ENGAGING WITH THE NATION:
GERMAN WOMEN WRITERS OF THE VORMÄRZ AND
CONSTRUCTIONS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

A Dissertation in
German
by
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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

August 2010
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According to the French philosopher Etienne Balibar, the histories of nations are always presented in the form of narratives. These narratives create the myths of national origins and seek to tell the story of a national community’s evolution through time to its moment of self-awareness. Literature then, which is often composed of narratives, lends itself well to the telling of national histories and provides the means to create cultural meaning and aid in the construction of national communities.

The ascendant narrative of German nationhood during the first half of the nineteenth century was ethnocultural. Conceptions of nation and national community were based around notions of common ancestry and similarity of culture and language. This narrative was created out of a desire to resurrect a German national past which linked the German nationalist project to Protestantism through such figures as Martin Luther who fought against papal despotism and translated the Bible into German, and to middle-class, bourgeois values, since middle-class, intellectual men were the main proponents and champions of German nationalism. This also meant that German nationalism was conceived of in gendered terms, where ideally, men would occupy and have access to the public sphere and women would be relegated to the private sphere.

This dissertation aims to look at the proliferation of meanings of Germanness and investigate the diversity and fluidity of national belonging in the Vormärz period (1815-1848) of German history through the examination of three
novels written by three different German women, Fanny Lewald, Ida Hahn-Hahn and Louise Aston. Writing in the *Vormärz* period leading up to the Revolution of 1848, these women writers offer an interesting cross-section of nineteenth-century German society. Their novels accentuate the intersection of gender, class and religion and thus provide a good model for examining difference among women writers, as well as, the creation of alternative narratives of German national identity. Through the examination of these texts, one can explore the ways in which marginal groups engaged and critiqued this dominant vision of national identity and how they attempted to write a place for themselves in the German nation. Thus, my analysis presents one with the range of meanings of Germanness and allows one to see the multiplicity of voices which are always present in any debate.

This study aims to expand on the growing body of work which is being done on nineteenth century German women writers. It also attempts to synthesize issues, such as gender, class and religion in women’s writing, which are often examined individually, but rarely in conjunction with one another. Further, it explores how women were able to create a public space for themselves through literature and engage in the culturally and politically charged discourses of the day. Feminist scholars owe much to the plight of these women and in analyzing their texts, one can gain a better understanding as to how diverse women positioned themselves vis-à-vis an emerging nationalist discourse that sought to exclude them from political participation.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee, Dr. Daniel Purdy, Dr. Thomas Beebee, Dr. Greg Eghigian and Dr. Martina Kolb for their support. A very special thanks goes to Dr. Daniel Purdy – without his help and support there would be no dissertation. Furthermore, I would like to thank my parents, Ann Mattos, Thaddeus Zajdowicz, Jack Mattos and Margan Zajdowicz, and my brother Jan Zajdowicz and sister-in-law Sheryl Zajdowicz, who supported and believed in me. Lastly and with deep sincerity, I would like to thank: my friends, Liz Hughes, Laura Donnelly and Atia Sattar, for being my personal counselors throughout my graduate school experience; my partners in crime, Josh Brown and Luke Eilderts, without whom graduate school would not have been nearly as much fun; and my boyfriend Jeff Horton, who has provided nothing but unfailing support.
Chapter 1

Introduction

A. Introduction

About one-third of the way through Fanny Lewald’s autobiography *Meine Lebensgeschichte*, originally published in 1861 and again in 1871 as a second edition, Lewald remarks about the Wars of Liberation (1813–1814) against Napoleon:

...die Errinnerung an die Freiheitskämpfe des Vaterlandes, die mir sonst nur als große, heldenhafte, historische Momente vorgeschwebt, und in denen die Gestalt Napoleons immer, gleichviel ob siegreich oder besiegt, den Mittelpunkt gebildet hatten, gewannen für mich eine neue Bedeutung, eine versittlichende und erhebende Kraft, weil ich sie als die Erhebung eines ganzes Volkes gegen eine entsittlichende Tyrannie zu erkennen begann. Mein Gemeingefühl für ein einiges deutsches Vaterland danke ich jenen Tagen der ersten Jugendliebe.¹

What Lewald’s remarks about these Wars of Liberation point to is the idea of a German national consciousness that started to emerge fervently in the late eighteenth century and really began to grow at the beginning of the nineteenth century. These wars of liberation, in Lewald’s estimation, marked Germany as something different, as an “Other” to the “uncivilizing tyranny” of Napoleonic France. It was during this period within German history that there was a push to define what it meant to be German and how Germany might one day manifest

itself into an actual nation-state. However, as a woman, and particularly a Jewish woman writer who would later convert to Christianity, Lewald’s remarks bring up other issues as well—namely the problem of how women were constructed within the emerging German nationalist context and how women writers were able to construct themselves and engage with the narrative of the German nation.

These issues are important to examine because the nation and nation-building have largely been studied and understood as belonging to the domain of men. The literature dealing with the production of the nation has claimed that the dominant figures in the imagining of nations have been men.² As such, women’s role in the nation has primarily been viewed as being constructed in relation to men’s role, where men are the active participants, and women are seen as passive participants in the creation of the nation and principally the bearers of cultural traditions.

Yet, viewing women as passive participants and the bearers of cultural tradition in the imagining of nations carries with it certain problems. First, it presumes that culture is a static and fundamental category that is immutable and therefore limits women’s role in the imagining of the nation to couriers of a timeless culture. Secondly, it neglects women’s voices altogether and presumes that no woman challenged dominant perceptions of the nation and her role within it. It also presupposes that the category of woman is monolithic and,

² see Nira Yuval-Davis, Gender and Nation (London: SAGE, 1997), 1–2. Yuval-Davis points out that in the literature concerning the production of nation, women are often left out all together and that scholars have predominantly focused their attention on state bureaucrats and intellectuals.
therefore, denies the differing experiences of women in the nation across socioeconomic and sociocultural lines.

This dissertation aims to examine three different German women writers of the Vormärz period—Fanny Lewald, Louise Aston and Ida Hahn-Hahn—in an attempt to show that women did attempt to engage critically with the role that they had been prescribed within German national discourses and that women’s experience of the nation was not necessarily the same. This dissertation will look at the proliferation of meanings of Germanness and investigate the diversity and fluidity of national belonging in the Vormärz through the examination of novels written by these women. These three women writers offer an interesting cross-section of nineteenth-century German society, and their novels accentuate the intersections of gender, class, and ethno-religious categories. As such, they provide a good model for examining difference among women writers as well as the creation of alternative visions of German national identity. Through the examination of these texts, one can explore the ways in which marginalized groups engaged with and critiqued dominant understandings of national identity and community, and how they attempted to write their own place in and change the course of the German nation. This analysis presents one with the range of meanings of Germanness and allows one to see the multiplicity of voices which are always present in any debate.
**B. Towards a Politics of Difference—Women and Nation**

The issue of gender and its role in the nationalist project is not an idea that is new by any means. Feminist critics and scholars have been examining this very issue most eagerly for the past thirty years. As Benedict Anderson has argued, nations are “imagined communities,” in that they are organizations of cultural representations where people come to believe that they share a common experience of identification with an extended community. However, this definition of nation raises questions as to how common the experience of the nation really is and who and/or what does the imagining of the community. One can begin to see an inconsistency in the idea of a shared experience in investigating the notion of gender and how it relates to the nation. As Tamar Meyer notes, feminist research has consistently shown that men and women play very different roles and engage differently in the nationalist project.

In much scholarship concerning gender and nation, women have been characterized as the bearers of national tradition and culture, as “reproducers” of the nation. In this characterization, women still have a role in the nationalist project but not as **active** agents. They do not produce the nation, as men do, but only serve to reproduce and preserve it—both biologically and ideologically speaking. In this way, the destiny of man is social production, and the destiny of

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women only reproduction. Thus, women become representatives of a timeless idea of the nation, a primordial entity, whose culture has always existed and must continue to be reproduced. Accordingly, this sets up a power differential in the nation along lines of gender which relegates women to a more passive role.

Furthermore, in relation to the reproduction of the nation is the idea that the nation needs to somehow be reproduced as culturally “pure,” however that might be defined. Therefore, only pure women can be reproducers of the nation.\(^6\) This becomes particularly important in the context of women who do not wholly meet the requirements of national belonging, and the question then becomes, how are they dealt with and how do they negotiate their position? By requiring cultural purity in the reproduction of nation, a power differential is set up not only along lines of gender but within the categories of gender as well.

Yet, because the nation is bound up in power relationships, the internal workings of the nation are not just divided along discourses that construct gender; they are also informed by other discourses of difference,\(^7\) such as class and ethno-religious identity. In this way, there does not exist an internal unity to the nation despite its claims, and there are always those who are defined as central to the national project and those who are marginal. While it is of the utmost importance to examine issues of gender in relation to the nation, discussions of difference in relation to the nation cannot just revolve around gender. Critiques and examinations of the nation must be extended to include

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\(^6\) Mayer, “Gender Ironies of Nationalism,” 7.
arguments about identity markers that extend beyond gender. It is important that other facets of identity be explored in conjunction with gender, so that other differences can be accounted for and gender does not become the primary and most significant category of inquiry and difference.

The positing of gender as the most significant category of difference has proven to be problematic. Many structuralist approaches to the discursive construction of subjectivity, like those of Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva, have fallen prey to determinism: gender is cast as the key difference, women’s subordination is seen as inevitable, and identities are invariably fixed with the resolution of the Oedipus complex. This approach becomes problematic, as it fails to account for the complexity of social identities or the historicity and shifts in identity that take place over time.

Many critics have moved away from these structuralist theories and have asserted that social identities are more complex, created from a variety of different labels (not just gender), and are never fixed. This approach to identity formation is more palatable in that it does not essentialize identity and examines the historically specific social practices that produce cultural descriptions. Extending this approach to the question of women’s role in the nation, one cannot assume that all women experience the nation in the same way. It comes to pass then that if identities are a complex web of labels, national identity must be

8 see Nancy Fraser, “The Uses and Abuses of French Discourse Theories for Feminist Politics,” boundary 2 17 (Summer 1990), 82-101. Nancy Fraser argues that social identities are complex networks of meanings and that to be a man or a woman, is to act under a set of descriptions, that are not excreted by people’s bodies or released from one’s psyche. see also Christine Delphy, “The Invention of French Feminism: An Essential Move,” Yale French Studies 87 (1995): 190-221.
informed by multiple discourses, not just gender discourse. National identity and the experience of the nation are equally about other social fissures—such as class and ethnoreligious identity—as they are about gender identity.

The accounting of difference becomes especially crucial in the examination of women’s place within nationalist contexts. Feminist scholarship of recent years has begun to shift itself away from attempting to find a common identity among women and has instead begun to focus its attention on difference among women. This has especially been true in terms of looking at representations of women in the Third World. As postcolonial theorists have made apparent in the context of Third World representations, there is little to no account taken of distinctions in class, religion, or geographical location. As a result, portrayals of women in the Third World context lack internal difference and complexity. The same could be argued about representations of women and their writing in the Western World. No longer can women be seen and dealt with as a homogenous

9 see Denise Riley, *Am I That Name? Feminism and the Category of ‘Women’ in History* (London: Macmillan Press, 1988). Grounding her work in historical analysis, Riley rejects the notion of any concrete or stable unities among women. She views the category of women as a ‘volatile collectivity,’ in which she argues female persons can be differently positioned, thus dispelling the idea that there is any continuity of the subject ‘women.’ see also Donna Harraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York and London: Routledge) 1991. Harraway draws attention to the illusory “feminist dream of a common naming of experience.”

10 see Chandra Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse,” in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, eds. Chandra Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991). Mohanty argues that feminist writing about Third World Women discursively colonizes the historical and social multiplicities of the lives of these women, thus producing a composite “Third World Woman,” who is static and timeless. see also Uma Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions and Third World Feminism* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997). Narayan critiques the ways in which Third World practices, such as sati, are misrepresented and thus replicate common and problematic Western understandings of the Third World and its contexts and communities.

group, but rather, the attention must focus on the different ways the identities of women in and across societies are constructed. Ignoring these other axes of difference would only recreate the gender blindness of previous scholarly work.\(^{12}\) This accounting of difference also proves useful in thinking about the collective identities of nations. It demonstrates that these collective identities must not be homogenous and can be tolerant of difference.

The question then becomes, where does one go to look for women’s voices and ideas about national identity within the context of nineteenth-century Germany. Because women were, by definition of their gender, largely excluded from the public sphere (as will be later discussed), one must look to those few spaces where women were able to eke out territory, transcend “normal” gender positions and make their voices heard. For many women of the nineteenth century, writing provided the means to do this. Writing became, for these women, a public means of self-representation. In this way, they were able to engage with the external representations of their gendered identity and attempt to reposition themselves within the larger framework of the nation.

The discussion of difference and national identity do to a degree seem incongruous. How is it that one can talk about difference in terms of national identity, if national identity is fundamentally based on the idea of a collective identity? Yet, it is precisely this incongruity that needs to be further examined.

Speaking about the case of German women, points out that no time in history have women ever formed a unified, homogenous group.

The context of German women writers of the Vormärz provides a good point of inquiry in regards to questions of gender and nation as well as other social fissures.

C. The Role of Literature in the Creation of National Identity

The fight for hegemony and power is often only understood in its most clear and evident moments, such as political confrontation. In the case of German-speaking lands, events such as Luther’s attempt to reform the Catholic Church, the Wars of Freedom against Napoleon, or the barricades during the Revolutions of 1848 are cited as having great implications in regards to the formation of the German nation and its identity. In addition to political confrontation, power is often discussed as being located in official state institutions. However, these obvious events and locations of power do not offer the only modes of conflict. Discord can take on less conspicuous forms, as in the fight for cultural hegemony. This is where literature takes on a key role and provides an alternative space in which ideas about national identity are engaged with and criticized.

The book played an enormous role in the lives of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Germans, largely as a result of Germany’s political geography. Unlike other countries like France, which had a cultural center in Paris, Germany lacked a lively focal point that allowed for intellectuals to come together and

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communicate through conversations with one another. Due to the very fragmented nature of German geography, members of the German intelligentsia were spread out across the various German-speaking lands. Most of them were to be found in university towns, far from each other. Due to this lack, the book provided a favored means of communication and intellectual exchange in Germany when conversation could not take place, as it enabled dialogue over longer distances.\textsuperscript{14}

In addition to providing a means to communicate over long distances, literature offered a channel for political reflection. In his seminal work \textit{The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere}, Jürgen Habermas points to this importance of literature for political reflection and ultimately for the bourgeoisie’s involvement in political life. In his assertion, it is due to the state’s power that literature is needed and proves useful:

Even before the control over the public sphere by public authority was contested and finally wrested away by the critical reasoning of private persons on political issues, there evolved under its cover a public sphere in apolitical form – the literary precursor of the public sphere operative in the public domain. It provided the training ground for a critical public reflection...\textsuperscript{15}

As the state began to take on more power and affect people’s everyday lives, there was a need for a space where people could engage critically. This space emerged with the development of a new social class—the bourgeoisie—who became a


reading public and used a literary public sphere as a “training ground” for critical reflection.

As a literate social class, the bourgeoisie initially developed a literary public sphere that allowed them to come together in coffee houses or in salons and to engage in critical discussions about literature and art. Ultimately, this literary public sphere prepared the people for political reflection and acted as a bridge to a political public sphere where discussions pertaining to the ideas and needs of civil society were represented before public authority, thereby forming public opinion. Habermas contends that women could contribute to the literary public sphere but could not exercise their reason about politics, as they lacked “economic” qualifications. Consequently, they were excluded from the political public sphere.

Habermas’s argument is problematic as women and their voices are left out all together. By claiming that they cannot be part of the political public sphere, he in essence alleges that women cannot be political or contribute to political debates. What Habermas’ contention ignores is the idea that literature and its production in and of itself contains a political element. While women may not have been able to directly participate in discussions of political questions within the political public sphere, they were able to take recourse in literature and use it as a means to engage with political issues and questions. It would be
through fictional narratives that women could enter the public sphere as political writers.\textsuperscript{16}

As Nancy Armstrong has pointed out, fiction provided a means of social control in the nineteenth century by acting as an agent of cultural history and by supplying a means for representing acceptable behavior.\textsuperscript{17} She speaks to the importance and role of conduct books and finally novels in providing a framework for the domestic in the nineteenth century. While she speaks specifically about the wide range of conduct books within the English context of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, similarities can be drawn with German-speaking lands. As Ute Frevert points out, there were a number of printed materials within Germany that “proclaimed the principles of enlightened bourgeois morality, education and upbringing, between them providing the basis for a detailed rule-book of male and female duties and responsibilities.”\textsuperscript{18} In Nancy Armstrong’s assertion, the novel acted as a means to transform the rule-based world of conduct books into a mobilization of the imagination; power structures were no longer questioned but were set to be the example for the organization of domestic life.\textsuperscript{19} The power of the novel lies in the very fact that it exists outside of state-operated power. This becomes especially crucial in the context of mid nineteenth-century Germany, as it was often against state-operated power that the middle classes were fighting.

\textsuperscript{16} Karin Baumgartner, \textit{Public Voices: Political Discourse in the Writings of Caroline de la Motte Fouqué} (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2008), 74.


\textsuperscript{19} Armstrong, \textit{Desire and Domestic Fiction}, 48.
Thus, the novel anticipated and ultimately aided in constructing subjects. In this way, the novel acted as a powerful instrument in the creation of subjects. In her analysis of English domestic fiction in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Armstrong even makes note of men adopting women’s voices in their writing. This was often done as a means to provide political critique without appearing to challenge the dominant authority.\textsuperscript{20} Hence, if fiction could act as a means to create the domestic woman and have this image mirrored in social experience, it could also act as a way to change how womanhood and other social identities were inscribed.

It seems of little wonder then that women turned to writing as a measure to communicate their ideas. Living a life of relative solitude and isolation, women used writing as a route of escape and as a mode to have their voices heard. Just as middle class intellectuals used writing and books to communicate their ideas, so too did women use literature to enter into the dialogue surrounding the discourses of the day.

This dissertation views literature as a part of a larger discursive construct that can offer clues to the ideological constructions and contradictions of mid nineteenth-century Germany. Although the selection of works presented in this dissertation did not (and still do not) belong to the German canon of high literature in the nineteenth century, this study juxtaposes nineteenth-century historical texts—novels with an autobiographical bent—which identify and interpret the discourse on national identity within this time period. In this way,\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{20} Armstrong, \textit{Desire and Domestic Fiction}, 28-29.
literature is viewed as acting as a social force that contributes to the making of individuals.\textsuperscript{21}

\textbf{D. The German Vormärz and its Women Writers}

The \textit{Vormärz} period provides a good epoch for inquiry into the issues surrounding the construction of German nationalism. It was a period of tremendous agitation and change that would eventually lead to the formation of a German nation-state in 1871. Although the censorship of society begun in the Restoration continued, this period saw a flourishing of political life, and public debate enjoyed new intensity.

The literature of the \textit{Vormärz}, like the period, was also marked with agitation and change, with the role of literature itself acquiring a new meaning and purpose. In contrast to more classical modes of literature, which predominantly took a neutral stance towards social movements, the literature of the \textit{Vormärz} was highly engaged with social reform and opposed to authority.\textsuperscript{22} Because of new modes of production, writing became a mass phenomenon which opened up new spaces and perspectives for many groups on the margins of


society. Themes hitherto deemed objectionable in literature were now seen as acceptable.23

Significantly, this period coincides with substantial developments in the historical women’s movement in Germany. The seeds of feminist consciousness in Germany were first sewn in the late eighteenth century in reaction to the emerging ideology of sexual character and separate spheres, also known as Geschlechtscharakter.24 However, it was not until the 1830s, with the emergence of a politically engaged group of writers known as Young Germany (Junges Deutschland), that women began to speak out. By the 1840s, many outspoken authors were women. And by 1849, Louise Otto-Peters, a founding figure of the German women’s movement and staunch supporter of the 1848 Revolution, began to publish the Frauen-Zeitung, a women’s newspaper in which women were able to voice their desire for legal equality and to organize themselves into a group with common political objectives.25 Even though women’s emancipation in Germany did not begin as it did in England or France with figures such as Mary

Wollstonecraft or Olympe de Gouges, the proliferation of women writers in the nineteenth century is evidence of an emerging self-awareness on the part of women and their position in society.

Starting in the late eighteenth century and continuing into the beginning of the nineteenth century, more women began to exchange their sewing needles for the pen. For those women writing in the late eighteenth century, this exchange was not necessarily looked at positively. Women’s status as writer was often looked down upon and seen as an act that overstepped the bounds of womanhood and encroached upon the world of men. However, these earlier women writers often emphasized the private nature of their writing and claimed that it was done in their leisure time and, therefore, was no offense against their true nature as women. In addition, they saw their purpose in writing as presenting the morally virtuous woman. This purpose for writing would eventually change for some women writers in the nineteenth century.

The primary genre for women writers in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was the novel. Literary historians of the time noted women’s forays into literature and their dominance in novel writing. As the famous

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26 Both Wollstonecraft and de Gouges, in England and France respectively, demanded rights for women and provide a symbolic beginning to the women’s question in those countries. see Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) and Olympe de Gouges’ “The Rights of Women” (1791).
nineteenth century literary historian, Robert Prutz wrote: “Die Frauen sind eine Macht in unserer Literatur geworden; gleich den Juden begegnet man ihnen auf Schritt und Tritt [...] ja auf manchen Gebieten, wie z.B. im Roman, haben sie sogar entschieden die Oberhand.” Thus, women’s fondness and proclivity to write novels did not go unnoticed. In addition, their status as outsiders in the world of literature was cemented, as Prutz notes in comparing them with other minority groups, such as Jews.

The penchant for women writers to write novels reached back into the late eighteenth century, with writers such as Sophie von Laroche, Therese Huber and Johanna Schopenhauer. As a genre, the novel was not readily accepted as it lacked rhyme and meter as well as a long-standing literary tradition, making it unsuitable for poetry but befitting for historiography and the telling of stories. Because of this status as a less-than-acceptable literary form, the novel facilitated women’s entry into the literary public sphere—after all, one did not need to be educated or trained to write a novel. The type of novel that women of the late eighteenth century wrote could best be characterized as the bourgeois, moral romance novel in the style of Samuel Richardson and Christoph Martin Wieland. What made this type of novel innovative in respect to its forerunners is that rather than receiving the thoughts and feelings of the women characters from

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outside—either through the male protagonist or the omniscient narrator—the reader was privy to the subjective perceptions and feelings of the heroine.

At the time, these novels were viewed as politically resistant since they communicated the ideas of the growing middle classes. Typically these novels had as their heroine a pure, innocent woman of high moral virtue whose renunciation of happiness, for a myriad reasons, was usually celebrated. The virtues which these female title characters possessed reflected the traits that were held by bourgeois culture to be proper for women, and they were often portrayed in contrast to the excesses of the aristocratic class. Often, these women writers had to appeal to a sense of feminine morality and purity in order to be accepted as writers and to have their works published. Their heroines needed to function as positive models for their female readership. Thus, while on the one hand their characters were imbued with womanly experience and characteristics, on the other hand they also represented the bourgeois feminine ideal. In addition, the majority of women’s novels at this time had prefaces written by men whereby the man paved the way for the woman into the literary public sphere and reflected on the need for freedom of expression.32 As a result, rather than engaging with the particularity of their cultural situation, these women writers often ended up continuing to mirror the images of women that had existed for hundreds of years in the eyes of men.33

In the nineteenth century, however, during the period leading up to the failed Revolution of 1848, the genre of the novel became much more politicized,

33 Silvia Bovenschen, Die imaginierte Weiblichkeit (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), 42.
especially during the 1830s and 1840s. The reasons for politicization at this particular point in German history were manifold. The period after the Napoleonic Wars seemed for many a promising moment for potential change, constitutionalism, and a more unified and united Germany. Nonetheless, the reformists had many enemies that sought to reestablish the status quo of prewar Germany and restrain constitutional efforts. After the infamous Karlsbad decrees of 1819 under Klemens von Metternich, censorship was the mode of the day, and there were massive crackdowns on liberal-democratic and nationalist groups in the German-speaking lands. After the revolutionary upheaval of the early 1830s, the policing of society did not cease, and political life grew due to and alongside of the growing reading public. Public life flourished in theater and concert halls and public debate grew more intense as new societies appeared.

In reaction to this newly flourishing public life, the Vormärz period saw a move towards more socially engaged literature which was often in conflict with the authority of existing literature.34 The novel once again became a genre of choice because its form appealed to the telling of history, taking as its subject the history of the present day and opening up for discussion areas that had previously not been acceptable topics in the realm of literature.35

In regards to many women novelists of the Vormärz period, we begin to see a questioning of the representation of the bourgeois woman as the feminine ideal. These women writers, like their predecessors, focused on the lives of women and typically had as their main protagonist a female character; however,

unlike their foremothers, they grappled with and documented the current social problems that they faced.\textsuperscript{36} Frequently, their novels combined the fate of women in German society with other social questions, focusing quite a bit of attention on the gender question. They attempted to link questions of gender to the revolutionary ideals of the time, in an attempt to work against the exclusion of their sex from political and public life.\textsuperscript{37} Still their novels did not focus solely on questions of gender. While the subject of Gender often took center stage, these women novelists also appealed to questions of class and of religion—questions that were constantly posed in relation to German national belonging.

In this manner, the novel was a tool in the creation of subjects. As such, it developed in the nineteenth century as a means of speaking from a position of cultural hegemony. For many women writers of the Vormärz period, this became problematic. No longer could they position themselves as Sophie von LaRoche had done a few generations prior, writing instructional and virtuous novels for and about women; rather, these women needed to find new ways in which to position themselves. Their novels delve more deeply into the psychological impact of German cultural norms and question the cultural meanings of the German nation.

\textsuperscript{36} McNicholl and Williams, "Romane von Frauen," 210-233.
\textsuperscript{37} McNicholl and Williams, "Romane von Frauen," 214.
E. Fanny Lewald, Louise Aston and Ida Hahn-Hahn

Fanny Lewald, Louise Aston and Ida Hahn-Hahn were three very well-known women authors of the 1840s, each of whom enjoyed relative success through their writing. Before 1850, Fanny Lewald had written numerous novels and novellas among which *Clementine* (1842), *Jenny* (1843), *Prinz Louise Ferdinand* (1849), and *Auf roter Erde* (1850) count as some of the most well-known. She was also known for her travel writing which chronicled her experiences abroad in places like England, Scotland and Italy. Like Lewald, Aston was also a writer of novels among which *Aus dem Leben einer Frau* (1847), *Lydia* (1847), and *Revolution und Contrarevolution* (1849) are her most notable. Aston, however, in contrast to Lewald (and Hahn-Hahn), proves to be the most interesting and yet difficult woman writer examined here. After the 1848 Revolution, Aston retreated from public life and not much is known about her life after this period. She left behind no memoirs or letters like those of many other women authors, and what is known about her biography has mostly been pieced together from her novels. Lastly, Ida Hahn-Hahn, the most prolific of the three writers, was extremely popular as a writer before her conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1850, having published ten novels as well as numerous accounts of her travels abroad. Among her most famous novels are *Gräfin Faustine* (1841), *Zwei Frauen* (1845), and *Sibylle* (1846). Additionally, like Lewald, she was quite popular for her travel literature where she writes about her time spent in England, the Orient, and the Middle East.
The choice to analyze Fanny Lewald, Louise Aston and Ida Hahn-Hahn is not accidental. As has been previously stated, these three women writers offer a good cross-section of nineteenth-century German society. Geography and history place Lewald, Hahn-Hahn and Aston in very similar contexts within the realm of German history. They were all born in the early nineteenth century—Fanny Lewald in 1811, Louise Aston in 1814, and Ida Hahn-Hahn in 1805. Geographically speaking, they were all born in and remained in what had been the German Confederation before its dissolution in 1866. Fanny Lewald was born in Königsberg, eventually settling in Berlin. Hahn-Hahn, born in Tressow in Mecklenburg-Schwerin, ultimately established residence in Mainz. And Aston, who was born in Gröningen, also moved and took up residence in Berlin before being expelled for radical behavior and forced to move around.

While time and geography physically situate these women within similar contexts, their biographies lead to very different positions within nineteenth-century German culture. Among the three writers, two stem from the middle-class and one from the aristocracy. Furthermore, religious affiliations among these women are quite different. Fanny Lewald came from a Jewish family (although she did convert to Christianity) and Aston and Hahn-Hahn from Protestant backgrounds, though Aston eventually proclaimed herself an atheist and Hahn-Hahn in time converted to Catholicism.

38 The choice not to include a woman writer from the working-class milieu was not done purposefully. Women writers from this background are less, if at all, to be found in mid-nineteenth century Germany.
In addition to their differences providing a good example of nineteenth-century variation, all three of these women writers have been noted to have much in common with the French novelist George Sand. As such, one would expect similar themes and topics to be addressed in their novel, as is the case. All three women deal with topics surrounding the construction and position of women in relation to the German nation in their writing. However, the way in which they engage with these themes are influenced by their social positioning beyond their gender.

This dissertation will focus on three novels (one by each author) which have been characterized as semi-autobiographical in nature and are based loosely on the writers’ own lives. Fanny Lewald’s novel Jenny, Louise Aston’s novel Aus dem Leben einer Frau, and Ida Hahn-Hahn’s novel Gräfin Faustine will be examined and compared. In order to establish and maintain identities acceptable to both themselves and to the society in which they live, artistic women have developed strategies that involve both the medium of their art and autobiographical elements. Focusing on novels that have an autobiographical bent allows one to examine more closely the extent to which women writers used their writing as a means to define their own identities within and against dominant national narratives. Because these literary works are not true autobiographies but works of fiction, they offer these women an element of

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39 See Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres, Respectability and Deviance: Nineteenth-Century German Women Writers and the Ambiguity of Representation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 111. Both Fanny Lewald and Louise Aston were called the “German George Sand” by their contemporaries. See also Gisela Argyle, “The Horror and the Pleasure of Un-English Fiction: Ida von Hahn-Hahn and Fanny Lewald in England” in Comparative Literature Studies 44 (2007): 153. Ida Hahn-Hahn was also compared to George Sand in 1843 by Jane Carlyle, the wife of the Scottish essayist, Thomas Carlyle.
distance from reality. Women are able to use the fictional genre of the novel to
develop their own ideas and identities outside of their existing realities and to
link them to the idea of the German nation, thereby actively reinterpreting their
respective positions in society.

Fanny Lewald’s *Jenny*, published in 1843, is perhaps her most famous
novel. It can be considered semi-autobiographical in nature because of the
content it addresses, namely the linkage of women’s rights to Jewish
emancipation. Like the female protagonist, Lewald had to deal with the issue of
converting to Christianity in order to fit into the world outside. By linking
German national identity with religious freedom, Lewald’s novel becomes an
alternative reality to that which she herself experienced; the presence of diversity
is not downplayed, and women’s roles are not concretely placed within an ideal of
bourgeois domesticity.

Louise Aston’s novel *Aus dem Leben einer Frau*, like Lewald’s, contains
allusions to the author’s own life. The main character Johanna, like Louise, stems
from a middle-class family and, like Aston, is forced into a marriage of
convenience with a wealthy businessman. As with her fictional counterpart, this
marriage does not end well, and Aston seeks through her novel to resolve her own
experiences by counteracting the ahistorical perception of women and moving
women away from being confined to roles as only wife and mother. In addition,
she deals with issues beyond gender and focuses on the class issues that plagued
Germany. Like Lewald, Aston aligns the plight of women’s (non)emancipation
with that of another plight—the lower classes.
Ida Hahn-Hahn’s novel *Gräfin Faustine* also blurs the line between autobiography and novel in its mirroring of her own life. Many of the same traumatic experiences that Hahn-Hahn endured during her life are portrayed and retold in the life of the main protagonist. Like the Gräfin Faustine, Hahn-Hahn was forced to marry a man whom she did not love, having very adverse effects on her life. In this novel, Hahn-Hahn, like Lewald and Aston, deals with the issue of women’s emancipation. However, even though this novel is about female emancipation, it is written about an aristocratic woman through the eyes of an aristocratic woman. As a result, her approach to female emancipation in her novel differs vastly from Lewald and Aston.

The following chapters will examine more closely the questions surrounding the formation and creation of the German nation and its national identity, with a particular eye on women writers and their novels. Chapter two will canvass and take stock of the various modes of understanding the nation and how these approaches apply in particular to Germany in the mid-nineteenth century. It will delve into more cultural understandings of the nation and will examine the ways in which gender, class, and ethno-religious identities helped shape national consciousness in the nineteenth century. It will focus on more dominant understandings of German national belonging.

In the third, fourth and fifth chapters, the novels by these three women will be examined in detail, focusing on the construction of gender, class, and ethnoreligious identity in relation to national identity. These chapters will center on how these three women novelists engaged with dominant understandings of
national belonging in their writing and will attempt to interconnect the following questions. In an era when the rise of German nationalism was such a pressing issue, where did women fit into the burgeoning nation-state, and how did they cope with their position? For the first time, this period sees women writers who are able to make a profession out of writing. As a consequence, they come from a variety of different social backgrounds—not just the aristocratic milieu. How do these women writers identify themselves with a German collectivity, if their positions are so different from each other? How do they cope with this paradox in their writing? What kinds of identities did these women construct? In what ways do the different facets of their identity cause tension in their works? How did these women attempt to write new identities into and against the national narrative?

In addition, a short biography of each author will be included with a special emphasis placed on their foray into the world of writing as well as their ideas surrounding the role of women. Chapter three will examine Fanny Lewald and her novel Jenny. Chapter four will investigate Louise Aston and her novel Aus dem Leben einer Frau. And in the fifth chapter, Ida Hahn-Hahn and her novel Gräfin Faustine will be addressed.
Chapter 2
The Making of the German “Nation”

A. The “Nation”

There is no denying that the nation has played an essential role in the world of the past two centuries. It is a concept that has been influential in shaping understandings of both political community and personal identity. The term “nation” is often invoked in the political arena in one form or another, where much is spoken of as being in “the nation’s best interest.” However, it is not a concept that is used exclusively in the area of politics. Ideas relating to the nation—such as national distinction and national identity—permeate the ways in which we view and understand many matters from the economic to the cultural. Often times the very essence of difference is understood in national terms.

Yet, as often as the nation and terms relating to it are evoked, as a concept it is less easily defined, perhaps because of its very ambivalent nature. In everyday practice, the concept of the nation is often conflated with or seen as equivalent to such terms as “the state.” While there are historical and theoretical reasons for the amalgamation of these terms, they do little to enlighten us about the “true” nature of the nation, if this “true” nature exists at all. Delving into scholarly literature proves to be little more useful in pinning down any concrete definitions. What one finds instead are a myriad competing definitions and
theories relating to the nation, leading one to conclude, like the influential scholar of nationalism Anthony Smith that the nation is “elusive, even protean, in its manifestations.”

Nevertheless, it is precisely the nation’s protean and ambivalent nature that needs to be further explored. Germany is not just a political or geographical entity but is also a discursive formation; it represents a set of ideas encoded within a national narrative. Rather than seeking to attempt to define concretely what the nation is and where its origins lie, it thus seems that examining the ways in which it is a contested site of meaning might prove to be more useful, especially in regards to exploring those who find themselves on the imagined boundaries of the nation. Ultimately, the essence of the nation lies in its use as a device for identification, invention, and belonging.

B. Causality and the Origins of the Nation

The most prominent question that has been raised and explored in relation to the nation is the question of causality and the origin of the nation. From the very beginning, nationalists have sought to create national narratives that emphasize the primordial origins of the nation and its people as a homogenous and unitary entity. This particular understanding of the nation can be traced back to intellectuals of the German tradition such as Johann Gottfried Herder and Johann Gottlieb Fichte, both of whom understood the nation as

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synonymous to historical language groups and communities.\textsuperscript{41} More recently, scholars such as Anthony Smith have also argued that there are continuities between ancient and modern conceptions of the nation that cut across different historical moments and places.\textsuperscript{42} Smith asserts that nationalism could not be created out of nothing and, therefore, that the nation must be a reconstruction of already existing elements and motifs.\textsuperscript{43} For these scholars, nationalism and the construction of nations derive their power from how the past is rediscovered and reinterpreted.

While many nationalists view the nation as having its roots in the mists of time, as a ‘national’ biological entity based around historical traditions and communities,\textsuperscript{44} many scholars of nationalism agree that the nation is a product of modernity and that it has been one of the most influential forces in modern history. Already in 1882, with Ernest Renan and his lecture “What is a Nation?” given at the Sorbonne, we can see a questioning of the naturalness of the nation. As Renan states, “Nations are not something eternal. They had their beginnings and they will end.”\textsuperscript{45} Ernest Gellner echoes this same sentiment later when he says: “Nations as a natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an

\textsuperscript{41} see Johann Gottfried Herder, \textit{Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit} (Leipzig: Johanna Friedrich Hartknoch, 1841). See also Johann Gottlieb Fichte, \textit{Reden an die deutsche Nation} (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1871).


\textsuperscript{44} Franjo Tudman, \textit{Nationalism in Contemporary Europe} (Boulder, CO: Boulder East European Monographs, 1981), 288.

inherent...political destiny, are a myth." According to Ernest Gellner, Nations and Nationalism (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 48. Accordingly, if nations are not eternal phenomena and therefore also not natural, one must ask the question as to when and how they arose, what purpose they serve, and who belongs.

The majority of scholars see the roots of the nation as embedded in the ideals of the Enlightenment of the late eighteenth century—they argue that before this time, the nation as a cultural and political form would have been virtually unrecognizable. During the Enlightenment period, there were rapid changes in the material and structural ways in which society operated, allowing for the creation of the nation. The movement from agrarian to modern society called for new ways to maintain social solidarity. This modernist view holds that nationalism reflects certain historical developments and certain historical impetuses such as shifts in political institutions, social relations and economic systems; as a result, it is often examined with a particular eye on the political and the economic.

Due to its intertwinement with changing political institutions and movements, the nation is often studied in relation to the state. This is often where the idea of the state gets conflated with the nation. Yet, although frequently studied in conjunction with one another, they signify distinct ideas. While the interest of the state lies in the exertion of power and authority over a given population, the idea of the nation lies in the relationship of people and their

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collective identity. This is not to say that the concepts of nation and state are completely unrelated to one another. According to Hegel, the destiny of the nation should be its formation into a state. Ultimately, the goal of the nation is to assert the primacy of its collective identity and to seek political power in its name, ideally in the form of a state. Nineteenth-century historiography followed this line very closely, and historians like Leopold von Ranke proclaimed the triumph and importance of the nation-state. Thus the nation-state was often conceived of as the most successful and natural form of political organization.

More recent scholars also emphasize the importance of politics and the state to nationalist movements. As John Breuilly explains, the struggle for and over the state is what makes nationalism a modern phenomenon because it is “associated with the development of specifically modern kinds of political action, and that these kinds of political action are closely connected to the development of a new kind of state.” The main focus for Breuilly, however, lies not in the nationalist ideas themselves but in the political effects of nationalist doctrine.

50 see Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts (Leipzig: Verlag von Felix Meiner, 1911).
51 Leopold von Ranke held a Romantic belief in primeval nations, which ultimately would provide the cultural material and remain the source for later cultural developments. see Leopold von Ranke, Zur deutschen Geschichte: Vom Religionsfrieden bis zum Dreißigjährigen Krieg (Leipzig: Verlag von Dunker und Humblot, 1869). see also Leopold von Ranke, Englische Geschichte vornehmlich im sechzehnten und siebzehnten Jahrhundert (Leipzig: Verlag von Dunker und Humblot, 1866).
States and nations, it need be noted, are not completely identical concepts. As others have pointed out, states do not need to be conceived of in nationalist terms. In fact, states can often have a very denationalizing effect. In such cases, the conflation of state and nation does little to illuminate an understanding of the nation. This denationalizing effect is immediately understood in Hannah Arendt’s definition of the state as “derived from centuries of monarchy and enlightened despotism...whether in the form of a new republic or of a reformed constitutional monarchy, the state inherited as its supreme function the protection of all inhabitants in its territory no matter what their nationality.”54 In her definition of the state, its ultimate role is the protection of all of those who live within its territorial boundaries. Unlike the nation, the state does not necessarily have to be understood as an exclusive entity; it is instead interested in political control over certain territories regardless of the kinship or communal ties that residents may or may not feel towards each other.

The over-emphasis on the nation as a political body of ideas also ignores the appeal of the idea of the nation as a social category. The state by definition focuses on the notion of political rule and is often understood as inclusive. Its focus lies primarily in the ideas of political sovereignty and authority over a given population. The nation, on the other hand, deals more with the relationships between people—their connection to each other in history and their collective identity. However, this does not mean that the political does not play a significant

role in the creation of nations. Often it is through political struggle that the unitary notion of the nation is produced culturally.

In addition to an abundance of studies surrounding politics and the nation, studies on nation and national identity have also concentrated on various structures of modernization, such as industrialization and the advent of capitalism, that have led to social and economic changes as the causal factor in the creation of nations and nationalism, and thusly the national identities there within.\(^{55}\) Ernest Gellner, perhaps the most respected and quoted scholar of nationalism, argues that in traditionally agrarian societies, the nation is virtually an impossible phenomenon. By contrasting traditional society with modern society, he finds that only with industrial society does there become a social and economic need for cultural homogeneity, which is provided through a high culture that plays a significant role in creating the identity of the national community.\(^{56}\)

However, Ernest Gellner was not the first to stress the importance of social communication and culture to nation formation and the construction of national identity. Karl Wolfgang Deutsch characterized the idea of communication in a very broad sense, in which it was seen as a part of culture that sought to integrate


a given people.\textsuperscript{57} And for one to be able to participate in the network of social communication, one had to be mobilized.

Others, like Benedict Anderson, also emphasize cultural change brought about through socio-economic change. For Anderson, this cultural change is a result of the combination of capitalism and the revolution of communication, specifically what he terms print-capitalism.\textsuperscript{58} However, unlike Gellner who believes that the economy of modern society can only function properly when all individuals have been socialized into a high culture and can therefore communicate easily with one another, Anderson views the advent of print capitalism as creating the means by which people began to imagine abstract communities and thus underpin a national identity. National identity emerges then in this process of industrialization, due to the dissolution of traditional kinship ties and the need for new shared norms.

Yet, exploring the origins of the nation does little to enlighten us about the nation’s ambivalent nature and identity. Focusing on either the nation as a primordial entity that has existed in one form or another since time eternal or viewing the nation as a product of modernizing forces fixes the meaning of the nation and sets its course as predetermined. In the case of the modernists, the nation is viewed as the certain result of modernizing forces, whether they be economic or political. Thus, national belonging is a fixed process that has as its inevitable conclusion the move from a traditional society into modern identities.


\textsuperscript{58} Benedict Anderson, \textit{Imagined Communities}, 37-46.
This becomes problematic when one analyzes how premodern identity factors—such as religion—influence national identity. This approach also only delves into national belonging in so far as how it is disseminated through the driving forces of modernity, not necessarily what it means to individuals or how this process is disputed and called into question. The nation and its people are not predetermined entities. They are discursive constructs, and as such are open to debate and contestation.

**C. Roots of German National Identity**

The study of German nationalism and national identity of the nineteenth century has been heavily influenced by Friedrich Meinecke and his study *Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat*. Published in 1908, this work by Meinecke attempted to categorize and understand the path that Germany took to nationhood. In comparing Germany to other countries such as France and England, he devised two classifications of European nations—*Staatsnation* and *Kulturnation*—based around the source of national consciousness. In countries like France, which exemplified the *Staatsnation*, political unification preceded the development of national consciousness; therefore, the state came before the nation. According to Meinecke, this could not be the case in Germany because, unlike those countries west of the Rhine, there was no common political experience in Germany. Therefore, Germany had to derive its national consciousness from someplace else—its common culture and heritage. In contrast
to nationalist scholars like Ernest Renan, who claimed that nations were self-determining entities, Meinecke claimed that the German nation was predetermined. The principle was not as Renan had stated, that whoever wants to be a nation is a nation. For Meinecke, the German nation simply was, whether or not the individuals of which it was composed wanted to belong. In this way, it was not based on self-determination but rather on predetermination. In Meinecke’s conception of the nation, there existed a predetermined understanding that the German nation was based around its culture, therefore making it a prescriptive model of belonging.

It is easy to understand why Meinecke characterized the development of German national consciousness in the nineteenth century in cultural terms. Beginning in the late eighteenth and continuing through the nineteenth century, the image of the nation took a decidedly cultural turn, and national boundaries began to be defined in terms of ethnography, particularly language, culture, and history. This was symptomatic of a larger problem occurring at this time, namely the frequency with which political boundaries changed, as was largely the case during the Napoleonic era. In an effort to give continuity to group identity, language especially became a means to distinguish groups and demarcate political borders.

The belief in a common German language, culture, and history is reflected in the literature and philosophy of the time period. The idea of the character of the German people deriving from cultural elements was expressed by many important intellectuals of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It was at this time that Achim von Arnim and Clemens Brentano began their work on gathering and editing German folk ballads into a collection entitled *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (1806–1808). These ballads, written in German, worked as a means for the German nation to self-create an historic identity which was crucial since Germany was a fragmented land living under the dominance of France. In addition to Arnim and Brentano, the Grimm Brothers were also busy collecting and editing a compilation of fairy tales in the German language. However, unlike *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, their collection of fairy tales was much more infused with a sense of national purpose, as the Grimm Brothers saw their work as an extension of the old and traditional German epics.

Scholarship examining national consciousness has come a long way since Friedrich Meinecke, and more recent work has been done to analyze the origins of nations. As has been discussed previously, the majority of scholars dealing with the study of nation have come to view it as a modern phenomenon, an outlook which would dispel Meinecke’s claim that some nations are predestined entities. Still, his focus on cultural components cannot be ignored and raises some important issues in terms of studying the German nation in the nineteenth century—if nations are modern phenomena, what and how do certain narratives

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62 Mosse, *The Culture of Western Europe*, 55.
come to be dominant narratives of the nation? And how then do certain ideas and narratives about the origins and character of nations come to be naturalized?

**D. Creating the Boundaries of the Nation**

As has already been noted, nations are often understood as being created out of the necessity to reorder the modern world. Nationalism then becomes a mode of thinking that seeks to order the world through the continuous process of defining difference and asserting and subsuming the primacy of certain identities over others. While this process is a contested site, there do emerge dominant understandings and narratives of the nation and its inhabitants. These dominant notions are often set forth and undertaken by nationalists who often engage in the creation of dichotomies, the us versus them.63

Elemental to the creation of all identities, including the national, are processes of classification which seek to create insiders and outsiders and demonstrate difference between groups.64 Nationalist movements are always immersed in a struggle to define, identify, create, and maintain their alleged common measure of national identity.65 The challenge facing nationalists revolves around demonstrating how one particular group of people, although individually unique, constitute one nation of beings who are alike. In this way, nationalist thinking sets up oppositional structures and dichotomies which seek

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to define the nation in terms of difference with other peoples and places. It also “presupposes a past” such that any group that cannot create a past or invent a past cannot become a nation.

Etienne Balibar terms this boundedness or the community that is created by the nation a “fictive ethnicity.” In using this term, he does not mean fictive in the sense that the community is a complete illusory effect, but rather that it is a fabrication of a community that is represented in the past and in the future as though it is an organic community that possesses an origin as well as culture, tradition, and interests. Nonetheless, as the term fictive implies, it is not a natural community; it is only presented as one. Ultimately, fictive ethnicity is a narration that attempts to bind individuals together as one people. It reinforces certain cultural narratives and histories and seeks to dispel counter-narratives and histories.

Most often the defining of boundaries and the creation of fictive ethnicity plays a crucial role in defining the nation against those who are physically outside of its borders. Within the larger context of European identity in the nineteenth century, for example, this often meant that German national identity was contrasted against the French. This particular defining of boundaries is seen in the work of figures of the Romantic period such as Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm who sought within the backdrop of the Napoleonic victories to resist French

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67 Renan, “What is a Nation?,” 53.
cultural dominance and find the essence of German identity. However, establishing borders between insiders and outsiders can also take place within the physical borders of a nation.

In this way, the nation and national identity are Janus-faced. On the one hand, there is a constant inward looking that tries to seek commonality among the members of a nation in order that they may be bound together. These common features include a historic territory, a myth of descent, a collective history and memory as well as a common culture and customs. However, on the other hand, national identity also implies an awareness of the “Other,” that which the nation seeks to differentiate itself against.

In creating borders within the nation, the spatial entity of the margins and the center is created. With this construct of periphery and core, we become aware of those groups who stand on the margins of the cultural center—those who lack access to the dominant means of representation. It is these groups which prompt us to think about the experience and contestation of national belonging at various moments within German history.

E. Envisioning the Ideal German Nation

German historiography has once again taken a turn towards the cultural, no longer focusing the bulk of its energy on nationalist movements, their

70 The Grimm brothers attempted to find the essence of German identity through language in their works, such as Deutsche Grammatik, published in 4 volumes between the years 1819 and 1837. However, language as the distinctive feature of German identity was also accepted by many others, like Johann Gottlieb Fichte, which he expressed in his Reden an die deutsche Nation.

ideologies and their politics, but rather on the social and cultural production of the nation. However, in so doing, it has not lost sight of reassessing how the cultural and social can be political. To claim that the creating of a German national identity was apolitical and can only be seen in cultural terms would be false. Rather it is crucial to understand that the political was often couched in the terminology and seen as the end product of the cultural. The cultural would ultimately become highly important, especially among the middle-class elites of Germany who were perhaps most responsible for constructing the nation; it was the one arena that represented their freedom and pride, in contrast to the political sphere in which they had suffered humiliation and a lack of freedom.\footnote{Norbert Elias, \textit{The Germans: Power Struggles and the Development of Habitus in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries}, ed. Michael Schröter (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 126.}

The amalgamation of the political and the cultural can also be understood in the terminology \textit{Nation} and \textit{Volk}. In the nineteenth century, these terms were often used interchangeably to refer to ethnographically and politically defined communities and did not become standardized until the very end of the century.\footnote{Brian E. Vick, \textit{Defining Germany: The 1848 Frankfurt Parliamentarians and National Identity} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 21-22.} What this reciprocity of vocabulary demonstrates is that, unlike what Friedrich Meinecke strictly differentiated as \textit{Kulturnation} vs. \textit{Staatsnation},\footnote{see Friedrich Meinecke, \textit{Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat: Studien zur Genesis des deutschen Nationalstaates} (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1908).} there existed a conflation of the political and cultural in the minds of many Germans when conjuring up images of the nation. The German people, having no collective German nation-state, appealed to their cultural and linguistic commonalities in order to legitimate their claim to the creation of an identity that
would bring together both the *Kulturnation* and the *Staatsnation* into a German nation-state.\(^75\)

This proved to be an important undertaking as, during the early nineteenth century and the *Vormärz* period, there was no one collective German nation-state but rather a federation of multiple German states termed the German Confederation (*Deutscher Bund*). The German Confederation was created in 1815 at the Congress of Vienna as a means to organize the surviving states of the Holy Roman Empire which had been abolished in 1806 by Napoleon. Many German patriots had hoped that, with the defeat of Napoleon during the Wars of Freedom and with the Congress of Vienna, a more unitary German state would emerge based on constitutional rights. However, this hope was quickly dashed, and there was a move to return the German princes to the territories they controlled before the Napoleonic Wars and restore the *ancien régime* in Europe. This German confederation can best be described as “a patchwork of states ranging from the very large to the very small.”\(^76\) The majority of member states, including the free cities of Frankfurt, Bremen, Lübeck and Hamburg, had populations of less than 100,000.\(^77\) Although the German Confederation was a conglomeration of multiple states, each with sovereign statehood, it was dominated by the two greatest German powers at the time—Austria and Prussia.

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This domination by Austria and Prussia eventually led to larger problems concerning the make-up of a potential German nation-state, as including Austria in a greater Germany also meant including millions of non-Germans into a German national state. This idea was not looked favorably upon by proponents of the Little Germany solution who favored a smaller German national state, albeit dominated by Prussia. In openly debating the inclusion and/or exclusion of non-Germans in the creation of a German national state, the question becomes: what discourses influenced the ways in which the German nation was constructed? Who were considered Germans and non-Germans? And what discourses aided in constructing “the German character”?

1. Gender

Changes in the social structures of German society led increasingly to divisions along lines of gender. Along with these new divisions of gender came new definitions of masculinity and femininity which brought along with them consequences for the way in which gender roles were divided and viewed. The gender division within German society was highly influenced by middle class ideas which will be discussed later.

German society during the nineteenth-century was often conceived of as split into a public sphere, the world “outside” of the home, and a private sphere, the world “inside” the home or the domestic. Generally speaking, men belonged and moved between the public and private spheres while women were relegated
to the private sphere of the home. As Lynn Abrams and Elizabeth Harvey point out in their work on gender relations in German history, this division between spheres helped maintain male domination and female subordination while at the same time naturalized and essentialized the different roles between men and women:

While the association of masculine with public, feminine with private was nothing novel, so went the argument, the nineteenth century saw the notion of gendered public and private spheres being elaborated in more absolute and forceful terms than ever before by theorists who emphasized how such a separation of spheres was both natural and essential for the smooth functioning of society. However, for all the contemporary emphasis on the complementarity and equality in value of the two spheres, feminist analyses pointed out how the insistence upon separate public and private spheres actually served to uphold male power and perpetuate the subordination of women.  

In terms of examining the concepts of the public/private or male/female spheres, it must be said that it is understood that these spheres were not nearly as rigid as the literature of the era characterizes them to be. However, they are not concepts that can be abandoned easily when discussing the construction of gender within nineteenth-century Germany. While the theory and literature of this era does not necessarily reflect the social reality of the times, the concept of separate spheres is important and useful because it did help in shaping an ideal. This ideal is important to consider because it implies a striving towards—a standard to which the sexes were held. The idea of separate spheres influenced the ways in which people viewed the sexes and the ways in which women’s lives in particular were

affected during this period in German history. Therefore, it should not be discounted as a category of examination into the gendered reality of nineteenth-century Germany.

This public/private distinction and the different roles of men and women in their respective spheres was naturalized through writings found in encyclopedias, such as the *Conversationslexikon*, published by Brockhaus, and other literature of this period, which attempted to provide a prescriptive physical, physiological, and moral image of the woman. These encyclopedias enjoyed wide success with the middle class and went through multiple editions during the nineteenth century. As such, they were influential in disseminating an ideal of gender roles to the public.

In addition to the various encyclopedias which enjoyed widespread success, the role and division of the sexes was also picked up by theologists, pedagogues, philosophers, and writers in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and they aided in creating gender differences as well. In these writings, women were primarily defined in and by their relationship to men. Claims to education or broader involvement in public affairs were not defined by women’s own self-development but were related back to the requirements of domesticity—husband, children and household.

In his article “Über den Geschlechtsunterschied und dessen Einfluss auf die organische Natur,” written in 1795, Wilhelm von Humboldt addresses this

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unmistakable fact of sexual difference. He claims that the outer form of a person directly relates to an individual’s inner, moral nature.\textsuperscript{81} In this assertion, biology becomes destiny for both men and women, as the male is the active soul in contrast to the female’s receptive body. Essentially then, man becomes an active element who is driven to what he needs, in contrast to the female who must wait and receive what is offered. This translates into the arena of education for Humboldt, who did not think to include women into his ideas surrounding “universal education” in his efforts to reform education in early nineteenth-century Prussia.\textsuperscript{82}

Writers of literature like Johann Wolfgang von Goethe also contributed to the gender discourse and construction of women in their literary works. In his version of \textit{Faust}, Goethe introduces the reader to the idea of “\textit{das ewige-Weibliche}.” In this construction, the feminine is idealized as having an attraction to the good, innocent, pure, and holy as well as a redemptive power for the masculine. These traits, which are culturally esteemed and viewed as positive, ultimately impose limitations on women. Thus, in presenting the feminine subject in this light, Goethe reproduces through the eternal feminine the two-sex model and relegates women to positions of wife, mother, and moral guardians of men and family.


\textsuperscript{82} Marion W. Gray, \textit{Productive Men, Reproductive Women: The Agrarian Household and the Emergence of Separate Spheres during the German Enlightenment} (New York: Berghahn, 2000), 243-244.
Texts which made distinctions between the two sexes were not only written in terms of the speculative and discursive perspectives appearing in philosophical and literary works. They were beginning to become more scientific and clinical, focusing on actual biological distinctions between men and women. During the late eighteenth century into the early nineteenth century, science was often used to substantiate sexual difference and the naturalness of separate spheres for the sexes. This can clearly be seen in many of the anatomical texts that were being produced at the turn of the nineteenth century.\footnote{see Londa Schiebinger, \textit{The Mind has no sex? Women in the Origins of Modern Science} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 189-244. see also John Barclay, \textit{The Anatomy of the Bones of the Human Body}, ed. Edward Mitchell and R. Knox (Edinburgh: Maclachlan and Steward, 1829). Barclay remarks on the similarity in skeletal and anatomical structure between woman and child. He also calls attention to the size of the pelvis in the female form as in comparison to the male, which he considers superior. Thus, aiding in naturalizing the woman's role as mother. see also E.W. Posner, \textit{Das Weib und das Kind} (Glogau, 1847). Posner, like Barclay focuses his attention on the similarities between woman and child. He concludes that the female form does not reach the full maturation of the male.}

The philosophy which emerged from these writings was known as the character of the sexes, or \textit{Geschlechtscharakter}, and “was generally used to describe the mental characteristics which were held to coincide with the physiological distinctions between the sexes.”\footnote{Karin Hausen, “Family and Role Division: The Polarisation of Sexual Stereotypes in the Nineteenth Century – An Aspect of the Dissociation of Work and Family Life,” in \textit{The German Family: Essays on the Social History of the Family in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Germany}, ed. Richard J. Evans and W.R. Lee (London: Croom Helm, 1981), 51.} These physiological distinctions, which came out of this idea of the character of the sexes, were then used to describe the different natures of men and women. Women, according to this notion, were described as dependent, protective, having feeling, and having intuition, whereas men were described as independent, acquisitive, having mind, and having reason. This helped in translating the separate spheres for the two
sexes, the public and the private. Women were confined to the private sphere because of their “nature.” They were put in a position of caretaker of the family precisely due to the fact that they were constructed as having more feeling and being protective. Men, on the other hand, dominated the public sphere because they were constructed as having reason, being independent, and being more acquisitive, those characteristics thought to be more conducive to the public sphere. However, their domination was not just relegated to the public sphere. Men, in contrast to women, “have been seen as belonging in both spheres in their different guises as members or heads of households and as public actors/citizens.”\textsuperscript{85} So not only were men afforded the ability to occupy the public sphere and become public actors and control the fate of women within the public arena, but they were also afforded the dominating role as head of household within the domestic sphere, thereby able to control the fate of women within the private arena as well. Through medical and anthropological literature of the time, this public/private distinction was set up as the hegemonic discourse of the century. The roles of men and women became part of a binary which seemed predetermined by nature and thus immune to social and cultural change.

This philosophy, which was codified in literature, had a real and tangible impact on women’s actual lives. As the concept of the eternal feminine and the division of the male and female spheres was being lauded in literary, philosophical, and medical texts, women were being denied legal, economic, and political rights in German lands. Gender was strictly being codified in the civil

\textsuperscript{85} Abrams and Harvey, “Introduction,” 17.
laws that governed the German lands in the mid-nineteenth century. Among these civil codes stood the Allgemeines Landrecht (General State Laws) of Prussia which first took effect in 1794 and were not dissolved until 1900. The aim of the Prussian Civil Code was to prescribe laws and rules aimed at creating and reinforcing an orderly society. Included in the Allgemeines Landrecht were laws pertaining to men and women’s position within Prussian society. There are extensive sections dealing with marriage, the raising of children, as well as the position of unmarried women and their rights (or lack thereof).

In addition to demarcating differences among men and women in nineteenth-century Germany, the Geschlechtscharacter which emerged also made comparative reference to women and gender behavior in other countries, such as France and England. In this way, it was not enough to demarcate divisions internally along gender lines. Gender too had to be compared to external sources. This Othering can be seen in the works of such women as Ida Frick who wrote Women’s Slavery and Freedom in 1845. In this work, Frick argues that “German women should reject the false French values of coquetry, gallantry, and slavery to fashion in favor of superior German ‘simplicity,’ ‘investigation of the self,’ and freedom…instead of chasing the ‘fool’s gold’ of the social life of French salons, German women should cultivate ‘the moral purity of Northern women.’”

87 Bonnie S. Anderson, “Frauenemancipation and Beyond: The Use of the Concept of Emancipation by Early German and French Feminists” (paper presented at the Proceedings of the Third Annual Gilder Lehrmann Center International Conference at Yale University, October 2001), 6.
commentary about the position of women outside of the private sphere. The purity of German women is not to be found within the public sphere but is to be cultivated within a domestic space.

This emphasis on women’s roles in the domestic sphere was maintained throughout the nineteenth century as an integral part of the idea of the German nation. After German unification and the creation of a German nation-state in 1871, Kaiser Wilhelm would further emphasize the division between the two sexes when he came into power, bringing the idea of the Geschlechtscharakter even further into the political realm. He defined the role of the German woman in three terms: Kinder, Küche, Kirche, once again confining women to the private sphere and essentializing their position within the family as a duty to the nation. Wilhelm believed, as did many others, that women’s qualities were best suited in the context of the family—raising the children, cooking in the home, and providing spiritual support for the family. Thus, eventually, the separation of the sexes would find its place in German politics.

2. Class

In contrast to gender, the issue of class has long been an important subject for the study of nationalism, and much has been done to elucidate the role and nationalist aims of the bourgeoisie in Germany. The concept of the bourgeoisie in Germany from the late eighteenth century onwards encompassed a broad middle
stratum of society of a diverse social and regional segment.\textsuperscript{88} Understood in the concept of \textit{Bürger} were various social strata whose belonging and togetherness stood in contrast, on the one hand, to the landed nobility and, on the other hand, to the economically dependent lower classes.\textsuperscript{89} This stratum of society was united and unified through shared values, principles, codes of conduct, and cultural patterns.\textsuperscript{90} Yet, as one critic notes, the national idea in Germany was impressed through the self-image of the middle-class intelligentsia.\textsuperscript{91} While the middle class of Germany accounted for a diverse segment of the population, it was the middle-class intellectuals who would be most influential in creating the “we-image” of Germanness throughout the early years of the nineteenth century.

According to Norbert Elias, the middle classes of Germany went through a journey of sorts in their development towards nationalist aims.\textsuperscript{92} In the late eighteenth century, what started off as a humanistic and moralistic endeavor to create a better future on the part of Germany’s middle class ended with a subordination of those ideals to national values. In opposition to the aristocratic class, which sought only to maintain the status quo of the \textit{ancien régime} and therefore emphasized their claim to power through their familial ancestry, Germany’s middle class strived to be forward looking in order to develop and progress German culture and humanity.

\textsuperscript{89} Peter Stein, \textit{Epochenproblem Vormärz 1815-1848} (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1974), 24.
\textsuperscript{92} Elias, \textit{The Germans}, 125-135.
It was largely within the realm of culture that the German middle class could really exercise any power, as they were all but locked out of the upper echelons of society where political decisions were made. The arena of culture provided the German middle class an area of freedom from the state which granted them the position of second-class citizens with no political power or recourse to positions of power within the state. Culture, situated beyond the domain of economics and politics, allowed the middle class intelligentsia to posit a self-image that emphasized inner enrichment of the personality as well as intellectual development—a position they would come to view as standing in opposition to aristocratic and courtly society.

By taking refuge in the realm of culture and focusing on progress, the middle class of the German-speaking lands attempted to maintain their distance and to differentiate themselves from the aristocratic classes whom they believed to be immoral and extravagant. Starting in the mid-eighteenth century, the dissatisfaction of the middle class with the aristocratic way of life grew made its way into the literature of the time. In examining writers and books like Sophie von La Roche’s *Fraulein von Sternheim* (1771) or Caroline von Wolzogen’s *Agnes von Lilien* (1798), to name a few, one can see how the middle class attempted to draw a distinction between their way of life and the behavior and morality of the aristocratic class. In both of these novels, sound education and the preference for virtue to honor are judged as positive attributes in juxtaposition to the luxury, indulgence, and immorality of the nobility and their courtly society.
In addition to drawing a distinction between themselves and the values and morals of the nobility, some writers took a more overt approach in criticizing the aristocracy in Germany. In Friedrich Schiller’s works *Die Räuber* (1782) and *Don Carlos* (1787), the tyranny of the aristocracy as an absolutist regime is criticized, and the freedom of individuals and of the people is championed. Although skeptical of nationalist aims himself, the bourgeois values and ideas in his work would eventually strike a chord with the national movement in Germany and influence the image the bourgeoisie created of itself.93

However, the liberal aim of developing and advancing humanity, and the search for a universal “human” nature as promoted during the Enlightenment, would not be maintained and would give way to a more cultural and particular understanding of humanity. While initially the middle-class intelligentsia’s “we-image” reflected development-oriented attitudes and beliefs, eventually, as they ascended in importance, an idealistic image of their nation would take center stage. In so doing, the ideal image of Germany was no longer necessarily predicated on building a better future but rather focused on reaching into the past to national tradition and heritage to support middle-class claims to the we-image.

One can see the move away from universal understandings to more cultural understandings beginning with writers such as Johann Gottfried Herder, who wrote in the late eighteenth century. Even though Herder remained to a certain extent within the Enlightenment framework, his work emphasized local

and specific culture in reference to the German Volk and language. This focus on language would ultimately get picked up and gain even more credence in the nineteenth century through other philosophers and writers. Writing in the very early nineteenth century, Johann Gottlieb Fichte also emphasized the importance of language to the nation. In giving his famous Reden an die deutsche Nation, Fichte makes the claim that a language’s mechanical features not only allowed for the expression of thought but also shaped that expression of thought, thus creating a distinct and unique national form.

The creation of a distinct national language and form also had a few practical implications for the middle class. The middle-class intelligentsia saw the institutionalization of the German language as high culture as a means to combat French cultural hegemony as well as aristocratic social domination. This became especially crucial during the years leading up to the Napoleonic War and thereafter, as France continued to play a dominant role in the history of Europe. In addition, the language used by most aristocrats in courtly society was French, and by emphasizing the German language, the middle class was able to gain ground in cultural affairs. By foregrounding the importance of the German language, they were able to raise the social status of their language and thereby also their nation.

However, emphasizing cultural elements of the German nation had an effect of naturalizing them. This meant that the idealized vision of Germany as

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95 Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Reden an die deutsche Nation (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1871), 41-54.
96 Brian Vick, Defining Germany, 25.
understood by the middle-class intelligentsia in the nineteenth century rested on static images and ideals and not on the dynamic and developmental character of German culture as had previously been the case. By emphasizing culture, insiders and outsiders were created, leading to idealized, aesthetisized ideas of the German nation which were not prone to change. In this way, middle-class ideals, such as bourgeois respectability, with its emphasis on feminine virtue and gender hierarchy, and ethnoreligious identity, were naturalized and put forth as a true and natural image of Germanness. And for many intellectuals of the middle class, an ideal and “natural” image of Germany was a united Germany, not the “unnatural” world of the aristocratic courtly society.

During the course of the nineteenth century, the middle-class focus on cultural perspectives would gain in importance, as territorial and dynastic histories declined in significance. In the first half of the nineteenth century, this is clearly noted in the development and increase of various middle-class voluntary associations which had a historical bent and thus fostered a historical sense of nation, like the student fraternities (Burschenschaften) and gymnastic societies (Turnvereine). Founded in 1811, the gymnastic societies were developed as a means to restore physical and moral pride to Germany’s young men who had seen and experienced defeat by Napoleon in the first years of the nineteenth century. Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, who founded these societies, was an ardent supporter of liberal ideals and the progress of humanity and Germany’s role

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98 Berger, Germany, 51.
within that history of progress. He was also an advocate of maintaining a German language free of foreign influence.

The *Burschenschaft* movement was also a movement initiated by Jahn. In this movement of young students, the problem of creating a new future Germany or looking to the German past and its traditional institutions came to the fore. In terms of the student fraternity movement, the majority of opinion sided with basing a future constitution of a united Germany around traditional German institutions and not on new egalitarian principles.99

It was not only the aristocratic class that the middle class in Germany found to be unnatural. Distinguishing themselves from the uncivilized strata below them would become increasingly more important throughout the course of the nineteenth century. Depicted by many as “raw” and “rootless,” a unique working class culture was emerging which did not share the same values or expectations as those among the rising bourgeoisie.100

### 3. Ethno-Religious Identity

In addition to gender discourses and class discourses, discourses surrounding ethnoreligious identity also played a role in the development of nineteenth-century German national identity. The secularization of societies is often touted as being synonymous with the rise of nationalism and the modernization of societies. Religion and religious belief are frequently viewed as

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backwards to forward progress. In addition, the nation and nationalism are often understood as taking the place of religion.\textsuperscript{101} In nations that are confessionally divided, promoting nationalism to a political religion can be beneficial in that it acts as a means to solve the problem of denominational diversity. Yet, to argue that religion did not play an enormous role in the lives of nineteenth-century Germans would be wrong. Disagreements among nationalists in the early nineteenth century did occur, and they revolved around the centrality of religion to the nationalist project.\textsuperscript{102} Despite the fact that there was disagreement over the centrality of religion, the fact that there was even dialogue that existed on the subject points to the importance of religion in the lives of nineteenth-century Germans. And while some scholars will argue that national unity no longer rested on religious consciousness, but rather on historical consciousness,\textsuperscript{103} religion no doubt played a formidable role in how historical consciousness was shaped. In fact, religion, particularly Christianity and its various denominations, played an ever-increasing role for the Germans throughout the course of the nineteenth century and acted as a force that helped shape the political, social, and cultural landscape of Germany.

\textsuperscript{101} see George Mosse, \textit{The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich} (New York: Howard Fertig, 1975). Mosse outlines the emergence and development of what he terms “new politics” in German history. This “new politics” he claims is rooted in the idea of popular sovereignty and gains credence and momentum through nationalism in the nineteenth century. It takes on the form of a “secular religion,” in that like other religions it creates its own myths, rituals and symbols.

\textsuperscript{102} Levinger, \textit{Enlightened Nationalism}, 115.

\textsuperscript{103} Schulin, “The Most Historical of All Peoples’ Nationalism and the New Construction of Jewish History in Nineteenth-Century Germany,” (paper presented at the German Historical Institute, London, England, 1995), 5
During the nineteenth century, there existed a considerable obscuring of the lines between religion and nationalism in German cultural and intellectual thought. According to Wolfgang Altgeld, the basis for the modern idea of nation found its origins in Protestant Germany, and Christianity, specifically its Lutheran expression, was the best suited to be the national religion of the Germans. This was largely due to the fact that embedded in the very core of Protestantism were the principles of social and cultural progress, which built the core belief of middle-class intellectual views on the nation. In contrast, Catholicism’s emphasis on faith and tradition were largely viewed as being at odds with education and culture—the new hallmarks of German civilization.

In addition, many of the main proponents and champions of German nationalism were largely Protestants. The majority of German poets and philosophers stemmed from Protestant areas of Germany and were able to exert more influence in their writing, as the Protestant north had many more bookstores and publishers than the did Catholic south. Thus, many of the ideas and the development of the German nation took root in the northern states such as Prussia. These proponents of the German nation had national-religious

105 Altgeld, “Religion, Denomination and Nationalism,” 52.
107 see Anthony J. Steinhoff, “Christianity and the Creation of Germany,” in World Christianities c. 1815-c.1914, eds. Sheridan Gilley and Brian Stanley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 283. Geography also aided in German identity being understood in Protestant terms. Beginning in 1815 with the Vienna Settlement, the seeds were sown for German identity to be understood predominantly in Protestant terms. After the Wars of Freedom and Austria’s gains in...
beliefs couched in the idea that Protestantism largely defined what it meant to be German—educated and self-cultivated; that there should be religious homogeneity in a unified Germany; and that in a future Germany, nation and religion should be indivisible. These nationalists attempted to weave past religious conflicts into the present narrative of the German nation, making religion, especially its Protestant form, an integral part to national belonging and establishing it as “the cultural criteria for national authenticity.”

In weaving past religious conflicts into the narrative of the German nation, the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century took center stage. Within much of the nationalist mythology, the Reformation, despite not being confined to Germanic areas, was often conceived of as the moment of awakening for the German nation. The coupling of nationalism and Protestantism was based on the idea that the Protestant Reformation exemplified the core values that made up the German nation—values that bound together a national community as chosen to forge a nation that was envisaged in moral and political terms. This coupling of Protestantism and nation can be seen if one examines the use of “nation” within the Protestant discourse of the Reformation:

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Central Europe and Italy, her role as a “German” state diminished. This decline would continue into the latter parts of the nineteenth century, when proponents of the kleindeutsch solution to German unification would prevail. In contrast, Prussia’s acquisitions of the Rhineland and Westphalia cemented its position as a “German” state.


Within Protestantism ‘nation’ was used as an anti-universalist oppositional term against emperor and pope. Medieval theories of translation had legitimated the power of the pope and the emperor, the Protestant territories (Reichsstände) now constructed a Germanic past which was separate and opposed to Rome...Nationalism was a useful tool to defeat the militant universalism of the Counter-Reformation and to legitimate the setting up of separate territorial entities with their own constitutions. The Reformation was depicted as the moment when the German nation found itself.\textsuperscript{111}

Protestants used the term nation to describe themselves in opposition to the Pope and to Rome, from whom they wanted to break free. The idea of the nation allowed individual state sovereigns to legitimize their own individual power and illegitimate the power of the pope and emperor. By doing so, they distanced themselves from the ideas of the pope and created their own individual identity outside the bounds of Catholicism.

The importance of the Reformation and Protestantism to the German nation gets picked up again in the nineteenth century in the national festivals of the time, such as at the first major public festival at the Wartburg castle which took place on the 18\textsuperscript{th} of October, 1817. This festival was celebrated by students and members of the Burschenschaften to honor the fourth anniversary of the Battle of Leipzig as well as the tercentennial anniversary of Martin Luther's translation of the Bible. In addition, in imitation of Luther's public burning of the papal bull, the students of the Burschenschaften burned various books they deemed to be un-German. In celebrating both of these anniversaries together, the students were equating the freeing of the German nation from papal despotism

\textsuperscript{111} Berger, Germany, 18.
with the freeing of the German nation from Napoleon’s despotism.\textsuperscript{112} In addition, the framing of Germany’s national struggle in confessional terms did much more than just make a political statement; it linked Germany’s future with Christian ideals. According to John Breuilly, these groups and celebrations were more important in the Protestant parts of Germany than in their Catholic counterparts.\textsuperscript{113}

The Protestant claims to German national identity continued well into the nineteenth century and into the years that led to the creation of the new German empire in 1871. Only in the years leading up to the Frankfurt Assembly of 1848 was the role of religion downplayed. Although many German liberals who attended the assembly were Protestants, they attempted to deemphasize the role of religion in public life. This did not mean that religion was not to play an important role in the lives of Germans. While these men wanted churches to lose their status as state institutions and felt that the existing church-state relations impeded political and social progress, they still wanted churches to have the freedom of religious assembly.\textsuperscript{114} What becomes important in this assertion, however, is that not all churches were to be recognized by the constitution. Only certain churches and religions would be allowed a role in the nation.

Despite the fact that the Protestant prescription for the nation was perhaps the most dominant formula of the German nation, this did not preclude

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\item[\textsuperscript{114}] Steinhoff, “Christianity and the Creation of Germany,” 288.
\end{itemize}
Catholics from attempting to reconcile their religious traditions with German culture and thereby seek respect as “authentic” Germans. During the years of the German Confederation, Protestantism and Catholicism were recognized as having parity. The territorial reorganization that took place after 1815, following the Congress of Vienna, left the major states of the Confederation religiously pluralistic. That meant that confessional differences between Christians could not warrant distinctions in the political and civil rights of Germans. As such, all German Christians would be granted equal rights. Attempts were also made to heal the rift between Protestants and Catholics, especially through the efforts of Frederick William IV in Prussia, who supported the completion of the cathedral in Cologne honoring it as a great monument of Germany and Christianity.\textsuperscript{115}

Ultimately, however, reconciling Catholicism proved difficult, as Catholics were often perceived as having dual allegiance to the nation and to the Church. This problem would extend well into the new empire under Otto von Bismarck. Within the new empire, Protestants held a virtual monopoly on positions of power within the government, universities, and the military. The notion of distancing the German nation from centers outside of Germany extended well into Otto von Bismarck’s rule and the \textit{Kulturkampf} that sought to curb the power of the Catholic Church in Germany. His concerns with the Catholic Church stemmed less from doctrinal differences (Bismarck was a committed Protestant)

\textsuperscript{115} Steinhoff, “Christianity and the Creation of Germany,” 287.
and more from the perceived threat to the German nation caused by the power of an international Catholic Church whose center was outside German borders.\textsuperscript{116}

The idea of the German nation as connected to Christianity can also be seen in how Jews were viewed within German society. Jews presented an interesting conundrum to the rise of German nationalism and the development of a German national identity. The debate that swarmed around the Jewish question in Germany in the nineteenth century and earlier was never just a discussion about the nature of the Jews but was rather a question about the makeup of the German nation.\textsuperscript{117} The Jewish people were often not only viewed as having religious peculiarity, but they were understood as being socially and nationally different. As such, they were viewed as foreigners, not Germans, and were therefore incapable of acculturating into German society. In comparison to other countries in Western Europe, the Jewish minority was quite large in Germany, and in contrast to their Eastern European counterparts, they were much more interested in education and assimilation; nevertheless, they held a desire to maintain their historical uniqueness.\textsuperscript{118}

The position of Jews within German lands remained largely unaltered until the end of the eighteenth century. Before this time, Jews were generally understood to be a caste of pariahs who were often excluded from the occupations and commerce of Christian German society. However, at the end of


\textsuperscript{118} Schulin, “The Most Historical of All Peoples,” 7.
the eighteenth century, the status quo of the Jews began to change with the new economic and societal advents and changes in Germany. Affected by the deluge of economic modernization, they were more absorbed into German society, and their interaction with the greater public was largely inescapable.\footnote{Pulzer, \textit{Jews and the German State}, 5.} This opened up a Gentile-Jewish dialogue in which the position of Jews within Germany was hotly debated.

The largest problem facing the Jewish minority within German territory revolved around the conception of them as a distinct “people” or “nation.” This interpretation was problematic within the larger context of German nation-building, as it played into the wider question of the existence of tribal diversity within Germany. Many German nationalists felt as though the issue of tribal diversity was paramount to the issue of national identity. Even so, disagreement occurred in debating whether or not national unification would ultimately depend on the dissolution of diversity through the blending of tribes, or if national unity would depend on the continuous existence of different tribes.\footnote{Till van Rahden, “Germans of the Jewish \textit{Stamm}: Visions of Community between Nationalism and Particularism 1850 to 1933,” in \textit{German History from the Margins}, eds. Neil Gregor, Nils Roemer, and Mark Roseman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 36.}

The exclusion of Jews from voluntary associations like the \textit{Turnvereine} which (as has been previously discussed) aided in creating cultural understandings of German identity was framed in this manner. In his book \textit{Deutsches Volkstum} (1810), Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, the founder of the gymnastic societies made clear his stance on the position of Jews within the German \textit{Volk}, claiming that the \textit{Volk} needed to keep itself racially pure so as not to fall as Rome...
did because it mixed races. Christian Friedrich Rühs, a Professor of History at the University of Berlin, echoed this same sentiment in his treatise *The Demands of the Jews for German Citizenship*, published in 1815. Like Jahn, Rühs believed that the Jewish people made up their own separate nation composed of its own particular system of law which was both religious and political. As such, he felt their only means to integration into the German state would be through conversion to Christianity.

As aestheticized images of Germanness and the demarcation of insiders versus outsiders continued in the nationalist project of the nineteenth century, a stereotyped image of the Jew perpetuated in German society. This anti-Judaic sentiment was built on antiquated ideas of Judaism based around common culture and descent. The stereotyped Jew was seen as ugly, disharmonious, and immodest; he lacked patriotic attachment to his country of residence due to his belief in Zion, and he cheated Christians in his practice of usury.

However, this did not mean that Jews did not see themselves as part of the German nation and did not fight for inclusion. Often when confronted with anti-Semitism, Jews would claim to no longer be a tribal or ethnic group and would instead argue for their position as a religious community, like the Catholics and Protestants. This increasingly became the position of Reform Jews into the nineteenth century which culminated in the creation in 1818 of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* by many leading reform theologians. In arguing for status as a religious minority, these theologians effectively broke the link between

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121 Vick, *Defining Germany*, 85.
nationality and religion, allowing Jews of the early nineteenth century to make claims to be German citizens of the Jewish faith. They hoped that Judaism would be recognized alongside Catholicism and Protestantism as a part of religious pluralism.

While it became clear that some Jews could enjoy some measure of success as economic citizens in Germany, it was also apparent that, due to the way in which the German nation was constructed with its intertwining of nationality and citizenship, the collective condition of Jews could not change. Just as gender came to be codified in law, so too did the question of religion, especially with regards to the Jewish question. In 1812, the Prussian emancipation edict gave partial rights to Jews by recognizing them as economic citizens but not as political citizens. Even more problematic to the status of Jews was that, among the territories that Prussia acquired after Napoleon’s defeat, their status remained unstandardized. It would not be until 1847 that the various codes governing the status of Jews in Prussia would be unified.

**F. The Nation as Imaginative Construct and Discursive Habit**

Missing from these larger discussions of the formation of the German nation and its identity, however, are views from those who stood on the margins of the nation and had little power to influence the discourses surrounding the nation at this point in history. Up to this point, most of the conversations dealing with German nationalism have revolved around middle class, intellectual, male
discourse and have not focused on women’s voices. Rather than only focusing on the narratives set forth by middle-class intellectuals, we need to shift the focus to examining the different voices that are always present within the national community. Difference is always present within the nation—it cannot be escaped, even when the Other is so fiercely disparaged.

In order to gain more insight into the various voices that were present within the debate, we have to first start by looking at the nation as an imaginative and discursive construct, that is, as an entity that has been created from various discourses. The advantage to approaching the nation as an imaginative and discursive construct is that it does not tend toward reified conceptions of the nation, its culture, or its identity, as having its own peculiar set of traits, practices, and values that are shared by all its members. In contrast to a very holistic understanding of the nation as a historically fixed continuous narrative, approaching the nation as a discursive construct allows one to view the nation as ambivalent and antagonistic, as Homi Bhabha puts it, “the cultural temporality of the nation inscribes a much more transitional reality.” Thus, the nation is not a concrete whole but is fluid and permutable.

The ambivalent and antagonistic nature of the nation is most easily understood in its margins. However, as Bhabha has shown, the marginal or the ‘minority’ is not a celebratory or utopian space and is not a product of self-marginalization. The margins, rather, are created out of the authoritarian,

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123 Bhabha, “Narrating the Nation,” 4.
normalizing tendencies that are present within cultures that seek to homogenize and create the nation as a cultural organism with a deep and long-rooted past. Dominant images are created that seek to normalize the nation. This homogenization is nonetheless contested and most critically so in the margins.

National culture and identity are not unified concepts, nor can they simply be understood in terms of an “Other” in relation to what they are not or what may lay outside of them. Their boundaries are duplicitous and must be viewed as being able to be turned into in-between spaces where cultural and political meaning can be negotiated. The creation of national identity must be reconceptualized as a process of identification that is unstable and influenced by history and difference.¹²⁴ In this way, examining the margins of a nation can prove to be useful, as the margins “alert [us] to the presence in society of groups that are somehow excluded, separate or distanced from the political or cultural center...while the center defined what was marginal, the margins encroached upon and redefined the territory of the center.”¹²⁵ There exists a dialectical struggle between a quest for unity in the nation and the almost certain disappointment that the quest faces due to the challenge of difference.

This is not to say that there are not dominant imaginative constructions of the nation because there are, and these dominant imaginative constructions of

the nation reflect the power differential that exists within society.\textsuperscript{126} As has been mentioned, intellectuals played a huge role in creating dominant images and narratives of the nation and in setting these forth as the ideals to be attained. Thus, national narratives often present the nation in its ideal form. Often this meant that the intellectuals were responsible for formulating proper codes of behavior and for defining who was central to the nation as well as those who were marginal.

In examining the margins, we can achieve a better understanding and get a more realistic look at the composition of the German nation as a contested site of meaning. What should be kept in mind is that understandings of the nation and its makeup hardly ever describe actual historical reality but rather describe an ambition or an ideal. Too many accounts of nation and national belonging understate the issue and presence of diversity within the nation. By looking at those who fall outside of the cultural center of the nation, we no longer just emphasize the dissolution of difference as important to the construction of the nation, but rather examine its reproduction and continued significance and the attempts to contest the dominant image.

In the following chapters, novels by three German women writers of the Vormärz will be examined in the hopes of illuminating a tiny segment of women’s ideas on German identity, Germanness, and women’s place therein. As members of a marginalized group, in the sense that women were distanced from those defining the cultural center, these women writers used literature as a

means to actively engage with issues of the nation and national identity. Through writing, these women were able to move past the passive role of reproducer of nation and take part in producing and challenging dominant conceptions of the nation.
Chapter 3

Fanny Lewald’s novel Jenny

A. Introduction

Constructed in a doubly marginalized position as woman and Jew, Fanny Lewald provides a good example to examine the disenfranchised and contested dominant imaginings of the German nation. Rather than presenting a homogenously unified picture of the German nation, her novel Jenny Lewald attempts to engage questions of national consciousness and national belonging where the presence of diversity is not understated and discourses surrounding women and their roles are not reified.

Ultimately her vision of the German nation is one where belonging is divorced from religious and gendered bourgeois discourse, and an ideal of emancipation is set forth in which Jews, women, and all citizens are tolerated and seen as equal. For Lewald, Germandom, freedom, and humanity are part and parcel of the same idea and should play equal roles. Her view is that all should be able to equally partake in the affairs of the nation, no matter their gender or ethno-religious background. In this way, her understanding of nation is coupled with political ideas of the state and national unity as a condition of social progress therein. This requires that there is no subscription to definitions of the nation in which difference is erased and all citizens are homogeneously combined
into one single group. Rather, she is more interested in exploring the diversities which are evident in German culture and in proposing a means in which these differences will be accepted and tolerated.

**B. Fanny Lewald’s Path to Mündigkeit**

Beginning her writing career in the midst of the *Vormärz* period, Lewald was aware of the power of literature and of the role of the writer to affect change:

Ein Roman, der nicht in genauer Beziehung zu der Zeit steht, in der er geschrieben ward, wird selten ein gelungenes Werk sein...In Ländern, in denen das Volk selbstregierund Theil nimmt an allen Zeitinteressen, wo die Unterhaltung darüber von dem Palast bis in die Hütte dringt, wo Jeder die Gegenwart kennt, da darf der Dichter sich in poetischer Betrachtung der Vergangenheit zuwenden, denn die Arbeit des Tages wird gethan...Doch dünkt es mich augenblicklich in Deutschland eben nicht Zeit dazu sein...Wir haben jetzt nicht Zeit, in poetischen Ergüssen zu feiern; denn unsere Tage sind Tage des Kampfes und der Arbeit...So lange das Volk nicht frei seine Meinung sagen darf, so lange muß der Dichter in Bildern für sein Volk sprechen und in Bildern erklären, was die Nation bedarf und fordert.¹²⁷

These words, written in 1845 in her work *Eine Lebensfrage*, describe the way in which Lewald views the role of the poet and his or her works. For Lewald, literature, specifically novels, should be socially engaged and should stand in relationship to the time in which they are produced, explaining through imagery what the nation requires and demands. It is the role and responsibility of the poet to act as mediator between reader and life and engage in the struggle of the times. In this way, Lewald places a real and important emphasis on the role of the writer

in society, providing through him or her the real possibility to influence the world outside and bridge the gap between art and life.

Born in 1811 to a Jewish merchant family, Fanny Lewald (born Fanny Markus) entered the world in a marginalized position as a woman and a Jew. As a woman, her options for education were limited. Yet, unlike many of her female contemporaries, Lewald was given the opportunity by her father, David Markus, to attend a coeducational school in Königsberg. However, once the school was forced to close in 1824, Lewald was compelled to continue her education under the tutelage of her father at home. While her father did place an emphasis on the education of his children, even his daughters, he adhered to the norms of bourgeois society and felt that the place for a woman was the home. Her education at home reflected this, as she was required to spend the majority of her day helping her mother with the duties of the household. Lewald lamented these years at home under her father’s educational supervision, as she felt it did not intellectually stimulate her and reinforced gendered roles that she felt compelled to break. Her education differed vastly from her brothers’ education. As she recalls in her autobiography:

...[ich] hatte am Abende das niedergeschlagene Gefühl, den Tag über nichts Rechtes getan zu haben, und einen brennenden Neid auf meine Brüder, welche ruhig in ihr Gymnasium gingen, ruhig ihre Lektionen machten, und an denen also lange nicht so viel herumzogen werden konnte als an mir. Ihr ganzes Dasein erschien mir vornehmer als das meine, und mit der Sehnsucht nach der Schule regte sich in mir das Verlangen, womöglich Lehrerin zu werden und so zu einem Lebenslauf zu kommen, bei dem mich

128 The family changed the name from Markus to Lewald in 1831. see Fanny Lewald, *Im Vaterhause*, vol. 1, *Meine Lebensgeschichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Ulrike Helmer Verlag, 1988), 242-244.
nicht immer der Gedanke plagte, daß ich meine Zeit unnütz hinbringen müsse.\textsuperscript{129}

She was jealous of her brothers’ ability to attend school and university and felt as though her day was spent engaging in useless activities. As a younger girl, Lewald was unable to escape the restrictions placed on her sex and was relegated to the private sphere.

Despite being raised in an assimilated Jewish household, Lewald was also not able to escape her outsider position as a Jew, experiencing the echo of the Hep-Hep Riots in 1819.\textsuperscript{130} Even though she did not experience these riots directly, as they were largely contained in southern and western Germany, she was well aware of her parent’s concerns for relatives living in Hamburg.\textsuperscript{131} Although she witnessed these acts of persecution from afar, she was not immune to the prejudice taking place in her liberal home town of Königsberg. As a young girl in school, Lewald often felt like an outsider and was rarely invited to social events. She was called names on account of being Jewish, a concept she became aware of and familiar with because of her Jewish neighbors whom she often observed celebrating Jewish holidays.\textsuperscript{132} Despite the fact that her parents had distanced themselves from Jewish tradition and showed a real aversion to

\textsuperscript{129} Lewald, \textit{Im Vaterhause}, 142.
\textsuperscript{130} The Hep-Hep riots were pogroms against Jews, which began in the city of Würzberg and spread throughout much of Germany and into neighboring countries, such as Denmark, Poland and Latvia.
\textsuperscript{131} see Hanna B. Lewis, “Fanny Lewald and Judaism: The Writer, the Woman, the Prussian, the Jew,” in \textit{The Germanic Mosaic: Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Society}, ed. Carol Aisha Blackshire-Belay (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 269.
\textsuperscript{132} see Lewald, \textit{Im Vaterhause}, 45-53.
Judaism in general, her parents did not convert to Christianity. This was largely due to Lewald’s father’s business through which he had many contacts with other Jews and did not want to threaten losing their business.

However, in 1831, Fanny was given permission by her father to convert to Christianity, despite a lack of real belief and faith on her part. She would later describe her conversion in her autobiography as an offense against herself. Her father’s decision to allow her conversion came a short while after he broke off her engagement, unexpectedly and for no apparent reason known to Lewald, to a young theology student named Leopold August Bock. There are those who speculate that the conversion was made as compensation to Fanny for the loss of Leopold. This is a matter of debate, as her brothers were also given permission to convert.

Conversion was one of the few methods that allowed Jewish individuals entry into German society at large. However, it often had adverse effects on those who converted. As Heinrich Heine, another prominent German author of this time, noted about his conversion, “Ich bin jetzt bey Christ und Jude verhaßt. Ich bereue sehr daß ich mich getauft hab‘; ich seh noch gar nicht ein daß mir seitdem besser gegangen sey, im Gegentheil, ich habe seitdem nichts als Unglück.”

Very much like Heine, Lewald’s conversion left her feeling ambivalent. The

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133 see Lewald, *Im Vaterhause*, 48. Lewald recalls in her autobiography, asking her father “Sind wir wohl Juden?” to which he responded “Du bist unser Kind und weiter geht dich nichts an!” thus ending all discussion and questions on the matter.


135 see Brigitta van Rheinberg, *Fanny Lewald: Geschichte einer Emanzipation* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag), 79.

spiritual emptiness and guilt that she felt from her conversion contributed to her critical stance towards all religions as well as strengthened her demand for intellectual freedom, forming the basis of her political consciousness.\textsuperscript{137} She would later grapple with these feelings of uneasiness in her writing.\textsuperscript{138}

Writing was one of the few options open to Lewald as an unmarried woman. Having rejected a marriage of convenience in 1836, in which she would have married a much older man whom she did not know or love, Lewald did not want to become a financial burden to her parents. A position as a governess (although viewed as an acceptable position for a woman) was seen as out of the question because her father did not want to be viewed as being monetarily unable to care for his family and therefore ruin his other daughters’ chances for marriage. Writing was a more feasible career because Fanny could publish her works anonymously, which she did for her first two novels, thereby not tarnishing her father’s name nor injuring any opportunities for her sisters. Ultimately, writing would also prove to provide Lewald a measure of independence she would not have enjoyed otherwise: “Es war mir ein Blick aus der Wüste in das gelobte Land, er ware eine Aussicht der Befreiung.”\textsuperscript{139} In this way, writing allowed Lewald a means to liberate herself from the bourgeois family and the


\textsuperscript{138} In addition to \textit{Jenny}, which is being dealt with here, Lewald also deals with the topic of the Jewish people in her historical novel \textit{Prinz Louis Ferdinand} (1849), which provides a portrait of Berlin at the time of Rahel Varnhagen’s first salon.

\textsuperscript{139} Fanny Lewald, \textit{Leidensjahre}, vol. 2, \textit{Meine Lebensgeschichte} (Frankfurt am Main: Ulrike Helmer Verlag, 1988), 254.
restrictions it placed on her sex. It became a means for her to explore freedom and critique a means of life that she felt did not suit her personality.

It was her uncle August Lewald, who first noticed Lewald's propensity and ability to write. In 1840, August Lewald asked his niece to write a description of the festivities in Königsberg surrounding the newly crowned Friedrich Wilhelm IV for the magazine Europa, of which he was editor. He was so pleased with her work, that he published her narration of this event unaltered in the magazine. Shortly thereafter, he sent a letter to his brother, Fanny's father, lauding her talent as a writer and presenting the idea that Fanny could prosper financially from her writing:

Fanny hat ein so entscheidenes Talent der Darstellung, daß ich nicht begreife, wie sie nicht von selbst darauf gekommen ist, sich mehr darin zu versuchen. Sie ist ohne Frage eine dichterische Natur, und es wäre nicht zu verantworten, wenn sie eine solche Begabung nicht benutzte und ein Feld brach liegen ließe, von dem sie für ihre Zukunft gute Früchte erndten könnte.¹⁴⁰

Thus, with her uncle’s prodding and her father’s permission, Lewald was eventually able to emancipate herself by becoming a writer of novels, novellas, travel literature and essays. And in so doing, she was able to define her own position and enter the debate on class, religion and gender through her writing. Literature provided her the means to break into the political and social world.¹⁴¹

That Lewald was very engaged and interested in the politics of her time and would subsequently make them the topic of her writing is made clear in her autobiography, Meine Lebensgeschichte, which appeared in 6 volumes between

¹⁴⁰ Lewald, Leidensjahre, 254.
the years 1861–1862. At a very young age, she took interest in and followed closely the various events of her time. She was very much aware of her father’s involvement and interest in politics, especially his enthusiasm for the concerns of the French liberals during the revolutionary events of 1830. This engagement with politics was not at all unusual for the acculturated Jews of this period. Many of them were active and took part in the cultural and political discussions. She had the opportunity to personally meet many politically engaged and outspoken figures of her time, such as Hoffmann von Fallersleben and Johann Jacoby. She also makes the claim that already at the age of seventeen, the longing for a united German fatherland was awakened in her through her first love, the young theology student Leopold August Bock who was a member of the Deutsche Burschenschaften.

While Lewald expressed a marked longing for a united German nation, the question arises as to how she constructs national consciousness and how she views belonging in the German nation. This becomes a particularly prudent question for Lewald herself, as she finds her own position to be a marginalized one because of her gender and ethno-religious background.

**C. Jenny (1843)**

Originally written and published in 1843, *Jenny* is the second novel written by Fanny Lewald. Like her first novel *Clementine*, the first edition of the novel was published anonymously, and *Jenny* only carries the words “von der
Verfasserin der Clementine” on the title page. It would later be published under her own name and go through various editions.\textsuperscript{142}

This novel, like many of her novels written in the 1840s, is often categorized as a Tendenzroman because it treats and deals with specific social issues of her present or recent past. In addition, Lewald’s early novels have often been classified under the Junges Deutschland movement.\textsuperscript{143} There is no doubt that the writers that made up the literary movement of Junges Deutschland exercised influence on the young Lewald. In her autobiography, she calls attention to the work of these writers and describes their viewpoint:

In Deutschland war ebenfalls ein neues Geschlecht in der Literatur herangereift. Heines Reisebilder und französische Zustände, Börnes Mitteilungen aus Paris vermittelten das französische Leben mit dem deutschen und trugen das Verlangen nach freier Betätigung des einzelnen im Staate, nach freier Selbstbestimmung in den persönlichen Verhältnissen nur noch lebhafter nach Deutschland hinüber.\textsuperscript{144}

Lewald tackles this longing for freer activity in the affairs of the nation and for freer self-determination in personal relationships in her novel Jenny through the

\textsuperscript{142} There have been four editions of this novel published. The first edition was published in 1843 by Brockhaus. Thirty years later, in 1872, after making stylistic changes to the text, Fanny Lewald had the work republished in a collected works edition of her novels. The third edition appeared in 1967 from the publishing house “Der Morgen” in East Berlin. Therese Erler reworked the text, added an afterword, and identified the text as a historical novel, a classification that was not given to the text by Lewald. The last edition of the novel was reissued by Ulrike Helmer in the series entitled Edition Klassikerinnen in 1988 and was taken from the 1872 edition that had been reworked by Adolf Stahr and Fanny Lewald. The only changes made to the text by Helmer include editorial corrections. My analysis of the text is based off of the Helmer edition. see Gudrun Marci-Boehncke, Fanny Lewald: Jüdin, Preußin, Schriftstellerin: Studien zu autobiographischem Werk und Kontext (Stuttgart: Verlag Hans-Dieter Heinz, 1998), 197-199.


\textsuperscript{144} Fanny Lewald, Befreiung und Wanderleben, vol. 3, Meine Lebensgeschichte (Frankfurt am Main: Ulrike Helmer Verlag, 1988), 27-28.
portrayal of the prejudice that Jews and women in Germany encountered. Her purpose is to portray the relationship between Jews and Christians in mid-nineteenth-century Germany and its effects on the existence of Jews. She argues that German national discourse should not be informed by religious discourse. Furthermore, beyond the issue of faith, she also tackles matters of gender and class.

The reception of the novel within the nineteenth century by critics also points to its significance in dealing with questions of German national identity. Jenny received great attention inside as well as outside of Germany. Much of the reception dealt with the identity of the author herself, as questions revolved around whether or not a woman and/or Jewish person could have written it. Many critics were surprised to learn that the anonymous author masked behind this work was a woman, because no woman’s novel to this point had engaged so readily with political, religious and social questions.

In addition to speculation regarding the gender of the author, the novel received much attention from Jewish critics who were interested in the ways in which Jews were portrayed in the novel. Some critics such as Ludwig Phillipson of the “Allgemeiner Zeitung des Judentums,” while elated that Jewish characters were portrayed as being decorated with virtue, lamented the fact that the novel lacked a Jewish character who stood for genuine Judaism, leading him to

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conclude that the anonymous author had to be a Christian.\textsuperscript{147} In contrast to Phillipson’s review, Gustav Karpeles suggested that the \textit{Judenfrage}, which Lewald poses in the novel as part of a broader problematic, was the social and legal emancipation of the ambitious and bourgeois middle-classes.\textsuperscript{148} Thus, his understanding of the novel moves away from the belief of Judaism only in religious terms to a recognition of it as ancestral, as something independent from conversion to Christianity.

Apart from addressing social issues of the present and recent past, Jenny also contains an obvious personal element. This text has been characterized as the most autobiographical of all of Fanny Lewald’s novels.\textsuperscript{149} The autobiographical elements are most strongly seen in the female protagonist Jenny who, like Lewald, comes from a liberal, acculturated, middle-class Jewish family. Elements of the plot also strongly echo Fanny Lewald’s own life, such as the conversion of Jenny from Judaism to Christianity triggered by the want to marry a young theology student, closely resembling her own experience with Leopold Bock. Jenny’s struggle with converting to Christianity likewise parallels the spiritual upheaval that Lewald speaks of regarding her own conversion in her autobiography. In addition, attention has been called to the orthographical similarities between the first names of the title character and Lewald herself.\textsuperscript{150}

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\item \textsuperscript{147} Horch, \textit{Auf der Suche}, 118.
\item \textsuperscript{148} Horch, \textit{Auf der Suche}, 118.
\item \textsuperscript{150} Gabriele Schneider, \textit{Vom Zeitroman zum ’stylisierten Roman: Die Erzählerin Fanny Lewald} (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1993), 90. In fact Adolf Bartels in writing his history of German
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Some critics have emphasized the personal element of this novel, along with others written by Lewald before 1845, and placed it under the heading of “Schreiben als Chance zur Selbstbefreiung.”

Although writing most definitely provided Lewald with a chance for self-expression, in that many of her early novels deal with issues that she herself faced in her own life, Jenny goes beyond just being a means for Lewald to express her own personality. In focusing purely on the personal element of Lewald’s writing, these critics deny the broader implications of her work. The goal of this work is not only to present her own viewpoint on social issues, such as the emancipation of women and Jews, but also to be politically engaged and effective. In dealing with issues surrounding women and Jews, Lewald provides the reader with a critical viewpoint of the dominant image of the German nation.

_Jenny_ can best be described as polemical; through the plot and outcome of the narrative, Lewald attempts to argue a point about the nature of belonging. She is most interested in reflecting on societal change and human rights, with a particular focus on emancipation. Issues of class, gender and Jewishness end up as essential elements in her project. The society that Lewald envisions and seeks to create in her novel is a society that knows no barriers in regards to class, faith, or gender.


In tackling the prejudice facing the Jews and women in Germany, Lewald offers a perspective that up until this point in German literary history had rarely been encountered. Traditionally, Jews had been portrayed as outsiders in German literature.\(^{153}\) Lewald provides an insider’s perspective to Jewish life; nonetheless, as an assimilated Jewish woman, she offers a perspective that understands Gentile society.\(^{154}\) Not only does she provide a means to examine the idea of German national identity from the margins, but she also demonstrates the continuous presence of diversity in Germany and the ongoing debate and competing visions of what it meant to be “German.”

**D. A Novel of Struggle**

Lewald’s novel *Jenny* finds itself in the midst of struggle in Germany. Set in the years between 1832 and 1841, Lewald calls to attention the particular problems facing Germany during this time. The period was marked by great upheaval and vast censorship. After Napoleon’s defeat at Waterloo in 1815, the European powers collectively agreed to maintain the balance of power. This meant a return to the status quo, and the hopes for more liberal change and progress were dashed. Dominated by the Austrian statesman, Prince Klemens Metternich, this reactionary period is rife with attempts at containing republican and liberal forces and preventing the spread of revolutionary fervor.

\(^{153}\) see Gustav Freytag, *Soll und Haben* (Boston: D.C. Heath, 1901). The Jewish Ehrental family represents greed and dishonesty and are portrayed as outsiders in the novel.

Lewald explicitly states the time span in which her novel takes place. The narrative begins in the late autumn of 1832 and continues through the first months of 1834. It is in these scenes that the reader is introduced to the characters and is witness to the private interactions of their lives. In addition, the reader is thrust into debates surrounding what it means to be “German” and the various ways in which this identity is constructed. The second half of the novel picks up eight years later in the summer of 1841 in Baden-Baden, with the characters’ lives much changed and ends in the late autumn of that very same year with the death of the title character.

The years between 1832 and 1841 are fraught with particular meaning as they take place after the Karlsbad Decrees of 1819 which effectively dissolved public gatherings and political activity and placed strict censorship on publications and the Hambacher Fest, a national democratic festival that promoted a new German history.\textsuperscript{155} At the Hambacher festival, members from all ranks of society gathered to protest for more freedoms, religious tolerance, and national unity. Fanny Lewald would have been very aware of this festival, as her father had taken part in it.

In laying out clearly the timeline for the novel, Lewald emphasizes the contemporary nature of her project. By placing the novel in historically recent times, she foregrounds the issues surrounding the censoring of certain political activity and the push for German national unity. Furthermore, in connecting

these issues with the private lives of her characters, Lewald emphasizes the private nature of the political.

**E. Creating an Imagined German Community**

According to Benedict Anderson, the novel played a tremendous role in the imagining of the national community. The representation of “homogenous, empty time” in the novel, for Anderson, is the exact counterpart to the nation, which is conceived of as a “solid community moving steadily up (or down) history.”\(^{156}\) While the idea of the sociological entity moving calendrically through time exists in Fanny Lewald’s novel, the community depicted is not conceived of as a “solid community.” Rather than presenting one coherent, indivisible community, she chooses instead to focus on the various tensions that exist between different groups in German society, in order to offer a critique about the problems she inherently sees with how Jews and women are viewed and treated. Some critics have claimed that Lewald’s primary focus and reference in this novel is Prussia.\(^{157}\) Even though Lewald would have been most familiar with the laws and events in Prussia, since she grew up and lived in Königsberg and later moved to Berlin, in this novel she presents an image and idea of a “Germany” that transcends differing regional identities and specific German states. Lewald is intent in focusing on a psychological conception of Germany and a shift in how belonging is conceived.

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\(^{157}\) see Gabriele Schneider, *Vom Zeitroman zum “stylisierten” Roman*, 81-92.
That questions of German national belonging and a sense of Germanness are a primary focus of the novel can be seen in the very opening chapter of the novel when the Englishman Hughes, while speaking with a group of mostly liberal-minded young men, makes a toast to the unity of Germany, “Der Toast wurde erwidert. Hughes trank auf die Einheit Deutschlands...”158 This toast ostensibly ends the conversation the reader was immediately thrust into at the very beginning of the novel. The discussion among the men summarily turns from an exchange of views of that night’s events at the theater to issues and questions of national identity, particularly the differences between Northern Europeans and what is described as those nationalities which are more “oriental” or “Jewish” in nature. By placing these issues in the very forefront of the novel, Lewald is calling attention to the vast debate surrounding these questions at this time. In addition, she makes clear through the use of words like “oriental” and “Jewish” how German national identity in the nineteenth century was often framed as a tribal and blood phenomenon. The emphasis on this formulation of national belonging at the beginning of the novel becomes crucial; it sets up a mode in which Fanny Lewald can critique the discourses surrounding national belonging. It is against this framework of German national belonging that Lewald will argue.

The spatial setting of Lewald’s novel plays a key role in the creation of an imagined “German” community. She begins to set up the idea that there exists physical and cultural boundaries to Germany that make it separate from other

158 Lewald, Jenny, 31.
places. In the very opening sentence of the novel, the reader is only given this cue as to the setting of the story: “Bei Gerhard, dem ersten Restaurant einer großen deutschen Handelsstadt, hatte Spätherbst des Jahres 1832 nach dem Theater eine Gesellschaft von jungen Leuten in einem besonderen Zimmer zusammengefunden...”\textsuperscript{159} It would be very easy to approach this novel through the lens of Prussia and postulate that the large trading town is Königsberg, the city that Lewald herself grew up in. While it is very possible that Lewald fashioned the setting of her novel after her hometown of Königsberg, the fact that her descriptions are never characterized as specifically Prussian opens up the possibility that her story could take place outside of Königsberg and even outside of Prussia.

The city name, in which the narrative is to occur, is left ambiguous. Lewald does nonetheless alert the reader to the fact that the city is “German.”\textsuperscript{160} The reason for this ambiguity seems evident. In leaving the location unclear, Lewald is offering up a quasi-distinct setting for the plot, suggesting that the happenings in this particular German city could happen in any city in Germany. The ambiguous nature of the setting has important implications for how readers might identify with the narrative. The idea is that no matter where readers lives, they should be able to identify with this “deutsche Handelsstadt” and the events and people there.

Lewald’s references to Germany are not just made in the setting of the novel. There are other instances throughout the story that note distinctly German

\textsuperscript{159} Lewald, \textit{Jenny}, 27.
\textsuperscript{160} Lewald, \textit{Jenny}, 27.
items. In the background information provided for Eduard Meier, Jenny’s brother, German universities are mentioned. In speaking of Eduard Meier and his ambition of studying at university, the narrator comments: “Auf eine solche Stelle an irgendeiner Universität Deutschlands hatte er aber nicht rechnen können...”\textsuperscript{161} By referring to German universities, she invokes the idea of Germany as an entity. This statement about German universities becomes crucial to Lewald’s critique of German national identity and becomes an important part of the story line. The university became the social center that was responsible for disseminating the ideas and ideals of the middle-class; the young men who graduated from university left and became teachers and clergymen in various areas and brought middle class culture with them to those areas.\textsuperscript{162} In this way, both Eduard’s and Reinhard’s university education has imparted upon them a specific view of German identity that is centered on middle class culture and values. And it is these values and ideas that influence the way they view Germany and its culture as well as various people’s positions within Germany.

In addition to referring to Germany in various geographical locations, cities and universities, Lewald makes allusions to Germany as an historical and cultural entity by citing a common German past and a common German culture. In Jenny Meier’s tutoring sessions, mention is made of the German classical writers: “Mit erhöhter Begeisterung las er die deutschen Klassiker mit den

\textsuperscript{161} Lewald, Jenny, 44.
Mädchen...” By describing the writers as German, Lewald references common German culture through literature. Although no particular writers are specifically noted, readers of the time would know which German writers she was speaking of, for instance Johann Wolfgang von Goethe who was a tremendous influence on Lewald herself. And in speaking of Reinhard’s appearance and how it recalls the German knights of antiquity, Lewald alludes to the idea of a common “German” past and bloodline:


By referring to a common “German” past and bloodline, Lewald draws on the idea that that the “German” nation is something that has existed for many centuries and that there are measured traits that are often viewed as particularly “German.” Ultimately, it is this stereotypical German appearance that she wants to challenge, such that the meaning of “German” would include minorities, like the Jews, who she claims to be equally as German as those who display the conventional image of German.

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163 Lewald, Jenny, 49.
164 Lewald, Jenny, 49.
**F. Creating Outsiders**

By creating a spatial setting in her novel that delineates the physical and psychological entity of Germany, Lewald inherently raises the question of national belonging. As has been previously discussed, national belonging is largely dependent on the construction of insiders and outsiders. Lewald engages with the question of belonging in describing how outsiders were viewed and contrasted with insiders of the German community.

National differentiation is made overtly visible in discussions of other nationalities—specifically England and France. The choice to have characters discuss these two nations is not arbitrary. England, which was often viewed as the home of liberalism, was often cited by German liberal nationalists as tribally related to Germany. The freedoms that the English enjoyed and had developed into a constitutional government were often viewed as Germanic freedoms brought to England by the Anglo-Saxons. In contrast to England, France stood as a nation against which Germany sought to define itself. The dislike of the French had its roots in the liberation struggle against Napoleon in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. While most modern historians today question the negativity of the memories of French occupation, no one can dispute the power of the war’s contribution and the negative stereotype of the French to nationalist mythology.

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The positive perception of the English and their system can be seen in the novel, especially in the figure of William Hughes. William Hughes, who the reader encounters in the opening scene of the novel, has come to Germany to visit his cousin Ferdinand and his family. Lewald paints William Hughes in a very positive light and puts him on par with the other positive male figures of the novel, such as Eduard Meier. Unlike his German cousin, Ferdinand Horn, who holds contempt for Jewish people, Hughes is portrayed as a man who does not have any prejudices against Jews. In fact, he holds the view that Jews are German. In a conversation with a group of young men, including Eduard Meier, he describes Eduard, who is Jewish, as the “German” when he says: “Verzeihen Sie mir, mein Herr! Aber Sie müssen mein Freund werden! Wir Engländer haben sonst nicht das Herz auf der Zunge – aber ihr Deutschen seid unsere Stammverwandten.” 167 Because Hughes is talking to a group of men, which includes Eduard, his use of the pronoun “ihr” includes Eduard into the category of “German.” He does not view him as an outsider, and his identity is wrapped up with German identity. This becomes especially crucial due to the way in which Hughes includes Eduard into the group. In saying that the English and Germans are congeneric, Hughes reinforces conceptions of national belonging as genealogically oriented. And in his view, Eduard, despite his Jewishness, belongs.

In opposition to the English, the French are negatively depicted in the novel and often portrayed in opposition to the morality of Germans. This aversion to the French is voiced by Eduard Meier when he argues that France is a

167 Lewald, Jenny, 32.
corrupt society in which family no longer plays an important role: “Weil in Frankreich der ganze Zustand der Gesellschaft ein verderbter, ein aufgelöster ist; weil die Bande der Ehe dort locker geworden sind und das Haus, die Familie aufgehört haben, der Mittelpunkt zu sein, von dem alles ausgeht.”¹⁶⁸ In addition to degrading the French, Eduard voices his support of bourgeois, middle class morality and the position of women therein and links this understanding of society to Germany. Unlike corrupt France, Germany is understood by Eduard as morally superior in that it places a real emphasis on the importance of domestic life and family. This has implications in how he views the role of women within the nation. He is not enamored with the fact that his sister attends theater productions, as he believes that modern novels and the theater provide a bad example for women. His mother disagrees with this view and openly proclaims that she has no misgivings about allowing her daughter to be exposed to books and discussions that normally would have been denied someone of her age. This she claims is due to the way in which German society is constructed:

> Aber bei uns, mein Sohn! ist doch der Zustand der Frauen und der Gesellschaft überhaupt ein ganz anderer. Deshalb scheint mir, du übertreibest den Nachteil, den Theater und dergleichen auf junge Gemüter ausübt, und wir Deutschen können unseren Töchtern diese Genüsse gewähren.¹⁶⁹

Emphasizing that the position of women and German society in its entirety are different from France, she identifies herself as a German and argues that in a German society these pleasures can be afforded to women. In her estimation, the

¹⁶⁸ Lewald, Jenny, 59.
¹⁶⁹ Lewald, Jenny, 59.
family still plays an important role in Germany and as such remains a watchful eye over the conduct of its women.

Thus, the morality of German women is opposed to the supposed promiscuity of the French, and women’s emancipation is linked to Germanic values. Germans are not corrupt and licentious and, therefore, their women, even when exposed to theater and books, will not become impious or degenerate. Ultimately, Eduard is not persuaded by his mother’s position and once again emphasizes the importance of domestic life to German men:

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\text{Im Gegenteil, liebe Mutter! Weil bei uns der Mann sein Haus noch für den Tempel des Glückes, die geliebte Frau für die Hohepriesterin desselben halt, weil er Ruhm, Ehre und alles, was er ist und erwirbt, diesem Tempel und seiner Priesterin darbringt, weil sein Hoffen und Fürchten in diesen Kreis gebannt ist und er immer wieder dahin zurückkehrt, sobald das Leben mit seinen gebieterischen Forderungen ihn freiläßt; darum haben wir deutschen Männer ein Recht, zu verlangen, daß auch kein unreiner Hauch die Seele eines Mädchens berühre, dem so viel geopfert wird.}\]

Even though he elevates the position of woman to that of high-priestess, he reinforces the idea that women can only occupy one of two extremes—the angel or the prostitute. In his estimation, the ideal German woman should be an image of angelic domesticity, or she will fall prey to the immoral image and behavior that he has observed in French women.

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170 Lewald, Jenny, 60.
G. The Jewish Question: Perception of the Other

Perhaps what plays a larger role in the creation of the outsider in the novel is not the discussion of England and France but the discussion surrounding the Jewish question and where Jews fit into the national community. The treatment and perception of Jewish characters by the other figures in the novel plays a tremendous role in creating an “Other” and offers insight into the Vormärz world in which Fanny Lewald lived. It provides an understanding into the problems facing different minority groups within German society at this time and presents a means to extend a critique of dominant understandings of Germanness. As Ludwig Börne has suggested, Jews have always been faced with the predicament of being identified as Jewish, whether positively or negatively: “Es ist wie ein Wunder! Tausend Male habe ich es erfahren, und doch bleibt es mir ewig neu. Die einen werfen mir vor, daß ich ein Jude sei, die anderen verzeihen mir es, der Dritte lobt mich gar dafür, aber alle denken daran. Sie sind wie gebannt in diesem magischen Judenkreise, es kann keiner hinaus.” Like Börne, the Jewish characters in Lewald’s novel find themselves in the dilemma of the “magischer Judenkreis.” No matter what actions they take or do not take, they are all often still identified by others as Jews even though they often self-identify first as Germans and then perhaps as Jews. However, Lewald does not present this image as necessarily problematic. Her vision of German society rests on some

elements of diversity in which complete homogenization of the nation is not required or necessary.

Lewald elucidates this position on diversity through the characters in her novel. She presents the reader not only with more dominant positions on Jewish integration but also offers examples of acceptance and ways in which diversity can be tolerated. Lewald is thus able to present the reader with the various viewpoints surrounding the Jewish question in mid nineteenth-century Germany.

1. Judenfeindschaft: Ferdinand Horn and Madame Horn

Through the characters of Ferdinand Horn and his mother Madame Horn, Lewald offers a view into one part of the social strata which regarded Jews with hostility and felt as though they had no place within German society. According to some historians, the ideas surrounding the formation of the German nation were primarily liberal ones in the first half of the nineteenth century, and the more malevolent form of German nationalism “based on the negative creation of stereotypes such as Slavs or Jews”\(^\text{172}\) did not gain prevalence until the second half of the century.\(^\text{173}\) While there may have been a strong liberal component to German nationalism prior to 1848, the claim that more sinister variants did not then exist or were not prevalent is not true, and Lewald addresses this ominous form in her narrative. As can be seen with the characters Ferdinand Horn and his


mother, there were portions of the German population who viewed Jews negatively.

Already in the opening scene of the novel, the reader encounters Ferdinand Horn and his opinions of the Jewish people. Sitting in a restaurant with a group of his peers, discussing the beauty of an Italian actress, he turns to the appearance of Jews. Horn exclaims that the Italian actress Giavanolla, who played the lead role in the play they are considering, looks too Jewish:

Wenn sie nur nicht so verdammt jüdisch aussähe...Ich sagte es gleich zu meinem Vetter Hughes, den ich Ihnen, lieber Erlau, als einen Mitenthusiasten empfehlen kann, und der für nichts Augen hatte, als für diese Person, die mir wirklich mit all ihrer gepriesenen italiensichen – oder sagten Sie orientalischen? – Schönheit im höchsten Grade mißfallen hat. Wir lieben in unserer Familie diese Art von Schönheit nicht, es ist eine uns angeborene Antipathie, und mir wurde erst wieder in England bei den schlanken, blonden Insulanerinnen recht wohl...174

Horn describes the appearance of Jewish people as containing something oriental, thus constructing them in the position of the Other in contrast to a Northern European ideal of appearance which he describes as blond, thin and pleasant to look at. For Horn, already in the appearance of Jews, there is nothing attractive. As such, he aids in creating a negative stereotype of the Jew.

His hostility towards the Jews is further explicated by his remarks that those who are seen in Jewish company should be shunned:

Ich bitte dich, diese Juden hängen wie die Kletten zusammen, und bist du erst in einem ihrer Zirkel, so steckst du auch gleich so fest in der ganzen Clique, daß man sich scheuen muß, mit dir an öffentlichen Orten zu erscheinen, aus Furcht, von deiner mosaischen Bekanntschaft überfallen zu werden.175

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174 Lewald, Jenny, 27.
175 Lewald, Jenny, 29.
In describing Jews as barnacles that stick together, he draws attention to their marginalized position. Picturing Jews as a cohesive outsider group was not uncommon. Up until the mid-eighteenth century, ghettoization and Jewish exclusion from various occupations hindered their interaction with others. Into the nineteenth century, this would gradually change, leading to more interplay between Jews and Gentiles. Once again, he constructs the Jews as an “Other.” And befriending Jewish people has repercussions for insiders as well. It leads to alienation from the wider population and is something that Ferdinand believes should be avoided at all costs.

Like her son, Madame Horn also shares the idea that Jews do not have a place within German society. Despite the fact that the young Jewish doctor Eduard Meier visits her daughter often to attend to her healing, Madame Horn attributes the vast amount of time they spend together to his professional diligence and Clara’s gratitude:

Seine fleißigen Besuche schrieb Madame Horn der Ehre zu, die ihm durch seine Wahl widerfahren sei und die er zu schätzen wisse; und daß Claras Interesse für den Doktor andere Motive als Erkenntlichkeit haben könne, war ein Gedanke, der ihr niemals einfiel, weil sie die Liebe ihrer Tochter zu einem Juden für eine Naturverirrung angesehen haben würde, die sie einem Mädchen aus ihrer Familie unmöglich zutrauen konnte.176

The thought that Clara’s interest in the doctor could be romantically motivated does not fall into the realm of possibility. This position is often visible in the literature of the time. Jewish men were rarely depicted as potential lovers of

176 Lewald, Jenny, 80.
Gentile women. Madame Horn holds the union between Christian and Jew as unnatural, as defying the laws of nature. She does not believe that it would be capable for her daughter to love a Jew.

2. The Need for Conversion: Gustav Reinhard and die Pfarrerin

The young theology student Gustav Reinhard and his mother offer up an alternative vision to the Jewish question in relation to the German question during this period of history. Unlike the figures of Ferdinand Horn and his mother, both Reinhard and the Pfarrerin seem sympathetic to the Jews, especially the Meier family. However, upon further inspection, their acceptance of Jewish people only goes so far. While they do not display any outward hostility towards the Meier family and actually go as far as to befriend them, their acceptance of Jewish traditions and customs is tempered, particularly in regards to the Meier’s daughter Jenny whom Reinhard falls in love with and wants to marry. For both Reinhard and his mother, gender and religion are connected and seen as crucial for acceptance into German society.

Reinhard, the son of a poor pastor’s widow, first became acquainted with Eduard Meier when they both attended university and became members of the Burschenschaften. His experience with the Meier family has been a positive one, with him even being hired to tutor their daughter Jenny and her young friend Therese when few options were left to him after his imprisonment due to his ties

177 Lorenz, Keepers of the Motherland, 5.
to student fraternities. In describing the family to the Englishman William Hughes, Reinhard describes the Meier household as “eines der gastlichsten in unserer Stadt, die Mutter eine freundliche, wohlwollende Frau, der Vater ein sehr gescheiter und braver Mann.”

So convincing and positive is Reinhard’s description of the family that the young Englishman wishes to meet the family, much to the chagrin of his cousin Ferdinand Horn, who as stated before holds anti-Semitic beliefs. These beliefs are even referred to as medieval on the part of Reinhard, who responds to Ferdinand’s comments about Jews:


He does not believe that these beliefs should hold a place in the current times. Yet, as will be demonstrated, in many ways his own beliefs, especially in regards to women and their position in Germany, can be viewed as backwards and medieval.

This acceptance of the Meier family and their Jewish roots only goes so far, especially when it comes to Jenny, the Meier’s daughter, marrying the young Reinhard. It is here that Lewald connects religion and gender in regards to national identity. Reinhard’s profile and beliefs center around the dominant discourses of German national belonging: he is a middle-class, Christian man who exhibits patriarchal notions of gender, displayed clearly in his adherence to
an ideal of bourgeois morality. While he may be sympathetic to the Meier family and specifically to Eduard Meier whom he befriended at university, he still views the ideal German woman in religious, and chiefly Christian, terms. In spending time with Jenny, he notices deficiencies in her character that he attributes to the lack of religious teaching:


Through his religious teaching, Reinhard hopes to make Jenny’s entire demeanor milder. Yet, as this quote above shows, it is only through Christian teachings that he believes this possible. He does not believe that a strong upbringing in Jewish teachings will achieve the same outcome.

In Reinhard’s discussion with his mother about loving Jenny, the Pfarrerin also voices her doubts about Jenny, referring back to what she terms the Jewish element which she possesses: “Jenny hat Fehler, für die sie nicht verantwortlich ist, weil sie gewissermaßen national sind, und weil die Mehrzahl der Jüdinnen sie mehr oder weniger mit ihr teilen.” The deficiencies in Jenny’s character are described as national in nature, referring to the Jewish people as a nation, and they are to be found in most Jewish women. According to the Pfarrerin, Jewish

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180 Lewald, Jenny, 50.
181 This was a fairly wide held belief among prominent educators of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Germany. The prominence of Protestant pastors and those who had studied theology as teachers also points to the importance of religion attached to religion in girl’s education. see James C. Albisetti, Schooling German Girls and Women (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 40-41.
182 Lewald, Jenny, 89.
women are more educated and are not brought up with much outside female contact; as such they are less likely to understand a woman’s place in the world and are more likely to become bored with their household duties and to want to enter into the realm of men:

Diesen geistreichen Mädchen aus den jüdischen Familien, die gleich Jenny erzogen werden, fehlt es fast immer an gutem weiblichen Umgange: mehr unterrichtet als die Frauen ihrer nächsten Umgebung, überschätzen sie sich zu leicht; das Beisammensein mit Mädchen, die Sorge für die täglichen Bedürfnisse des Hauses hört auf, ihnen Freude zu machen; sie ziehen die Unterhaltung der Männer vor, welche mit Vergnügen solch einen kleinen Überläufer empfangen.\footnote{Lewald, \textit{Jenny}, 90.}

The Pfarrerin holds a traditional, bourgeois view on the sexes, where a woman’s main concern and realm should be the household. Characteristics like intellect and unconstraint, which the Pfarrerin views Jenny to possess, are viewed as less tolerable and undesirable for a woman. Restraint and humility, among other things, are attributes of a good bourgeois woman.

Jenny’s more aggressive and outspoken nature is nonetheless not seen as an element of her own personality but is constantly related back to her Jewishness. Jews were often understood to be intellectual and pedantic. This apprehension expressed by the Pfarrerin was not completely unfounded, as the Jewish people traditionally regarded learning and knowledge highly.\footnote{Walter Grab, \textit{Der deutsche Weg der Judenemanzipation 1789-1938} (Munich, 1991), 28.} As a Jewish woman, Jenny could only be viewed by her as unfeminine. However, Reinhard believes that these factors will be overcome in Jenny’s conversion to
Christianity because it will teach her the softness and humility that he views as characteristic of the female sex:

Reinhard behauptete geradezu, daß ein weibliches Gemüt ohne festes Halten an Religion weder glücklich zu sein noch glücklich zu machen vermöge. Absichtlich führte er deshalb die Unterhaltung mit seinen Schülerinnen häufig auf christlich-religiöse Gegenstände, so daß in seinem Unterricht Religion und Poesie Hand in Hand gingen, wodurch den Lehren des Christentumes ein leichter und gewinnender Einzug in Jennys Seele bereitet wurde.\footnote{Lewald, Jenny, 50.}

Hence, it is through the Christian religion that Jenny’s mind will be made contented, and she can become the ideal German woman. For both Reinhard and his mother, the ideal German cannot be separated from the Christian faith.

3. Tolerance: Clara Horn and Graf Walter

In contrast to the characters who are openly anti-Semitic, having a very ethnocentric view of German identity, and those who consider conversion to Christianity and education as the only means to true assimilation, stand those figures who believe in tolerance and are not opposed to broader definitions of Germandom. Two such figures can be found in the characters of Clara Horn and Graf Walter.

Unlike her brother and her mother, who are both depicted as very intolerant, Clara Horn is able to look past issues of difference and falls in love with the Jewish Eduard Meier. Despite the fact that Eduard attempts to explain to her that they are separated by the prejudice of the people, she attempts to
show him that she does not hold the same prejudices that the majority holds against him: “Sie wünschte und fühlte in sich die Macht, ihn zu entschädigen für alles, was fremde Unduldsamkeit an ihm verbrochen hatte; sie wollte ihm zeigen, daß sie wenigstens die Vorurteile der Menge nicht teile.” In fact, it seems as though she is incapable of prejudice all together because she does not understand or see the world in terms of generalizations. Therefore, when Eduard criticizes the Jews for keeping to their own circles and for their “national elements,” Clara rejects this view because she believes that the faults that Eduard has found in his Jewish people can be found in all closed circles. She sees no general difference in behavior or manner between the Jewish and Christian Germans.

Clara makes her feelings known about Eduard’s situation in a conversation with her cousin Hughes when he expresses that he is taken aback by how strongly and openly Eduard speaks about the emancipation of the Jews. Hughes believes that in Eduard’s open expression about the emancipation of the Jews, he is asking for pity. Clara disagrees with Hughes; to her, Eduard is not asking for pity, but rather only asking for his right:

‘Mitleid...verlangt denn Eduard Mitleid? Er will sein Recht, das Recht, welches man seinem Volke und damit auch ihm selber vorenthält. Wer darf mehr verlangen, frei und den Besten gleichgestellt zu sein, als er? Und kannst du ihn tadeln, daß er in jedem Augenblicke das Unrecht fühlt, welches ihm geschieht? Daß er den Gedanken auspricht, der zum Grundton seines Wesens geworden ist? Atmen und frei sein mit seinem Volke, das ist ihm gleichbedeutend; er kann und will nicht schweigen von dem, was allein ihm Wert hat. Jeder Mann von Ehre müßte so handeln; ich begreife das vollkommen.’

186 Lewald, Jenny, 78.
187 Gudrun Marci-Boehncke, Fanny Lewald: Jüdin, Preußin, Schriftstellerin, 287.
188 Lewald, Jenny, 100.
Clara is in a better position to understand and identify with Eduard than her cousin because she herself is constructed in a position that also denies her full equality—her position as a woman. Thus, despite the empathy she feels for Eduard’s situation, she is unable to take action to help him and his cause.

Clara’s inability to help Eduard stems from the fact that she is portrayed as the ideal, traditional, bourgeois German woman. In fact, this is a major factor in what attracts Eduard to her. Although she understands that Eduard is not seeking pity for the Jewish people and is rather seeking justice, her representation as the ideal German woman does not allow her room to maneuver in regards to Eduard. Even though she is in love with Eduard and wishes to marry him, she refuses to marry him unless he converts to Christianity because she does not feel as though she can go against her family’s wishes. She expresses this in a letter that she sends to him:

Glauben Sie mir, ich verlange nichts als Ihre Liebe, nichts als Sie, Eduard! Und jedes Band, das uns vereinigte, wäre mir heilig. Ich möchte Ihr treues Weib sein, gleichviel, welch ein Priester den Segen über uns gesprochen; jedes Land, jedes Verhältnis wäre mir gleich. Ich könnte ruhig den Tadel der Menge ertragen – aber den Segen meiner Eltern kann ich nicht entbehren. Ohne diesen Segen, den ich nie zu erhalten hoffen darf, so lange Sie nicht Christ geworden sind, gäbe es, selbst mit Ihnen, kein Glück für mich.\(^{189}\)

Although she could deal with the disapproval from society at large were she to marry Eduard without him converting to Christianity, she could not deal with the condemnation she would receive from her own family.

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\(^{189}\) Lewald, Jenny, 154.
Like Clara Horn, Graf Walter also represents a figure who believes in tolerance in German society and culture. However, as a male, he is more able to transcend the normal boundaries of Germanness. The reader is introduced to Graf Walter in the second section of the novel after Jenny's broken engagement to Reinhard. While in Baden-Baden, Jenny makes his acquaintance which ultimately leads to her engagement to him.

Through the figure of Graf Walter, Fanny Lewald links the idea of a German national past with the hope for a better future. In describing Walter’s entrance into the narrative, the narrator notes that he comes from one of the oldest families of Germany: “Graf Walter gehörte einer der ältesten Familien Deutschlands an. Wie die meisten Jünglinge seines Standes früh in das Militär getreten, war er mit seinem Regiment in die Vaterstadt Claras gekommen und in ihrem elterlichen Hause fast mit allen Personen unserer Erzählung bekannt, mit Hughes befreundet geworden.”

Yet he is one of the few figures in the novel who is not disturbed by Jenny’s Jewishness or her vibrant and curious personality. In emphasizing Walter’s lineage, Lewald is stressing the sense of lineage imbued within the concept of the German nation. Ultimately, it is this arbiter of German lineage who makes an appeal to tolerance.

The appeal to tolerance becomes visible when Walter and Jenny are discussing oak trees, as they explore the area around Baden-Baden. It is Jenny who first broaches the subject, as she shares with Walter a picture she has previously drawn of some trees she found in the area. While at first read, this

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190 Lewald, Jenny, 225.
scene makes a solid statement about the nature of marriage, upon closer inspection, a comment on the larger issue of Germany as a nation and the relation between Germans and Jews comes to the fore as well.

Discussing the oak trees drawn by Jenny as well as those Walter remembers from his youth on his parent’s property, Walter recalls the customary image of an oak tree wrapped in ivy. In the symbolic language of the time, a picture depicting an oak tree wrapped in ivy would have been understood in gendered terms where ivy, representing the woman, would have been seen as embracing and loving the man, depicted through the imagery of the tree. Accordingly, this image had ramifications for how marriage was viewed.

After this discussion with Graf Walter about the imagery of the tree and ivy, Jenny critiques this representation of marriage. For her, the vision of the ivy growing up the tree does not provide symbolism of partnership. It demonstrates the stressful and parasitic nature that marriage engenders, especially for women. Instead, Jenny produces for Walter her own picture of the relationship between the genders and marriage: "Sie hatte mit kunstgeübter Hand eine vortreffliche Skizze entworfen. Zwei kräftige, üppige Bäume standen dicht nebeneinander, frisch und fröhlich emporstrebend, mit eng verschlungenen Ästen. Darunter laß man die Worte: ‘Aus gleicher Tiefe, frei und vereint zum Äther empor!’" She is suggesting here that marriages should be viewed as a partnership where both

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parties are strong and self-reliant but also work together for common goals. This partnership is represented through the two trees firmly rooted in the ground, signaling that their foundations should be equally strong. Yet, they are still committed to the same plan, signaled through their interlocking branches which are aspiring to ever higher aims.

Nevertheless, this scene cannot be read as pertaining to the institution of marriage and the relationship between the sexes alone, for the oak tree is steeped with symbolic meaning pertaining to the German nation. Dating back to the Wars of Liberation in the early nineteenth century, the oak tree came to symbolize the nation of Germany, “like an oak the German nation had roots and it grew; it germinated, matured and came to fruition.”

Jenny’s remarks reflect this symbolism. In speaking of the large oak trees, Jenny emphasizes their rootedness and as such also the naturalness of the German nation: “Ich kann es nicht ausdrücken wie ich diese schönen, großen Bäume liebe. Sie geben mir immer ein Bild unsers Lebens, das fest in der Erde gewurzelt, doch sehnsüchtig himmelangestrebt...” Walter’s reaction to her remarks as a “purely German sentiment” underscores the oak tree’s connection to Germanness: “Das ist eine echt deutsche Empfindung, die ich vollkommen begreife und mit Ihnen teile.”

Yet, Jenny’s remarks about the tree longingly striving towards the heavens provides a critique of this German nation. Rather than viewing the tree in full maturation, this imagery presents an image of a nation still growing. Though its
roots are firmly planted and germinated, there is still some distance to be covered before it has reached maturity. In this manner, Lewald connects the idea of the German nation with liberal notions. Rather than focusing on the past, she is more concerned with the future and with what is to come. In her estimation, the nation cannot reach full maturation until all people are treated as equal citizens of the state. Thus, one can read the picture as the longing for better conditions and emancipation for both women and Jews. In presenting a picture of two trees, she is implying that women and Jews be given equality. Thus, she provides a critique of gendered conceptions of the German nation that regard women as passive and weak-willed, as well as conceptions that consider minorities such as the Jews are unequal. Graf Walter is quite pleased with the picture that Jenny has drawn, to the point where he wants to keep it as a sign of their consensus.

Ultimately, however, Graf Walter will be killed in a duel when he defends Jenny and his engagement to her despite the fact that his relationship to Jenny happens in the region of Baden. Historically speaking, Baden was the site of many democratic assemblies and demands, and therefore was viewed largely as a progressive area of the German Confederation. In having this character killed, Lewald demonstrates that Germany, while in the midst of struggle and developing identity, is not yet ready for the ideas that she is proposing.

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**H. The Jewish Question: Perception of the Self**

In contrast to their Gentile counterparts, the Jewish characters within Lewald’s novel offer a different perspective to the question of German identity and the Jewish people’s place within it. While the vast majority of the Gentile population either do not tolerate Jews and see intermarriage as going against the laws of nature or believe the only way they can be truly integrated is through conversion, the Jewish characters view Germany as their fatherland and home and consider themselves as German. Conversion does not always present itself as the most feasible option to them. In this way, their understanding of the nation and its identity is separate from religion and from Christian understandings of the nation.

**1. Steinheim: The Negative Jewish Stereotype**

The figure of Steinheim, a Jewish friend of the Meier family, offers a picture of the stereotypical Jew in the nineteenth century. His portrayal is markedly similar to descriptions of Jews that one would find in other literature of this time. His character provides a contrast to the other Jewish figures, namely the Meier family, in the novel. Through him, Lewald is able to demonstrate that the stereotypical picture of the Jew should not be viewed as the rule but rather as a variant. He stands as the exception to the rule within the constellation of Jewish

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198 see Gustav Freytag, *Soll und haben: Roman in sechs Büchern* (Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 1892). The Jewish characters Hirsch Ehrenthal and Veitl Itzig in Gustav Freytag’s novel offer a good comparison to the stereotyped image of the Jew that Lewald presents in her novel.
figures in the novel rather than as the rule itself. In this way, Lewald is able to play off of society’s held stereotypes and flip it to her benefit in characterizing the Jewish characters in her novel.

Like Eduard Meier, Steinheim considers himself to be a politically engaged and acculturated Jew. However, unlike the other figures in the novel, the description that we receive from the narrator about Steinheim is more distanced and reticent whereby we understand Steinheim’s tendency towards overconformity.\textsuperscript{199} He is described as having the potential to be attractive to many people, yet also has a sinister, eerie look. The narrator calls particular attention to his appearance and his clothing:

\begin{quote}
Er mochte siebenundzwanzig bis achtunzwanzig Jahre alt sein, hatte eine große kräftige Figur und einen vollblütigen, rotbraunen Teint. Sein krauses schwarzes Haar, die dunklen Augen und der starke bläuliche Bart konnten ebenso gut dem Südländer als dem Juden gehören...Er trug an jenem Morgen einen kurzen, dunklen Überrock, zu dem eine ebenfalls grüne Atlasweste und mehr noch ein dunkelroter türkischer Shawl sonderbar abstachen, den er unter der Weste kreuzweise über die Brust gelegt und mit einer großen Brillantnadel zusammengesteckt hatte. Handschuhe, Stiefel und Frisur waren nach der modernsten Weise gewählt, aber all das stand ihm, als ob er es eben wie eine Verkleidung angelegte. Es war für den feinen Beobachter etwas Unharmonisches in der ganzen Erscheinung, das störend auffiel.\textsuperscript{200}
\end{quote}

His overall appearance draws attention to his position as an outsider. Even though his beard does not necessarily out him as a Jew, it is reminiscent of another type of outsider—the southerner. What is still more interesting in this passage is his clothing which points to the problematic of the Jewish position. Even though his clothing is in the style of the most modern trends, he has the

\textsuperscript{199} Gudrun Marci-Boehncke, \textit{Fanny Lewald: Jüdin, Preußin, Schriftstellerin}, 274.
\textsuperscript{200} Lewald, \textit{Jenny}, 38.
appearance of being overdone. Moreover, by wearing modern bourgeois clothing in the form of the atlas vest and more Eastern dress in the form of the Turkish shawl, Steinheim attempts to show his straddling of both groups—the modern and traditional—neither of which really works for him, as his appearance is described as unharmonious. And in the end, it is this unharmonious image that proponents of Jewish nationalization, like Jenny’s brother Eduard, are fighting against through education. As will later be discussed, it is the “Oriental” elements which need to be done away with in the Jewish persona and this can be accomplished through their education and nationalization.

2. Eduard Meier: Nationalization through Education

The love of Germany as home and fatherland is most greatly seen in the Jewish figure of Eduard Meier who, when faced with the choice between marrying the Christian woman he loves by fleeing to another country or staying and fighting for his people and their place in what he considers his Germany, he decides to stay:

Mochte der Schiffer noch so lange von der Heimat getrennt sein, einst kehrt er doch zurück in ein Land, dessen Bürger, dessen eingeborner Sohn er ist, das ihn schützt in allen seinen Rechten; und die Gattin, die er unter allen Mädchen frei erwählte, sinkt an seine Brust, ohne daß der Glaube wie ein drohendes Gespenst zwischen sie tritt und mit kalter Hand die warmen Herzen trennt.201

He dreams of a Germany (of which he considers himself a son) that will one day protect him and his rights and will allow for difference of belief.

201 Lewald, Jenny, 76.
While Eduard shows a love for Germany and considers it his fatherland, because he was born there and his family is there, he also shows an affinity towards the Jewish people. The connection to the Jewish people is not a connection of religious belief, “Es ist nicht der Glaube, der mich an das Judentum bindet: ich bin weder Jude noch Christ in dem Sinne der Menge – ich bin ein Mensch.” Rather the connection for Eduard is based in the idea of the Jewish people as a family who, for thousands of years, have fought against persecution. Viewing the Jewish people as that, as a “people,” was not novel. During the course of the nineteenth century, German Jewry moved from being viewed purely as a religious minority to being understood in socio-cultural terms and thus as a minority defined only originally by religious association.

Although Eduard understands that conversion would open up many possibilities for him and help him escape the position that he is in, allowing him to take a position in a medical clinic and to marry the Christian woman he loves, he is inwardly conflicted by the thought of converting:

Aber war dies Schreckbild nicht zu bannen? Warum sollte er nicht, wie tausend andere, einem Glauben entsagen, dessen Form allein ihn von der übrigen Menschheit trennte? Was band ihn an Moses und seine Gesetze?...Aber war es denn allein der Glaube, den er zu verleugnen hatte? War es nicht auch das Volk, in dem er geboren war, von dem er sich losreißen mußte? Das uralte Volk, das in tausendjährigen Kämpfen seine Selbstständigkeit zu wahren und damit seine innere Mächtigkeit zu bekunden gewußt hat?

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202 Lewald, Jenny, 152.
204 Lewald, Jenny, 76.
Conversion for him has less to do with the renunciation of one’s religious belief in acceptance of another and more to do with the renunciation of a people who he is linked to and who have endured thousands of years of suffering and persecution.

His attachment to the Jewish people, however, does not diminish his attachment to his fatherland—Germany. In fact, he decides to make his life’s work the fight for equal rights and acceptance of his people. Yet, he does this in the context of Germany. He realizes that he could easily leave Germany for another country that would allow him the right to a union with Clara Horn, but he decides that his attachment to Germany is too great and that his efforts would be best suited to change the laws and views there.

In this way, Eduard’s belief about the Jew’s position in Germany echoes that of Christian Wilhelm Dohm in his book Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden. Dohm believed that the conversion the Jews needed to undergo was not a religious conversion, but rather a secular conversion. Through legal emancipation, the Jews would be relieved of their particular customs, laws and communal life, and be inspired with love and patriotism for the nation. Eduard also believes, like Dohm, that the Jewish people need to assimilate into wider culture and this end can be attained through legal emancipation and education. For Eduard, the confessional divide between Jews and Christians is not what separates them, but rather those national elements and particularisms, which he

205 see Christian Wilhelm Dohm, Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden (Berlin and Stettin: Friedrich Nicolai, 1781).
still sees in some Jews, like Steinheim, who is portrayed as the negative stereotype:

Ich teile Ihre Empfindung”, gab Eduard ihm zur Antwort, ‘aber Steinheims üble Angewohnheit ist halbwegs nationell. Es walten in den Juden noch die alten orientalischen Elemente vor; und noch heute hat z.B. der ungebildete Jude seine Lust an kleinen Erzählungen, wie der Orientale. Er liebt es, sich in Bildern und Gleichnissen auszudrücken, und mag gern das, was er zu sagen hat, mit einer jener Anekdoten begleiten, die oft schlagend genug sind und deren seine alten Bücher zu Tausenden enthalten...Ein Teil der gebildeten Juden kann sich dreist mit jedem andern Gebildeten messen, er würde, wie in Frankreich, sich längst der Masse der Nation angeschlossen haben, er würde auch in Deutschland längst nationalisiert sein...207

Through education, therefore, Jews can be assimilated into Germany, be nationalized as Germans, and can lose those oriental features which distinguish them from their fellow German citizens. These oriental features are evident in the case of Steinheim who, because of his lack of education, still speaks through images and parables.

Whereas Eduard as a character offers a critique of Christian conceptions of nation and represents a more liberal-minded stance, his views on women and the idea of bourgeois respectability are not any different from his gentile counterparts in the narrative, except that they are divorced from religion. Unlike his questioning of the position of the Jew in German society, Eduard never questions the conventional notions of the dichotomy between the sexes. This is clearly seen in his affections for Clara Horn. In Clara, Eduard sees the ideal, virtuous German woman. His ideas about education and nationalization through education do not extend to women.

207 Lewald, Jenny, 98-99.
It is through the figure of Jenny Meier that Lewald offers up her critique of certain discourses that inform German national identity. In contrast to the figures of Sternheim and Eduard Meier, the figure of Jenny Meier has been viewed in opposing ways in the literary criticism of Lewald’s novel. Some, like Renate Möhrmann, regard her character as an overtly political figure, “den Typus der jungdeutschen Frau, ...welche nicht mehr bloß wartend am Fenster hockt, sondern lebhaften Anteil an den Gesprächen der Männer nimmt und ein offenes Ohr für die Fragen ihrer Zeit hat.”208 Yet, others like Gabriele Schneider have viewed Jenny’s character as apolitical, as a figure who does not overtly voice any political belief or willingness to engage in the political questions of her time.209 While there is merit to each of the arguments made in relation to these opposing views, the figure of Jenny Meier cannot be seen as an apolitical character. She is not political through voiced words which give credence to Gabriele Schneider’s argument. Jenny voices her aversion to overt political discussions in the novel: “Ich bitte dich Eduard, nur beim Frühstück verschone mich mit Politik, nur die eine Tassee Kaffee lasse mich ohne politische Zutaten genießen.”210 Nevertheless, her actions do speak to a politically minded and engaged figure, as Renate Möhrmann has pointed to in her analysis. Her politicalness is extended further, especially if one views gender and its dichotomy, in addition to religion, as being imbued with political implications. In this way, she becomes the novel’s most  

208 Möhrmann, Die andere Frau, 136.  
209 Gabriele Schneider, Vom Zeitroman zum “stylisierten” Roman, 86.  
210 Lewald, Jenny, 34.
political figure, in that politics plays a role in and dictates her position in German society, not only as a woman but a minority as well.

Perhaps the most effective critique of purely Christian views of nation Lewald provides is through the title character’s conversion to Christianity and the emotional and spiritual turmoil and rift it causes in her. Although Jenny’s situation parallels her brother’s, both being in love with someone who does not share the same religious faith, Jenny’s situation differs and is more problematic because she is a woman. As a Jew and as a woman, she is in a doubly oppressed position and experiences not only a double standard in terms of morals but also in terms of religion. Unlike her brother, who refuses to convert to Christianity in order to marry Clara, Jenny’s conversion for Reinhard is hailed as a tribute to her femininity.\(^\text{211}\) This testament to her femininity is understood and voiced by her brother. While he does not believe he can convert to Christianity because he views it as “meineidig...an [seiner] Ehre,”\(^\text{212}\) he views Jenny’s conversion in a vastly different light. His belief falls in line with the idea of bourgeois femininity that held that men should be the enunciators of belief and that women should follow: “Jeder Mann ist seiner Geliebten der Verkünder eines neuen Glaubens; Liebe ist die Offenbarung, in der das Weib den Geliebten als den gottgesandten Messias erblickt.”\(^\text{213}\) The role of the man is to show woman belief and it is her duty to follow and obey him. Thus, Jenny’s conversion is a charge she must fulfill

\begin{flushright}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \(^\text{211}\) Möhrmann, \textit{Die andere Frau}, 135.
  \item \(^\text{212}\) Lewald, \textit{Jenny}, 76.
  \item \(^\text{213}\) Lewald, \textit{Jenny}, 109.
\end{itemize}
\end{flushright}
as a woman, but Eduard’s conversion would be a false oath; as a man he is not required to have a milder nature.

While Eduard’s beliefs about women echo Reinhard’s beliefs, the motivation of each seems to be different. Reinhard very much views a woman’s place as connected to religion. The characteristics of the sexes for him are based not only in an ideal of bourgeois respectability but also to Christianity. It is Christianity that will make Jenny’s demeanor milder and teach her that her place is within the home as wife and mother. It is Christianity that will provide her with decent bourgeois morals and make her an ideal German woman.

Eduard’s understanding of the sexes, on the other hand, falls in line with the idea of bourgeois respectability—divorced from any overt religious belief. As discussed previously, the faults he finds in his sister’s character have less to do with her lack of Christian religious teaching and more to do with her attending the theater as French women might. In attending the theater, he worries that she might not be exposed to good bourgeois virtue, a possibility he finds disturbing. Instead, he hopes she will learn to be a good German woman like Clara Horn.

At first glance, Jenny’s conversion to Christianity seems like something she very much wants to do in order to demonstrate her love to Reinhard:

Mit aller Kraft ihrer Seele hörte sie den Vorträgen ihres Lehrers zu; sie wollte sich aus Liebe um jeden Preis überzeugen; glauben, was Millionen Menschen, die es kaum so eifrig gesucht hatten wie sie, zur beseligen Gewißheit, zur Stärkung in Not und Tod geworden war. Warum sollte gerade ihr das unerreichbar bleiben? Warum gerade ihr, die ihn so eifrig erstrebte, der Glaube versagt sein?²¹⁴

²¹⁴ Lewald, Jenny, 132.
Nevertheless, the main impetus for her conversion is not to demonstrate her love to Reinhard or to work around the laws that denied mixed-marriages; it is due to Reinhard and his “griesgramige Frömmigkeit” and the belief that only through Christianity could Jenny view life with any seriousness.\footnote{Tebben, “Erfahrung und politische Intention,” 103.} Still, Lewald portrays religion as an impediment to Jenny’s development.\footnote{Lorenz, Keepers of the Motherland, 39.} The question must be asked, why does religion stand in her way? What are the repercussions of religion, specifically Christianity, on Jenny’s development?

This question can only be answered by looking at the role that Christianity assigns to women at this time. Women’s position in German society was perceived not only as natural but also as ordained by God. In this way, religion often supported the cult of domesticity that was widespread and popular in this period. Religion could, however, act as a double-edged sword, either opening or closing doors, as it did allow women to live independently from marriage. Just like bourgeois virtue, theology was patriarchally ordered and aided in subordinating women by confining them to specific roles that were deemed appropriate for them, even if these roles meant a life without marriage. Although some critics have argued that Lewald does not explicitly thematize female emancipation in this novel,\footnote{Judith Purver, “Steps Beyond the Private Sphere: Women Writers of the Vormärz and the Challenge of Exclusion,” in Vormärzliteratur in europaischen Perspektive I: Öffentlichkeit und nationale Identität, eds. Helmut Koopmann and Martina Lauster (Bielefeld, 1996), 262.} if we look at the ways in which she deals with religion, we can see a call to women’s self-determination.
Like Lewald herself, Jenny’s religious leanings sway more to a pantheistic understanding of God and the universe, rather than a positivist understanding. Jenny expresses this to her cousin Joseph, when she says:

Wie wir Juden jetzt in religiöser Beziehung denken, gibt es keine positive Religion mehr, die für uns möglich ist, und wir teilen mit Tausenden von Christen die Hoffnung, daß eine neue Religion sich aus dem Wissen hervorarbeiten werde, deren Lehren nur Nächstenliebe und Wahrheit, deren Mittelpunkt Gott sein muß, ohne daß sie einer mystischen Enthüllung bedürfen.

Through a pantheistic worldview, Jenny attempts to overcome the confessional divide that exists in German society. Rather than understanding God as a mystical being, both Jenny and her cousin share the hope that a new religion and a new nation will be born of reason. Her relationship to the Christian and Jewish religion is ambivalent and conflicting. Like Lewald herself, Jenny is only aware of Jewish customs and traditions from family acquaintances like Steinheim. Her schooling exposes her to Christian teachings; however, she is never able to understand the idea of the trinity and the positivistic nature of the religion goes against her nature – which is to place reason above all things. Thus, even though conversion will enable her to marry the man she loves, she eventually finds it to be a false oath that she has sworn against herself. Judaism also does not present itself as a useful avenue either, because she feels no attachment to it. Therefore, Jenny’s relationship to Judaism is not based in religion, but rather, like Eduard, in a feeling of solidarity.

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218 Lewald, Jenny, 84.
219 This would continue to ring true for Jewish women throughout the nineteenth century, defining Jewishness through community, rather than religion. see Marion A. Kaplan, The Making
Jenny’s conversion to Christianity, while characterized as a declaration of love to Reinhard
d, can also be read as a conversion necessitated by the need for belonging. Without conversion, Jenny could never be viewed as embodying the ideal of German womanhood and would never be allowed to marry Reinhard. Ultimately, however, this is not the ideal means for constructing German national identity to Jenny. Rather than basing national identity around discourses of religion and gender which exclude her, she feels as though belonging should be centered on reason.

**J. Conclusion**

In the very last scene, the reader is confronted with Jenny’s father, Eduard and Joseph all standing over Jenny’s freshly dug grave in what is described as a foreign, Christian cemetery, “auf dem fremden christlichen Kirchhof.” Both Jenny and Walter are victims of prejudice: Jenny, because she herself was Jewish; and Walter, because he was able to look past that and love her for who she was. Their love was destined to fail because, as Fanny Lewald had made clear in many of her earlier writings, Germany was not ready to accept liberal thought and become free. But this setback did not keep her from tackling these issues in her novel. As Ingeborg Bachmann has pointed out, “Die Literatur aber braucht kein Pantheon, sie versteht sich nicht aufs Sterben, auf den Himmel, auf keine

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of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany (New York, 1991), 84.

220 Ulla Schacht, Geschichte in der Geschichte, 8.

221 Lewald, Jenny, 273.
Erlösung, sondern auf die stärkste Absicht, zu wirken in jeder Gegenwart, in
dieser oder der nächsten”\textsuperscript{222} and that the writer should succeed “zu
repräsentieren, seine Zeit zu repräsentieren, und etwas zu prädestinieren, für das
die Zeit noch nicht gekommen ist.”\textsuperscript{223} Bachmann sees in literature the ability to
transform and change. Yet, she recognizes that this change may not occur
immediately but some time in the future. She also does not believe that this
occurs with a single poem; nonetheless, an effect can be achieved through
literature and through language.

With this ending, Lewald demonstrates a similar sentiment. Jenny has to
die at the end because Germany has not yet reached a point in which it can
handle the change and the vision that Lewald sets forth. In writing this novel and
providing a critique that sets forth a vision that challenges the bourgeois order of
the nation, she is making a statement that might have repercussions and lead to
change in the future of the German nation. Through her characters, Lewald
demonstrates the multiple ideas and positions regarding women and Jews in the
nineteenth century. She ties the fate of Jewish emancipation to that of women’s
emancipation. Eventually, she indicates that emancipation for women and Jews
can only be possible with the secularization of German society.


Chapter 4

Louise Aston’s novel *Aus dem Leben einer Frau*

A. Introduction

Louise Aston represents perhaps one of the most radical women of the *Vormärz* period. In contrast to Fanny Lewald, who was discussed in the previous chapter, and Ida Hahn-Hahn, who will be discussed later, her personal life was marked by much more personal scandal. Characterized often “as the most radical German feminist of the *Vormärz*”[^224] and as embodying the highpoint of feminist radicalism during this period[^225], Louise Aston is considered by some to be the first woman in Germany, who claimed in every aspect—sexual, intellectual, and political—that women should have personal rights and freedoms[^226].

In comparison with many other women writers of the *Vormärz*, there is very little known about Louise Aston’s childhood. Unlike Fanny Lewald, Aston never wrote an autobiography chronicling her early life and unlike Hahn-Hahn, she did not write extensive travel literature to give substantial insight into her own experiences. In fact, much of her own thought and experience can only be ascertained through the little that she did write. More is known about her life in

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later years due to her writing and the scandal that followed her, making her very much disliked by other “feminists” of this period.

Described as a “cigar-smoking, beer-drinking, cross-dressing divorcée,” Aston gained much notoriety with the Berlin public and the Berlin police.227 Predictably, the public at large took great offense to her very unconventional behavior. Among those offended by her behavior, specifically by the challenge she posed towards men’s roles, were other vocal women of the time like Fanny Lewald and Louise Otto-Peters, two prominent bourgeois feminists of the period.228 Louise Otto-Peters, who had very specific views of what female emancipation was and was not, felt as though Aston did more to hinder its cause and discredit it than she did to help it.229 Aston’s unconventional views and lifestyle eventually led to her expulsion from multiple cities. In 1846, she was forced to leave Berlin by Prussian authorities on grounds of subversive behavior. She would be expelled from Berlin a second time in November 1848, and then later barred from such towns as Leipzig, Breslau, Munich, and Zurich.230

However, in connection with writers like Lewald, Aston also was interested in topics surrounding German national identity and the ways in which women and other marginal groups were positioned within the burgeoning German nation.

227 Todd Kontje, Women, the Novel, and the German Nation, 170.
230 Germaine Goetzinger, Für die Selbstverwirklichung der Frau: Louise Aston in Selbstzeugnissen und Dokumenten (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1983), 121.
B. The Early Years

Louise Aston was born on November 26, 1814 as Louise Franziska Hoche in Gröningen near Halberstadt to Johann Gottfried Hoche and Louise Charlotte Berning. Her father was an advisor to the church consistory and senior minister in Gröningen bei Halberstadt. According to the few accounts of her earlier life, Aston received a good education and excelled in the fields of literature and music. However, at the age of seventeen, Louise was forced into a marriage of convenience with Samuel Aston, an Englishman with a factory in Magdeburg. The marriage to Samuel Aston has been described by those who knew Louise as unhappy and unfulfilling. The German dramatist and poet Rudolf Gottschall, who was well acquainted with Louise wrote, “Die Ehe mit Aston war indes eine tief unglückliche; mehrmals verließ sie ihn, einmal mit Zurücklassung eines Briefes...” The marriage to Samuel Aston ended in divorce in 1838, and Louise moved with her child, Jenny Louise, to Berlin. Three years later, in 1841, Louise reconciled with her husband Samuel, and they eventually remarried. However, there are differing accounts of her reconciliation with Samuel Aston. One source claims that Louise was persuaded by a clergyman in Berlin to return and remarry her ex-husband. Others cite both Louise and Samuel reuniting on the deathbed.

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233 Carico, Life and Works, 27.
of their first daughter, Jenny Louise. In either event, the second marriage to Samuel Aston also did not last, and in 1844, it was officially dissolved. Despite the dissolution, the second marriage resulted in the birth of a second daughter in June 1842, also named Jenny Louise after their first daughter who had died.

After her second divorce from Samuel Aston, Louise spent some time with her sister before moving once again to Berlin. Berlin seemed like a good opportunity for Aston, as it was here that she felt she could provide a cosmopolitan education for her daughter and also make a name for herself as a writer. During the course of the first half of the nineteenth century, Berlin had developed into a major city centered around trade and industry where both the propertied and educated bourgeoisie rose to economic power. And it was precisely this bourgeois spirit which she opposed, as she moved to Berlin in August 1845. It was accordingly in Berlin that Louise Aston decided to refuse to live by the “norms” of bourgeois, civic decorum and thusly forayed into a more radical life.

C. Life in Berlin: A Turn Towards Radicalism

Introduced into various literary and intellectual circles by friend and companion Rudolf Gottschall, Aston made a home for herself among a group known as “die Berliner Freien” during her stay in Berlin. The members of this group would meet in the Hippelscher Weinstube in the Friedrichstraße and

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234 Goetzinger, Für die Selbstverwirklichung der Frau, 24.
debate critical topics of the day such as censorship, struggles with the authorities, socialism, and the *Burschenschaften*. Due to her connections with this group, Aston probably came into contact with many radical and extreme literary and philosophical figures of her day. Members of “die Freien” included among others Bruno Bauer and his brother Edgar, Max Stirner, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Arnold Ruge, and Ludwig Feuerbach. Following Hegel’s philosophy of the dialectic of history, this group employed Hegel’s ideas about the promise of history as being the total negation of everything that restricted freedom. Hegel, himself an advocate for the Prussian State, saw in Prussia a vehicle of human freedom and an exemplar for the German nation. After his death in 1831, however, this group of young radicals began to focus more on the contemporary manifestation of the oppressive state and not just the state in its abstract form. This resulted in major critiques of religion and ultimately of the role of religion in the power of the Prussian political establishment. Figures such as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels would eventually break with the group, citing differences in the basis for the establishment’s power. For Marx and Engels, power was not based in religion, but rather it became a question of the ownership of capital—a class struggle.

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236 see Karl Marx, “Discovering Hegel,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978), 7. Karl Marx began attending these meetings in Berlin in 1837. It is not clear whether or not he was still attending or would have been familiar with Louise Aston, during her attendance in the 1840s.
In line with the “die Berliner Freien,” Aston too had very strong beliefs about the role of the state and of religion in the lives of Germans. She would eventually abandon the faith—Lutheranism—in which she had been raised. Aston was not alone among radical German feminists of her time in rejecting religious faith. Louise Dittmar and Mathilde Franziska Anneke also rejected organized religion, questioning religious faith and the double standard it created in judging women more harshly than men.239

Unfortunately, Aston’s affiliation with “Die Berliner Freien” and her rejection of “normal” behavior resulted in her being considered a subject of police attention. The fact that Aston and her cohorts in Berlin were inclined to anarchism seemed of little consequence to the authorities in Berlin—what was most disturbing, rather, was that they were self-proclaimed atheists.240 She attracted the attention of the press in Berlin due to her connections to high profile members of “die Freien” and her own writing.241 The press in Berlin did little to help positive perceptions of her, often characterizing her as immoral and salacious, and played a crucial role in Aston’s pursuance by the authorities through their coverage of her and her commitment to sexual freedom. The attacks on her did not just end with the press. They were continued in the forms

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239 see Anderson, *Joyous Greetings*, 12. The rejection of religious faith extended to support of one another. In 1847, Mathilda Franziska Anneke wrote an essay entitled “Women in Conflict with Social Conditions,” in which she expressed support for Aston, who had been exiled from Berlin the previous year.


241 In 1846, she published a volume of poetry entitled *Wilde Rosen*, which challenged widely held bourgeois values by advocating the emancipation of women and free love.
of letters from average citizens to the Berlin police. In one such anonymous letter, written in 1845 to the president of police, a citizen wrote:

Eine Sache, die jedem guten Patrioten tief zu Herzen geht, und gehen muß, bekümmert auch mich...Eine gewisse Asten oder Aston...zieht durch ihre Verführungskünste, und durch entsetzliche Ausschweifungen, Männer jedes Standes und Alters nach sich; nicht genug, daß Männer, ihr Einkommen, und Vermögen dieser Buhlerin opfern müssen, so hat dies Weib im Verein mit vielen Männer[n], Dichter[n], Künstler[n], Offiziere[n], Juden etc. ein Komplott gegen den Staat, den König und die Religion gebildet...

What is interesting to observe in this letter is the disdain for Aston’s lifestyle held by this self-proclaimed patriot. Not only is she a corrupter and seducer of men, who are deemed innocent in their own behavior of cavorting with such a woman, but she is also lumped together as a conspirator against the nation along with other “outsiders” and enemies of the state such as Jews. In addition, she is accused of plotting against the state and its religion—themes that she deals with quite overtly in her later writings.

On March 21, 1846, Louise Aston was summoned to leave Berlin within the next eight days. Despite many attempts on her part to appeal to the Prussian Interior Minister and to the king himself, she was forced to yield to the will of the Prussian authorities, and on May 13, 1846, she was banished from Berlin to

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243 see Debbie Pinfold and Ruth Whittle, Voices of Rebellion: Political Writing by Malwida von Meysenburg, Fanny Lewald, Johanna Kinkel and Louise Aston (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005). According to Ruth Whittle and Debbie Pinfold in their study on political writing by women of the Vormärz, Louise Aston’s expulsion from Berlin in 1846 was not based on “staatsgefährdene” reasons, but rather because of a poem written about her by Rudolf Gottschall. Thus, Whittle and Pinfold conclude that she was expelled not due to her own writing, but her perceived immoral behavior. However, as this letter written in 1845 clearly demonstrates, Aston’s immoral behavior was perceived and deemed to be dangerous to the state.
Köpenick. Although these sorts of banishments were not new for the Prussian authorities—other writers who were considered oppositional forces like Ernst Droncke and Friedrich Saß were also forced to leave—what was new in the case of Aston was that her expulsion was due to her moral behavior and her atheistic beliefs.\(^{244}\) This, however, did not prevent her from returning to Berlin in disguise. According to Varnhagen von Ense’s diary entries, in spite of her expulsion from Berlin, she was there most every day, “[…] sie ist nach Köpenick verbannt, aber täglich hier in Berlin.”\(^{245}\)

In April 1848, Louise Aston left Köpenick and went with other members of the Berliner Freischaren to Schleswig-Holstein to aid in the protection of Schleswig-Holstein from annexation by Denmark. On the one hand, Aston felt this was important in terms of protecting German national freedom; yet she also felt strongly about aiding Schleswig-Holstein because she believed in the values of the Vormärz—freedom, equality and brotherhood.\(^ {246}\)

It was also later in 1848 that Aston began to publish her own magazine, entitled Der Freischäler. Für Kunst und sociales Leben. The first issue appeared on November 1, 1848, but was unfortunately short-lived. The purpose of the magazine was to publish poems, theater reviews, novella fragments, and reports of revolutionary events, and thereby to argue openly for the concerns and cause of the German people and democracy.

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\(^{244}\) Hülsbergen, “Louise Aston,” 30.


\(^{246}\) Hülsbergen, “Louise Aston,” 35.
Even though Aston’s years in Köpenick, which lasted until the revolutionary events of 1848, were some of the most difficult for her personally—she had to deal with custody issues of her only surviving daughter until the death of her ex-husband Samuel Aston in January of 1848—they were also her most productive years in terms of literature. It is within the span of these two years that she wrote her treatise defending her beliefs that led to her expulsion from Berlin, Meine Emancipation, Verweisung und Rechtfertigung, as well as her first two novels, Aus dem Leben einer Frau and Lydia. In comparison to other women writers of the time, less is known about Aston, especially after the failed revolution, as she all but disappeared from public life. What little that can be gathered includes her marriage to Dr. Daniel Eduard Meier, a physician in Bremen, on November 25, 1850.\(^{247}\) In terms of her writing, however, there is little evidence to support that she published any works after 1850.\(^{248}\)

**D. Louise Aston and “das deutsche Volk”**

It becomes clear when examining Louise Aston’s personal life and her writings that she sees “das deutsche Volk” as her audience. In her treatise Meine Emancipation, Verweisung und Rechtfertigung, she appeals directly to the German people in order to defend and justify her honor and actions and demonstrate how she has become a victim of the Berlin authorities: “Nachdem ich so all preußischen Instanzen durchgemacht, wende ich mich an eine höhere:

\(^{247}\) Carico, *Life and Works*, 41.
ich wende mich in allerletzter Instanz an das deutsche Volk!” What is striking about this statement made by Aston is that she appeals to the German people to be her judge and not the Prussian authorities. Thus she links the German nation, not to the absolutism of the Prussian state but to something more—to a people that should have the ability to decide their own fate. She recognizes an entity bigger than Prussia that she believes carries more weight and meaning. By appealing to the German people and sharing her personal affairs through writing, she also hopes to shift current discourse and affect the social order and thereby to provide a means for people to be encouraged to share their own stories and ideas.

In addition to defending herself before the German people, this treatise offers insight into Aston’s personal ideas about the role of women in the German nation. In this work, she openly talks about women very much in the vein of German tradition, making allusions to the Minnehof and knighthood of the medieval period. However, Aston did not want to rely on this traditional conception of German womanhood in her own life, as she felt it led to the wrongful persecution of her own life and to violence against other women. In contrast to these traditional ideas of German womanhood, Aston focuses her argument on Recht der freien Persönlichkeit where each individual is free to develop their own personality.

Unlike other feminists of the period, Louise Aston’s understanding of the German nation and of women’s position therein was much more tied to the

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political and revolutionary liberal elements of nation at the time, no doubt influenced by the many people she associated with during her time in Berlin. Her understanding of the German nation has more to do with freeing it from despotic rule and creating autonomous and independent individuals who develop their beliefs and participate in the future decisions as related to their nation. This freedom to develop autonomous and independent selves is carried into her novel writing as well and is not just a part of her political writing.

**E. Aus dem Leben einer Frau (1847)**

In her novel *Aus dem Leben einer Frau*, Aston critiques German society and the way in which it is represented and divided. Her critique mainly focuses on the way in which women are treated and what they symbolize, but it also extends to the plight of the working class and their struggles within a society in the midst of industrialization. In this way, Aston brings the emancipatory ideals of two socially disadvantaged groups together and calls for new conceptions of German society in which people’s imposed dependencies can be transformed and transcended.

Published in 1847, Aston’s novel can be understood as semi-autobiographical because it contains many allusions to the author’s own personal life and experience. As some critics have pointed out, it has been an instrumental
piece of work used in attempts at reconstructing her biography.\textsuperscript{250} She alludes to this autobiographical nature already in the prologue of her work, when she writes: “Findet dies Fragment Anklang, hat der Kern dieses Lebens und sein Schicksal eine allgemeine Bedeutung: so schließt sich vielleicht ein zweites Fragment daran, das manche Entwicklungen weiter führt, und manche ‘confessions’ vollendet.”\textsuperscript{251} By using the word “confessions” she is intimating that the novel itself is an act of confession and when compared with what is known about her actual life, it is easy to make this connection.

In addition to the allusions to autobiography in the prologue of the novel, autobiographical parallels can be drawn between the main female protagonist Johanna and Louise Aston herself. Like her character Johanna, Aston was forced into a marriage of convenience with a much older factory owner. In addition, many of the figures within the work can also be read as figures from her own life. The figure of her father Johann Gottfried Hoche, an advisor to the church consistory, is alluded to in the figure of Johanna’s father who was likewise a pastor. And the break between Johanna and Herr Oburn at the very end of the novel mirrors the issues that Aston herself faced in her own life with her first marriage to Samuel Aston whom she divorced twice. There are also phonetic

\textsuperscript{250} Much secondary literature has focussed on the extent to which \textit{Aus dem Leben einer Frau} can be read as an autobiographical narrative. Some critics like Barbara Wimmer have disputed the extent to which it is autobiographical, arguing that the narrative goes beyond what we know about Aston’s own life. See Barbara Wimmer, \textit{Die Vormärzschriftstellerin Louise Aston: Selbst- und Zeiterfahrung} (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1993). Others, like Kay Goodman analyze the text solely through the lens of autobiography. See Kay Goodman, \textit{Dis/Closures: Women’s Autobiography in Germany between 1790 and 1914} (New York: Lang, 1986). Germaine Goetzinger, while making no explicit statement about the overtly autobiographical element to the novel, points out that the work was originally entitled \textit{Louise, eine Ehestandsgeschichte}. See Goetzinger, \textit{Für die Selbstverwirklichung der Frau}, 58.

\textsuperscript{251} Louise Aston, \textit{Aus dem Leben einer Frau} (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag, 1982), VI.
similarities of names, such as Aston/Oburn and Louise/Johanna, with Johanna being the female version of her father’s name Johann. Yet, given the lack of knowledge of Aston’s early life, it is difficult to discern where fact ends and fiction begins.

*Aus dem Leben einer Frau* is divided into a prologue and three primary sections based on setting: the rural parsonage, Carlsbad and Oburn’s factory. The novel’s sections are divided up into various levels of female emancipation as carried out by the main female protagonist Johanna. While these sections can be read as such, each part also offers an element of criticism to the forging of the German nation and the identities and lives of those therein. In each of these sections, Aston problematizes the construction of the dominant and competing narratives of the German nation as it has been conceived by many German nationalists and the aristocracy, and she attempts to engage new understandings of the German nation that fall in line with her own radical and revolutionary understandings of nation. She is interested in exposing the narratives and discourses—religion, patriarchal authority and bourgeois morality—that create a privileged hierarchy of gender and class in German society. The following sections will explore the various parts of the novel and Aston’s critique within these sections.
F. Prologue: Setting the Tone

In the opening Prologue, Aston provides the reader with her purpose in writing the novel. Reader can here already discern a lot about Aston and her beliefs about the role of literature in the modern times she considers herself to be a part of. Unlike other women authors of the time, such as Bettina von Arnim or even Fanny Lewald whose literary role-model was Goethe, Aston attempts to distance herself from her paternal literary forefathers and, in so doing, endeavors to create something new that represents and also criticizes modern life, particularly its impact on those who have little power in creating their own circumstances. As will be discussed, however, she does draw on literary conventions set forth by these literary figures but to achieve different ends. By moving away from her German forefathers and thus their German traditions and ideas, Aston calls for something more inclusive and revolutionary.

In the opening prologue of her novel *Aus dem Leben einer Frau*, Aston decidedly takes a stand against the abstract realm of aesthetics propagated by writers like Johann Wolfgang Goethe whom she views as retreating into the abstract and ignoring the plights of real people and their circumstances. The allusion to Goethe cannot be denied or ignored. The title of Aston’s novel itself alludes to Goethe’s autobiography which is fully entitled “Aus meinem Leben. Dichtung und Wahrheit.” Yet unlike Goethe’s work, which attempts to represent an individual and unique life (that of the author’s), Aston’s *Aus dem Leben einer Frau*, as the title suggests in referring to “a woman” and not to any specific woman, presents the life and issues of a woman as representative, not
inimitable.252 Thus, Aston is less concerned with the idea of the individual in her novel. What she emphasizes in her prologue is that unlike Goethe’s autobiography which stresses individual genius, her novel focuses on a woman’s life. And this woman’s life is not necessarily specific to any one woman but is representative of women’s lives in general in nineteenth-century Germany. It is therefore not important that the story be about one woman’s specific life, but rather that it represent women’s plight as a whole.

By distancing herself from her literary forefathers and the abstract realm which they created in their works, Aston hopes to influence life through her novel—not to remain a mere spectator. The value that is placed on this work is that of proximity to and the involvement in life. As she states at the beginning, Aston wants to evince the turmoil of life. As she begins in her prologue, she does not want to represent life as an artistic whole but rather wants to represent it as fragmentary because that is the way in which modern life is lived, “Darum sind sie fragmentarisch wie diese ganze moderne Welt, aus deren gährenden Elementen sie hervorgegangen, ein Beitrag zur Charakteristik unseres Lebens!”253 She draws attention to the chaos modern life brings and disturbs us with, by arguing that even what used to be thought of as peaceful and harmonious is not free from the clutches of modernity, and perhaps, as she will show, has always been a site of disharmony.

By making the claim that the story she is about to write is as fragmentary as modern life, Aston’s novel references the nature of the modern world and the

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252 Goodman, Dis/Closures, 123.
253 Aston, Aus dem Leben, V.
need for modern identities. For Aston, the way in which German identity is constructed around discourses of gender and class does not work in the modern world. As she will demonstrate, the current image of German society is violent in its treatment of women, forcing them into loveless marriages of convenience and offering them few alternatives. And ultimately, she links women’s emancipation to the plight of the working class whom she also views as being mistreated. Thus, her novel is important to the current situation in Germany and its future, as she engages in discourses that are crucial to the way in which German national identity were being constructed in the mid-nineteenth century.

G. The Rural Parsonage: Voss’s Luise and Aston’s Critique of the Rural Idyll as German Nation

In the very opening scene of Louise Aston’s novel, the reader is presented with the image of the quintessential parsonage as the manifestation of the German idyll:

Eine alterthümliche Pfarrerwohnung gilt von jeher für das heimatliche Reich der Idylle. Hier quartiert, seit Vossens Louise, die gemütliche Phantasie der Dichter ihre behaglichen Gestalten ein, welche in dem Comfort eines stillen, in sich befriedigten Lebens das letzte Ziel und den ganzen Werth der Existenz zu erschöpfen wähnen.\(^{254}\)

Aston’s opening two lines set up how she would like her novel to be read. Aston draws on popular notions of the idyll and its genre by referencing *Luise: Ein ländliches Gedicht in drei Idyllen*, written by Johann Heinrich Voss in the second

half of the eighteenth century. By referencing the idyll and Voss in this manner, Aston sets up a critical tone to her novel where the reader expects to be engaged in questions of the formation of modern versus traditional identities.

Voss’s work, along with other idyll poetry,255 often found voice among middle-class Germans of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century who felt as though this literature idealized their goals and aims of representing German national culture against immoral courtly society.256 In this way, the genre of the idyll was often linked to middle-class conceptions of the German nation and its identity. In his poem Luise, Voss creates a middle-class idyll marked with the moral purity of the middle-classes, located in the rural German countryside. His idyll is presented as an ideal for a future, culturally pure German society—as the genre of the idyll represented the idea of nation as it was conceived of, as a naturally linguistic and cultural community, and not necessarily an organized state.257 At the very center of Voss’s critique is a disavowal of courtly culture and European politics which he views as attempting to penetrate and corrupt middle-class values and religious faith but which are ultimately unsuccessful in this endeavor. Tying and connecting notions of an ideal German nation and its character to the idyll has the effect of naturalizing the nation in very specific ways. If the idyll represents the idea of the German nation, and this nation is a natural entity, then the religious and middle-class

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value discourses that inform its construction are also made to look organic. This will become problematic in Aston’s assertions, as she will demonstrate that history and life are not static entities immune to change.

It is here that Ferdinand Tönnies becomes useful in examining the idyll and how Aston uses this genre to critique certain discourses as they relate to German national conceptions. Some critics have examined the genre of the idyll using Tönnies’s terminology of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft.258 In this assertion, the rural idyll is often put forth as the epitome of the Gemeinschaft—a relationship characterized by reciprocal bonds of sentiment and kinship within a common tradition. It implies a state of harmony where there is a unity of wills, unlike Gesellschaft, in which individuals are alone and constantly living in a state of tension against everyone else. The Gemeinschaft is defined through organic and historical means such as descent and kinship and is representative of traditional blood and clan communities. In this way, it is akin to organic conceptions of the nation. In fact, Tönnies links the idea of Gemeinschaft with national character and culture, claiming that they are far better preserved by its order and way of life.259

Yet, it is this national character and culture and the discourses that inform them that Aston critiques in her novel. Gemeinschaft, in Tönnie’s assertion, is tied to the original or natural state; however, as Aston demonstrates in her prologue, modernity has permeated life, and humans are no longer living in a

258 see Ferdinand Tönnies, Community and Civil Society, trans. Jose Harris and Margaret Hollis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 22–91.
259 Tönnies, Community and Civil Society, 249.
natural state. The modern world has created social beings and modern communities. Thus, she attempts to offer alternatives to the Gemeinschaft and its preservation of a national culture that is wrought with problems, in order to present an alternative where all people can develop freely and be active participants in their own lives.

As has been stated before, Johann Heinrich Voss, whom Aston refers to in her opening paragraph, set his idyllic poems in the rural countryside. Other literary figures of the nineteenth century, such as Berthold Auerbach and Jeremias Gotthelf, also used the setting of the small rural village in their works in an attempt to represent through locality what was true of Germans and Germanness. In the eyes of these writers, the village depicted Germany at a more local level. The city was not considered a national cultural center; rather, the national cultural center came from the many rural localities of the German-speaking lands. In Aston’s opening scene, she imitates these literary writers by using the setting of the rural locality and idyll, but to achieve different ends. Rather than represent what is true of Germanness and Germans and lauding the idea of Gemeinschaft, she paints a picture that demonstrates that “traditional” or “preordained” ties should not be the basis for the German nation. The structure of the naturally organic Gemeinschaft nation in Aston’s depiction is inherently violent and causes massive power differentials appear. Despite the fact that it is conceived of as a harmonious site, she demonstrates that it is in actuality wrought with tension.

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260 see Berthold Auerbach’s Schwarzwälder Dorfgeschichten (1843) and Jeremias Gotthelf’s Die Schwarze Spinne (1842).
As the opening scene progresses, the picture that Aston paints of this quintessential idyll becomes quite different from what we find in Voss’s poem and in other literary works that make use of the idyll and rural locality. Although Louise Aston will also criticize the immorality of courtly culture in the second section of her novel, she does not view the idyll of the rural parsonage and its values as a better alternative to courtly society. The idyll and the discourses that construct it, in Aston’s eyes, are equally as corrupt. As the narrator explains, it is within the confines of the idyll that the fantasies of men and poets have housed their comfortable portraits of the way life should be, that is, how they have interpreted and idealized German culture and character. In referencing poets in relation to an idealized image of German culture and life, Aston recognizes the role literature plays in the creation of identities. She is also conscious of the fact that this ideal has been created by men who have been largely influenced by discourses of bourgeois morality and religion. Thus, their ideal is envisioned through a lens of patriarchal values and Christian faith.

The discourses surrounding patriarchal power and the Christian faith are highly interrelated. Johann Gottfried Herder’s definition of the idyll clearly depicts the interconnection between these two discourses. As Herder describes it, “Auch die königliche Braut in Schmuck und Pracht mußte als eine Schäferin, ihr Gemahl als Schäfer, der König ein Hirt der Völker, Gott selbst als ein Hirt seines Volkes erscheinen, um ein Zeitalter der Ruhe und Freude, ein Idyll der
Glückseligkeit darzustellen oder zu schildern.”

In Herder’s interpretation of the idyll, differing power relations are created in which patriarchal notions of power are set forth—a husband as shepherd to his wife, the king to his people, and God to all people. While each person has a duty to one another to his flock, there still exists a power differential in which different groups have authority over others. It is clear in Herder’s explanation of the idyll that the authority lies among the male population. Tönnies also echoes this assertion, declaring that fatherhood should form the basis of authority in the community because while matriarchy had preceded patriarchal rule, “masculine domination at work and in battle proved stronger.”

As a woman and a woman writer, Louise Aston stands in contrast to the Dichter that she references at the outset of her novel. Unlike these poets, she seeks to destabilize the construction of the rural idyll as an organically unified community and makes the claim that this image does not represent reality and can be quite violent and disharmonious. In this way, it does not provide a good basis on which conceptions of the German nation or Germanness should be built. She engages with the opposition often set up in idyll literature—tradition against modernity. Taking into account once again the purpose she sets forth in the prologue, she makes the claim that the German nation cannot exist or move forward based on its traditions. Rather new modern identities need to be formed based on livable identities, enabling individuals to claim power over their own

262 Tönnies, Community and Civil Society, 25.
circumstances and creating communities of common purpose. Aston posits that nations are not ahistorical entities and thus need to adapt and change as they progress through time.

Here Aston’s ideas can be related back to her Hegelian influence. Like Hegel, she clearly views history as a process in which there is constant improvement. However unlike Hegel, she does not see this as culminating in the Prussian state or in the current discourses that construct people. For Aston, the very image of the rural idyll becomes an anti-idyll—the “Utopien einer spießbürgerlichen Phantasie,” especially upon closer inspection and definitely in regards to the treatment of women. The idyll and the notions bound up in the idyll as a bourgeois fantasy latent with middle-class values, patriarchal power, and religion are what Aston is reacting against and seeking to undermine in this novel. By criticizing the rural idyll, she calls attention to the problematic assemblage of gender, class and religious discourses in regards to cultural and national identity in nineteenth-century Germany.

The pretense of the German idyll cannot be maintained in Aston’s assertion because of the violence that is perpetuated against women and other groups in its traditional characterization. As such, she sets the imagination of the reader in the rural parsonage and describes the reality that besets many young women of the middle-class through the main character Johanna and by doing so, destabilizes the image of the rural idyll and the notions that go with it as the ideal manifestation of the German nation. The middle-class values that lie at the heart

of German national identity and its construction of women are abusive. In addition, the world of the idyll separated from history and outside forces reinforces essentialized notions. Therefore, women in the conception of the idyll are removed from history and are seen as a static entity. While men can move into and actively participate in the world beyond, women are confined to their roles as wife and mother. This ahistoricism was a common theme in the nineteenth century and beyond and played out in the real lives of women. While men could move forward and with history, the realm of tradition remained a woman’s place, thus locking them into certain roles from which it was difficult to break free.

According to Aston, the pictures and portraits that are so often presented as the ideal in the genre of the idyll do not have any more room in present society: “Diese Genrebilder ohne Perspektive und Hintergrund finden kein Publikum mehr; denn sie sind poetische Grillen, welche der Wirklichkeit fern liegen.” In this way, earlier literature does little to portray or effect realistic change in modernizing times that require new ideas about identities and people’s roles in a changing world. These bourgeois ideals that are presented and represented do not portray reality. She demonstrates this through her description of the inside of the rural rectory.

While the outside of the rural parsonage conjures up images of harmony, once inside, the description of the room affords a different image from the apotheosis of the idyll; it is described as “etwas Lindenschatten und Abendrot,

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Mittagessen und Gebet, eine Promenade durch die Kornfelder, die Bereitung des Kaffees und wenn es hoch kommt, eines Hochzeitbettes.”265 As one critic points out, the reality of the parsonage and its layout—the half withered bouquet of everlasting flowers, the old man with his uncanny and gaunt appearance—does not present the reader with an image of harmony but one of discord in which one would expect to find conflict.266 And discord is precisely what the reader encounters and finds within the interior of the rural rectory.

It is in the parsonage that Johanna, the female protagonist, learns that her father has betrothed her to a man much older than she but who can provide her with a good lifestyle, “Du wirst ein glänzendes, vielfach beneidetes Leben führen, da vergißt sich rasch die sentimentale Jugendliebe, das Spiel einer müffiges Phantasie, das vor dem Ernst des Lebens verschwinden muß.”267 This type of marriage, often arranged out of economic necessity, was not atypical of middle-class marriages in the nineteenth century. Yet, for many politically minded women of this period, there was a hope that marriages would be born out of mutual affection and not calculated scheming.268 This sentiment is shared by Johanna who wishes to bloom and grow into what she is to become and not be bound to a marriage of economic convenience.

The rural idyll and its cozy interiors also conjure up images of Biedermeier Germany and its emphasis on the domestic world of the home, thus playing into

265 Aston, Aus dem Leben, 1.
266 Barbara Wimmer, Die Vormärzschriftstellerin Louise Aston, 15.
267 Aston, Aus dem Leben, 5.
the discourse of bourgeois values: “What has remained is the preconception that only the family can provide the individual with a refuge from the effects of a society regarded as hostile.”  

269 Aston refutes this claim in demonstrating that the home can also be hostile—especially in regards to the treatment of women. The world inside is equally perverse. Johanna has yet to realize this and still views her home as a safe haven from the world outside. For Johanna, it is the outside world that links her to degradation and wilting, “Dort muß ich verwelken, verdorren – ich fühl’s – dort ist meine Heimath nicht.”  

270 How she views the outside world and her marriage to Herr Oburn is not “Heimat.” But in the end, the rural idyll in which she grew up can also not be her home because it is not a paradise from which she sees herself banned; it too has been permeated with patriarchal abuse.

Women especially need to break free from the cultural isolation in which they have been placed and become active participants in their own lives and in the nation. Unfortunately, this does not happen for Johanna in the first section of Aston’s novel. Johanna ends up obeying her father and marrying Herr Oburn, even though it is not what she wants for herself, nor is it what she thinks is best for her.

Yet, cracks in the foundation of the law of the father begin to show in this first chapter. Johanna does attempt her own personal revolution which consists


270 Aston, Aus dem Leben, 5-6.
of her insistence to choose the object of her affection. In this way, she seeks to refuse to obey the law of the father and revolt against patriarchical control. Though ultimately Johanna yields to her father’s wishes and marries Oburn, he falls ill and mute. His illness symbolizes a now defunct patriarchy, which cannot be a framework for the future. Thus, in the first section of the novel, the discourses informing women’s position within the German nation are problematized.

The scene at the parsonage ends ultimately in Johanna’s renunciation of God and religion:

Beten kann ich nicht – wohlan so will ich fluchen. Es giebt keinen Gott der Liebe; warum leide ich sonst: Wenn die Gnade des Himmels nicht allgemein ist, wie sein Regen und sein Sonnenschein; wenn sie nicht auch zu mir und meinen Schmerzen segnend herniedersteigt: dann ist sie ja nichts, als ein Traum der Glücklichen, die ihr süßes Vorrecht in so schöne Bilder kleiden. Ich will nicht länger zu diesen Träumen schwören. Meine Träume hat die Wirklichkeit zertrümmert, die Wirklichkeit dieser Welt und ihre ehere Macht! Wohlan, so will ich sie anerkennen, und mit ihr kämpfen und jeden Fuß breit Landes, den ich mir umschaffen will in ein Paradies. Für die Welt, die den Sieg davongetragen über mein Herz, für die Welt nur will ich leben.\textsuperscript{271}

At the end of this first scene, Johanna exclaims that she can no longer pray and renounces the promises of life eternal, seeking instead to improve her lot in her current life.\textsuperscript{272} Johanna’s pain in having to marry a man she does not love is the impetus for her renunciation. She sees an unjust distribution of grace offered by God and begins to understand that happiness is illusory and only for the privileged. As a woman, she realizes that does not occupy a position of privilege.

\textsuperscript{271} Aston, \textit{Aus dem Leben}, 27
The seed for personal revolt against patriarchal rule has been sowed in her, one she will take with her and that will grow throughout her encounters and experiences in the novel.

**H. Carlsbad: Aristocratic Abuse of the Nation**

The second section of the novel extends the critique of the German nation beyond the rural parsonage and tackles the corruptness of the German nobility. Aston here moves her critique of bourgeois middle-class values to criticism of the aristocracy. She seeks to demonstrate the corruptness of this strata of society as well. This particular scene from the novel takes place in Carlsbad. Historically significant, Carlsbad was the location of the infamous Carlsbad decrees, a set of social restrictions that ostensibly banned the convening of liberal groups such as the *Burschenschaften* and set in place a strict censor. Carlsbad is also understood to have had one of the most elegant societies in the mid-nineteenth century, in which one could find many “celebrities” of the time. 273 In this way, Aston does not disappoint, as later in the Carlsbad scenes, Prince Clemens von Metternich makes an appearance. 274 The setting of this scene then appears to be no accident. In order to make her critique even more clearly, Aston chooses Carlsbad, and

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274 The appearance of Prince Metternich in Aston’s novel might also contain an allusion to Aston’s own life. Rudolf Gottschall alludes to the fact that Louise Aston had met Metternich before in her life and that he may have been attracted to her. See Rudolf Gottschall, “Aus Meiner Jugend,” in *Für die Selbstwirklichung der Frau: Louise Aston in Selbstzeugnissen und Dokumenten*, ed. Germaine Goetzinger (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1983), 47.
along with it, its history and importance to the German question of the nineteenth century.

It is in Carlsbad, according to the novel, that three crowned heads have convened to decide the fate and welfare of entire nations, “Drei gekrönte Häupter waren hier versammelt, nicht, um Genesung zu suchen für irgend ein Leiden, sondern um über das Wohl ganzer Nationen zu entscheiden.”\(^{275}\) Here the reader encounters “alle gewandten Vertheidiger und Anhänger des status quo zusammen, welche aus den nationalen Bewegungen der Jugend das revolutionäre Element herauswitterten, das den bestehenden Mächten und ihrem wohlgemeinten System Gefahr drohte.”\(^{276}\) It is clear through these two descriptions that the future of the German lands is not in the hands of the people but rather those of the nobility. The longing for these defenders and adherents of the status quo comes, as Aston explains, at the cost of the national youth movements striving to create a German nation based around liberal and democratic notions. In this manner, Aston draws attention to the national struggle of this period in Germany—its opponents and its supporters. On the one side are defenders of the existing state of affairs who want the decision-making power to be left in the hands of the nobility and aristocrats. On the other side stand the people who are endeavoring towards national freedom and desire that their voices be heard.

Criticized most fervently in this section are the nobility, as they attempt to maintain their control and dominant role in German society. Described as “die

\(^{275}\) Aston, \textit{Aus dem Leben}, 30.

\(^{276}\) Aston, \textit{Aus dem Leben}, 30.
Aston rejects the nobility who attempt to suppress the voices of the more liberal nationalist movement and its demand for new conceptions of the German nation that are not based on ideas of "holy legitimacy." Once again, she calls attention to the new age and to the new demands that are required of this time.

In Carlsbad, Johanna comes to recognize the corruptness of the nobility and its effects on German society. This comes across most clearly in the near rape she endures at the hands of Prince C. Taken by her beauty and his sense of entitlement, the Prince sneaks into the room in which she is staying and attempts to seduce and rape her. She is ultimately saved by another aristocrat who has befriended her, the Baron Stein, who sees the Prince entering her bedroom chamber and chases him away. In order that her name not be tarnished, he tampers with the crime scene by stealing some of Johanna’s jewels to make it appear as though she had only been robbed.

In fact, it is the Baron Stein who comes to the fore as the only redeeming aristocrat in the Carlsbad scene. However, as others have pointed out, his diary reveals a different sort of man than the other assembled aristocrats—a man who

had been a member of the *Burschenschaften* and had therefore remained loyal to liberal national aims and criticized the aristocracy’s addiction to pleasure.\textsuperscript{278}

In his diaries, Stein gives voice to Aston’s own ideas and provides the reader with her worldview.\textsuperscript{279} Chapter ten, which concludes the second section of the novel, is devoted entirely to Baron Stein’s journal entries. Within the first entry, the reader becomes aware that while an aristocrat, Baron Stein was a member of the *Burschenschaftler* and is an adherent of the liberal ideas of this group. He makes mention of the Wartburg and how the “official history” of the German lands has turned once again to despotism, characterizing this time in history as a youthful aberration:

Die Feuer der Wartburg sind ausgebrannt, und die offizielle Geschichte trägt eine jugendliche Verirrung in ihre Bücher ein, während die Inquisition mit ihren Ketten und Torturen, wiederum durch die deutschen Lande rasselt. Eine jugendliche Verirrung...Diese Jugend hatte mitgestritten in den Schlachten von Leipzig und Belle-Alliance, nährte sich mit dem Marke großer Thaten, hörte die Würfel eines bedeutsamen Weltgeschicks auf den blutigen Schlachtfeldern fallen, sah dem Tod in das Auge, und lernte die Geschichte, indem sie dieselbe schaffen half! Das eiserne Kreuz schmückte ihre Brust! So hatten sie das Vaterland erlöst aus langer Knechtschaft, auf daß es, von innen heraus, nach eigenem Gesetz, sich empörrende zur Freiheit, und sie nicht empfange als die Gabe eines fremden Volkes, als die Nachlese einer fremden Revolution! Wohlan, ihr diplomatischen Kläger, ihr habt Recht! Ihr macht diese Begeisterung, die eure Schlachten schlug, die an die Freiheit glaubte, sie nach außen errang, sie nach innen erringen wollte – ihr macht sie zu einer jugendlichen Verirrung.\textsuperscript{280}

\textsuperscript{279} Wimmer, *Die Vormärzschriftstellerin*, 14.
\textsuperscript{280} Aston, *Aus dem Leben*, 102.
Those who regained power after the Wars of Freedom, the aristocracy who reinstated the status quo, have written the “official history” of the German lands. It was nonetheless the youth and students who would later become members of the *Burschenschaften* who freed the fatherland both from the bondage of tyranny and from the French. However, with the Carlsbad decrees and the banishment of these groups, the diplomatic claimants turned their backs on those who fought so ardently for the benefit and freedom of the German lands and reimposed the status quo, whereby the dream for a free constitutional Germany could no longer be realized.

Baron Stein continues to criticize the aristocracy for being out of touch with the current of the times:

“Da schlürfen sie, die Diplomaten, die Aristokraten, die ganze Seligkeit eines komfortablen Lebens, spielen, wie Mückenschwärme in der Abendsonne, während es in den Völkern rollt und grollt...Doch die Zeit wird und muß anders werden...es ist ein Geist, der draußen in den Völkern groß wird, eine neue Geschichte nervig und markig, die nicht mehr in den Salons der bevorzugten Stände die diplomatischen Polonaisen aufführt...”

Here, Stein calls attention to the extravagant nature of courtly society and criticizes this behavior, especially in relation to what the “people” are having to endure. It becomes clear that the “Volk,” the people, are synonymous in Baron Stein’s conception to the nation. It is only through the people that a new history can be created in the German lands; it cannot be accomplished by the aristocracy.

Although Baron Stein most clearly has ties to the *Burschenschaften* and their liberal ideas, he does criticize in particular one of their middle-class beliefs

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which is one of Aston’s biggest issues—the treatment of women. In one of his journal entries he says:

Und was ist aus den Frauen geworden? Wir Burschenschafter glauben an das Ideal der Jungfräulichkeit. Es war eine Reminiscens aus Tacitus oder aus dem katholischen Glauben des Mittelalters. Doch die Zeit der alten, germanischen Frauen ist vorübergegangen, wie die Zeit der Madonnen. Jede Zeit hat ihr eigenes Recht. Nicht in der Entschärfung, sondern in der liebenden Hingabe finden wir die Weiblichkeit.\footnote{Aston, \textit{Aus dem Leben}, 107.}

According to Stein, there is an inherent belief, held even by the liberal \textit{Burschenschafter}, in a distinctively German femininity that has been linked in the past to Tacitus—and thus to the earliest descriptions of the Germanic tribes—and also to the Catholic Church. This idea of femininity views the woman as a virgin or as the Madonna—pure and innocent. For Baron Stein, these depictions of women do little in modern times. As he claims, each era provides its own rights, and in this modern era, the traditional notions of German femininity do not fit and a “new” German woman needs to be created. This “new” German femininity in the modern era cannot be found in the ideal of women’s renunciation, as it was in the past, but rather in the loving devotedness of their own choosing.

In addition to recognizing the corruptness of the nobility, Johanna therefore comes to a clearer recognition of the dissolute features of middle-class morality and acknowledges that something must be done. In a conversation with the Baron von Stein, whom she befriends, she alludes to this when she says:

Wie wechselvoll ist doch das Innere des Menschen! Früher erfaßte mich stets eine große Bangigkeit während des Gewitters! Um den
Blitz nicht zu sehen, verbarg ich als Kind mein Köpfchen in den Schoß der Mutter, als wäre ich hier gegen jede Gefahr gefeit. Heute weitet sich meine Brust bei dem Rollen des Donners, mein Auge labt sich an den feurigen Strahlen, die so keck, wie junge, lebensfrische Gesellen, den Wolkenvorhang zerreißen, als wollten sie der Natur in’s Herz sehen.\textsuperscript{283}

As the corruptness of German society becomes more evident, the call to revolution, which is alluded to here through the imagery of thunder in the distance, becomes more appealing. No longer does she feel as though she can hide behind the values of her bourgeois home in the lap of her mother and its values, which she also begins to discern as corrupt. Instead she feels as though the call to revolution and the changes it could bring are imminent, made clear in the imagery of the fiery rays that break through the curtain of clouds.

\textit{I. Oburn’s Factory: Linking Women’s Emancipation to the Plight of the Working Class}

In the third section of the novel, the reader finds Johanna back with her husband Herr Oburn, and Johanna comes to symbolize Aston’s vision for the German nation. It is in these scenes that Aston further problematizes the issue of class: she turns her attention to the working class, and presents the reader with the image of class struggle within German society alongside a critique of bourgeois gender roles.

In the Carlsbad scenes, Johanna was depicted as needing protection from the tyranny of the aristocracy. But Johanna is equally presented as needing to be

\textsuperscript{283} Aston, \textit{Aus dem Leben}, 83.
protected from bourgeois ideals of German society. This was handled in the first section of the novel at the rural parsonage and is now picked up again in the third section. The difference, however, is that ultimately Johanna will attempt to change her circumstances rather than simply give in to them. In this way, the bourgeoisie, once again, is not portrayed as a better alternative to the aristocracy in Aston’s assertions, especially with regards to the treatment of women and the lower classes.

The bourgeoisie’s downfall is their imitation of the ways of the corrupted nobility. This is most clearly demonstrated in the figure of Herr Oburn, Johanna’s husband, who is presented as the stereotypical character of the “unenlightened husband.” He is representative of what happens when the bourgeois attempts to imitate the nobility. Like their aristocratic counterparts, they too become corrupt. This is interesting as bourgeois virtue and ideals were meant to distinguish the middle-classes from groups like the nobility who were viewed as being immoral. Aston critiques this distinction and demonstrates that often times, the ideal set forth by the bourgeois was just as immoral in its treatment of certain groups.

While the aristocracy, represented by Prince C., views Johanna as an object to be enjoyed and admired, Oburn also views her the same way. The Prince C. views Johanna as an object to be conquered and possessed, and Herr Oburn very much sees Johanna as a prized possession, an article to own, not as an equal. Oburn thereby represents the corruptness of the middle-class, particularly their

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vainness, insensitivity and greediness. Often emphasized in his dealings with his wife is the importance of appearance and reputation. This is demonstrated in a letter that he writes to Johanna during her stay in Carlsbad, “Meine liebe Johanna! Es freut mich herzlich, daß Dir das Leben in Carlsbad auch ohne mich gefällt. Wie ich höre sollst Du und unsere schönen Pferde allgemeines Aufsehen bei den Männern machen. Mir ist das recht! Sehen doch die Leute daraus, daß ich einen guten Geschmack habe.”

Johanna, in this instance, is compared to Oburn’s other possessions—horses, and she is useful in as so far that she demonstrates to the aristocratic society of Carlsbad that he has good taste.

That Herr Oburn is interested in mimicking the aristocratic lifestyle is demonstrated when Johanna approaches her husband about helping his factory workers, as she feels that the factory workers should not go unpaid, especially when she herself already has so much: “Als Herr Oburn später diese eigenmächtige Maßregel erfuhr, polterte er arg im Hause umher, schalt seine Frau eine Romanheldinn, und berhuigte sich endlich durch die Hoffnung, daß diese Grille doch nur von kurzer Dauer sein und das ancien régime im Haushalt bald wieder herrschen würde.” In this scene, Aston draws attention to how the greater violence being played out in the German lands gets repeated in the household itself. By using the words ancien régime, Aston underscores the status quo that was reinstated after the end of the Wars of Freedom.

The critique of the corruptness of bourgeois values also extends to Herr Oburn’s dealings with the workers in his factory, and therefore, the treatment of

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286 Aston, Aus dem Leben, 127.
the working class. Once again, Aston comes back to the assertion that the German nation should be a community of common purpose. It is here that her socialist leanings really come to the fore. She is not arguing that there should be an elimination of class systems, as this does not appear to be a realistic possibility. Nevertheless, she argues that there should be accountability among the classes, chiefly between the middle class and the working class. This is clearly shown in the dealings between Herr Oburn and his factory workers.

A large part of the third section of the novel revolves around the factory that Herr Oburn owns and his relationship with his workers. The reader is introduced to the factory workers as they are leaving during working hours, dissatisfied with the wages they receive for their work. In a conversation with the bookkeeper of the factory, the oldest of the factory workers explains the reason for their discontent:

Wir sind hier um mit unserem Herrn zu reden, weil wir nicht Hungers sterben wollen mit Weib und Kind...Mit uns ist's aber von Jahr zu Jahr schlechter geworden. Unser Herr ward inzwischen ein reicher Mann. Unser saurer Schweiß hat die Fabriken gehoben, und das Gold in seiner Kasse gehäuft. Wir meinen denn, da wär's recht und billig gewesen, uns eine kleine Zulage zu geben. Es hätte uns schon gefreut, weil wir des Herrn Freundlichkeit und Menschenliebe daraus ersehen. Und das thut wohl, und weckt auch bei uns Liebe und Vertrauen, und in die Arbeit kommt ein guter Geist.287

The workers recognize that the success of Herr Oburn was dependent on their hard work. A parallel can be drawn here between the working class and the youths and students, mentioned by Baron von Stein, who fought in the Wars of Freedom. These working-class men and women resemble the young men who

fought against Napoleon to free Germany from his tyranny. Like those freedom fighters, the working class is repaid for their work through a corrupt system. The workers for Herr Oburn are not asking for a huge pay raise but are looking for enough money so that they can feed themselves, their wives, and their children. In return, upon receiving enough money to live, they can be more productive and continue to bring Herr Oburn profits for his factory. In this way, a new societal order is not necessarily being called for, but rather what the narrator terms later as a “new gospel of love,” where people demonstrate love and responsibility towards one another:


Aston intimates that Revolution is not the only solution to the corruptness and violence of German society. Reform is equally a plausible solution; however, it would require the propertied classes to willingly renounce the ways of the current regime in favor of a system where everyone would be held accountable for their treatment towards others. This new gospel of love, as is preached by both the factory workers and the narrator, is a community of common purpose, one where

there exist recognized human rights for all. Even so, Aston makes clear that revolution remains ever a possibility, and that this revolution would do more to shake the foundations of society than the French Revolution.

It is here that Aston’s ideas take a decidedly nationalist turn. She suggests that German philosophy has a role to play in creating this new German society and accomplish what the French, their philosophies, and their revolution were unable to:

Doch allmählich beginnt auch in den Massen das Bewußtsein der ewigen Menschenrechte, wie sie die fränzösische Revolution proklamiert, die keine Form der Freiheit geben ohne ihren Inhalt; sondern den Anspruch auf eine Existenz, die in allem Reichthum der Schöpfung sich mit Freiheit auszubreiten berechtigt ist. In den neuesten Entwicklungen des französischen Geistens gähren diese Probleme mit dunkler Gewalt, eine Gährung, die noch keine feste Form gewinnen kann, die proteusartig ihre Gestaltungen wechselt, oft in leere Luftbilder verweht, in eiteln Dunst ausdampft; aber stets Zeugniß ablegt von der inner, schaffenden Nothwendigkeit, welche fortzuleugnen eine Blasphemie ist gegen den neuen Geist der Menschheit. Die deutsche Philosophie hat die Aufgabe, diese Erscheinungen auf ihren wahren Gehalt zurückzuführen, ihre innerste Bedeutung aufzufassen, ihnen ihre Stelle anzuweisen in der Entwicklung des Geistes. In Rousseau’s Urwälder zurück zu fliehen, die ganze Cultur als Flitterwerk und Unnatur, als aufgedrungene Last von sich zu werfen, und ein vierbeiniges Leben zu führen: das ist der neuen Menschheit nicht möglich: das hieße ihre innerste Entwicklung verläugnen; das ist der Gedanke der kolossalsten Reaktion, den je ein Menschengeist gedacht! Doch die tiefern Gegensätze, welche aus dieser Kultur hervorgegangen, müssen auf ihrem eigensten Terrain sich auskämpfen.289

In her assertion, retreating to the primeval forest of Rousseau is not a plausible solution for the modern world because, unlike Rousseau,290 she does not view culture as worthless finery and understands that humans are social beings and

are part of larger communities. In fact, she views culture in the opposite vein and emphasizes its importance to humanity. Yet, she also recognizes that culture has contradictions that must be overcome.

Viewing humans as social beings brings up larger questions of identification. The feeling of social belonging becomes an important question in the mid-nineteenth century as competing narratives vie for dominance in the quest to develop and define a German national identity. For Aston, these contradictions come across most clearly in the roles that women are assigned in society and in the treatment of the lower classes which she critiques most fervently in this novel. However, Aston does find fault with parts of Hegel’s philosophy. Unlike Hegel, who understands the state to be the preserver of individual freedoms, Aston criticizes the collective knowledge that has shaped and constructed social relations as they exist currently in German society. Far from preserving individual freedoms, the power of the establishment no longer represents the collective:

Die Industrie, die Mutter des Proletariats, die zugleich den Reichthum und die Armuth bringt, den Reichthum für Einzelne, welche die Nation repräsentieren; die Armuth für die Massen; die ist das neueste Kind der Cultur, unter bedenklichen Auspicien geboren, einer bedenklichen Zukunft entgegensehend. Sie hat die Armuth, die bisher zufällig war und isolirt oder in der Knechtschaft Rettung vor dem Hunger fand, zuerst freigegeben und organisirt, so daß sie jetzt als eine imposante Macht in die Geschichte tritt. 291

In making this statement, Aston points to the danger inherent in how the aristocracy and parts of the bourgeoisie envision the German nation. Only a few represent the masses. In keeping with Hegelian ideas, she believe that public

opinion and policy should be formed of the opinions of the majority, not of a select few. For Aston, true change can only come once the social and economic structures in Germany have been changed.

Herr Oburn’s response to the factory workers is still less than congenial, “’Was,’ schrie Oburn wüthend, ‘das Volk will nicht mehr arbeiten? Ist für solche Kreaturen nicht 1 Rthlr. 15 Sgr. wöchentlich ein reiches Einkommen?'” He refuses to do the right thing and boost their living wages because it means that he and his wife will not be able to have the finer material possessions in life.

Aston offers a comparison between the lives of Herr Oburn and his wife and the factory workers through the bookkeeper Ehrig’s eyes: “Ehrig’s Blick überflog mit bedeutsamen Ausdruck den mit den feinsten Leckereien besetzten Tisch, den er mit der kärglichen Kartoffel-Mahlzeit der Arbeiter verglich.”

The Oburns’ table filled with various elegant foods contrasts starkly with the meager potatoes that the factory workers eat.

In comparing the tables of the propertied and the unpropertied, Ehrig’s thoughts turn to the larger question of what has been done to bridge the divide between these two classes: “Seine Gedanken verweilten bei der maßlosen Kluft zwischen den Besitzenden und den Besitzlosen, nach deren Ausfüllung das Jahrhundert in jungendlichem Streben ringt, bei jenem Bruch der Gesellschaft, den noch kein System der edelsten Denker zu heilen vermocht....” Aston claims that the reason behind this lack of ability to overcome social gaps in the German system is because the noble thinkers of the nineteenth century are

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293 Aston, *Aus dem Leben*, 120.
relying on traditional conceptions of what it means to be German and not moving forward with the times which require modern ideas and modern identities. The middle classes, despite their attempts at fighting for equality, have become just as corrupt as the aristocracy in their quest for more political and economic power. In so doing, there remains a divide between those who have and those who have not. In addition, the middle classes have largely reinvoked and created traditional German identities which continue to be violent towards certain groups, such as women. Aston argues that these identities and conceptions cannot work in modern times on account of the social and economic change of the era.

In contrast to Ehrig, who has thought about the divide between the propertied and unpropertied, stands Herr Oburn. Utterly unsympathetic to the plight of his factory workers, he believes that the reason they have settled down in their demands is because he has been assertive and put his foot down: “Sehen Sie, Herr Ehrig! die Leute sind, ohne Lohnerhöhung, doch geblieben! O ich weiß sie zu beurtheilen; ich verstehe, sie zu behandeln! Das Volk muß gedrückt sein – der Druck ist sein Lebens-Element!”294 It is clear through this statement that he does not hold them in high regard and sees himself as above the Volk—the people.

Little does he know, the real reason there has been little unrest in his factory is because of his sympathetic wife who has simplified her life, so that the workers can be given more money. Unlike her husband, Johanna is sympathetic to their plight, as she does not view herself to be above them in societal station.

294 Aston, Aus dem Leben, 134.
Ehrig recognizes this, and as he listens to Herr Oburn’s triumphant exclamations about the state of his factory, “seine Gedanken waren bei der schönen, jungen Frau, die durch eine so edle Praxis der Humanität ihres Gatten Theorien beschämte.” In this way, Johanna becomes the symbol of Aston’s “new gospel of love.” In a shift of perspective, she comes to view the predicament of the factory workers as her own.

Ultimately, Johanna’s sizing down of her house economy leads to ill humor in her living situation, as Johanna and Oburn are seen to be living a serene and secluded life.

Aston compares this to a normal scene that one might encounter in a novel by Ida Hahn-Hahn, where one would expect to find a focus on the conventional, upper echelons of society.

In contrast to his wife Johanna, Oburn becomes obsessed with guaranteeing their gentrified position in society. When it becomes clear that he could potentially lose his factory if he does not receive a loan of a huge sum of money, Oburn exclaims: “Hier gilt es die Ehre vor der Welt, unsere ganze

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bürgerliche Stellung! davon hängt der Werth unseres Lebens ab, und sie müssen wir gegen jedes Opfer erretten!” Unlike Oburn, Johanna does not view her honor as hinging upon her bourgeois position. Quite in contrast, she views her honor in opposite terms. She realizes that honor cannot come from her current position in society, as it is corrupt and does not guarantee protection for all.

**J. Conclusion**

Ultimately, Aston portrays her “new gospel of love” as impossible in the current state of German affairs. As both the privileged nobility and the bourgeoisie, who are attempting to become propertied, fight for societal acceptance and dominance, Aston makes apparent that the divides between the classes are not bridgeable. She shows how the class struggle in Germany has begun to take on new importance. Accordingly, these views fall in line with Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels who, in breaking with “die Freien,” acknowledged that ultimately the current privileges enjoyed by some were the result of economic power struggles and capital. The only solution that seems feasible in terms of answering the class question is revolution.

However, the ending for Aston is not entirely pessimistic. Unlike the ending in Fanny Lewald’s *Jenny* and the ending in Ida Hahn-Hahn’s *Gräfin Faustine*, which will be discussed later, Louise Aston offers her reader an open-ended conclusion for Johanna, insofar as the reader does not know exactly what

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298 Möhmann, *Die andere Frau*, 143-144.
happens to her. Rather than ending her novel with the death of the heroine, as Lewald does, Aston ends with her heroine setting out to make it on her own: “Rasch und geheim ließ sie ihre Sachen einpacken, den Reisewagen fertig machen, und fuhr, ohne von Oburn Abschied zu nehmen, aus dem Hause, die Schande fliehend, die ihr drohte. Frei athmete sie draußen auf...Sie rettete die Heiligkeit der Ehe, indem sie dieselbe zerriß!”\(^{299}\) Aston has been taken to task for the ending of her novel, as she does not refute the idea of the marriage altogether. Yet, she was only able to save the sanctity of marriage by not following the rules of marriage, as they have been set forth by bourgeois morality and culture. She is not willing to cast away marriage as an option but understands that as it currently exists within the bourgeois model, it is violent towards women. By leaving her marriage, Johanna makes the statement that the sanctity of marriage must be based on the appropriate treatment of women.

Thus, Johanna sets out to change the world, not just to interpret it. She will no longer play a merely passive role in the forging of the nation but will take an active role and create her own circumstances. Aston is nonetheless ambiguous as to how Johanna will make this change, and the story ends with her simply setting out on her own. If we take Aston’s own life as a model for what awaits Johanna (followed by the police, expelled from multiple cities), her future does not seem so certain. Knowing what is available to women and their overall treatment, it is hard to picture an overly optimistic ending. Still, no matter what awaits Johanna, it will be a future of her own making.

Chapter 5
Ida Hahn-Hahn’s novel Gräfin Faustine

A. Introduction

Ida Hahn-Hahn differs from the two previous women discussed, as she stems from an entirely different social milieu. Unlike Fanny Lewald, Louise Aston, and many other women writers of the middle nineteenth century, Hahn-Hahn came from an aristocratic family. Despite this difference, within the realm of feminist historiography, these three women are often examined together.\textsuperscript{300} Her aristocratic position did not mean that her life was free of the problems that beset many women of this period. Just like these other women, she was faced with problems pertaining largely to her sex. However, as will be shown, the issues, while fundamentally the same, are more narrowly defined and expressed differently on account of her class affiliation.

Aristocratic women of the nineteenth century have often been assumed to be apolitical when it comes to challenging women’s place and role in the context of Germany. For many earlier active women of the nineteenth century such as Betty Gleim, an educational reformer, and Caroline de la Motte Fouqué, a writer, women’s intellectual freedom was often viewed to be of the utmost importance.

For these women, freedom and peace had their roots in the inner soul of a person, and the generator of moral improvement was education. In this way, these women felt as though change should happen through a moral revolution, not an overtly political one. Even though they felt that morality would be improved through education, they still also felt that education should not change the existing structures of society and instead help only to strengthen and realize ideal social structures.

Women like Fouqué emphasized the study of German history in order to gain cultural insight. Through their role as mothers, women could then instill cultural insight in their children. As such, women could actively contribute to the creation of a German national identity and to nation building. According to women like Fouqué, women’s roles were thus political—the survival of the nation was linked to their commitment to impress German culture upon their children.

Like these earlier women, Hahn-Hahn’s novel Gräfin Faustine is not overtly political, as it works on the level of cultural agenda and not social agenda. Her novel functions more as a means of self-expression than as a call to social action. And, while Hahn-Hahn to a large extent echoes the sentiments of women like Gleim and Fouqué in the early nineteenth century, what differentiates her focus is the time period in which she exists and writes. The family structure for Hahn-Hahn had largely gone through a Verbürgerlichung and as such was more narrowly defined by bourgeois norms realized as the ideal structure. It follows

301 The idea that bourgeois norms are seen as the ideal can also be seen in later autobiographies by women of the lower-class, such as Adelheid Popp. In her autobiography, she compares her childhood life to bourgeois norms and concludes that her childhood was lacking. see Adelheid
that she agrees with women like Gleim and Fouqué in locating freedom in the inner soul of a person. Nonetheless, this freedom cannot exist within the current structures in Germany that position women in the domestic sphere, primarily as wives and mothers. And women’s position cannot change as long as men do not view them as equal. In contrast to women writers like Lewald and Aston, however, Hahn-Hahn is less interested in transforming German society socially. For Hahn-Hahn, politics happens on the level of literary historicism. In her novel Gräfin Faustine, she seeks to use the myth of Faust to enter into a cultural debate about women and their intellectual freedom.

**B. The Evolution of an Emancipator**

Ida Hahn-Hahn was born on June 22, 1805 in Mecklenburg-Schwerin into a well-respected aristocratic family. The family’s standing, however, was tarnished when her father Carl Friedrich Graf von Hahn, also known as the Theatergraf, squandered a large portion of the family’s fortune and brought much scandal upon the family through his dealings in theater. He built his own theater at enormous expense, and despite its success in bringing in such visitors as Achim von Arnim, his attempts to make a profit from it were largely unsuccessful due to his extravagance and his wish to hire only the best actors.\(^\text{302}\)

Within four years of inheriting his property, Carl von Hahn was in deep debt and

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Hahn-Hahn’s mother was left with little choice in coping with her husband’s obsession. Thus, in 1808 in an effort to protect the family resources, Hahn-Hahn’s mother divorced her father.

Unfortunately, Hahn-Hahn’s parents’ divorce and subsequent status as impoverished nobility put undue pressure on Ida to marry. Similarly to Louise Aston, she was forced into a hasty marriage of convenience to her cousin at a young age in order to secure ample money not only for herself but also for her mother and sister. In 1826, she therefore married the Graf Friedrich Hahn at the urging of her family. Regrettably, her cousin was just as compulsive and extravagant as her father, although his penchant was for horse-racing and not the theater.

The marriage to her cousin only lasted three years and in 1829, they divorced after a scandal, whereby the Graf Friedrich Hahn planted false evidence of Ida’s infidelity and ostensibly forced a divorce upon her. Soon after her divorce from her cousin, Hahn-Hahn gave birth to a daughter who was both severely physically and mentally handicapped, and she left her home of Mecklenburg. Recognizing that she could not take care of her daughter, she eventually handed her over to foster care. Her daughter then remained in foster care until she died at the age of twenty four. This issue of forced, unhappy marriages would later become a frequent theme in her writing, and it forms the basis for her novel *Gräfin Faustine*.

It would be another six years before Hahn-Hahn published her first book and tackled, through her writing, the issues facing women. Unlike Aston and
Lewald, Hahn-Hahn did not need to write in order to earn a living. Her financial security was ensured after her divorce through fifteen hundred Thaler gold as well as a pension to help pay for her mentally-ill daughter. Therefore, during these six years, Hahn-Hahn spent much of her time traveling and learning of the world. She traveled with a companion, Baron Adolf Bystram, who accompanied Hahn-Hahn on her extensive travels in England, Italy, France, Spain, and the Orient and remained her companion until his death in 1849. Their relationship appears to only have had one break, when Ida Hahn-Hahn had a liaison with Fanny Lewald’s cousin, Heinrich Simon. This episode has been noted to have been the impetus that caused the bitterness between Fanny Lewald and Hahn-Hahn.

Unlike many of the women writers of her time, writers such as Lewald, Aston and even Luise Mühlbach who held emancipative ideals from a fairly early age, Hahn-Hahn did not originally hold these same ideas. She was unaware of the ideas of the Young Germans, and the echoes of the July Revolutions of France made little noise in her home of Mecklenburg.\(^{303}\) In contrast to both Lewald and Aston, who were influenced by the Young Germany movement and had contact with other writers and political figures of the time, Hahn-Hahn appears not to have been similarly exposed. Her emancipatory ideas did not come until her early twenties, when she experienced first hand a divorce with her husband and became aware of the oppressive and backwards treatment of women in German society. Thus, the egalitarian position that she took in her early works of

\(^{303}\) Möhrmann, *Die andere Frau*, 89.
literature did not come from some abstract understanding of the injustice against women and stemmed from the frustration that she experienced in her own life and her marriage. The same would hold true after her conversion to Catholicism after the 1848 Revolution. Once again, her writings revolved exclusively around her experiences and were put to the service of her new Catholic faith.

In addition, Hahn-Hahn remained distanced from the literary discourse of her day.\textsuperscript{304} She did not partake in any salons or literary circles of her time. Nor did she receive the same type of education that writers like Fanny Lewald did. This allowed for some critics to praise her for being an original prose writer who did not try to imitate other works.\textsuperscript{305} While she may not have had the same educational background as her contemporaries, to claim that she did not draw from other literary sources would be a misnomer. Her novel \textit{Gräfin Faustine}, which will be discussed in this chapter, draws heavily on the Faustian ideals of Goethe’s \textit{Faust}.

What makes Ida Hahn-Hahn stand out from other writers of her time, like Louise Aston and Fanny Lewald, is the focus of her work. In contrast to these women whose works, in addition to dealing with women, dealt with the fate and lives of other marginal groups including men, the larger portion of Hahn-Hahn’s novels written before 1848 focus exclusively on the fate of the heroine who


usually stems from the aristocratic milieu of society, paying little attention to others. Furthermore, the primary focus of many of her novels almost solely revolves around the inner development and self-fulfillment of the heroine.\footnote{306} Thus Hahn-Hahn’s main concern lies with the individual person and is not a cry for social activism.

**C. Focus on Aristocratic Milieu**

The situation of aristocratic women differed greatly, in some ways, from their counterparts in the middle and working classes. Unlike middle-class and working-class women, aristocratic women had proprietary rights. Therefore, when faced with divorce or other calamity, they were entitled to a pension. It follows that Hahn-Hahn’s own experience and ideas concerning women did not need to revolve around the right to work, which many bourgeois women fought for, or around independence from employers and wages, as in the case of working-class women. Instead, her ideas regarding women focus almost exclusively on their emotional and intellectual freedom and equality. As Renate Möhrmann points out, “die Befreiungsvorstellungen der aristokratischen Damen konzentrierten sich daher vor allem auf die emotionale und intellektuelle Gleichheit.”\footnote{307} If their emotional and intellectual freedom and equality should necessitate working, as will be seen in her novel *Gräfin Faustine*, she does not overtly dismiss it. However, she never formulates any overarching thematic in


\footnote{307 Möhrmann, *Die andere Frau*, 92.}
her novels concerning a woman’s right to work. It is here that she differs greatly from Aston and Lewald in that she only concerns herself with her particular class. Unlike Aston and Lewald who stemmed from the middle classes, Hahn-Hahn was not concerned with issues of professional life of the middle classes or of the dependence of the working class on their employers.

The focus on aristocrats and nobility and their place within society comes across very clearly in some of Hahn-Hahn’s travel writing. Because of her extensive travels, which took place mostly between the years 1835–1847, Hahn-Hahn was able to create an element of distance from Germany that perhaps helped in shaping her ideas about the German nation and its identity. This constant movement inside and outside German society allowed her to create a space between the two and to adopt a particular way of seeing things. In her travel book *Meine Reise nach England*, Hahn-Hahn gives her reader a fairly clear understanding of her political positioning. She writes in comparing England to Germany:

Der absurde Gegensatz von liberal und aristokratisch, den man in Deutschland macht, paßt Gottlob! nicht auf England. Es sind jetzt ungefähr zwei Jahre, als ich mir in Berlin zu fragen erlaubte, was man eigentlich unter jene beiden Bezeichnungen verstände, und folgende Antwort, aber ganz ernsthaft gegeben, erhielt: Liberale sind die, welche eine Repräsentativ-Verfassung begehren, Aristokraten die, welche gegen eine solche sind. Mir schien die letztere Richtung bestimmter durch Absolut-Monarchische bezeichnet; aber man hatte eine wundersame Vorliebe für das Wort Aristokraten und blieb dabei...Die englische Aristokratie ist also weder im Prinzip noch in der praktischen Ausübung – weder im politischen noch im sozialen Leben von den übrigen Ständen abgetrennt und auf sich beschränkt...Ihre Heiraten, ihre politischen

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308 Gerlinde Maria Geiger, *Die befreite Psyche: Emanzipationsansätze im Frühwerk Ida Hahn-Hahns (1838-1848)*, (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1986), 69.
Mischungen, ihre Bereitwilligkeit, Verdienst und Tüchtigkeit als Pairs gelten zu lassen, bringen sie in einen ewig regenerierenden Kontakt mit der ganzen Masse der Nation...Ich nenne aristokratische Gesinnung die, deren Prinzip Gleichgewicht der Stände – demokratische, deren Prinzip Gleichheit derselben ist. Darum ist nur mit aristokratischer Gesinnung Freiheit möglich.309

For Hahn-Hahn, the main issue facing the German nation in regards to class is the difference between *Gleichgewicht* (balance) and *Gleichheit* (equality). As one critic explains, while this work makes a national comparison between England and Germany, her ideas and criticisms are targeted largely at Germany.310 Ultimately, she presents England as ideal, but in comparing both England and Germany attempts to understand the situation in which Germany finds itself.

In a diary entry dated February 25, 1845, Hahn-Hahn discusses her reasoning for focusing solely on the lives of aristocrats:

> Wenn ich zuweilen höre oder lese, wie mich die Journalisten verfluchen, weil ich nicht schreibe fürs Volk, so denke ich immer höchst gelassen: wie kann man für etwas schreiben, das man nicht kennt? Ich kenne nicht Bedürfnis, Denk- und Lebensweise des Handwerkers, Bauern oder Fabrikarbeiters. Ich habe nie in ihrer Sphäre gelebt, in ihrer Luft geatmet, in ihre Verhältnisse nicht gründlich eingeweiht...311

What is striking about this statement is that it demonstrates Ida Hahn-Hahn’s loyalty to her aristocratic class in opposition to those who might have been more willing to work for democratic reforms, such as handworkers, farmers and factory workers. What also comes across in this statement is the way in which she views the Volk. She does not write about the “people,” because she claims that she does

not know them. In speaking about the people as handworkers, farmers and factory workers, she removes herself from being a part of it. She is somehow above their sphere. One can infer from this statement and from her lack of engagement with other economic classes in her novels that Ida Hahn-Hahn felt as though the class hierarchy within the German nation should be maintained.

This focus on the aristocratic milieu of society did little to win Hahn-Hahn favor among her literary contemporaries and counterparts. Yet, in the years leading up to the 1848 Revolution, Ida Hahn-Hahn was a prolific writer of novels and travel literature, and her novels enjoyed immense popularity in Germany as well as abroad in such places as England. Between the years of 1838–1848, she wrote and published ten novels. She was considered to be one of the first German woman writers of her time to write from the upper echelon of society about the upper classes. Still, while Hahn-Hahn was one of the most popular and widely read woman writers of her time who found a place within literary criticism, she was not well-received by many male critics and was usually put forth as a negative example, especially of a woman. One reviewer in 1843 points to the danger she poses to German women:

Wir hoffen, die Gräfin Hahn-Hahn werde in Deutschland, so viel sie jetzt in gewissen Kreisen gelesen und gelobhudelt wird, nie populär im wahren Sinne des Wortes werden, denn sie ist krank, wenn wir es gelinde ausdrücken wollen; wäre sie ein Mann, so würden wir sagen, sie ist zu unwahr, zu geziert, zu verlogen in ihren Schriften, und die Deutschen, zumal die deutschen Frauen, sind zu schlicht und wahr um mehr als Modegefallen an ihr zu finden...zur Ehre ihrer Weiblichkeit wollen wir es hoffen, nicht in dem Grade besitzt, wie wir sie in ihren Schriften finden, die uns aber anwidert, weil sie unweiblich ist...312

According to this reviewer, Hahn-Hahn is considered unwomanly and does not possess the traits a German woman should have. He hopes that her ideas will never be as popular as her books because he believes her to be ill. However, he puts stock in German women—they are genuine and simple enough not to take her or her ideas too seriously.

The translator's note to the 1872 English edition of her novel Gräfin Faustine takes an equally worrisome tone to Hahn-Hahn's work. While the translator lauds Hahn-Hahn's writing ability, she warns that the main character Faustine is not a character to be mimicked:

Faustina is, alas ‘a maiden from a foreign land;' and what may be her reception in this country of conventionalism? The man of the world will sneer – the matron will gravely shake her head – the prude will thank Heaven she is no acquaintance of hers. Not to them, therefore, we commit her, but to you, the young, the lovely, the gifted! To you whom, pure in heart yourselves, can yet believe in purity of heart of in others; to you whose souls yet glowing with the inspiration of Heaven, can best appreciate the strength and weakness of genius; to you we will instrust Faustina, ‘this erring child of light.’ Take her not as an example, but a warning.313

Even though the translator lauds Faustine as a character who possesses genius and all the strengths and weaknesses therein, the very last line offers up the position that should be taken towards her character. While she may demonstrate aspects of her character that are pure of heart, she is not to be taken as an example, but rather as a figure not to be imitated.

In addition to the criticism that she endured from literary critics, Ida Hahn-Hahn also found herself at odds with other women writers of the day, in

particular Fanny Lewald. There has been much speculation as to where the animosity between these two writers stemmed. More than likely, it proceeded from the love triangle that formed between Fanny Lewald, her cousin Heinrich Simon and Hahn-Hahn. Both Lewald and Hahn-Hahn were in love with Simon, an active proponent of Jewish emancipation and republicanism. However, Simon’s affections were reciprocated to Hahn-Hahn and not Lewald. Eventually, he asked for her hand in marriage but was rejected.

While Fanny Lewald’s dislike for Hahn-Hahn surely in part stemmed from this love triangle, it is also clear that Lewald found the focus of Hahn-Hahn’s novels despicable—namely the concern only with the aristocratic milieu of society. Lewald was really overt in her dislike of Hahn-Hahn, even writing a satirical piece entitled *Diogena (Pseudonym). Roman von Iduna H...H...* in 1847. In this novel, Lewald ridicules the style and features of Hahn-Hahn’s earlier novels. This piece uncovers the primary differences between Lewald and Hahn-Hahn’s ideas about women’s issues. Where Lewald’s fiction often deals with marginal groups, Hahn-Hahn’s work is portrayed as aristocratic snobbery and political reactionism.

Yet, even though Hahn-Hahn and Lewald had personal differences and wrote about different social milieus in their novels, they actually held similar views concerning the role of the novel within society. In her travel book *Errinerungen aus und an Frankreich*, Hahn-Hahn laid out her ideas about the novel:
Ein Roman, wenn er nur einigermaßen erträglich ist, muß ein Gemälde, mindestens eine Skizze des Zustandes der Gesellschaft geben, aus der er, wie eines ihrer Kinder, heraustritt; muß zeigen, welche Sitten, welche Mißstände und Gebräuche, welche Ansichten, welche Richtungen in der Zeit leben, die er repräsentieren soll.314

Just like Lewald, Hahn-Hahn felt as though the novel’s responsibility was to represent the time in which it was written. What is most interesting in Hahn-Hahns assertion about the role of the novel is her use of plurals. The novel, in her estimation, should represent the grievances, views, morals, customs and trends of the time period in which it is written. In this way, Hahn-Hahn acknowledges that there are different ways in which to view the situation and condition of Germany at any given moment. And as she herself stems from the aristocracy, it is no wonder that the focus of her work revolves around that milieu.

D. Gräfin Faustine (1841)

In 1841, Ida Hahn-Hahn published perhaps her most popular novel Gräfin Faustine. This novel is arguably the most widely read and recognized of Ida Hahn-Hahn’s novels. It is also the one novel by Hahn-Hahn that reflects most clearly her own life and includes, in the figure of Faustine, Hahn-Hahn’s own experiences with marriage. Like the works of both authors discussed before her, Hahn-Hahn’s novel Gräfin Faustine falls into the realm of the Tendenzroman, as it portrays the social conditions of the time and critiques the modern conditions under which people, especially women, lived. However, unlike Fanny Lewald and

314 Ida Hahn-Hahn, Errinerungen aus und an Frankreich (Berlin: Verlag von Alexander Duncker, 1842), 91.
Louise Aston, whose novels concern themselves with the middle and working classes of Germany, Ida Hahn-Hahn’s novel focuses its attention almost exclusively on the unfulfilled lives of women in the upper echelons of German society.

Although no one can deny that the experience of those in the aristocratic circles of Germany differed from the middle and working classes, as Hahn-Hahn suggests in her novel, the idea of bourgeois respectability and a woman’s place within that paradigm were not excluded from the upper levels of German society. What Fanny Lewald and Louise Aston have in common with Ida Hahn-Hahn in terms of social critique is then the role of woman within German society. These problems are not exceptional but rather quite ordinary. As Helen Chambers points out, Faustine’s “problems are not extraordinary at all, but ordinary human problems of the relationships of the self to the other, be that other accepted codes of behaviour, men or art and religion.”315 Just as in the other novels examined, Faustine struggles to reconcile her own beliefs about herself and women with the accepted codes of behavior of the respectable German woman. Hahn-Hahn’s novel points to the similarities that women of the middle classes and the aristocracy faced in their lives. Regardless of class, there always remained in the lives of nineteenth-century women a power politics of sexual difference. The same expectations of motherhood and marriage applied for aristocratic women as they did for middle-class women like Fanny Lewald and Louise Aston. It is

precisely this power politic between men and women that is explored in great detail in *Gräfin Faustine*.

### E. Setting the Backdrop

Like Lewald, Hahn-Hahn sets her novel in a geographic location. However, she is more specific than Lewald in her location. In the very opening scene of the novel, she provides the reader with this description: “In Norddeutschland gibt es wohl wenig lieblichere Punkte als die Brühlische Terrasse in Dresden zur Frühlingszeit.” By locating her story within Dresden, Hahn-Hahn places her novel directly in the midst of the German confederation which existed in the 1840s when she wrote the novel. By providing a spatial setting to the novel, Hahn-Hahn connects her narrative to a specific location and in so doing, enables the reader to identify with the time and space in which the narrative takes place.

Dresden and the Kingdom of Saxony played a special role in nineteenth-century Germany. During the wars against Napoleon, Saxony fought on the side of France, and several key battles took place in and around Dresden. Dresden would later become important during the Revolutions of 1848/1849, acting as a center of revolutionary action and the May revolutions of 1849. Even though Hahn-Hahn wrote her novel before these Revolutions, setting her novel in

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Dresden demonstrates her desire to focus on an area that reveals the variations in understanding German national identity.

**F. Engaging with the Eternal Feminine**

While many discourses aided in shaping the German nation, Hahn-Hahn focuses primarily on gender and class discourses in her novel *Gräfin Faustine*. She enters into these discourses through different means than Lewald and Aston but still places herself within the German cultural tradition and ties her novel into cultural understandings of German nation most clearly through allusion to the Faust legend in the name of main protagonist—Faustine. By reappropriating Faust in her novel, Hahn-Hahn places herself within a system of cultural meanings that aided in shaping the cultural terrain of the German nation and especially women’s place within it. As a result, her novel implicitly provides commentary on the conception of the German nation. The allusion to Faust in the protagonist’s name is shown to be no coincidence when Faustine remarks about her name, “Mein Vater hatte eine solche Liebe zu dem Goetheschen Faust, daß er, um in jedem Augenblick seines Lebens an dies Meisterwerk erinnert zu werden, seinen beiden ersten Kindern den Namen Faust und Faustine beizulegen beschloß.”\(^{317}\) It follows then that perhaps Faustine might share something more in common with Faust than just her name.

\(^{317}\) Hahn-Hahn, *Faustine*, 174.
Hahn-Hahn’s novel draws heavily on Goethe’s version of *Faust* and as Faustine states herself, her name came as a result of her father having read Goethe. This is important because the versions of *Faust* that started to emerge during the period of *Sturm und Drang* were given more contemporary plots and, in the particular case of Goethe, the Faust character became a symbol of modern man longing for wholeness and totality. Hahn-Hahn, writing half a century later, continues in making the Faustian model contemporary, nonetheless to achieve different ends. Unlike Goethe, who presents the tragic conflict of Faust as a class conflict—the seduction of Gretchen, a young maiden of the lower class, by Faust, a man of the upper-class—Hahn-Hahn presents the conflict in gendered terms to make a commentary about the role accorded to women in the Germany of her day. While a character like Faust is allowed his quest for knowledge, an understanding of the world, and the development of his potential, Hahn-Hahn shows that the same does not apply for women, given how they are constructed in nineteenth-century discourse. In an attempt to reinscribe the Faust legend for women and thereby reinterpret women’s cultural identity through literatue, Hahn-Hahn enters a different kind of politics of nationalism. Ultimately, however, the Faustian character cannot be supplanted with a female character as Hahn-Hahn’s novel demonstrates.

To conceive of the Faust legend in strictly Germanic terms was not unheard of during Hahn-Hahn’s time. While these types of readings became

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more popular in the 1860s, the appropriation of the legend as German drama had
its beginnings in the Vormärz, the period in which Hahn-Hahn was writing. Inherent in the Faust myth is a system of cultural meanings which embody the
idealization of the bourgeois woman and confine her to the realm of the private.
In versions of the Faust legend from 1770 into the nineteenth century, women
were characterized as being “innately virtuous, and situated in static tranquility
in the private, domestic sphere,” as well as, “the subordinate term in a process
which privileges the development of the dominant (masculine) entity.” Women
were thus idealized, and any deviant behavior that was considered to overstep the
bounds of femininity was castigated. Accordingly, the female characters in Faust
are denied the change that is indicative of the Faust character. They are not
allowed to develop. The female figures come to represent the “Other” whose sole
function is to contribute to the advancement of the male subject.

In addition to embodying the idealization of woman, the Faust narrative
also provides a sense of the gender role division that became popular in the late
eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Within the story, Faust often occupies
a metaphysical realm. This is seen within the opening scene of part one of the
tragedy, where Faust’s study is described as “in einem hochgewölbten, engen
gotischen Zimmer Faust, unruhig auf seinem Sessel am Pulte.” In contrast to

319 Françoise Forster-Hahn, “Romantic Tragedy or National Symbol? The Interpretation of
Goethe’s Faust in 19th-Century German Art,” in Our Faust? Roots and Ramifications of a Modern
German Myth, ed. Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermand (Madison, WI: The University of
320 Nancy A. Kaiser, “Faust/Faustine in the 19th Century: Man’s Myth, Women’s Place,” in Our
Faust? Roots and Ramifications of a Modern Germany Myth, ed. Reinhold Grimm and Jost
321 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Faust: erster Teil (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1974), 27.
Faust, the female character of Margaret is often only seen within domestic contexts such as that of the spinning wheel.

It must be noted, however, that Hahn-Hahn’s novel is neither a faithful rendition, nor an inversion of the Faust legend with the Faustian hero as female; rather, it is only a reappropriation of Faust through the character of Faustine. In Hahn-Hahn’s novel, the meaning of Faust is reduced only to the concept of intellectual striving. Unlike other versions of the Faust legend in the nineteenth century which show women serving the advancement of men, the men in Gräfin Faustine can hardly be viewed as advancing the feminine subject. And ultimately, the male characters aid in her demise. This outcome is even alluded to in the novel during a discussion that Faustine has with Mario Mengen regarding the genius of men versus women. When Mengen asks, “Aber der ruinierte und gesunkene Mann kann durch eine Frau erhoben und gebessert werden. Läßt sich diese Behauptung auch umkehren?” Faustine replies in the negative, “Ich glaube kaum. Die gesunkene Frau steht nicht wieder auf. Ein böser Mann ruiniert so gründlich, daß ein guter nicht mehr retten kann.” While redemption is afforded a man through a woman, as Faust is ultimately redeemed through Gretchen, the same does not hold true for women. As Faustine states, a fallen woman will never be able to be saved. This foreshadowing holds true for Faustine herself, as will be discussed.

Through the reappropriation of Faust in Faustine, Hahn-Hahn attempts to develop the female entity and move woman from subordinate to dominant entity.

323 Hahn-Hahn, Faustine, 102.
Even so, Faustine’s success in this role is limited. Although she attempts to reject the customary roles accorded her sex—wife, mother, nun, temptress—she is continually forced back into these categories. When not confined to societal and cultural constraints and norms, as is more the case when she is with the Baron Andlau, she is more successful in transgressing customary roles. However, she is never able to totally relieve herself of the bourgeois role of woman.

Faustine is to a certain extent able to fulfill her quest for self-fulfillment when she lives with Baron Andlau, as Andlau does not require Faustine to adhere to the cultural norms of woman. She is able to enjoy a moderate amount of success with her painting and a certain amount of personal freedom. Yet, the moment she is confined and constrained by the boundaries and cultural roles allowed to women, she fails to in her quest to develop. This is most clearly seen in her relationship with Mario Mengen. After her marriage to Mengen, she is expected to fill the role of wife and mother through which she finds no self-fulfillment or satisfaction.

It becomes clear to Faustine that she will never be able to fulfill her own destiny through striving. She says:


324 Hahn-Hahn, Faustine, 175.
The question then becomes, why does the second part of Goethe’s *Faust* make it impossible for her to find satisfaction? The answer lies in Goethe’s construction of what is termed the “eternal feminine,” which he mentions at the end of the second part of *Faust*. Goethe accentuates and punctuates the image of the eternal feminine in the last words of the play, where he writes “das Ewig-Weibliche zieht uns hinan.” The eternal feminine is defined as the virtuous, submissive, and long-suffering patient woman. It is ultimately through the redemptive power of Gretchen and her femininity that Faust’s soul can be saved and not be taken by Mephisto. Through the figure of Gretchen, the feminine is idealized as bearing an attraction to the good, innocent, pure and holy as well as a redemptive power for the masculine. The eternal feminine embodies traits that are culturally esteemed and viewed as positive but which ultimately impose limitations on women. In presenting the feminine subject in this light, Goethe reproduces the two-sex model and relegates women to positions of wife, mother, and moral guardians of men and family.

In setting up the two-sex model in Part Two of *Faust* and thereby relegating women to the roles of wives and mothers, Goethe makes it impossible for women to strive. As such, in reproducing Goethe’s two-sex model, Hahn-Hahn renders Faustine’s quest for self-development as impossible. Because she is a woman, she cannot successfully fulfill her quest. While the feminine subjects in Goethe’s version of *Faust* aid in his advancement and redemption, this does not

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happen for Faustine. And ultimately, the only second part Hahn-Hahn can write is Faustine’s untimely death. The male characters, with the exception of Baron Andlau, do not aid in her advancement and eventually lead her down her path of demise and destruction. Faustine does not enjoy the same fate as her namesake. While Goethe’s Faust can strive, err, seek, and ultimately succeed, Faustine cannot. She is forever relegated to traditionally feminine roles whereby she can derive no happiness.

**G. Disputing “Nature”**

Yet, while Faustine’s character is unsuccessful in her striving, she does dispute the natural gender order and attempts to write new positions for women outside of the traditional gender hierarchy. Faustine’s new found desire to reposition women comes from her own life experiences, as she explains to Mario Mengen: “Mein Leben ist so unaussprechlich einfach und einfarbig gewesen, daß ich nur ein einziges Mal Gelegenheit hatte, einen unbesieglichen Entschluß zu fassen. Da revoltierte ich freilich, aber es war eine Revolution, aus der eine neue Ära für mich hervorging.”327 As the reader will learn later, this personal revolution and the new era which was created from it, stemmed from a terrible marriage which she was able to escape with the help of her lover Baron von Andlau.

327 Hahn-Hahn, *Faustine*, 126.
Nevertheless, Hahn-Hahn does not argue completely against such conventions as marriage and makes the case that each person has their own way of being. For instance, Faustine does not argue against her sister’s happiness in marriage. But while she inherently sees nothing wrong with the way her sister Adele and her husband live, she also believes that each individual should have a choice to develop and grow of his/her own accord. And what works for Adele and her brother-in-law would not work for her.

Faustine comments that she believes women like her sister to be lucky in some aspects, as she finds their countenance and temper in line with a woman’s fate:

Meine Schwester war in kurzer Zeit ganz fraulich geworden, verloren in ihren Familien- und Haus-Interessen und mit unendlichem Behagen sich darin zurecht setzend, wie der Vogel auf seinem Nest. Sie gehörte zu den weiblichen Wesen, die von der Geburt an, möchte ich sagen, Frauen sind und im Hause Wurzel fassen und Blüten treiben. Sie ist glücklich dabei geworden, weil Temperament, Sinnesart, Charakter mit ihrem Schicksal Hand in Hand gingen...\(^\text{328}\)

Unlike her sister, Faustine’s temperament is not suited to the ways of bourgeois marriage. Unlike other authors who were fighting for a political concept of freedom, Hahn-Hahn here attempts to put the emancipated “I” at the center point of her ideology.\(^\text{329}\)

Despite the fact that she does not argue completely against the convention of marriage, she does dispute the naturalness of gender distinctions in society that reproduce woman as the subordinate of man and, as a result, lead to inequity

\(^{328}\) Hahn-Hahn, *Faustine*, 185.
\(^{329}\) Möhrmann, *Die andere Frau*, 91.
in marriage. When she speaks with her brother-in-law Walldorf about the position of women in society, he makes the following statement: “Nebensache, das! Aber...nehmen Sie’s nicht übel, ich dachte, Sie wollten ganz auf gleichem Fuß mit dem Mann leben – und das geht doch nicht an. Darum mein freudiges Erstaunen bei Ihrer demütigen Äußerung, die vom Gegenteil zeugt. Ja gewiß! Der Mann muß herrschen und die Frau gehorchen – dazu ist sie geboren.’” It becomes clear in this statement from Walldorf that he believes there exists a natural element to gender roles. He uses the word *geboren* to describe both men and women’s roles in society. Man is born to rule, and woman is born to obey. In response to Walldorf’s comments, Faustine calls into question this position:


Faustine clearly equates the ideas of gender division with bourgeois ideals. In this way, one can clearly see how extensively these ideas pervaded society and became the norm. Religion and bourgeois respectability decreed and naturalized this way of imagining German society. Men continue to raise their children and write

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330 Hahn-Hahn, Faustine, 49.
331 Hahn-Hahn, Faustine, 49-50.
books with these ideas and ideals in mind. It is precisely this way of thinking that Faustine is fighting against. It is with these words as well that Hahn-Hahn presents the reader with the goal of her novel—to change perceptions of woman’s roles as subordinate to man. For a woman like Faustine, marriage is a chain, *Fessel*.

**H. Attempting to Rewrite Woman’s Position**

While the bulk of secondary literature on the novel has focused its attention on comparing Faustine to her sister Adele (as they represent two different sides of the spectrum), there is perhaps more to be learned about changing perceptions of women in examining Faustine, specifically in relation to the figure of Kunigunde. Through Faustine’s relationship with Andlau and through the figure of Kunigunde, Hahn-Hahn attempts to inscribe a new role for women that does not call for their subordination to or reliance on a man.

Behavior that stands outside of the realm of bourgeois domesticity is often castigated in the novel, or attempts are made at least to normalize this behavior through various explanations. This is seen in the figure of Kunigunde, a woman whom Faustine befriends after learning that she is to be married to a man to whom she is not romantically inclined. Kunigunde’s parents and her fiancé cannot understand why she reproaches his advances and his affection and why she does not seem contented to marry him and fulfill her role as wife. In order to understand her abnormal behavior, they normalize it to fit the paradigm of
prescribed gender roles. Thus, her lack of affection towards her fiancé Feldern and her stalling of the wedding ceremony is understood as nervous sentimentality and nothing more.\textsuperscript{332}

Faustine herself is no stranger to receiving admonishment for her untraditional behavior either. She too is rebuked by those on the outside. To the outside eye, Faustine is reproached for what is perceived as her deviant behavior. This is most clearly understood in Mengen’s family’s immediate response and reaction to his description of her when he arrives to tell them of his plans to marry her. His father exclaims that she must be a “Circe” and his mother gives him this warning: “Und fliegt davon, mein Sohn! solche Frauen – genial, ungewöhnlich, über dem Alltäglichen, und wie man sie nennen mag! haben so selten die Klarheit, Ruhe, Gewissenhaftigkeit und Pflichttreue, mit denen mag einzig und allein glücklich sein und machen kann.”\textsuperscript{333} Her behavior is not easily understandable to them and the only way in which they can interpret it is to categorize her into a traditional mode of female behavior—a temptress who preys upon men.

Kunigunde also attempts to understand Faustine’s untraditional manner by assessing her through traditional modes of femininity. And because none of these modes seem to fit, she labels Faustine “das Mädchen aus der Fremde.”\textsuperscript{334} Because she defies categorization, Faustine is viewed as a stranger, as something

\textsuperscript{332} Hahn-Hahn, \textit{Faustine}, 307.
\textsuperscript{333} Hahn-Hahn, \textit{Faustine}, 207-208.
\textsuperscript{334} Hahn-Hahn, \textit{Faustine}, 282. Hahn-Hahn might also be referencing here with these words, the poem “Das Mädchen aus der Fremde” by Friedrich Schiller, which describes a woman who comes to a valley, where she was not born and brings with her gifts that she shares with the people that live there.
foreign. After all, she would have to be viewed that way in order to live as she does, as this behavior is unbefitting of a German woman. In this way, it is easy to understand why her positioning as a single woman living with her lover causes little annoyance and bother to those around her who know her. She is somehow perceived as being outside their realm. In being perceived as an “outsider,” Faustine is able to resist the role of bourgeois femininity which has come to be the norm of behavior for German women. But in this effort, she is only partially successful, as resisting the role also means not being seen as an insider.

Despite the fact that others may view her coming from the “Fremde,” Faustine does not view herself in the same way. Faustine is keenly aware of women’s position within German bourgeois society and attempts to rewrite this position for herself through her untraditional relationship with Baron Andlau. In this relationship, she attempts to make it possible for a woman to have a relationship with a man that is based on love but which still allows her to maintain her independence. As such, she wants to change the role of woman and to reject the idea that a woman’s natural role is that of self-renunciation. Yet, in some ways, she is only able to accomplish this because she is an aristocrat. She has the financial means to maintain an independent lifestyle.

Faustine’s success in living an independent life is reflected in the way the narrator describes her character. In contrast to Kunigunde, who is described as melancholy, Faustine is described as bright.335 The situations that these two women find themselves in are likewise reflected in their dispositions. Faustine is

335 Hahn-Hahn, *Faustine*, 305.
a vibrant figure because she has found herself in a position that allows her unfettered freedom. Kunigunde, on the other hand, is suffering the fate of many women of nineteenth-century Germany—being married off so that they do not become a burden to their parents financially or ruin the prospects of younger sisters for marriage.

In speaking to Kunigunde, Faustine recognizes in her a kindred spirit—a woman whose disposition is not predisposed to the role that society has prescribed. Yet she has been placed in a position where she is expected to marry, and it has caused her much pain. Kunigunde’s mother is vigilant about Kunigunde marrying, as she sees marriage as a duty that women are to fulfill: “Hat sie sich nur erst überwunden und den Schritt getan, welcher ihr jetzt unmöglich scheint, so wird ihr reines Herz in dem Bewuβtsein erfüllter Pflicht die nötige Stärke und Erhebung finden, um sie mit ihrem Schicksal auszusöhnen. Und überdies geht sie ja keinem entsetzlichen Schicksal entgegen.”336 Faustine tries to help Kunigunde find an alternative to the marriage she seems doomed to enter by procuring her a position as a companion for Mario Mengen’s youngest sister.

Unfortunately, this plan is short-sighted, and Kunigunde is not able to maintain this new position that Faustine has attempted to rewrite for her. Faustine later learns that Kunigunde has been engaged to marry another man, one she deems even less agreeable than Feldern.

336 Hahn-Hahn, Faustine, 131.
Hahn-Hahn concedes that the ability for new positions to be created for women involves the changing attitude of man, as the narrator suggests:

Der starke Mann fürchtet nicht, zu der Geliebten emporzublicken; er fühlt die Kraft in sich, mit einem Schwung ihr zur Seite zu stehen. Der eitle und schwache Mann halt sie gern in seinem Niveau; er fürchtet die Überstrahlung und fühlt nicht die Kraft, ein Gegengewicht in die Schale zu werfen.\(^{337}\)

These words sum up the message of the novel. And these words are representative of Faustine’s life, which she explains to Mario Mengen when he implores her to marry him. As she narrates the story of her life, Mario learns of her first marriage to the Baron Obernau who she describes as not interested in her happiness. This marriage ultimately fails when she meets Andlau, but he is wounded in a duel with her husband. The description she affords Andlau is vastly different than that of Obernau.


Unlike Obernau, who fits the narrator’s description of a man who is weak and incapable of tolerating a woman of equal standing, Andlau is a strong man for whom Faustine’s love is neither bought nor sold. He is not afraid to have a woman at his level and helps to improve her character and her striving. He raises Faustine up, in contrast to Obernau, who was apt to keep her down.

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\(^{337}\) Hahn-Hahn, *Faustine*, 107.
\(^{338}\) Hahn-Hahn, *Faustine*, 196.
And while it appears that Mario Mengen adores Faustine for her independent character and appears to be one of these strong men of whom she speaks, he still holds very patriarchal ideas when it comes to marriage and the sexes. While attracted to Faustine due to her self-reliant spirit, her wit and charm are, in the end, only a novelty to him, as he makes clear in telling her story to one of her admirers after her death: “Ich wurde auch nie müde, sie zu beobachten. Es war etwas Unergründliches, Geheimnisreiches, Einfaches in ihr, etwas von der primitiven Frische des Naturlebens, durch welches alle Elemente spielen und blitzen.” For Mengen, she comes to represent only a beautiful object to admire. While he is quite taken with her independent nature, he still views Faustine as a possession which ultimately leads to her demise.

### I. Escape as Means of Change

Faustine’s only recourse to happiness seems to be through escape of German bourgeois society. After she marries Mario Mengen, this first occurs in their moving to Italy. And as Mengen describes it in his story to Faustine’s admirer, she happily left Germany: “Gleich nach unserer Verheiratung gingen wir nach Florenz, wohin ich als Geschäftsträger gesendet ward. Faustine verließ gern Deutschland.” Ultimately, however, Italy does not prove to be enough of an escape from bourgeois Europe, and she begs Mario to go with her to the Orient. It is here in the novel that the Orient is presented as a prehistoric (Urgeschichte)

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339 Hahn-Hahn, *Faustine*, 221.
and prepoetic (Urpoesie) place. As Faustine is no longer independent due to her marriage to Mengen, the Orient comes to represent an escape from bourgeois society. The Orient is assigned a primeval quality that allows Faustine to move beyond the limits imposed upon her by the bourgeois society of Germany. It is a place that exists outside the boundaries of what society in Germany has become. In contrast, Europe represents for her a stifling society that stunts one’s ability to achieve:

Ich bin allzu glücklich! hier muß ich sterben – wäre der Tod nicht allzu grausig. Ich will leben ohne zu altern, schaffen ohne zu ermüden, genießen ohne mich abzustumpfen, forschen ohne zu zweifeln, ruhen ohne mich zu langweilen! glaubst du nicht, Mario, daß alles hier, in diesen primitiveren Zuständen, leichter zu erreichen sei, als da draußen, in der berschrobenen, abhetzenden okzidentalischen Zivilisation?

She believes that, in the Orient, it will be easier for her to achieve those things she views Europe as hindering and as such the Orient will allow her to regain her sense of self and independence.

This viewing of occidental society as stifling does not just apply to her. She does not even want her son raised in the restrained environment of Germany, as she finds it demoralizing:

Wärst Du mein Sohn allein, so erzög ich dich hier, fern von der demoralisierten Gesellschaft, fern von dem Wust pedantischer Gelahrtheit, mit der Bibel, der Geschichte, der Poesie und der Natur; und wärst du zum Jüngling herangereift, so ließe ich dich nach Europa in alle Länder, zu allen Nationen, auf all Universitäten ziehen, um die Gegenwart durch unmittelbare Anschauung kennen zu lernen...wenn du in zwanzig Jahren eine Brille auf der Nase hast, Runzeln auf der Stirn, Falten um Mund und Augenwinkel, wenn du

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342 Hahn-Hahn, Faustine, 233.
pedantisch bist, mein Bonaventura, langweilig, unholfen, dürr an Leib und Seele, unerquicklich wei die personifizierter Vernunftigkeit, gehörig eitel auf deine negative Entwicklung – so verklage ich den Staat beim lieben Gott, weil dessen Geschöpf und mein Sohn so kläglich mißhandelt ward von dem alles verschlingenden Moloch, dem wir unsre lieben Kinder auf die versengenden Arme legen müssen.343

It is only in the escape of the Orient that she will be able to raise her son to not view the world through the narrow eyes of the Europe and Germany, restrained by the ideas that its history, its literature, and its religion perpetuate. And should he become pedantic and vain in his development, it would be the state’s fault, as it continues to educate its children to mimic certain behaviors that do not allow for the personal development of its constituents.

Mario does not agree with Faustine on this point and believes that his son should be raised and educated back in Germany, a path for which his birth has destined him:

Ich bin aber der Meinung, daß Kinder in dem Lande und in den Verhältnissen zu erziehen sind, für welche die Geburt sie bestimmte. Exotische Erziehungen sind fast immer unverträglich mit der späteren Bestimmung und die Gewöhnung der Kindheit so stark, daß oft ein trauriger Zwiespalt entsteht, wenn man nicht gesucht hat, sie, wenigstens approximativ, jener anzupassen.

In this way, Mengen seeks to reproduce the status quo of bourgeois Europe and thusly aids in the maintaining of women’s subordination.

Faustine understands that she does not have the power to change the circumstances of her son, and she concedes that Mengen is lord over her and their son: “Ich hab’ auch nur gesagt: wenn Bonaventura mein Sohn allein wäre! –

343 Hahn-Hahn, Faustine, 232.
Thus, the freedom and autonomy that Faustine believes the Orient provides her is illusory, as her destiny is now connected with that of Mario through their marriage. And as her husband and the father of her child, he is the one who makes the decisions regarding his son’s education. In this way, marriage has become a chain that binds Faustine to the bourgeois ideal of domesticity and even a move to the Orient cannot unbind her.

**J. Conclusion**

The ending of Hahn-Hahn’s novel has been interpreted by some as upholding the views of nineteenth-century Germany, that is, a warning to women not to overstep their bounds. Told from a different narrative perspective, the reader finds Mario Mengen standing over the grave of his wife Faustine in the final scene:

Frauen wie Faustine sind der Racheengel unseres Geschlechtes, welche die Vorsehung zuweilen, aber selten auf die Erde schickt, und denen die Allerbesten unter euch verfallen; denn nur die Allerbesten unter euch sind zu dem bereit, wozu die meisten Frauen bereit sind: ein Herz für ein Herz, ein Leben für ein Leben, eine ganze Existenz für eine ganze Existenz zu geben, und sie wähnen, diesen Tausch bei solchen Frauen zu finden, deren glutvolle Unersättlichkeit eine Bürgschaft unerschöpflichen Gefühls zu geben scheint. Ein so strahlendes Wesen, meinen sie, müsse ein verklärtes sein; aber mitnichten! eine solche feingeistige Vampirnatur verbrennt und verbraucht – zuerst den andern, dann sich selbst. Die mittelmäßigen Männer hüten sich vor ihnen; sie, die ewig Bedürftigen, wollen immer haben; die Bessern unter euch wollen auch geben. Nehmt euch vor den Faustinen in acht! Es ist nicht mit

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In the case of a male Faust figure, it is okay that he uses others, as he will be saved. Yet, for a woman to do the same, she is considered a demon, someone not of this world, who uses and discards others and then finally herself.

However, because the narrative is told from a different perspective in this final scene, one cannot equate it with the narrative voice of the rest of the novel. In this way, the final scene can only be interpreted as a warning by this specific person making these claims at the graveside; it does not represent the overall message of the novel. In fact, the overall message of the novel seems to question this very belief about women.

Although Ida Hahn-Hahn questions the naturalness of gender hierarchy and division in her novel, she does remain against the radical questioning of religious, social, and sexual laws. In this way, Hahn-Hahn seeks to distinguish between “the emancipation of women” and women’s intellectual emancipation. Hahn-Hahn’s novel *Gräfin Faustine* deals almost exclusively with the question surrounding intellectual freedom for women. She is not interested in focusing on the plight of the lower classes or other marginal groups such as the Jews. Rather, she is most interested in addressing the “emancipated I” and the intellectual development of the self. As an aristocratic woman, Faustine, like the woman who creates her, has what many middle-class women want—economic freedom. She is less interested in attaching her argument for intellectual freedom to economic

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345 Hahn-Hahn, *Faustine*, 244.
concerns, as Aston did. Thus, she is not critical of the social order in Germany, as she does not attach her critique to any broader social thematic.

Faustine is semi-successful in her undertaking to develop her intellectual self. While living together with Andlau in an untraditional manner, as she is not married to him, Faustine is able to enjoy relative success as an artist. However, once she marries Mario Mengen and enters into more traditional arrangement, she no longer has the freedom to develop herself intellectually. It is here that marriage comes to be seen as a chain that binds Faustine to a way of life that she does not consider fitting. Faustine’s marriage to Mengen marks the end of her freedom and growth. While it is clear that she does love Mario, his picture of love and marriage is different from Faustine’s. She is expected to fill her role as wife and eventually mother—the bourgeois ideal of womanhood. And while she associates love with freedom and growth, Mario describes his relationship with Faustine with words like “acquiescence,” “law,” and “restraint”: “...denn ich wollte, daß sie sich fügen lernen sollte...aber dem anerkannten festen Gesetz. Ich glaubte, die allmähliche Gewöhnung würde auch ihre innerste Wesenheit nach und nach zügeln können.” 346 In this way, he reinforced patriarchal notions of marriage where the man is seen as the dominant figure and woman as subordinate.

Faustine’s consent to marry Mengen is the last the reader hears of her own voice; she no longer narrates her own story. 347 The rest of her story is either told through a narrator or through her husband, Mengen. In this way, Hahn-Hahn

346 Hahn-Hahn, Faustine, 222.
makes a statement about the nature of marriage. Once married, Faustine succumbs to the eternal feminine and is no longer an active agent in her own life and story. She is instead placed into a passive position, and her story is narrated for her.

Ultimately, Hahn-Hahn offers no vast restructuring of German national identity in her novel beyond the longing for women’s intellectual freedom and the hope that men will see women as more than mere objects to be possessed. She does not seek to transform society beyond the scope of gender, and when she falls prey to bourgeois marriage and virtue, rather than attempt to revamp her position, she only seeks to escape it by traveling to the Orient.
Chapter 6

Conclusion

The process of identifying and creating a German collectivity underwent growth and intensification at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The Napoleonic era and the ensuing Wars of Liberation which took place during this time are often understood as the main impetus in pushing to define what it meant to be German and how a German nation-state would be established. While Napoleon’s contribution to the active constructing and proposing of a unified German identity might be overstated, he nevertheless did provide an impetus, especially to academics and literary authors, to decry the lack of mass nationalism on the part of the German people.348

Yet, even after Napoleon’s defeat in 1815, many among the rising middle class were unhappy with the ancien régime that pervaded the restructuring of the old Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation. The middle classes often times found themselves positioned with little to no political power, as they were frequently locked out of the upper echelons of society where political decisions were commonly made. As a result, they sought to take control of cultural understandings of Germany in order to create a self-image of Germany that emphasized intellectual development and morality in opposition to what was

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viewed as the immorality and extravagance of the aristocracy. Thus, even though Germany’s national narrative should have spoken to a single, unified public, it did not. The German narrative of the mid-nineteenth century primarily targeted and was sustained by the bourgeoisie.

The rising bourgeoisie had much influence on the way in which the German nation was conceived. Contrasting themselves against the immoral depravity of the aristocracy and the working-class, they positioned themselves as the ideal of Germandom. This positioning not only affected how class was viewed but also had lasting effects on the role of gender and ethnoreligious identity. With the advent of such ideas as bourgeois domesticity and the separation of the public and private sphere, the ideal German woman was produced—a domestic wife and mother relegated to the private world of the home. In addition, in linking bourgeois ideals with Protestant ideals and events, the bourgeoisie was able to maintain male domination and female subordination. It also had the added advantage of creating outsiders through religious affiliation.

As such, women’s role in the nationalist project has been viewed as a passive and subordinate role. As wives and mothers, their job was not social production, but rather reproduction, whereby they reproduced the nation, both biologically and ideologically. Thus, women become representatives of a timeless idea of the nation, a primordial entity whose culture has always existed and must continue to be reproduced and preserved.

While it has often been theorized that women play a passive role in the creation of national identity, this is not always the case. The category of woman is
not monolithic. Even though some women might have been happy to play the part that was written for them, not all women were passive participants, relegated to positions as only wives and mothers. Many took an active role in helping to shape and engage with the construction of the nation. And for many of these women, their socioeconomic and sociocultural positions influenced the ways in which they understood the creation of national identity and women’s role in the emerging German nation. These women, who attempted to rewrite or reinterpret their positions in the national constellation and enter into discussions surrounding the production of the nation, used the resources that they had available to them. And in mid nineteenth-century Germany, this often meant taking to the pen.

All three of the women writers examined in this dissertation—Fanny Lewald, Louise Aston, and Ida Hahn-Hahn—were well-known during the Vormärz period and enjoyed relative success with their writing. That each of them was engaged in the particular social and political questions of her time is clear in the novels that she wrote. All three of these novels have fallen under the classification of Tendenzliteratur and, as such, are set in modern times with modern characters who attempt to navigate their way through the social and cultural landscape of mid nineteenth-century Germany. And even though the female protagonists all come from different backgrounds (class and ethnoreligious), the problems that they face are remarkably similar. They are each victims of a female bourgeois morality which does not allow them to reach their full potential or realize the lives they envision for themselves. However, how
each of these protagonists and the authors themselves engage and deal with these issues varies.

This dissertation calls into question feminist historiography and how women are grouped together for study. What do these three women have in common? They all wrote about women’s issues during the *Vormärz* period and sought to reinscribe women’s roles. Yet, while they all treat women’s issues in relation to the German nation in their novels, their differences cannot continue to be overlooked. Yes, they are all women, but their other positions within German society also help shape their views on German society and what it means to be German.

Research on women writers of the *Vormärz* has often concluded that women were first and foremost representatives of their class and not their gender.349 However, this finding is still somewhat oversimplistic, as *Vormärz* women writers were not only concerned with issues of class. While the literary compassion of Ida Hahn-Hahn was largely limited to the upper-class and the banal and dissatisfying lives of these women, and Lewald and Aston focused on the problems of women in the rising middle-class, all of these women writers address women’s roles in their novels and criticize patriarchal gender barriers. These women were both representatives of their class and their gender, their own social standing tempering the way in which they inveighed against women’s positions. In addition, their social positioning beyond class shaped the way they

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dealt with women’s issues, evident most starkly in the case of Fanny Lewald who was very much influenced by her Jewish background. The largest difference between these women writers lies in the fact that Lewald and Aston extend their critique socially beyond domestic bourgeois ideals and into overtly political critiques of the class structure and ethno-religious structure of mid-nineteenth-century Germany. In contrast, Hahn-Hahn almost solely focuses her novel around women’s intellectual emancipation and does not dabble in such things as the socialist ideas surrounding class or Jewish emancipation—a difference which has not been explicated enough in the literature surrounding these three women. Hahn-Hahn’s female protagonist does not seek a fundamental change to society. Rather, Hahn-Hahn attempts to reinscribe women’s position through culture by using the myth of Faust and reinterpreting the main protagonist as a woman. And when she is unsuccessful in her endeavors in Germany, she attempts to rectify and cope with her position through escape from her own society.

In the case of Lewald, gender identity and ethnoreligious identity are intertwined to such a degree that she feels the only solution is to do away with theistic notions of religion and belief in a personal God to more pantheistic notions where God and nature are seen as synonymous. In her assertions, Christianity has perverted gender to such a degree and provided for only one view of woman that it needs to be done away with. Yet, she is also no real supporter of Judaism either. While she addresses the Jewish question in her novel, it is never done in a religious manner. Judaism is equally a religion bearing its own issues,
and her support of the Jewish people lies in her defense of them as a group that has been persecuted for years, not necessarily in their belief system. It is only through secularization that women and Jews can come to enjoy a renewed sense of belonging in German society. Ultimately, her novel Jenny is a call to further action. Lewald uses her protagonist’s failure to incite indignation and determination in her reader to lobby for change in the real world.

Like Fanny Lewald, Louise Aston uses her novel as a means to engage in issues surrounding women’s position in German society and to critique further facets of a society which she finds to be flawed. In the same vein as Lewald, Aston argues for the creation of modern identities which would enable individuals to claim power over their own circumstances. This is understood best in the female protagonist’s situation. Constructed in a position that only really allows her the role of wife, Johanna yearns to be the one that controls her own destiny and chooses her own object of love.

Like Lewald, she moves her critique of gender beyond just gender and links women’s emancipation with further political critiques such as the aristocratic abuse of the nation and the plight of the working class. In the end, the main protagonist Johanna comes to view the troubles of the workers in her husband’s factory as her own. Like herself, they find themselves in a position where they have been treated unjustly. In this way, their needs and wants echo her own.

And like Lewald, Aston’s novel Aus dem Leben einer Frau is also a call to further action. This is represented in the ending when Johanna leaves the
unfulfilling and cruel marriage she has found herself in and sets out on her own. Even though the reader is not certain what the future holds for Johanna, they can imagine how she will negotiate her position and where she will go. As such, the narrative does not have an ending, but rather encourages the reader to think of possibilities that allow for the renegotiation of women’s position.

For Ida Hahn-Hahn, however, there is no big push in her novel to transform German society. While her protagonist Faustine finds women’s position in bourgeois society unfair and undesirable, her solution, when unsuccessful within a German context, is to escape it completely and go to the Orient. And, unlike Lewald’s and Aston’s texts, Hahn-Hahn’s novel Gräfin Faustine is not a call to further action. Hahn-Hahn’s novel lacks the practical purpose of Lewald and Aston. Fiction is, for Hahn-Hahn, a means of self-expression and does not have an underlying tone of utility beyond the individual. Lewald and Aston’s novels are a call to action by their very nature. Hahn-Hahn’s novel is a means of self-expression.

In examining all three of these texts, what becomes perhaps most clear is that none of these novels could have been written after the Vormärz period. After the Revolutions of 1848, there was a marked turn towards a more conservative approach to nationalism. As such, more racialized and romantic notions of the nation came to the fore with a focus on creating a strong, nationally-oriented monarchy.

This turn towards more conservative approaches to the national question can be seen in the behavior of these three women writers. After the era of the
failed revolutions, Fanny Lewald and Ida Hahn-Hahn continued to write. However, in their writing, they both took a more conservative tone. Hahn-Hahn converted to Catholicism and continued to write novels, predominantly for the Catholic Church and as a means to promote Catholic ideals. In keeping with her newly conservative stance after 1848, Hahn-Hahn refused to allow a second edition of her earlier novels to be published in 1851.350

Lewald too continued to write. And like Hahn-Hahn, her beliefs and writings took a more conservative turn. Her revolutionary eagerness was beset with doubts after the failed revolutions of 1849 and the unrealistic expectations of the left-wing radicals. Despite the fact that she felt that republicanism was the most fitting form of government for Germany, she did eventually come to regard Bismarck and his reforms as necessary, as she was not sure how a republic could be achieved.351

Even though her writing before the 1848 Revolution was typical in its social criticism, her life after the Revolution was not what one would describe as publically active. She remained a popular writer but was not involved in public activities, nor was she actively involved in the women’s movement which emerged in the 1850s.352

In contrast to both these women, Louise Aston left the public eye almost completely after this period. There is some speculation that she fought on the barricades during the March Revolution, but there is no definitive evidence to corroborate this. There is evidence, nonetheless, that suggests that she did travel with German nationalists to take part in the campaign against the Danish later in the spring of 1848. In terms of her writing, there is no record that she wrote anything after 1850 after her marriage to Dr. Daniel Eduard Meier. She spent her last years in exile, moving from place to place, eventually dying in a small Austrian town near Lake Constance in December 1871.

This study does not claim to be exhaustive in any sense. It seeks only to begin to provide a sense as to how nineteenth-century German women attempted to engage with the position that had been granted them while they lived. In examining these three women writers, one can begin to gain an understanding of how gender united and divided these three women. While gender was important to these women and clearly thematized in their novels, how it was dealt with was often respective to other identity markers such as class and ethnoreligious identity. There is still much more to be studied in terms of nineteenth-century women writers and constructions of national identity. For instance, further examinations on this topic could account for variation not only in social and religious backgrounds of women writers but could also include more

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353 Germaine Goetzinger, Für die Selbstverwirklichung der Frau: Louise Aston in Selbstzeugnissen und Dokumenten (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1983), 123. She tended the wounded on the battlefield during the Danish campaign and was grazed by a bullet, which she proudly displayed as a badge of honor.

geographically diverse areas such as Austria or areas outside of the predominantly Protestant north. In addition, comparisons could be made between national constructions in the Vormärz period versus constructions that come later in the nineteenth century after the failed revolutions of 1849. The examinations of women writers in these later periods could extend to include women from working-class backgrounds, those whom one is hard-pressed to find writing in the Vormärz period.
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