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Growing Up Female in the Nineteenth Century*

JULIANE JACOBI-DITTRICH

I

*Könnte ich nicht auch ein Wolkenschwimmer werden?
(Couldn't I become a cloud swimmer, too?)*

—Bettina von Brentano

The history of women is not only the history of adult women. It has its roots in the history of women as children. In the research on socialization there is no less a controversial proposition than that which propounds that socialization is determined by sex. Varying opinions are held as to the importance and reversibility of sex-determined aspects of socialization; none, however, questions the basic fact. Historians who for the past twenty years have been investigating historical aspects of the conditions for childhood socialization have been primarily concerned with the circumstances of boys' socialization. And aspects determined by sex have rarely been considered, or if they have, it has not yet led to the inclusion of sex (gender) as a category for research. An example of this is Philippe Ariès's telling statement that well into the nineteenth century boys in their early childhood wore the lower-status clothing of women.¹

In this article I seek to shed some light on the history of female childhood. I shall attempt to present a picture of the childhood of middle-class girls throughout the entire nineteenth century. That is a long period of time but justifiable for this topic nonetheless, since from all our knowledge of the history of the family, it can be assumed that the changes that took place during this period were limited in scope. I would even argue

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that between 1811 and 1900 the childhoods of middle-class girls exhibited similar patterns. In fact, from the point of view of socialization, one might argue that individual differences were only secondary. Yet these individual differences in each girl's childhood should not be overlooked. They will be important for our examination of changes that were occurring generally in girls' socialization in the nineteenth century.

The following criteria were used in the selection of source material: (1) the source material is available in published form; (2) childhood and youth must be described in considerable detail in the autobiographies, *Schlüsselromane* (novels in which living people appear with assumed names), and/or letters; (3) the author must have described her childhood in a reasonably conclusive manner—for this reason many autobiographies were not considered if the description of childhood never went beyond the sentimental discussion of Christmas celebrations; (4) the autobiographical material had to be written by women who led public lives, as it is important to analyze sources where the authors had a stated consciousness of the contradictions in their development and where, nevertheless, it can be assumed that normal girls' socialization patterns existed.

I am limiting my selection to girls from the middle class and the nobility, since the inclusion of descriptions of working-class girls' childhoods proved to be problematic in establishing a common framework for interpretation. All the authors were born between 1811 and 1881. Their dates of birth are distributed relatively evenly throughout the whole time frame under consideration. The greatest differential in age between two authors is seventeen years (Helene Lange was born in 1848 and Lily Braun was born in 1865), and the smallest is three years (Marianne Weber was born in 1870 and Gertrud Bäumer was born in 1873). The dates of publication of the autobiographies expand the time frame; they were published between 1860 and 1948.

Some of the authors were married: Fanny Lewald, Hedwig Dohm, Mathilde Franziska Anneke, Marianne Weber, Lily Braun, and Elly Heuss-Knapp. Three never married: Franziska Tiburtius, Helene Lange, and Gertrud Bäumer. Whether the status of Lewald, who at the age of forty-four married the man she had loved for years, is comparable to that of Dohm, who at nineteen entered into an unhappy marriage, is a difficult question. The women whose lives are examined here had the following professions: author and journalist, teacher, politician, and scientist (without academic position).

Girls' childhood experiences changed little in the course of the nineteenth century. Even the fact that in the second half of the nineteenth century many young middle-class women faced the prospect of having to go out and earn a living, had no direct consequences for the developmental patterns of childhood and youth. In addition to the obvious educational and socio-historical relationships, one specific aspect of

family history interests me in my study of female autobiographies that are concerned with childhood; namely, with whom might these women have identified? The answer to that question may help us understand what enabled or forced them to escape from the anonymity of the private sphere. The question cannot be answered, given the limited number of autobiographies used for this study, but individual autobiographical statements do help us identify or understand the process within each emotional context. Therefore nine autobiographies are to be interpreted individually in order to examine this problem.

The question asked by Bettina von Brentano at the beginning of the century: "Couldn't I become a cloud swimmer, too?"—where she tried to compensate for the differentiation between the sexes in a romantic, imaginative way—was no longer asked by the authors in this selection. Woman's role as "housewife, wife, and mother," a notion that was deeply embedded in German society, was not a goal which these authors chose as a focal point for their lives. However, this deviation from the norm created discontinuities in their lives and probably in their personalities. Although I have previously stated (here I agree with Theodor von Hippel) that nineteenth-century middle-class biographies depict *Lebensläufe nach aufsteigender Linie* (upwardly mobile lives), I must now state that generally this model does not hold true for the female autobiographies examined here.²

In the next section of this essay I shall provide brief biographical sketches which will serve as background information in the course of the evaluation of the source material. The third section of this essay will be concerned with various aspects of the childhood experiences of these nine women. I do this so that I can better represent the concerns of my research and I can combine individual with generalized facets of my work, without giving preferential treatment to one or the other.

II

La réalité ne se forme que dans la mémoire.
(Reality is not shaped but in the memory.)

—Marcel Proust

Fanny Lewald (1811–89)³

Fanny Lewald wrote her autobiography when she was nearly fifty years old. She is considered one of the most important first-generation authors of the feminist movement. She consciously modeled her memoirs on Goethe's. In selecting material for her autobiography, she evidently chose to write about experiences that were directly related to the question of women's emancipation. She was quite successful in that. It can be said, without irony, that Lewald was able to delineate all the inconsisten-

cies which females had to confront in the nineteenth century. For example, one sees in her writing the issue of sex stereotyping (and its insolubility in that century) and how that phenomenon influenced her enlightened education in a Jewish family that was undergoing the process of emancipation. This woman experienced the contradictions of middle-class emancipation in a twofold manner: as a woman and as a Jew. In looking back on her childhood it seemed possible to her to overcome these contradictions in a pragmatic, middle-class manner. Humor and the writing of prose were her individual solutions to the problem. The pain that nonetheless came with that is not concealed but it is not overly stressed either. If I could confront the actual woman, I would ask her questions about this dark side of her life, which she in her old age, having had a successful life, would not be able to answer. Hypothetically one might argue that a certain liberal pragmatism was the female strategy for survival practiced by a talented woman in her social situation. Childhood and youth were described in the first volume of her three-volume memoirs.⁴

Mathilde Franziska Anneke (1817–84)⁵

Anneke wrote a scanty autobiographical sketch for her friend Mary Booth when she was in her fifties. It is an unfinished autobiography which tells of her childhood. Written in a romantic style, it supplies very little information about her girlhood and education. It may be argued that the character of the manuscript was shaped by her personal experiences; she was forced to emigrate following the Revolution of 1848. The extensive collection of letters in her literary *Nachlass* (remains), most of which date from the period 1847 to 1870, clearly shows that she never accepted her forced emigration, even though it was impossible for her ever to return to Germany. Her fate was a typical one for many emigrants; it was characterized by an unhappy consciousness of not being at home anywhere. Given that situation, she wrote about her childhood in a very positive light. Nonetheless, she did describe some aspects of her family history which are not unimportant to the question of girls' childhood.

Hedwig Dohm (1813–1919)⁶

When Hedwig Dohm was sixty-five, she wrote the first part of a three-volume novel, which it is assumed is quite autobiographical. It presents a detailed picture of childhood and youth, with special emphasis on the psychological conditions under which she grew to adulthood. Dohm's goal was to show how from earliest childhood women were trained to become good wives and mothers and how, therefore, every individual feeling, be it of an aesthetic, intellectual, or social nature, was suppressed. The memoirs were written in a very programmatic manner,

as were Fanny Lewald's, although there is considerably more differentiation on the psychological level. Dohm understood very clearly the problematic, destructive, and suppressive aspects of her childhood. Implacable, she attacked parents and society alike for allowing a girl to grow up in that fashion.

Franziska Tiburtius (1843–1927)⁷

Franziska Tiburtius wrote her memoirs relatively late, after World War I and as an eighty-year-old woman. They are written in a very conventional manner. Going far back in history, including general historical events that took place on the island of Rügen and aspects of family history, the memoirs offer a picture of a very upright Pomeranian-Prussian family whose values prejudiced her political judgment in a catastrophic way. Naturally, she considered herself to be absolutely divorced from politics. Questions such as why women could not study at German universities or why it was so difficult to establish that right, were never raised, although Tiburtius was one of the first German women to study at a university. Equally conspicuous in their absence are remarks about her personal life, especially as an adult. No comments are made about Miss Lemus, her friend and colleague of many years. According to her autobiography, there were no men in her life, other than her brother and younger friends and pupils. She described her childhood, youth, and university years in a very positive manner, despite the adverse conditions under which she lived.

Helene Lange (1848–1930)⁸

Helene Lange wrote her memoirs at the age of seventy and a large segment was devoted to her childhood and youth. Her preference for the impersonal subject, *man* (one), in many of her sentences is quite conspicuous. She stated in the preface that she wrote with the following criteria in mind: "If I have refused to have anything to do with that often recurring desire, I did so with the conviction that my whole life has been dedicated to and concerned with *one* thought, *one* interest, in order to realize it in the real world."⁹ It may be assumed that that one main thought and interest was women's cultural task. The entire presentation is dry, much like Tiburtius's, but it is representative of a middle-class environment of the second half of the nineteenth century. The struggles of her youth are described with considerable understatement. Childhood and youth were far back in her past and were presented in a soft light.

Lily Braun (1865–1916)¹⁰

Lily Braun wrote the first volume of her *Memoirs of a Socialist Woman* at the relatively young age of forty-five. In this first volume she

described in great detail her childhood and youth as the daughter of a Prussian general. That work ends with the death of her first husband, whom she married at the age of twenty-six and with whom she lived for only a short period. Braun's autobiography is probably most like that of Fanny Lewald, as it was obviously also modeled on Goethe's. In the introduction, she writes: "The people who have spent some time with me get angry and call me a deserter; it appears to me they are the disloyal ones."¹¹ She does not glorify her childhood but it is depicted in the context of problematic family relationships which are presented with psychological and sociological understanding. There is nothing *bürgerlich* (bourgeois) in this autobiography, if one understands *bürgerlich* to mean middle-class. A dissertation done on Lily Braun in the 1930s had an appropriate title: *Lily Braun: A Journalist of Sentiment*.¹²

Marianne Weber (1870–1954)¹³

Marianne Weber wrote her memoirs during World War II and probably completed them right after the German capitulation—at the age of seventy-five. They are very long and begin with a description of her mother's life, who died when she was a very young child. In fact, the detailed descriptions of both her mother's and her father's life that frame the childhood memoirs are quite remarkable. Autobiographical material on how she chose her husband is not found in her memoirs but in the biography of her husband.¹⁴ Weber essentially saw herself as a small part of a "whole." That probably results from her sociological training or possibly from her individual character. It should be emphasized that this woman specialized in describing other people's lives. She seemed to live her life through the lives of other people. Given that, and the fact that she was a social scientist, meant she rarely reflected on her own personal feelings. Her memories of childhood play an unimportant role, since the main themes of the autobiography are "women's emancipation," "the relationship between the sexes," and the "political development of Germany after World War I." Her childhood in a protective middle-class environment in provincial East Westphalia seemed hardly reconcilable to her with her later life with Max Weber, the famous social scientist who taught in Berlin, Freiburg, Munich, and Heidelberg. The central theme of the memoirs is the political crisis of the enlightened upper middle class in Germany from the onset of the twentieth century through the Nazi period; therefore, her remarks about childhood were merely preliminary.

Gertrud Bäumer (1873–1954)¹⁵

Gertrud Bäumer minutely described the stages of her childhood in three large sections of her memoirs. The first two deal with the period up

to the age of nine, when her father died; that included her early childhood in Pomerania and the family's short stay in the booming industrial city of Essen. After her father's death, Bäumer lived in her grandmother's upper-middle-class home in Halle/Saale and she described the life style, the social and family relationships, and the educational possibilities for young girls in great detail. This part of her memoirs was written in a very emotional but conventional style. Although certainly not intended, the passages where she awkwardly attempted to describe her inner feelings evoke for the reader associations with trivial late-nineteenth-century women's novels. Up to the moment when she decided to attend a university and join the fight for women's right to study and the women's emancipation movement in general, her childhood is described at great length, and it is quite apparent how the family and other friends influenced her. For that reason, Bäumer's memoirs are a valuable source for the examination of girls' childhood experiences in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Elly Heuss-Knapp (1881–1950)¹⁶

Elly Heuss-Knapp's *Ausblick vom Münsterturm* (*View from a Münster Tower*) is a very short retrospective which she wrote while relatively young; it only covers the first forty years of her life. The writing style is quite interesting. It is emotionally reserved (compared to Gertrud Bäumer's memoirs—they were about the same age) but at the same time not intellectually stiff. The fact that the two hundred pages are replete with many quotes attests to her high-quality education. The whole text is full of self-irony but yet is witty and light. The main theme is her life as a German, first as a child and then as a young woman, in Strassburg after 1870. She felt at home there and evidently wanted to attest to that fact. She was quite aware of the political and historical context of her life, which is atypical for female autobiographies. In this respect, although she was middle-class and utterly bourgeois, she went beyond the boundaries of the middle-class women's movement of her time. She probably considered it self-evident that the "personal" is political. That linkage of the personal with the political is certainly also a result of the influence of her father, the economist Georg Friedrich Knapp.

III GIRLS IN THE FAMILY

Es ist Menschenunkunde, wenn sich die Leute einbilden, unser Geist sei anders und zu anderen Bedürfnissen konstituiert, und wir könnten z.E. ganz des Mannes oder Sohnes Existenz mitzehren.

It is ignorant of people to imagine that our spirit is different and suited to other needs and that we can live only through the existence of a husband or a son.

—Rahel Varnhagen

All nine women, whose autobiographies I have described, wrote about their lives after having become active in public life. In entering the limelight, they all left the sphere prescribed for women in the nineteenth century. That subject was constantly discussed either directly or indirectly in these memoirs. The fact that their lives were "unique" must have affected their perception of childhood experiences and the way they viewed their position in their families. It certainly acted as a filter for their memories. The next section of this essay will examine these and other questions from the vantage point of the autobiographies. Several general hypotheses about nineteenth-century concepts of education for girls which I have made will be integrated into the analysis.

Research on socialization has shown that firstborn children (as well as the single child in a family) are more highly motivated than those born into a different position within the sibling sequence.¹⁷ Of these nine women, five were firstborn children: Lewald, Anneke, Braun, Weber, and Bäumer. In all these women's lives, their father's support and influence was a primary factor in the process of socialization. They all portrayed their fathers in a positive way, even when they were hurt by them, as was the case with Lily Braun. Some of the women offered a very romanticized description of their fathers, for example, Anneke and especially Bäumer. She spoke of her father as if he were an idolized and inaccessible lover. That may be explained by the fact that he died when she was nine years old and therefore her image of him was not affected by puberty or adulthood. Of the other four women, who were not firstborn children, Heuss-Knapp and Lange also harbored tender, loving feelings for their fathers. Lange viewed her father as a liberal educator who, during her motherless childhood, protected her from the tyranny of conventions about education for girls. Heuss-Knapp said she was indebted to her father for his contribution to her intellectual development. The relative freedom from convention that she enjoyed while growing up almost motherless was largely due to the influence of her well-educated father. She wrote: "When I weigh what we learned from my father and grandfather and what we learned at school, the scale is out of balance, as we were not just raised at home, we were educated."¹⁸

Lewald loved her father dearly, as is evident in her moving description of him. Most importantly, he was concerned about her intellectual development. Dohm felt that her father was completely unimportant and, accordingly, said little about him. This is also true for Tiburtius, who, in a restrained way, described her father as difficult and a hypochondriac. Due

to his mental instability, Weber was no longer able to live with her father after her mother's death. She grew up in her paternal grandmother's home.

Relationships with mothers cannot be as easily delineated. Weber, Lange, and Heuss-Knapp lost their mothers at an early age. Lewald had a very difficult relationship with her mother, as she objected to Fanny's early deviation from the generally accepted female mode of behavior. For Fanny, her mother represented the conventional middle-class Jewish woman. Braun had an extremely bad relationship with her mother, which she attributed to her mother's conventionality and the arrogance and emotional reserve of the Prussian nobility. Bäumer's mother was described as weak and as having little influence on the child. Tiburtius wrote about her mother with great warmth, but Heuss-Knapp implied that her mother remained a stranger to her because she was often ill and spent little time with her. Dohm hated her mother and said explicitly that her mother saw her as an unloved child and she admitted that fact openly. One might assume that, in the case of firstborn daughters especially, there might be competition between mothers and daughters for the father's attention. Heuss-Knapp described her family as one where the mother and older daughter, and the father and younger daughter, were quite close and where there was a substantial social and cultural rift between the parents.

The importance which the girls occasionally attached to a grandmother, aunt, or grandfather is conspicuous. Braun loved her maternal grandmother very much and was strongly influenced by her. Bäumer's grandmother acted as a matriarch; Gertrud, her mother, and her siblings lived in this grandmother's home for many years following her father's death. Anneke adored her paternal grandfather, and Weber, an orphan at an early age, saw her paternal grandmother and aunt as her "parents," although her maternal grandfather, a middle-class nineteenth-century patriarch, also "fathered" her. For Lange, living in her grandfather's house with her many unmarried aunts was the most important part of her childhood following her mother's death. Heuss-Knapp said of her paternal grandfather, in whose home she spent the first year and a half of her life, "The passionate (*leidenschaftliche*) love between my grandfather and me began when I was four months old."¹⁹ Even Dohm, who was unable to say much of anything good about her family, wondered if she did not possibly inherit her sensitivity from her grandfather.

Relationships with siblings varied with these women. Dohm is very negative; her brothers constantly teased her, making her childhood hell. Lewald evidently considered herself in an exceptional position as the oldest daughter and she hardly mentioned her younger brothers and sisters. Braun, who essentially grew up as an only child, played the roles

of mother and teacher for her beloved younger sister. Bäumer, like Lewald, said very little, again perhaps because she was the oldest child. Lange loved both of her brothers deeply and wrote a great deal about them. Many of her social contacts and friends came about through their help. Heuss-Knapp reported little but often wrote using the "we" form, which was probably meant to include her sister, who was two years older than she. Tiburtius, even at the age of eighty, was still the "wonderful little one" who is always allowed to participate but never forgets the gap separating her from the "older" ones. Her brother played a decisive role in her life. The women who had brothers perceived the differences in girls' and boys' socialization more critically and noted it in their memoirs.

Extending beyond the close-knit parent-child relationship in the majority of the families, there was a strong material and emotional relationship with other family members, which was very important for the girls. In this limited sampling, general trends in sibling relationships cannot be determined. The father usually played a decisive role in the families where the women left the private household sphere to enter public life as doctors, authors, scientists, teachers, and politicians. With this kind of source material, it is difficult to know whether the statements are based in reality. The society in which these women grew up reserved the public sphere for men. Therefore, it is likely that these women's fathers, through their support, paved the way for their entrance into public life. These same women were very critical of their mothers because they saw in them all the limitations on women as wives, housewives, and mothers.

The extended family was not unimportant even though almost all the women lived in "nuclear" families. Grandparents and unmarried aunts accepted important responsibilities for the girls' upbringing and education. Less can be said about sibling relationships. This is due to the fact that in the autobiographies "childhood" is viewed in conjunction with later adult life; memories are selected accordingly. Siblings necessarily played a less important role than the adults in the family.

SEXUALITY AND EROTICISM BEFORE AND AFTER PUBERTY

It may be assumed that the onset of menstruation is a very important experience in the life of every female child. It may also be assumed that, with the taboo on sexuality, this topic would not be mentioned in autobiographical sources. Quite surprisingly, there was one exception in my selection. Braun devoted a small section to it.²⁰ In several of the women's descriptions of that period in their lives, the similarities stood out; they were hostile, discontented with themselves, and at odds with their traditional role and their families' expectations (Lewald, Braun, Dohm). They felt uncomfortable with their constantly changing bodies (Braun, Tiburtius). They all wanted to read more books than they were allowed to read,

since reading was not suitable for a young lady (Lewald, Dohm, Braun). In short, they all remembered this period as an extremely unpleasant one. After having turned fourteen, they seemed to accept the fact that people considered them as future women. As Lange put it, the *Wartezeit* (the waiting period) begins at that age.

There was little mention of sexuality and eroticism during this "waiting period"; almost nothing was said about their relationships with their own sex or with the opposite sex: Lewald is adored by a student whom she loves but he constantly provokes her wrath. Dohm, who was a beautiful girl, had several uncomfortable encounters with brash men and she worshipped a young hero whom she saw dying in the street during the Revolution of 1848. Anneke's memoirs break off at an earlier point, as she married when she was only seventeen years old. Lange consciously excluded this period of her life from her memoirs. Tiburtius is also silent, but Bäumer wrote unbelievably bombastic descriptions of experiences she supposedly had in this period of her life; the reader wonders if the good woman knew what she was talking about. She described going ice skating on two occasions with a Norwegian student and she spoke of exhilaration on one February night in that same year. Both obviously served as a substitute for erotic and sexual desires, although neither really had anything to do with that aspect of life. This approach clearly demonstrates nineteenth century prudishness. In contrast, Braun, who became sexually mature at an early age, gave full rein to her desire for adulation, love, and playful eroticism. She thereby broke the strict code of etiquette of the Prussian nobility on numerous occasions. Since she was completely at odds with society, her memoirs are quite different in this regard than the other autobiographies. Somewhat comparable is Dohm's description of her young heroine's need for love, but Dohm portrayed that as a weakness. Braun, however, considered love and eroticism to be rightful desires which were undeniably hers. Weber used an unmistakably matter-of-fact style. She described in a very dispassionate way her school crushes, her poor chances of marriage, and the desolation of the *Wartezeit*. Her life was shaped by her encounter with one man—Max Weber—and so at seventy-five, she looked upon the loves of her youth as meaningless. Heuss-Knapp was totally discreet. Here is how she described those years: "We slowly grew out of childhood. One attended confirmation classes and wore long robes."²¹ She spent the *Wartezeit* in a more meaningful way than the others (namely, Dohm, Lange, Lewald, Weber)—as a teacher and volunteer in Strassburg's relief programs for the poor. She wrote:

When I think back on this period it seems like a rich and happy time, but youth is too restless to be happy and in many diary entries and letters there is much written about wounds and scars. But people often deceive

each other and I had the very girlish feeling that everything was not yet real life. Sometimes I felt like I was sitting in a waiting room.²²

Heuss-Knapp's life was the least influenced by the admonition that a woman is supposed to fall into a man's lap and become a wife, housewife, and mother. She also did not have to be concerned about earning her own living. Therefore, she was able to make many friends and have time for many activities. She described her youth in such a way that it could have been written by a young man. Female influence on her life seemed to be minimal in her youth; it only became a factor later in her life when a career and marriage were important to her.

From puberty onward, some of the women had close friendships with other girls. Lewald devoted a whole chapter to her friend Mathilde and Mathilde's family. Dohm had a girlfriend with whom she shared her enthusiasm for the Revolution of 1848. Braun corresponded with her cousin Mathilde and often quoted these letters to document how she felt at that particular time. Adult friendships played an even more important role for these women. Having read many other autobiographies (especially by twentieth-century men, e.g., Sperber, Canetti, K. Mann), I believe that these women considered these friendships unimportant. In writing, none of them was searching for a "lost past." Rather, they sought to portray their lives in terms of their successful emergence into public life—out of their minority status within the family. To them, their friendships with other girls were not important to that development. That says nothing, of course, about the actual existence of friendships these women had with girls when they were ten to eighteen years old. Relationships with their own sex were simply not a topic of conversation. Only Lewald wrote about her friendships with other girls, and she said somewhat warningly: ". . . and when you have not disclosed sensuality in children's love, you should respect it and leave it alone."²³

From research on the middle-class women's movement, we know that the sexual repression of women, or the discovery of specifically female repression, was not discussed in the nineteenth century. These autobiographies support that finding. Only the more "radical" women, Dohm and Braun, mentioned the topic explicitly. They describe incomprehensible taboos and sexual repression and exploitation. All of the women perceived puberty as an unhappy time. Only with their later education and marriage did they overcome that and make the adjustment to family and societal expectations.

SEARCHING FOR AND SELECTING A HUSBAND

Some of the autobiographies included stories about crushes and love affairs; some did not. There were some borderline cases. For example, Tiburtius's relationship with her brother went beyond normal bound-

aries. The fact that some autobiographies had dramatic descriptions of love affairs and some were more *bürgerlich* was not just a matter of style; it is related to social environments. The non-Jewish women did not include love stories (Lange, Tiburtius, Bäumer, Weber, Heuss-Knapp), but the autobiographies of Jewish women and women of noble birth did (Lewald, Dohm, Braun); the latter believed that the "great loves" of their lives contributed to their development and they spoke highly of these men in their memoirs. One wonders if the other women did not have experiences such as these, or if they did, perhaps they were too disappointed by the men to include them in their memoirs. They could have been lacking in self-confidence, fearing that the men they loved in their youth would not be happy about being mentioned in an autobiography. Of course, discretion might have been the reason these women concealed or merely hinted at the loves of their youth.

In all of the autobiographies it was clear that there was a direct relationship between the search for a husband and their education. In this respect, stories about men are not a private matter but rather an important part of their public life. Those women who could not be expected to marry because of their family's financial situation (Bäumer, Tiburtius) hardly mentioned searching for a husband. They began preparing for their careers, as teachers, at an early age. Those women with adequate finances, who therefore could count on getting married, had to struggle to get an education and did not put as much emphasis on the search for a mate. Lange spent much of her time at balls and the like but did not specifically complain about such inactivity. Weber suffered the life style of an unmarried daughter in a secure middle-class family. Dohm hated the *Wartezeit* and latched on to the first man she found. Lewald regretted the time she had spent in meaningless social activities looking for the right man and at twenty-six consciously decided to remain single and devote her life to her career as a writer. Her later marriage was a marriage of love which was against all conventions. Looking back, Anneke, viewed her marriage at seventeen as a conventional one, which it probably was.²⁴ Braun, at the age of twenty, was not permitted to marry her great love, as he did not meet the standards of her aristocratic family; thereafter she turned to writing and teaching. Although her intelligent grandmother thought she would have to earn her own living since the family was destitute, Braun's parents still hoped that, with her good looks, the prestigious family name, and the promise of a later inheritance, she would be able to find a suitable husband. She was not, however, at all willing to enter a marriage of convenience. For her, marriage had to be based on love and, moreover, she credited her husbands for the role they played in her education and intellectual development.

Heuss-Knapp chose her husband in a "modern" way. While studying in Berlin, she met him as a result of their shared political work in the

Naumann circle. The letters she wrote to Theodor Heuss at that time demonstrate that she considered herself an equal partner in their marriage.²⁵ Actually the marriage did have consequences for her education and career, but it was her own "free" decision.

Three of these nine women were able to plan their professions without problems. For two of the three, the impetus was their poor marriage chances. All of the others had to fight for their education, which would give them intellectual and possibly financial independence. Lewald, Dohm, and Braun were the only women who found the conditions for marriage completely disgraceful and denounced society for it. Heuss-Knapp, the youngest of the authors, was almost a unique case, probably one of the first in her generation. Her life stands as a symbol of the revolutionary tendencies in women's education. Of these nine women, only two were "married off"—Dohm and Anneke. But both rebelled against their fate; Dohm primarily in an intellectual way, through writing, and Anneke got a divorce and dared thereafter to be a social outcast.

Girlhood ended for these women either with marriage or with their decision to pursue higher education or a career (Tiburtius, Bäumer, Lange, Weber, Braun, Heuss-Knapp). There was clearly an opposite pattern for middle-class men in the nineteenth century. The search for a wife seldom coincided with education. The only general exception to this was a variety of government positions which paid poorly and therefore not only limited the choice of prospective wives considerably but also postponed marriage to a later age. I emphasize this point because obviously there was a real difference between the way girls and boys conceived of their own identity and development. This point will be examined further in the discussion of school and education.

SCHOOL AND GIRLS' EDUCATION

Girls had limited educational possibilities in the nineteenth century and this can be illustrated with the nine women under discussion here. Normally girls attended a private (sometimes coeducational) preschool, elementary school, and after that private *Töchterschulen* (girls' schools). Of the nine, only Bäumer attended a public elementary school, but that was made possible by the fact that her father was a school administrator; otherwise it would have been quite unusual, given her social status. Lewald, Dohm, Tiburtius, Lange, Weber, and Heuss-Knapp attended private girls' schools. Private tutors were used for Anneke, Tiburtius (as long as her parents lived in the country), and Braun (depending on the situation in the garrison where her father was stationed). Lewald and Lange attended private elementary schools that were coeducational.

Dohm and Heuss-Knapp went to teachers' colleges, and Tiburtius studied for her *Abitur* (required university entrance examination) on her own. Weber attended a well-known boarding school in Hannover for two years, and Lange boarded in a pastor's home in southern Germany. All the women wrote extensively about their schooling. In almost all cases the education they received was unmethodical, often of poor quality, and not especially broad. The main emphasis was always on literature, religion, foreign languages, and history. Science, mathematics, and ancient languages, the core of higher education for boys in the nineteenth century, were never included.

While reading what these women wrote about their education, I felt a certain sense of tragedy that their childhood had been so poorly utilized. This was often true for boys as well, but the quality of girls' education was certainly lower. Lewald, of all the women, had the most ambitious ideas about girls' education. She said of her father: "I do not believe that my father ever devoted much time to books on education or even thought much about it, with the possible exception of Jean Paul's *Levana*, which I know he had read quite early. What should you do to give your children a good education?"²⁶ Although Jean Paul perfected the idea of sex stereotyping in his *Levana*, it is an ambitious book on education. From the point of teaching, Heuss-Knapp's intellectual education went far beyond that offered in the schools. Both she and Lewald were taught by their fathers on a daily basis.

Bäumer and Braun also documented social experiences at school. Bäumer attended a public *Volksschule* (elementary school) and encountered class distinctions at an early age. A lower-class girl enunciated these differences, which Bäumer's liberal middle-class parents would never have done. Braun was attracted to a Jewish child who, in the anti-Semitic atmosphere of her exclusive girls' institute in Berlin, had been labeled an outcast. Lily's parents forbade her to have contact with these "rich social climbers." In general, life in the private girls' schools of Oldenburg, Stralsund, Strassburg, and Lemgo must have been undisturbed by the social tensions of the *Kaiserreich* (Imperial Germany).

Teachers, both female and male, were influential people. Lewald admired her principal's talent for teaching. During her puberty, Braun had a tutor who obviously did a good job teaching her German and history, as it gave her a framework for her intellectual development. Most of the teachers, however, were described in a colorless way in the autobiographies. Dohm was the only one who was critical, especially on the question of the sexual exploitation of schoolgirls. By doing that, she courageously discussed an aspect of violence against children which it was taboo to discuss. Tiburtius, Lange, Bäumer, Weber, and Heuss-Knapp, all graduates of the *höhere Töchterschulen* established in the nineteenth

century for middle-class girls, had nothing exciting to report. Truly relevant experiences in their education usually came after ten or more years in school. When Tiburtius was seventeen, she began teaching children of the nobility on the eastern bank of the Elbe and she gained considerable insight into people. At twenty-three she went to England to continue her teacher training. She had planned on establishing her own private *höhere Töchterschule*. But her studies went in another direction, mainly due to her brother; he wanted her to study medicine and helped her prepare for her university entrance examinations.

Lange spent a year as a "boarder" in a parsonage in southern Germany, where she was allowed to listen in on intellectual discussions of a kind which never would have taken place in Oldenburg. Looking back, she was convinced that the impetus for her later involvement in the fight for women's right to study was developed then. Tiburtius also worked as a tutor for a family and then taught in a French girls' boarding school while completing her own education. Only after having come of age was she able to fulfill her dream and pass her teaching examinations. Bäumer's situation was similar to that of Tiburtius; her family raised her with the idea that she would be able to earn her own living. Given the thirty-year age difference, by the time Bäumer went to school, there was a formalized system and so she was able to go directly from a *höhere Töchterschule* to a teachers' seminary and she became an elementary-school teacher. She later taught at a *höhere Mädchenschule* in Magdeburg and then, after gaining some experience, went to Berlin to prepare for her *Oberlehrerin* (advanced teacher) examinations. She passed them and became actively involved in the women's movement and began studying the social sciences and eventually received her doctor's degree.

As mentioned earlier, Weber was allowed to spend two years at a boarding school, which she wrote enthusiastically about, but she certainly did not receive a systematic education there. At the age of twenty-two she was allowed to leave home to pursue her musical training in Berlin. She was not under any economic pressure to earn her own living. Only after her marriage to Max Weber did she seriously begin to educate herself in a systematic way in philosophy, law, and sociology. Heuss-Knapp also attended a *Töchterschule* but she spent her girlhood in a way that was quite different from the others (the others would not have been allowed to do this). She was involved in social politics, both through her work in a boys' home and also intellectually through working on plans for relief programs for the poor. She wrote about that and she studied economics for a couple of semesters in Berlin and Freiburg. In other words, she represented a new type of woman. She was not limited to being a *höhere Tochter*, which was the fate of the other eight women. Therefore she was neither an

object of prestige nor a financial burden. Because she had a very intelligent father and a very unconventional mother and given the specific political and cultural atmosphere in Strassburg, she had many educational experiences which the other women had to fight for or missed completely. It is certainly not a coincidence that she was the youngest of the authors.

From what we have seen, it is not possible to establish any standardized educational pattern for women before 1900. Education was organized by the family and it was only in the period between 1902 and 1908 that Prussia, for example, made all children's education equal; university education was not open to women until 1908. Before that time, all women had to fight for what education they received, as the schools were not organized for that purpose.

In their description of school education many of the women were inclined to compare themselves to boys or men. Women who were later publicly active had to make such a comparison. Lewald even reported that Prussian Privy Councillor Dinter, an influential school administrator, once said to her during an examination: "With your brain, you should have been a boy!" But then he added, in a friendly tone: "If you turn out to be a fine woman, that's all right too!"²⁷ She was happy with that. Dohm wrote: "I don't know why my brothers never learned anything. They attended good schools and the most gifted one successfully made it to the third form. I know why we girls never learned. In those days there was hardly anything taught that went beyond the most elementary. The boys had it good. They had gymnastics and they were allowed to romp freely in the streets. . . . At that time I had the idea that boys were real boors who never washed and for them school meant nothing."²⁸

Tiburtius obviously adored her older brothers and male cousins more than her older sisters. Anneke portrayed herself as a wild horseback rider. Lange suffered because she was made to knit while the boys were allowed to play outside. Because of the way Heuss-Knapp carried on, other girls were not allowed to play with her and her sister. Braun played with a farm boy in Garmisch and she was also a reckless horseback rider. Bäumer and Weber both grew up in an environment without a strong male presence and either did not experience the trials and tribulations of being compared to boys or did not think it was worthy of mention. Almost all the women had to suffer through long, boring hours of fancy needlework. Though their personalities were oriented in a different direction, family and school clearly trained them to perform typical female tasks. When they were young, they identified themselves with such figures as "the female professor in Bologna" (Lewald), a "fairly princess," or a "revolutionary heroine." As they grew older, they were more realistic and dreamt of becoming "well-traveled teachers." Lange, Tiburtius, Bäumer, and

Weber were the product of the changes in the second half of the nineteenth century and of their social class and made no mention of their dreams.

IV NORMAL CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

Gottfried Kössler, in his book *Mädchenkindheiten im 19. Jahrhundert* (*Girls' Childhood in the 19th Century*), attempted "to find indices for a correlation between the intentions of the producers of ideologies and their theories and the socialization agents—mothers, fathers, school—on the one side and those who were socialized on the other but they could not be produced."²⁹ In other words, he was looking for "breaches" out of which emancipatory movements might have originated. He suspected these would appear in "dreams, friendships, games, adventures, and other non-genital forms of sexuality." But he found little evidence in his sources. His conclusion that these breaches existed, nonetheless, is far-fetched, as far as I am concerned. In my opinion, these deviations were not just hidden, as Kössler argued, they were nonexistent. I will cite three examples from the autobiographies I have examined to refute Kössler's thesis.

Lewald said of her first young love: "Female nature is such that it is so instinctively independent of men that even in youth it automatically feels unwilling to be the property of the man who claims her."³⁰ Here she justified her early engagement—though it was against her will—it was right in line with prevailing opinion. The sense of the contradictions and even rebellion against socialization practices are evident here but they were not associated with "female nature." Tiburtius, to cite a second example, does not mention the fact that she wanted to study medicine. The reader is given the strange impression that her family planned this for her, but that is not very plausible. That is especially true since she enjoyed studies and was a very innovative and involved doctor. She evidently did not see this contradiction in her memoirs. The only woman who had an exaggerated sense of happiness in her autobiography was Braun. It is fairly easy to understand that. When compared with the other autobiographers, she spent her childhood in a non-middle-class, elite environment where she was the only daughter of a father who adored her. She was thereby forced into opposition, since her milieu was so extremely contradictory. If economic necessity had not arisen, she might not have aspired to a career as a journalist. Rather, she might have sought happiness in the private sphere.

In reality, most of these women's childhoods were without dreams.

adventures, other forms of sexuality, or any close friendships other than what was acceptable. Lewald's dream of the female professor in Bologna is moderate and even realistic in comparison to Brentano's *Wolkenschwimmer*. The women who largely shaped the women's movement in the period of the second half of the nineteenth century and up until World War I (Lange, Bäumer, Weber, Tiburtius) did not dream of any "new worlds."³¹ The main criticism of their childhoods was the poor education they received. Almost all these women perceived their childhood as a harmonious time. Sexuality was definitely not a subject which a nineteenth-century woman was able to write about without risking her social status. Most of the women examined here felt no such restriction.

To summarize, it may be said the childhood of these women is not distinguished by anything out of the ordinary. That they were able to plan their own lives was made possible by family circumstances, being Jewish, early intellectual interests, and economic necessity. By abandoning the prescribed way of life for women, they were able to fight for women's rights and for life styles outside conventional marriages. In later life, they all were active in the fight to improve women's education, which proves that they had reflected critically on their childhood. It was not really until the twentieth century that some successes were achieved, namely, a change in girls' childhood development, but we know now that the work is not yet finished. There are barriers which none of them foresaw except Marianne Weber.

The identity of these women developed within a tension—between the accepted goals of socialization that were then prevalent and their intellectual interests—a tension between their desire for autonomy and their needs which conformed to the goals of socialization. There was no set pattern for life. That is also the reason why love affairs with men played such an important role in the lives of some of these women—more important than in the lives of men. That is also the reason why these women's career goals were usually derivatives of "motherhood." We cannot simply attribute that to patriarchal influence. As women, we must ask ourselves if our childhood as girls—which had these same tensions—did not also shape our lives with all the corresponding ambiguous identities?

NOTES

1. Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood* (New York, 1969), pp. 50–61.
2. Dittrich Eckhard and Juliane Dittrich-Jacobi, "Die Autobiographie als Quelle zur Sozialgeschichte der Erziehung," in *Aus Geschichten lernen*, ed. by

Dieter Baacke and Theodor Schulze (Munich, 1979), pp. 99–119. I have not included a discussion of pedagogical theories of girls' education. I would refer to Elisabeth Blochmann, *Das "Frauenzimmer" und die "Gelehrsamkeit"* (Heidelberg, 1966), where the topic is covered thoroughly. For more recent work, see Gerda Tornieporth, *Studien zur Frauenbildung* (Weinheim, 1977), and Monika Simmel, *Erziehung zum Weibe* (Frankfurt, 1980).

3. Fanny Lewald, *Meine Lebensgeschichte*, ed. by Gisela Brinker-Gabler (Frankfurt, 1980); *Römisches Tagebuch 1845–56* (Leipzig, 1927).

4. My interpretation is limited since I was unable to find the original and thus I relied on Brinker-Gabler's edition. Regula Venske pointed out to me that Brinker-Gabler was very selective and thus did not give the complete picture of Lewald's complex life.

5. Mathilde Franziska Anneke, "Autobiographisches Fragment," in *Mathilde Franziska Anneke in Selbstzeugnissen und Dokumenten*, ed. by Maria Wagner (Frankfurt, 1980), pp. 20–26.

6. Hedwig Dohm, *Schicksale einer Seele* (Berlin, 1899); see also Elisabeth Heimpel, "Hedwig Dohm," *Neue Deutsche Biographie* (Berlin, 1952–80), 4, pp. 41–42.

7. Franziska Tiburtius, *Erinnerungen einer Achtzigjährigen* (Berlin, 1925).

8. Helene Lange, *Lebenserinnerungen* (Berlin, 1927).

9. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

10. Lily Braun, *Memoiren einer Sozialistin. Lehrjahre* (Munich, 1909); see also Elisabeth Heimpel, "Lily Braun," *Neue Deutsche Biographie* (Berlin, 1952–80), 2, pp. 546–47.

11. Braun, p. 3.

12. G. Gärtner, *Lily Braun. Eine Publizistin des Gefühls*, Ph.D. dissertation, Heidelberg, 1935.

13. Marianne Weber, *Lebenserinnerungen* (Bremen, 1948).

14. Marianne Weber, *Max Weber. Ein Lebensbild* (Tübingen, 1926).

15. Gertrud Bäumer, *Lebensweg durch eine Zeitenwende* (Tübingen, 1933).

16. Elly Heuss-Knapp, *Ausblick vom Münsterturm* (Tübingen, 1952); *Bürgerin zweier Welten. Ein Leben in Briefen und Aufzeichnungen* (Tübingen, 1961).

17. Jaques Vontobel, *Leistungsbedürfnis und soziale Umwelt* (Bern, 1970), pp. 81–84.

18. Heuss-Knapp, *Ausblick*, p. 36.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

20. Braun, pp. 105–6.

21. Heuss-Knapp, *Ausblick*, p. 36.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 66.

23. Lewald, p. 82.

24. According to Wagner, this was not merely a marriage of convenience. I do not agree with her argument. This applies to her comment on the Aston review, in which Anneke accused Aston of marrying a man she did not love. In my opinion, this does not prove that Anneke could not have criticized herself for the same reason. Wagner, p. 28.

26. Lewald, pp. 55–56.
27. Ibid., pp. 59–60.
28. Dohm, pp. 28–29.
29. Gottfried Kössler, *Mädchenkindeiten im 19. Jahrhundert* (Giessen, 1979), p. 91. To a certain extent, Kössler and I use the same source material.
30. Lewald, p. 112.
31. They belonged to the *Bildungsbürgertum* (the educated middle class). This specific German social class was defined by Klaus Vondung in *Das wilhelminische Bildungsbürgertum* (Göttingen, 1976), but Vondung did not include the women's movement.