



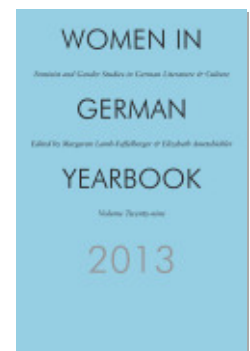
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Viktoria Harms

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Sympathy for a Villain? Suffering Men and Angelic Women in the Novels of Caroline Auguste Fischer (1764–1842)

VIKTORIA HARMS

This article examines the effects that the socially preassigned gender roles had on both men and women in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as depicted in Caroline Auguste Fischer's four novels: *Gustavs Verirrungen* (1801, *Gustav's errors*), *Die Honigmonathe* (1802, *The honeymoons*), *Der Günstling* (1809, *The favorite*), and *Margarethe* (1812). Although Fischer is well known for her radical critique of female oppression and women's limited possibilities, she also demonstrates in her work that men were not simply driven by self-interest and egoism but were themselves victims of a gender ideology that restricted both men and women in their search for happiness and love.

Caroline Auguste Fischer's novels and stories revolve around love, yet there are few happy endings in her work. Instead, what stands out in her writing is the candid analysis of contemporary gender relations and the pessimistic view with regard to happy relationships between men and women that she presents.¹ Fischer is openly critical of the roles that were assigned to each gender at her time, and her focus is clearly on the often disastrous effect that men's privileged position in society had on women and their lives. Still, Fischer's male characters are not simply presented as villains or blackguards. In this article, I look closely at the gender roles and relationships in Fischer's four novels because they reveal her view that men were not any happier than women even though they possessed more power and freedom.² Indeed, most noticeable about Fischer's male protagonists is their misery, self-doubt, discontent, and longing. Furthermore, most of them are doomed to die in the end.

In her first novel, *Gustavs Verirrungen* (1801, *Gustav's errors*), the protagonist, by his own admission a spoiled young man, goes out into the world to search for the girl with whom he has fallen in love. After a series of relationships with different women, he finally finds her but

dies a little later of a sexually transmitted disease. The epistolary novel *Die Honigmonathe* (1802, The honeymoons) tells the story of Julie and Olivier through their letters, as well as through those of their respective friends Wilhelmine and Reinhold. The first volume of the letters is the story of their courtship. Olivier, a successful military man and guardian of the fatherless Julie, is initially only interested in a marriage of convenience, but later he falls in love with his ward. Although Julie does not reciprocate his feelings, she is pressured by him, her mother, and even Olivier's soldiers into marrying him. The second volume depicts their marriage, which quickly deteriorates due to Olivier's extreme jealousy. The situation is made worse by the fact that the son of one of Olivier's fallen comrades, Antonelli, falls in love with Julie. The novel ends with Olivier seeking his death in battle after he has killed Antonelli in a fit of jealous rage. In *Der Günstling* (1809, The favorite), another epistolary novel, Count Alexander is torn between his duty to his country and its people and his growing antipathy toward Empress Iwanova, who loves him and cannot accept his rejection. When he decides to marry his ward, an innocent young girl from the country, Iwanova poisons them both in their wedding bed. Lastly, in the epistolary novel *Margarethe* (1812), both the artist Stephani and the Prince are unsuccessful in their attempts to gain the women they love—the artist Rosamunde and the innocent Margarethe, respectively. While Stephani continues to love many women and dies prematurely as a result of his excessive lifestyle, the Prince accepts his duty to his country and marries for political reasons.

The scholarship on Fischer's work has mostly focused on her portrayal of the oppression of women in the early nineteenth century due to the prevailing gender ideology. This article shifts the attention to Fischer's depiction of the role of men in the patriarchal system of the time and investigates the construction of individual masculinities, while also looking at how women were affected by the division of gender roles. Sarah S. G. Frantz and Katharina Rennak state in the introduction to their study *Women Constructing Men: Female Novelists and Their Male Characters, 1750–2000* (2010) that, to date, most research on works by women in the nineteenth century has focused on female rather than male characters (2). This lack of scholarly investigation on males, according to Frantz and Rennak, "implies, on the one hand, that male authors were and are solely responsible for constructing literary masculinity, and on the other hand, that masculinity in female-authored texts goes without saying, is natural" (3). Fischer's novels demonstrate that she did not believe in so-called

natural masculinity. Her distinct interest in the question of masculinity is demonstrated by the wide variety of male characters she presents, both as protagonists and narrators, and by her particular attention to the social expectations, pressures, constraints, and personal experiences that shape the lives of her male characters, as well as their understanding of themselves and of women. In other words, Fischer's works were part of the lively debate around 1800 about men and their role in society.

Although this debate on gender roles focused on women, the Other to the male norm,³ Peter Uwe Hohendahl points out that the idea of masculinity was found to be in need of reconceptualization as well: "Eighteenth-century masculinity came under close scrutiny and was considered deficient" at the dawn of the nineteenth century ("New Man" 187). According to Hohendahl, social changes such as the restructuring of the family and the subsequent loss of the father figure's authority led to a deep sense of uncertainty and even to a "crisis of masculinity."⁴ Due to the patriarch's weakened position at the center of the old order, the sons lacked guidance and direction and had to search for a new ideal of masculinity. Therefore, the question of male identity became a central topic in the literature of the time ("Krise" 281). Typically, the texts revolve around a protagonist who goes through a process of transition after leaving his parental home in order to discover his role in life and seek his fortune. Different literary options are explored: from the *Bildungsroman* that depicts the young man's successful integration into the social order after a number of trials and tribulations (e.g., Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* [1795–96])⁵ and the novel that presents the tragic story of a young man who fails to find happiness within the confines of bourgeois society (e.g., Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* [1774]) to the radical solutions offered by the Romantics Novalis and Schlegel, who sought to redefine masculinity by feminizing it.⁶ However, while Hohendahl's study on the discourse of masculinity at the beginning of the nineteenth century mainly refers to literary works by male authors, women writers like Fischer also dealt with the topic.⁷ Two previous studies show an increased interest in Fischer's attention to the changing perceptions of masculinity and gender roles. These are Judith Purver's 1995 article on "images of men" in Fischer's works and Birgit Tautz's research on white masculinity in Fischer's story "William the Negro" ("William der Neger"), published in 2008. Purver highlights Fischer's "real insight into male dilemmas and conflicts" ("Passion" 620) and gives an overview of the different male characters in Fischer's work. She comments that "vic-

tims and perpetrators cannot be definitely identified” (626), however, as she finds that the men are “not depicted for their own sake, but in relation to women and in their effect on women’s lives” (“Passion” 620), she does not explore this ambivalence any further.⁸ Weertje Willms’s monograph (2009) on gender relations and the construction of both masculinity and femininity in German and Russian Romantic literature also includes a chapter on Fischer, specifically on her novels *Gustavs Verirrungen* and *Margarethe*. With regard to the construction of masculinity in Fischer’s work, Willms analyzes the male protagonists’ process of transition and education and the figure of the artist. However, her comparative study focuses on specific themes and structures, thus limiting her interpretation and analysis.⁹

Feminist scholars have been reluctant to put men and masculinity at the center of their research, because opposing the traditional scholarly emphasis on men was, after all, part of their original *raison d’être*. However, as Anna Richards notes in her introduction to *German Women’s Writing of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century* (2011), there is now “a sense that we need to embark on new directions in order to prevent the gradual decline of our field” (5). In a similar vein, Helen Fronius calls for a less restrictive view of the literature of the period, noting the “mechanisms of exclusion in feminist criticism” that have limited the field. She specifically mentions that conservative women writers¹⁰ and minor texts have been disregarded (“Chasing” 42), but the neglect of women’s contribution to the debate on masculinity can also be added here. Fronius suggests “[a] change in perspective, away from a one-sided analysis of oppression to a more complex consideration of opportunities and restrictions alike” in order to “reveal women’s complex and often contradictory participation in literature and culture” (“Chasing” 53). While Fischer certainly has not been ignored by recent feminist critics, her careful assessment of men and their role in the gender order of the time has often been overlooked. Yet her work presents a more complex picture than the familiar story of female oppression and male power.¹¹

There can be no doubt about Fischer’s feminist tendencies, her critical stance toward men and their power over women, and especially her disapproving attitude toward an ideology that declared the public sphere the domain of men and assigned women to the home. Throughout her work, she thoroughly analyzes the different levels of constraint and lack of freedom women experienced, beginning with a state of law that put most of them under the absolute control of either a father or a husband.

She thus shows that husbands can imprison their wives without any legal consequences as, for example, Olivier does in *Die Honigmonathe*, when he tries to keep Julie all to himself.¹² But Fischer was also very conscious of the fact that even if women were not physically imprisoned, social norms and conventions gave them few options for living a self-defined life. After all, Fischer's own (second) husband, the writer Christian August Fischer, had neatly summarized contemporary gender ideology and its restrictive view of women's purpose in life in his treatise *Über den Umgang der Weiber mit Männern* (On the association of women with men): "The woman is destined to be the companion of man. All her talents, all her virtues are adjusted for this relation" (11).¹³ The idea that a woman's role was that of wife, mother, and general caretaker, that her life was meant to be sacrificed for others in loving, selfless care is shared and expressed by many of Fischer's characters. For example, the Prince in *Margarethe* tries to convince the dancer Rosamunde to give up her profession in order to be with the artist Stephani, to be his muse and possibly the mother of his children. He thus asks her to "be a woman, a truly beautiful, a loving woman! Sacrifice yourself" (27).¹⁴ Olivier in *Die Honigmonathe* characteristically expresses his expectations more bluntly when he explains what he expects of his future wife: "The dear lamb will take care of my household and a few boys who will continue my name. She will nurse me when I am sick and entertain me when I am hypochondriac. By the by, it goes without saying that there will be no to-do, if I should be in the mood for a little escapade at any time" (*HM* I: 27–28).¹⁵ Further, he declares: "instead of any explanations a manly 'You shall!'—That is how it was in the old days, and our fathers did well with it!" (*HM* I: 31).¹⁶ Fischer makes her position on this attitude clear by having not just one, but two characters comment on the thoroughly egoistical foundation of such gender ideology, which gives men all the advantages (*HM* I: 18, 34).

Fischer's novels demonstrate the effect that this ideology has on women and how it confines those who act according to its rules and expectations, an effect that Susanne Zantop has called "deformation" (35), as well as those who transgress its limits. In *Die Honigmonathe*, Julie faithfully does what is expected of her yet is effectively imprisoned by her role as dutiful daughter to a tyrannical, sick mother, even before she marries Olivier, who literally locks her away. On the other hand, any woman who dares defy social expectations risks being seen as unwomanly and even unnatural. As Karin Hausen observes in her seminal article on the

concept of “gender characteristics” (*Geschlechtscharaktere*), which developed in the eighteenth century, women were increasingly seen as innately domestic, modest, receptive, submissive, and self-denying (368). Julie’s friend Wilhelmine, however, does not fit this concept, as she resists all attempts at an arranged marriage and encourages Julie to do the same. Thus, Reinhold, Olivier’s friend, might admire Wilhelmine for her strength and confidence, her independence of mind, and her unwillingness to bow to convention, yet he also admits that he does not perceive her as a woman anymore, but rather as an asexual being (59). Only loving self-sacrifice seems to make a woman a woman in the eyes of these men. A woman who shows an independent will and claims self-fulfillment is accused of not being true to her gender.

While both Rosamunde and Wilhelmine refuse to give up their independence for a man, the Russian monarch Iwanova in *Der Günstling* oversteps the boundaries of “appropriate” behavior for women in another way.¹⁷ From the beginning, the male narrator, Count Alexander, struggles with the fact that Iwanova is both a woman and a ruler, as he tries in vain to understand her in terms of conventional womanhood. His first description of her thus alternates between backhanded praise and barely hidden criticism, despite his claim to the contrary: “Whether she lives up to her reputation: O yes! A great mind, of great dignity, and yet very mild—more so than I expected—but then also very self-confident. This is no criticism. What would she be, what would her people be, if she did not have that. They call her mother, and they are right. She is that, although more in mind than in deed, which is unfortunately often not hers” (1).¹⁸ Alexander’s reaction to Iwanova, however, changes from an initial vague disquiet and fear to repugnance once she openly expresses her love and desire for him. Instead, he falls in love with his ward, the very young Maria, whom he admires for her purity of mind and unworldly innocence, calling her a “being as pure as heaven,” whose “saintly, child-like mind” he wants to preserve (*G* 40).¹⁹ She in turn calls him “father” at first, and when she later begins to love him as a man, it is important to him that her love for him is still grounded in admiration (“höchste Bewunderung”), rather than physical desire (*G* 138).²⁰ She is furthermore quite willing to accept that, as his wife, she will play a minor role in his life, as he is primarily dedicated to serving the state and making his name in history (*G* 140–41). Women are clearly expected to be loving, but only in a selfless, asexual, nondemanding, angelic way. Otherwise, they risk losing their idealized status, because a proper woman can never know “pas-

sionate love” (“leidenschaftliche Liebe” [G 137]).²¹ The ideal woman is closer to angels than to humans, as Julie herself remarks (*HM* 1:17). Julie, Maria, and Margarethe are all examples of the angelic woman admired by men (and women) in Fischer’s novels.

Fischer draws attention to the contradictory expectations of women when Reinhold in *Die Honigmonathe* comments:

Poor women! When will you ever satisfy the egoism of men?—If you are simple of mind, we believe ourselves justified in using you purely as a means to satisfy our sensuality. If you dare to think, we accuse you of being unwomanly and regard you as rebels. You may treat us with the highest intelligence, only you must not know that you have it. All that is great and sublime in you, we only allow as instinct, never as reason. (*HM* 1: 34)²²

It becomes evident here not only that Fischer was critical of men and their attitude toward women but also that she saw the hypocrisy and double standards behind the concept of a “naturally given” feminine character.

It is therefore not surprising that Fischer has long been recognized for her outspoken assessment of the gender order around 1800. Christine Touaillon stated as early as 1919 that such radical views about the relationship between man and woman had not been expressed before by a German woman writer (618).²³ Anita Runge, who was the first contemporary scholar to publish extensively on Fischer and is also responsible for the first modern reprint of her work, clearly identifies her as an early example of modern feminism. Runge notes that her radical views made her stand out from other writers who were more careful in their criticism (“Dramatik” 96). Other scholars, such as Purver, Clementine Kügler, and Michaela Krug, have expressed similar protofeminist interpretations of Fischer in their studies by emphasizing the destructive effect of her male characters on women. The most extreme example of a man as a tyrant who disregards independence and self-determination for women is Olivier in *Die Honigmonathe*. Therefore, when analyzed by critics in more detail, the focus was on his oppressive treatment of his wife, Julie, or on his military character (e.g., Krug; Purver, “Passion”). Carola Hilmes describes him as egotistical, arrogant, and blind to reality (“Skandal” 53), and others have called him a “stereotype” of masculinity (Krug 298; Purver, “Passion” 623). Overall, he appears to be a thoroughly unlovable, even detestable man. Kügler points out, however, that he shows the qualities Wilhelm von Humboldt ascribes to men in general in his 1795

essay “Über den Geschlechtsunterschied und dessen Einfluß auf die organische Natur” (On gender difference and its influence on organic nature), such as energy, aggression, and independence (Kügler 74). According to the thinking of the time, Olivier, as an ideal man, is thus greatly admired by his soldiers, his friend Reinhold, and even Julie.

Touaillon notes that Fischer is ambivalent toward her male characters. The scholar observes Fischer’s fundamental enmity against the male gender²⁴ and also comments on the contradictions in her position regarding ideal femininity and masculinity: “As much as the author rejects the male gender ideal rationally, as little is she able to let go of it completely. And thus there is a strange contradiction in her work” (625).²⁵ Touaillon identifies two types of female figures in Fischer’s work and notices, perhaps surprisingly, that “[a]lthough she describes the ‘masculine women’ with great interest, the ‘feminine women’ have her love” (628).²⁶ With regard to *Die Honigmonathe* and the two characters at its center, Touaillon notes that the author describes Olivier “as a man at whose side any woman must become unhappy; and she depicts the devoted, selfless Julie as a woman bound to be brought down by her feminine qualities. But despite this turn against the old gender ideal, a strong sympathy for these two characters that embody it sneaks in without her being conscious of it” (628).²⁷ It is easier to understand her sympathy for gentle Julie, a woman whom even Wilhelmine, the character who seems to express Fischer’s own views most closely, cannot help but admire and love despite her criticism of Julie’s acquiescence.²⁸ It is much more difficult to fathom how Fischer could possibly express sympathy for Olivier, who is, of all of her characters, the most extreme example of the autocratic man. Yet it is noteworthy that Olivier, for all his success and despite his absolute power over Julie, is not a happy man but an increasingly tortured human being who finally seeks his death in battle.²⁹

In the context of her critical stance toward the contemporary concept of gender roles, Fischer’s partiality for characters who seem to conform most closely to the ideals of the passive, weak, and submissive female and the active, strong, and aggressive male might be unexpected. However, it underscores just how difficult it was for any woman at the time to free herself completely of such a pervasive ideology, even someone as independent and courageous as Fischer, who not only expressed her thoughts with unusual openness but also got divorced and wrote for a living at a time when both were very unusual indeed.³⁰

However, Fischer herself was faced with the same dilemma as the

dancer Rosamunde in *Margarethe*. As mentioned, Rosamunde is criticized by the Prince (as the representative of the social order) for acting against the prevailing gender ideology when she does not want to be a wife and muse to a male artist, but instead wants to be acknowledged for her own artistic work.³¹ Likewise, women who wrote and published—that is, who were creative and entered the public sphere—were seen as “deviant,” to use Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres’s terminology, and often ridiculed, if not worse.

Many female writers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries therefore tried to conceal their identity as women in an effort to make their publications more acceptable to a public that did not consider female authorship appropriate or at least did not take works written by women very seriously. Fischer herself published her first novel anonymously and the second one, *Gustavs Verirrungen*, simply as author (*Verfasser*). The last two acknowledged her gender, if not her name, as she was now mentioned as *Verfasserin*, that is, the female author.³²

Being a female author around 1800 was not easy, which could explain why, even when women resisted the pressure of public opinion and wrote and published, they might still have “interiorized the rules of gendered behavior” (Joeres 7). In their works they might therefore have criticized women who offended these rules and praised those who complied with them, a move that revealed a deep-seated ambivalence regarding their own role as writers (Joeres 5–7).³³ This inner conflict can also be seen in Fischer’s work. Wilhelmine in *Die Honigmonathe* rages against Wilhelmine Caroline Wobeser’s novel *Elisa, oder; Das Weib wie es seyn sollte* (1795, *Elisa, or the woman as she is supposed to be*), because it is written by a woman, yet extolls the virtue of female renunciation and a woman’s acceptance of her fate, whatever it may be.³⁴ At the same time, Fischer herself clearly demonstrates sympathy for just the kind of gentle, selfless woman Wobeser praises.

This ambivalence regarding her own role might also be a reason for Fischer’s choice of narrators in her novels. While *Gustavs Verirrungen* is told from the perspective of its protagonist, the other three are epistolary novels. Thus, all of her novels are narrated by one or more of the characters rather than an omniscient or objective, third-person narrator who might be identified with the author. Fischer can thereby hide behind her characters, as Sigrun Schmid points out. Schmid also notes that the sometimes radical opinions expressed by one character are often countered by another who presents the opposite point of view. It thus becomes

impossible to determine definitively which one the author favors (268).³⁵ Furthermore, Fischer's novels are often completely, or at least to a large extent, narrated from a male perspective, a technique that could be used to express thoughts considered inappropriate for a woman.³⁶

Yet, hiding behind male characters cannot have been the main reason for Fischer's choice of narrator. Not only did she publish her last two novels openly as a female author, but some of the most critical opinions regarding men and the patriarchal social order of the time are also voiced by women characters (Wilhelmine and Rosamunde). Her use of different types of epistolary novels and narrators shows rather that Fischer was aware of the possibilities the genre offered and skillfully used them to create a complex picture of her characters.³⁷ Letting her male characters speak for themselves allowed Fischer to show these men from different perspectives and to give the reader insight into the motivations, doubts, questions, and often self-torturous thoughts of her characters. This is how she is able to evoke sympathy, even for someone as domineering and aggressive as Olivier, but most importantly, it becomes an especially effective way to add her voice to the debate on masculinity. As she states in the preface to her first novel, *Gustavs Verirrungen*, she was especially interested in finding out *how* people became who they are.³⁸ Her goal was thus not just to depict the gender inequalities of her society and women's oppression by men; she also wanted to understand why men are the way they are and why they treat women the way they do. Telling her stories to a large part from a male perspective gave her the opportunity to explore the effect that an ideology which equated masculinity with the qualities of strength, independence, rationality, and decisiveness had on men.

Although Fischer's novels are told mostly from a male perspective, none of her narrators is completely in control of the narration. In *Gustavs Verirrungen*, the protagonist recounts most of his story, but in the end, his friend and rival Heinrich takes over when Gustav becomes too sick to continue. The three other, epistolary, novels all include a fictional editor who explains what happens after the correspondence has ended. Both *Der Günstling* and *Margarethe* include only one side of the correspondence, which emphasizes the lack of any real communication. In *Der Günstling*, for example, Alexander's comments reveal that the relatives to whom he addresses his letters do not always agree with him and often suggest a different course of action than the one he follows. The artist Stephani in *Margarethe*, who also writes to his relatives, begins his correspondence by expecting censure for not fulfilling his duties and

then seems to write more for himself than for a specific audience, thus failing in his own way to communicate effectively.³⁹ *Die Honigmonathe* includes letters from all participants of the correspondence, yet the letters are characterized mostly by disagreements, and the overall impression is again that communication is futile.⁴⁰ The illusion of male power and command is thus already revealed by the way the novels are told; there is no single authoritative voice in control of the narration.

This lack of authority is most obvious in *Die Honigmonathe*, in which Olivier is unable to gain control over the narrative, foreshadowing a parallel lack of command over the development of events. The novel tells the story of Olivier and Julie, as reported and commented on by them and their friends Reinhold and Wilhelmine. All four represent different positions of the gender debate, and although Olivier dominates the novel in terms of quantity, just as he seems to have all the power over Julie, he cannot achieve complete control of either the narrative or the plot. He not only shares the narrative space with three other voices, plus the fictional editor at the end, but also fails to convince Reinhold, to whom most of his letters are addressed, of his point of view. While Reinhold sympathizes with him and at times even understands his excessive behavior, the two men mostly argue. Their disagreements once even lead to the threat of a duel when Olivier feels that his honor was violated and that only an act of physical force could reestablish order. He is even less able to keep the correspondence with Julie under his control. He writes only two letters to her and she writes none to him, which shows just how little communication and connection there is between them. These two letters furthermore demonstrate that he is insecure and hesitant about writing to her. Both letters are composed in moments of desperation or crisis: the first at a time when he does not know where she is and cannot find her, the second right before a battle. He is so afraid of receiving a response he cannot control that he almost does not send the first letter—he would rather just imagine her reading and responding to it.

Olivier is not only powerless to control the reactions of his correspondents but also unable to impose order on his own letters, which are full of exclamations, questions, broken sentences, threats, and passionate pleas. Form and content equally express his loss of control, as in the following passage: “But I could write to her, couldn’t I? Reinhold! I will write to her. I will send the letter to you. You have to, yes, you will forward it!—No, you cannot do that! No, you will not keep it.—You still love me, you do not want me to despair. O Reinhold! You will send her the letter.—I

will write! I will write" (*HM* I:113).⁴¹ Although Olivier tries to convey an image of absolute self-control, expressed, for example, by his habit of wearing a uniform at all times, in the course of the novel his violent emotions overwhelm him. And just as his attempt to control the narrative fails, he loses Julie despite his precautions and safety measures: she falls in love with another man, Antonelli, who finds a way to reach her.

The clearest sign of Olivier's loss of control is the breaking down of his body. In fact, many of Fischer's male protagonists fall ill at some point because of their emotions, which runs counter to the ideal image of masculinity: the strong and rational man in control. One example of emotional ill health is Gustav in *Gustavs Verirrungen*, who faints after his encounter with a young chambermaid whom he had seduced earlier in the novel and who is now suffering from a disfiguring disease (presumably as a result of the seduction or of the life she subsequently has had to lead as a "fallen" woman). Consumed by guilt over his sinful past, he dies after a short illness soon thereafter. Stephani in *Margarethe* is another example of a man who becomes sick and has to be looked after by friends while he lies unconscious in bed; in this case, though, his fever is caused by a woman's rejection of his love (*M* 43). While such an extreme reaction might be expected from a character like Gustav, who is spoiled and impetuous and not used to being contradicted (*GV* 4, 16), or from Stephani, who as a genius is supposed to have more powerful feelings than others, even the strong soldier Olivier is not immune to debilitating emotional outbursts. The first instance of this occurs when Julie defies him and refuses to become engaged to him that very same day, as he demands. Wilhelmine describes, not without a hint of glee, how this causes Olivier such inner turmoil that he ends up hanging "pale as a corpse over the back of the sofa" (*HM* I: 36).⁴² Later, when Olivier sees Julie at a ball dancing with the king, he can hardly keep from intervening. When, however, he observes that she is about to receive an offer from another man to dance, it becomes too much for him. Unable to watch, he rushes out of the room and takes his horse out to gallop wildly across the fields, only to be found later, lying on the ground, unconscious (*HM* I: 175–76). Considering these moments of involuntary, very powerful reactions when Olivier loses control over himself, it seems unlikely that his motivation to seek death on the battle field in the end is really meant to be read as nothing more than "contrived heroism" ("aufgesetzter Heroismus"), as Hilmes has claimed ("Skandal" 53). Instead, it seems to me to be an ex-

pression of the unsolvable crisis Olivier finds himself in, of his inability to integrate his desires into reality.⁴³

Die Honigmonathe is thus the opposite of a *Bildungsroman*: instead of telling the story of Olivier's successful integration into society, the "hero" disintegrates in front of us. Most people around him—the king, the soldiers under his command, society, and even Julie—see Olivier as a strong and confident man and as a successful military leader. His first letters also show him as self-assured and secure ("At war with myself? Oh no!" he claims in a letter to Reinhold [*HM* 1:40]).⁴⁴ But gradually he turns into a man completely unmoored both by his passionate love for Julie and by the fact that he cannot control her feelings for him. He compares his situation to a labyrinth (*HM* 2:143) to express his feelings of helplessness and disorientation. When he suspects Julie's feelings for Antonelli, a man whom he loves like a son, he even locks her away in a desperate attempt to keep her to himself. Antonelli manages to find her in her prison, however, and Olivier kills him in a fit of jealousy. Realizing that he will never find what he is looking for, that he has in fact destroyed any possibility of achieving happiness and inner peace, Olivier's only option is death—the ultimate sign of his failure.⁴⁵

Like Olivier, Alexander, the protagonist of *Der Günstling*, compares his situation to a labyrinth (9) as he tries desperately (and in vain) to find a way to reconcile his obligations toward his country and the ambition of his relatives with his wish to love freely. He mentions first a sense of dread and later outright fear. He also falls ill in the course of the novel; here, however, it is because of the love potion that Iwanova gives him. While his illness is thus physical rather than emotional, it is again a woman and unrequited love at the root of the problem, though in this instance *her* unrequited love. In both novels, the men are in a position of dependency on women: Olivier's need for Julie is an emotional one, whereas Alexander is politically and socially dependent on Iwanova because he is "the favorite" and would be nothing without her goodwill (Dawson 83). Hence he is afraid to reject her advances outright, and the question of what to do about her unwelcome love becomes the topic of many of his letters. Therefore, an ever-increasing sense of insecurity and crisis runs through the letters of these two men as they write about their worries, fears, and anxieties.

For both Olivier and Alexander, the crisis they experience is clearly gendered, as their comments reveal. Thus, Alexander berates himself for his hesitation to speak openly to Iwanova and writes about getting up

every morning intending to speak with her, “freely, as it befits *a man*” (*G* 13; my emphasis), only to postpone the confrontation for another day.⁴⁶ Olivier, on the other hand, asks, “have I become *a woman*? Shall this boy command me?” (*HM* 2:67; my emphasis), when he is torn between his consuming jealousy and his fatherly feelings for Antonelli.⁴⁷ For both Olivier and Alexander, a man is clearly supposed to be in charge, in control of his own feelings, and not afraid of confronting any opponent—certainly any woman—and the doubt and hesitation they experience do not fit their ideal of masculinity. Instead, their excessive feelings, their physical weakness, and their dependency on others show them in a “typically feminine” position.⁴⁸ The male characters in Fischer’s work thus stand out not for their strength and power but rather for their insecurities and the lack of control over their emotions and lives.

One reason for their increasing confusion is that they are very much on their own. All of the men leave home to try to find happiness or fulfillment, which was a typical literary topos at the time and also served as the premise for the three epistolary novels. While Gustav is looking for love, Olivier, Alexander, and Stephani seek advancement in their respective careers as soldier, politician/administrator/civil servant, and artist. Although their original community and family context remain vague, there is a noticeable lack of strong and effective parental support, especially from their fathers. Gustav grew up an orphan, while Olivier was spoiled by his elders, and Alexander and Stephani write to their relatives, but it is not specified who they are. If fathers are mentioned at all, they are the fathers of daughters and usually die too early to take care of them properly.⁴⁹ Overall, both the male and female protagonists in Fischer’s novels tend to be without parental support.⁵⁰ While the men still write to family and friends, thereby acknowledging their social context and a past, they are not looking for guidance from their correspondents. Instead, they usually ignore or argue against any advice they are given. The clearest example of this is Olivier in *Die Honigmonathe*, because the reader knows exactly what Reinhold writes in response to Olivier. In the other novels, the reader must infer from the reactions of the protagonists what their counterparts might have written. For example, Alexander often openly contradicts his relatives, while Stephani does not seem to address anyone in particular after the first letter. As lost as they might feel, these men evidently do not expect that their families and the old order they represent can help them in their present circumstances.

While growing up without a strong father figure makes daughters es-

pecially vulnerable, for the sons it primarily means a lot of freedom, at least in the beginning. This is most obvious in *Gustavs Verirrungen*. Gustav was brought up by an aunt who was weak and indulged his every wish, rather than teaching him restraint and self-discipline: “No, I was not bad!—I was pampered, spoiled, impetuous, short-tempered; I could not abide any opposition” (G 31).⁵¹ Throughout the novel he does whatever he wants, and it is only at the very end that he is reformed. By then, though, it is too late to recover his health or undo all the damage his irresponsible behavior has caused. Olivier in *Die Honigmonathe* is another example of a male character shaped by his upbringing without proper parental guidance. As Julie observes, he was “[b]orn with French frivolousness, pampered by his elders, alternately used and idolized by women, brought to the most abject misery by his insatiable greed for pleasure, and now forced by a total lack of patience to use any means to climb up again” (HM 1:8).⁵² Clearly, Fischer’s male characters tend to have little help in finding their way in the world.

Despite their lack of familial support, most of Fischer’s male protagonists are shown to be successful in their respective careers: Olivier is promoted to the rank of general because of his bravery and leadership; Alexander, as Iwanova’s apparently only loyal and honest adviser, is presented as the only one who can ensure that her people are not mistreated by other officials; in *Margarethe*, Stephani is a generally admired artist, and the Prince is described as a well-liked ruler. All of them thus follow a path that corresponds to the prescribed gender roles, which, for men, meant a life focused on the public sphere and on work.

Yet the novels show how these men increasingly feel the tension between their public duties and their private needs and desires. Olivier, for example, begins to question his role in war in the course of *Die Honigmonathe*. There is no indication at the beginning of the novel that he has any problems with his military career, especially since he constantly wears a uniform and spurs, even inside, which clearly marks him as a soldier.⁵³ However, once he falls in love with Julie he begins to change. When he is again called upon to lead his company into battle, he reacts with reluctance and bitterness, not only because war takes him away from her but also because he has begun to question the reasons for the military campaign and worries about his men. Although Alexander in *Der Günstling* is no soldier, he also compares his role at court to that of a fighter and, moreover, a fighter who has entered the ring somewhat reluctantly: “Well then! I have accepted the challenge; now I will fight

until the end" (*G* 5).⁵⁴ He also often writes about the crushing workload that is exhausting him and his men and resents that it keeps him from the woman he loves. Another man who cannot live and love the way he would like is the Prince in *Margarethe*, who is often described as working hard and being preoccupied with the business of ruling.⁵⁵ All he can do for the woman he loves is to found a cloister where she can become a nun and help others, while he must marry for political reasons. Fischer's male characters are thus typical for their time, when, as Christoph Kucklick points out, a profession or public career was not seen as a means of masculine self-realization or an opportunity to broaden one's horizon, "but rather as a source of restrictions and the destruction of the human spirit" (171). With the exception of Stephani, for whom allowances are made because he is an artist, all of Fischer's male protagonists learn that success in the public sphere was largely based on self-repression.⁵⁶

In fact, the pressure these men face in their careers might also be connected to their bouts of illness. Miriam Bailin notes that the sickroom can be seen as a realm of freedom from the restrictions and expectations of normal life for both women and men (27–28) and that the "disabled male under the care of a woman permits imaginative, if not actual, access to traits that were associated with femininity and allowed a retreat from those associated with manliness" (40). While the men appear to be much more in control of their own destiny than any woman could be, Fischer clearly shows that their freedom and power are relative. All of them struggle to control their passions and wishes in order to fulfill their duties, which means channeling their energies in ways that are acceptable and useful to the state—for example, into battle or working long hours as civil servants. It becomes obvious therefore that despite being male, they actually are not at all independent or autonomous.

Their insight into the inner workings of the court and into the power play involved in politics also mean that Olivier's and Alexander's view of the world darkens as they observe the greed and hypocrisy around them (e.g., *HM* 1:44; *G* 31). Thus they fall in love with women who seem to have everything they lack themselves: the ability to love selflessly, an innocent belief in the goodness of others, a clear sense of purpose, and an inner certainty about what is right. As Krug points out with regard to Julie and Olivier, Julie comes to represent his desire for wholeness and harmony with the world, which stands in contrast to the friction and tension that he experiences (288). She is supposed to be the reward for all his troubles and give him the strength to face his tasks outside the home.⁵⁷

This is why it is so important to him that she remain pure and untouched by the world. The angelic women in Fischer's novels—Julie, Maria, and Margarethe—become living proof for the men who love them that there is more to life than greed and selfishness, that there is meaning beyond hedonism and striving for power.

It is because the ideal woman comes to represent his only hope for salvation that Olivier becomes so desperate to win Julie. When Wilhelmine takes her away, he writes therefore, "I will be unhappy for the rest of my life, if I cannot find her" (*HM* I:112).⁵⁸ More and more he wants her to return his love, because her love would prove his worth as a human being. But how could she truly love him, when the only way he knows to reach out to her is through the military strategy of siege and conquering (Krug 299–300)? Of course, as Alexander realizes, if the ideal woman would love him, it would lead to another problem, because then he would wonder how she could love him, if she were perfect and he was not—for if she loved him, would she still be perfect? By defining the ideal woman as their complete opposite, these men render them unreachable. And rather than anchoring them and reinforcing their sense of masculinity, these women therefore add to the men's feelings of threat and danger.

Throughout her work, Fischer thus shows that the subjugation of women, their restriction to the private sphere, and the expectation that women be pure and loving is not rooted just in the domineering character of individual men. Instead, she demonstrates the connection between the contemporary attitude toward women and a society that forces men to suppress and control their emotions in order to do their duty. She emphasizes that both the ideal of angelic femininity and the ideal of strong and passionate but controlled masculinity are fictions that fulfill certain functions. Fischer is very aware that the private and the public are closely intertwined and that gender relations are never a purely personal matter. Although she is certainly critical of the oppression women suffer at the hands of men, she is able to show sympathy, even for someone like Olivier, because she realizes that he too is a victim of the contemporary gender order.

Notes

1. Hence almost all studies on Fischer mention her unusual outspokenness and radical critique of contemporary gender relations.

2. Fischer's four novels that I discuss are *Gustavs Verirrungen* (1801), *Die Honigmonathe* (1802; originally published in two volumes), *Der Günstling* (1809), and

Margarethe (1812). In the article, I refer to the novels as *GV*, *HM 1* and *HM 2*, *G*, and *M*, respectively. All translations from these texts are mine.

3. See, for example, Honegger.

4. See Hohendahl's two articles on masculinity around 1800, "Krise der Männlichkeit" and "The New Man."

5. Lokke (among others) points out that this was a fundamentally conservative solution (4).

6. See Hohendahl on the question of male identity as a topic of the (fictional) literature of the time ("Krise" 278–83) and on the feminized male character ("Krise" 283). For the story of initiation as a typical motif in Romantic literature and specifically in E. T. A. Hoffmann's works see Willms (97–117), who explains that the quest of the Romantic heroes often remained unsuccessful because they were not able to integrate their striving for the absolute into the real world (115). The feminization of the Romantic artist in particular is the topic of Kuzniar's article, which is also referred to in Martin (127).

7. Fischer's take on the topic of the crisis of masculinity and the development of the male "hero" can be seen as another example of a woman writer contributing to one of "the central cultural debates of the day" (Lokke 3).

8. Nor does Runge, who acknowledges that the psychological state of the male protagonist is depicted with great detail and empathy yet stresses that the novel is primarily concerned with the consequences of male behavior for the lives of women ("Dramatik" 98). She also repeatedly comments on the fact that "perpetrators and victims" ("Täter und Opfer") are difficult to identify (see *Literarische Praxis* 46 with regard to *Die Honigmonathe*).

9. Willms uses the two novels by Fischer, as well as Thérèse Huber's *Sophie* (1798) and *Eine Ehestandsgeschichte* (1804), to comment on the works of "female German Romantic writers" in general and to compare them with those by female Russian, as well as male German and Russian Romantic writers, respectively.

10. Conservative women writers have often been ignored by the scholarship, because they do not fit in with the feminist agenda driving most scholars interested in recovering women writers in the first place. Baumgartner makes a similar point in her study of one of these conservative writers, Caroline Fouqué (17). See also Gerig (28), who in turn refers to a very early warning by Weigel against a Cinderella-like sorting of the good (aka protofeminist) from the bad (aka conservative) women writers (84).

11. See Helfer's article on male muses in Romantic texts for a similar point. While Helfer acknowledges the "tremendous insights into the structure and function of gender in the Romantic project" that the focus on women by feminist scholars has yielded, she also asks "[w]hat happens when we remove woman from the spotlight afforded her by our own critical framework, and highlight other aspects of these texts?" (300). She points out that her intention is less to contradict than to complicate the commonly held view of the primacy of the feminine in Romantic poetics by offering another view and argues that "given the ironic, self-reflexive, self-critical, polyvalent nature of Romantic discourse and the fluid gender categories that animate it, it is con-

ceivable that Romanticism simultaneously inscribes competing discourses on gender not completely accounted for in the scholarship to date, and that new interpretative paradigms are possible, indeed necessary” (300).

12. Afraid to bring his wife, Julie, with him to court, where he has to attend the king, and thus expose her to its licentious atmosphere and the amorous interest of the king himself, Olivier takes her instead to a castle that is secured by a moat and drawbridge. He leaves her there in almost complete isolation, only in the company of a female servant, whom she does not know, and a guard. Fischer’s condemnation of this state of affairs is expressed most clearly through the voice of Julie’s friend Wilhelmine, who compares Julie’s captivity to slavery and thereby points to the fundamental injustice of a society that allows the oppression of others on the basis of their race or gender.

13. “Das Weib ist zur Gefährtin des Mannes bestimmt. Alle ihre Talente, alle ihre Tugenden sind auf dieses Verhältniß berechnet.” For a recent analysis of key texts and the general outline of eighteenth-century gender ideology see Fronius, *Women and Literature in the Goethe Era*.

14. “Seyen Sie ein Weib, ein wahrhaft schönes, ein liebendes Weib! Opfern Sie sich auf [. . .].”

15. “Das gute Schäfchen besorgt mein Hauswesen und ein paar Buben, die meinen Nahmen fortpflanzen. Wartet mich, wenn ich krank, und zerstreut mich, wenn ich hypochondrisch bin. Übrigens versteht es sich von selbst, daß wenn es mir früh oder spät einfällt, einen kleinen Seitengang zu machen, keine Achs und Ohs vorfallen.”

16. “[. . .] statt aller Grundsätze ein männliches Du sollst!—So hieß es in alten Zeiten, und unsere Väter befanden sich wohl dabey.”

17. See Martin for more on Rosamunde’s struggle to remain an artist of her own right rather than become an object of Stephani’s art (123–50).

18. “Ob sie ihrem Rufe entspricht: O ja! Viel Geist, viel Würde, und dennoch viel Milde—mehr als ich erwartete—dann aber auch viel Selbstvertrauen. Das ist kein Tadel. Was wäre sie, was wären ihre Völker, wenn sie es nicht hätte? Sie nennen sie Mutter, und thun Recht daran. Sie ist es; freylich mehr dem Sinne, als der That nach, die leider nur selten ihre That ist.”

19. “Das himmelreine Wesen!” and “diesen heiligen Kindersinn.”

20. Dawson points out the many references to incest regarding the relationship between Maria and Alexander and argues that they “articulate the new kind of love different from libertine passion” (82).

21. After Maria has told Alexander that she loves him, he then wonders what kind of love it is. Has she sacrificed her femininity and what is most holy in her (“Hat Maria dieses Heiligste wirklich geopfert”)? He is both relieved and aggrieved by the fact that she is still as pure and feminine as ever (“Maria ist rein und weiblich geblieben, wie vorher”). He is not entirely happy about this, because he wants more than just her respect and admiration, but at the same time, no pure woman can know truly human, passionate love: “Die eigentlich menschliche, immer mehr oder minder leidenschaftliche Liebe, kann von dem reinen Weibe nie mit dieser Unbefangenheit bekannt werden” (137).

22. "Arme Weiber! Wann werdet ihr den männlichen Egoismus befriedigen?— Seyd ihr eingeschränkt an Verstande; so glauben wir uns berechtigt euch als bloße Mittel zur Befriedigung unserer Sinnlichkeit zu gebrauchen. Untersteht ihr euch zu denken; so beschuldigen wir euch der Unweiblichkeit und betrachten euch als Empörer. Behandeln könnt ihr uns mit der höchsten Vernunft, nur wissen dürft ihr nicht, daß ihr sie habt. Alles Große und Erhabene an euch dulden wir nur als Instinkt, nie als Raisonnement."

23. "So radikale Ansichten über das Verhältnis von Mann und Frau waren bisher noch durch keine deutsche Schriftstellerin vorgetragen worden."

24. "In den Betrachtungen der Schriftstellerin über die Frauenfrage bildet die Feindschaft gegen das männliche Geschlecht den Ausgangspunkt" (614).

25. "So sehr die Dichterin aber verstandesmäßig das männliche Geschlechtsideal ablehnt, so wenig ist auch sie imstande, sich davon völlig loszureißen. Und so zeigt sich in ihrer Dichtung ein merkwürdiger Widerspruch."

26. "Obgleich sie die 'männlichen Frauen' mit größtem Interesse schildert, besitzen doch die 'weiblichen Frauen' ihre Liebe."

27. "In den *Honigmonathen* schildert sie den Kraftmenschen Olivier als einen Mann, an dessen Seite jede Frau unglücklich werden müsse; sie schildert die hingebungsvolle, opferbereite Julie als eine Frau, die eben durch ihre weiblichen Eigenschaften Schiffbruch leiden müsse. Aber trotz dieser Wendung gegen das alte Geschlechtsideal schleicht sich, ihr selbst unbewußt, starke Sympathie für die beiden, ihm nahestehenden Gestalten ein." Runge also mentions briefly the ambivalent fascination ("ambivalente Faszination") that the traditional gender roles hold for Fischer ("Schillers Geist" 191).

28. Dangel calls her the "mouthpiece" ("Sprachrohr") of Fischer (74).

29. As Runge points out, he becomes increasingly insecure and torn apart by his conflicting emotions in the course of the novel ("Dramatik" 98), while Purver almost grudgingly admits him to be "more than a mere inhuman monster" because of "the doubts and confusions that he suffers, and his genuine feeling for others" ("Passion" 623).

30. See Kügler for a detailed account of Fischer's biography. For a shorter overview, see Runge's afterword to *Die Honigmonate*, and Zantop.

31. This conflict also lies at the heart of de Staël's novel *Corinne*. Madame de Staël's influence on German women writers, including Fischer, has been shown by Martin in great depth. Willms also comments on Rosamunde as the female artist (202–15).

32. See Becker-Cantarino (62–63) and Kord on the various ways in which women writers of the time used pseudonyms or published anonymously to avoid social stigma for themselves and in general to negotiate their "deviancy" from the socially accepted norm; and referring specifically to Fischer, see the two articles by Hilmes, and Schmid. Much has been written about the depreciation of women writers because of their gender. For a recent addition to this discussion and an attempt to revise the general focus on women's oppression and limitation for a more nuanced view of women's literary activities at the time, see Fronius, *Women and Literature*.

33. See Weigel on the possibilities of female writing in a male-oriented culture in general.

34. Wilhelmine warns her friend Julie that she might end up like a “second Elise” and openly express her disgust at the fact that some women praise female submission: “Gott! Ist es nicht himmelschreiend! Daß selbst Weiber unsre Ketten erschweren!” (*HM I*: 18).

35. Purver notes that women writers often had difficulties finding “an independent voice or a robust creative identity” because their writing went so much against the gender ideology of the time (“Zufrieden” 87). Fischer’s use of multiple voices in most of her novels might be an expression of just that problem. It should be noted, however, that women were not the only ones using the multiperspective type of epistolary novel; male authors like Samuel Richardson, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Choderlos de Laclos previously had used the same technique.

36. *Der Günstling* is composed mainly of letters by its male protagonist (it includes only one letter by a woman), and while *Die Honigmonathe* has four correspondents, two female and two male, Olivier’s letters take up most of the space. Only in Fischer’s final novel, *Margarethe*, does a female voice outweigh the male voice (twenty-one letters are written by Gretchen to her mother, in comparison to the fourteen written by Stephani to his relatives; Rosamunde only writes down her story, which is included in one of Stephani’s letters, as well as one letter), but again the novel has four main characters, two female, two male.

37. See Runge’s afterword to *Die Honigmonathe* on the ways in which Fischer uses the genre of the epistolary novel (230–36).

38. “Man erzählt uns oft, was die Menschen sind; man beschreibt uns noch öfter—vielleicht ein wenig zu oft wie sie seyn sollen; aber man sagt uns, wie mich dünkt, noch immer nicht oft genug: auf welche Weise sie das werden, was sie sind” (n.p.).

39. The characteristics of Stephani’s writing are emphasized by the very different style in comparison to Margarethe’s letters to her mother, as Runge points out. In contrast to Stephani’s letters, which, in the end are hardly recognizable as letters anymore, because they have evolved into a *Künstlerroman*, Margarethe’s are always clearly addressed to her mother, telling her about her experiences and asking for advice in a manner that is aimed at communication and mutual understanding (“Dramatik” 107). Schmid, who analyzes Stephani’s writing style in detail (120–22), concludes that his letters reveal him to be the image of a self-involved artist whose egocentricity has made him unable to communicate any longer (121). Willms argues similarly (207).

40. See Runge: “Die Diskussion führt zu keinem Ergebnis, mündet in Ratlosigkeit und Verstörung. [. . .] Alle Versuche, die Ereignisse argumentativ, erklärend, beschwörend, mit moralischen Appellen oder mit freundschaftlichem Rat zu beeinflussen, scheitern, und damit scheitern auch die traditionellen Vermittlungsfunktionen brieflicher Kommunikation, die hier noch einmal bemüht und zugleich an ihre Grenze geführt werden” (“Dramatik” 100).

41. “Aber kann ich ihr nicht schreiben? Reinhold! ich will ihr schreiben. Dir selbst schicke ich den Brief. Du mußt, ja Du wirst ihn besorgen!—Nein, das kannst Du

nicht! nein, Du behältst ihn nicht zurück.—Du liebst mich noch, Du willst nicht, daß ich verzweifle. O Reinhold! Du schickst ihr den Brief.—Ich schreibe! Ich schreibe.”

42. “[. . .] bleich wie eine Leiche über der Lehne des Sopha’s.”

43. According to Willms, this is a typical fate of the Romantic hero in texts written by men (103).

44. “Mit mir selbst im Kriege? O nein!”

45. Other male characters who sought the same solution to impossible love in early-nineteenth-century literature were Léonce in de Staël’s *Delphine* (1802), Oswald in de Staël’s *Corinne* (1807), and Eduard in Goethe’s *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (1809).

46. “Jeden Morgen stehe ich mit dem Vorsatze auf, frey, wie es einem Manne ziemt, mit ihr zu reden [. . .].”

47. “Was? Bin ich ein Weib geworden? Soll dieser Knabe mich beherrschen?”

48. While masculinity and reason is the common association, Frevert cautions: “Dass Frauen emotional und Männer rational seien und sein sollten, steht so nirgendwo geschrieben” (314). However, she adds that men were expected to keep their feelings in check: “Dass alle diese Gefühle ein gewisses Maß halten mussten, verstand sich von selbst. Exzess war ebenso unmännlich wie Mangel unmenschlich” (315). And Fischer’s male characters certainly have a problem doing that. Also see Lloyd’s *The Man of Reason*. Regarding the connection between illness and femininity, see Richards on the “wasting heroine” in German fiction (*Wasting Heroine*).

49. This is the case with Julie in *Die Honigmonathe*, Count Alexander’s ward Maria in *Der Günstling*, and Margarethe in the novel named after her. The only exception here is Wilhelmine’s father, who is no match for the strong personality of his daughter, who is also financially and legally independent of him. Their relationship thus underscores the exceptional character of Wilhelmine and once again shows her refusal to follow the rules of society.

50. The mothers, if mentioned, are also of little help: Julie’s is downright mean, Wilhelmine’s is weak, and Margarethe’s is far away (and thus the recipient of her daughter’s letters).

51. “Nein, ich war nicht böse!—verzärtelt, verzogen, heftig, aufbrausend war ich; keinen Widerspruch konnte ich dulden [. . .].” For the negative effect of Gustav’s upbringing, see also Willms 164.

52. “Mit dem französischen Leichtsinne geboren, von seinen Ältern verzärtelt, von den Weibern wechselweise gemißbraucht und vergöttert, durch seine unersättliche Begierde nach Genuß ins tiefste Elend gestürzt, nun bey dem gänzlichen Mangel an Ergebung gezwungen alle Mittel zum Emporkommen wieder zu gebrauchen.”

53. See Purver (“Passion”) and Krug on Olivier as soldier and thus the embodiment of aggressive masculinity.

54. “Wohlan! In die Schranken bin ich getreten; so will ich dann kämpfen bis zu Ende.”

55. Schmid adds that the Prince is leading an “inauthentic” life because he has to live according to the rules of conduct that the courtly world dictates (123).

56. See Willms on Stephani and the special case of the man as artist (206–10), and see Kucklick on self-repression in men's public lives (178).

57. See Luhmann on this function of women (194).

58. “[. . .] auf mein ganzes Leben bin ich unglücklich, wenn ich sie nicht finde.”

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