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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Zsuzsanna Zádori Rothné entitled “Decoding Charlotte’s Prevalence. A Kristevian Approach to the Representation of Femininity in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s Die Wahlverwandtschaften.” I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a major in Modern Foreign Languages.

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Decoding Charlotte's Prevalence.
A Kristevian Approach to the Representation of Femininity
in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's Die Wahlverwandtschaften

A Dissertation Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

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May 2010

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved husband, Steve, who with his boundless faith in me and his continuous support escorted me tirelessly along my dissertation journey.

And this is also for my daughters, Lili and Alexa.

In memory of my much-loved father, János Zádori.

His enthusiasm for learning and joy of life continue to be a true inspiration for me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are a number of people to whom I owe my gratitude for their support during the writing of this dissertation. First of all, I wish to thank my dissertation committee, Stefanie Ohnesorg, David Lee, Maria Stehle, and Misty Anderson for their thoughtful and insightful comments, suggestions, and for their assistance. I am thankful for their willingness to serve on my committee and for the valuable time all my committee members graciously invested in helping me complete my work. Above all, I am grateful to my dissertation advisor, Stefanie Ohnesorg for her ongoing assistance, support, and encouragement at times when I really needed it. Her knowledgeable and insightful suggestions always guided me in the right direction. I am truly grateful for Stefanie's endless support. I also owe special thanks to David Lee for his willingness to proofread my dissertation with an eye for stylistic and linguistic suggestions.

I would also like to thank Peter Höyng who briefly served as my dissertation advisor and who inspired my love for Goethe's works and my interest in his portrayal of the female characters in Die Wahlverwandtschaften. Peter provided me with many interesting and thought-provoking ideas in the beginning phase of my project. I owe special thanks to Ferenc Zsélyi, my undergraduate advisor, who fundamentally changed my perception of literature when he introduced me to Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis. His fascinating courses on English literature and cinema inspired my passion for reading and analyzing literary works through the lens of psychoanalytic theory.

I am particularly grateful for the relentless support of my husband, Stephen Roth, who always believed in my abilities and never ceased to encourage me to complete this dissertation. Steve was not only a tremendous support because of his everlasting encouragement but also because he was always there to take on more household responsibilities and to take care of our precious daughters on weekend days and in the evenings after returning from a long day at work. Steve also ‘served’ as my proofreader whose questions and comments often helped me to consider new ideas or reconsider old ones. My Mom, Zsuzsanna Zádori offered me a great deal of assistance with my children and household duties during the three months she spent with us. Her loving and helpful presence allowed me to make enormous progress at a time when it was absolutely essential. Special thanks also to my in-laws, Nancy Roth, Dr. Evans Roth, and Dr. Philip Roth for all their support, encouragement, and compassion throughout the writing of this dissertation.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines Goethe's portrayal of femininity in Die Wahlverwandtschaften and how his depiction of all three central female characters relates to feminine ideals that were promoted through the theoretical gender debate of the late 1700s in Germany and Western Europe. I analyze Charlotte's, Luciane's, and Ottilie's actions and interactions in various triadic character constellations in order to offer new insights into Goethe's portrayal of femininity. In so doing, I argue that Goethe's depiction of Charlotte holds the key to understanding how far Die Wahlverwandtschaften functions as (critical) commentary on the late Enlightenment gender discourse.

I maintain that the actions and interactions of these three women show them as at times 'unfit' and/or unwilling to meet feminine ideals promoted in the late Enlightenment. I apply central concepts of Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytic theory from the 1970s and 1980s as analytical tools to examine how far Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften can be viewed as a critique of the norms and expectations commonly expressed in the late Enlightenment.

I primarily focus on Kristeva's concepts of subjectivity formation, semiotic and symbolic modalities, abjection, and her theorizing of motherhood. Kristeva's emphasis on the pivotal role of the maternal function in the child's identity formation and her representation of femininity as alterity allow me to explore the significance of Charlotte's prevalence among the characters and to approach Goethe's ambiguous and complex portrayal of unsteady, constantly shifting, and interrelated models of femininity in

Charlotte, Luciane, and Ottilie as a narrative experiment in which he tests the viability of such models within the surrounding social discourse.

In the main body of this dissertation, I begin by concentrating on Charlotte's partnerships with men, and then I focus on her maternal role in relation to Luciane, Ottilie, and Otto. By making Charlotte the 'epicenter' of this investigation, I explore how far Goethe shapes her, Luciane, and Ottilie as characters who transgress late Enlightenment gender boundaries and thus deviate from what were considered 'feminine ideals' in order to underscore the arbitrary and contradictory nature of the prevalent social order.

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I. Introduction

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and his literary works have been the focus of scholarly studies ever since their first publications and they have also inspired or contributed to the conception of countless artistic masterpieces both in literature, art, and music. Goethe redefined the standards of the contemporary epistolary novel and drama respectively in Die Leiden des jungen Werthers, Iphigenie auf Tauris, and Faust while creating an entirely new form of the “Bildungsroman” in Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre. Goethe’s exceptional literary and linguistic creativity and his far reaching national and international artistic influence and scholarly resonance are further illustrated by his continuing significance that finds expression in a vast number of intertextual connections in contemporary works of art and in the field of current literary scholarship.¹

Goethe and more specifically his novel Die Wahlverwandtschaften will serve as the main focus of this study. I wish to explore how Goethe portrays femininity by looking at various character constellations, and by demonstrating that all are centered around Charlotte. Throughout the entire novel, Charlotte is depicted as a verbally dominant,

¹ It would be impossible to list the large number of studies that have dealt with the issues of intertextuality with regard to Goethe’s Wahlverwandtschaften. The following studies can only serve as a few representative examples of a much larger corpus of Goethe scholarship. Below are, therefore, some studies that discuss Goethe’s reception and his influence on numerous literary periods and authors both in the 19th and 20th centuries: Henk de Berg, Kontext und Kontingenz. Kommunikationstheoretische Überlegungen zu Literaturhistoriographie. Mit einer Fallstudie zur Goethe-Rezeption des Jungen Deutschlands, (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1995). Bernhard Beutler and Anke Bosse, eds., Spuren, Signaturen, Spiegelungen. Zur Goethe-Rezeption in Europa, (Köln: Boehlau Verlag GmbH & Cie, 2000). Nancy Birch Wagner, Goethe as Cultural Icon. Intertextual Encounters with Stifter and Fontane, (New York: Peter Lang, 1994). Wolfgang Leppmann, Goethe und die Deutschen. Der Nachruhm eines Dichters im Wandel der Zeit und der Weltanschauungen, (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1984).

decisive, and active female figure in multiple groupings of characters that are based on marital, maternal, and romantic affiliations. Within these configurations, Charlotte's actions have a noticeable impact on other central characters' identities, and they affect the dynamics of relationships within each grouping. Goethe undeniably places the narrative focus on Charlotte: She is the most influential figure in various character constellations. Her character has been, thus far, largely overlooked in Goethe scholarship. My objective is to rectify this oversight and to offer a new and distinct perspective on Goethe's representation of femininity in Die Wahlverwandtschaften.

Considering Charlotte's dominant presence throughout the narrative, an exhaustive analysis of Goethe's representation of femininity cannot 'only' focus on Goethe's depiction of Otilie and/or Luciane as 'isolated' characters, as is the case in scholarship on Die Wahlverwandtschaften.² Viewing Charlotte as the central figure in multiple character constellations allows for a more accurate analysis of Goethe's representation of femininity in his novel.

Even though the emphasis is on Charlotte's character, her actions, utterances, and behavior patterns can hardly be considered in isolation: Charlotte is always portrayed in relation to other characters and embedded in partnerships, friendships, and familial relationships; in all of these she is shown to occupy a leading and influential position. Thus, Charlotte's significance is stressed through her dominant presence in various

² In the literature review, I illustrate that Otilie, Luciane, and the apparent contrast between them have been analyzed extensively, both in relation to the tableaux vivants and as vivid examples that stand out in the large spectrum of Goethe's rather unconventional female figures in his works. A few of such unconventional female figures depicted in Goethe's works are Iphigenie, Gretchen, "die schöne Seele," and Adelheid, whose exceptional abilities have been explored by feminist scholarship. For a more in-depth discussion of these characters, see Part II, Chapter 2 below.

groupings of characters as well as through her decisive actions and interactions, which affect all other characters' identities and the dynamics of her relationships with them. To provide a thorough and comprehensive analysis of Goethe's portrayal of femininity, the characterization of Charlotte's roles as wife, household manager, mother, and friend, as well as of the dynamics of her relationships with Eduard, the Hauptmann, Luciane, and Otilie, need to be taken into account collectively.

Based on the above, my objective is to offer a comprehensive analysis of Goethe's depiction of Charlotte's roles in various character groupings and to explore her feminine identity in relation to the portrayal of Luciane and Otilie, the two other central female figures in Die Wahlverwandtschaften and with regard to the contemporary gender hierarchy. In so doing, I seek to provide a thorough and exhaustive interpretation of Goethe's complex and often ambiguous representation of femininity as displayed in the underlying subtext on women in his Wahlverwandtschaften. Such an analysis allows me to draw conclusions about Goethe's attitude towards predefined feminine ideals of his time.

With regard to Goethe's groupings of the characters in this novel, I emphasize that the first part of the novel is dominated by the character constellation 'Charlotte—Eduard—Hauptmann' and by indications of Charlotte's roles in relation to Eduard and the Hauptmann. After Eduard's and the Hauptmann's departure from the estate at the end of the first part of the novel, the triangular mother-daughter constellation that connects Charlotte with Luciane and Otilie becomes the focal point of the narrative, and this 'untraditional' family unit of three female figures with no male paternal authority

dominates a substantial proportion of the second part of the novel. The way in which Goethe depicts the actions, utterances, and interactions of Charlotte, Otilie, and Luciane – to a lesser extent in the first and to a larger extent in the second part of the novel – allows readers to witness the formation of discourses from which men are partially or completely absent. The dominance of such narrative discourses, especially in the second part of the novel, leads me to ask whether Die Wahlverwandtschaften can be understood as Goethe's attempt to test the viability of various representations of femininity that, at times, deviate notably from late Enlightenment feminine ideals. Consequently, I explore whether Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften can be viewed as a narrative experiment that puts the existing social value system to the test by shaping discursive environments in which women assume – at least temporarily – a dominant role.

Based on the above, I am convinced that a comprehensive analysis that goes beyond questions about Otilie's and/or Luciane's portrayal in the context of the gender paradigm of the Goethe era and also considers Goethe's multifaceted portrayal of Charlotte in her relationships with both male and female characters can offer new perspectives for the understanding of the complexities of Goethe's portrayal of femininity in his narrative. Looking at the interrelated depiction of these three central female figures collectively can generate new insights into Goethe's attitude towards the hierarchic gender relations of his time.

In order to situate my analysis within and yet differentiate it from the vast number of publications on Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften, I first demonstrate that a great

variety of themes and critical issues have been addressed by Goethe scholars.³ It would be a futile undertaking to try to include all recent contributions to the scholarship on Die Wahlverwandtschaften. Therefore, my review limits itself to highlighting those studies that received major attention during recent years, and it also offers an overview of and insight into the vast spectrum of thematic and critical approaches in these studies. Doing so allows me to illustrate that since the early 1980s, there has been a significant increase in the number of feminist analyses of Goethe's works. Identifying and reviewing this corpus of feminist research on Goethe allows me to contextualize the focus of my investigation and to locate it within the framework of existing feminist approaches to this particular narrative.

In order to establish a framework for this undertaking, I draw on some central concepts regarding identity formation and cultural integration that were developed by Julia Kristeva as part of her semiotic and psychoanalytic framework in the 1970s and 1980s. I also focus on Kristeva's theoretical approach – innovative in its time – to maternity and to the role of the maternal in the child's ego formation process. Kristeva's theories of subjectivity formation and maternity provide a systematic analytical lens for my investigation of Goethe's representation of femininity. Through this lens, I can make psychological processes explicit that Goethe seems to have implied in his portrayal of the central characters in Die Wahlverwandtschaften when he shaped their actions, verbal

³ With regard to Die Wahlverwandtschaften, Goethe scholars have offered valuable insights, for example, into Goethe's aesthetics and have addressed the issue of periodic classification. In addition, significant socio-historical, psychological, and feminist themes have also been discussed in numerous studies in the context of this particular Goethe text. In the Literature Review of this dissertation, I offer a detailed overview of the large spectrum of themes and issues that have been analyzed in recent scholarship in the context of Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften.

utterances, and the dynamics of their relationships. I hypothesize that through the detailed portrayal of Charlotte's, Luciane's, and Otilie's actions, utterances, and behavior patterns, Goethe's text can be perceived as a narrative experiment that tests the viability of three interrelated concepts of womanhood. Since these representations of feminine identity are formed more or less simultaneously, Goethe's text suggests that he saw femininity foremostly as a social construct.

I find Kristeva's framework relevant for this study because it allows me to identify character constellations and to trace the roles that the male and female characters assume as suggested through their actions and interactions with one another. Kristeva's framework offers an explanatory model through which I can analyze changes in the dynamics of the characters' relationships while also exploring what such changes reveal about the gender relations postulated in Goethe's text. Kristeva's focus on the relationship dynamics of the mother—father—child triad in the context of the child's ego formation is also valuable to my analysis because it allows me to explore the character constellations as symbolic and/or unorthodox family units that Goethe may have had in mind when grouping the characters. I hypothesize that, by creating untraditional familial configurations in which the division of gender roles shows deviations from the 'norm,' Goethe may have intended to display and critique social conventions of his time.

Central concepts of Kristeva's framework, such as her definition of the semiotic and symbolic modalities, of abjection, and of the imaginary father serve as analytical tools that allow me to trace and look at significant changes in the dynamics of the characters' relationships. These changes are important because they constitute scenarios

in which Goethe ‘experiments’ with characters and character constellations that seem to transgress socially defined late Enlightenment gender boundaries. Based on the above, Kristeva’s theories provide me with an analytical framework through which Goethe’s narrative can be viewed as his way to test the viability of alternate models of womanhood within the late Enlightenment social context.

For a comprehensive understanding of Goethe’s representation of femininity, I find it essential to consider the differences and interconnections that are displayed among all three central female characters. Looking at the actions, utterances, and interactions of Charlotte, Luciane, and Ottilie with one another as well as with Eduard and the Hauptmann through the lens of Kristeva’s framework allows me to explore whether Goethe’s female figures in Die Wahlverwandtschaften are ‘equipped’ with characteristics that enable them to (temporarily) transgress rigid social boundaries that were broadly accepted at the time the novel was written. In this undertaking, Kristeva’s approach is also valuable because it deconstructs the patriarchal and limiting representations of maternity as an essential part of femininity, i.e., a precultural identity while reconstructing it within the paternal culture as a part of feminine identity that breaks down the boundaries between nature and culture, subject and other. In light of the above, I explore whether Goethe’s portrayal of Charlotte, Luciane, and Ottilie as well as their relationships to motherhood postulate a representation of the maternal role as a potential means for women to transgress patriarchal gender boundaries and attain some form of authority and self-reliance within the paternal social order.

Kristeva's framework functions as a lens through which Goethe's complex portrayal of femininity can be viewed both as his way to underscore the fragility and contradictory nature of social conventions and to critique the gender relations of his time. Furthermore, Kristeva's theories allow me to highlight Goethe's remarkable knowledge of human psychology, a science that was in the beginning stages of its development at the end of the 18th century.

Kristeva's psychoanalytic and semiotic framework laid out in her works Revolution in Poetic Language ([1974] 1984), Powers of Horror ([1980] 1982), Tales of Love ([1983] 1987), Black Sun ([1987] 1989), and "The Subject in Process" ([1976] 1998) will serve as the primary theoretical foundation for this study. Kristeva has revolutionized traditional psychoanalytic thinking by re-evaluating the reasons and factors that initiate the child's development into a speaking ego. Her theory pays considerably less attention to the authoritarian father, who, in the context of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, acts as the instigator of the child's separation from the mother and its entry into language and culture.⁴ In contrast to Freud's and Lacan's emphasis on

⁴ At this point, it seems relevant to mention that in Kristeva's approach, which shows significant overlaps with Freud and Lacan, the child's separation from the initial unity with the mother's body starts around the age of six months when the infant first recognizes his/her own image in the mirror. In this instance, Kristeva follows the Lacanian concept of the mirror stage. The child's process of language acquisition and integration into the social order starts somewhere between age 6 and 18 months when he/she gradually learns to express needs, wishes, and desires in words and later in simple utterances. In this process, the child also learns that language is a medium that allows him/her to express a position or a judgment. Furthermore, since language is the medium of prohibition and disciplining as well, the child also has to learn to obey rules and to respect what he/she may and may not do and say. Kristeva locates "the thetic phase of the signifying process, around which signification is organized, at two points: the mirror stage and the 'discovery' of castration" (Revolution 46). Similarly to Lacan, Kristeva maintains that "a child's first holophrastic utterances [e.g. gestures, vocal emissions, and not-yet sentences] occur at this time, within what are considered the boundaries of the mirror stage (six to eighteen months)" (Revolution 47). Julia Kristeva, Revolution in Poetic Language, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia UP, 1984). Throughout this dissertation, I quote from the English translation. Kristeva's original text was written and published in French in 1974 under the title La révolution du langage poétique.

the pivotal role of the penis envy and the symbolic father (phallus) in the subject's developmental process, Kristeva highlights the function of the mother and extends the influential presence of the maternal function even into the stage of self identification, culture, and meaningful language. Lacan had viewed the mother's relevance in the child's development of subjectivity as limited to the preverbal and precultural phase. According to Kristeva, however, the mother and her body not only encompass maternal love and care in this stage but also embody the paternal authority associated with the rules and prohibitions of the paternal social order.⁵

Kristeva emphasizes in her theory that the mother, who simultaneously embodies the loving and regulative maternal function, plays an important role in the child's subjectivity formation as well as in his/her language acquisition and socialization process. Kristeva considers the mother's role equally, if not more, important than the prohibiting paternal function. Furthermore, Kristeva also attributes special significance to women's experience of motherhood because, in her view, to look at motherhood as an experience that only women can enjoy allows for discussing female subjectivity as a form of

⁵ Kristeva describes the importance of the mother's role in the semiotic stage in her book, Revolution in Poetic Language ([1974] 1984): "The theory of the subject proposed by the theory of the unconscious will allow us to read in this rhythmic space [the chora, Z.R.], which has no thesis and no position, the process by which significance is constituted. Plato himself leads us to such a process when he calls this receptacle or *chora* nourishing and maternal, not yet unified in an ordered whole because deity is absent from it. Though deprived of unity, identity, or deity, the *chora* is nevertheless subject to a regulating process (réglementation), which is different from that of symbolic law [...]. Drives involve pre-Oedipal semiotic functions and energy discharges that connect and orient the body to the mother. We must emphasize that 'drives' are always already ambiguous, simultaneously assimilating and destructive; this dualism [...] makes the semiotized body a place of permanent scission. The oral and anal drives, both of which are oriented and structured around the mother's body, dominate this sensorimotor organization. The mother's body is therefore what mediates the symbolic law organizing social relations and becomes the ordering principle of the semiotic *chora* [...]" (26-27).

alterity.⁶ Thus, Kristeva's model of maternity suggests that motherhood can be an empowering experience for women instead of a confining social institution.

In her essay "Julia Kristeva's Feminist Revolutions" (1993), Kelly Oliver points out that Kristeva rejects traditional patriarchal representations of women according to which motherhood was considered as women's primary determination so that they could fulfill their predefined role as guarantors of reproduction.⁷ In her theory of motherhood, which she formulates first and foremost in "Stabat Mater" ([1976] 1987) and Powers of Horror ([1980] 1982), Kristeva also rejects women's traditional confinement into domestic servitude as opposed to men's supremacy in professional and public life. Kristeva refuses such traditional representations of women and articulates a new discourse on maternity, as Oliver eloquently points out in "Julia Kristeva's Feminist Revolutions" (1993):

Her [Kristeva's, Z.R.] analysis of philosophical, religious, and literary texts suggests that these texts have been historically situated social forces engaged in the production of representations, representations through which we live. For Kristeva, social problems always have their core in representation; and she argues that our representations of maternity are not only detrimental for women but, because the first relation is with the mother, they are detrimental to all human relations. [...] Kristeva begins to develop [a] new discourse on maternity.

⁶ In her book Sexual Subversions (1989), Elizabeth Grosz describes alterity as follows: "A form of otherness irreducible to and unable to be modeled on any form of projection of or identification with the subject. The term refers to a notion of the other outside the binary opposition between self and other, an independent and autonomous other with its own qualities and attributes. The other is outside of, unpredictable by and ontologically prior to the subject" (xiv). Elizabeth Grosz, Sexual Subversions (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989).

⁷ Kelly Oliver, "Julia Kristeva's Feminist Revolutions," Hypatia 8.3 (1993): 94-114.

Kristeva believes that an analysis of motherhood and the mother/child relationship can provide the foundation for a new ethics and a new conception of difference and alterity. (106)

In “Stabat Mater,” Kristeva describes femininity, i.e., its traditional and more specifically Christian representation, as “absorbed by motherhood.”⁸ She further claims: “[T]his motherhood is the fantasy that is nurtured by the adult, man or woman, of a lost territory; what is more, it involves less an idealized archaic mother than the idealization of the relationship that binds us to her [...]” (“Stabat Mater” 234). In light of the above, Kristeva defines reproduction not only as “an important aspect of human survival but also as a unique experience that women can enjoy” (“Feminist Revolutions” 105-106).

I find it important to note here that Kristeva’s psychoanalytic theory of identity formation and maternity has not only found approval but has also triggered considerable criticism among feminist critics, mostly in England and America. In her book Julia Kristeva (2004), Noëlle McAfee, for example, points out that critics in the 1980s and 1990s such as Judith Butler, Elizabeth Grosz, Nancy Fraser, and Toril Moi argued that “[Kristeva’s, Z.R.] notion of the semiotic prediscursively naturalizes femininity” and that “it makes women’s femininity a biological fact and not a cultural construction (McAfee 80).”⁹ McAfee explains this in more detail when she writes:

They [leading feminist critics in the English speaking world, Z.R.] took issue with her [Kristeva’s, Z.R.] conceptions of the chora, maternity, and the semiotic, arguing that, in invoking these, Kristeva is positing some female essence. [...]

⁸ Julia Kristeva, “Stabat Mater,” Tales of Love, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1987) 234-263.

⁹ Noëlle McAfee, Julia Kristeva (New York: Routledge, 2004).

The concern among many feminists has been that, in Kristeva's philosophy, woman is linked necessarily with the maternal and that she is powerless to change a male-driven symbolic order. (77)¹⁰

Besides attempts to label her theory as essentialist, Kristeva has also been criticized for promoting a theory that entails a psychoanalytic model. In this context, Chris Weedon claims, for example, that "to take on the Freudian and Lacanian models is implicitly to accept the Freudian principles of psycho-sexual development with their universalist patriarchal implications and their reduction of subjectivity to sexuality" (Weedon 71).¹¹

In the face of such a strongly critical reception of Kristeva's theory of subjectivity and motherhood in England and America, the question may arise why I have set out to work with such a controversial theoretical construct in order to investigate Goethe's portrayal of femininity in Die Wahlverwandtschaften. The reason I rely on Kristeva's theory is that I find it legitimate and valid: While she indeed connects feminine identity with motherhood, she does not attempt to do away with the paternal symbolic order. In my view, Kristeva does not reduce the construct of femininity to biology and to the semiotic. On the contrary, Kristeva much rather emphasizes that the simultaneous presence of both the semiotic and the symbolic modalities defines the process-like

¹⁰ This type of criticism has also been expressed by others. For example, Kelly Oliver also notes that Nancy Fraser and Judith Butler argue against "the revolutionary power of Kristeva's semiotic" (9). Oliver further elaborates on Butler's criticism of Kristeva's theory when she writes: "Butler argues that Kristeva 'safeguards the notion of culture as a paternal structure and delimits maternity as essentially precultural.' She maintains that for Kristeva it is this precultural maternal realm that provides subversive force, and the source of this subversion is outside of culture; so any possibility of subversion is foreclosed" (9). In: Kelly Oliver, Reading Kristeva (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1993). Oliver quotes directly from the essay: Judith Butler, "The Body Politics of Julia Kristeva," Hypatia 3.3 (Winter) (1989): 104-118.

¹¹ Chris Weedon, Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1987).

character of subjectivity not only prior to but also subsequent to the child's acquisition of language and participation in meaningful signification. In my view, Kristeva's approach can, therefore, hardly be categorized as essentialist, and I consider it a useful tool to decipher the various symbolic constructs of motherhood ranging from biological/natural to cultural.¹²

Comparing Kristeva's theory with earlier psychoanalytic models, it can be argued that on the one hand, she does draw on key concepts of Freudian and Lacanian theories of subjectivity, as for example Freud's notion of the "father of individual prehistory" in Tales of Love ([1983] 1987).¹³ On the other hand, it is important to point out that Kristeva also deconstructs and reworks these concepts: With regard to the above, Kristeva redefined Freud's notion of the "Vater der persönlichen Vorzeit" when she formulated and laid out her concept of the imaginary father in Tales of Love (21-45). Furthermore, in Revolution in Poetic Language ([1974] 1984), Kristeva also redefined the role of the maternal function in the process of subjectivity formation by attributing a crucial role to her loving and regulative presence not only prior to the Oedipal situation but all the way to the child's integration into culture, i.e., into the symbolic order (25-70).

I share Oliver's view that "Kristeva does not delimit maternity as an essentially precultural reality." I, therefore, argue that Kristeva's descriptive account of the culture of motherhood is critically useful in my study on Goethe's representation of femininity in his Wahlverwandtschaften. Oliver also duly claims that the "boundary between culture and nature" is called into question through maternity. Kristeva "chooses maternity as a

¹² McAfee also rejects this criticism of Kristeva's theories when she writes: "Insofar as the body is mediated through language, it becomes a cultural construction as well" (80).

¹³ Julia Kristeva, Tales of Love, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1987).

prototype precisely because it breaks down borders between culture and nature and subject and other” (Reading Kristeva 9).¹⁴

Through the lens of Kristeva’s model of femininity and motherhood, Goethe’s portrayal of Charlotte as the apparent focal figure in multiple character configurations gains particular significance because her actions and utterances often show her as an unusually dynamic, thoughtful, and creative woman for her time and because Goethe’s depiction of her in relation to other characters exhibits signs of alternative representations to what was considered ‘mainstream’ at the time of the novel’s publication. Kristeva’s framework helps me to shed new light on whether Goethe’s depiction of the ever changing and complex dynamics of Charlotte’s relationships with other central male and female figures as well as his portrayal of Luciane and Otilie in relation to Charlotte and one another can, from a modern standpoint, be viewed as an innovative approach to women’s social positioning in the gender hierarchy of the outgoing 18th and beginning 19th centuries.

In light of the above, it can be concluded that despite the more than 150-year temporal distance between Goethe’s creation of Die Wahlverwandtschaften and the publications of Kristeva’s theories on maternity and subjectivity development, remarkable correspondences can be traced in Goethe’s experimental portrayal of femininity in his Wahlverwandtschaften and in Kristeva’s theoretical focus on motherhood as a potentially liberating female experience.

¹⁴ Like Oliver, McAfee also sees the value of Kristeva’s theory of maternity in the fact that it deconstructs traditional representations of maternity: “The function of motherhood depicted here is radical: to be a fold between nature and culture, self and other, life and death, a fold that is a catastrophe of being that shatters the usual representations. I read ‘catastrophe’ here as meaning not an end or cataclysm but ‘an event that produces a subversion of the usual order of things’” (87).

Some discussion of the late Enlightenment social environment can help us to better comprehend how Goethe set himself apart from the contemporary gender discourse. Therefore, it will be necessary to look at the philosophical and theoretical considerations in relation to gender issues at the time of the novel's creation. With regard to the late Enlightenment gender context, Barbara Becker-Cantarino describes the relationship between patriarchy and the female subject in her article "Patriarchy and German Enlightenment Discourse" as follows: "[T]he realm of women is the private, not the political, and thus does not speak to public life, great art, powerful signification or theoretical abstraction"¹⁵ (52). She also emphasizes the dominating role of the family in the late Enlightenment era when she writes:

The father possesses not only authority and control over his wife and children, other dependent relatives, and servants, but also moral and civic responsibility for his entire household. [...] In the patriarchal family, the father controls woman's labor, woman's procreative function, and (in psychoanalytic discourse) the psychosexual configurations within the family, which are of central importance for childrearing. (53-54)

Joachim Heinrich Campe's Väterlicher Rath für meine Tochter (1789), a book that enjoyed widespread popularity not only around the 1800s but also well into the 19th century, promoted the naturalness of patriarchy well into the modern era.¹⁶ Campe's

¹⁵ Barbara Becker-Cantarino, "Patriarchy and German Enlightenment Discourse: From Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* to Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*," Impure Reason: Dialectic of Enlightenment in Germany, ed. W. Daniel Wilson and Robert C. Holub (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1993) 48-64.

¹⁶ Joachim Heinrich Campe, Väterlicher Rath für meine Tochter, ed. Ruth Bleckwenn (Paderborn: Verlag M. Hüttemann, 1988).

concept for young women's education is based on J.J. Rousseau's elaborations in the chapter on Sophie in Émile (1762), and he advocates women's complete submission to men. Campe claims that this principle is given by nature ("naturgegeben") and that it also represents the will of God ("gottgewollt"). In so doing, Campe defines women's roles first and foremost as wives whose primary task is to make their husbands happy, as mothers who are to educate their children, and as wise managers of their households.¹⁷ Campe places special emphasis on household management in that he seeks to demonstrate that this responsibility not only affects family harmony but even the state's well-being. Although Campe limits women to the spheres of family and household, he simultaneously attempts to create the illusion that women, despite the restrictions, do make significant contributions to the public well-being by their acceptance of belonging to the 'weaker sex' and by their submission to the service of their husbands. This sentiment is clearly stated in his appeal to women in which he cautions and motivates them as follows:

Noch einmahl: allgewaltiges, obgleich schwaches Geschlecht, was hängt nicht alles von deinem unsichtbaren Einflusse ab, und wie viel kommt nicht darauf an, wie lauter oder wie trübe du, Urquell aller Sittlichkeit und Unsittlichkeit, alles menschlichen Wohlgehens und alles menschlichen Elends, seist! (19)

What makes Goethe's positioning of Charlotte as the 'epicenter' of various character and symbolic family constellations especially intriguing is that, in light of the above quoted expectations of women's roles in the late 18th century, she possesses

¹⁷ In Campe's words: "[...] ihr seid vielmehr geschaffen [...] um beglückende Gattinnen, bildende Mütter und weise Vorsteherinnen des inneren Hauswesens zu werden" (17).

unusual characteristics, that do not fit Campe's gender model. Kristeva's similarly unusual interest in motherhood makes her work a particularly useful lens for an analysis of Goethe's narrative experiments with Charlotte.

The Structure of This Dissertation

Following this **Introduction (Part I)** and the **Literature Review (Part II)**, the main body of this dissertation (**Part III**) is divided into two sections (**Sections A and B**); both sections are devoted to the analysis of the dynamics in various character constellations that are centered around Charlotte. While the primary focus in Section A is placed on Goethe's characterization of Charlotte's roles in relation to her husband, Eduard and her friend, the Hauptmann, after Eduard's and the Hauptmann's departure from the estate, the narrative focus shifts from the portrayal of Charlotte's roles in partnerships with men to her role as (symbolic) mother figure in distinct character constellations like those of 'Charlotte—Luciane—Otilie,' 'Charlotte—Otilie—Eduard,' and 'Charlotte—Otilie—Otto.' Therefore, in Section B, I devote attention to Charlotte's maternal bond with Luciane, Otilie, and Otto as displayed in part two of Die Wahlverwandtschaften.

Part III, Section A: Charlotte in Partnerships with Eduard and the Hauptmann

Section A of Part III is divided into four chapters in which I offer an analysis of Goethe's portrayal of Charlotte in her marriage with Eduard and in her friendship with the Hauptmann. However, before looking at the grouping of 'Charlotte—Eduard—Hauptmann' in Section A, I provide a broad overview of the main issues that animated

the gender debates of the late 18th century. This overview is necessary in order to analyze whether the contemporary social discourse can offer a fitting and feasible framework for the way in which Goethe depicted the actions, utterances, behavior and interactions of Charlotte in these complex relationships.

Having reviewed the social context surrounding Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften, I first of all explore how Goethe portrays the dynamics of Charlotte's and Eduard's marriage and the roles they are shown to assume in relation to one another. By doing so, my intention is to examine and draw conclusions about how far Goethe's depiction of the dynamics of this marriage correlates with the roles that were predefined for husbands and wives in the late Enlightenment social contract.

Based on Goethe's indications of the Hauptmann's significant presence in relation to Eduard and Charlotte, I find it essential to take the married couple's relationships with the Hauptmann into account in order to trace the impact of his day-to-day presence, actions, and utterances on Charlotte and Eduard as well as on the dynamics of their marriage. In the context of this study, I devote considerable attention to Charlotte's close friendship with the Hauptmann in order to ascertain whether, and if so, how far the gradual unfolding of their mutual romantic attraction affects Goethe's representation of Charlotte's roles on the estate and in the totality of the narrative.

Part III, Section B: Charlotte in a Family of Mother and Daughters

I have divided Section B into three chapters which are devoted primarily to the mother-daughter bond among Charlotte, Luciane, and Otilie that is depicted as the

dominant character configuration after Eduard's and the Hauptmann's departure. I also examine other related character constellations that entail the complexities of Goethe's portrayal of Charlotte in her maternal role within groupings consisting of 'Charlotte—Otilie—Eduard' and 'Charlotte—Otilie—Otto.'

Based on the dominant presence of women in the second part of the novel, a major focus will be to test my original hypothesis that Goethe's carefully shaped female characters in Die Wahlverwandtschaften may be viewed as parts of a narrative experiment to offer parallel representations of alternate feminine identities in order test their viability in the context of the late Enlightenment gender paradigm.

With the above in mind, I find it important to first analyze Goethe's characterization of the family unit of the three central female figures by looking at the initial portrayal of Luciane's and Otilie's experience in the boarding school, of their conflict-laden relationship with one another, and of their connection to Charlotte prior to arriving at the estate. Then I devote attention to Goethe's depiction of Luciane's visit to the estate and to the changing dynamics of Charlotte's and Otilie's bond. With regard to Luciane, I am particularly interested in comparing Goethe's depiction of her behavior patterns, and her interactions with Otilie to those that she displayed in the boarding school. It is also important to consider Charlotte's role as Luciane's mother figure and how Charlotte's actions may affect Luciane's behavior. Another focal point is to shed light on how Luciane's depiction correlates with contemporary feminine ideals and whether she can be viewed as a viable representation of feminine identity within the late Enlightenment social context.

I conclude Section B with an analysis of Goethe's complex portrayal of Charlotte's and Ottilie's connection both as rivals in their relationship with Eduard and as Otto's complementary mother figures. My motivation here is to assess Goethe's depiction of Charlotte and Ottilie as characters whose actions, utterances, and behavior patterns, similarly to Luciane, could signify distinct and, at least in part, deviant models of femininity when compared to the contemporary definition of feminine ideals. In so doing, I trace whether Goethe's complex portrayal of his female characters in Die Wahlverwandtschaften conveys a critique of the restrictions placed on women within the prevailing gender hierarchy of his own time.

II. Literature Review

1. Review of Recent Scholarly Studies on Die Wahlverwandtschaften

Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften has inspired a vast number of critical studies that investigate numerous aspects of the novel. The untraditional storyline, the ambiguity of the characterization of marriage and women, and the striking contrast between form versus content are only a few issues in the novel that have stimulated highly conflicting findings and a notably vigorous scholarly discourse. The following synopsis of studies will illustrate that this novel offers scholars a vast number of topics for critical analysis. The studies introduced below have all made valuable contributions to the understanding of one of Goethe's most enigmatic and controversial works and that they have enhanced a far-reaching and comprehensive interpretation of such a multifaceted and complex text. However, it is surprising that so little attention has been devoted to Goethe's apparent emphasis on Charlotte as the focal point of multiple character constellations.

Besides themes that have traditionally received significant scholarly attention, in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the portrayal of women and feminine identity in Die Wahlverwandtschaften has also become an established and recognized area of investigation. However, before positioning this study within the substantial body of feminist scholarship, I provide a brief overview of frequently considered themes that are viewed as absolutely central to the Wahlverwandtschaften narrative and that have been investigated by distinguished Goethe scholars in recent years. Because of the extremely

large scope of scholarship on Die Wahlverwandtschaften and the similarly vast range of thematic areas of interest within this scholarship, this review inevitably has to be selective despite my efforts to include a broad scale of themes such as the following:

- Periodization
- Goethe's aesthetics in Die Wahlverwandtschaften
- The circumstances of the novel's creation
- Reflection of late 18th century social discourses
- The significance of Walter Benjamin's Wahlverwandtschaften-essay
- The symbolic functions of architecture
- Allusions to 'chemistry' in Die Wahlverwandtschaften
- The role of language itself in the novel
- Character studies inspired by the narrative.

With the feminist psychoanalytic framework of this study in mind, the last part of the following literature review focuses on the segment of recent feminist scholarship on Goethe and Die Wahlverwandtschaften that I consider to be of special relevance to my analysis. An introduction to the recent corpus of feminist and psychological studies dealing with Die Wahlverwandtschaften helps me to clearly identify my area of investigation within the corpus of feminist scholarship on Goethe in order to further distinguish the theme, the theoretical approach, and findings of this dissertation from related studies on Goethe's portrayal of women.

Periodization

The objective of periodic categorization of literary works and the origination of due criteria for such a classification have generated an ongoing debate among scholars for several decades. The problematic character of the theoretical foundation for any periodic approach can be demonstrated by numerous attempts to classify Die Wahlverwandtschaften as an optimal model of either German Classicism or German Romanticism. Scholars have advanced convincing arguments to position Goethe's text as an equally optimal fit for either German Classicism or German Romanticism.

One of the numerous studies that have sought to categorize Die Wahlverwandtschaften as a text with narrative characteristics that are representative of one single literary period is Ellis Dye's "Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften*: Romantic Metafiction" (1996).¹⁸ Dye claims in response to Stuart Atkins' description of the novel as classical by virtue of its "idealized naturalism" and "broad human significance," that "Goethe's narrative is better described as a Romantic metafiction" (66-67). Dye maintains his view based on Otilie's and Eduard's longing for unity, and he sees their death as a symbolic representation of victory over separation and division of any kind. Thus he views the final romantic union between Otilie and Eduard as an expression of the aim of Romanticism "to unite subject and object, self and other, art and nature, language and reality" (73).

¹⁸Ellis Dye, "Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*: Romantic Metafiction," Goethe Yearbook 8 (1996): 66-92. Dye refers to Stuart Atkins' essay, "*Die Wahlverwandtschaften*: Novel of German Classicism," Essays on Goethe, ed. Stuart Atkins (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1995) 137-181.

In her book Goethes Rätselparodie der Romantik (1997), Gabrielle Bersier claims that Die Wahlverwandtschaften can be seen as Goethe's critical reflection on Friedrich Schlegel's poetics of Romanticism and on his conversion to Catholicism. She goes so far as to say that Die Wahlverwandtschaften must be seen as a symbolic and enigmatic verdict on the, as she puts it, literary dilettantism of Friedrich Schlegel when she writes: "Mit seiner aus dem botanischen Bildarsenal des romantischen Kritikers geborgten Metapher [vermochte Goethe] bereits am Anfang seines Romans sein Verdikt über den literarischen Dilettantismus des Restaurationspoetologen Friedrich Schlegel in eine Bildformel zu verstecken" (77).¹⁹

A year later, Bersier published her article "Buchstäblich genommen," in which she gives further insights into Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften and re-emphasizes that he expresses criticism of Friedrich Schlegel's aesthetics.²⁰ Her main focus in this article, however, shifts to the comparison of Otilie and Luciane in the context of the philosophical frameworks of German Romanticism and Classicism. For example, she compares the contrasting figures of the modest Otilie and the flamboyant Luciane with regard to their respectively economical versus wasteful 'consumption' of clothing and reads this juxtaposition as symbolic representations of the poetics of German Classicism versus German Romanticism.

These works by Dye and Bersier are illustrative examples of a significantly larger corpus of Wahlverwandtschaften criticism that has focused on the periodic categorization of the novel. The conflicting yet equally convincing positions these studies take illustrate

¹⁹ Gabrielle Bersier, Goethes Rätselparodie der Romantik (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1997).

²⁰ Gabrielle Bersier, "Buchstäblich genommen," Jahrbuch des freien deutschen Hochstifts (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1998) 15-35.

that on the one hand, traditional instruments and modes of criticism can provide valuable insights into various aspect of Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften. On the other hand, such examples also show that in the context of Die Wahlverwandtschaften, conventional critical tools might not lead to definite answers since Goethe's text with its particularly complex and multifaceted form and content hardly fits in established categories. Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften needs to be approached as an experimental narrative that presents an exceptional opportunity to test modified or newly shaped critical models in order to attain an even more comprehensive understanding of its complexity and abundance.

Goethe's Aesthetics and the Significance of the Tableaux Vivants

Die Wahlverwandtschaften has also been analyzed extensively with special attention to how Goethe's aesthetic principles come to expression in the novel. The recreation of scenes depicted in well-known paintings in the novel has become a central theme in scholarship on Die Wahlverwandtschaften. As the studies cited below duly illustrate, scholars have looked at the relevance of these "still arrangements of significant events or paintings on stage" (Breithaupt 314)²¹ in relation to their representation of Goethe's aesthetics.

In her detailed study of the tableaux vivants – the silent and motionless recreation of paintings on stage – in Die Wahlverwandtschaften, Karin Leonhard tries to demonstrate Goethe's reference to and critique of Diderot's aesthetic principles.²² Her

²¹ Fritz Breithaupt, "Cultures of Images: Limitation in Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften*," Monatshefte für deutschsprachige Literatur und Kultur 92.3 (2000): 302-320.

²² Karin Leonhard, "Goethe, Diderot und die Romantik," Jahrbuch des freien deutschen Hochstifts (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2003) 29-54.

analysis also convincingly demonstrates Goethe's aesthetic 'resistance' to Diderot's inclination for the 'amalgamation' of art and nature, i.e., Goethe's rejection of the concept that the simple mimesis of nature would constitute the highest form of art. Furthermore, she claims that Goethe's critique of Diderot's aesthetics in Die Wahlverwandtschaften shows parallels with and similarities to Goethe's critique of Romanticism: "Seine [Goethes, Z.R.] Kritik an der Romantik ähnelt deswegen der Kritik an Diderots Ästhetik, weil sich seiner Meinung nach beide nachlässig genug über die Beziehung von Kunst und Natur geäußert hätten und Gefahr liefen, die notwendige Umrißzeichnung der Bereiche aufzugeben" (Leonhard 52).

The tableaux vivants have also been explored with regard to the striking contrast between Luciane and Otilie and as representations of Goethe's portrayal of a contemporary cultural and social phenomenon.²³ Nils Reschke views the tableaux vivants as a simultaneous reflection on and turning away from contemporary history in a period of enormous political and social changes.²⁴ In contrast, Rita Lennartz' study looks at the tableaux vivants in their role of connecting the medium of painting with literary artistic expression. In her analysis, she seeks to demonstrate that the tableaux vivants play a significant role in revealing both the compositional structure of the narrative and the multiple layers of possible interpretations related to the literary text. As opposed to Leonhard, Lennartz seeks to show the proximity of the narrative to Diderot's

²³ The tableaux vivants were a relatively widely known and popular form of social entertainment both in Germany and Western Europe at the time of the novel's creation. They were often used in literary texts as a means for the author to mediate certain statements about contemporary social practices. According to my interpretation, the episodes centered around Luciane's and Otilie's staging of tableaux vivants in Die Wahlverwandtschaften offer further insights into Goethe's multifaceted representation of femininity and reflect his view of social practices prevalent in his lifetime.

²⁴ Nils Reschke, "'Die Wirklichkeit als Bild.' Die tableaux vivants der *Wahlverwandtschaften*," Erzählen und Wissen, ed. Gabriele Brandstetter (Freiburg im Breisgau: Rombach Verlag, 2003) 137-167.

methodology of artistic creation while describing the paintings acted out in the novel as mediating devices that illustrate the complexity of the narrative's composition.²⁵

Another noteworthy publication that examines the tableaux vivants and has received broad attention is Fritz Breithaupt's "Cultures of Images: Limitation in Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften*" (2000). Breithaupt investigates the significance of the still arrangements staged by Otilie and Luciane and the contrast between these two female characters, which he sees manifested in their relationship to appearance (Schein):²⁶

What is held against Luciane is that her living images fail to produce a 'Schein' (semblance/shine/appearance). [...] In all three [paintings that she staged as living pictures, Z.R.], the central person is blind or does not possess sight. [...] Otilie's images are those of the birth of Christ. 'Aber hier,' we read, 'hatte die Wirklichkeit als Bild ihre besonderen Vorzüge.' And with that, the novel speaks of the particular 'semblance' that is absent from Luciane's images. (314-315)

Breithaupt perceives the novel as Goethe's attempt to create a counterbalance to the predisposition of contemporary culture that aims to restrict the individual to an institutionalized self. He claims that Goethe rejected many of the concepts that were widely accepted among his contemporaries as guarantors of hope such as self-consciousness, love, and imagination because he considered knowledge and consciousness to be limited and restricted entities incapable of promoting human

²⁵ Rita Lennartz, "'Von Angesicht zu Angesicht'. Lebende Bilder und tote Buchstaben in Goethes *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*," *Bildersturm und Bilderflut um 1800: Zur schwierigen Anschaulichkeit der Moderne*, ed. Helmut Schneider (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2001) 145-183. In her analysis, Lennartz makes reference to Diderot's works such as *Entretiens sur le fils naturel* (1757), *De la poesie dramatique* (1758), and *Les Salons* (1759-1781).

²⁶ Besides his focus on the tableaux vivants, Breithaupt also analyzes the novella about the neighboring children in order to show that: "Goethe's novel presents 'knowing' with a counter-condition of possibility, namely not-knowing" (316).

freedom. Breithaupt believes that this limitation is implied in Luciane's still performance of the paintings and particularly by her lack of eyesight in all illustrations. In addition, Breithaupt stresses that Otilie's images create a distinct contrast to Luciane's images because they have light as their focal point: "Otilie's images use light not only to show the limited nature of the present reality, but at the same time to open up the possibility of other realities [...]" (315). In conclusion, Breithaupt states that Goethe's novel offers an alternative to the view that any culture implies institutionalization and restriction. By doing so, Breithaupt refers to the novella embedded in Die Wahlverwandtschaften and sees the young couple as an example of Goethe's rejection of social institutions: "The pair in the novella finds success in the area in which the characters in the novel falter: they escape from the chains of marriage and from the boundaries of the institutionalized self and its reality" (313). Breithaupt correlates the alternative Goethe's novel offers with the movement of history since, in his view, "history occurs in the abandonment of institutions, even if it leads to the establishment of new institutions" (313). He further argues that "[f]or Goethe, this step through the un-formed that brings the institution, the ritual, and even a rite of passage to a close, is the movement of history. [...] The force that leads out of the restrictive conceptions or images of reality is history" (313).

Luciane's and Otilie's presentations of the tableaux vivants in Die Wahlverwandtschaften have also inspired critical studies that focus on Goethe's portrayal of gender identities in the late Enlightenment social context. I will discuss this aspect of the tableaux vivants and their implications for the Wahlverwandtschaften narrative in detail in my review of feminist Goethe scholarship.

Circumstances of the Novel's Genesis

Other scholars, such as Stefan Keppler, have investigated the circumstances that lead to the novel's genesis.²⁷ Keppler provides a thorough and convincing analysis, in which he demonstrates that the Tristan story served as a significant source of Die Wahlverwandtschaften. On the one hand, he reveals biographic data that demonstrate Goethe's exposure to different versions of the Tristan story, and on the other hand, he shows parallels between the development of the storyline and the characters in Gottfried's epic poem as well as in Die Wahlverwandtschaften. Keppler, in particular, traces similarities and highlights contrasts as they relate to the formation of the romantic relationships between Otilie and Eduard as well as Tristan and Isolde: "Die Liebe [in beiden Texten, Z.R.] ist auf magisch-alchemische Weise zwanghaft, trägt mystisch-religiöse Züge und erfüllt sich allein im Tod" (77). Keppler also compares the characters of Tristan and Eduard in order to show a rather questionable quality ("die innere Fragwürdigkeit") of the love between Eduard and Otilie in Die Wahlverwandtschaften. By doing so, he accentuates that Tristan and Eduard are weakly formulated in both texts. He further argues that both Tristan and Eduard stand in strong contrast to the stylized and legendary depictions of their strong female counterparts: "Eduard nun erscheint gegenüber Tristan als noch einmal bedeutend schwächerer Charakter. [...] Gleichzeitig erfährt Otilie eine weitaus stärkere Legendarisierung als Isolde, so daß die Disharmonien und die innere Fragwürdigkeit der 'Wahlverwandtschaften'-Liebe gerade vor dem Quellenhintergrund umso deutlicher hervortreten" (80).

²⁷ Stefan Keppler, "Die Heiligung der 'sündigen Otilie': Goethes *Wahlverwandtschaften* und der Tristanstoff," Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen und Literaturen 152.1 (2000) 64-91.

What makes Keppler's study interesting in the context of my investigation is his claim that Goethe places significantly more emphasis on Otilie's portrayal than on the depiction of Eduard's character. He also maintains that Otilie is depicted as a notably more complex figure than Eduard, which coincides with my viewpoint that the discursive environments shaped in Die Wahlverwandtschaften are mostly dominated by women.

Die Wahlverwandtschaften – A Reflection of Contemporary Social Discourse

The examination of contemporary society and its reflection in the narrative have been the focus of a large segment of Goethe scholarship. In his article, “‘sociale Verhältnisse und die Conflictte derselben symbolisch gefasst darzustellen,’” Hans Reiss seeks an answer to the question whether the novel can be seen as a manifestation of or rather as a critique of contemporary social conditions and emphasizes that the socio-historical background of the 18th century plays a significant role in Goethe's text.²⁸ In so doing, Reiss focuses on Goethe's portrayal of contemporary aristocracy in light of the Wahlverwandtschaften characters and concludes that in spite of repeated narrative implications of Eduard's weaknesses, Goethe offers a multifaceted representation of the late 18th century aristocracy (Reiss 81). Reiss concludes that Die Wahlverwandtschaften is a novel in which Goethe points to the extensive social changes of his time with special attention to the transformation of moral rather than political or economic ideas.²⁹

²⁸ Hans Reiss, “‘sociale Verhältnisse und die Conflictte derselben symbolisch gefasst darzustellen.’ Goethes ‘Die Wahlverwandtschaften’ als Widerspiegelung oder Kritik der sozialen Umwelt?” Goethezeit – Zeit für Goethe (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2003) 73-83.

²⁹ Reiss formulates his conclusion as follows: “Goethe weist auf den tiefgreifenden Wandel im gesellschaftlichen Leben im Zuge der Säkularisation hin. Wie T.J. Reed zu Recht bemerkt, findet der Roman in einer Zeit des Wandels statt, aber es ist ein Wandel moralischer Vorstellungen, und nicht der

Peter Klotz' study entitled "Gesellschaftsdiskurs und Gartenkonstruktion: Zur Spiegelung des Ordnungswandels in Goethes Roman 'Die Wahlverwandtschaften'" also considers the contemporary social discourse, i.e., examines Goethe's representation of the changes in the existing social order as manifested in the landscaping composition in the novel.³⁰ Both of the above studies serve as representative examples of a significant part of the Wahlverwandtschaften scholarship that examines Goethe's approach to the social environment of the late Enlightenment because they pointedly sum up the status-quo of research conducted on this aspect of Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften in the past two decades.

The Significance of Walter Benjamin's Wahlverwandtschaften-Essay

A whole new line of critical reception was initiated by Walter Benjamin's essay on Die Wahlverwandtschaften, and it has attracted the attention of literary critics ever since its publication in 1924.³¹ Benjamin begins his essay by defining its genre as a critical writing ("Kritik") as opposed to a commentary ("Kommentar"). In his own words, a critical writing searches for the truth content ("Wahrheitsgehalt") in a literary work as opposed to the material content ("Sachgehalt").³² In his attempt to specify the novel's

politischen und ökonomischen Umwelt im Gange; denn schon der Gedanke an eine Scheidung einer Ehe, die in früheren vom Christentum völlig dominierten Zeiten unvorstellbar war, bezeugt dies" (83).

³⁰ Peter Klotz, "Gesellschaftsdiskurs und Gartenkonstruktion: Zur Spiegelung des Ordnungswandels in Goethes Roman 'Die Wahlverwandtschaften,'" Sozialgeschichtliche Aspekte des Gartens, ed. Walter Gebhard (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2002) 113-132.

³¹ Walter Benjamin, "Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften," Gesammelte Schriften, eds. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, vol. I/2 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974) 123-201.

³² I cite the English equivalents of "Wahrheitsgehalt" and "Sachgehalt" from the English translation of Walter Benjamin's "Goethe's Elective Affinities" by Stanley Corngold that was published in 2002: Walter Benjamin, Selected Writings 1913-1926, eds. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, vol. 3 (London: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2002).

truth content, Benjamin emphasizes that he does not view Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften as a novel about the institution of marriage or even about the morality of marriage. To him, the novel's focal points are the characters and their dependence on nature, i.e., on fate and external forces whose power lies beyond human reach. Benjamin repeatedly claims that fate acts as a central organizing principle in Goethe's novel, and that such pivotal significance of fate would allow the reader to explore its effect on human innocence (see Benjamin 133-139). Benjamin also seeks to demonstrate that there is a close connection between fate and guilt, and he claims that destiny unfolds as an inevitable consequence of guilt in Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften:

Diese schicksalhafte Art des Daseins, die in einem einzigen Zusammenhang von Schuld und Sühne lebende Naturen umschließt, hat der Dichter durch das Werk hin entfaltet. [...] Denn Schicksal [...] betrifft das Leben unschuldiger Pflanzen nicht. Nichts ist diesem ferner. Unaufhaltsam dagegen entfaltet es sich im verschuldeten Leben. Schicksal ist der Schuldzusammenhang von Lebendigem. [...] Und so erscheint [das Schicksalhafte, Z.R.] in den Wahlverwandtschaften: als die Schuld, die am Leben forterbt. „Charlotte wird von einem Sohne entbunden. Das Kind ist aus der Lüge geboren. Zum Zeichen dessen trägt es die Züge des Hauptmanns und Otiliens. Es ist als Geschöpf der Lüge zum Tode verurteilt. Denn nur die Wahrheit ist wesenhaft. Die Schuld an seinem Tode muß auf die fallen, die ihre Schuld an seiner innerlich unwahren Existenz nicht durch Selbstüberwindung gesühnt haben. Das sind Ottilie und Eduard“ (138).³³

³³ Although Benjamin only specifies the author of this quote, he refers to Albert Bielschowsky, Goethe. Sein Leben und seine Werke, vol. 2 (München: Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1908) 276.

In his discussion of how fate and mankind's natural innocence versus natural guilt are interrelated, Benjamin focuses on Otilie's character and views her as a victim, whose fate seems embedded in a mythical context. Benjamin considers Otilie central in Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften because she simultaneously embodies guilt and innocence.³⁴ He further compares her to the white lily, the Christian symbol of innocence and points out that the lily's intoxicatingly sweet scent signifies irresistible desire paired with whiteness and natural purity, the same contradictory qualities Benjamin observes in Otilie's character.³⁵

Although it is impossible to cover all studies that deal with the reception of Benjamin's essay within the scope of this literature review, I find it important to include Vivian Liska's review article because it provides a comprehensive summary of studies

³⁴ Benjamin sees Otilie as a mythical character and connects her with the magical power of innocence as it is represented in the Christian symbol of innocence: "Scheint doch in [Otilien] am sichtbarsten der Roman der mythischen Welt entwachsen. Denn wenn sie auch als Opfer dunkler Mächte fällt, so ist's doch eben ihre Unschuld, welche sie, der alten Forderung gemäß, die vom Geopferten Untadeligkeit verlangt, zu diesem furchtbaren Geschick bestimmt. [...] Vor allem liegt die Zweideutigkeit [Otiliens] Unberührtheit zu Tage. Denn eben das, was als Zeichen innerer Reinheit gedacht wird, ist der Begierde das Willkommenste. Aber auch die Unschuld der Unwissenheit ist zweideutig. Denn auf ihrem Grunde geht die Neigung unversehens in die als sündhaft gedachte Begierde über. Und eben diese Zweideutigkeit kehrt höchst bezeichnender Weise in dem christlichen Symbol der Unschuld, in der Lilie, wieder. Die strengen Linien des Gewächses, das Weiß des Blütenkelchs verbinden sich mit den betäubend süßen, kaum mehr vegetabilen Düften. Diese gefährliche Magie der Unschuld hat der Dichter der Otilie mitgegeben und sie ist aufs engste dem Opfer verwandt, das ihr Tod zelebriert. [...] Nicht Reinheit sondern deren Schein verbreitet sich mit solcher Unschuld über ihre Gestalt. Es ist die Unberührbarkeit des Scheins, die sie dem Geliebten entrückt" (173-175).

³⁵ Benjamin also deals with the genres of novel and novella that are both represented and melted into one in Goethe's book. Furthermore, Benjamin focuses on the task of the literary critic and seeks an answer to the question, among others, to what extent a critic should rely on the author's biography when analyzing a literary text. In so doing, he intends to keep the author's biography separate from the critique and therefore defines the artist's work not as a creation, but rather as a structure: "Und in der Tat ist der Künstler weniger der Urgrund oder Schöpfer als der Ursprung oder Bildner und sicherlich sein Werk um keinen Preis sein Geschöpf, vielmehr sein Gebilde. Zwar hat das Gebilde auch Leben, nicht das Geschöpf allein. [...] Wie immer also die Gleichnisrede vom Schöpfer eines Künstlers sprechen mag, ihre eigenste virtus, die der Ursache nämlich, vermag Schöpfung nicht an seinen Werken, sondern an Geschöpfen einzig und allein zu entfalten. Daher führt jener unbesonnene Sprachgebrauch, der an dem Worte "Schöpfer" sich erbaut, ganz von selbst dahin, vom Künstler nicht die Werke sondern das Leben für dessen eigenstes Produkt zu halten" (159-160).

directly or indirectly engaged in this thematic field.³⁶ In her overview of critical responses to Benjamin in the second half of the 20th century, Liska displays a gradual shift away from scholarly responses to Benjamin's essay, which resulted in Benjamin's continuing disappearance from the Wahlverwandtschaften critical discourse. Liska further argues that in second half of the 20th century, Goethe scholars rather turned to new areas of investigation such as the analysis of the malfunction and breakdown in the communication among the characters in Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften.

Despite Benjamin's decreasing impact on more recent Wahlverwandtschaften critical discourse, his ongoing influential presence is indicated by studies like Sigrid Weigel's essay, "Das Kunstwerk als Einbruchsstelle eines Jenseits" (1998).³⁷ Weigel deals with some of the central issues in Benjamin's approach. In this context, she calls her readers' attention to literary interpretations of the passages where Otilie is depicted as the allegory of artistic creation, and she also discusses Benjamin's differentiation between commentary and critical writing.³⁸ Weigel convincingly demonstrates that Benjamin formulated his own theoretical considerations about the work of art ("Theorie des Kunstwerks" 142) in the Wahlverwandtschaften-essay.

³⁶Vivian Liska, "Die Mortifikation der Kritik. Zum Nachleben von Walter Benjamins Wahlverwandtschaften-Essay," Spuren, Signaturen, Spiegelungen. Zur Goethe-Rezeption in Europa, eds. Bernhard Beutler and Anke Bosse (Köln: Böhlau, 2000): 581-599.

³⁷Sigrid Weigel, "Das Kunstwerk als Einbruchsstelle eines Jenseits," Paragrana: Internationale Zeitschrift für historische Anthropologie 7.2 (1998): 140-151.

³⁸Benjamin differentiates between critical writing and commentary as follows: "[Die vorliegende Literatur über Dichtungen] könnte als Kommentar erscheinen; gemeint jedoch ist sie als Kritik. Die Kritik sucht den Wahrheitsgehalt eines Kunstwerks, der Kommentar seinen Sachgehalt. Das Verhältnis der beiden bestimmt jenes Grundgesetz des Schrifttums, demzufolge der Wahrheitsgehalt eines Werkes, je bedeutender es ist, desto unscheinbarer und inniger an seinen Sachgehalt gebunden ist. Wenn sich demnach als die dauernden gerade jene Werke erweisen, deren Wahrheit am tiefsten ihrem Sachgehalt eingesenkt ist, so stehen im Verlaufe dieser Dauer die Realien dem Betrachtenden im Werk desto deutlicher vor Augen, je mehr sie in der Welt absterben. Damit aber tritt der Erscheinung nach Sachgehalt und Wahrheitsgehalt, in der Frühzeit des Werkes geeint, auseinander mit seiner Dauer, weil der letzte immer gleich verborgen sich hält, wenn der erste hervordringt" (125).

Symbolic Functions Associated with Architecture

Since architectural design and the construction of buildings and pathways shape a significant part of Goethe's novel, a substantial body of Wahlverwandtschaften scholarship has dealt with the symbolic functions attributed to architecture. Michael Mandelartz' essay "Bauen, Erhalten, Zerstören, Versiegeln. Architektur als Kunst in Goethes 'Wahlverwandtschaften'" serves as an illustrative example of the extensive research corpus that explores Goethe's recurring focus on architecture and the role it potentially plays in the articulation of his poetics and aesthetics.³⁹ Mandelartz points out compellingly that "the complex of motifs and 'architecture' [...] offers insights into the poetic method underlying Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften and its strategic alignment against the Romantic movement" (Mandelartz 500).

Further aspects of architecture have also been studied in the context of Die Wahlverwandtschaften such as the significance of Goethe's emphasis on architectural and horticultural design and the role(s) that park and garden play in the novel.⁴⁰

³⁹ Michael Mandelartz, "Bauen, Erhalten, Zerstören, Versiegeln. Architektur als Kunst in Goethes 'Wahlverwandtschaften,'" Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie 118 (1999): 500-517.

⁴⁰ Some publications that have explored issues related to the importance of park and garden in Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften are: Claudia Broses 1977 essay "Park und Garten in Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften," Ulrike Weinhold's publication "Ebenbild und Ebenbildung: Zur Problematik des Garten-Motivs in Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften (1983), Esther Elstun's 1990 article entitled "Hans J. Fröhlich's Im Garten der Gefühle: Elective Affinities Revisited," and Hildegard Haberl's "'An der Natur herumversuchen': Landschaft, Garten und die Grenzen der heiteren Vernunftfreiheit in Die Wahlverwandtschaften und Bouvard et Pécuchet" (2007).

Allusions to ‘Chemistry’ in Die Wahlverwandtschaften

The metaphorical title of Goethe’s novel – a relatively new term used in chemistry – that Goethe borrowed from Swedish chemist Torbern Olof Bergman’s text Disquisito de Attractionibus Electivis (1775) has generated a large corpus of scholarly discussions. Scholars have been especially interested in why Goethe structured the novel around the chemical phenomenon of “elective affinities,” and they have sought answers to the questions whether and how chemistry, alchemy, and literary form intersect and play a significant part in Goethe’s creation of a multifaceted and ambiguous narrative.

Terry Reilly, for example, focuses on Goethe’s use of alchemical and chemical discourses in the novel.⁴¹ In his essay “Alchemy, Chemistry, and Literary Form in Goethe’s *Elective Affinities*,” Reilly examines Goethe’s direct and oblique references to mercury, a substance that was “considered collectively in both alchemical and chemical contexts” at the time of the novel’s creation (Reilly 1). Reilly argues that Goethe’s text presents “extensive representations of mercury (quicksilver)” and that Die Wahlverwandtschaften is a “hybrid work which takes shape from the various contexts, languages, and discourses concerned with *both* alchemy and chemistry” (2).

With the above in mind, Reilly attributes special significance to the name Otto that connects five characters. He argues that the written image of the name Otto can be interpreted as the symbol for mercury and that Goethe “includes the mercury symbol at least once in all of these names, and then conceals the symbol by the alternate names of the male characters” (2). Reilly views Otilie as a metaphorical representation of mercury,

⁴¹ Terry Reilly, “Alchemy, Chemistry, and Literary Form in Goethe’s *Elective Affinities*,” Cauda Pavonis: Studies in Hermeticism 16.2 (1997): 1-9.

that was used in the production of mirrors, because Otilie is portrayed both as a reflection of the needs and desires of the male characters and as a woman who, at the same time, is shown to replace the female characters:

As Otilie replaces the female characters in the text, she embodies the late eighteenth- to early nineteenth-century scientific conception regarding the superior attractive, almost magnetic qualities of mercury [...]. Otilie also embodies the transitional properties of the mercury cycle in which “mercury circulates and is redistributed in nature ... creating countless new combinations of mercury with other elements.” (4)⁴²

In light of the above, Reilly emphasizes the ambiguous voice of the narrator while also pointing out that “the metaphorical portrayal of mercury serves to both link and separate the characters, as well as many of the scenes and activities which form the structure of the work” (4).

I find it interesting to note that despite the fact that Reilly and I take clearly distinct critical approaches to Goethe’s Wahlverwandtschaften, I share his view that Goethe’s text is constantly changing and that it is structured around manifold ambiguities. I further agree with Reilly’s viewpoint that these ambiguities can be regarded as a fundamental part of the text, and they allow “a variety of diverse, contradictory, and even antithetical readings, all of which may be regarded as valid” (6).

In his study “Otilie muß sterben. Zum ‘Ungleichnis’ zwischen chemischer und menschlicher Natur in Goethes Roman ‘Die Wahlverwandtschaften,’” Hee-Ju Kim takes

⁴² Reilly cites here from page 2 in Leonard J. Goldwater, Mercury: A History of Quicksilver (Baltimore: York Press, 1972).

a different approach and examines the connection between scientific and mythical discourses in Die Wahlverwandtschaften.⁴³ Kim maintains that the narrative is first structured around a scientific discourse of chemistry that creates the frame of a literary experiment with human relationships. Kim also stresses that the narrative's scientific focus gradually disperses after the episode that he labels as "geistige[r] Ehebruch," and in this process Otto's death represents a turning point. Following this tragic event, the narrative is dominated by a mythical discourse that is centered around Ottilie's character. Kim illustrates this change in the narrative by comparing the beginning and the end of Goethe's text. He maintains that the experimental narrative style at the beginning of the novel is closely connected to the scientific topic of conversation among the characters and to their experiment with personal relationships among humans. At the same time, Kim insightfully observes that the narrator's position significantly changes by the end of the novel and provokes an interpretation according to which he is no longer in control of his experimental approach to human relationships:

Die zu Beginn fiktional entworfene Welt, über die der Erzähler mit der willkürlichen Benennung einer Figur experimentell verfügte, präsentiert sich nunmehr als eine mythisch-religiöse, die dem rationalen Zugriff des Menschen enthoben scheint. [...] Hatte der Erzähler eingangs die Liebespaare, wie bereits Peter Michelsen betont hat, "wie chemische Stoffe in einem Reagenzglas" betrachtet, so nimmt er damit am Schluß eine ganz andere Haltung ein, die den

⁴³ Hee-Ju Kim, "Ottilie muß sterben. Zum 'Ungleichnis' zwischen chemischer und menschlicher Natur in Goethes Roman 'Die Wahlverwandtschaften,'" Goethe Jahrbuch 124 (2007): 85-95.

Eindruck provoziert, daß das narrative Laborant nicht mehr Herr seiner Versuche ist. (Kim 86)

Kim interprets the connection between scientific and mythical/religious discourses in Die Wahlverwandtschaften as Goethe's way to display his dilemma between sensuality ("Sinnlichkeit") and morality ("Sittlichkeit"). In Kim's view, this conflict is revealed by the way Goethe's text highlights the differences between chemical and human pairings:

Doch gibt es eine markante Differenz zwischen der chemischen und der menschlichen Paarung. Während nämlich die chemischen Stoffe zusammen einen neuen Körper bilden, vollziehen Eduard und Ottilie diese Vereinigung lediglich auf rein geistiger Ebene, weder eine physische noch eine soziale Vereinigung kommt zustande. (88)

In his interpretation of the mythical discourse centered around Ottilie that takes the place of the scientific focus of the narrative, Kim views Goethe's association of Ottilie with saintly existence, i.e., the Ottilie-myth, as a form of irony and emphasizes that Ottilie's connection with images of angels is a purely visual similarity rather than a "jenseitige Verklärung Ottilies" (95).

In his conclusion, Kim interprets Die Wahlverwandtschaften as a text in which Goethe ardently critiques the 'new' religious trend in German Romanticism:

So steht dem Erzähler kraft seiner Imagination die glückselige Zukunft der ins Jenseits entrückten Liebenden lebendig vor Augen: "welch ein freundlicher Augenblick wird es sein, wenn sie dereinst wieder zusammen erwachen". Mit diesem Schlußsatz, der die Liebesgeschichte über die Romanhandlung hinaus

weiterschiebt und in ein außerzeitliches “dereinst” verlängert, läßt Goethe den anfangs so experimentierfreudigen Erzähler endgültig zum bloßen Reproduzenten der romantischen Utopie einer absoluten Liebe regredieren.

Gerade anhand dieser Regression des Erzählers unterläuft Goethe die in der Romantik florierende neureligiöse Mode mit provokanter Ironie. (95)

Kim’s study serves as an illustrative example of how scholars have worked with the dominant presence of a scientific/chemical discourse in Goethe’s Wahlverwandtschaften. It also illustrates that analyzing the role of Goethe’s emphasis on the chemical concept of “elective affinities” has allowed for making the narrative’s complexities and ambiguities transparent and it reveals multiple facets of this enigmatic text, such as Goethe’s aesthetics, his attitude towards German Romanticism, the implications behind the ambivalence of the central characters, and his representation of human relations through a lens that seeks to correlate personal relationships with affinities among chemical elements.⁴⁴

The Role of Language in Die Wahlverwandtschaften

Die Wahlverwandtschaften has also been interpreted as a representation of Goethe’s theoretical considerations about language. In her book Der Einfall des Bildes (2000), Heike Brandstädter perceives the novel as a narrative about language and focuses on Ottilie’s character from a deconstructionist and semiotic perspective. She further

⁴⁴ A couple of further examples of studies that have analyzed the role of chemistry and the concept of “elective affinities” in Goethe’s Wahlverwandtschaften are Martin Stingelin, “Die Elementenlehre in Goethe’s Roman *Die Wahlverwandtschaften*,” Prospero: Rivista di Culture Anglo-Germaniche 5 (1988): 133-151. and Loisa Nygaard, “‘Bild’ and ‘Sinnbild’: The Problem of the Symbol in Goethe’s *Wahlverwandtschaften*,” The Germanic Review 18.2 (1988): 58-76.

claims that the uniqueness of Die Wahlverwandtschaften lies in the fact that its language has a constitutive and direct tie to the realm of images:⁴⁵ “Die Besonderheit der Wahlverwandtschaften aber liegt darin, dass Sprache hier in konstitutiver Weise an Bildlichkeit geknüpft wird [...]” (Brandstädter 5). Brandstädter claims that Goethe’s novel constitutes the formulation of a theory of language that allows – through its form – more flexibility than a theoretical text: “Was die Sprachtheorie gerne ausdiskutiert oder in Paragraphen fixiert haben möchte, kann im Modus der Literatur sukzessiv, von einem Text zum anderen entwickelt, befragt, erörtert, in konstellative Anordnungen gebracht, aber auch wieder eingeschränkt, ja widerrufen werden” (7).

Character Studies

Since character studies build a substantial part of more recent scholarship on Die Wahlverwandtschaften, the following essays by Rolf Ahrens and Carsten Leimbach should serve as examples that illustrate this segment of scholarship.

Although there have been critical analyses of various individual characters of Die Wahlverwandtschaften, in this study I focus on scholarship that explores female characters because they have special relevance to the central theme of this dissertation.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Heike Brandstädter, Der Einfall des Bildes. Otilie in den “Wahlverwandtschaften” (Würzburg: Verlag Königshausen und Neumann, 2000).

⁴⁶ One example of character studies that explore the role of individual male figures in Goethe’s Wahlverwandtschaften is: Philipp W. Hildmann, “Die Figur Mittler aus Goethes Roman *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* als Repräsentant der Neologen,” Euphorion 97.1 (2003): 51-71. Hildmann offers a character study of Mittler from a theological perspective, in which Mittler’s use of language is closely examined in order to offer a precise analysis of the theological background he stands for in the novel. By doing so, Hildmann examines the possibility of both Lutheran and Catholic beliefs and comes to the conclusion that Mittler is a theologian of the Lutheran church. In addition, he claims that Mittler can be tied to the principles of the *Neologen* as he also stands for a positive image of mankind and regards the Bible as relevant for leading an ethical life. However in this belief system, the Bible is considered as a historical

With regard to the analysis of individual characters within Die Wahlverwandtschaften, Otilie has undoubtedly received the most attention. Critics claim that she plays the most significant role in the novel because of her elevation into the transcendental sphere and due to her association with aesthetic creation and mythical content.⁴⁷

Rolf Ahrens is one of the critics who consider Otilie as the central character in Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften. Ahrens' psychological investigation seeks to demonstrate that Otilie's death is the result of a pathological desire, i.e., of a subconscious drive, that underlies her entire existence.⁴⁸

In his study, "Die Gegenbilder von Ehe und Leidenschaften in Goethes 'Wahlverwandtschaften,'" Carsten Leimbach's focus is on the characters in Goethe's novel, yet his approach centers around the interpretation of the institution of marriage with regard to individual figures.⁴⁹ He seeks to answer the question if the characters are shown as objects and victims of social practices. Leimbach also explores whether the characters can be seen as individually developing subjects. He convincingly compares the postmodern individual with the characters in Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften and pinpoints their continual confrontation with the discursively constructed moral order defined by Christianity.⁵⁰

document that needs to be read through the filter of reason and experience: "Sowohl Mittler als auch die Neologen betrachten die Bibel zwar als relevant für eine ethische Lebensführung, aber die Autorität dieses 'historischen Dokuments' muß sich an den Kriterien der Vernunft und der Erfahrung erweisen" (69).

⁴⁷ One illustrative example of such studies is Dan Farelly, "Die Gestalt einer Heiligen: Zur Figur der Otilie in Goethes Wahlverwandtschaften," Zeitschrift für Germanistik 1.2 (1991): 364-378.

⁴⁸ Rolf Ahrens, "Die Gestalt der Otilie in Goethes 'Wahlverwandtschaften'. Pathologische Todessehnsucht?" Sehnsucht (Innsbruck: Verlag Integrative Psychiatrie, 1994): 92-95.

⁴⁹ Carsten Leimbach, "Die Gegenbilder von Ehe und Leidenschaften in Goethes 'Wahlverwandtschaften,'" Weimarer Beiträge 45.1 (1999): 35-51.

⁵⁰ Leimbach sums up the objective of his study as follows: "Vor dem skizzierten Hintergrund zielt die folgende Untersuchung – indem sie die Ehe als ordnungsgebende Struktur auf der einen Seite, die

Summary of Recent Scholarship on Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften

The major themes that have been discussed in critical analyses of Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften illustrate that the novel has inspired a great variety of approaches and an even larger spectrum of analytical conclusions. While this substantial body of recent Wahlverwandtschaften scholarship has provided highly revealing insights into the understanding of the nearly limitless number of layers of metatexts underneath the storyline, it under represents Charlotte's central and dominant presence within various character groupings throughout the entire novel.

In order to further illustrate this void in Goethe scholarship and to situate my investigative focus on Charlotte and his interrelatedness with the central female and male characters, in the following I provide an overview of recent feminist studies on Goethe's novel that explore the dynamics of the Wahlverwandtschaften gender discourse and Goethe's representation of feminine identity. This review also helps me to differentiate my theme from the comprehensive scholarship on Goethe's representation of femininity in Die Wahlverwandtschaften and other works.

'Wahlverwandtschaften' als Chiffre für das Begehren bzw. die Leidenschaft als grenzüberschreitende, strukturbrechende Naturkraft auf der anderen Seite konturiert – darauf, die diskursiven Ordnungen zu beleuchten, die als gesellschaftlich-historische Wirklichkeiten zentral durch christliche Imperative bestimmt sind und die Handlungen und Subjektivierungsweisen der Protagonisten des Romans auf subtile Weise bestimmen" (36).

2. Feminist Scholarship on Goethe and Die Wahlverwandtschaften

Recent feminist scholarship on Goethe's literary works has investigated a broad variety of themes, such as Goethe's depiction of female characters, their subjectivity development, the general representation of gender, and the roles associated with gender within the Enlightenment and Post-Enlightenment social environment in Europe. My methodological foundation falls within the framework of feminist analyses, and many of the more recent studies discussed below serve as a foundation for my own argumentation.

The following is a review of recently published critical studies that deal with Goethe's female characters and his depiction of their femininity in relation to masculinity. It is important to note that the first pioneering studies on Goethe's female characters that questioned and put Goethe's long advocated traditional late Enlightenment attitude towards his female characters to the test were published by Goethe scholars in the 1980s. Katharina Mommsen was one of the first of these early feminist scholars, who, in her article entitled "Goethe As a Precursor of Women's Emancipation" (1984), took an innovative approach by exploring individual female figures in Goethe's works and concluded that they were often portrayed as independent, daring, and courageous women with exceptional intellectual abilities and artistic creativity, such as Iphigenie, "die schöne Seele" in Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, and Adelheid in Götz von Berlichingen, just to mention a few (Mommsen 55).⁵¹

⁵¹ Katharina Mommsen, "Goethe As a Precursor of Women's Emancipation," Goethe Proceedings: Essays Commemorating the Goethe Sesquicentennial at the University of California, Davis (Columbia, S.C.: Camden House, 1984) 51-65. "[A]s early as *Götz von Berlichingen* (1773), Goethe portrays women who are actually superior to their male counterparts. The supposed model of manhood, Weislingen, is reputed to

Scholars since the 1980s have viewed Goethe's depiction of feminine identity in the context of the late Enlightenment theoretical gender discourse shaped by Rousseau, Kant, Campe, and other advocates, who viewed women as inferior to men and considered domestic servitude and maternal duties as women's sole "professional" purpose in life.

In her book Die imaginierte Weiblichkeit (1979), Silvia Bovenschen defines this reductionist tradition under the concept of "Ergänzungstheorien" and by doing so, she borrows the term from Hedwig Dohm, one of the most prominent voices of the German women's movement around the beginning of the 20th century.⁵² Similarly to Dohm, Bovenschen uses the term "Ergänzungstheorien" to describe and explain theories on gender differences such as Rousseau's, which exclude women from public life and define them as dependent on and subordinate to men. Bovenschen points out that such reductionist models associated women's daily activities exclusively with their families and the domestic realm. Based on this confinement, women's primary role was to facilitate and support their husband's material and possibly also intellectual production:

Die streitbare Frauenrechtlerin Hedwig Dohm hat diese Appendixkonstruktion, die nicht nur bei Rousseau zu finden ist, gelegentlich als Ergänzungstheorie bezeichnet. Die Frauen sollen die Männer „ergänzen“, allerdings nicht in dem Sinne, daß sie ihren Interessen und Lebenszusammenhängen adäquate Inhalte und Formen in das öffentliche Leben einbringen, sondern indem sie „drinnen walten“

be the 'quintessence of the male sex,' as Adelheid, the expert judge of men, scornfully says. But it is Adelheid – herself a figure of imposing talents – who becomes a defender of women when she exposes Weislingen's weakness [...]” (55). “There are interesting configurations in *Egmont*, too, in which the merit of the women equals or even exceeds that of the men. Margarethe von Palma has all the statesmanlike abilities of a man and is respected for that reason” (55).

⁵² Silvia Bovenschen, Die imaginierte Weiblichkeit (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979).

und bestimmte Sektoren – speziell den des Hauses – so strukturieren, daß der Mann zur materiellen und geistigen Produktion freigesetzt ist. (Bovenschen 26)

Bovenschen further explains that, while women were often viewed as a source of inspiration for male artists within the field of artistic production, they were nevertheless also considered unfit for artistic creation themselves. She points to the dual positioning of women: On the one hand, they were elevated to muses while on the other hand, their marginalized daily existence remained strongly engraved into the socio-cultural reality as well (26).⁵³

Bovenschen convincingly demonstrates that such late 18th century reductionist approaches to gender differences formulated by men sought to define men and women by solely employing biological attributes and on that basis assigning them to distinct societal functions. While men were considered to change and grow through socialization and individuation, women were regarded as static beings. Based on these assumptions, women were excluded from economic as well as artistic production, which remained solely reserved for men (27). Bovenschen's broadly recognized interpretation of the late Enlightenment gender theorizing draws on one of Rousseau's statements about the fundamentally distinct theoretical approaches to the social positioning of men and women:

“Der Mann ist nur in gewissen Augenblicken Mann, die Frau ist ihr ganzes Leben lang Frau”, hatte Rousseau behauptet, und in diesem Satz steckt eine

⁵³ While explaining the fundamental differences as to how women's and men's roles in society were defined in the late Enlightenment era, Bovenschen repeatedly refers to Georg Simmel and his early 20th century theoretical considerations about gender issues in his “Zur Philosophie der Geschlechter” (1911) and “Weibliche Kultur” (1911).

geschlechtspolare Zuschreibung, die die Frau als Gattungswesen, den Mann dagegen als das durch Sozialisation und Individuation strukturierte gesellschaftliche Wesen begreift. [...] In der Gegensatzkonstruktion von weiblicher Statik, die in aller Regel naturmetaphorisch ausgedeutet wird, und männlicher Dynamik, die die historischen Momente von Fortschritt und leidvoller Entfremdung in sich birgt, ist die Abwesenheit der Weiblichen in der Geschichte zwar noch angezeigt, aber in ideologisch verklärter Weise. (27)

Despite the prevailing reductionist view of women represented by late Enlightenment thinkers, recent publications by feminist scholars have often concluded that Goethe's portrayal of women stands in opposition to such beliefs. As numerous feminist studies on Goethe's female characters have convincingly demonstrated, many of these women can be characterized as independent thinkers, whose actions show that they are eager to establish their own authority even if the result is only a temporary achievement. On the contrary, late Enlightenment thinkers such as Rousseau, Campe, and others saw women's roles in society rather confined to being a mother, a supportive and obedient spouse, and a committed household manager.

As I noted above, one of the earliest studies that deal with the issue of Goethe's - for his time - unconventional portrayal of feminine identity was Katharina Mommsen's essay "Goethe As a Precursor of Women's Emancipation" (1984). More than ten years later, Lynn Zimmermann also investigates the issues of power and gender in her 1997 publication of "Inferiority, Power, and Female Subjectivity in Goethe's *Faust I*."

In her 1984 essay, Mommsen characterizes the author's attitude towards women as "decidedly sympathetic," and she sees his literary work as a testimony of his exaltation of women (51). It is important to note here that the current developments in feminist scholarship on female characters in Goethe's work have meanwhile moved away considerably from Mommsen's pioneering approach to a feminist reading of Goethe. Yet, Mommsen's article must still be regarded as a significant milestone in feminist scholarship on Goethe. Mommsen was one of the first scholars in the 1980s who pointed out that Goethe, in many of his female characters, offered an 'unconventional' portrayal of femininity. Based on her interpretation of Goethe's untraditional female characters and even on some biographical information from Goethe's life, Mommsen viewed him as an advocate for women. Mommsen highlighted Goethe's extensive contact with educated women in his early years and above all his cherished friendship with Susanne von Klettenberg, and she offered a convincing description of the process that led to the formation of Goethe's unconventional attitude towards women.

Mommsen further interpreted Goethe's depiction of female characters as a reflection of his treatment of women. By doing so, she challenged the 'traditional' portrayal of Goethe as a "typical conservative" and claimed that "he always demonstrated progressive thinking" (52). She also advocated that research both on Goethe's early life and his works in that period needed to focus on the issue of women's emancipation. The need for scholarship on this aspect was especially important to Mommsen because "early Goethe research hardly confronted such a question since it was carried out largely by men who were not interested in [pursuing such issues]" (51). In her view, socio-historical and

feminist endeavors could ideally close a considerable gap within the field of Goethe research.

More than a decade after Mommsen's pioneering interpretation of Goethe's approach to femininity and after significant developments in the area of gender research, Lynn Zimmermann offers a similar yet distinct view of Goethe's depiction of women in her study on "Inferiority, Power, and Female Subjectivity in Goethe's *Faust I*."⁵⁴ In her persuasive analysis of the witch and Gretchen, Zimmermann interprets Goethe's depiction of women as confining and inferior to men. However, she also demonstrates that women's reduced 'power' in society nevertheless can have the potential to pose a threat to male authority within confined domestic spaces: "[T]he characters of the witch and Gretchen in particular demonstrate great power when they move within private and usually domestic interiors; these women take charge of enclosed spaces and the persons (whether male or female, human or supernatural) within those spaces in a profound way which serves to underscore their autonomy and self-control" (Zimmermann 36). Zimmermann concludes that in *Faust*, "the manipulation and negotiation of private space becomes [...] an outlet for feminine power and control." She further argues that "[b]y controlling interiors and the language spoken within those interiors, female characters actively work to subvert male authority" (45).

Both Mommsen's and Zimmermann's analyses of women in a variety of Goethe's works successfully demonstrate that Goethe shaped his female characters in a way that enabled them to stretch and modify their rigidly fixed and marginalized social position. In

⁵⁴ Lynn Zimmermann, "Inferiority, Power, and Female Subjectivity in Goethe's *Faust I*" New German Review: A Journal of Germanic Studies 13 (1997-1998): 36-46.

Mommsen's and Zimmermann's interpretation, Goethe often portrayed his female characters as capable and dynamic figures who are well equipped to partially transgress the strictly guarded gender boundaries of their time at least on a temporary basis.

In the corpus of research on Goethe's approach to femininity since the 1980s, the female characters in his Wahlverwandtschaften have received considerable scholarly attention as well. Such studies focus primarily on Otilie and secondarily on Luciane. Recent analyses of Goethe's representation of femininity in this particular novel have provided compelling arguments about and valuable insights into Goethe's attitude towards the gender discourse of his time. Yet, one cannot provide an exhaustive interpretation of the novel's gender discourse without considering Charlotte as the focal point of various character constellations in this text. Therefore, my overview is also intended to highlight the notable gap in feminist research on Die Wahlverwandtschaften due to the limited attention that has been paid to Charlotte and her domineering and decisive presence in her marriage with Eduard, in her friendship with the Hauptmann, and in her role as the mother figure for Luciane, Otilie, and Otto.

Considering the above, it is apparent that even in most recent feminist scholarship Charlotte's central importance in the narrative remains unnoticed. In her book, The Beginnings of Modern Gendered Discourse in Late Eighteenth-Century Germany (2009), Heather Merle Benbow explores literary, philosophical, and popular depictions of female orality and devotes considerable attention to "images of orality" in Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften as well.⁵⁵ In her analysis of, Benbow focuses on Goethe's

⁵⁵ Heather Merle Benbow, The Beginnings of Modern Gendered Discourse in Late Eighteenth-Century Germany (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2009).

portrayal of Otilie's and Luciane's orality with respect to food consumption, sexuality, and speech. In her view, Otilie and Luciane "represent the two threads of thinking on female orality around 1800: Otilie stands for a natural bourgeois modesty, Luciane for the decadence of aristocratic appetitivity" (Benbow 126). Merle Benbow further claims that Otilie's character represents a femininity "of absence of desire and unobtrusive service, just that which was promoted by popular philosophers, pedagogues, and medical men around 1800" (138). However, she also points to the problematic nature of Otilie's idealized femininity when she says:

Yet, Otilie's conformity to a feminine ideal of oral modesty is hardly compatible with the easy sociability of the bourgeois housewife. Observing oral taboos to an extraordinary degree, Otilie becomes sexually unavailable, barren, and withdrawn, and is ultimately destroyed by her oral abstinence. (138)

Benbow offers new and valuable insights into Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften as a pedagogical discourse through her portrayal of opposing approaches of Luciane and Otilie to orality. However, not only Goethe's complex depiction of Luciane and Otilie but also of Charlotte's character as the 'epicenter' of multiple character constellations needs to be considered in order to offer an exhaustive and comprehensive analysis of Goethe's representation of femininity.

In "Otilie's Kopf-weh, Goethes Wahl-verwandtschaften" (1999), Gabriele Brandstädter offers a chronological analysis of the seemingly mirrored headaches of

Otilie and Eduard from a poststructuralist and feminist perspective.⁵⁶ Brandstädter seeks to show the dividing and separating aspects of the pain(s) Otilie and Eduard suffer instead of echoing a unifying and merging quality as has been done extensively in earlier Wahlverwandtschaften scholarship. By devoting close attention to linguistic signs in the context of “Kopfwegh,” Brandstädter’s semiotic analysis demonstrates that Otilie’s headache carries primary significance in comparison to Eduard’s. She also claims that Otilie, as a result of her and Eduard’s headaches, does not simply function as Eduard’s mirror image, but that she acquires an active and signifying role by means of her statements about the pain. As a result, the headaches’ seemingly symmetric and mirroring quality cannot serve exclusively as a representation of complementary and compensatory gender roles. Brandstädter’s interpretation of Otilie’s “Kopfwegh” implies that Otilie occupies a superior position when compared to Eduard and that Otilie’s identity in Die Wahlverwandtschaften is not only complementary to but also independent of Eduard’s subjectivity (56).

Elizabeth Boa’s essay on gender discourse around 1800 investigates Goethe’s depiction of female figures in the context of social changes that took place in the late 18th century.⁵⁷ Boa opens her discussion with a brief analysis of Kant’s concept of emancipation and emphasizes that Goethe’s novel was written during a time of significant social change that also affected pre-defined gender roles: the moderate

⁵⁶ Gabriele Brandstädter, “Otilies Kopf-wegh, Goethes Wahl-verwandtschaften. Zur Auftrennung der sprachlichen Zeichen,” Margarete, Otilie, Mignon, ed. Heike Brandstädter and Katharina Jeorgakopulos, (Hamburg: Argument Verlag, 1999) 48-76.

⁵⁷ Elizabeth Boa, “Die Geschichte der O oder die (Ohn-)Macht der Frauen: ‘Die Wahlverwandtschaften’ im Kontext des Geschlechterdiskurses um 1800,” Goethe-Jahrbuch 118 (Weimar: Verlag Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 2001) 217-233.

emancipatory tendencies that provided women with a certain degree of intellectual freedom in the early Enlightenment were threatened in the second half of the 18th century by the redefinition of “Geschlechtscharaktere.”⁵⁸ Boa’s essay, which discusses the socio-historical landscape of the outgoing 18th century with special attention to the existing gender hierarchy, evokes the terminology Karin Hausen uses in her momentous essay “Die Polarisierung der Geschlechtscharaktere” (1978). In so doing, Boa points out that the universal polarization of women’s and men’s ‘naturally’ conditioned characteristics in the second half of the 18th century was accompanied by a similarly rigid distinction between men’s and women’s gender roles and by the strict definition of social spaces associated with those roles. In the 18th century, the term emancipation was used in a much wider context than only in relation to women’s rights. Among others, the term emancipation was often used to refer to the social emancipation of Jews and/or the political emancipation of the bourgeois social class. However, in her discussion of emancipation, Boa focuses only on the shift in women’s social positioning that resulted in their more rigid confinement to domestic and maternal duties in the late Enlightenment as opposed to the moderate emancipatory tendencies of the early Enlightenment. In this context, Boa explores the representation of marriage in 18th century literature, including Goethe’s Wahlverwandtschaften.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Boa summarizes Kant’s definition as follows: “Emanzipation ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner von anderen auferlegten und verinnerlichten, also auch selbstverschuldeten Unmündigkeit. Unmündigkeit ist [...] die Unfähigkeit zum Objekt der Lust einer anderen reduzierten Person, als begehrendes Subjekt zu agieren” (219).

⁵⁹ Boa points out that in spite of the existing ideal of enlightened partnership in marriage, at the end of the 18th century financial motivation was still the foundation of marriages of convenience: “Eine glückliche Übereinstimmung von vernünftiger Partnerschaft und leidenschaftlicher Liebe schien ein seltener Zufall zu sein” (219).

Boa's analysis of the gender discourse around 1800 emphasizes that the late 18th and early 19th century was an era of turbulent social changes that are also illustrated by the emancipatory writings of Jean Antoine de Condorcet, Theodor Gottfried von Hippel, and Mary Wollstonecraft. Such writings confronted the late Enlightenment concepts of women's physical, emotional, and intellectual limitations and sought to promote the view that both men and women were capable of rational thinking based on reason. Boa provides a lucid description of these dialectic tendencies in the gender discourse around 1800 when she writes:

Auch im Geschlechterdiskurs können diese Jahre [um 1800, Z.R.] als eine Zeit des Umbruchs gelten: zwischen der Ständegesellschaft, die Frauen aus den höheren Schichten gewisse Freiheiten einräumte, und der Klassengesellschaft, die die Frau im bürgerlichen Haushalt einsperrte; zwischen einem dualistischen Menschenbild, das der Frau Anteil an der Vernunft einräumte, damit sie fast wie ein Mann ihre allzu weiblichen Gefühle zügeln könnte, und der neuen Anthropologie des ganzen Menschen, die aber eine scharfe Trennung zwischen männlichen und weiblichen Geschlechtscharakteren setzte. Diese Übergangszeit des Paradigmawechsels brachte kontrastierende Emanzipationsansätze von aufklärerischer und romantischer Prägung, die einen wichtigen Kontext zu Goethes Roman bildeten. (Boa 222)

Boa's main objective is to explore whether Goethe, in the context of his Wahlverwandtschaften, can be viewed as an advocate for women's emancipation, and her insightful discussion of gender relations in Die Wahlverwandtschaften reveals Goethe's

ambiguous treatment of this issue: By paying close attention to Otilie's actions – verbal utterances and interactions with other characters – Boa concludes that women's power in the gender hierarchy does not reach beyond the erotic attraction that they arouse in their male counterparts. She further claims that this seemingly powerful 'property' nevertheless leaves women without actual power when she concludes: "[I]n *den Wahlverwandtschaften* bleibt die Macht der Frauen in ihrer erotisch anziehenden, inspirierenden Lust und Schuld erweckenden Ohnmacht verankert" (233). In summary, Boa interprets *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* as the portrayal of a social order that is based on the belief that there is a clear difference between the characteristics of each gender. She also concludes that *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* can hardly be considered as an emancipatory novel because Goethe, in her view, does not challenge the existing order.

Another aspect in Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften* that received much attention in connection with the representation of women is the *tableaux vivants*. In the general overview of *Wahlverwandtschaften* scholarship, I already discussed some aspects that Goethe scholars have considered significant with regard to the *tableaux vivants*, such as Lennartz' study on the connection between the medium of painting and literary expression or Breithaupt's investigation of Otilie's and Luciane's relationship to appearance ("Schein"). Since the *tableaux vivants* have also inspired scholarship that focuses on gender issues, I have decided to include Norbert Puszkar's essay on the *tableaux vivants*, "Frauen und Bilder: Luciane und Otilie" (1989), in this review of feminist studies for the following reason:⁶⁰ Puszkar explores to what extent the *tableaux*

⁶⁰ Norbert Puszkar, "Frauen und Bilder: Luciane und Otilie," *Neophilologus* 73 (1989): 397-410.

vivants and the muteness associated with them can reveal insights into Goethe's representation of women's social and gender identity.

The tableaux vivants are especially interesting for Puszkas because of what they reveal about Ottilie's and Luciane's relationship with one another and their connection to language. In this context, Puszkas further explores the symbolism associated with the tableaux vivants with reference to Silvia Bovenschen's "Ergänzungstheorie," a theoretical framework that she describes in her book, Die imaginierte Weiblichkeit (1979):⁶¹ He devotes special attention to Bovenschen's analysis of women's muteness as an important component of idealized feminine identity in the late Enlightenment (Puszkas 406):

Silvia Bovenschen hat in ihrem Buch *Die imaginierte Weiblichkeit* darauf hingewiesen, daß das Schweigen der Frauen in der Ideologie der Spätaufklärung ihren Bildcharakter unterstreicht: "Der Reichtum der imaginierten Bilder kompensiert scheinbar die Stummheit der Frauen" [...] Die Frau, genauer gesagt das Bild der Frau, wie es besonders von Kant und Schiller definiert wurde, repräsentierte mittels ihrer physischen, bzw. naturhaften Schönheit eine "unbewußte Harmonie", ein "Bild einer verlorenen, unzerstörten Ganzheit", die die Dichotomie von Natur und Vernunft ästhetisch und vorrational versöhnte. (406)

Puszkas tries to establish a correlation between the aesthetic education of women as depicted in the tableaux vivants and Bovenschen's discussion of women's traditionally

⁶¹ See detailed summary of Bovenschen's notion of "Die Ergänzungstheorie" on pages 45-47 above.

defined identity as idealized passive harmony (Bovenschen 33).⁶² Through attributes such as completeness (“Ganzheitlichkeit”) and unity (“Geschlossenheit”), women were primarily identified with nature as a metaphysical principle (Bovenschen 27-31).

Although Puszkar falls short on placing the concepts he borrows from Bovenschen into their broader context, I find it relevant to point out that Bovenschen’s convincing analysis of early 20th century gender theories emphasizes that women’s restricted participation in spheres of society other than reproduction and the domestic household was the result of a traditionally dual characterization of femininity: In this traditional ontology, women on the one hand were regarded as the embodiment of nature, i.e., an idealized harmony and a closed and unified entity, while on the other hand they were also characterized as inferior beings to men (Bovenschen 32).⁶³

Through his analysis of Luciane’s transformation into the still and voiceless performer of the three paintings, Puszkar interprets her transformation as a sign of Luciane’s internalization of the idealized gender role precisely because of her refusal of both language use and body movement:

Goethe postuliert hier sozusagen, daß Schönheit, die weiblich ist, und Sprache selten kompatibel sind. [...] Indem Luciane in den ‘tableaux vivants’ auftritt, wird sie – auch beim Erzähler – unumstrittenen Mittelpunkt der Gesellschaft. Sie

⁶² Puszkar does not explicitly cite Bovenschen’s Ergänzungstheorie. It is my conclusion based on his references to and direct quotes from Bovenschen’s book.

⁶³ In Bovenschen words: “[Die Frau erscheint, Z.R.] als das Undifferenzierte, Molluskenhafte, Vorindividuelle, durch Natur- und Gattungsgesetze Bestimmte, mit Maßstäben des bürgerlichen Alltagslebens gar nicht zu Erfassende. [...] So wird die Frau mit dem metaphysisch verkärten Prinzip Natur in eins gesetzt; sie wird zugleich erhoben und erniedrigt, und zwar so hoch und so tief, daß sie in den gesellschaftlichen Lebenszusammenhängen keinen Platz mehr findet. [...] Die weibliche ‘Natur’ wird so einerseits zur Trägerin der ideellen männlichen Harmonie- und Einheitssehnsüchte stilisiert, andererseits schließt ihre Definition das Gebot der Unterwerfung und des Stillhaltens ein“ (Bovenschen 31-32).

[Luciane, Z.R.] [...] gibt Beweglichkeit und Sprache auf, um “in ihrem höchsten Glanze zu erscheinen.” (405-406)

In Puszkar's view, the tableaux vivants, just like the painting of the chapel and Otilie's presentation of the Virgin Mary, reveal an idealization of women. He further claims that they also represent an educational tool for both Luciane and Otilie: “Die ‘tableaux vivants,’ wie die Ausmalung der Kapelle und das Präsepe, stellen eine Ästhetisierung und eine Idealisierung dar, die Luciane und Otilie im von Männern bestimmten Frauencharakter schulen sollen” (407).⁶⁴ Puszkar maintains that on the one hand, Luciane becomes the instigator of the ‘aesthetic lesson,’ and that on the other hand she refuses to follow the rules imposed on her by the patriarchal society. Therefore, Puszkar's analysis – just like Boa's interpretation discussed earlier – also observes traits of Otilie's and Luciane's actions and their denunciation of language that foster the formation of their submissive and passive identities.

Feminist theory has undergone a tremendous evolution and growth and that the facets of femininity that feminist research has considered have also expanded substantially. While Puszkar's study represents a rather traditional view of Goethe's depiction of feminine identity, and while Mommsen's reasoning is not based on in-depth analyses of individual female characters, these earlier studies that focused on Goethe's approach to the idealized feminine identity of his era were significant milestones that inspired the development of new directions in feminist research. Consequently,

⁶⁴ Puszkar cites the following from Bovenschen in order to illustrate the aesthetic lesson implied: “Die Frau muß also ins Bild des Weiblichen durch Reflexion transformiert werden. Andernfalls gleicht ihre Darstellung dem leeren Spiegel – leer deswegen, weil der Mann darin nicht sein Bild des Weiblichen erkennt” (Bovenschen 256).

scholarship in the 1980s that explored Goethe's portrayal of femininity built the foundation for today's extensive body of feminist studies on Goethe's complex and enigmatic depiction of his female characters both in Die Wahlverwandtschaften and in his other works.

In order to illustrate the chronological evolution in the field of feminist research and to shed light on some of the concepts investigated in the context of gender studies in more recent Goethe and Wahlverwandtschaften research, I will include a few of the latest publications by feminist scholars such as Heather Merle Benbow and Gail Hart.

In her article entitled Goethe's "*Die Wahlverwandtschaften* and the Problem of Feminine Orality" (2003), Benbow also focuses on contemporary gender discourse, and by looking at Otilie, she problematizes issues like feminine orality, gendered values, and taboos manifested in speech, food consumption, and sexuality.⁶⁵ She contextualizes her discussion by referring to Immanuel Kant's unfavorable description of the learned woman in his Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen: "The figure of the "Pedantin oder Amazone" [...] haunts much of the Enlightenment writing on feminine virtue; the education of feminine modesty implies the presence of an inherent appetitive excess and this is conflated with anxieties aroused by the emancipatory tendencies of the early Enlightenment" (Benbow 316). In her analysis of Otilie – an "unmouthed" female subject – from a gastronomic, sexual and intellectual/

⁶⁵ Heather Merle Benbow, "Goethe's *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* and the Problem of Feminine Orality," Body Dialectics in the Age of Goethe, ed. Marianne Henn and Holger A. Pausch (New York: Editions Rodopi B.V., 2003) 315-332.

I would like to point out here that in her recently published book, The Beginnings of Modern Gendered Discourse in Late Eighteenth-Century Germany (2009), Benbow expands his discussion laid out in the above article and offers a more extensive and wide-ranging analysis of the portrayal of feminine orality in late 18th century philosophical, pedagogical, and literary discourses. For a brief reference to Benbow's book, see pages 50-51 above.

metaphorical perspective, Merle Benbow argues that “the Enlightenment gender hegemony dictates a femininity which is impoverished with respect to oral functions” (315). According to Benbow, orality was perceived as a threat that could possibly subvert feminine modesty.

Benbow perceives Goethe’s Wahlverwandtschaften as a display of a conflict between emancipatory tendencies of the early Enlightenment that, among many other things, seem to have endorsed female orality and the restrictive messages in the writings of Kant, Rousseau, Campe, and others, who define modesty as one of the central feminine virtues. Benbow points out that in the late Enlightenment patriarchal social context, one of the most important expectations toward women was modesty in outward appearance, demeanor, and appetite. She correlates this contemporary view of women with similar characteristic traits she sees depicted in Otilie and claims that “Otilie’s idealization as a ‘mother’ in the novel and her death caused by self-denial reveal the paradox inherent in pedagogical and biomedical femininities” (316). For Benbow, Otilie’s voluntary self-starvation and death create a critical angle in the narrative that questions the legitimacy of those very traits of Otilie idealized as feminine virtues in the late Enlightenment social context. In Benbow’s view, by both portraying Otilie as an ideal of femininity and by juxtaposing this idealization to her self-destructive death, Goethe problematizes the Enlightenment ideal of feminine modesty.

The significance and considerable volume of feminist research on Goethe and his portrayal of women are highlighted in Gail K. Hart’s article “Goethe, *Faust*, and the Feminist Reader” (2005). In her review of feminist criticism of Goethe’s literary works,

Hart seeks to create an overview of feminist scholarship on Goethe. Hart points out that “[...] given the massive proportions of Goethe criticism, the segment that explicitly represents or advances a feminist social or political agenda is rather small” (Hart 10-11).⁶⁶ She differentiates between descriptive and analytical feminist research, whereas she also points out that these approaches can be and often are intertwined within one single study. According to Hart, “descriptive feminist writing on Goethe tends to review a text or texts from a feminist perspective, casting themes, events, and figures in another light and pointing out what are, from this perspective, skewed images of women’s roles in social relations [...]” (11).⁶⁷ Hart contrasts this approach to analytical feminist criticism in Goethe research that “concentrates on the possible motives behind or reasons for the qualities of the text in question, patterns of thought that underlie various aspects of the text, or the text’s relatedness to theoretical or historical models” (11).⁶⁸

In addition to differentiating between the descriptive and analytical methods, Hart identifies the following three thematic areas of interest within feminist scholarship focusing on Goethe:

⁶⁶ Gail K. Hart, “Goethe, *Faust* and the Feminist Reader,” From Goethe to Gide. Feminism, Aesthetics and the French and German Literary Canon 1770-1936, ed. Mary Orr and Leslie Sharpe (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2005) 7-21. Hart does not provide explicit examples of the above mentioned restricted body of feminist Goethe criticism, however she mentions several of these studies later in her article when laying out her categorization of such scholarship.

⁶⁷ Hart mentions “Katharina Mommsen’s portrayal of Goethe as an ‘advocate for women’” as an example of what she considers descriptive feminist writing (Hart 11). She quotes from Katharina Mommsen, “Goethe As a Precursor of Women’s Emancipation,” *Goethe Proceedings; Essays Commemorating Goethe Sesquicentennial at the University of California, Davis* (Columbia, S.C.: Camden House, 1984) 51-65.

⁶⁸ Hart makes reference to, among others, Barbara Becker-Cantarino’s following essay as an illustration of the analytical treatment: “The Discourse of Patriarchy in Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister*,” *Neohelicon* 20 (1993): 137-153.

- The large number of remarkable and inspiring female characters both in his dramatic and narrative works such as Iphigenie, Adelheid, and “die schöne Seele,”
- The presence of male narcissism in his female characters, and
- The examination of various atypical patterns in forms of reproduction in Goethe’s texts.⁶⁹

While Hart does not explain her first thematic category in detail, she explains with regard to the presence of male narcissism in Goethe’s female characters that early feminist scholarship on Goethe often promoted the idea that he showed women in their domestic passivity, intellectual inferiority and public “Unmündigkeit” (political immaturity) in the patriarchal social order. Hart cites Barbara Becker-Cantarino as an example for this type of scholarship. In Hart’s view, Becker-Cantarino claims that “all of Goethe’s fictional heroines derived and defined their existence within the context of bondage and service to a male who himself was an independent and active individual” (12).⁷⁰ Hart suggests that Becker-Cantarino sees Goethe’s women figures as inferior to and dependent on the authority of their male counterparts. She further claims that Becker-Cantarino makes a strong and inclusive claim that “poses a challenge to readers and critics either to resist its sweeping universalism or to accept it and probe the context for the astounding

⁶⁹ “[T]he two parent-and-child/ren family is a relative rarity in [Goethe’s] work” (13).

⁷⁰ Quoted from Becker-Cantarino’s essay by Hart: “Goethe as a Critic of Literary Women,” Goethe as a Critic of Literature, ed. Karl Fink (New York: University Press of America, 1984) 177. Although Hart’s study does not include any reference of this kind, I believe that it is important to take note of the exceptional contributions Barbara Becker-Cantarino has made to the development and formation of recent feminist scholarship both on Goethe and in general. Although her interpretation of Goethe’s portrayal of women might not coincide with the latest scholarly views, Becker-Cantarino’s groundbreaking work as a feminist scholar was and has been both the inspiration and the foundation of newer directions and tendencies that have been explored within this field of the discipline.

consistency that Becker-Cantarino asserts” (12-13). However, Hart also concludes that the previously mentioned unusual and impressive female characters in Goethe’s works “are indeed bound to or in thrall to independent – if not always active – male figures” (13).

With regard to “Goethe’s unusual representations of reproduction” (13), the third thematic category of feminist Goethe research identified by Hart, she insightfully points out that in Goethe’s literary world children may be born of an intellectual union (Faust), they may be made of clay (Prometheus) or created in a laboratory (Faust). Even the occasional human children like Otto in Die Wahlverwandtschaften or Mignon in Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre are not born into the traditional family model and cannot survive. Hart concludes that “the avoidance of the standard methods of procreation [...] has obvious applications for a theory of male poetic creativity that competes with and effaces women’s reproductive role” (14).

Hart exemplifies her interpretation of Goethe’s depiction of feminine identity by a compelling analysis of Margarete in Goethe’s “Gretchen Tragödie.” She describes Margarete as a female character whose limitless affection for Faust positions her as a passive and emotional woman in her inferiority to Faust’s intellectuality and rationality. On the other hand, Hart views Gretchen also as a female figure who does not conform to the idealized patriarchal concept of women.⁷¹ In Hart’s interpretation of Margarete’s

⁷¹ In Hart’s words, “In *Faust I* (fatherless) Gretchen is the focus of the seduction tragedy and she matters in a way that few female figures before or since her have. That she gains such stature by playing her gender role well and loving the protagonist does not necessarily relegate her to the uniformity of tradition. This is neither emancipatory nor oppressive writing and Goethe did not, in any case, work along these particular axes. [...] Gretchen is the subject of strong physical desire. She desires Faust, making this explicit in many of her solitary speeches, and accosts him physically when he tries to liberate her from her cell. This well-developed ardour on Gretchen’s part certainly flatters the protagonist [...], but it represents a new and

gender identity in Faust I, viewing Gretchen as a victim of seduction and a sacrificial virgin can represent only one possible critical perspective. I find that Hart's discussion makes a valuable and revealing contribution to the immeasurable corpus of Faust research in that she sees Margarete not only as an object of Faust's desire, but also as a female subject who expresses her desire for Faust as well. Thus, according to Hart, Margarete, who repeatedly transgresses stereotypically constructed gender categories such as 'male activity' versus 'female passivity,' is a more complex character than many traditional interpretations suggest. According to her, Margarete does not remain a static and "stationary object of abandonment juxtaposed to the moving, striving male subject," (20), but she is also portrayed in a leading function that shows Faust his way to salvation. Therefore, Hart offers an enlightening and thus noteworthy approach to Gretchen's identity in that she emphasizes her power over her own fate and highlights her agency that affects both Faust's and her own future.⁷²

Overall, Hart's study puts special emphasis on the importance of feminist scholarship that has focused on narrative details in Goethe's works that allow us to discover traits of independence, autonomy, and power in many of Goethe's female

unique subject position for such a figure – the female or feminine 'I' that expresses desire for pleasure and satisfaction" (19).

⁷² Although Hart does not discuss specific studies viewing Gretchen as the ultimate victim of Faust's supremacy, she does provide a detailed depiction of this view while creating the premise for her own argumentation. In so doing, she connects Gretchen's tragedy to Faust II and displays the similarities between Faust's love for Gretchen and his infatuation with an image of Helen of Troy. In this context, Hart refers to Charles Grair's article entitled "Seducing Helena: The Court Fantasy of Faust II, Act III". According to her, Grair "complains that any subject-hood she [Helena, Z.R.] may have had is lost or subordinated to her status as evidence and guarantee of Faust's power, as 'visual confirmation of his authority.' Grair notes that '[f]or the patriarchal imagination, she represents a very desirable prize: a willing prisoner waiting to be seized, controlled, and assimilated.'" In contrast to Grair, Hart concludes that "the flatness or bloodlessness of the portrayal ought to discourage rather than inspire advocacy" (15). Therefore, for Hart it is the way Goethe portrays Faust's appropriation of Helen and his exploitation of Gretchen that should evoke critical thinking and unfavorable interpretation of Faust and his demonstration of male supremacy.

characters.⁷³ Hart's and other feminist scholars' growing emphasis on the investigation of unusual traits in Goethe's female characters, such as independence and some form and degree of autonomy and power are very significant considerations in the context of this study. Recent scholarship has asked what Goethe's depiction of his female figures as, in part, unconventional women may imply about his approach to late Enlightenment idealized femininity because in his Wahlverwandtschaften, Goethe portrays women who possess traits that, from time to time, deviate from idealized feminine attributes such as weakness, powerlessness, modesty, and passivity.

Based on the above, recent feminist scholarship on Goethe's depiction of women and on the gender discourse in Die Wahlverwandtschaften in particular serves as a significant theoretical foundation for this dissertation. I also believe that Hart's favorable reading of Goethe's representation of "leading" and non-static female figures and her suggestion that many of them can be seen as inspiring, strong, and independent creates room for a new and innovative analysis of Goethe's characterization of the changing relationship dynamics in a number of character constellations all of which are shown to be centered around and dominated by Charlotte.

Summary of Recent Approaches to Goethe's Depiction of Femininity

The above survey of recent feminist scholarship on Goethe's works and more specifically on Die Wahlverwandtschaften demonstrates that there has been a shift from descriptive approaches to Goethe's portrayal of the female characters in a variety of his

⁷³ Although Hart fails to do so in her article, it is essential to stress that this new direction of feminist scholarship would be impossible without the groundbreaking contributions of scholars such as Katharina Mommsen and Barbara Becker-Cantarino in the 1980s and early 1990s.

works toward more analytical studies on his representation of feminine identity within the social context of his time. This overview of studies since the 1980s that devote attention to female figures in Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften has also demonstrated that the majority of scholars have investigated Goethe's depiction of individual characters such as Otilie (see Benbow or Boa), or the connection and/or conflicts between two female figures such as Otilie and Luciane (see Puszkar). At the same time, it can also be concluded that further significant aspects of Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften, such as Charlotte's character, her feminine identity, and dominant presence in multiple character groupings have been largely overlooked in the corpus of feminist and psychoanalytic research on this Goethe text. I consider this lack of scholarly attention to Charlotte's portrayal a significant void in the corpus of Goethe research because she is positioned as a similarly important female figure to Luciane and Otilie. I also argue that while Charlotte is of central importance, all three female characters play a significant role in Goethe's representation of femininity in this novel. Therefore, in the following I devote considerable attention to Goethe's characterization of Charlotte, Luciane, and Otilie collectively in order to provide an exhaustive analysis that offers new insights into Goethe's attitude towards the late Enlightenment gender discourse.

III. Charlotte at the Center of Multiple Character Constellations

Section A: Charlotte in Partnership with Eduard and the Hauptmann

1. Charlotte and the Late 18th Century Gender Paradigm

In this dissertation, my main objective is to trace parallels and disparities between the ideals of femininity that were broadly accepted in Germany and Western Europe in the outgoing 18th century and the roles that the female characters are shown to assume in various character constellations in Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften. By using Kristeva's psychoanalytic framework as an analytical tool to my investigation, I seek to position Goethe's approach to femininity and issues of gender within the social context of the late Enlightenment in Western Europe. I further argue that Charlotte needs to be a focal figure of this investigation because all character groupings in the narrative center around her. As a result of her reflective ability and dominant verbal presence throughout the narrative, she is shown to act as the catalyst of changes both in individual characters and in the dynamics of existing relationships within specific character groupings. As a result, her dynamic presence in the novel grants her a pivotal role in the progression of the entire narrative.

In order to 'set the stage' for my analysis, I now focus on the theoretical debate of the late 1700s in Germany that was stimulated by Jean Jacques Rousseau's concepts of a

rigid division of roles between men and women. This lively debate mobilized a large number of mostly, but not exclusively, male philosophers, authors, and other intellectuals like Joachim Heinrich Campe, Ernst Brandes, Friedrich Schiller, Friedrich Schlegel, and others, who sought to express their theoretical and/or pedagogical considerations about the anatomical and biological origins of – as they saw it – complementary gender characteristics of men and women.

The overall social changes in the last three decades of the 18th century brought along a new interpretation of gender roles and more specifically of the fundamental characteristics associated with men and women. The contrast in comparison with the first part of the century manifested itself in the ways gender characteristics (“Geschlechtscharaktere”) were formulated.

In her groundbreaking study “Die Polarisierung der ‘Geschlechtscharaktere’” (1978), Karin Hausen analyzes the underlying social, philosophical, anthropological, and psychological currents that increasingly limited women to the domestic and familial spheres in the second half of the 18th century.⁷⁴ In this context, it is important to keep in mind that the early Enlightenment phenomenon of promoting women’s “Gelehrsamkeit” (erudition) and the praising their intellectual and creative abilities was only a utopian ideal that collided with the day-to-day reality of women’s actual duties, which mostly entailed serving their husbands’ needs, mothering their children, and managing the household.

⁷⁴ Karin Hausen, “Die Polarisierung der ‘Geschlechtscharaktere’ – Eine Spiegelung der Dissoziation von Erwerbs- und Familienleben,” Seminar. Familie und Gesellschaftsstruktur, ed. Heidi Rosenbaum (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978) 161-191.

Hausen points out very convincingly that women had been defined as the ‘other’ in patriarchal social systems well before the late 1700s. Hausen, however, explains that in the second half of 18th century the way women were viewed and characterized underwent a major shift because of the redefinition of the gender characteristics (“Geschlechtscharaktere”). These gender attributes were based on the biological and anatomical structure of women’s and men’s bodies, and this ‘natural’ biology of the sexes was combined with the idea of their ‘natural’ determination (“Bestimmung”):

Die bloße Tatsache der Kontrastierung von Mann und Frau ist historisch zunächst wenig aufschlußreich, waren doch in patriarchalischen Gesellschaften seit eh und je Aussagen über das andere Geschlecht gängige Muster der männlichen Selbstdefinition. Auf eine historisch möglicherweise gewichtige Differenzierung verweist jedoch die Beobachtung, daß mit den “Geschlechtscharakteren” diese Kontrastierung im letzten Drittel des 18. Jahrhunderts eine spezifisch neue Qualität gewinnt. Der Geschlechtscharakter wird als eine Kombination von Biologie und Bestimmung aus der Natur abgeleitet und zugleich als Wesensmerkmal in das Innere der Menschen verlegt. Demgegenüber sind die älteren vor allem in der Hausväterliteratur und den Predigten überlieferten Aussagen über den Mann und die Frau Aussagen über den Stand, also über soziale Positionen und die diesen Positionen entsprechenden Tugenden. (Hausen 162)

Hausen places special emphasis on the fact that gender specific attributes of men and women were perceived as universal truths, which rendered them indisputable and eliminated the possibility of exceptional cases:

Neuartig ist an der Bestimmung der „Geschlechtscharaktere“ also offenbar der Wechsel des für die Aussagen über den Mann und die Frau gewählten Bezugssystems. Seit dem ausgehenden 18. Jahrhundert treten an die Stelle der Standesdefinitionen Charakterdefinitionen. Damit aber wird ein partikulares durch ein universales Zuordnungsprinzip ersetzt: statt des Hausvaters und der Hausmutter wird jetzt das gesamte männliche und weibliche Geschlecht und statt der aus dem Hausstand abgeleiteten Pflichten werden jetzt allgemeine Eigenschaften der Personen angesprochen. (163)

The redefinition of the “Geschlechtscharaktere” during the late 18th century resulted in fixed and rigid descriptions of gender characteristics and consequently of social roles that were portrayed as innate and biologically conditioned by the ‘law of nature.’ Women were described with attributes such as passivity, dependence, weakness, and emotionality, while men were associated with traits such as activity (“Aktivität”) and rationality (“Rationalität”) and were, therefore, positioned above women in the gender hierarchy. Such concepts built the foundation for an understanding of gender roles as strictly hierarchic and complementary. Rousseau and other philosophers referred to the ‘law of nature’ as the absolute origin of their ideology and thus placed it into a ‘scientific’ and – as it seemed – unquestionable framework to justify women’s exclusion from public life and to reduce their societal function to familial and household duties.

Almost thirty years after Bovenschen and Hausen, Inge Stephan's book Inszenierte Weiblichkeit (2004), in which Stephan devotes an entire chapter to the collapse of familial genealogies in Die Wahlverwandtschaften, also focuses on the social, economic, and political currents that contributed to the transformation of the "Frauenbild" (perception of women) during the Enlightenment years. Unlike Hausen, Stephan looks at a variety of 18th century depictions of femininity in texts by Lessing, Schiller, Goethe, Kleist, and others and she then analyzes the implications of such literary representations on society and particularly on the gender discourse of the late 18th and early 19th centuries.⁷⁵

Stephan shares the view of Bovenschen and Hausen that major economic developments in the course of the 18th century were the underlying cause for fundamental social changes, i.e., the phenomenon of the bourgeois and religious emancipation. In this context, Stephan stresses that the bourgeoisie's growing economic strength, and yet its exclusion from political power, played a critical role in women's more pronounced marginalization to the domestic and familial setting by the second half of the 18th century:

“[E]ine Revision des Frauenbildes [war, Z.R.] dringend erforderlich. Das Idealbild der selbständigen, selbstbewußten, dem Mann ebenbürtigen Frau, an dem Gottsched und die Frühaufklärer gearbeitet hatten, war obsolet geworden, es mußte durch ein anderes ersetzt werden. [...] Die Frau wird an den heimischen Herd verwiesen, als Hausfrau und Mutter wird sie auf den engen Raum der

⁷⁵ Inge Stephan, Inszenierte Weiblichkeit. Codierung der Geschlechter in der Literatur des 18. Jahrhunderts (Köln: Böhlau, 2004).

Familie beschränkt, sie wird vollständig der Herrschaft des Mannes unterstellt und allein auf sein Glück und Wohlbefinden hin definiert. (Stephan 21-22)

What makes Stephan's book especially relevant to this dissertation is the emphasis on the wide-ranging interrelation of social and literary discourses. Literary discourses can either serve as a reflection of existing social values and thus as a stabilizing force, or they can provide impulses of criticism and therefore question, challenge, and problematize established social practices.

Unlike Hausen, Bovenschen, or Stephan, in Barbara Becker-Cantarino concentrates her book Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik (2000) on the secularization process in the Enlightenment years and its relation to the 18th century gender discourse.⁷⁶ Becker-Cantarino maintains that this secularization process was followed by a shift from the Christian gender myth of Adam and Eve to a 'scientific' gender concept based on the law of nature. Becker-Cantarino also stresses that despite the pronounced wave of secularization, no changes within the established gender hierarchy could be traced:

[...] der Paradigmenwechsel vom christlichen Geschlechtermythos von Adam und Eva zur naturrechtlichen, 'wissenschaftlichen' Geschlechterkonzeption hat stattgefunden und ist durchaus mit der Säkularisation anderer Bereiche im 18. Jahrhundert vergleichbar – nur hat sich an der Struktur der Geschlechterhierarchie nichts geändert. Diese Säkularisation wirkte nicht emanzipativ für die Frauen, sondern schrieb die althergebrachten Herrschaftsverhältnisse in einem idealistisch verbrämten, folgenreichen Denkspiel neu fest. (51)

⁷⁶ Barbara Becker-Cantarino, Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik. Epoche – Werke – Wirkung (München: C.H.Beck, 2000).

Becker-Cantarino's characterization of the late Enlightenment idealization of femininity incorporates the ideas laid out in Hausen's essay on the polarization of gender characteristics when she writes:

Als Ergebnis kann festgehalten werden, daß eine natürliche und naturgegebene Polarisierung der Geschlechtscharaktere in "männlich" und "weiblich" angenommen wurde, auch wenn einzelne Aspekte der Zuschreibungen nicht immer ganz einheitlich waren; dabei wurde versucht, "Weiblichkeit" und damit auch die Natur und Rolle der Frau systematisch zu definieren, zu beurteilen und die Geschlechterhierarchie wieder zu festigen. (45)

As a result, the redefinition of the "Geschlechtscharacktere" created an idealized image of femininity that restricted women to their family and to the domestic sphere as well as placed them into the bottom layer of a hierarchy between men and women. Jean Jacques Rousseau is one of the most influential instigators of the regressive changes in the Western European gender discourse after the mid-18th century. In *Émile* (1762), Rousseau's characterization of male/female physiology and intellectuality is founded on biological differences that he perceives as originating in the 'law of nature.'⁷⁷ Rousseau further describes how these differences between the sexes manifest themselves in their personal relations and explains that they translate into a clearly hierarchic relationship between men and women, in which men exercise power and supervision over women, who are considered as inferior:

⁷⁷ William Boyd, ed. *The Emile of Jean Jacques Rousseau*, trans. William Boyd (New York: Bureau of Publications Coulmbia University, 1963).

All we know with certainty is that the common features are due to the species and the differences to sex. From this twofold point of view we find so many likenesses and so many contrasts that we cannot but marvel that nature has been able to create two beings so much alike with constitutions so different. [...] The sameness and the difference cannot but have an effect on mentality. [T]he first difference which has to be noted in their personal relations [is that, Z.R.] the part of the one [is, Z.R.] is to be active and strong, and of the other to be passive and weak. (Rousseau 131)

Since Rousseau claims that such manifold distinctions all originate from the ‘law of nature’ that is ‘responsible’ for the distinct anatomical and physical structures of men and women, he presents the hierarchic distinction between them virtually universal and unchangeable. In Émile, Rousseau also argues that the physiological and intellectual differences between men and women necessitate distinct forms and degrees of education, which can ideally prepare women and men for their social roles:

If woman is made to please and to be dominated, she ought to make herself agreeable to man and avoid provocation. Her strength is in her charms and through them she should constrain him to discover his powers and make use of them. [...] Once it has been shown that men and women are essentially different in character and temperament, it follows that they ought to not have the same education. [...] By the very law of nature women are at the mercy of men’s judgments both for themselves and for their children. It is not enough that they should be estimable: they must be esteemed. It is not enough that they should be

beautiful: they must be pleasing. It is not enough that they should be wise: their wisdom must be recognized. Their honor does not rest on their conduct but on their reputation. Hence the kind of education they get should be the very opposite of men's in this respect. (133-135)

Rousseau shapes Émile's bride, Sophie, based on these considerations: He depicts her intellectual abilities as rather limited and shallow, and he therefore places her unmistakably under the intellectual supervision and teaching of her husband. Another important aspect of Sophie's character is that she is young, uneducated, and uncultured, and thus in need of cultural and intellectual training. Hence, Rousseau creates a rather inflexible hierarchy within Sophie's marriage when he determines her role as the disciple in relation to her husband, the teacher:

Sophie's mind is pleasing but not brilliant, solid but not deep. She has always something attractive to say to those who talk with her, but lacks the conversational adornments we associate with cultured women. Her mind has been formed, not only by reading but by conversation with father and mother and by her own reflections on the little bit of the world she has seen. [...] Her education is in no way exceptional. She has taste without study, talents without art, judgment without knowledge. Her mind is still vacant but has been trained to learn. [...] She will be her husband's disciple, not his teacher. (150-153)

Rousseau's description signals that the roles assigned to husband and wife are complementary with no overlap and that they are by no means interchangeable.

One of the central issues in Rousseau's theory about gender relations is that women's education always remains dependent on their husband's degree of education. This dependence of the wife guarantees the husband's unshakeable role as teacher and avoids conflicts of opinions. Rousseau frequently underscores the irreversible nature of this teacher-disciple relationship between Émile and Sophie:

He sings with her: more than that, he teaches her music. She is lively and nimble and is fond of skipping. He dances with her and changes her steps into perfect movements. [...] It is right for a lover to be the master of his mistress. [...] Here then is Emile teaching her philosophy, physics, mathematics, history, everything in fact. She lends herself with pleasure to his zeal, and tries to profit by it. The art of thinking is not alien to women, but they only need a nodding acquaintance with logic and metaphysics. Sophie forms some idea of everything, but most of what she learns is soon forgotten. She makes best progress in matters of conduct and taste. (156-157)

Rousseau depicts Sophie as an eager and interested yet intellectually limited student, who is, however, not suited for and is incapable of processing sophisticated scientific or philosophical knowledge. Rousseau's illustration of Sophie's intellectual limitations leads him to narrow down the curriculum for women to areas related to household, motherhood, and issues about demeanor. Thus, Rousseau's reductionist depiction of Sophie's intellectual abilities – which he legitimizes through his reference on the law of nature and the will of God – not only places her under the authority and supervision of

her husband but also guarantees the long-term survival of a strictly hierarchic model of marriage.

Rousseau's 'scientifically' supported regressive approach to women's social roles and his rigid framework of gender differences had a major impact on the theoretical dialogue among late Enlightenment thinkers in Germany such as Campe, Fichte, Brandes, Pockels, and others. When considering the late Enlightenment intellectual scene, it is important to take note of the relatively small group of women, who, despite barriers imposed on them, expressed their ideas about and reactions to the theoretical foundations of the gender debate both in thought provoking essays and fictional texts.⁷⁸ Although some women did make noteworthy and valuable contributions to this debate, the theoretical discussions were undoubtedly dominated by men. As to the writings of intellectually active women such as Sophie von La Roche, Betty Gleim, Amalia Holst, and others, it is interesting that even these women writers represent relatively restrictive ideas about women's roles in society. Their pedagogical and literary texts also show parallels to one another to a great degree: On the one hand, they are critical of the prevailing social practice and openly advocate the necessity of some degree of education for women. On the other hand, women like La Roche, Gleim, Holst, and others also indicate their acceptance of the social expectations of their gender. Therefore, they also share the broadly accepted view of their time that women were biologically determined by the 'law of nature' to fulfill distinct social and professional roles. Thus, while they placed great emphasis on intellectual education ("Geistesbildung") and frequently

⁷⁸ A few representative figures of late 18th century women of active authorship were Sophie von La Roche, Amalia Holst, Christine Dorothea G rnth, Susanne von Bandemer, and Betty Gleim, all of whom were engaged in the intellectual dialogue about gender issues in the outgoing 18th and beginning 19th centuries.

indicated an intrinsic desire for more freedom of choice with regard to their own educational experience, they also demonstrated their belief in the legitimacy of the social order that minimized those very choices for women.⁷⁹

In order to illustrate some of the central concepts that built the theoretical basis for the gender discourse in Germany in the outgoing 18th century, I will focus my attention primarily on Joachim Heinrich Campe, one of the most prominent and influential figures of the debate, whose pedagogical guide to women's preparation for adult life, Väterlicher Rath für meine Tochter (1789), gained similar significance in Germany to Rousseau's Émile in France and Western Europe. Campe's Väterlicher Rath für meine Tochter (1789) was a very successful publication that enjoyed unmatched popularity among contemporary readers. Based on the book's enormous popularity, Campe had a remarkable impact on the social reality of the late 1700s.⁸⁰

In Väterlicher Rath für meine Tochter (1789), Campe follows Rousseau's reference to the 'law of nature' as the foundation of physiological, intellectual, and

⁷⁹ My conclusions are based on some representative pedagogical and fictional texts such as Sophie von La Roche's epistolary novel Die Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim (1771), Amalia Holst's "Über die Bestimmung des Weibes zur höheren Geistesbildung" (1802), Susanne von Bandemer's "Zufällige Gedanken über die Bestimmung des Weibes und einige Vorschläge dieselbe zu befördern" (1802), Betty Gleim's "Über die Bildung der Frauen und die Behauptung ihrer Würde in den wichtigsten Verhältnissen ihres Lebens" (1814).

⁸⁰ Although Campe's prominence in the gender debate cannot be disputed, it is important at this point to mention a few other significant philosophers, thinkers, and authors, who also substantially contributed to the formation of a redefined universal feminine identity that imposed countless professional, legal, intellectual, and educational limitations on late Enlightenment women and had long lasting effects in the 19th and well into the 20th centuries as well. Joachim Gottlieb Fichte, Ernst Brandes, and Carl Friedrich Pockels were only a couple of thinkers who made important contributions to this prevailing gender dialogue. Contemporary authors also participated in the gender debate and, in part, contributed to securing women's subordination to and dependence on men in the gender hierarchy. Goethe, Schiller, and Friedrich Schlegel were only a few authors who explored gender issues in their literary works such as Die Wahlverwandtschaften, Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre, the poems "Die Würde der Frauen" and "Das Lied von der Glocke," and the romantic novel Lucinde respectively. As Becker-Cantarino sums up, such literary texts were affected by the gender debate and they sought to provide philosophical and poetic representation of the core and social stance of the genders (Schriftstellerinnen der Romantik 44).

emotional differences between the sexes. Following Rousseau's reasoning also allows Campe to rationalize women's inferior social standing compared to that of men. He further offers pragmatic advice for young women as to how they can achieve the desirable attributes associated with ideal "Weiblichkeit" (femininity), i.e., characteristics, such as humility, self-denial, and passivity.

Campe defines the characteristics of each gender on the basis of Rousseau's 'scientific' considerations about physiological differences. Like Rousseau, he also emphasizes the biological differences as the basis for designing gender specific curricula and educational goals. His book shaped the late 18th century gender ideology to a great extent and gained popularity as an influential source of reference for young women in the Goethe era. Five editions of his book were published between 1789 and 1796 alone.

In concordance with many of his contemporaries such as Rousseau, Fichte, Brandes, and others, Campe promotes the idea that the physical characteristics of the sexes are determined by the 'law of nature' and 'God's will.' In this process, Campe uses the visible physiological differences between men's and women's bodies to establish correlation between distinct anatomical features and similarly differential psychological, emotional, and mental characteristics. It is important to note that such characteristics were regarded as universal.

According to Campe's reasoning, the anatomical and biological dissimilarities contribute to distinct gender specific psychological and intellectual abilities, and they also trigger discrete and complementary social roles for men and women that result in a gender hierarchy. In order to illustrate this, Campe associates masculine identity with

exclusively positive attributes of inner strength such as steadiness (“Festigkeit”), courage (“Muth”), and reason (“Verstand”) that allow men to rise above and gain authority over women. Femininity, however, is not only perceived as weaker, more sensitive, and fearsome but also as intellectually less capable (“kleingeistig”):

Gott selbst hat gewollt, und die ganze Verfassung der menschlichen Gesellschaften auf Erden, so weit wir sie kennen, ist danach zugeschnitten, daß nicht das Weib, sondern der Mann das Haupt sein sollte. Dazu gab der Schöpfer in der Regel dem Manne die stärkere Muskelkraft, die strafferen Nerven, die unbiegsamen Fasern, das gröbere Knochengebäude; dazu den größeren Muth, den kühnern Unternehmungsgeist, die auszeichnende Festigkeit und Kälte, und – in der Regel meine ich – auch die unverkennbaren Anlagen zu einem größern, weiterblickenden und mehr umfassenden Verstande. Dazu ward bei allen gebildeten Völkerschaften die ganze erziehungs- und Lebensart der beiden Geschlechter dergestalt eingerichtet, daß das Weib schwach, klein, zart, empfindlich, furchtsam, kleingeistig – der Mann hingegen stark, fest, kühn ausdauernd, groß, hehr und kraftvoll an Leib und Seele würde. [...] Es ist also der übereinstimmende Wille der Natur und der menschlichen Gesellschaft, daß der Mann des Weibes Beschützer und Oberhaupt, das Weib hingegen die sich ihm anschmiegende, sich an ihm haltende und stützende treue, dankbare und folgsame Gefährtin und Gehülfin seines Lebens sein sollte [...]. (Campe 22-23)

Thus, Campe encourages women to attain mostly subservient and passive attributes such as humility, patience, self-denial, and gentleness and elevates these

preferred qualities to true feminine virtues. He creates a model of feminine identity that he describes as the absolute precondition for a young woman to reach her natural determination (“natürliche Bestimmung”) in marriage and motherhood (26). Since he also characterizes this goal as the only way for women to reach happiness in life, he identifies happiness with marriage and motherhood and further reduces women’s freedom of choice:

Sei endlich [...] fest überzeugt, daß Geduld, Sanftmuth, Nachgiebigkeit und Selbstverläugnung die allerunentbehrlichsten Tugenden deines Geschlechts sind, ohne welche ein weibliches Geschöpf, das seine natürliche Bestimmung erreichen, d.i. Gattin und Mutter werden will, unmöglich glücklich und zufrieden leben kann. (26)

Campe’s teachings offer a carefully constructed and idealized juxtaposition of men and women: his ‘perfect’ woman consciously submits to male dominance and superiority in social and economic affairs as well as intellectually. A woman with Campe’s idealized feminine attributes willingly accepts the limitations society has imposed on her, such as her restriction to the domains of family and household as well as her dependence on her husband. In return, the merit of her virtuous conduct manifests itself in social recognition and respect:

Tausend Aeufferungen einer freien unabhängigen Selbständigkeit sind dem Manne – so will es die Weltsitte – vergönnt, oder werden ihm nachgesehn: euch nicht! [...] Du fühlst vielleicht Kräfte des Geistes und einen Trieb zu gemeinnützlicher Wirksamkeit in dir, die dich fähig und begierig machen, einen

größeren Wirkungskreis auszufüllen, an den öffentlichen Geschäften des Staats Antheil zu nehmen [...]: aber die bürgerliche Vervassung hat dir jede Gelegenheit dazu abgeschnitten, hat jeden Standort auf dem sich etwas Großes und Rühmliches verrichten läßt, fast ohne Ausnahme mit Männern besetzt, und ein demüthigendes Zurück! Scheucht dich, sobald du dennoch wagen wolltest [...].
(28-29)

I would like to point out an effective rhetorical strategy that Campe uses to “win“ his female readers: While he alludes to the inconveniences and the hardships of the confined, submissive, and passive life he offers for women, he does not fail to point out that within marriage, women can develop their skills to manipulate, i.e., soften and reduce, their legal, financial, and overall dependence on their husbands if they learn to use their resources smartly (26-27). Thus Campe positions women’s subservient role in marriage as most advantageous for their social recognition and describes marriage as a precondition for motherhood, namely the primary natural determination (“natürliche Bestimmung”) of women. In this context, marriage also functions as a protective framework for women’s fundamental duty of raising children:

Wie könnte ich es wagen, den weisen und mütterlichen Absichten der Natur, welche keine Abweisung von ihren Gesetzen ungeahndet läßt, an meinem einzigen Kinde entgegen zu arbeiten? Und was würde es dir auch helfen, der ehelichen Abhängigkeit entfliehen zu wollen, da du eben dadurch der weit größern, härteren und drückenderen Abhängigkeit, theils von anderen Menschen, theils von Vorurtheilen, Sitten und bürgerlichen Verfassungen, nur noch mehr

würdest unterworfen werden? Die Ehe ist ja das einzige, euch noch übrig gelassene Mittel, einen bestimmten Standort, Wirkungskreis, Schutz, Ansehn und einen höhern Grad von Freiheit und Selbständigkeit zu erhalten. – Also wozu jene traurige Schilderung? (32-33)

In his characterization of women's roles as wives, mothers, and household managers, Campe's main rhetorical device is the use of an overly compassionate and sympathetic tone of voice. While he depicts the subservient and dependent existence of women in marriage as a partially grim reality, he also warns against disobeying such expectations because noncompliance might endanger women's social standing. Campe makes his 'teachings' even more credible by addressing the book to his own daughter and by highlighting his personal emotional investment. With his systematic demonstration, Campe seeks to help his daughter and women in general to voluntarily suppress any desire to disobey. He also includes a warning that all the 'wrong' choices can only lead to the destruction of a woman's social acceptance and recognition. Therefore, Campe claims that women risk becoming outcasts if they choose to transgress any of the gender boundaries of their social reality.

Altogether, Campe's book offers a methodical description of the late 18th century gender model and its philosophical/'scientific' foundations. Campe's and other contemporary thinkers' argumentation for women's manifold natural limitations largely contributed to the broad acceptance of restricting women's education to informal teaching and excluding them from public matters as well as from creative artistic work.

In light of the above, I argue that Goethe's portrayal of Charlotte postulates that she cannot represent a 'perfect fit' for the late Enlightenment definition of femininity because her actions and utterances show her, at times, as a transgressive female figure: Charlotte is not only a wife and a mother who fulfills manifold responsibilities traditionally defined for women, but, at times, she is also presented as an independent, self-reliant, and decisive woman with a dominant presence throughout the narrative. Since Charlotte's character shows apparent deviations from the late Enlightenment definition of feminine identity, I now examine her actions and verbal presence in relation to the central male characters, Eduard and the Hauptmann. I am particularly interested in the question how Goethe depicts the dynamics of Charlotte's marriage with Eduard and her friendship with the Hauptmann. I also seek to identify what roles Charlotte is shown to assume in relation to both male characters.

Kristeva's theories of subjectivity formation and motherhood are valuable to this investigation because they provide a systematic analytical tool that allows me to connect Charlotte, Eduard, and the Hauptmann in a character constellation and an unorthodox family unit based on their actions and utterances in relation to one another. Kristeva's approach to motherhood as a 'bridge' between subject and object, culture and nature coupled with her emphasis on the pivotal part of the maternal function in the child's ego formation is essential to my analysis: These central concepts of Kristeva's theory allow for alternate representations of femininity that are based on alterity and yet embedded in culture, i.e., the paternal social order.

2. In Search of a ‘New’ Equilibrium in Marriage

In my above analysis, I sought to outline how the substantial political, economic, and social changes in the course of the Enlightenment years contributed to a redefinition of women’s roles in the second half of the 18th century and how Goethe’s portrayal of Charlotte relates to the late 18th century social/theoretical construct of idealized femininity. In this segment, I am particularly interested in exploring the question how Goethe characterizes Charlotte’s roles in her marriage with Eduard and in her friendship with the Hauptmann. In so doing, I trace parallels and disparities between Goethe’s depiction of Charlotte’s distinctive character traits and the attributes associated with late Enlightenment feminine ideals in order to draw further conclusions about how Goethe’s Wahlverwandtschaften relates to the prevailing gender hierarchy of his time.

I have already noted that surprisingly little attention has been devoted to the analysis of Charlotte and her femininity; those studies that have attributed significance to her have explored her exceptional intellect, unusual character traits, and maternal role in Goethe’s Wahlverwandtschaften. I now provide a summary of the two publications that have highlighted the importance of Charlotte, her unconventional attributes, and her impact on other characters.

In his 1999 article “‘Und doch läßt sich die Gegenwart ihr ungeheures Recht nicht rauben’. Zur Problematik eines zentralen Symbols in Goethes *Wahlverwandtschaften*,” Hermann Beland focuses on various symbols such as the ink stain (“Tintenfleck”), the conception of the child, and his appearance as double mirror image (“doppeltes

Ebenbild”) from a Freudian perspective.⁸¹ Beland evaluates Charlotte’s key utterances in relation to the Hauptmann as a narrative sign of her educated and sophisticated thought processes (Beland 75). Beland further describes her as a female character who shows “psychological maturity.” One scene that – according to Beland – emphasizes such psychological maturity is when Charlotte expresses her apprehensions about hosting the Hauptmann for an extended period of time by saying: “Nichts ist bedeutender in jedem Zustande als die Dazwischenkunft eines Dritten” (Goethe 277). Beland attributes central importance to this utterance because it affects the entire narrative, and he, therefore, views it as the narrator’s attempt to portray Charlotte as a woman of striking intellect: “Es muß viel über Charlotte aussagen, daß der Erzähler ihre Klugheit mit dieser Zentralsatzung betraut und sie dadurch charakterisiert. Sie hat offenbar viel nachgedacht und entdeckt” (Beland 75).

However, Beland also highlights Charlotte’s reason- and convention-driven qualities in order to point to what he perceives as her flaw, namely her indecisive and inconsequent nature: “Sie [Charlotte, Z.R.] lebt zwar gerne, aber sie hat zu große Angst vor jedem Sprung heraus aus dem Schutzraum von Sitte, schonungsvoller Gemeinschaft und finanzieller Sicherheit. [...] Aber sie läßt sich, wie zu ihrer Ehe, von Eduard dazu bereden, ihren Ahnungen nicht zu folgen. In Wahrheit ist sie selber ambivalent gegenüber ihren Ahnungen [...]” (76-77). Beland, for example, interprets the ink spill on the

⁸¹ Hermann Beland, “‘Und doch läßt sich die Gegenwart ihr ungeheures Recht nicht rauben’ Zur Problematik eines zentralen Symbols in Goethes *Wahlverwandtschaften*,” Goethe. Die Wahlverwandtschaften, ed. Gisela Greve (Tübingen: Edition Diskord, 1999) 71-96.

invitation letter addressed to the Hauptmann as Charlotte's unconscious confession of love and her wish for the Hauptmann to become the father of their child.⁸²

Beland provides a compelling interpretation of Charlotte's ambivalent oscillation between her attachment to reason and social conventions on the one hand and her inability to overcome unconscious desires on the other hand. This reasoning is embedded into Beland's main goal, namely to analyze Goethe's novel as a portrayal of fundamental oppositions such as that of narcissism versus social competence and the relationship between reality and psychotic thinking.

In his study "Otilie Hauptmann" (1991), Friedrich Kittler also explores Charlotte's portrayal in Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften, yet he takes a distinctly different approach and re-evaluates the dependency relationships among the four central characters.⁸³ Kittler points out that both Eduard and Charlotte undergo a learning process that was initiated by the arrival of Otilie and the Hauptmann. He moves the novel's often discussed themes such as morality and adultery to the side and claims that it is mainly engaged in a pedagogical endeavor and seeks to "educate" civil servants ("Beamte") and mothers. By doing so, Kittler emphasizes that Goethe's implied distinction between civil

⁸² "Ich nehme an (und fasse alles über die Ahnungen Charlottes Gesagte zusammen), der Tintenfleck schreibt einen unbewußten Liebesbrief Charlottes an den Hauptmann, der unbewußt und ungeduldig herbeigewünscht wird *als Vater eines gemeinsamen Kindes*." (Beland 78). In this context, Beland points out the significance of the detail that at this point in the storyline, Charlotte does not mention the Hauptmann's earlier involvement in a love triangle that is echoed in the story of the neighboring children: "Wir erfahren aus [Charlottes] Reaktion auf die Erzählung über 'Die wunderlichen Nachbarskinder', daß der Hauptmann als eines der beiden Nachbarskinder schon einmal in unwälzender Weise als Dritter aufgetreten ist und den Beweis geliefert hatte, daß er die Liebe der Braut eines anderen erwidern und mit ihr – wenigstens für eine bestimmte Zeit – glücklich sein kann. [...] Das ist der Hintergrund von Charlottes Ahnungen. Aber sie sagt nichts davon. Heimlich wäre sie gerne und unbedingt eine durch Liebe Gerettete" (Beland 76).

⁸³ Friedrich Kittler, "Otilie Hauptmann," Dichter, Mutter, Kind (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1991) 119-148.

servants and mothers also exemplifies the power relations embedded in the late

Enlightenment gender discourse:

Es geht also, im Roman und überhaupt, um eine pädagogische Produktion von Beamten und Müttern. Beamte und Mütter sind aber genau die zwei Berufe, die Deutschland um 1800 zu neuen Kultur- und Staatsträgern ernannte. In ihrem Doppelsinn als Darstellung und Deckbild, als Offenbarung und Geheimnis des Geschlechterunterschieds begründet die Zweiheit von Beamten- und Mutterschaft das Machtsystem der Goethezeit. (Kittler 122)

One of Kittler's main goals is to re-examine the mentor-mentee relationship between Charlotte and Otilie. He attributes central significance to Otilie because of her innate pedagogical talent, and he thus defines her primary role as the embodiment of the "ideal mother" (124). In contrast to Otilie, Kittler characterizes Charlotte as the "empirical mother" when he writes:

Otilie ist die erzogene Erzieherin und, weil alle Erziehung mit der mütterlichen anzuheben hat, die ideale Mutter. [...] Otilie und nicht etwa Charlotte ist es, die den Diskurs der Familienliebe in die kleine Welt des Romans trägt. Charlotte plädiert nur für die Ehe; wie es um ihre Mütterlichkeit steht zeigt die Frucht Luciane. Das pädagogische Naturtalent Otilie dagegen arbeitet mit am Schwenk, der aus der konjugalen Familie die moderne Kernfamilie mit ihrem Doppelzentrum Mutter-Kind gemacht hat. [...] [Z]usammen bilden sie [Charlotte und Otilie, Z.R.] eine kleine Maschine, die der empirischen, allzu empirischen Mutter Charlotte das neue Ideal einbildet. (124-127)

Kittler views Ottilie's inability to pass the public examinations as yet another occurrence that shows her as ideally suited for motherhood, the ultimate goal of young women's education:

In öffentlicher Prüfung [...] kann eine auf Idealmutterschaft programmierte Jungfrau selbstredend nur durchfallen. Wie die Öffentlichkeit den Staatsdienern und die Staatsdienerschaft Männern vorbehalten bleibt, so die Intimität vom Gefühl und Familie in genauer Komplementarität den Müttern. (124)

In Kittler's interpretation, Ottilie is not only a role model of ideal maternity, but she also validates and embodies the feminine ideal of the male dominated public discourse of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In Kittler's reading, Ottilie even takes over the leading position from Charlotte within the discourse of family love, mostly because Charlotte's main concern is the very institution of marriage rather than fulfilling her maternal role.

While Beland in his analysis points at Charlotte's striking intellect, verbal talent, and her internal ambivalence, he does so to exemplify psychological phenomena, such as narcissism or psychotic behavior. I, however, argue that Goethe's emphasis on highlighting Charlotte's intellect as well as her ambivalent nature also plays a central part in his representation of femininity and is a revealing detail with regard to his attitude towards the social discourse of his time. In contrast to Beland, Kittler in his study claims that the roles of mother and daughter are reversed between Charlotte and Ottilie by placing Ottilie in the position of the educator and ideal mother and defining Charlotte as the empirical maternal figure. Although Beland's and Kittler's studies do provide revealing insights into the actions and interactions of the female figures as well as the

gender dynamics in Die Wahlverwandtschaften, they either do so in order to support a psychological hypothesis that Beland perceives as inscribed into the text or – as Kittler attempts in his study – in order to depict contemporary social practices that place women into the intimate family circle and men into the public sphere.

Despite the fact that both studies attribute considerable significance to Charlotte's verbal and maternal presence in Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften, central issues related to her portrayal, such as the depth of her character and how far her actions and utterances affect the identity formation of other male and female figures, remain unexplored. The analysis of these aspects of Charlotte's character and of the roles she is shown to assume in various character configurations constitutes the core endeavor of this dissertation. Therefore, one of my main objectives is to analyze Charlotte's actions, verbal utterances, and the dynamics of her relationships with other central figures of Die Wahlverwandtschaften in multiple character groupings that surround her. In this section, I primarily focus on the character constellation that ties Charlotte to Eduard and the Hauptmann. In Section B, I then analyze various aspects of Goethe's depiction of the mother-daughter bond among Charlotte, Luciane, and Ottilie. In addition, I devote attention to two further character groupings, namely those of 'Charlotte—Ottilie—Eduard' and 'Charlotte—Ottilie—Otto,' both of which are also centered around Charlotte and in both of which motherhood plays a relevant part. Charlotte's significance is underscored by the fact that Goethe characterizes her as the only character in the entire novel who is actively involved in and shapes every personal relationship among the central male and female figures.

The introductory paragraph of the novel places Charlotte into financial and legal dependence on Eduard, and thus her character may first appear as an embodiment of idealized late Enlightenment feminine qualities. The framework of their marriage and Charlotte's physical as well as verbal absence from the very beginning of the novel insinuate a traditional marriage based on the gender definitions that were customary in the late Enlightenment. Thus, the stylized idleness and tranquility of married life on Eduard's estate seems to be embedded in and conforming to the values of the surrounding social reality. Therefore, the narrative presupposes an implied reader who is familiar and can identify with the contemporary social discourse. As a result, the introductory paragraph creates a stylized image of an idealized marriage whose harmony is founded on the conventional division of roles between husband and wife.

What makes the portrayal of Charlotte especially intriguing is that once she appears on the scene, her actions and verbal utterances create a distinct and contradictory image of her because she demonstrates readiness to think and act independently of Eduard. This often highlighted aspect of Charlotte's character contradicts and, in part, even overshadows the initially implied image of her as Eduard's submissive and dependent wife. The shift from Charlotte's portrayal as a dependent and submissive wife to her characterization as a dynamic, independent, and verbally dominant woman is only the first instance in the novel where Goethe suggests both compliance with and signs of deviation from the 'norm.'

With regard to Charlotte's relationships with the other male and female characters of the novel, Goethe's text depicts her identity formation as a cyclical rather than a linear

process of development. This pattern of development is exemplified by the way Goethe depicts the evolution of Charlotte's behavior in relation to the Hauptmann. After her initial adverse attitude towards him, Charlotte is shown to willingly accept and respect the Hauptmann's expertise by temporarily submitting herself to him as the figure of authority. However, this phase of submission in Charlotte's characterization is of temporary nature and results in her renewed depiction with dominant and influential presence.⁸⁴ When Charlotte acts as an independent, dynamic, and decisive woman, her actions place her into a dominant position temporarily. Her control over the progression of the narrative is then followed by a period of submissive withdrawal, and this pattern of cyclical shifts in her depiction weaves through the narrative. Therefore, Goethe provides a remarkably ambiguous portrayal of her character that entails Charlotte's ability to transgress traditional gender boundaries. However, Goethe's portrayal of Charlotte also shows her as a female figure who then returns to her traditionally marginal gender position. The ongoing emphasis on Charlotte's ambivalence accentuates Goethe's experiment with stretching predefined gender boundaries that may have been motivated by his intention to test not only the viability of distinct models of femininity but also the (in)stability of the late Enlightenment gender discourse. This pattern of Charlotte's recurrent shifts between conventional and rather unusual gender positions triggered by the dynamics of her relationships with other male and female figures within multiple character constellations makes an analysis of her subjectivity formation especially interesting in the context of Goethe's portrayal of femininity in his

⁸⁴ See Section A, Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion of Goethe's characterization of these shifts in Charlotte's actions and utterances.

Wahlverwandtschaften and with regard to his attitude towards the gender paradigm that surrounded him. In the following, I seek to explore these core issues through my analysis of Goethe's portrayal of the central characters and the dynamics of their relationships.

At the beginning of Die Wahlverwandtschaften, the reader is exposed to one seemingly unremarkable day in a couple's life:

Eduard – so nennen wir einen reichen Baron im besten Mannesalter – Eduard hatte in seiner Baumschule die schönste Stunde eines Aprilmachmittags zugebracht, um frisch erhaltene Pfropfreiser auf junge Stämme zu bringen. Sein Geschäft war eben vollendet; er legte die Gerätschaften in das Futteral zusammen und betrachtete seine Arbeit mit Vergnügen, als der Gärtner hinzutrat und sich an dem teilnehmenden Fleiße des Herren ergetzte.

Hast du meine Frau gesehen? Fragte Eduard, indem er sich weiter zu gehen anschickte. (Goethe 271)⁸⁵

Husband and wife are first introduced in hierarchic order, the wife after her husband, through their activities on their home estate. The narrator mentions the marital bond between Eduard and Charlotte on the first page, yet only Eduard is named, and it is only he who is physically and verbally present in the opening scene. He is introduced by the narrator in the very first line of the novel and is characterized primarily by his wealth ("ein reicher Baron") and by his advantageous age ("im besten Mannesalter") (Goethe 271).

⁸⁵ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Die Wahlverwandtschaften, ed. Waltraud Wiethölter, vol.8 (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1994) 269-529.

On the very first page of Die Wahlverwandtschaften, Eduard's particularly short reference to Charlotte coupled with her physical and verbal absence/silence shows her as a seemingly "normal" woman and wife who conforms to the social expectations of married women in the Goethe era.⁸⁶ Charlotte is mentioned only briefly in a dialogue between Eduard and the gardener when they refer to her as "meine Frau" and "[d]ie gnädige Frau" respectively (Goethe 271). Thus, her identity is first confined into the single signifier, 'wife,' i.e., a role that was highly controlled and restricted by men in the late Enlightenment context. In contrast, Charlotte is absent from the initial scene. Both her absence and the fact that Eduard possesses powerful financial resources coupled with his advantageous age – after all Goethe labels him as someone "im besten Mannesalter" – suggest a hierarchic positioning between them: in this marriage – at least as it is portrayed at the beginning of the novel – Eduard occupies authority and dominance, while Charlotte has secondary importance. Eduard's dominant position in relation to Charlotte in the marital hierarchy is also implied in the text when he speaks first and mentions Charlotte by asking the gardener about her whereabouts.

The first twelve lines of the novel display a married couple on their estate, whose existence is based on traditional patriarchal values. The narrator's introduction of Eduard as the central character of the fictional world grants him a dominant position on the estate. In addition, Eduard's first reference to Charlotte defines her primarily as his wife and subordinate and suggests implicitly that Charlotte is placed under his dominance and control.

⁸⁶ For more information on women's prescribed roles as part of the late Enlightenment social discourse, see previous chapter of this dissertation.

The gardener's rather detailed response to Eduard's basic question resembles a status report on a project of significance in which he praises a few aspects of the construction of a new hut and compliments Charlotte's talent for this type of work and for her leadership ability: "Die gnädige Frau versteht es; man arbeitet unter ihr mit Vergnügen" (Goethe 271). Despite Charlotte's physical and verbal absence, the gardener's relatively detailed and rather favorable report on the work performed by her presents her as an active, creative, and rather independent woman who has executed and successfully completed a construction project outside of the immediate household. The image of Charlotte generated by the gardener's summary can be viewed as the first indication by Goethe's text that Charlotte's identity might be more complex than that of a 'wife' in the early 19th century, which Eduard's minimalistic and narrow reference to her had previously suggested. Goethe's narrative takes an immediate turn and characterizes Charlotte through a creative act that shows her as a self-reliant and productive figure. Her successful completion of the hut's construction stands in apparent contrast with Eduard's leisurely activity, i.e., grafting new shoots in his nursery.

The fact that Eduard's activity ties him to nature, while Charlotte's project implies her connection to civilization and culture contradicts one of the fundamental philosophical considerations of the late Enlightenment: According to the contemporary beliefs about innate gender differences, men and their actions were associated with reason, culture, and civilization while women were believed to be essentially founded on emotions rather than reason. Furthermore, women were also viewed as closely connected to nature and as the representation of its wholeness and unity. In this context, Karin

Hausen also points out that in the late Enlightenment, the attributes rationality and emotionality were grouped respectively with activity (“Akitivität”) and passivity (“Passivität”) and were exclusively tied to masculine and feminine subjectivity respectively (Hausen 169).⁸⁷ In light of the above, I argue that Charlotte’s successful completion of the moss hut and Eduard’s grafting new shoots can be interpreted as activities that might depict them as unfit for traditional gender roles.

As the storyline unfolds and Eduard shares his idea with Charlotte that he wants to help his friend, the Hauptmann, Charlotte’s guarded reaction to Eduard’s request signals that she does not simply follow Eduard’s way of thinking. Her actions are based on careful considerations instead of outbursts of emotions when she says: “Das ist wohl zu überlegen und von mehr als einer Seite zu betrachten” (Goethe 273).

While Eduard’s main focus is on his friend’s professional difficulties and the use of his expertise on the estate, Charlotte is more concerned with the potentially negative impact that the Hauptmann’s presence would have on their relationship:

Es ist recht schön und liebenswürdig von dir, versetzte Charlotte, daß du des
Freundes Zustand mit so viel Teilnahme bedenkst; allein erlaube mir dich

⁸⁷ Hausen describes the philosophical reasoning behind the gender differences as follows: “Interpretationswürdig ist in dieser Hinsicht vor allem, daß die Hauptkriterien der normativen Positionszuschreibung für die Geschlechter nicht länger die Befähigung zur Herrschaft auf der einen und die zur Unterordnung auf der anderen Seite sind. Vielmehr wird bei häufig ausdrücklicher Zurückweisung der Herrschaftsqualität mit den um die Merkmalsgruppen Aktivität-Rationalität für den Mann und Passivität-Emotionalität für die Frau gruppierten Eigenschaften der Mann eindeutig und explizit für die Welt und die Frau für das häusliche Leben qualifiziert. Damit wiederholt sich in den kontrastierenden ‘Geschlechtscharakteren’ die Polarisierung von ‘Heim’ und ‘Welt.’ [...] Mann und Frau sind nach Natur und Bestimmung auf Ergänzung angelegt und demgemäß ist es einem einzelnen Menschen unmöglich, sich zur harmonischen Persönlichkeit zu entwickeln. Diese in der Literatur der Klassik und Romantik hochstilisierte Idee der Ergänzung verallgemeinert und steigert den in der Sexualität angelegten Gattungszweck zur psychischen Verschmelzung in der Seelengemeinschaft“ (Hausen 169).

aufzufordern, auch deiner, auch unser zu gedenken. [...] Gönn mir noch einige Tage, entscheide nicht! (Goethe 276-277).

Eduard's request for Charlotte's consent, her immediate hesitation and caution in response, as well as her ability to prevent Eduard from further action temporarily show Charlotte as a woman who actively participates in this decision making process and expresses insights into the complexity of the situation.

Charlotte becomes the dominant voice of the conversation in which she also provides a brief summary of the challenges both she and Eduard had had to face before they could finally reunite and live a married life:

Du drangst auf eine Verbindung; ich willigte nicht gleich: denn da wir ohngefähr von denselben Jahren sind, so bin ich als Frau wohl älter geworden, du nicht als Mann. Zuletzt wollte ich dir nicht versagen, was du für dein einziges Glück zu halten schienst. Du wolltest von allen Unruhen, die du bei Hof, im Militär, auf Reisen erlebt hattest, dich an meiner Seite erholen, zur Besinnung kommen, des Lebens genießen; aber auch nur mit mir allein. (Goethe 275)

In this statement, Charlotte indirectly holds Eduard accountable for the commitments he had made to her, namely that one of his preconditions was to live with her alone. Since Charlotte has a biological and an adoptive daughter, Eduard's wish meant at the time of their reunion that she had to make arrangements to live separately from her daughters.

Charlotte's remark shows her yet again as a self-reliant and independent character who expresses her opinion freely when she disagrees with her husband and therefore does not fit the expectations associated with the prevailing social paradigm. Since she acts

eagerly to defend her position, she proves her talent for rational thinking by challenging Eduard's proposal with a series of arguments and by anticipating future consequences.

Charlotte's noticeable intellect is also highlighted in Goethe's narrative when she eventually considers Eduard's request from an emotional angle and tells him that even her intuition advises her against inviting the Hauptmann to the estate:

Ich bin nicht abergläubisch, versetzte Charlotte, und gebe nichts auf diese dunklen Anregungen, insofern sie nur solche wären; aber es sind meistens unbewußte Erinnerungen glücklicher und unglücklicher Folgen, die wir an eigenen oder fremden Handlungen erlebt haben. Nichts ist bedeutender in jedem Zustande, als die Dazwischenkunft eines Dritten. (Goethe 277)

What makes this comment particularly important in this context is that her reaction reflects emotionality, a character trait that was traditionally defined as feminine. And yet, Charlotte's words seem to suggest her detachment from the conventional definition of emotionality because she provides a well-informed psychological clarification by pointing out the significance of unconscious memories that can manifest themselves in such "Ahndungen" (Goethe 277).

With this statement, Charlotte demonstrates, for Goethe's time, an exceptional understanding of the human psyche and thus takes on the role of a wise and cautiously rational 'teacher,' whose arguments show Eduard as a less experienced and less knowledgeable partner. Charlotte's active participation and leading role in the conversation carries special significance in the context of her marriage with Eduard

because through her verbal presence, Goethe's depiction places her into a guiding role that grants her more wisdom and insight than Eduard.

Charlotte's independent construction project in addition to her apparent verbal dominance and distinctive intellect stand in sharp contrast to the image created about her at the very beginning of the novel. Thus, Goethe places a marital relationship into the center of the fictional reality of his Wahlverwandtschaften, in which the distribution of roles between husband and wife is founded on recurring ambiguities rather than on the solid pillars of the hierarchic late Enlightenment gender paradigm.

The cyclical shifts in Charlotte's actions and utterances in relation to Eduard are further accentuated when Goethe lets Charlotte describe the division of operational spaces between Eduard and her and defines the domestic ("das Innere") as the feminine and the public (das Äußere") as the masculine areas of daily operation (Goethe 275). She allocates Eduard's responsibilities outside the estate boundaries entailing everything that "ins Ganze geht" (Goethe 275). In her words, Charlotte limits her own operational space to the domestic sphere and postulates a definite separation of complementary duties: "Ich übernahm das Innere, du das Äußere und was ins Ganze geht" (Goethe 275). This differentiation between spheres of life labeled as strictly masculine and feminine echoes the late Enlightenment distinction of duties and responsibilities that men and women were biologically conditioned for by the law of nature.

In this context, it is also important to note that it is Charlotte after all and not Eduard who points out the spatial division within their marriage. Her verbal dominance, yet again, contradicts the very content of her statement because her signifying power

diminishes the traditional division of spaces that she specifies in the context of her marriage and of the roles associated with those spaces.

Thus, Charlotte is portrayed as a woman and wife whose actions and utterances indicate shifts between being compliant and passive versus dominant and dynamic. While the implications are that she conforms to the roles prescribed to her by her time, her exceptional attributes also ‘equip’ her with the ability to repeatedly transgress these gender boundaries on a temporary basis.

In the following, I further explore how the dynamics of Eduard’s and Charlotte’s relationship continue to evolve. I work with Kristeva’s psychoanalytic theory of subjectivity formation because I consider it to be a suitable tool to interpret the complexities and ambiguities of and to trace the potential reasons for Goethe’s ambivalent portrayal of Charlotte and Eduard. I also seek to investigate how Eduard’s and Charlotte’s disagreement over the Hauptmann is shown to transform the dynamics of their marriage. Having established the psychology of the characters that is shown to define their interactions, I also look at the impact of the Hauptmann’s presence on Eduard’s and Charlotte’s behavior.

3. A Triangle of 'Elective Affinities'

Based on my observations in the previous chapter, I have concluded that Goethe's depiction of Charlotte's roles in her marriage with Eduard shows her as a woman who does not fit idealized femininity as defined in the late Enlightenment. While Goethe portrays her as a married woman who has earned social recognition and respect, she is also shown as an independent, dynamic, and creative figure with a pronounced verbal presence. Goethe creates an ambiguous character in Charlotte who combines traits of conformity to and signs of deviation from late Enlightenment expectations of women's roles in society. Goethe's emphasis on such ambiguities in Charlotte's actions and utterances makes her into an interesting female character and an intriguing subject of analysis with regard to Goethe's representation of femininity in his Wahlverwandtschaften.

Kristeva's model of subjectivity formation and her theoretical approach to motherhood serves as a useful tool to analyze such ambiguities in Charlotte as the central figure of various character groupings that can also be perceived as symbolic and, in part, unconventional family units. I use Kristeva's feminist psychoanalytic theory of the child's development into a speaking and culturally integrated subject as the platform for my investigation of the characters because this theory of identity formation describes unconscious and conscious processes that can lead to or prevent the developing child's psyche from experiencing identification, hostility, and separation. I consider Kristeva's theory important in this context because it concentrates on the stimulating, stagnating, or

preventive impact that family members and the dynamics of familial relationships can have on the child's ego formation.⁸⁸ In order to be able to test whether Kristeva's model can be applied to explain some aspects of the subtext on gender in Die Wahlverwandtschaften, I have identified multiple character constellations that can also be perceived as symbolic familial configurations. These unorthodox family units are important because in psychoanalytic theory the child's ego formation and integration into culture are greatly affected by the dynamics of his/her relationship with both parental figures. Besides recreating the circumstances of subjectivity formation, these untraditional familial configurations also 'reproduce' the existing social order with its regulations and prohibitions in modified, i.e., experimental ways. With this in mind, I further argue that the characters' actions and interactions are not only symptomatic of their identity formation, but that they also shape the gender discourse of the novel. Thus, the emphasis Goethe's text places on multiple untraditional family units and the fact that they are centered around Charlotte underscores the experimental nature of his characterization of gender roles when compared to late Enlightenment social practices.

As I indicated in my Introduction, Goethe placed Charlotte into the center of all character groupings. While she is tied to Eduard and the Hauptmann in distinct forms of partnership, she is also connected to Luciane and Ottilie as their biological and adoptive

⁸⁸ I am going to focus primarily but not exclusively on Kristeva's early feminist psychoanalytic theory in which by drawing on Freud's and Lacan's psychoanalysis, she formulates her own, and partially distinct, definition of the child's identity formation process in the two modes of representation (semiotic and symbolic, as she calls them). Kristeva lays out significant concepts of her theory of subjectivity in Revolution in Poetic Language ([1974] 1984), Powers of Horror ([1980] 1982), Tales of Love ([1983] 1987), and in "The Subject in Process" ([1976] 1998). It is important to note that whereas her overall theoretical writings comprise many other valuable publications since the mid 1980s, I will concentrate on her earlier work in the context of this dissertation because her later theoretical focus shifted from the analysis of early childhood developmental processes toward issues such as revolutionary analysis, politics and propaganda, religion, and the documentation of actual psychoanalytic practice.

mother figure respectively. Furthermore, Charlotte is also united into a symbolic family unit with Eduard and Otilie as well as with Otilie and Otto. I, therefore, argue that the central male and female figures of Die Wahlverwandtschaften are closely interrelated characters on multiple levels, they undergo changes, and are shown to take on distinct roles as the narrative progresses and ‘new’ character configurations are formed.

I further hypothesize that Goethe’s positioning of Charlotte as the focal figure of each grouping suggests that her actions and utterances may have a notable impact on other central figures in the novel and on the dynamics of their relationships. Therefore, my goal is to trace changes in the dynamics of Charlotte’s relationships and to outline the roles that male and female characters are shown to assume within each grouping, i.e. symbolic family configuration. In light of the above, I seek to offer an exhaustive interpretation of Goethe’s portrayal of the gender relations among the central characters and, consequently, of his representation of femininity in this novel.

Kristeva’s theory focuses primarily on the development of the human psyche in early childhood and on the fact that the dynamics of the child’s relationship with his/her parental figures have a pivotal impact on his/her successful separation from the mother and integration into culture. It might first seem problematic that in this dissertation, I seek to provide a more comprehensive understanding of Goethe’s portrayal of adult men and women and the dynamics of their relationships while relying on a theoretical framework that primarily deals with processes that lead to or hinder the infant’s evolution into a speaking and integrated member of the social order. Nevertheless, I argue that in the context of Die Wahlverwandtschaften, Goethe not only depicts Charlotte and the other

central characters as in many ways deviant from what was considered ‘normal’ in the contemporary social context, but he also portrays most relationships that tie the individual characters to one another as notably uncommon and unfit for conventional social categories. This is where Kristeva’s framework can help me to trace and make unconscious processes transparent that Goethe may have had in mind when shaping his characters and the gender discourse of the fictional reality in the novel.

In this chapter, I continue to focus on how Charlotte’s relationship with Eduard evolves and how her friendship with the Hauptmann unfolds. In so doing, I concentrate on how the Hauptmann’s actions and utterances affect Eduard’s and Charlotte’s behavior patterns by exploring the triangular character constellation they are united in the first part of Goethe’s Wahlverwandtschaften.

I have shown that Eduard’s and Charlotte’s relationship can be perceived as an atypical bond that does not fit the late Enlightenment definition of marriage. While the division of roles between husband and wife first creates the perception of a predictable hierarchic structure, this brief introductory allusion becomes less relevant in Eduard’s and Charlotte’s first conversation about the Hauptmann’s potential employment. The fact that Eduard includes Charlotte in the decision making process and that he accepts her request for more time for consideration indicate a gradual shift in the dynamics of their relationship from the hierarchic structure implied in the first twelve lines of the novel toward a form of partnership based on mutual respect: “Da wir denn ungestört hier allein sind, sagte Eduard, und ganz ruhigen heiteren Sinnes; so muß ich dir gestehen, daß ich

schon einige Zeit etwas auf dem Herzen habe, was ich dir vertrauen muß und möchte, und nicht dazu kommen kann” (Goethe 272).

The almost six-page-long detailed account of the couple’s thought processes and Charlotte’s synopsis of their personal background show her as an actively participating figure who speaks considerably more than Eduard and thus dominates the scene verbally. This linguistic dominance is accentuated when it is Charlotte and not Eduard who provides an in-depth depiction of their past. Parallel to Charlotte’s inclusion in the decision making process, Eduard’s dominant position in this marriage, which was implied on the first page of the novel, gradually fades away as the conversation about the Hauptmann unfolds.

Eduard’s request entails his long-time friendship with the Hauptmann, who is in need of a challenging and meaningful job in his field. When Eduard describes the Hauptmann’s discouraging professional situation, he shows compassion and a deep understanding of his unfortunate circumstances:

[...] so muß ich dir gestehen, daß ich schon einige Zeit etwas auf dem Herzen habe, was ich dir vertrauen muß und möchte, und nicht dazu kommen kann. [...]
Es betrifft unsern Freund, den Hauptmann, antwortete Eduard. Du kennst die traurige Lage, in die er, wie so manche andere, ohne sein Verschulden gesetzt ist. Wie schmerzlich muß es einem Manne von seinen Kenntnissen, seinen Talenten und Fertigkeiten sein, sich außer Tätigkeit zu sehen und – ich will nicht lange zurückhalten mit dem was ich für ihn wünsche: ich möchte daß wir ihn auf einige Zeit zu uns nähmen. (Goethe 272-273)

Based on Goethe's choice of adjectives such as "traurig" and "schmerzlich," it can even be argued that Eduard shows more emotional commitment to and empathy with his friend than with Charlotte. Besides these implicit references to Eduard's close connection to the Hauptmann, the forthcoming discussion between Charlotte and Eduard followed by Eduard's continued pursuit of the issue also indicate that the Hauptmann takes on a central role in the further development of this friendship.

After Eduard's emotional illustration of the Hauptmann's difficult situation, Charlotte incisively points out to her husband that he is more concerned about his friend's well-being than about their own situation: "Es ist recht schön und liebenswürdig von dir, versetzte Charlotte, daß du des Freundes Zustand mit so viel Teilnahme bedenkst; allein erlaube mir dich aufzufordern, auch unser zu gedenken" (Goethe 274). While Charlotte foresees potential negative consequences that the Hauptmann's long-term presence could bring about, Eduard finds himself in an emotional state and only takes note of the advantages of such a stay when he says:

Ganz recht, versetzte Eduard; aber selbst diese verschiedenen Gelegenheiten, diese Anerbietungen machen ihm neue Qual, neue Unruhe. Keines von den Verhältnissen ist ihm gemäß. Er soll nicht wirken; er soll sich aufopfern, seine Zeit, seine Gesinnungen, seine Art zu sein, und das ist ihm unmöglich. Jemehr ich das alles betrachte, jemehr ich es fühle, desto lebhafter wird der Wunsch ihn bei uns zu sehen. [...] Wir können von seiner Nähe uns nur Vorteil und Annehmlichkeit versprechen. Von dem Aufwande will ich nicht reden, der auf alle Fälle gering für mich wird, wenn er zu uns zieht; besonders wenn ich

zugleich bedenke, daß uns seine Gegenwart nicht die mindeste Unbequemlichkeit verursacht. Auf dem rechten Flügel des Schlosses kann er wohnen, und alles andere findet sich. Wie viel wird ihm dadurch geleistet, und wie manches Angenehme wird uns durch seinen Umgang, ja wie mancher Vorteil! (Goethe 273-274)

While on the one hand, Eduard's request for Charlotte's approval can be perceived as an invitation to make a mutual decision in partnership, it may, on the other hand, also signal the start of a gradual change in their marriage toward a relationship in which Charlotte attains a regulative role. I will evaluate these options when I compare Eduard's and Charlotte's actions, interactions, and their emotional position with regard to the Hauptmann's employment.

One striking difference in the portrayal of Charlotte and Eduard is that while Eduard makes emotional arguments and urges Charlotte to decide promptly in support of his position, Charlotte expresses clearly that it is necessary to think through the proposal carefully and rationally when she says:

Das ist wohl zu überlegen und von mehr als einer Seite zu betrachten, versetzte Charlotte. [...] Laß uns deswegen einen Blick auf unser gegenwärtiges, auf unser vergangenes Leben werfen, und du wirst mir eingestehen, daß die Berufung des Hauptmanns nicht so ganz mit unsern Vorsätzen, unsern Planen, unsern Einrichtungen zusammentrifft. (Goethe 275)

It is interesting to observe that Charlotte is portrayed as undecided and willing to consider the decision from various perspectives while Eduard's wish is motivated by his strong

emotional connection to his friend and by the advantages that his expertise can bring to the estate. She is portrayed as cautious and pensive, and thus she first refuses to give Eduard her consent and asks for more time: “Gönne mir noch einige Tage, entscheide noch nicht!” (Goethe 278).

Considering that Charlotte is reluctant to give her immediate consent and that she asks Eduard for more time to consider the pros and contras of his request, Goethe’s portrayal of her as the verbally more dominant of the two characters can be interpreted as an indication that she gradually assumes more control over the outcome of this discussion than Eduard. Therefore, Goethe’s depiction of the process that leads to this significant decision seems to place Charlotte gradually in charge of the final outcome. Her growing dominance is revealed in the narrative by her thoughtful reasoning, her need for more time to reflect, and by the fact that she verbally dominates more than half of the utterances in this scene.

The moment when Eduard indicates his need for Charlotte’s guidance as to the content of his response to the Hauptmann can be perceived as another indication of her growing control over this situation: “Was soll ich aber dem Hauptmann schreiben? rief Eduard aus: denn ich muß mich gleich hinsetzen. Einen ruhigen, vernünftigen, tröstlichen Brief, sagte Charlotte” (Goethe 278). In this sentence, Charlotte’s reflective ability is accentuated and contrasted to Eduard’s puzzlement and emotional state. While Eduard is depicted as overwhelmed by his wish for the Hauptmann’s presence, Charlotte is shown as the one who has taken control of the situation however temporary her regulative intervention may be.

By the time this conversation ends with Charlotte's request for a delayed decision and with her advice regarding the content of Eduard's reply to the Hauptmann, the partnership initiated by Eduard can be perceived as a relationship that also shows apparent signs of Charlotte's control. Based on this assumption, Goethe depicts an uncommon marital relationship between Charlotte and Eduard because the roles they assume in relation to one another hardly show conformity to the late Enlightenment establishment of marriage. Goethe offers a complex portrayal of Eduard's roles in relation to Charlotte that offers only a partial and thus ambiguous reflection of the late 18th century model of marital gender hierarchy. At the same time, I perceive Goethe's portrayal of Charlotte as the more decisive, influential, and also more rational figure in this marriage, who gradually takes control over the outcome of the situation. But even though Goethe does portray Charlotte as a woman with verbal dominance and decisive traits in the context of this first disagreement between her and Eduard, it would lead to a misleading interpretation to conclude that Goethe may have aimed at depicting a reversed gender hierarchy in Charlotte's and Eduard's marriage.

As I trace Goethe's portrayal of the changes and shifts in Charlotte's behavior, I rely on some key concepts of Kristeva's theory of subjectivity such as the notion of the imaginary father, of the semiotic, as well as of the symbolic modes of representation that play a crucial role in facilitating the child's identity formation process. An analysis of Die Wahlverwandtschaften in light of Kristeva's definition of these concepts reveals a new understanding of the depiction of Charlotte's evolving gender identity displayed in the character constellation that ties her to Eduard and the Hauptmann because Kristeva

primarily focuses on the importance of the child's relationship with his/her parental figures during its ego development. Kristeva's framework will allow for considering the ambiguities in Charlotte's portrayal and Goethe's representation of gender roles.

In the context of multiple character constellations, Goethe's portrayal of Charlotte not only shows her as the central figure in these groupings but it also suggests that the way her actions and behavior patterns are depicted signifies the maternal function in relation to various characters within symbolic family units that can be identified in the narrative. Kristeva's theory pays close attention to the mother's role in the child's subject formation both before and during its acquisition of meaningful language and cultural integration.

Prior to further textual analysis of Die Wahlverwandtschaften, I now introduce some of the main points of Kristeva's theory that I use as platform for my analysis of Goethe's portrayal of Charlotte both in partnership with the central male characters and as the mother figure for Luciane, Ottilie, and Otto.

Kristeva's special focus on the mother's role in the child's ego formation differentiates her approach from both Freud's and Lacan's theories that associate the child's separation from the mother and its entry into culture with the castration threat and the prohibitions of the paternal figure. Kristeva maintains that the mother's love is a pivotal motivating factor in this process because the castration threat 'alone' would not be a strong enough catalyst for the child to leave the nurturing haven of the semiotic "chora."

In Tales of Love ([1983] 1987), Kristeva lays out her psychoanalytic approach to the complex relationship between mother and child in the preverbal, i.e., semiotic stage of the infant's development and the roles mother and father play in the Oedipal triangle, in the child's separation from the mother, and in its entry into the cultural order. Both Freud and Lacan maintain in their psychoanalytic theories that only the Phallus/the Law of the Father has power over the child's formation into a speaking subject. Lacan follows Freud's theory in so far as they both maintain that the child's fear of castration instigates the separation from its unity with the mother starting with the mirror stage and culminating in the Oedipal situation. In contrast, Kristeva claims that the mother and more specifically her love/desire as part of the preverbal semiotic unity between mother and child also entails a regulative function over the child's development that prefigures the prohibitions of the Law of the Father after the child's entry into language and the symbolic order. Kristeva identifies this loving, yet regulative function that is imaginary and not identical with the mother as an entity that plays an influential part in the pre-objectal/semiotic stage of development and refers to it as the imaginary father (Tales of Love 40-42).

In Kristeva's theory, the imaginary father is described as both male and female because it encompasses the mother's love for the child and her desire for a third other that is not identical with the child. The mother's desire for an 'other' beyond the child helps the child to differentiate him/herself from the mother's body and to develop his/her own ego. This process moves the child away from the maternal body and fosters its entry into the symbolic order of signifying language and culture.

Kristeva borrows and elaborates on Freud's discussion about the father of individual prehistory ("Vater der persönlichen Vorzeit") when she conceives the concept of the imaginary father. In so doing, she addresses the issue of maternal desire for the Father's Phallus and its relevance to the child's pre-Oedipal development in Tales of Love ([1983] 1987) when she writes:

The advent of the *Vater der persönlichen Vorzeit* takes place thanks to the assistance of the so-called pre-Oedipal mother, to the extent that she can indicate to her child that her desire is not limited to responding to her offspring's request (or simply turning it down). This assistance is none other than maternal desire for the Father's Phallus. Which one? The child's father or her own? For "primary identification" the question is not relevant. If there is an *immediacy* of the child's identification with *that desire* (of the Father's Phallus), it probably comes from the child's not having to elaborate it; rather, he receives it, mimics it, or even sustains it through the mother who offers it to him (or refuses it) as a gift. In a way, such an identification with the father-mother conglomerate, as Freud would have it, or with what we have just called the maternal desire for the Phallus, comes as a godsend. And for a very good reason, since without that disposition of the psyche, the child and the mother do not yet constitute 'two' [...]. (Tales of Love 40)

In Reading Kristeva (1993) with reference to Kristeva's concept of the imaginary father, Kelly Oliver points out that "[it, Z.R.] provides the support necessary to allow the child to

move into the Symbolic order. This is a move from the mother's body to the mother's desire through the mother's love" (Reading Kristeva 70).

In Kristeva's view, Freud links his concept of the father of individual prehistory to the child's primary narcissism, i.e., its primary identification with a loving paternal entity (Tales of Love 40). Kristeva considers Freud's theory of primary narcissism problematic and incongruous because Freud, on the one hand, characterizes the preverbal phase of development as "an objectless stage in which the infant comprises all of its universe" (Reading Kristeva 71). On the other hand, however, Freud places a process of identification into this objectless stage, which, even if it is primary, automatically requires an object that it is directed to:

We know that, *empirically*, the first affections, the first imitations, and the first vocalizations as well are directed toward the mother; it is thus hardly necessary to stress that one's pointing to the Father as the magnet for primary love, primary identification is tenable only if one conceives of *identification* as being always already within the symbolic orbit, under the sway of language. (Tales of Love 27)

Based on the above, Kristeva perceives primary narcissism as a form of identification that foreshadows objectal identifications of the child after entering the symbolic order governed by the Law of the Father.

Kristeva identifies another problematic issue in Freud's theory, namely that he characterizes the object of the child's primary love as male when in the first six months of its life the infant directs all its energy and attention exclusively toward the mother. Based on the above assumptions, while Kristeva uses the foundations of Freud's concept

of the “father of individual prehistory,” she also modifies the overall idea: She transforms Freud’s “Vater der persönlichen Vorzeit” into her notion of the imaginary father and defines the pre-objectal period prior to the mirror stage as the narcissistic structure that already prefigures objectal identifications by establishing a pattern of reduplication. According to Kristeva, this pattern will manifest itself in further reduplications within the semiotic sphere that will ultimately lead the child toward symbolization:

Neither screen nor state, primary narcissism is already a structure, previous to the Oedipus complex, which operates on the basis of three terms. The central node of connection and disconnection, fullness and emptiness, positions and losses, represents the instability of the *narcissistic subject*. He remains there, attracted to the one hand by the magnet of *primary identification*, which is a father imagined to be loving, “father of individual prehistory,” the seed of the Ego ideal; and on the other, by a magnet of desire and hatred, fascination of disgust, constituted by the archaic mother who has ceased to be a container of needs but not yet made up into a taboo object of desire. (Tales of Love 374)⁸⁹

Kristeva describes the imaginary father as a “father-mother conglomerate” and maintains that it represents the first step toward the later emergence of the child’s ego

⁸⁹ Oliver provides a lucid explanation of Kristeva’s concept when she writes: “[T]he archaic identification with the mother’s breast is a pre-objectal identification. The infant *becomes* the breast through its incorporation. Kristeva maintains that this breast is not an object for the infant but a ‘model,’ a ‘pattern.’ Kristeva describes this identification as a *reduplication* of the pattern. [...] This archaic semiotic identification with the mother’s breast, which is merely a reduplication, becomes the first in a series of reduplications. It prefigures and sets in motion the logic of object identifications in all object relations, including both discourse and love” (Reading Kristeva 72). In Kristeva’s own words, “[t]his archaic identification, which is characteristic of the oral phase of the libido’s organization where what I incorporate is what I become, where *having* amounts to *being*, is not, truly speaking, objectal. [...] it is an identification that sets up love, the sign, and repetition at the heart of the psyche. For the sake of an object to come, later or never? (Tales of Love 25).

because it initiates the separation of the primary unity between mother and infant (41).

Kristeva further emphasizes that the mother's desire for an 'other' is crucial in order for the child to successfully separate from her and her body:

The imaginary father would thus be the indication that the mother is not complete but that she wants . . . Who? What? The question has no answer other than the one that uncovers narcissistic emptiness; 'At any rate not I.' [...] And it is out of this 'not I' (see Beckett's play with that title) that an Ego painfully attempts to come into being . . . (Tales of Love 41)

The loving quality of the imaginary father as opposed to the threatening nature of Freud's and Lacan's representation of the Phallus/Law of the Father plays a crucial role in this model of subject formation because Kristeva maintains that the child's fear of castration and the constant surveillance of the superego/God, i.e., the Law of the Father cannot serve as the stimulus for a painful separation from the sheltering and loving maternal body. According to Oliver's analysis of Kristeva's concept of the imaginary father, the Phallus is to be perceived as a part of the mother: "[t]he Other exists within the mother, not only in the real sense during pregnancy, but also in the imaginary and symbolic senses" (Oliver 85).

Kristeva's notion of the imaginary father gains significance in the context of this dissertation because when one seeks to explain Charlotte's actions and utterances with the help of Kristeva's framework, it can be concluded that Charlotte is shown to gradually assume a leading position in relation to Eduard. This important shift in the dynamics of their relationship is suggested by Charlotte's ability to influence and even

manipulate Eduard's actions when asking him for more time and patience as well as in her response to his need for advice on the content of the letter to the Hauptmann. While Kristeva's theory of subjectivity formation focuses on early childhood development, it can also serve as a useful tool when I analyze Goethe's depiction of Charlotte's relationships with Eduard and the Hauptmann as well as with Luciane and Otilie: It can help me to explain why Charlotte and the other central characters are shown to take on specific roles within distinct character groupings, i.e. untraditional family units that do not always shows conformity to arbitrarily defined late Enlightenment gender roles.

Their first conversation begins because Eduard invites Charlotte to give her consent on the Hauptmann's employment; his inclusion of Charlotte in the decision making process seems to diminish previous implications of a hierarchic structure in their marriage. As the conversation progresses, Charlotte through her speech starts to dominate the scene. She emerges as the person in this marriage who takes the initiative and guides Eduard through a wide-ranging reflective process that considers potential drawbacks as well. As part of her reflections, Charlotte reveals various aspects of the situation that Eduard had not considered before: she highlights that Eduard had wished to live in complete privacy with her (Goethe 275), that they had made plans to read through Eduard's travel journals together (Goethe 276), and that Eduard had wanted to play the flute again regularly with Charlotte (Goethe 276).

Since Charlotte is depicted as the signifier of reflective thinking and her statements take up more than half of the scene, she gradually assumes a more pronounced and influential presence as the conversation unfolds. In contrast, Eduard participates less

in the verbal exchange and focuses primarily on the advantages of the Hauptmann's presence. Based on the above, I argue that Goethe casts Charlotte as the leading force of this exchange and demonstrates her ability to determine the direction and outcome of their discussion.

Considering the above, it can be argued that Goethe's depiction of the dynamics of Charlotte's and Eduard's marriage is more reminiscent of a mother-son bond than of a male-female hierarchy. As a result, I find it important to further explore how this adjustment in their relationship affects Charlotte's positioning in the novel. While the general tone of their conversation is considerate and respectful, signs of tension can also be identified in both of their utterances. Charlotte's argumentation shows that her priority is to nurture and protect her marriage, but her statement also entails a form of reproach when she gently reminds Eduard that his current wish contradicts the precondition he had set for their married life and that his wish can also lead to undesired circumstances:

Du wolltest von allen Unruhen, die du bei Hof, im Militär, auf Reisen erlebt hattest, dich an meiner Seite erholen, zur Besinnung kommen, des Lebens genießen; aber auch nur mit mir allein. [...] Nichts ist bedeutender in jenem Zustande, als die Dazwischenkunft eines Dritten. Ich habe Freunde gesehen, Geschwister, Liebende, Gatten, deren Verhältnis durch den zufälligen oder gewählten Hinzutritt einer neuen Person ganz und gar verändert, deren Lage völlig umgekehrt geworden. (Goethe 275-277)

With this statement, Charlotte articulates her commitment and love for Eduard, but at the same time, she also shows her strength to confront him and challenge his opinion.

Eduard's attitude toward Charlotte signals friction and conflict that is shown in his startled and emotionally ambivalent reaction to her hesitation about the Hauptmann: "Was soll ich aber dem Hauptmann schreiben? rief Eduard aus: denn ich muß mich gleich hinsetzen" (Goethe 278). He is taken aback and staggered by Charlotte's disapproval and request for a delay. Based on Eduard's bewilderment, it can be argued that Charlotte's provisional 'no' indicates an abrupt and unexpected rupture in the 'order' of everyday life. Her advice about the content of his letter, however, reflects a calm and balanced disposition that operates on the basis of rational reasoning: "Einen ruhigen, vernünftigen, tröstlichen Brief, sagte Charlotte" (Goethe 278). If read on the basis of Kristeva's theory, Charlotte's request for time can be interpreted as a form of refusal of Eduard's will, i.e., an act of maternal regulation that has inspired tension and bewilderment in Eduard.

Eduard's state of puzzlement shifts toward feelings of irritation and annoyance in the following scene of the novel. His thoughts and feelings after the conversation with Charlotte reveal an internally divided character, who takes great comfort in Charlotte's presence and wants to follow her directions, but who also feels the urge to defy Charlotte and act against her will:

Eduard fand sich allein auf seinem Zimmer [...] Er hatte sich in ihrer Nähe, in ihrer Gesellschaft so glücklich gefühlt, daß er sich einen freundlichen, teilnehmenden, aber ruhigen und auf nichts hindeutenden Brief an den Hauptmann ausdachte. Als er aber zum Schreibtisch ging und den Brief des

Freundes annahm, [...] es schien ihm unmöglich, seinen Freund einer so ängstlichen Lage zu überlassen. (Goethe 278)

The narrator also offers some important insights into Eduard's personal history that predates his marriage with Charlotte:

Sich etwas zu versagen, war Eduard nicht gewohnt. Von Jugend auf das einzige, verzogene Kind reicher Eltern, die ihn zu einer seltsamen aber höchst vorteilhaften Heirat mit einer viel älteren Frau zu bereden wußten, von dieser auch auf alle Weise verzärtelt, indem sie sein gutes Betragen gegen sie durch die größte Freigiebigkeit zu erwidern suchte, nach ihrem baldigen Tode sein eigener Herr, auf Reisen unabhängig, jeder Abwechslung jeder Veränderung mächtig, nichts Übertriebenes wollend, aber viel und vielerlei wollend, freimütig, wohlthätig, brav, ja tapfer im Fall – was konnte in der Welt seinen Wünschen entgegenstehen! (Goethe 278-279)

The narrator's references to Eduard's relationship with his parents and late wife show him as a spoiled child and young adult in every possible way ("verzogen" and "verzärtelt"). A clear difference is indicated in Charlotte's motherly reactions to Eduard because her behavior is both loving and regulatory. Charlotte's objections represent a turning point in Eduard's life because the pattern of immediate and unconditional gratification that he experienced in his relationships with his parents and late wife is interrupted by Charlotte's forceful and disruptive intervention.

Charlotte's initial refusal to immediately hire the Hauptmann requires of Eduard that he repress his desire and comply with her regulation. This is an act for which he is

not equipped. Although Goethe describes Eduard as an independent and open (“freimütig”) man after the death of his late wife, references are repeatedly made to Eduard’s inability to accept ‘no’ as an answer and to lead his life entirely according to his wishes: “Sich etwas zu versagen, war Eduard nicht gewohnt. [...] Bisher war alles nach seinem Sinne gegangen” (Goethe 278-279).

Based on repeated narrative references to Eduard as a spoiled child of wealthy parents and as a similarly “verzärtelt” husband of a significantly older wife, it can be argued that Eduard’s emotional attachment to and dependence on his parents did not cease to exist but was rather reduplicated in his marriage to his late wife. This parental attachment can also be argued because Eduard’s childhood experience and his first marriage are described with similar adjectives and the two experiences are even connected with the adverb “auch” (Goethe 278). Even though his former wife’s death is followed by a phase of adventures and independent travel and adventure in Eduard’s life, his will to marry and ‘own’ (“auch zum Besitz Charlottens war er gelangt” Goethe 279) Charlotte can be perceived as a wish to re-establish a relationship that is based on the same pattern of instant gratification that became engraved into his ego while growing up and during his first marriage. In this context, Charlotte’s and Eduard’s first encounter in the novel gains special relevance because her provisional ‘no’ as an answer to his request is a first-time experience for him: “er fühlte sich zum erstenmal widersprochen, zum erstenmal gehindert” (Goethe 279).

I have indicated above that Kristeva’s concept of the imaginary father can provide revealing insights into understanding what Charlotte’s protective affection for Eduard,

coupled with her negative response, says about her as a wife and as a woman. In light of Kristeva's theory, an analysis of the textual implications of her symbolic maternal role in relation to Eduard can shed further light on Eduard's deviant and hindered identity development that I discuss in more detail earlier in this chapter.

Eduard's deliberate return to a pattern in his life that was interrupted for a period of time can be interpreted as a sign of his unfinished separation process from what Kristeva calls the maternal function. Kristeva calls the space that 'houses' the child's unity with the mother's body before its acquisition of language the semiotic "chora." Following Plato's definition, she characterizes this space as rhythmic, nourishing, and maternal. Kristeva also maintains about the "chora" that it has a regulated aspect that manifests itself in the function of the mother's body as an ordering principle that mediates the symbolic law organizing social relations (Revolution 26-27).

Therefore, if analyzed from Kristeva's viewpoint, it can be argued that Eduard's separation process has not taken place as part of his identity development, and that his character shows a subject whose ego formation remained stagnant in the preverbal/semiotic mode of representation. Goethe's portrayal of him as the less verbally dominant, as unable to repress his desires, and in need of Charlotte's immediate gratification. Thus, he is a subject who, despite his adult age, still operates in the preverbal and semiotic modality of the "chora." According to Oliver, this is "the place where the subject is both generated and negated. [...] Before it enters the Symbolic and encounters the No/Name of the Father, the infant has already lived with maternal regulation, the mother's 'no'" (Reading Kristeva 46).

Eduard grew up as a spoiled child who then continued to be “verzärtelt” by his late wife. Not long before the narrator’s description of Eduard’s pampered childhood, Charlotte calls Eduard’s first wife his “Mütterchen.” This is yet another reference to his marriage as a reduplication of his childhood experience with his parents: “[W]ir wurden getrennt: du von mir, weil dein Vater, aus nie sättigender Begierde des Besitzes, dich mit einer ziemlich älteren reichen Frau verband [...] Wir wurden wieder frei; du früher, indem dich dein Mütterchen im Besitz eines großen Vermögens ließ [...]” (Goethe 275).

What seems to make Eduard’s relationship with Charlotte different from his previous affiliations with his parents (in particular with his mother) and with the symbolic mother figure that seems to have been assumed by his late wife is that Charlotte’s actions, as displayed by Goethe, are not the actions of a “narcissistic” maternal figure. Kristeva, namely associates her concept of the “narcissistic” mother with an exclusively gratifying presence. As opposed to Eduard’s relationships with his parents and his late wife, Charlotte is much rather portrayed as the embodiment of a loving/gratifying and yet controlling/regulating maternal function that makes her into a ‘new’ kind of symbolic mother figure for Eduard. In light of Kristeva’s framework, Charlotte’s regulative presence brings about a rupture in Eduard’s desire-driven existence and ‘sets the stage’ for his potential further development as a subject. The above statement by Charlotte also signals that Eduard’s relationship with her is different from his previous experiences with his parents and late wife. Charlotte plays a similar role to that of Kristeva’s imaginary father in the child’s ego development. Charlotte’s actions not

only change an established pattern in Eduard's life, but to also instigate a further evolution in the stunted development of Eduard's ego.

In Kristeva's theory, one important aspect of the imaginary father is that it incorporates the mother's desire for an 'other' and thus prompts feelings of animosity and hostility in the child towards the mother. Kristeva calls this hostile attitude toward the mother "abjection" (Powers of Horror 13).⁹⁰ "Abjection" is based on the child's growing understanding that the unity with the mother's body has to end and that the mother's love is not only directed toward the child. In Kristeva's model, the imaginary father lets the child witness for the first time what object-love is and how symbolization works. It also instigates the process of alienation from the mother because the child starts to view the mother as an "abject," a not-yet-object of hostility and hatred:

The abject confronts us, [...] and this time within our personal archeology, with our earliest attempts to release the hold of maternal entity even before ex-isting outside of her, thanks to the autonomy of language. It is a violent, clumsy breaking away, with the constant risk of falling back under the sway of a power as securing as it is stifling. (Powers of Horror 13)

Besides asserting that Charlotte's symbolic motherly role creates a new pattern in Eduard's life, it can also be argued that the signs of hostility and irritation in Eduard's attitude towards Charlotte are a form of abjection. The narrator offers an in-depth illustration of Eduard's thought process and the uncontrollable surfacing of mixed emotions he experiences by saying:

⁹⁰ Julia Kristeva, Powers of Horror, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1982).

Er war verdrießlich, ungeduldig, nahm einigemal die Feder und legte sie nieder, weil er nicht einig mit sich werden konnte, was er schreiben sollte. Gegen die Wünsche seiner Frau wollte er nicht, nach ihrem Verlangen konnte er nicht; unruhig wie er war sollte er einen ruhigen Brief schreiben, es wäre ihm ganz unmöglich gewesen. (Goethe 279)

Eduard shows ambivalent emotions towards Charlotte: While he does not want to act against her will, he cannot willingly follow her instructions either. He is internally divided and experiences feelings of hostility and revolt that are directed to her and the maternal function that she represents.

In Kristeva's theory, the concepts of the imaginary father and the child's abjection of the mother are both tied to a third 'other,' to whom – besides the child – the mother's desire is directed. This 'other' can be the child's father figure, but it can also be a symbolic entity that fills in the father's space; in psychoanalytic theory, the symbolic father is the representation of the Law of the Father/the Phallus, namely the rules and prohibitions of the social/symbolic order. Turning to the Hauptmann and his relationship with Charlotte and Eduard, I would argue that the Hauptmann represents an intervention and interruption in the couple's marriage: The Hauptmann's presence on the estate instigates further changes in so far as both Eduard's and Charlotte's attention becomes redirected to him.

The Hauptmann is portrayed as an orderly, knowledgeable, law abiding, and yet critical figure. The narrator's description of him also implies that he is dynamic, serious, and pensive: "Dem Gaste ward auf dem rechten Flügel des Schlosses ein freundliches

geräumiges Quartier angewiesen, wo er sehr bald Bücher, Papiere und Instrumente aufgestellt und geordnet hatte, um in seiner gewohnten Tätigkeit fortzufahren” (Goethe 290). A few pages later, the narrator also refers to the Hauptmann as a productive and efficient man: “[W]eniger Schlaf als dieser tätige Mann, bedurfte kaum Jemand, so wie sein Tag stets dem augenblicklichen Zwecke gewidmet und deswegen jederzeit am Abende etwas getan war” (Goethe 296).

The Hauptmann’s vigorous presence has a noticeable impact on the couple. Due to his architectural expertise coupled with vitality and creative energy, he assumes a superior position in his friendship with Eduard even despite the fact that Eduard occupies a more powerful place socially as the Hauptmann’s host and employer. Frequent references to the Hauptmann’s role as Eduard’s guide and educator in various matters indicate his superior standing. He often acts as an adviser to Eduard both in architectural and in more basic organizational matters:

Der Hauptmann war in dieser Art des Aufnehmens sehr geübt. Er hatte die nötige Gerätschaft mitgebracht und fing sogleich an. Er unterrichtete Eduarden, einige Jäger und Bauern, die ihm bei dem Geschäft behülflich sein sollten. [...] Nur eines laß uns festsetzen und einrichten: trenne alles was eigentlich Geschäft ist vom Leben. Das Geschäft verlangt Ernst und Strenge, das Leben Willkür; das Geschäft die reinste Folge, dem Leben tut eine Inkonsequenz oft not, ja sie ist lebenswürdig und erheiternd. (Goethe 290-296)

Although Eduard feels somewhat offended by his friend’s forceful advice, his voluntary compliance with the Hauptmann’s ideas shows that he accepts and submits to a

distribution of roles that places the Hauptmann in a leading position. This intimate yet unmistakably hierarchic connection between Eduard and the Hauptmann is further suggested when the narrator points out the effect the Hauptmann's disciplinary presence has on Eduard's divided psyche:

Das was er mit andern abzutun hatte, was bloß von ihm abhing, es war nicht geschieden; so wie er auch Geschäfte und Beschäftigung, Unterhaltung und Zerstreuung nicht genugsam von einander absonderte. Jetzt wurde es ihm leicht, da ein Freund diese Bemühung übernahm, ein zweites Ich die Sonderung bewirkte, in die das eine Ich nicht immer sich spalten mag. (Goethe 296)

Eduard welcomes the Hauptmann's guidance and assistance after all because, as Goethe's text signals, he identifies the Hauptmann with the part of his psyche that is responsible, organized, and law abiding. If these character traits are interpreted through the lens of Kristeva's characterization of the human consciousness, it can be argued that the Hauptmann represents Eduard's superego that stands for the Law of the Father/God/ the Phallus and for the prohibitions and regulations of the symbolic order.

Based on this assumption and the Hauptmann's pronounced professional expertise, it can be further maintained that he brings the public and professional domain within the borders of the estate and is portrayed as the signifier of the Law of the symbolic order to Eduard. He takes on the disciplinary and prohibitory role associated with the symbolic father in psychoanalytic theory: The symbolic father signifies "cultural

privileges and positive values which define male subjectivity within patriarchal society” (Silverman 183).⁹¹

It is important to note that Goethe frequently reminds his readers of the influence the Hauptmann’s presence has on the development of Eduard’s ego. One narrative moment that foreshadows their interconnection is when Charlotte reveals that they have identical names: “[U]nseres Freundes Ankunft behandeln wir billig als ein Fest; und dann habt Ihr beide wohl nicht daran gedacht, daß heute Euer Namenstag ist. Heißt nicht einer Otto so gut als der andere?” (Goethe 288). Reference to the Hauptmann with a descriptive title instead of his name further implies his superior position in the novel. This narrative detail reinforces that Eduard and the Hauptmann are depicted as two interrelated characters in a hierarchic relationship that is founded on the Hauptmann’s professional expertise, superior organizational skills, and social recognition as the basis of his authority. Eduard, on the other hand – despite his initial resistance – is then depicted as eager to learn from his friend, to consider his advice, and thus, he is shown to willingly submit to this hierarchic structure.

Besides the connection between Eduard and the Hauptmann, Charlotte’s relationship with the Hauptmann has a similarly important impact on both Eduard and her. Charlotte realizes soon after the Hauptmann’s arrival that she can use his expertise to her advantage; she also seeks his advice in various matters: “So benutzte Charlotte die Kenntnisse, die Tätigkeit des Hauptmanns auch nach ihrem Sinne und fing an mit seiner Gegenwart völlig zufrieden und über alle Folgen beruhigt zu werden” (Goethe 298).

⁹¹ Kaja Silverman, The Subject of Semiotics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983)

Charlotte's acceptance of the Hauptmann's superior knowledge and teaching abilities is followed by his critical comments about her design of the path that leads up to the moss hut. This is a significant narrative moment in so far as it brings all three characters together into an unusual triangular relationship. Eduard's intermediary involvement is especially important because he breaks the news to Charlotte despite the Hauptmann's specific cautioning against it:

Gar leicht, versetzte der Hauptmann; sie [Charlotte, Z.R.] durfte nur die eine Felsenecke, die noch dazu unscheinbar ist, weil sie aus kleinen Teilen besteht, wegbrechen; so erlangte sie eine schön geschwungene Wendung zum Aufstieg und zugleich überflüssige Steine, um die Stellen heraufzumauern, wo der Weg schmal und verkrüppelt geworden wäre. Doch sei dies im engsten Vertrauen unter uns gesagt: sie wird sonst irre und verdrießlich. Auch muß man was gemacht ist, bestehen lassen. [...] Lange verschwieg er was ihm der Hauptmann vertraut hatte; aber als er seine Gattin zuletzt beschäftigt sah, von der Mooshütte hinauf zur Anhöhe wieder mit Stüfchen und Pfädchen sich empor zu arbeiten; so hielt er nicht länger zurück, sondern machte sie nach einigen Umschweifen mit seinen neuen Einsichten bekannt. (Goethe 291-292)

Eduard is unable and unwilling to follow the Hauptmann's advice and informs Charlotte about his friend's critique: Eduard's behavior can be interpreted as a sign of his growing animosity and, as Kristeva puts it, "abject" against the maternal function that Charlotte represents to him. This is yet another indication of the Hauptmann's impact on Eduard: the Hauptmann's presence seems to instigate a growing desire in Eduard to distance

himself from Charlotte. At the same time, Eduard is shown as more attached to the Hauptmann as well.

Charlotte is also strongly affected by the Hauptmann's presence because he seems to insert a form of 'normality' into the marital disorder initiated by Charlotte's earlier rejection of Eduard's plan. Nevertheless, at this point in the narrative, it is first the Hauptmann's criticism and then his valuable insights and guidance that have a profound impact on Charlotte. Her initial reaction to the critique highlights her intellect and her remarkable ability to rationalize, consider, and reflect, even in a situation where all those qualities as well as the pride of and joy in her creation have been criticized and impaired:

Charlotte stand betroffen. Sie war geistreich genug, um schnell einzusehen, daß jene Recht hatten; aber das Getane widersprach, es war nun einmal so gemacht; sie hatte es recht, sie hatte es wünschenswert gefunden, selbst das Getadelte war ihr in jedem einzelnen Teile lieb; sie widerstrebte der Überzeugung, sie verteidigte ihre kleine Schöpfung, sie schalt auf die Männer, die gleich ins Weite und Große gingen, aus einem Scherz, aus einer Unterhaltung gleich ein Werk machen wollten, nicht an die Kosten denken, die ein erweiterter Plan durchaus nach sich zieht. Sie war bewegt, verletzt, verdrießlich; sie konnte das Alte nicht fahren lassen, das Neue nicht ganz abweisen; aber entschlossen wie sie war, stellte sie sogleich die Arbeit ein und nahm sich Zeit, die Sache zu bedenken und bei sich reif werden zu lassen. (Goethe 292)

The narrator's flattering description of Charlotte's rational and contemplative thought process reinforces her earlier depiction as a woman who is not only intellectually capable

and creative but who also openly demonstrates these qualities in her actions and through her verbal domination. Charlotte's appreciation for the Hauptmann's intellect and expertise signals her acceptance of his superior standing. The narrator's description also accentuates Charlotte's shrewdness and reason ("Vernunft") and suggests that Charlotte's acceptance of the Hauptmann's control and dominance is Charlotte's choice that is based on a conscious decision: She, therefore, continues to demonstrate independence in the shaping of her own identity.

On the one hand, the Hauptmann's superior standing and sophisticated advisory role, generate Eduard's and Charlotte's respect and growing attachment to him. On the other hand, his presence contributes to the growing physical and emotional distance between Eduard and Charlotte that was initiated when Charlotte first refused to hire the Hauptmann. Eduard spends more and more time in the Hauptmann's company while Charlotte is often alone and is occupied with her correspondence:

Indem sie nun auch diese tätige Unterhaltung vermißte, da indes die Männer ihr Geschäft immer geselliger betrieben und besonders die Kunstgärten und Glashäuser mit Eifer besorgten, auch dazwischen die gewöhnlichen ritterlichen Übungen fortsetzten, als Jagen, Pferde Kaufen, Tauschen, Bereiten und Einfahren; so fühlte sich Charlotte täglich einsamer. Sie führte ihren Briefwechsel, auch um des Hauptmanns willen, lebhafter, und doch gab es manche einsame Stunde. (Goethe 293)

This distancing can be seen as a sign of Eduard's "abjection" of Charlotte, who represents the maternal function to him. Since Goethe emphasizes Charlotte's lonesome

moments as well, he does not find in her symbolic role as Eduard's maternal figure an alternative way of self-fulfillment for her. On the one hand, Charlotte realizes that this marriage with Eduard cannot function on the basis of contemporary standards because Eduard cannot fulfill his role as a conventional husband. On the other hand, she is also depicted as a woman who is 'equipped' to adapt to Eduard's needs and to assume a motherly role in relation to him and thus facilitate his identity development.

Based on the above assumption, I maintain that Goethe depicts Charlotte as a multifaceted female character who is capable of shaping her own identity but who also experiences a significant void in her married life because Eduard has been shown as incapable of and unwilling to act and relate to Charlotte as a husband with authority and dominance. The narrator's reference to Charlotte's increasing isolation and her devotion to her correspondence suggests that her motherly role in relation to Eduard will hardly result in her self-fulfillment. In this context, I believe that Charlotte's character cannot be reduced to her symbolic maternal role in relation to Eduard. She is much rather shown as an 'incomplete' adult whose stable life as a married woman, according to the standards of her time, has been shaken and has fallen out of balance due to Eduard's inability to assume his role as a conventional husband. I consider Eduard's request for the Hauptmann's employment and then Charlotte's sincere and rationally and cautiously thought through response as the first indications of a fundamental disruption in the harmony of their marriage, which then results in the redefinition of Eduard's and Charlotte's roles in relation to one another. Since Eduard is depicted, in Kristeva's terms,

as a developing subject whose separation from the mother has not taken place in his identity formation process, he leaves behind a void in his marriage.

The narrator's reference to Charlotte's loneliness suggests that Charlotte experiences this change in the dynamics of her marriage as an emptiness rather than a form of fulfillment. The discontent and disappointment expressed in her portrayal as Eduard's mother figure suggest that Eduard's behavior, coupled with the Hauptmann's authoritative presence is a catalyst for the activation of mechanisms and processes in Charlotte's consciousness that aim to fill this void and restore harmony.

Based on the implications of such a close interconnection among these three characters, they can be seen not only as a character grouping but also as a symbolic family unit. Within this uncommon family constellation, Eduard's hostility toward Charlotte is catalyzed both by the Hauptmann's presence and Charlotte's growing affection for him. On the basis of Kristeva's framework, Charlotte's developing attraction to the Hauptmann also contributes to the formation of this symbolic family constellation, in which the Hauptmann, as Goethe depicts him, assumes the role of the symbolic Father. He is the figure of social and moral authority, an outsider to the estate and a member of the social order who lives by its Law and who, therefore, can be perceived as the representation and enforcer of the rules and prohibitions for which the Law of the Father stands. While Charlotte's character, as Goethe portrays her, assumes the role of the mother figure in relation to Eduard, the Hauptmann's portrayal suggests that he is 'qualified' to fill the void that Eduard has left in his marital relationship. Therefore, the Hauptmann's authoritative presence in the underlying formation of the symbolic family

triangle implies that he may be able to bring back ‘normality’ into Charlotte’s life. Such ‘normality’ would entail a subordinate and submissive gender role for Charlotte that could complement the Hauptmann’s dominance and authority.

Through the lens of Kristeva’s theory of subjectivity formation, I have concluded that Goethe portrays Charlotte, Eduard, and the Hauptmann as strongly interconnected characters and the dynamics of their interactions invoke a symbolic family constellation. In this symbolic family unit, Charlotte is the maternal figure for Eduard. Her mothering behavior entails not only her love for and commitment to him but also the regulation of his wishes.

Goethe’s depiction of the Hauptmann shows him as the signifier of paternal authority, i.e., the Law of the Father, who affects both Charlotte’s and Eduard’s process of identity formation. Since Goethe’s portrayal of Charlotte in her interactions with the Hauptmann indicates that she accepts his superior intellect, respects his professional expertise, and even develops a romantic affection for him, it can be concluded that the Hauptmann is positioned by the narrator as a possible replacement for the void that the redefinition of Eduard’s relationship with Charlotte has created.

In the following chapter, I explore the evolution of the close friendship between Charlotte and the Hauptmann and investigate how his dominant presence affects Goethe’s depiction of Charlotte’s overall position in the narrative. In so doing, I seek to investigate whether Goethe portrays this relationship as a basis of potential fulfillment for Charlotte’s character. I also investigate the role morality plays in the evolution and then closure of their relationship.

4. Renegotiation of Gender Roles in a Friendship

Following my analysis in the previous chapter, I have concluded that the Hauptmann has a significant impact on the lives of Charlotte and Eduard. His presence contributes to substantial changes in their marriage while the dynamics of the Hauptmann's friendship with Charlotte and Eduard also have a noticeable impact on the behavior patterns of each character within this triangular constellation of symbolic familial relationships. I have concluded that Goethe's depiction of the couple's interactions show apparent traits of a symbolic mother-son bond even before the Hauptmann's arrival. At the same time, in Goethe's text the Hauptmann is depicted as a dominant figure on the estate even despite the apparent indications of his lack of professional success and accomplishments in the macrocosm of society beyond the estate boundaries. This notable contrast between the way the Hauptmann's architectural knowledge and character traits are perceived by Eduard and Charlotte and the way his professional life is characterized prior to his arrival suggests a clear distinction between the microcosm of the idle and stylized isolation of the estate and the macro environment of the societal order. This narrative distinction can be perceived as a signal of the experimental nature of Goethe's portrayal of gender relations in his narrative discourse that is set apart from the surrounding gender discourse of the late 18th century.

Based on the couple's acceptance of the Hauptmann's expertise and as a result of his actions and utterances in relation to Charlotte and Eduard, I have further concluded that his dynamic, dominant, and influential presence signifies authority, and thus the Law

and its enforcement, to both Eduard and Charlotte in the environment of the estate. In psychoanalytic theory, authority is associated with the symbolic father/Phallus, namely the superego within the family unit of father—mother—child(ren). The Hauptmann's authoritative presence represents the symbolic father within the grouping of 'Charlotte—Eduard—Hauptmann,' which can also be perceived as an unconventional family unit: the Hauptmann is positioned in Kristevian parlance as Eduard's symbolic paternal figure and Charlotte's potential object of desire.

Based on the above, I have also argued that the Hauptmann's actions and utterances facilitate changes in Eduard's identity development while his presence plays a significant part in the couple's emotional and physical separation as well. Although it cannot be overlooked that Eduard's affection for Otilie also accelerates and is fundamental to this process, the Hauptmann's close connection to Eduard and Charlotte affects Eduard's and Charlotte's behavior patterns and contributes to their gradual estrangement.

With the above in mind, in this chapter I primarily focus on Goethe's portrayal of the relationship between the Hauptmann and Charlotte and assess to what extent their friendship and emotional attachment affect Charlotte's actions and general conduct. My objective is to analyze how Goethe portrays the division of gender roles between the Hauptmann and Charlotte and how Charlotte's actions and utterances change when she is placed in a seemingly hierarchic male-female bond with the Hauptmann. In other words, can Charlotte's initial, yet short-lived depiction in her role as Eduard's compliant and dependent spouse be recreated in a modified form in her relationship with the

Hauptmann? I further consider these questions essential because changes in Charlotte's behavior pattern in her partnership with the Hauptmann shed light on how far Goethe may have intended to distance himself from the socially defined hierarchic structure of gender relations prevalent in his lifetime.

At first, Charlotte has uneasy emotions about the Hauptmann's coming to the estate. Shortly after his arrival, she learns from Eduard that the Hauptmann has criticized her design of the pathway to the moss hut and that Eduard shares his criticism. According to the narrator's detailed description of Charlotte's conflicted thought process (see page 129 above), her first reaction is highly emotional; she is shown to be deeply affected by the criticism (Goethe 292). While first her disappointment is accentuated, the narrator also highlights her ability to think over the situation and draw rational conclusions. Charlotte's reflective reasoning suggests emotional ambivalence that entails both strong passion for her creation and a rational understanding of the legitimacy of the criticism.

The moss hut and the path leading to it can be perceived as the very signifiers of her creative energy, dynamism, and independence; these character traits set her apart from the idealized late Enlightenment image of femininity and make her decision to not withstand the Hauptmann's constructive suggestions particularly relevant. The narrator's description reveals that she accepts and respects the Hauptmann's superior expertise and intellect with which Eduard also agrees ("jene Recht hatten," "sie konnte [...] das Neue nicht ganz abweisen" Goethe 292). However, it is interesting to note that the narrator offers a complimentary description of Charlotte's reaction by using expressions like "geistreich" and "schnell einsehen."

The narrator's flattering summary of Charlotte's ambivalent thought process can be perceived as the depiction of a superior subjective position similar to that of the Hauptmann. Goethe's description of this important scene suggests a hierarchic relationship between Charlotte and the Hauptmann, but the detailed depiction of her ability to evaluate the situation on the basis of reason can also be interpreted as implied partnership with the Hauptmann rather than a relationship defined exclusively through his dominance and her compliance. Goethe's portrayal of Charlotte both in her marriage and in her friendship with the Hauptmann shows her as a female character whose traits and actions resist precise and fixed gender categories.

From a Kristevian vantage point, Charlotte's thought process indicates the simultaneous presence of two conflicting poles of her consciousness. One pole is represented by her rejection of the Hauptmann's critique. This denial is signaled by narrative references to her emotional state with adjectives such as "bewegt, verletzt, verdrießlich" (Goethe 292). Charlotte's rejection is also revealed by her urge to defend her creation: "sie verteidigte ihre kleine Schöpfung" (Goethe 292). Besides her emotional reaction, the other pole of her consciousness is displayed by her ability to formulate a rational judgment about the Hauptmann's correctness and about the legitimacy of his critique: "[sie] konnte das Neue nicht ganz abweisen" (Goethe 292). Charlotte's ability to suppress and gain control over her surfacing desire to reject the Hauptmann shows her as a female subject who operates in the symbolic realm and is capable of meaningful signification. However, if considered through the lens of Kristeva's theory, the strong emotions that the Hauptmann's critique initiates in Charlotte can also be viewed as signs

of surfacing semiotic operations: Kristeva characterizes these operations as discharges of unconscious drives and energies that ‘attack’ the symbolic mode of representation while threatening to jeopardize its equilibrium. As Kristeva’s puts it in Revolution in Poetic Language (1974),

[n]ot only is symbolic, thetic unity divided (into signifier and signified), but this division is itself the result of a break that puts a heterogeneous functioning in the position of signifier. This functioning is the instinctual semiotic, preceding meaning and signification, mobile, amorphous, but already regulated [...]. In the speaking subject, fantasies articulate this irruption of drives within the realm of the signifier; they disrupt the signifier and shift the metonymy of desire, which acts within the place of the Other, onto a jouissance that divests the object and turns back toward the autoerotic body. (Revolution 49)⁹²

In the context of Die Wahlverwandtschaften, it is important to consider that Freud’s revolutionary theory of the unconscious – that served as a significant source of Kristeva’s theory of the “subject-in-process” – was first published approximately a century after Goethe’s novel. Since the late Enlightenment tradition advocated the concept of unified transcendental consciousness that was exclusively marked as masculine, Goethe’s ambiguous depiction of Charlotte as a woman who fluctuates between, in Kristeva’s terminology, symbolic position/judgment and semiotic rejection can be perceived as atypical and uncommon on two accounts: Firstly, this representation of the human consciousness goes against the late Enlightenment belief in a unified/

⁹² Julia Kristeva, Revolution in Poetic Language, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

transcendental human subjectivity; secondly the fact that Goethe portrays Charlotte as a central female figure who embodies this internal dialectic of human consciousness further problematizes rigid gender definitions of his time.

I consider Goethe's detailed depiction of the evolution of Charlotte's close friendship with the Hauptmann as part of his narrative experiment in which Goethe may have intended not only to test the viability of models of femininity but to also challenge the stability of the late Enlightenment social order. This romantic friendship is crucial since her acceptance of and respect for his authority imply that her independent position in marriage may undergo yet another shift toward a more dependent and compliant mode of existence. The unfolding friendship suggests that Charlotte voluntarily assumes the subordinate role of a mentee – a typical gender position for women of her time – as the voice of the narrator also implied in the opening paragraph of the novel:

Die Einrichtung war gemacht, die Arbeit rasch angefangen, der Hauptmann immer gegenwärtig, und Charlotte nunmehr fast täglich Zeuge seines ernsten und bestimmten Sinnes. Auch er lernte sie näher kennen, und beiden wurde es leicht, zusammen zu wirken und etwas zustande zu bringen.

Es ist mit den Geschäften wie mit dem Tanze; Personen die gleichen Schritt halten, müssen sich unentbehrlich werden; ein wechselseitiges Wohlwollen muß notwendig daraus entspringen, und daß Charlotte dem Hauptmann, seitdem sie ihn näher kennen gelernt, wirklich wohlwollte, davon war ein sicherer Beweis, daß sie ihn einen schönen Ruheplatz, den sie bei ihren ersten Anlagen besonders ausgesucht und verziert hatte, der aber seinem Pfade entgegenstand, ganz gelassen

zerstören ließ, ohne auch nur die mindeste unangenehme Empfindung dabei zu haben. (Goethe 319)

This scene suggests a hierarchic educational and intellectual connection between the Hauptmann and Charlotte in which, due to her calm acceptance of the Hauptmann's destruction of her resting place ("Ruheplatz"), Charlotte is depicted as his compliant counterpart. Based on Goethe's depiction of the Hauptmann, his character could stand for the rules and prohibitions that determine the Law of the social order; yet, this seemingly conventional division of gender roles between the Hauptmann and Charlotte can only create a temporary equilibrium, partly because of the Hauptmann's problematic behavior in relation to Charlotte and because of the ethical issues that the relationship raises.

Let me first focus on some situations, in which the Hauptmann's behavior can be perceived as problematic if we consider him as the symbolic representation of the rules of the symbolic order. Whereas his actions tie the Hauptmann to justice and morality, i.e., the Law of the Father, his relationship with Charlotte also brings about situations that challenge his authority and dominance. In this context, the scene in which the Hauptmann and Charlotte witness Eduard's and Ottilie's joint musical performance is important because of the narrator's emphasis on the former pair's awareness and understanding of potentially dangerous and detrimental consequences:

Auch diesem wundersamen, unerwarteten Begegnis [dem gemeinsamen Musikspiel Ottilies und Eduards, Z.R.] sahen der Hauptmann und Charlotte stillschweigend mit einer Empfindung zu, wie man oft kindische Handlungen betrachtet, die man wegen ihrer besorglichen Folgen gerade nicht billigt und doch

nicht schelten kann, ja vielleicht beneiden muß. Denn eigentlich war die Neigung dieser beiden eben so gut im Wachsen als jene, und vielleicht nur noch gefährlicher dadurch, daß beide ernster, sicherer von sich selbst, sich zu halten fähiger waren. (Goethe 328-329)

In this scene, the Hauptmann and Charlotte are referred to as a unit, i.e., belonging together, while witnessing Otilie's and Eduard's musical performance. In this episode, there are no references to the hierarchic relationship between Charlotte and the Hauptmann. They are both portrayed as serious and self-confident characters equally capable of self-control and self-discipline.

According to Kristeva, in the symbolic mode of representation the speaking subject experiences repeated disruptions in its temporarily harmonious existence due to expulsions of pre-verbal drives that "dissolve the linguistic sign and its system (word, syntax)" ("The Subject in Process" 134).⁹³ At the same time, the semiotic mode of representation is tied to the "chora" that Kristeva also describes as the "non-verbal semiotic articulation of the process [of subjectivity formation, Z.R.]." Kristeva further claims that "music or architecture might provide metaphors better suited to designate it [the semiotic chora, Z.R.] than grammatical categories of linguistics which it actually reorganizes" ("The Subject in Process" 142).

If we consider Kristeva's distinction between the semiotic and symbolic modes of representation and their simultaneous presence in the symbolic modality, Charlotte's and the Hauptmann's awareness of the potential peril juxtaposed against their inability to

⁹³ Julia Kristeva "The Subject in Process" *The Tel Quel Reader* ed. Patrick Ffrench and Roland François Lack (New York: Routledge, 1998) 133-178.

verbalize their moral judgment show them both as subjects who operate in the symbolic realm. At the same time however, they also experience a significant disruption in their controlled and censored existence as romantic emotions surface that are defined as unethical according to the Law. Since the narrator points out that a relationship is forming between Charlotte and the Hauptmann similar to the attraction between Otilie and Eduard, both Charlotte's and the Hauptmann's silence can be interpreted as the signifier of their inability to censor and oppress their desires/emotions that qualify as socially unacceptable.

The actions of Charlotte and the Hauptmann suggest that they both formulate a judgment/position with regard to Otilie's and Eduard's "kindische Handlungen," and yet they immediately reject this position by remaining silent.⁹⁴ I therefore believe that the Hauptmann's earlier positioning that I correlated with the representation of the Law of the Father/the symbolic order is now challenged and put to the test by his developing and temporarily uncensored affection for Charlotte.

The episode of Otilie's and Eduard's musical performance is replicated in a modified format in the scene when Charlotte and the Hauptmann play their instruments together:

⁹⁴ In Revolution in Poetic Language ([1974] 1984), Kristeva maintains that while rejection is a primary process and is tied to the semiotic mode of representation as an innate condition for language acquisition, judgment and position are symbolic because they represent someone for another position: "It may be hypothesized that certain semiotic articulations are transmitted through the biological code or physiological 'memory' and thus form the inborn bases of the symbolic function. Indeed, one branch of generative linguistics asserts the principle of innate language universals. As it will become apparent in what follows, however, the *symbolic* – therefore syntax and all linguistic categories – is a social effect of the relation to the other, established through the objective constraints of biological (including sexual) differences and concrete, historical family structures. Genetic programmings are necessarily semiotic: they include the primary processes such as displacement and condensation, absorption and repulsion, **rejection** and stasis all of which function as innate preconditions, 'memorable' by the species, for language acquisition" (Revolution 29).

Eduard [...] [rief] den Hauptmann eines Abends [auf], seine Violine hervorzunehmen und Charlotten bei dem Klavier zu begleiten. Der Hauptmann konnte dem allgemeinen Verlangen nicht widerstehen, und so führten beide, mit Empfindung, Behagen und Freiheit, eins der schwersten Musikstücke zusammen auf, daß es ihnen und dem zuhörenden Paar zum größten Vergnügen gereichte. (Goethe 329-330)

Their musical collaboration is set apart from Otilie's and Eduard's when the narrator stresses the complexity of the piece and the remarkable quality of their performance. In this scene, music becomes the medium of communication between Charlotte and the Hauptmann; it replaces syntax-driven linguistic expression. In Kristeva's description of the semiotic modality, drives manifest themselves through music, rhythm, and sounds. If we further consider Kristeva's framework, it can be concluded that the dominance of music as the means of communication invokes previous narrative implications that the Hauptmann and Charlotte undergo moments defined by the disruptions of semiotic discharges of otherwise repressed and censored desires such as their attraction to one another. According to Kristeva, such semiotic operations not only disrupt but also threaten the unified and censored existence of the symbolic subject of signification.

The forceful presence of semiotic operations in Charlotte's and the Hauptmann's consciousness can also be perceived through word choices such as "Empfindung," "Behagen" and "Freiheit" (Goethe 329). These nouns reveal the liberating nature of uncensored emotions and the surfacing of semiotic drives and energy discharges that –

based on Kristeva's framework – disrupt and endanger the superego's censorship and the ego's compliance with prohibitions and taboos dictated by the Law of the Father/Phallus.

Similarly to Charlotte, the Hauptmann's actions can be interpreted as attempts by Goethe to show him as an ambivalent and divided rather than a unified subject. It is important to point out that Goethe's ambivalent portrayal of this pair's fluctuation between a seemingly unified self-censored existence and temporary signs of inner division can be viewed as a necessary precondition for change and development in these characters. If read in the context of Kristeva's concept of the "subject-in-process," Goethe's depiction of Charlotte and the Hauptmann can be understood as an attempt to highlight the dialectic and intertwining connection between the semiotic and the symbolic modes of representation. A lucid summary of this important interconnection between the semiotic and the symbolic in Kristeva's methodology is provided by Oliver who writes: "The semiotic gives rise to, and challenges, the symbolic. [...] Without the symbolic we have only delirium or nature, without the semiotic, language would be completely empty, if not impossible. We would have no reason to speak if it weren't for semiotic drive force" ("Feminist Revolutions" 96).

Based on the above, it can be concluded that Kristeva's theory of subject formation and her concept of the "subject-in-process" can, indeed, shed new light on subjectivity formation in Charlotte and the Hauptmann as a dialectic evolutionary process. It is important to note that Goethe's portrayal of Charlotte's evolution is intertwined with that of the Hauptmann since the narrator repeatedly refers to both of them at the same time when describing their impressions and feelings.

The intimate friendship between Charlotte and the Hauptmann reaches its peak when they take a boat ride together on one evening:

Als Eduard ans Ufer springend den Kahn vom Lande stieß, Gattin und Freund dem schwankenden Element selbst überantwortete, sah nunmehr Charlotte den Mann, um den sie im Stillen schon so viel gelitten hatte, in der Dämmerung vor sich sitzen und durch die Führung zweier Ruder das Fahrzeug in beliebiger Richtung fortbewegen. (Goethe 356)

I consider this scene as a significant turning point in the novel because their actions and utterances reflect distinct ways of coping with overwhelming emotions that are considered unethical and that can be perceived as reduplications of the feelings displayed in both musical scenes.

It is important to note that the events are recounted from Charlotte's perspective, and the narrator describes her impressions and emotions tied to the encounter with the Hauptmann after some time of solitary deliberation: "Charlotte suchte bald in ihr Schlafzimmer zu gelangen, um sich der Erinnerung dessen zu überlassen, was diesen Abend zwischen ihr und dem Hauptmann vorgegangen war" (Goethe 356). If read on the basis of Kristeva's theory, Charlotte's reflective evaluation can be interpreted as an accentuation of her ability to self-censor, as 'required' by the Law. In depicting this scene from Charlotte's perspective and in introducing her reflective thought process, Goethe chooses to emphasize her decisive and influential role in the final outcome of this unethical/forbidden affiliation between her and the Hauptmann.

This detail becomes especially relevant because I have previously concluded that, in light of Kristeva's framework, the Hauptmann serves as the representation of the Law. At the same time, I have also shown that after some initial resistance, Charlotte willingly submits to the Hauptmann's superior position and accepts his authority. Despite all of the above, Goethe deprives him of linguistic expression and refrains from moral censorship while at the same time emphasizing Charlotte's perspective and defining this scene through her 'voice.'

When the circumstances of the boat ride are revealed, the narrator offers a profound illustration of Charlotte's impressions of the Hauptmann and the powerful emotions that had overcome her during this encounter:

Das Kreisen des Kahns, das Plätschern der Ruder, der über den Wasserspiegel
hinschauernde Windhauch, das Säuseln der Rohre, das letzte Schweben der
Vögel, das Blinken und Wiederblinken der ersten Sterne, alles hatte etwas
Geisterhaftes in dieser allgemeinen Stille. Es schien ihr, der Freund führe sie weit
weg, um sie allein auszusetzen, sie allein zu lassen. Eine wunderbare Bewegung
war in ihrem Inneren, und sie konnte nicht weinen. (Goethe 356-357)

Both the ghostly ("geisterhaft") atmosphere of the boat ride and the element of water that surrounds the friends are often associated with the unconscious force of the human psyche.⁹⁵ I devote attention to the water symbolism because the element of water is often

⁹⁵ In this dissertation, my primary focus is on Goethe's depiction of the characters' identity development and therefore I concentrate on the symbolic associations that tie water and the human unconscious together. However, in the context of the complex symbolism associated with the natural element of water I find it also important to mention that water was an important literary symbol in the works of authors of German Romanticism ("deutsche Romantik"). In her book, *Zeichensprache der Romantik* (Heidelberg: Lothar Stiehm Verlag, 1967), Marianne Thalmann offers an illustration of the central role that the imagery of nature, i.e., the picture of a landscape, and as part of it, water as symbol played in the literature of German

associated with the human unconscious. I also seek to illustrate that the connection between water and the human unconscious reaches beyond the field of psychoanalysis.

In A Dictionary of Symbols (1976), J. E. Cirlot points out that

[i]n a general sense, the concept of 'water' stands, of course, for all liquid matter. Moreover, the primeval waters, the image of prime matter, also contained all solid bodies before they acquired form and rigidity. For this reason, the alchemists gave the name of 'water' to quicksilver in its first stage of transmutation, and, by analogy, also to the 'fluid body' of man. This 'fluid body' is interpreted by modern psychology as a symbol of the unconscious, that is, of the non-formal, dynamic, motivating female side of the personality. [...] Whether we take water as a symbol of the collective or of the personal unconscious, or else as an element of mediation and dissolution, it is obvious that this symbolism is an expression of the vital potential of the psyche, of the struggles of the psychic depths, to find a way of formulating a clear message comprehensible to the consciousness. (Cirlot 364- 366)⁹⁶

Romanticism when she says: "[J]unge Menschen [haben] nie so innig und so überlegen von den Gebirgen, Gestirnen und Labyrinthen gesprochen, von den Knoten und Kräften der Dinge. [...] Ein Landschaftsbild beginnt mit der aktiven welligen Linie des Wassers, mit einem sich immer verändernden Bewegungselement aus der Spannung gestaltloser Kräfte, die jede Gestalt haben können. Mit dem 'Geheimnis des Flüssigen' (Novalis, 133) fängt sozusagen jede romantische Landschaft an. Tieck gibt den Nuancen und Schattierungen immer neue Namen. Der blaue Fluß ist das geistige Leben der Landschaft, Brunnen die kunstvolle Sprache der Städte. Er kennt das Sanfte und Sehnsüchtige des ruhigen Wassers in Teichen und Bächen [...]. Wasser ist Spiegel, in dem das Gespiegelte wirklicher wird als die Wirklichkeit. [...] Es gibt keine Erzählung der Romantiker, kein Märchen ohne Bäche, Flüsse, Meere. Sie haben keinen Namen, sie sind nicht geographisch deklariert, sie sind einfach 'die Augen der Landschaft' (Novalis, 239), die die Gegend aufschließen. Sie können dahingleiten, sie können mit positivem oder negativem Druck das Bild steigern, in die Höhe treiben und den unheimlichen Wellengang erreichen [...]. (Thalmann 34-35) Thalmann quotes directly from Novalis' Die Lehrlinge zu Sais (1798).

⁹⁶ J.E. Cirlot A Dictionary of Symbols (New York: Philosophical Library 1976).

Charlotte's silence, the wondersome feeling of motion inside herself, the rhythm of nature, and the circular passage of the boat create an ambiance that, in light of Kristeva's theory, can be perceived as a space that bears resemblance to the semiotic "chora."

Kristeva describes the semiotic "chora" as a rhythmic space and "a nonexpressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated" (Revolution 25). Thus, these details in the narrative can be perceived as implications of the temporarily dominant presence of surfacing semiotic operations in Charlotte's censored symbolic existence.

For a while, the Hauptmann navigates the boat and determines its direction while both he and Charlotte relinquish any form of linguistic expression. Nevertheless, the Hauptmann's control diminishes when Charlotte suddenly expresses her wish to end the ride and asks him to take the boat to shore: "Es ergriff sie eine große Wehmut, eine Ungeduld; sie bat ihn, baldmöglichst zu landen und mit ihr nach dem Schlosse zurückzukehren" (Goethe 357). If we view the boat ride as an episode that may represent the semiotic realm and may signify Charlotte's and the Hauptmann's unconscious drives, Charlotte's statement can also be perceived as a sign of the parallel forceful presence of the symbolic function in her ego. The simultaneous presence of both semiotic and symbolic elements in the way Charlotte's behavior is depicted can be interpreted as a sign of her portrayal as a "subject-in-process." Shortly after Charlotte's articulation of her wish to leave the water, the Hauptmann loses control over the boat:

Dunkel fing es an zu werden, [der Hauptmann] richtete seinen Lauf dahin, wo er einen bequemen Ort zum Aussteigen vermutete und den Fußpfad nicht entfernt

wußte, der nach dem Schlosse führte. Aber auch von dieser Bahn wurde er einigermaßen abgelenkt, als Charlotte mit einer Art von Ängstlichkeit den Wunsch wiederholte, bald am Lande zu sein. Er näherte sich mit erneuerten Anstrengungen dem Ufer, aber leider fühlte er sich in einiger Entfernung davon angehalten; er hatte sich fest gefahren und seine Bemühungen wieder los zu kommen waren vergebens. (Goethe 357)

If read on the basis of Kristeva's theory, Charlotte's will to return to land coupled with the Hauptmann's failed attempt to navigate the boat back to shore can be interpreted as signs of a significant shift in the dynamics of their relationship: The Hauptmann loses his dominant and leading position, while Charlotte gradually takes control of the further outcome of their encounter and the relationship as a whole.

Charlotte gains even more control over the channeling of this relationship when the Hauptmann embraces and then kisses her:

[Der Hauptmann] hielt sie fest und drückte sie an sich. Erst auf einem Rasenabhang ließ er sie nieder, nicht ohne Bewegung und Verwirrung. Sie lag noch an seinem Halse; er schloß sie aufs neue in seine Arme und drückte einen lebhaften Kuß auf ihre Lippen; aber auch im Augenblick lag er zu ihren Füßen, drückte seinen Mund auf ihre Hand und rief: Charlotte, werden Sie mir vergeben? (Goethe 358)

Since Goethe's portrayal of the Hauptmann can be interpreted as a representation of the authority and prohibitory power of the symbolic Father, it is important to point out that his kiss signifies an unethical act according to the Law. Based on his simultaneous

awareness of the moral implications of his affection for Charlotte and on his inability to control his desire as manifested in the kiss, I argue that this episode postulates a problematization of the Hauptmann's moral authority and that it reveals the contradictory nature of the social order the Hauptmann has been portrayed to represent.

At the same time, the narrator depicts Charlotte as the one who can regain control over her desire for the Hauptmann:

Der Kuß, den der Freund gewagt, den sie ihm beinahe zurück gegeben, brachte Charlotten wieder zu sich selbst. Sie drückte seine Hand, aber sie hob ihn nicht auf. Doch indem sie sich zu ihm hinunterneigte und eine Hand auf seine Schultern legte, rief sie aus: Daß dieser Augenblick in unserm Leben Epoche mache, können wir nicht verhindern; aber daß sie unser wert sei, hängt von uns ab. Sie müssen scheiden, lieber Freund, und Sie werden scheiden. [...] Nur in sofern kann ich Ihnen, kann ich mir verzeihen, wenn wir den Mut haben unsre Lage zu ändern, da es von uns nicht abhängt unsre Besinnung zu ändern. (Goethe 358)

Charlotte dominates the scene verbally and not only takes control over her own emotions but also makes the decision about necessary further actions. After the Hauptmann's kiss followed by his apology, he remains mute for the rest of the encounter. Charlotte, however, lays out her evaluation of their behavior and concludes that the Hauptmann has to depart.

If read on the basis of Kristeva, Charlotte's behavior can be interpreted as an act of moral censorship that Kristeva ties to the Law of the symbolic order. This would also mean that Charlotte is portrayed as able to gain control over and oppress expulsions of

unconscious drives that are considered forbidden and/or taboo in the social order. The narrator openly refers to Charlotte's inner division between her emotional attachment to the Hauptmann as well as her commitment to Eduard and shows her as a character that is capable of settling this internal conflict and recreating a state of harmony in her consciousness:

Nun stand sie in ihrem Schlafzimmer, wo sie sich als Gattin Eduards empfinden und betrachten mußte. Ihr kam bei diesen Widersprüchen ihr tüchtiger und durchs Leben mannigfaltig geübter Charakter zur Hülfe. Immer gewohnt sich ihrer selbst bewußt zu sein, sich selbst zu gebieten, ward es ihr auch jetzt nicht schwer, durch ernste Betrachtung sich dem erwünschten Gleichgewichte zu nähern [...] Gerührt kniete sie nieder, sie wiederholte den Schwur den sie Eduarden vor dem Altar getan. Freundschaft, Neigung, Entsagen gingen vor ihr in heitern Bildern vorüber. Sie fühlte sich innerlich wieder hergestellt. (Goethe 358-359)

Kristeva defines the "subject-in-process" as symbolized and yet never completely unitary due to repeated disruptions by semiotic operations that challenge and endanger its censored existence.⁹⁷ If read in the light of Kristeva's definition of the subject, Charlotte's verbal dominance after the kiss followed by her rational reflective process can be viewed as Goethe's way to show that she can regain self-control and censorship of her

⁹⁷ Kristeva summarizes her notion of the "subject-in-process" as follows: "Our positing of the semiotic is obviously inseparable from a theory of the subject that takes into account the Freudian positing of the unconscious. We view the subject in language as decentering the transcendental ego, cutting through it, and opening it up to a dialectic in which its syntactic and categorical understanding is merely the liminary moment of the process, which is itself always acted upon by the relation of the 'signifier'" (*Revolution* 30). Kristeva continues her elaborations when, a few pages later, she writes: "We shall see that when the speaking subject is no longer considered a phenomenological transcendental ego nor the Cartesian ego but rather a *subject in process/on trial* [*sujet en procès*], as is the case in the practice of the *text*, deep structure or at least transformational rules are disturbed and, with them, the possibility of semantic/or grammatical categorical interpretation" (*Revolution* 37).

own actions so that the equilibrium of the Law can be restored. Therefore, it can be concluded that Charlotte, and not the Hauptmann, as the figure who reinstates the Law and assumes a position of authority. Due to both Eduard's and the Hauptmann's extended absence from the narrative, Charlotte, in my view, attains – at least temporarily – overall dominance on the estate. I find it also important to consider that in the context of the 18th century, the social consequences of infidelity would have been detrimental and even devastating to Charlotte's socially acclaimed existence. At the same time, a romantic relationship prior to marriage would have been a socially tolerable act with no long-lasting impact on the Hauptmann's social recognition. Therefore, besides my above interpretation, such considerations might be concealed in Goethe's portrayal of Charlotte's behavior as well.

In light of my analysis in this chapter, I have concluded that in the 'Charlotte—Hauptmann—Eduard' character constellation, Goethe portrays Charlotte as a dominant and evolving female figure, whose actions and behavior pattern are substantially affected by her interactions with Eduard and the Hauptmann. At the same time, I have also concluded that Goethe places her into the epicenter of this character grouping because her actions and utterances in relation to both male characters can also be perceived as catalysts of change and evolution in both Eduard and the Hauptmann. In my view, Charlotte is depicted as a character of central importance not only because she gradually assumes more and more authority on the estate but also because she is shown to assume the maternal function and to take on the representation of paternal authority, morality, and thus the Law in the environment of the estate. By the time Eduard and the

Hauptmann depart, Goethe's text undeniably portrays Charlotte – by virtue of her commitment to morality and to the restitution of the original harmony on the estate – as the signifier of authority and the protector of order on the estate. The fact that Charlotte's character is placed into an influential leading position traditionally associated with men in the social discourse of his time reinforces my hypothesis that in Die Wahlverwandtschaften, Goethe may have aimed at experimenting with portrayals of femininity that deviate from patriarchal social representations of feminine ideals in the late Enlightenment era. Goethe's experimental approach to the representation of feminine identity is further highlighted by the dominant presence of the three central female characters and the extended absence of the focal male figures in the second part of the novel. The narrative focus takes an undeniable shift towards the distinct and intertwined depiction of Charlotte's, Luciane's and Otilie's characters, and thus, part two of the novel can be perceived as a discourse that is predominantly shaped by the actions, utterances, and interactions of these three women.

As Eduard and the Hauptmann depart, the unity of their symbolic family with Charlotte also disperses. At the same time, another grouping of characters takes shape that ties Charlotte, Luciane, and Otilie into a symbolic family unit. In this constellation, Charlotte is again the mother figure for both Luciane and Otilie. What makes this 'new' configuration interesting and worthy of further investigation is that Charlotte is not only depicted as the central figure of this 'new' character constellation but she is also placed into the epicenter of the entire narrative as both the representation of the maternal function and as the signifier of the Law, i.e., the symbolic father that stands for the rules

and prohibitions of the symbolic order. Therefore, the way Goethe's narrative evolves, Charlotte can be perceived as the central character of the 'Charlotte—Luciane—Otilie' constellation who unites the maternal function with paternal authority in an unconventional family that lacks a male paternal figure.

Based on the above, in Section B of this dissertation, I first devote my attention to the analysis of Goethe's depiction of the dynamics of this exclusively female character grouping in order to compare Luciane's, Otilie's, and Charlotte's multifaceted portrayals. Since the characterization of the dynamics that govern Charlotte's and Otilie's relationship is also affected by their relationship with Eduard and their shared maternal care for Otto, I also devote considerable attention to the character groupings 'Charlotte—Otilie—Eduard' and 'Charlotte—Otilie—Otto.' My motivation is to shed light on whether the overall representation of femininity in Die Wahlverwandtschaften – as displayed in the complex and ambiguous portrayals of Charlotte, Luciane, and Otilie – can be perceived as Goethe's way to set himself apart from late Enlightenment representations of feminine ideals and from prevalent social practices of his lifetime.

Section B: Charlotte in a Family of Mother and Daughters

1. Setting the Stage for an Experiment with Multiple Models of Femininity

In Section A, Chapter 4, I have concluded that by the time Eduard and the Hauptmann leave the estate Charlotte becomes the representation of authority on the entire estate, and her character is associated with the Law. Due to Eduard's and the Hauptmann's departure from the estate, the initial character constellation or symbolic family unit centered around Charlotte disperses, and the narrative focus shifts to Charlotte's role as the mother figure in another character constellation that unites her with Luciane and Ottilie. Goethe's depiction of this family of mother and daughters implies a void because the position of the male father figure remains unfilled. Based on the implications of this 'empty' function and on Charlotte's association with authority on the estate, she is shown to combine the maternal and paternal function in relation to both Luciane and Ottilie, and thus, she acts as the single parental figure for both girls. Therefore, through the lens of Kristeva's theory, Charlotte seems to unite maternal love/care with regulating and censoring authority, a function that is fulfilled by the male paternal figure in 'conventional' families.

In the context of Goethe's representation of femininity in Die Wahlverwandtschaften, I consider it a significant detail that in the second part of the novel, a mother—daughter—daughter constellation is placed into the center of the narrative from which men are, for the most part, excluded. With the above in mind, I seek to analyze the

dynamics that govern the characters' interactions in this family unit because Goethe's text offers and juxtaposes three distinct yet closely interrelated portrayals of feminine identity as an experiment and test in which he puts the viability of these alternate models against the prevalent social discourse. Situating these women in isolated settings such as the estate and the boarding school, where they are detached from society, enhances the experimental character of the portrayal of femininity in the novel.

In light of the above, it is essential to examine Goethe's portrayal of all three female figures' actions, utterances, and behavior patterns and correlate the models of womanhood they represent with late Enlightenment social definitions of feminine ideals. Furthermore, as Goethe places his female characters into various groupings and also puts strong emphasis on the portrayal of their interactions with other characters, I believe that the dynamics that govern their relationships need to be examined as well. In my view, such an analysis can shed new light on Goethe's overall portrayal of femininity in this novel as well as on his attitude towards social practices that were dominant in his lifetime.

With the mother—daughter—daughter family constellation in mind, it is necessary to take note of two additional groupings, namely 'Charlotte—Otilie—Eduard' and 'Charlotte—Otilie—Otto,' because Charlotte's and Otilie's behavior patterns as well as their relationship with one another are strongly affected by the way they are shown to relate to and interact with Eduard and Otto. Although the romantic affection between Otilie and Eduard is not one of the major focal points of this dissertation, I will discuss some aspects of this relationship later when I concentrate on Goethe's depiction

of the dynamics of Charlotte's and Otilie's bond. Furthermore, Goethe portrays the central female characters in such a way that they represent dynamic and gradually changing models of femininity. Thus, it is also important to look at Goethe's characterization of the evolution in Charlotte's, Luciane's, and Otilie's identities in order to offer a comprehensive interpretation of how femininity is portrayed in this novel.

I argue that not one single female character but the interrelated portrayal of all three female figures collectively shapes the discourse on femininity in the novel. Thus, I therefore first look at Luciane's and Otilie's introductory portrayals both of which center on their behavior patterns and academic experience in the boarding school. I also ask what opinion Charlotte expresses about both girls' school experience and how this opinion influences our image of her. More specifically, I will investigate what abilities and affinities Charlotte's statements foster and support in her daughter and niece and which of their attributes evoke concerns and discomfort in her.

Luciane and Otilie are first introduced by Charlotte, and then via letters by their primary caretakers and educators, i.e., the headmistress and the schoolmaster. Both girls are physically and verbally absent during their introduction. Their physical and verbal absence can be perceived as a sign of their dependent position both in their relationship with Charlotte and in the boarding school context.

Through the lens of Kristeva's framework, Charlotte's portrayal as the single decision maker and parental figure in her bond with Luciane and Otilie invokes the notion of the imaginary father, the entity that unites maternal love/care with regulation that is associated with the symbolic father and the Law of the social order. Considering

that Charlotte is shown to assume a parental role in which maternal love and paternal authority are united both in relation to Eduard as well as Luciane and Otilie, it can be argued that Goethe's narrative shapes a discourse of gender relations in which socially defined traditional gender boundaries are repeatedly transgressed. Goethe's initial portrayal of Luciane and Otilie in the boarding school as two young women with clearly opposite attributes and behavior patterns can be perceived as his way to 'set the stage' for his narrative experiment in which he may have aimed at testing the viability of alternate and closely intertwined representations of femininity. In order to offer a thorough and comprehensive interpretation of Goethe's overall attitude towards late Enlightenment gender practices as postulated in this novel, it is, therefore, essential to first focus on how the dynamics of Luciane's and Otilie's relationship, their behavior patterns, and their academic progress are depicted. In this context, I also find it important to consider Goethe's characterization of Charlotte's reactions to the, in part, conflicting reports she receives from the headmistress and the schoolmaster about Luciane's and Otilie's behavior in the school.

An analysis of Luciane's and Otilie's introductory portrayals in the school and of the contradictory evaluations of their behavior patterns can reveal the complexities and ambiguities of Goethe's experimental portrayal of his female characters in this novel. Such an analysis can further provide valuable insights into how far Goethe may have intended to set himself apart from socially defined ideals of feminine identity.

Otilie and Luciane are described with clearly opposite character traits by Charlotte and the headmistress: While Luciane is depicted as an energetic and well liked

young girl who is also an excellent student, Ottilie is primarily characterized by her unwillingness to learn and develop new skills. In addition, both girls' behavior patterns are also evaluated by the headmistress and Charlotte: When Charlotte first mentions her daughter and niece in her conversation with Eduard, by referring to the headmistress' reports, she offers lengthy praise of Luciane's attributes and accomplishments:

Wenn Luciane, meine Tochter, die für die Welt geboren ist, sich dort [in der Pension, Z.R.] für die Welt bildet, wenn sie Sprachen, Geschichtliches und was sonst von Kenntnissen ihr mitgeteilt wird, so wie ihre Noten und Variationen vom Blatte wegspielt; wenn bei einer lebhaften Natur und bei einem glücklichen Gedächtnis sie, man möchte wohl sagen, alles vergißt und im Augenblicke sich an alles erinnert; wenn sie durch Freiheit des Betragens, Anmut im Tanze, schickliche Bequemlichkeit des Gesprächs sich vor allen auszeichnet, und durch ein angeborenes herrschendes Wesen sich zur Königin des kleinen Kreises macht; wenn die Vorsteherin dieser Anstalt sie als eine kleine Gottheit ansieht, [...] wenn die ersten Seiten ihrer Briefe und Monatsberichte immer nur Hymnen sind über die Vortrefflichkeit eines solchen Kindes [...]. (Goethe 280)

In contrast to such a detailed 'tribute' to Luciane's achievements and overall success, Charlotte briefly articulates the headmistress' concerns about Ottilie:

[S]o ist dagegen, was sie [die Vorsteherin, Z.R.] schließlich von Ottilien erwähnt, nur immer Entschuldigung auf Entschuldigung, daß ein übrigens so schön heranwachsendes Mädchen sich nicht entwickeln, keine Fähigkeiten und keine Fertigkeiten zeigen wolle. (Goethe 280)

In the following, I focus on two central aspects of the way Charlotte introduces Luciane and Otilie. First, I take a look at how far their initial depiction shows conformity to the late Enlightenment definition of idealized femininity. Then, I take into consideration how their behavior is evaluated by the school staff and Charlotte because an analysis of Goethe's juxtaposition of distinct perspectives regarding the assessment of Luciane and Otilie allows the readers to think in relative terms about Goethe's positioning of these characters.

I first analyze Otilie's portrayal in the boarding school and the distinct evaluations of her behavior patterns offered by Charlotte, the headmistress, and the schoolmaster. I then look at the assessments of Luciane's behavior and accomplishments in order to compare their actions, utterances, and behavior with Goethe's characterization of Charlotte in the first part of the novel.

Shortly after Charlotte's reference to the headmistress' assessment of Otilie and Luciane, the headmistress further depicts Otilie as modest, withdrawn, committed to service, and susceptible to physical pain:

Sie [Otilie, Z.R.] ist nach wie vor bescheiden und gefällig gegen andre; aber dieses Zurücktreten, diese Dienstbarkeit will mir nicht gefallen. Ew. Gnaden haben ihr neulich Geld und verschiedene Zeuge geschickt. Das erste hat sie angegriffen; die anderen liegen noch da, unberührt. Sie hält freilich ihre Sachen reinlich und gut, und scheint nur in diesem Sinn die Kleider zu wechseln. Auch kann ich ihre große Mäßigkeit im Essen und Trinken nicht loben. [...] Bei diesem allen kommt jedoch in Betrachtung, daß sie manchmal, wie ich erst spät erfahren

habe, Kopfwelh auf der linken Seite hat, das zwar vorübergeht, aber schmerzlich und bedeutend sein mag. (Goethe 293)

In her letter, the headmistress emphasizes Otilie's extreme modesty regarding her clothing, eating, and drinking habits; she also vocalizes her concern about and disappointment with Otilie's behavior. Besides mentioning Otilie's abstinence, the headmistress also refers to her sensitive physical condition that manifests itself in regularly recurring headaches.

I consider Otilie's portrayal in the boarding school complex and ambiguous because, on the one hand, the headmistress' evaluation shows her as a young woman who conforms to socially defined feminine ideals in the late Enlightenment. On the other hand however, the headmistress disapproves of and critiques Otilie's overly abstemious habits and her unwillingness to learn. The headmistress represents authority and is the leading 'voice' in the boarding school. Her disapproval of and concerns about Otilie's idealized feminine attributes suggest a disparity and inconsistency between the late 18th century social definition of gender characteristics and her expectations of the young girls with regard to behavior and academic performance in the school.

In light of the above, Goethe's narrative displays an apparent separation between the requirements in the school and patriarchal social practices in the late Enlightenment era, where men, and not women, were associated with leadership and authority. I, therefore, maintain that the headmistress and also Charlotte represent a distinct perspective that clearly deviates from the perspective represented by Campe and others regarding women's preferred qualities. It is also interesting to observe that Goethe's

portrayal of Ottilie's behavior patterns and of her attitude towards learning shows undeniable correlation with Campe's perspective on women's demeanour and education: Ottilie's physical weakness, extreme verbal and appetitive modesty, as well as her poor academic results make her into an 'optimal' representation of idealized feminine qualities.

In this context, one further significant detail is that not only the headmistress but also the schoolmaster reports to Charlotte about Ottilie's academic standing. The schoolmaster primarily points to traits in Ottilie's behavior that reflect conformity to women's roles in society as defined in the Goethe era:

So lange ich Ottilie unterrichte sehe ich sie immer gleichen Schrittes gehen, langsam, langsam vorwärts, nie zurück. Wenn es bei einem Kinde nötig ist, vom Anfange anzufangen, so ist es gewiß bei ihr. Was nicht aus dem Vorhergehenden folgt, begreift sie nicht. Sie steht unfähig, ja stöckisch vor einer leicht faßlichen Sache, die für sie mit nichts zusammenhängt. [...] Man hat über ihre Handschrift geklagt, über ihre Unfähigkeit die Regeln der Grammatik zu fassen. Ich habe diese Bechwerde näher untersucht: es ist wahr, sie schreibt langsam und steif wenn man so will, doch nicht zaghaft und ungestalt. Was ich ihr von der französischen Sprache, die zwar nicht mein Fach ist, schrittweise mitteilte, begriff sie leicht. Freilich ist es wunderbar, sie weiß vieles und recht gut, nur wenn man sie fragt, scheint sie nichts zu wissen.

Soll ich mit einer allgemeinen Bemerkung schließen, so möchte ich sagen: sie lernt nicht als eine die erzogen werden soll, sondern als eine die erziehen will; nicht als Schülerin, sondern als künftige Lehrerin. (Goethe 294-295)

Compared to other young girls in the boarding school, the schoolmaster's description indicates that Otilie makes slow progress and shows noticeable limitations when it comes to adapting to different teaching styles. He also stresses the importance of a suitable teaching style that fits Otilie's needs as the precondition of her success in learning. Goethe's indication that the schoolmaster devotes a lot of attention to Otilie's education suggests a mentor/mentee relationship between them and thus her dependence on her mentor/educator in matters of learning. The implications of such a hierarchic relationship between the schoolmaster and Otilie invoke Rousseau's characterization of the division of roles between Emil and Sophie with regard to education. In his model men are always placed into the role of the knowledgeable educator while women are expected to be passive listeners/learners. Considering Goethe's overall depiction of Otilie's poor academic performance, her modest eating habits, plain clothing style, as well as her withdrawal from verbal expression, Otilie can be perceived as a female figure who clearly represents feminine qualities that were associated with and 'required' from cultivated young woman in the late Enlightenment.

The fact that Otilie is shown to make a conscious choice to voluntarily withstand the offered education and to exercise extreme modesty in verbal expression, food consumption, and in her clothing further reinforces her portrayal as a representation of idealized feminine qualities in the late Enlightenment years because cultivating extreme

modesty in virtually all areas of life was viewed as a way to keep women's 'natural' tendency to excessivity under control. The schoolmaster's report highlights this conscious decision on Ottilie's side when he uses the adjective "stöckisch" in his description of Ottilie's inability to learn the rules of grammar and when he later says that Ottilie "[...] weiß vieles und recht gut, nur wenn man sie fragt, scheint sie nichts zu wissen" (Goethe 295). In light of the above, Goethe's text portrays Ottilie as a capable young adult with considerable intellect who chooses the path of extreme modesty that was defined as the precondition of women's acceptance and recognition in society.

Despite Ottilie's self-imposed intellectual limitations, the schoolmaster views her as a future educator ("künftige Lehrerin" Goethe 295) and contemplates her future with unmistakable optimism when he writes: "Es gibt auch verschlossene Früchte, die erst die rechten kernhaften sind, und die sich früher oder später zu einem schönen Leben entwickeln" (Goethe 294). When compared to the headmistress' critical and worrisome voice, the schoolmaster's assessment, according to which Ottilie's abilities are optimally suited for teaching, can be viewed as favorable and sympathetic. In my view, the way Goethe's distinction between the schoolmaster's appreciation for Ottilie's poor school performance and the headmistress' worrisome reaction suggests that the schoolmaster's 'voice' signifies a distinct perspective that stands in concordance with the gender relations as defined by prevalent social practices.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ It is interesting to observe that the schoolmaster's favorable view of Ottilie is echoed by the narrator's flattering, sympathetic, and at times even affectionate statements about Ottilie in subsequent chapters of the novel. The narrator's recurring comments reflect a highly favorable perception of Ottilie's modesty as well as of her commitment to domestic servitude. This similarity in the way the schoolmaster and the narrator are shown to relate to Ottilie is suggested, for example, in the narrator's characterization of Ottilie's activities after her arrival at the estate: "Ottilie war indessen schon völlig Herrin des Haushaltes, und wie

The differentiation between the headmistress' and the schoolmaster's assessment is also revealed in the text when the schoolmaster openly indicates his disagreement with the headmistress' concerns about Otilie's performance and behavior:

So muß ich wenigstens Sie nicht minder glücklich preisen, daß Ihnen in Ihrer Pflgetochter ein Kind beschert ist, das zum Wohl, zur Zufriedenheit anderer und gewiß auch zu seinem eigenen Glück geboren ward. Otilie ist fast unser einziger Zögling, über den ich mit unserer so sehr verehrten Vorsteherin nicht einig werden kann. (Goethe 294)

Through the lens of Kristeva's theory of subjectivity, Otilie's character represents a subject who operates in the symbolic modality: The schoolmaster's comments in which he points out how much Otilie knows and how well she is suited for becoming an educator can be interpreted as signs of her ability to take a position and participate in meaningful signification. At the same time, through the lens of Kristeva's theory, her conscious withdrawal from verbal expression coupled with her unwillingness/inability to learn grammatical rules tie her symbolized existence – that is defined by her submission to the rules and expectations of the social order – to the semiotic realm where, according to Kristeva's theory, the child's enunciations have no syntax yet, and they are described as sounds and rhythm: "Indifferent to language, enigmatic and feminine, this space underlying the written is rhythmic, unfettered, irreducible to its intelligible verbal translation; [the semiotic rhythm, Z.R.] is musical, anterior to judgment, but restrained by a single guarantee: syntax" (Revolution 29).

konnte es anders sein, bei ihrem stillen und sichern Betragen. Auch war ihre ganze Sinnesweise dem Hause und dem Häuslichen mehr als der Welt, mehr als dem Leben im Freien zugewendet" (Goethe 327).

In light of the above, it can be concluded that Goethe's depiction of Otilie's actions, learning habits, and behavior patterns in the boarding school suggests that while she is a clearly knowledgeable young girl capable of meaningful signification, i.e., operating in the symbolic realm, she is also depicted as a cultivated female character who consciously operates in the semiotic mode of signification and whose behavior in the boarding school conforms to the socially defined gender roles of the late Enlightenment. If considered through the lens of Kristeva, Otilie's portrayal shows her as a subject who, while fully 'equipped' to operate in the symbolic modality, consciously chooses to live in abstinence and to withdraw from signification. Otilie is, therefore, also shown to operate in the semiotic modality.

According to Kristeva, in traditional representations of femininity, the semiotic modality is considered as women's designated social space in the order of society; as part of their semiotic existence, women have been restricted to an 'unmouthed' semiotic existence in the position of the 'object,' i.e., the 'other.'⁹⁹ Women's arbitrary and 'scientifically' supported restriction to what Kristeva calls the semiotic mode of representation guaranteed that their 'natural' excessivity was kept under control and that they remained excluded from intellectual, economic, political, and professional production in the public sphere. Based on the above, Otilie's withdrawal from the use of

⁹⁹ In her essay entitled "Women's Time" (1977), Kristeva elaborates on the question: "[W]hat is our place in the social contract? If this contract, whose terms don't treat everyone in an equal fashion, bases itself upon an ultimately sacrificial relationship of separation and articulation of differences that serves to create meaning that can be communicated, what is our place in the order of sacrifice and/or language? [...] We can only speak of a structure observed in a sociohistorical context, that of Christian civilization and its secular manifestations. At the interior of this psychosymbolic structure, women feel rejected from language and the social bond, in which they discover neither the affects nor the meanings of the relationships they enjoy with nature, their bodies, their children's bodies, another woman, or a man" (*The Portable Kristeva* 360-361). In: Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time," *The Portable Kristeva* (New York: Columbia UP, 2002) 351-371.

language coupled with her service-driven existence and her extreme modesty with regard to food consumption and clothing make her into a symbolic representation of idealized femininity as defined in the late Enlightenment. While the schoolmaster and the narrator offer an overly favorable and complimentary illustration of Otilie's actions and general conduct, the same behavior raises alarm and concern in the headmistress and Charlotte. The way Goethe formulates two distinct and competing perspectives – represented by Charlotte's and the headmistress' utterances on the one hand, and by the schoolmaster's on the other – can be interpreted as Goethe's way to suggest that more than one reflection of the patriarchal social construct of his time can allow for thinking about gender relations in relative terms rather than viewing them as universal and absolute.

Parallel to Otilie's characterization, considerable attention is also devoted to Luciane's experience in the boarding school. As opposed to Otilie, Luciane is depicted as a vital, energetic, and poised girl with a dominant social presence and excellent verbal skills (Goethe 280).¹⁰⁰ Charlotte highlights Luciane's free and impetuous demeanor ("Freiheit des Betragens") as well as her academic excellence. Luciane's representative traits such as "lebhaft," "frei," and "herrschend" are juxtaposed with Otilie's compliant, submissive, and modest behavior. Charlotte's summary of the headmistress' highly satisfactory evaluation accentuates Luciane's self-confidence, excellent academic record, and verbal talent. She is described as "Königin des kleinen Kreises" and eine "kleine Gottheit," whose "Vortrefflichkeit" the headmistress repeatedly praises (Goethe 280). Furthermore, Charlotte also points out in her introduction of Luciane that she was born and is educated for the 'world' ("Wenn Luciane, meine Tochter, die für die Welt geboren

¹⁰⁰ The passage in which Luciane and Otilie are introduced by Charlotte is quoted on page 159 above.

ist, sich dort für die Welt bildet [...]” Goethe 280). This is an important statement because it suggests that, in contrast to their concerns about Otilie, Charlotte and the headmistress are shown to view the gregarious and verbally dominant Luciane as a young girl ready for life beyond the school.

After Charlotte’s characterization of Luciane’s most noticeable attributes, the headmistress focuses on her academic performance in her report when she writes to Charlotte:

Ihre Fräulein Tochter hat sich in jedem Sinne als die erste bewiesen. Die beiliegenden Zeugnisse, ihr eigener Brief, der die Beschreibung der Preise enthält die geworden sind, und zugleich das Vergnügen ausdrückt das sie über ein so glückliches Gelingen empfindet, wird Ihnen zur Beruhigung, ja zur Freude gereichen. Die meinige wird dadurch einigermaßen gemindert, daß ich voraussehe, wir werden nicht lange mehr Ursache haben, ein so weit vorgeschrittenes Frauenzimmer bei uns zurück zu halten. (Goethe 307)

The headmistress praises Luciane’s academic excellence and clearly indicates her ‘readiness’ to leave the boarding school and start her life in the societal order.

Considering her confidence in Luciane’s completed preparation for life beyond the school’s boundaries, it is interesting to observe that neither Charlotte nor the headmistress makes reference to Luciane’s affinity or preparedness for duties associated with being a wife and a mother or for domestic service. Campe and others define women’s primary roles in society through marriage, motherhood, and household management. In contrast, like in the case of Otilie’s evaluation, the headmistress’ and

Charlotte's favorable and praising assessment of Luciane shows a viewpoint to be clearly differentiated and set apart from the patriarchal definition of women's acceptance and recognition in the late Enlightenment social construct.

As in Otilie's characterization, Charlotte's and the headmistress' contentment with Luciane's overall behavior and examination results is juxtaposed with Goethe's indications of the schoolmaster's impressions. The schoolmaster's references to Luciane and more specifically to the dynamics of her interaction with Otilie represent, yet again, a noticeably different viewpoint: In his letter to Charlotte, he praises almost exclusively Otilie, and he is very hopeful about her future. When he eventually and briefly does mention Luciane though, he focuses on Luciane's condescending attitude toward Otilie:

Ihre Fräulein Tochter, gnädige Frau, sonst lebhaft und freimütig, war im Gefühl ihres heutigen Triumphs ausgelassen und übermütig. Sie sprang mit ihren Preisen und Zeugnissen in den Zimmern herum, und schüttelte sie auch Otilien vor dem Gesicht. Du bist heute schlecht gefahren! rief sie aus. Ganz gelassen antwortete Otilie: es ist doch nicht der letzte Prüfungstag. Und doch wirst du immer die letzte bleiben! rief die Fräulein und sprang hinweg. (Goethe 309-310)

It is interesting to observe that the schoolmaster, in his brief reference to Luciane, highlights her arrogance, loudness, and confidence in a one-time incident. The schoolmaster's viewpoint shows undeniable correlation with the patriarchal definition of idealized femininity and gender relations in the late Enlightenment: Luciane's actions, attributes, and demeanour can hardly fulfill late Enlightenment expectations of women and their roles in relation to men, i.e., their husbands.

What makes Luciane's characterization especially interesting in the context of Goethe's discourse on femininity in his Wahlverwandtschaften is that, as in Otilie's case, Luciane makes the opposite impression on Charlotte and the headmistress. Since the headmistress directs the institution and Charlotte exercises decisive power as single parental figure, their 'voices' signify more authority and dominance in the environment of the boarding school than the 'voice' of the schoolmaster. I argue that Goethe, in his novel, displays a distinct perspective that promotes different talents and character traits in young women than those advocated by Campe and other late Enlightenment thinkers. By juxtaposing two discrete and competing viewpoints, Goethe creates a narrative discourse in which the universal validity of gender characteristics and gender relations as promoted in late Enlightenment gender theories is disputed and in which gender boundaries are defined less rigidly.

I have indicated earlier in this chapter that, if analyzed through the lens of Kristeva, Goethe portrays Otilie in the boarding school as a young adult who operates under social censorship and is primarily characterized by her self-imposed repression of oral drives. In Kristeva's theory of subject formation, abiding the rules and prohibitions of the Law signals the child's separate existence from the mother and his/her participation in meaningful signification and the symbolic order of society. With this in mind, it is interesting to observe that while Otilie is portrayed as a representation of late 18th century feminine ideals, the schoolmaster requests Charlotte to take her under her care until Luciane leaves the school:

Wir berieten, wir besprachen uns lange, und ohne deshalb weitläufiger zu sein, will ich Ew. Gnaden unsern Beschluß und unsre Bitte vortragen: Ottilien auf einige Zeit zu sich zu nehmen. Die Gründe werden Sie sich selbst am besten entfalten. Bestimmen Sie sich hiezu, so sage ich mehr über die Behandlung des guten Kindes. Verläßt uns dann Ihre Fräulein Tochter, wie zu vermuten steht; so sehen wir Ottilien mit Freuden zurückkehren. (Goethe 310)

What makes this request especially interesting in the context of my analysis is that despite her portrayal as a model of idealized feminine identity, she is placed back under Charlotte's maternal care. If viewed through the lens of Kristeva's theory, Ottilie is also shown as still connected to the semiotic modality that is characterized by the nourishing and maternal "chora." The fact that despite her representation of idealized feminine qualities in the late Enlightenment era, Ottilie is considered as unprepared for life in the macro-environment of society suggests that Goethe is testing the viability of this idealized model of femininity. As a result, Goethe in this text shapes a gender discourse that is defined by a less rigid division of gender roles than prescribed by the socially sanctioned gender discourse of the late Enlightenment.

In comparison with Ottilie, Luciane's portrayal as a young adult with dominant social and verbal presence suggests in Kristeva's terms that she is capable of meaningful signification and thus, of operating in the symbolic realm. Besides, Luciane's excellent academic results and the headmistress' reference to her completed education further accentuates her symbolic existence and that she is therefore, in contrast to Ottilie, no longer in need of maternal supervision.

At the same time, Luciane's behavior shows ambivalences that are well illustrated in her interaction with Otilie after they receive their report cards. If viewed through the lens of Kristeva's theory, Luciane's arrogance and her hurtful comments to Otilie signal the presence of semiotic operations in her consciousness. Kristeva calls this mode of aggressiveness and the *jouissance* connected to it "rejection," which she describes as a destructive form of negativity that is not only present in the semiotic mode of representation but one that repeatedly occurs in the symbolic mode as well: "Rejection is the very mechanism of reactivation, tension, life; aiming toward the equalization of tension, toward a state of inertia and death, it *perpetuates* tension and life" (Revolution 150). In Kristeva's model, rejection is closely tied to subjectivity, which she defines as a process generated by the heterogeneous presence of both semiotic and symbolic operations in the subject's consciousness. Thus, rejection can be viewed as a law of repetition and a process that functions as the operator of signification. Considering that both Otilie and Luciane are portrayed in such a way that their behavior patterns invoke the simultaneous presence of semiotic and symbolic operations in their subjectivities, Goethe in his female characters depicts feminine subjectivity as a dynamic process of evolution rather than the static and stationary condition advocated in late Enlightenment gender theories.

In the boarding school episode, Goethe has 'set the stage' for a narrative experiment in which three distinct yet closely intertwined models of womanhood are shaped more or less simultaneously in order to test their viability in the prevalent late Enlightenment social context. The experimental nature of Goethe's representation of

femininity is implied by the fact that Goethe in his novel not only portrays Otilie and Luciane as clearly opposite characters but that he also offers two conflicting evaluations of both girls' behavior patterns and school results. The way in which Goethe depicts Otilie and Luciane in the environment of the boarding school casts late Enlightenment gender relations in relative terms rather than viewing them as absolute and universal. I have further indicated that Goethe perceives femininity as a dynamic process that entails continual change and evolution generated by the dynamics of their relationships among one another and with other central figures of the novel.

2. 'Crash Course' for Luciane in Matters of Modesty?

Goethe's characterization of Luciane's and Otilie's experience in the boarding school serves as the basis of comparison as I now shift the focus of this investigation to Goethe's portrayal of Luciane's actions and interactions with Charlotte and Otilie during her visit to the estate. In so doing, I look at how Goethe portrays the dynamics that govern Luciane's relationship with Charlotte and Otilie in order to demonstrate that they represent interrelated and, at times, even co-dependent feminine identities that are 'organized' into an unconventional family unit and that collectively shape Goethe's overall representation of femininity in this novel.

Based on the above, I first explore Goethe's depiction of Charlotte's, Luciane's, and Otilie's co-existence on the estate during Luciane's extended visit. I focus on the portrayal of Luciane's actions and behavior patterns in comparison with her depiction in the boarding school in order to trace potential changes in her depiction and to assess how her character is positioned in relation to Charlotte and Otilie on her departure from the estate.

Luciane is depicted in the boarding school as a confident young girl with strong intellect and a dominant verbal as well as social presence. Luciane's competitive nature is also highlighted in the schoolmaster's depiction of her verbal assault on Otilie. Based on her characterization as a gregarious and outspoken young girl with excellent academic results, I have concluded that, through the lens of Kristeva's theory of subjectivity,

Luciane can be viewed as a subject who is engaged in meaningful signification, and thus operates in the symbolic mode of representation. At the same time, if we consider her hurtful comments to Otilie, they can be interpreted as manifestations of uncontrollable drives surfacing in her consciousness. Kristeva characterizes the overwhelming dominance of uncontrolled and unrepressed drives as signs of rejection/negativity, and in her theory, they are connected to the semiotic function: Kristeva defines rejection as either material and a part of the presymbolic mode of representation that helps to facilitate the subject's transition into the symbolic order or as an element that is heterogeneous to and moves through the symbolic order, i.e., that is also 'part' of the symbolized speaking subject: "True negativity is a dialectical notion specific to the signifying process, on the crossroads between the biological and social order on the one hand, and thethetic and signifying phase of the social order on the other" (Revolution 124). Kristeva also describes her notion of rejection as a semiotic movement "which moves through the symbolic, produces it, and continues to work on it from within. [...]" The concept of negativity registers a *conflictual state* which stresses the heterogeneity of the semiotic function [...]" (Revolution 117-118). Kristeva further views negativity/rejection as a pivotal notion in her specification of the "production of this subject as a process, an intersection—an impossible unity" (Revolution 118).

Considering the fact that Kristeva offers a dualistic definition of negativity that operates in the semiotic as well as in the symbolic modalities, Goethe's depiction of Luciane's actions and utterances can be interpreted as the representation of a symbolized subject fully capable of signification. At the same time, Luciane's verbally aggressive

behavior can be perceived as a sign of the “flow of the semiotic into the symbolic” through which the symbolic modality is shaken and threatened (Revolution 59).

I assert that Goethe in his complex portrayal of the female characters in Die Wahlverwandtschaften shapes a narrative experiment in which gender definitions and women’s roles are approached in a more flexible manner than they were advocated in the late Enlightenment era. Thus, in the following, I compare and trace changes in Luciane’s developmental stage in the boarding school with how her actions are characterized during her visit to the estate. By doing so, I seek answer to the questions whether Goethe displays a dynamically changing feminine identity in Luciane’s character and whether her domineering and excessive traits are welcomed with similar praise and recognition beyond the boundaries of the estate.

My objective is to identify how Luciane’s femininity is shaped in the second part of the novel and how her character is positioned in Goethe’s discourse on women when compared to Charlotte’s and Otilie’s characterization because looking at the complexities of all three female characters’ portrayal in relation to one another allows me to shed light on how far Goethe set himself apart from prevalent social practices of his lifetime. To do so, I draw on central concepts of Kristeva’s theory of subjectivity such as her analysis of the mirror stage, castration, the notion of negativity, and on how Kristeva defines the impact of these processes on the child’s ‘journey’ toward symbolization and living under social censorship. Such an analysis helps me to gain a more comprehensive understanding of Luciane’s, Otilie’s, and Charlotte’s identity development in the second part of the novel because in Goethe’s text they are united in a family triangle and

their interrelation dominates the narrative during the two months they spend together on the estate.

Two narrative details are important about Luciane's depiction in the context of her visit compared to her introduction in the boarding school:

- The change in the mode of narration between her depiction in the school and on the estate and
- Goethe's choice to reintroduce Luciane to the narrative during her visit to Charlotte and the maternal domain represented by the estate.

First, let me focus on the change in the mode of narration. As opposed to Luciane's depiction in the boarding school through references made by Charlotte, the headmistress, and the schoolmaster, this time it is solely the narrator who shapes her image by his in-depth display of her actions and utterances. The narrator's comments about Ottilie are often accompanied by flattering and favorable adjectives, while Luciane's depiction generally implies a critical tone and is accompanied by unfavorable opinions. While the narrator uses words and expressions like "brennender Kometenkern" (Goethe 413), "erschöpfen" (412), "gebieterisch" (416), and "Treiben" (420) to describe Luciane's conduct, expressions like "liebes Kind," "zartes Kind," and "die schönste" are used to describe Ottilie (423). Such word choices reveal that the narrator has distinct attitudes towards Ottilie and Luciane. It can be assumed that these evaluative judgments are made from the same perspective as those suggested by the schoolmaster that I already characterized as a standpoint juxtaposed with that of the headmistress. Based on the value judgments that are implied in the narrator's attitudes towards Ottilie and Luciane, it is

possible to perceive the narrator as a representative voice of the contemporary social paradigm of the outgoing 18th and beginning 19th centuries.

The second detail I would like to point out is that Luciane is reintroduced into the narrative as she returns to her mother's domain. If we take the uncommon family constellation of Charlotte, Luciane, and Ottilie into consideration, the depiction of Luciane's extended stay with her mother and Ottilie may conceal important propositions about her developmental phase as a subject. This episode also gains special relevance if we consider that in the first part of Die Wahlverwandtschaften, the headmistress' reports and Charlotte's decision to send Luciane to her aunt suggested that Luciane – as opposed to Ottilie – was no longer in need of her mother's support and care, and that she, already then, was prepared to live without her mother's and/or her teachers' supervision. In light of Kristeva's theory, Goethe's reference to Luciane's readiness for the 'world' can be viewed as a sign that she has completed the separation process from her mother, and it also signals that she is about to enter life in the symbolic order, which in turn implies her readiness to abide the Law of the Father. However, Luciane's return to the maternal space mediates the opposite, namely that her unity with her mother continues to exist after all. A close analysis of Luciane's behavior determines whether Goethe's portrayal of her suggests that Charlotte's presence still has a significant impact on Luciane's formation as a subject.

When Luciane is first mentioned in this episode, the narrator emphasizes her constant need for others' attention and admiration:

Charlottens Tochter, Luciane, war kaum aus der Pension in die große Welt getreten, hatte kaum in dem Hause ihrer Tante sich von zahlreicher Gesellschaft umgeben gesehen, als ihr Gefallenwollen wirklich Gefallen erregte, und ein junger, sehr reicher Mann gar bald eine heftige Neigung empfand, sie zu besitzen.

(Goethe 411)

Luciane's identity is mainly defined through her relationships with Charlotte and with her wealthy fiancé. By tying Luciane's existence simultaneously to both her mother and her fiancé Goethe depicts her as a young adult in a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood.

The narrator describes Luciane as a young woman with a strong need for constant attention and praise, and the passage above indicates that her relationship with her fiancé is founded on a similar need ("als ihr Gefallenwollen wirklich Gefallen erregte" Goethe 411). Luciane's existence seems to depend on such endless positive reinforcement by her environment because she is shown to demand it if this need is not fulfilled to her satisfaction. The episode when Luciane becomes upset and impatient with the architect because he refuses to share his art collection during an evening gathering serves as an illustrative example:

Er mag sie nur gleich bringen, rief Luciane. Nicht wahr, Sie bringen sie gleich? setzte sie schmeichelnd hinzu, indem sie ihn mit beiden Händen freundlich anfaßte.

Es möchte jetzt der Zeitpunkt nicht sein, versetzte der Architekt.

Was! rief Luciane gebieterisch: Sie wollen dem Befehl Ihrer Königin nicht gehorchen? Dann legte sie sich auf ein neckisches Bitten. (Goethe 416-417)

Luciane's first request is described by the adjective "schmeichelnd" while her reaction to the architect's refusal is portrayed as "gebieterisch." Thus her inner harmony is dependent on others around her as agents of the instant gratification of her needs and wishes.

If read on the basis of Kristeva's theory of the subject, Luciane's need for attention and gratification can be viewed as a sign of her inability to repress and control surfacing drives in her consciousness, which is a fundamental part of living under social censorship. If this is applied to the text, Goethe's illustration of this behavior can also be viewed as an indication that Luciane's subjectivity development has not reached the symbolic order of rules, regulations, and prohibitions. It implies that existing under social censorship is only possible if the subject is able to repress his/her drives (at least temporarily) into the unconscious by making them symbolic through signification.

As the narrative progresses, the narrator's reintroduction of Luciane further highlights this character trait. The following excerpt provides a descriptive illustration of Luciane's ongoing need for attention:

Nun hätten alle gern, nach einer höchst beschwerlichen Reise, einige Ruhe genossen; der Bräutigam hätte sich seiner Schwiegermutter gern genähert, um ihr seine Liebe, seinen guten Willen zu beteuern: aber Luciane konnte nicht rasten.

[...] Die Gesellschaft hatte manches zu leiden, am meisten aber die

Kammermädchen, die mit Waschen und Bügeln, Auftrennen und Annähen, nicht fertig werden konnten. (Goethe 412)

Luciane's physical closeness to her mother and Charlotte's involvement in the process of creating a comfortable and pleasant environment for Luciane's excessive needs is an important narrative detail because it shows Luciane as –temporarily and partially – in need of her mother's attention and as dependent on her care. At the same time, this implication goes against her image in the boarding school as a young adult who – in that context – was depicted as fully prepared for life without her mother's supervision and for her entry into society. In contrast to that, Charlotte is now portrayed as committed to satisfying Luciane's wishes. Her involvement in the preparations for Luciane's visit and entertainment is highlighted by the narrator even before her arrival:

Diese Familienangelegenheit war es, welche Charlotten bisher sehr viel zu tun gab, der sie ihre ganze Überlegung, ihre Korrespondenz widmete, insofern diese nicht darauf gerichtet war, von Eduard nähere Nachricht zu erhalten; deswegen auch Ottilie mehr als sonst in der letzten Zeit allein blieb. (Goethe 411)

One further noteworthy detail about Luciane's behavior, that is also descriptive of her developmental stage as a subject, is her inability to rest and her characterization as a female figure who is constantly engaged in movement and action. The narrator frequently refers to her relentless need for activity and entertainment that also entails physical exercise:

Sie war nun einmal zu dem Glücke gelangt, ein Pferd besteigen zu dürfen. Der Bräutigam hatte schöne Pferde, und sogleich mußte man aufsitzen. Wetter und

Wind, Regen und Sturm kamen nicht in Anschlag; es war als wenn man nur lebte um naß zu werden und sich wieder zu trocknen. [...] Bei der Schnelligkeit ihres Wesens war ihr nicht leicht zu widersprechen. [...] Luciane zeigte sich wie ein brennender Kometenkern, der einen langen Schweif nach sich zieht. (Goethe 412-413)

Kristeva's definition of the semiotic stage of subjectivity development and of the "chora" shows interesting correlations with the way Goethe depicts Luciane's actions and behavior. Kristeva describes the semiotic "chora" as the articulation of drives that are energy charges as well as psychical marks and as "a nonexpressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated" (Revolution 25). While the way Goethe depicts Luciane's articulations of her excessive needs can be perceived as an outgrowth of her (not repressed) surfacing drives, the narrative focus on her constant longing for movement also corresponds with Kristeva's description of the "chora" and its motility, i.e., a space of constant movement. Furthermore, the fact that Luciane is placed back into the physical immediacy of her mother, who is engaged in satisfying her needs, reinforces my proposition that Luciane's actions show her in the presymbolic mode of existence that is, as Kristeva maintains, dependent on the gratifying and regulating presence of the mother. In light of Kristeva's definition of the "chora," Luciane's energy charges or drives – represented by her uncontrollable needs and excessive wishes – are oriented to and structured around Charlotte, who, as indicated by Goethe, is deeply engaged in caring for Luciane's comfort and contentment (Goethe 411, 417). In Kristeva's framework, the mother's role

encompasses not only the gratification of the child's needs but also the mediation of the symbolic law and act as the ordering principle in the mother-child symbiosis in order to help the child's progression toward symbolization (Revolution 27).

Within this scene, the only, yet representative encounter between Charlotte and Luciane can also be interpreted as a reference to Charlotte's role as Luciane's mother and Luciane's dependence on Charlotte at the same time:

Kaum war er [der Architekt] fort, als Luciane sich mit einem Windspiel im Saale herumjagte. Ach! rief sie aus, indem sie zufällig an ihre Mutter stieß: wie bin ich nicht unglücklich! Ich habe meinen Affen nicht mitgenommen; man hat mir es abgeraten, es ist aber nur die Bequemlichkeit meiner Leute, die mich um dieses Vergnügen bringt. Ich will ihn aber nachkommen lassen, es soll mir Jemand hin ihn zu holen. Wenn ich nur sein Bildnis sehen könnte, so wäre ich schon vergnügt. Ich will ihn aber gewiß auch malen lassen und er soll mir nicht von der Seite kommen.

Vielleicht kann ich dich trösten, versetzte Charlotte, wenn ich dir aus der Bibliothek einen ganzen Band der wunderlichsten Affenbilder kommen lasse.

Luciane schrie vor Freuden laut auf, und der Folioband wurde gebracht. (Goethe 417)

Luciane is unhappy and discontented due to her missing 'companion.' Her wish to have a painted image of her pet emphasizes her uncontrollable need for the monkey's constant presence as a precondition of her happiness and contentment. This episode is important because Charlotte restores Luciane's inner peace by substituting the missing monkey

with images that show resemblance with Luciane's pet. If read on the basis of Kristeva's theory, Charlotte's act, with which she manages to comfort Luciane, evokes the child's and the mother's semiotic unity, where the mother responds to the child's (oral and anal) drives. In the semiotic stage as described by Kristeva, the drives constitute a significant part of the semiotic behavior, and the child is still unable to regulate and repress surfacing drives without the mother's loving and regulatory intervention. The interaction between them resembles the child's preverbal existence in the semiotic modality of the "chora."

In Kristeva's theory the semiotic modality is also associated with the human unconscious that is formed after the subject's entry into culture and comprises repressed drives. Luciane's yearning for a monkey and the symbolism attached to this animal can be perceived as a narrative moment that shows Luciane's character as defined by unconscious drives rather than by their repression. It is interesting to note that the monkey as literary symbol is often connected to the human unconscious: In Dictionary of Symbols (1976), Cirlot displays this connection when he writes:

The simians generally symbolize the baser forces, darkness, or unconscious activity, but this symbolism – like that of legendary fabulous beings – has two sides to it. If, on the one hand, this unconscious force may be dangerous, while it may degrade the individual, nevertheless it may also prove a boon – like all unconscious powers – when least expected. (Cirlot 212)

Besides the implications of Luciane's surfacing unconscious, the ambiguities in the interpretation of the monkey symbolism may also be viewed as a reflection of Goethe's

ambiguous representation of her in the narrative as both an articulate and yet incomprehensible young adult at the same time.

If one considers the shift in Goethe's portrayal of Luciane from a verbally dominant and self-reliant to a more dependent existence during her extended stay at the estate, Kristeva's characterization of the semiotic realm as "preverbal" gains special significance in understanding Luciane's overall depiction. According to Kristeva, the use of signifying language plays a pivotal role in the formation of the subject and in the process of cultururation. In Kristeva's own words, the semiotic is "not yet a position that represents something for someone (i.e., it is not a sign)," and yet it is a process that generates signification (Revolution 26). In Die Wahlverwandtschaften, Goethe depicts only one single direct encounter between Luciane and Charlotte in the monkey scene. Luciane's utterances in this episode still show her as a speaking subject, who is fully capable of signification.

However, when Luciane decides to orchestrate a musical performance in which she is to present her singing talent and guitar skills, not only the narrator's but also the poet's remarks suggest a major change, namely a regression with regard to Luciane's linguistic skills that suddenly appear to be very limited:

Das Instrument spielte sie nicht ungeschickt, ihre Stimme war angenehm; was aber die Worte betraf, so verstand man sie so wenig als wenn sonst eine deutsche Schöne zur Gitarre singt. [...] [A]us Ungeduld [schickte] sie einen ihrer Hofleute an ihn [den Dichter, Z.R.] und [ließ ihn sondieren], ob der Dichter denn nicht entzückt gewesen sei, seine vortrefflichen Gedichte so vortrefflich vortragen zu

hören. Meine Gedichte? versetzte dieser mit Erstaunen. Verzeihen Sie, mein Herr, fügte er hinzu: ich habe nichts als Vokale gehört und die nicht einmal alle.

(Goethe 425-426)

Goethe's portrayal of Luciane as someone with only limited ability to produce comprehensible language can be perceived as the characterization of a female figure who is still dependent on Charlotte's motherly presence and is not equipped to manage and control her needs on her own. Therefore, if read on the basis of Kristeva's theory, Luciane is a character who is a 'not yet subject' and is still involved in the maternal and preverbal realm of the semiotic "chora."

It is interesting to observe that Goethe's choice of using the adjective "vortrefflich" twice in close proximity to describe both the poet's artistic creation and Luciane's performance suggests irony and further accentuates the ambiguities of Luciane's characterization: This correlation between the poet and Luciane may imply not only a devaluation of Luciane's incomprehensible performance but also a potential criticism of the poet's work of art. While so far in the novel, Luciane's actions and utterances are presented in a depreciative tone of voice, this repetition of the same value judgment – that suggests an ironic approach to the poet's implied artistic excellence – may suddenly imply a less devaluative positioning of Luciane in the narrative discourse.

The issue of Luciane's difficulties with producing comprehensible language is further thematized when the narrator points out that even though she possesses good memorization skills, she has difficulty understanding the genre and interpreting the meaning of a text that she has selected for the purpose of a recital:

Ihr Gedächtnis war gut, aber wenn man aufrichtig reden sollte, ihr Vortrag geistlos und heftig ohne leidenschaftlich zu sein. Sie zitierte Balladen, Erzählungen und was sonst in Deklamatorien vorzukommen pflegt. Dabei hatte sie die unglückliche Gewohnheit angenommen, das was sie vortrug mit Gesten zu begleiten, wodurch man das was eigentlich episch und lyrisch ist, auf eine unangenehme Weise mit dem Dramatischen mehr verwirrt als verbindet. (Goethe 426)

This reference to Luciane's limited facility with language is worthy of closer examination because it can be viewed as a repetition of Charlotte's earlier comment about her memorization skills: In the context of Luciane's performance in the boarding school, Charlotte praised her memory and her ability to recall important information when necessary (Goethe 280).¹⁰¹ Thus, Goethe's portrayal of Luciane as someone with the ability to memorize and then recall the memorized information may even contain the key to understanding Luciane's success in school and may call into question some earlier remarks about her that suggested that her achievements would be the result of her intellect. Taking this viewpoint also indicates that a re-examination of Luciane's earlier portrayal may be necessary to understand all facets of her character.

Let me briefly return to the monkey scene in order to characterize Luciane and her developmental stage more specifically Kristeva's continuum of the semiotic modality.

¹⁰¹ In Charlotte's words: "Wenn Luciane, meine Tochter, die für die Welt geboren ist, sich dort für die Welt bildet, wenn sie Sprachen, Geschichtliches und was sonst von Kenntnissen ihr mitgeteilt wird, so wie ihre Noten und Variationen vom Blatte wegspielt; wenn bei einer lebhaften Natur und *bei einem glücklichen Gedächtnis sie, man möchte wohl sagen, alles vergißt und im Augenblicke sich an alles erinnert* [...] so ist dagegen, was sie [die Vorsteherin, Z.R.] schließlich von Ottilien erwähnt, nur immer Entschuldigung auf Entschuldigung [...] (Goethe 280)." I italicized the segment above in order to highlight the passage that is relevant to my argumentation.

The monkey may be viewed as a pet that functions as a substitute for the mother, who had been absent from Luciane's life before this visit. Luciane's comments about the missing monkey reveal a complex relationship between herself and the monkey that is reminiscent of Kristeva's depictions of the child's first realization that it is separate from the mother. Luciane's attachment to the monkey becomes apparent in its absence: This attachment is accentuated by her desire to always have a painting of the monkey next to her. Furthermore, the monkey's absence can be interpreted as a means for her to realize that the monkey and she are not One but that it is separate from her.

Luciane's attachment to the monkey can be perceived as a form of substitution which, in Kristeva's terminology, can be further regarded as a semiotic reduplication of Luciane's missing unity with the maternal function represented by Charlotte and by her absence from Luciane's life before this visit. At the same time, the fact that Goethe depicts this attachment through the absence of the monkey can be viewed as a sign of Luciane's underlying longing for the mother's presence and comfort.

What makes this situation especially interesting in the context of Kristeva's theory is that it is Charlotte who steps in and resolves Luciane's problem. The solution offered by Charlotte brings back Luciane's peace and contentment; Charlotte's action gratifies her needs. In light of Kristeva's psychoanalytic framework, it can be argued that this situation makes Luciane aware of her separateness from her mother, who is represented and substituted for by the missing monkey. Furthermore, Charlotte's comforting intervention also provides a temporary re-creation of their original attachment. Goethe's narrative depicts a complex relationship between Luciane and

Charlotte that – if interpreted through the lens of Kristeva’s theory – shows the process-like development of subjectivity and the intertwining functioning of the semiotic and symbolic modes of representation in both the preverbal stage as well as in the realm of signification.

Charlotte’s Depiction in the Context of the Luciane Episode

Before further expanding on Kristeva’s theoretical considerations about the evolution of human subjectivity and their possible explanatory potential in the context of Goethe’s portrayal of Luciane’s character, it is important to ask how Goethe characterizes Charlotte in the monkey scene. Charlotte’s positive reaction to Luciane’s request for help can be viewed as Goethe’s way to accentuate Luciane’s dependence on Charlotte’s maternal presence. I have concluded that the interaction between Luciane and Charlotte in the monkey scene can be perceived as a manifestation of Luciane’s growing awareness that she is separate from the maternal function for which the monkey substitutes. If Charlotte’s intervention is an important detail in Goethe’s overall portrayal of her, the question arises what significance her engagement in preparing for Luciane’s visit and her efforts to make Luciane feel better have in Charlotte’s current stage of life that is marked by her marital crisis and her separation from Eduard: Does Goethe depict Charlotte in this direct encounter as a woman who attempts to fill and replace an emptiness in her existence generated by Eduard’s absence?

When one seeks the answer to this fundamental question, it is essential to keep in mind that Charlotte’s primary focus on her maternal responsibilities in relation to Luciane

is temporary and it is presented side by side with many other episodes that shed light on Charlotte's daily life after Eduard's and the Hauptmann's departure. Even after Luciane's farewell Goethe continues to depict motherhood and maternal duties as a central part of Charlotte's existence both through her pregnancy and the birth of Otto and in her relationship with Otilie.

Based on Goethe's continued focus on Charlotte's motherly role in relation to Luciane, Otto, and Otilie, it can be argued that Goethe depicts her as a woman who attempts to redefine her existence and in particular her roles outside the boundaries set for women by and within the social institution of marriage. It can be further maintained that Charlotte's character, is therefore posited, similarly to the other central female figures, as an experimental one that Goethe uses to lay out and test the viability of a form of femininity that can be described as simultaneously compliant and law abiding and yet openly independent as well as creative. The fact that such a combination of feminine attributes was hardly welcome in the context of the late Enlightenment social discourse makes Goethe's portrayal of Charlotte's character the more interesting, especially in regard to her actions and behavior in the midst of the tragic events that dominate the narrative after Otilie's and Eduard's encounter at the lake.

In the following, I analyze Goethe's portrayal of Charlotte's actions during and following the disastrous events such as Otto's drowning, Otilie's self-starvation, and Eduard's death. I seek to also explore how Goethe's depiction of Charlotte's life as an expression of a certain kind of femininity compares with Luciane's and Otilie's

portrayals and how far these juxtaposed models correlate with and/or deviate from from the late Enlightenment definition of idealized femininity.

Re-examining Luciane's Portrayal through the Lens of Kristeva's Theory of Subjectivity Formation

With the above in mind, let me now return to Kristeva's theory of subjectivity formation and to the implications of the monkey scene on the portrayal of Luciane's relationship with Charlotte. Kristeva claims that the child's realization of its separateness from the mother marks the first step toward its ego formation. The monkey scene can be perceived as a significant narrative moment because the way Goethe depicts Luciane's behavior signifies change and evolution in her character. This change is marked by Luciane's statements in the monkey scene and can be perceived as a "thetic" act structured as a break in the semiotic realm and that facilitates the child's process of "signifiance."¹⁰² Kristeva describes even the child's first utterances, i.e., gestures and vocal emissions as "thetic" because "they separate an object from the subject, and attribute to it a semiotic fragment, which thereby becomes a signifier" (Revolution 43). She further claims that the thetic break is the threshold of language, and that it manifests itself at two points: the mirror stage and the 'discovery' of castration (Revolution 46).

¹⁰² Kristeva calls ego formation the "process of signifiance" and describes it as follows: "What we call *signifiance*, then, is precisely this unlimited and unbounded generating process, this unceasing operation of the drives forward, in, and through the exchange system and its protagonists—the subject and his institutions. This heterogeneous process [...] is a structuring and de-structuring *practice*, a passage to the outer *boundaries* of the subject and society. Then—and only then—can it be jouissance and revolution" (Revolution 17).

Considering my interpretation of the monkey scene, I maintain that Goethe's depiction of Luciane's actions and words reflects Kristeva's description of the child's preverbal existence in the semiotic realm, and more specifically the thetic phase of identity formation. Furthermore, the monkey scene and Luciane's behavior pattern following this scene – a pattern that shows her as cruel and hurtful toward other characters including Otilie – can be interpreted as an indication of her thetic existence, namely that she has reached a 'threshold' that may serve as a turning point in her separation process leading towards life under social censorship.

After their brief encounter, Charlotte almost completely withdraws from any interaction with Luciane until the end of her visit. At the same time, the narrative focus shifts to a more pronounced depiction of the ambivalent link between Luciane and Otilie, which I analyze in detail in the remaining part of this chapter. The lack of further direct contact between Charlotte and Luciane can be perceived as a one additional sign of Luciane's portrayal as a developing subject, whose evolution is clearly affected both by Charlotte's comforting presence and intervention in the initial part of the monkey scene as well as by her absence in the latter part of this important episode. In the following, I analyze Otilie's role in the further development of Luciane's character, and I seek an answer to the question whether Otilie's presence facilitates other changes in Luciane.

Before going further, it is necessary to clarify some additional concepts regarding Kristeva's notion of the "thetic" phase. Kristeva defines the process of language acquisition and symbolic integration as "an acute and dramatic confrontation between positing-separating-identifying and the motility of the semiotic *chora*" (Revolution 47).

She also maintains that the drives and their operation (charges versus repression) with their “waves of attack” (Revolution 28), i.e., charges/surfacing can significantly affect whether the developing subject reaches the “thetic” phase and the symbolic order with or without major interruptions and delays in the process.

Kristeva attributes an important role to the drives both in the semiotic and the symbolic realms. In her view, they facilitate a continuum of the process of identification in the preverbal phase and also contribute to the recurrent renewal of the subject in language. Kristeva also maintains that this process contradicts and undermines the concept of the Cartesian unitary ego because it decenters its unified and transcendental existence and because the “subject-in-process” challenges the validity of the concept of a unitary ego. In this context, Kristeva posits that

‘drives’ are always already ambiguous, simultaneously assimilating and destructive [...]. For although drives have been described as disunited or contradictory structures, simultaneously ‘positive’ and ‘negative,’ this doubling is said to generate a dominant destructive wave that is drive’s most characteristic trait [...] In this way, the term ‘drive’ denotes waves of attack against stases, which are themselves constituted by the repetition of these charges [...]. We shall call this process of charges and stases a *negativity* to distinguish it from negation, which is the act of a judging subject. (Revolution 27-28)

Negativity – or rejection, as Kristeva also calls it – “functions as the logical and material operator of signification [...] [as, Z.R.] one of the preconditions for symbolization

(Reading Kristeva 42-43).¹⁰³ Later in Revolution in Poetic Language (1974), Kristeva further describes “true negativity as a dialectical notion specific to the signifying process, on the crossroads between the biological and social order on the one hand, and the thetic and signifying phase of the social order on the other” (Revolution 124). In this framework, negativity/rejection needs to be understood “as always already a repetition of an impulse that is itself rejection” (Revolution 147). Kristeva further explains that the “law [of rejection, Z.R.] is one of returning, as opposed to one of becoming; it returns only to separate again immediately and thus appear as an impossible forward movement” (Revolution 147). Rejection is partly described as an obstacle to or demise of the symbolic function that may delay or may even completely prevent the child’s progression toward signification. At the same time, rejection also operates within the realm of the symbolic order, and there it can facilitate the renewal of the symbolic function because Kristeva perceives subjectivity in the symbolic order as a process and not as a static structure (Reading Kristeva 45).

As I indicated earlier in this chapter, Goethe’s portrayal of Luciane’s actions can be viewed as the representation of a not-yet-subject in the semiotic realm, whose statements about the missing monkey (Goethe 417) also signal the presence of the symbolic function in her subjectivity. Based on these observations, I have also suggested that, in light of Kristeva’s theory, Luciane’s depiction implies a developmental phase that reaches beyond the semiotic modality and can be characterized by the “thetic” break. In order to explain my proposition that Luciane’s developing identity demonstrates correspondences with Kristeva’s notion of the “thetic,” it is important to note that she is

¹⁰³ For a discussion of Kristeva’s distinction between negativity and rejection see pages 175-176 above.

repeatedly depicted as a character who is hurtful and cruel towards other people around her:

Jeder war in Gefahr, von ihr einmal angestoßen, gezerrt oder sonst geneckt zu werden; Niemand aber durfte sich gegen sie ein Gleiches erlauben, Niemand sie nach Willkür berühren, Niemand auch nur im entferntesten Sinne, eine Freiheit die sie sich nahm, erwidern; [...] Und wie mit den Personen, so machte sie es auch mit den Sachen, mit den Gebäuden, wie mit dem Haus- und Tischgeräte. (Goethe 422)

Goethe's depiction of Luciane's verbal hostility towards people and objects around her is accompanied by her wish to display the very few living plants from the garden in the house:

[S]ie ließ auch von nun an so viel Grünes, so viel Zweige und was nur irgend keimte, herbeiholen und zur täglichen Zierde der Zimmer und des Tisches verschwenden, daß Ottilie und der Gärtner nicht wenig gekränkt waren, ihre Hoffnungen für das nächste Jahr und vielleicht auf längere Zeit zerstört zu sehen. (Goethe 423)¹⁰⁴

I find Goethe's illustration of Luciane's self-centered and excessive orders important because they can be perceived as symbolic manifestations of verbally implied destruction and aggression. Such behavior patterns constitute a significant part of Kristeva's definition of negativity/rejection and manifest themselves in waves of surfacing uncontrolled drives. Kristeva claims that negativity and the surfacing drives can be

¹⁰⁴ In this scene, reference is made to Ottilie's commitment to taking care of Eduard's plans and the garden along with the gardener. In this remark, Luciane's destructive and wasteful attitude towards the vegetation is contrasted with Ottilie's protective and conscientious care for the garden.

viewed as not only the precondition but also the actual operators of signification. The destructive behavior and aggression that Goethe ascribes to Luciane is not only directed at plants and objects around her but also at Ottilie.

Besides, Goethe's narrative suggests an emotional attachment between Luciane and Ottilie. Luciane's feelings are described as bitterness that manifests itself in her competitive spirit with regard to men's admiration for Ottilie's beauty, modesty, and muse-like existence.¹⁰⁵ Goethe's narrative demonstrates Luciane's competitive nature repeatedly by references to her overwhelming desire to draw men's attention to her and to attain their admiration. What comes naturally to Ottilie, is depicted as a constant effort for Luciane:

Schien es bei ihr [Luciane, Z.R.] Plan zu sein, Männer die etwas vorstellten, Rang, Ansehen, Ruhm oder sonst etwas Bedeutendes vor sich hatten, für sich zu gewinnen, Weisheit und Besonnenheit zu schanden zu machen, und ihrem wilden wunderlichen Wesen selbst bei der Bedächtlichkeit Gunst zu erwerben, so kam die Jugend doch dabei nicht zu kurz: Jeder hatte sein Teil, seinen Tag, seine Stunde, in der sie ihn zu entzückeln und zu fesseln wußte. (Goethe 413)

Goethe's portrayal of Luciane does not limit itself to pointing out that she possesses opposing character traits to those of Ottilie and that she expresses aversion as well as bitterness towards Ottilie. Goethe depicts the relationship between Luciane and Ottilie as a highly complex bond that suggests a complementary interconnection between them and that has a profound impact on Luciane's identity formation process. Initially, Luciane is

¹⁰⁵ Luciane's bitterness in relation to Ottilie is clearly signaled in Goethe's text: "Eigentliche Bosheit war vielleicht nicht in diesem verneinenden Bestreben; ein selbstischer Mutwille mochte sie gewöhnlich anreizen: aber eine wahre Bitterkeit hatte sie in ihrem Verhältnis zu Ottilie erzeugt" (Goethe 423).

depicted as the complete opposite of the modest, quiet, and calm Ottilie: While Ottilie is committed to service, Luciane is not only arrogant and destructive but also excessive, restless, and commanding. However, the narrative then shows a gradual change in Luciane's actions that can be perceived as an indication of her more and more pronounced wish to be like Ottilie. In my view, the changes in Luciane constitute a noteworthy narrative detail: While Luciane's actions suggest that she despises and ridicules Ottilie, her behavior also implies a form of jealousy of and admiration for Ottilie's 'perfectness' in the eyes of the narrator and the male characters. Luciane's spitefulness and ill will are well displayed when she tirelessly insists on Ottilie's participation in the events and trips that she organizes despite the fact that Ottilie would rather stay at home:

Eben so wenig gönnte sie Ottilien die Ruhe des häuslichen Ganges, worin sie sich mit Bequemlichkeit fortbewegte. Ottilie sollte mit auf die Lust- und Schlittenfahrten; sie sollte mit auf die Bälle die in der Nachbarschaft veranstaltet wurden. [...] Das zarte Kind litt nicht wenig darunter, aber Luciane gewann nichts dabei: denn obgleich Ottilie sehr einfach gekleidet ging, so war sie doch, oder so schien sie wenigstens immer den Männern die schönste. (Goethe 423)

This scene is an illustrative example of Luciane's hostility on the one hand and her ambivalent attitude towards Ottilie on the other. Luciane's wish to be like Ottilie not only manifests itself in her efforts to position herself in such a way that she attracts the same attention from men as does Ottilie – as it is shown in the above scene – but also in the

way she seeks to replicate some of Otilie's other qualities, such as her muse-like inspiration that is repeatedly praised by the narrator.

In the scene where Luciane performs a few poems and accompanies her own singing on the guitar (Goethe 425-426), her behavior expresses a desire to become a similar muse-like figure to the poet who wrote the verse. However, the narrator, yet again implicitly displays Luciane's inability to reach the level of Otilie's idealization when he describes the poet's sharp criticism of her performance (see quote on pages 185-186 above). The apparent narrative distinction between Luciane and Otilie is further accentuated when on the same evening the poet writes a verse for Otilie's favorite melody: "Kurze Zeit darauf erfuhr sie [Luciane, Z.R.]: er habe noch selbigen Abend einer von Otiliens Lieblingsmelodien ein allerliebstes Gedicht untergelegt, das noch mehr als verbindlich sei" (Goethe 426).

Considering the above, it can be argued that Goethe depicts Otilie's presence as a stimulating factor that instigates significant changes in Luciane's behavior: Despite the apparent indication of her overwhelming feelings of jealousy and animosity, Luciane seeks to demonstrate qualities that resemble those of Otilie. In this context, the poet's sharp criticism of Luciane and his true appreciation for Otilie can be perceived as an important moment in the narrative by which Otilie's absolute flawlessness is suggested and is contrasted to Luciane's inability to reach this ideal.

As I mentioned above, Luciane's ambivalent attitude towards Otilie displays her unarticulated wish to be like Otilie. This wish suggests a relationship that cannot be reduced to the interpretation that Luciane is 'simply' portrayed as Otilie's opposite in

order to accentuate Otilie's flawlessness. While Goethe depicts Luciane and Otilie as clear opposites, it can also be argued that his portrayal shows Luciane as a character of complexity that cannot be explained solely as the embodiment of jealousy and aggression. In Goethe's representation, Luciane is also dependent on and complementary to Otilie's idealized character because the dynamics of their interactions coupled with Charlotte's maternal presence contribute to significant changes in Luciane's evolution as a subject. Therefore, I believe that the three female figures not only form an unusual symbolic family constellation because of the biological and legal connection between them, but that Goethe also portrays them as interdependent characters and as figures of similar significance in the context of the novel's discourse on women. Due to the manifold complexities of their relationship, all three women directly or implicitly affect one another's formation as subjects. While the primary narrative focus is on Luciane's development during her visit to the estate.

In terms of Kristeva's theory of subjectivity in mind, the combined presence in Luciane of feelings of dislike and of yearning to possess the qualities that characterize Otilie can be viewed as a defining "thetic" moment in Luciane's identity formation. Based on the narrative's implicit idealization of Otilie's flawlessness, Otilie's character can be perceived as a reflection of Kristeva's description of the ideal image that the child sees in the mirror after discovering that the image is his/her very reflection.

After the mirror stage, the child starts to differentiate his/her own voice from that of the mother. Oliver emphasizes that in Kristeva's theory of subjectivity formation, the mirror stage is a major step in the child's development that will result in the repression of

the mother-child unity behind language with the help of signification. This fundamental change means that the child starts to view its mother as an ‘other’ (Reading Kristeva 22). Oliver further explains that in Kristeva’s theory, the mirror stage constitutes a thetic break because “the child recognizes itself as a separate subject through the other of its image” (Reading Kristeva 40). Kristeva maintains that “in order to capture his image in a mirror, the child must remain separate from it, his body agitated by the semiotic motility [...], which fragments him more than it unifies him in a representation” (Revolution 46).

Kristeva draws on Lacan’s definition of the mirror stage in which he points out that it entails the child’s first recognition of the ‘I’ as a whole. In Lacan’s theory, this ‘self-recognition’ takes place because the child sees a unified body reflected in the mirror while it still experiences its own body as fragmented.¹⁰⁶ This is where the child’s first holophrastic utterances play an important role because they occur at this time, i.e., within the boundaries of the mirror stage (at six to eighteen months of age). Kristeva also shares Lacan’s view that “the specular image is the ‘prototype’ for the ‘world of objects’” (Revolution 46), and she further follows Lacan when she states: “Positing the imaged ego leads to the positing of the object, which is, likewise, separate and signifiable. [...] On the basis of this positing, which constitutes a break, signification becomes established [...]” (Revolution 46-47).

Based on this definition of the mirror stage, it can be concluded that it lets the subject experience the self as other; the other is its own reflection, however it “enjoys a

¹⁰⁶ In the context of her explanation of the impact of Lacan’s theory of the mirror stage on Kristeva’s theoretical considerations about the child’s subjectivity formation, Kelly Oliver concludes the following: “What is paradoxical about the mirror stage is that the realization that the child is *unified* comes through its *doubling* in the mirror. In a sense, it must become two (itself plus its reflection) in order to become one (a unified self)” (Reading Kristeva 20).

coherence which the subject itself lacks – it is an ideal image [...] the self recognition is [...] a mis-recognition [...] since to know oneself through an external image is to be defined through self-alienation” (The Subject of Semiotics 158).¹⁰⁷ As Kristeva maintains, the significance of the mirror stage is further marked by the fact that the child experiences “positing” for the first time when it differentiates between its self and its image. As a result, this “positing” can also be viewed as the child’s first-time differentiation between subject and object that prefigures later subject-object relations, language acquisition, and finally the very ability of signification. Linguistic signification is a fundamental part of the formation of the subject because language, i.e., representation, enables the substitution of the symbolic for the real body.

Given the interrelatedness of Luciane’s and Otilie’s characters described above, Otilie can be perceived as Luciane’s mirror image, the ideal ‘other’ that Luciane longs for but can’t possibly be because the image is separate from her. If read on the basis of Kristeva’s theory, Luciane’s ambivalent attitude towards Otilie can also be interpreted as a sign of confrontation between the child’s first steps toward self-identification and the ‘attacks’ of the drives that seek to destroy the ideal image and reinstate the semiotic unity. Therefore, it can be argued that Goethe portrays Luciane, based on her behavior on the estate, as a subject in the mirror stage, whose further evolution is greatly impacted by Otilie’s presence: Otilie’s depiction suggests an overall idealization of femininity according to the late Enlightenment gender context, which, therefore, implies that

¹⁰⁷ Kaja Silverman, The Subject of Semiotics (New York: Oxford UP, 1983).

Luciane, if she wishes to become like Ottilie, needs to not only change her excessive behavior patterns but also relinquish her uncontrolled oral functions.¹⁰⁸

In the traditional patriarchal gender discourse, women's integration into culture and their social recognition have been associated with modesty not only in matters such as food consumption, clothing, demeanor, and sexuality, but also with regard to verballity. As a result of their minimal verbal presence, they have been partially excluded from the process of symbolization and at the same time also fixed into the position of the 'other.' Considering Kristeva's theory of the formation of subjectivity, this socially prescribed positioning of women as the 'other'/the object in relation to men creates a situation in which women's cultural acceptance entails a regressive process through which they should return to overall modesty and withdraw from verbal self-expression: While women are expected to learn to keep their desires under the control of social censoring, they are also restricted to a semiotic existence by having to repress their desire for linguistic (self)-expression. This fundamental and arbitrarily defined social distinction between the preconditions of men's and women's cultural integration can serve as the explanation as to why Luciane's identity development entails a gradual renunciation of her verbal presence. Based on such contemporary social expectations of women, this change can be and has been interpreted as a sign of her evolution toward idealized femininity.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ In the context of my exploration of Goethe's portrayal of the three central female characters, it might seem unusual to analyze (young) adult female figures through the lens of Kristeva's psychoanalytic theory of subjectivity formation that primarily focuses on revealing conscious and unconscious processes in infants and young children.

¹⁰⁹ In my review of feminist scholarship on Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften*, I discuss Norbert Puszkar's study that focuses on the differences in Ottilie's and Luciane's characters as well as on the changes in Luciane's characterization through the *tableaux vivants* as signs of her learning process and thus,

Luciane's orchestration of the pantomimic representation of three paintings can be viewed as the high point of Goethe's depiction of her evolution as a subject.¹¹⁰ I find the third painting especially important in this context because Luciane's still performance can be perceived as a symbolic representation of multiple aspects of idealized femininity. She is shown as the central figure of the situation which entails a family and more specifically a father-daughter interaction.

Luciane's performance is also important because it represents a climactic episode in Goethe's portrayal of her conflict-laden relationship with Otilie. On the one hand, her decision to exclude Otilie from all three performances can be perceived as yet another indication of her competitive and adverse attitude toward Otilie. On the other hand, Luciane's overall silence in the still images, her ability to give up her constant need for movement and passion for excessive clothing – in the third living painting, she wears a “weißes Atlaskleid” (Goethe 428) – can be interpreted as implicit expressions of her desire to become identical with the image represented by Otilie's modesty, quiet beauty, and muse-like character:

Als drittes hatte man die sogenannte väterliche Ermahnung von Terburg gewählt
[...] Einen Fuß über den anderen geschlagen, sitzt ein edler ritterlicher Vater und
scheint seiner vor ihm stehenden Tochter ins Gewissen zu reden. Diese, eine
herrliche Gestalt, im faltenreichen Atlaskleide, wird zwar nur von hinten gesehen,

transformation into a cultivated young woman according to the expectations of the surrounding late Enlightenment social discourse.

¹¹⁰ The importance of the *tableaux vivants* in *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* is duly indicated by the significant number of studies that have engaged in the analysis of this episode in Goethe's novel. In my literature review, I provide a brief overview of a few illustrative examples of the *tableaux vivants* research in which various facets of this episode have been considered and analyzed (see pages 25-28 above).

aber ihr ganzes Wesen scheint anzudeuten, daß sie sich zusammennimmt. Daß jedoch die Ermahnung nicht heftig und beschämend sei, sieht man aus der Miene und Gebärde des Vaters; [...] Bei dieser Gelegenheit nun sollte Luciane in ihrem höchsten Glanze erscheinen. (Goethe 428-429)

Luciane's still presentation of the young girl shows her with attributes that were previously only associated with Otilie such as reserved demeanor, quietness, stillness, and understated white clothing. In this performance, Goethe portrays Luciane, at least temporarily, as a young woman who inspires her audience's awe and admiration. It can be argued that, for the time of the performance, Luciane is portrayed as a female character that projects qualities that are similar, if not identical, to those that Goethe implies in Otilie's depiction. Thus, Luciane can be perceived as a momentary still representation of idealized feminine attributes and qualities.

In this context, I would like to emphasize the temporary nature of her behavior in the still painting because this pattern of conduct, that is 'new' to her, changes again when she stops acting out her part in the 'living' painting; Goethe's narrative clearly indicates that Luciane's withdrawn and 'Otilie-like' behavior is not permanent. When Luciane and her company depart subsequent to these performances, the narrator shows her as yet again continuing her excessive life style on another estate:

Nun sollte man scheiden, aber das konnte nicht auf eine gewöhnliche Weise geschehen. Man scherzte einmal ziemlich laut, daß Charlottens Wintervorräte nun bald aufgezehrt seien, als der Ehrenmann, der den Belisar vorgestellt hatte, und freilich reich genug war, von Lucianens Vorzügen hingerissen, denen er schon

lange huldigte, unbedachtsam ausrief: so lassen Sie es uns auf polnische Art halten! Kommen Sie nun und zehren mich auf, und gehet es dann weiter in der Runde herum. Gesagt, getan: Luciane schlug ein. Den andern Tag war gepackt und der Schwarm warf sich auf ein anderes Besitztum. (Goethe 430)

Such a descriptive illustration of Luciane's departure clearly indicates that her actions and behavior show resemblances with the pattern of life she had lived before the still performances. Following Luciane's acclaimed still performances, Goethe reveals her unmistakable return to the core of her true "Natürlichkeit" that entails an overly excessive life style and that makes her portrayal highly ambiguous.

What makes Luciane's character even more interesting is that Goethe's complex and unclear depiction of her creates a female figure with a conspicuously inconsistent combination of actions and behavior patterns. Such an unclear and conflicting characterization of Luciane, similar to that of Charlotte, leaves room for various forms of interpretation, and it seems to underscore my earlier proposition that Goethe's portrayal of femininity in Die Wahlverwandtschaften can hardly be reduced to the view that it implies an uncritical affirmation of late Enlightenment gender relations.

The temporary nature of the shift in Luciane's conduct towards silence, modesty, and submission and the fact that her silencing is set in a series of art performances suggest that such pronounced changes are not only momentary but that they are embedded in an artificial and artistic framework that is detached from the fictional reality of the narrative and from Luciane's usual daily existence. Based on Goethe's indication of the overwhelming acclaim Luciane receives from her primarily male audience, it can

be argued that the revealed shift in her behavior – the taming of her natural excessivity for the duration of the performance – creates a contrast between her ‘old’ and ‘new’ image that is reminiscent of Campe’s description of the difference between the behavior of uncultivated young girls and women who have been trained to develop and nurture socially preferred feminine qualities and virtues in the late Enlightenment. Thus, this sudden shift in Luciane’s conduct shows her as a young adult whose absolute silence and submission to paternal authority temporarily fulfill the prevailing societal expectations of women and gain her acceptance as well as recognition. In the tableaux vivants, Goethe’s text places Luciane, a predominantly ‘untamed’ and ‘natural’ young adult with excessive traits, into an artistic and, at the same time artificial situation of momentary duration in which her thus far dominant attributes are restrained and placed under male paternal/social censorship.

Based on the above observations, it can be argued that Goethe’s in-depth illustration of profound changes in Luciane’s behavior, namely her gradual silencing and submission to paternal authority, can be viewed as part of a didactic lesson for young women with regard to the Late Enlightenment definition of their preferred traits and roles in society. Such interpretations would show Goethe’s portrayal of femininity in his Wahlverwandtschaften as fundamentally conforming to the surrounding social practice. However, to consider the above as the single possible interpretation would mean a one-sided and reductionist analysis of Goethe’s representation of women and of his approach to the dominant gender discourse of his era. Goethe’s notable emphasis on the momentary duration of Luciane’s silent, withdrawn, and modest behavior challenges, if

not undermines the implications that acting out the tableaux vivants can serve as the framework of Luciane's transformation into a female character with idealized feminine qualities. It can be argued that his view is also supported by the way Luciane's exit from the narrative is structured because her return to her true nature does not limit her social acceptance. On the contrary, Goethe's text illustrates Luciane's continued social recognition when she is invited to spend an extended period of time at another estate in a similar setting. Goethe's indication that Luciane exits the fictional reality as a fiancée and as a future wife also reinforces her positioning as a young woman who – even despite her excessivity that was defined as an unfavored feminine trait in the contemporary gender context – represents a viable model of femininity. Since Goethe describes the changes in Luciane's character as detached from the fictional reality of the estate life, and they are embedded in a series of on stage performances, it can be argued that this narrative detail further weakens the possible didactic implications of Goethe's depiction of Luciane's transformed behavior and the audience's admiration for her acting.

Luciane's return to her initial 'Natürlichkeit' and excessive lifestyle following her performance can be interpreted as a sign that the roles she plays in the tableaux vivants do not dominate her character and that her 'tamed' feminine existence is restricted to the artistic/artificial reality of her identity on stage. It is interesting to note that the complexity that Goethe gave Luciane in 1809 makes her into a suitable character to exemplify Kristeva's concept of the "subject-in-process" and her theory of subjectivity formation. If read on the basis of Kristeva's theory, Luciane's behavior and actions

demonstrate a dynamic oscillation between symbolized, and yet semiotic feminine existence displayed in her still performance.

Based on the above, it can be concluded that Goethe's complex and multifaceted portrayal of Luciane – similarly to that of Charlotte – shapes a rather open gender discourse within the Wahlverwandtschaften narrative that shows not only signs of conformity to the existing social practice but that also insinuates a critical approach to the rigid gender definitions of the late Enlightenment.

Goethe's depiction of Luciane's return to her true nature with all her excessive traits makes her character especially interesting in the context of my hypothesis that Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften offers an experimental depiction of various forms of femininity. Considering my observations about the ambiguities of Luciane's character, it can be argued that in spite of the changes she undergoes during the extended visit to the estate, Goethe shows her as a female figure who hardly fits any arbitrarily defined category of femininity. She can rather be viewed as an openly shaped female figure whose feminine identity and roles in the narrative are laid out in such a way that they also rely on and are shaped by the reader's expectations and his/her critical interpretation. Goethe's text leaves Luciane's role in relation to Charlotte and Ottilie as well as to her positioning in the gender discourse of the novel open. Thus, it seems that the way Goethe shapes Luciane's character and her apparent interconnection with Charlotte and Ottilie implies a 'playful' approach that relies on the reader's expectations. In so doing, Goethe's text presents conflicting images of Luciane that reflect opposing facets of existing social practices: On the one hand, Goethe depicts Luciane in the artificial setting

of theatrical acting as a female character that temporarily represents idealized feminine qualities while, on the other hand, he also shows her with attributes that shape her as an excessive young woman. These ambiguities around Luciane's character facilitate more than one interpretation and imply the possibility of a reading according to which Goethe offers a critique of the surrounding gender relations that were prevalent in his lifetime. They can further be viewed as a means for Goethe to point to the contradictory nature and thus instability of the Law of the surrounding paternal social order.

In the following, I explore Goethe's characterization of Otilie and her relationship with Charlotte in order to compare the positioning of each of these three female characters in the novel. I look at Goethe's depiction of Otilie in her relationship with Charlotte and explore whether Otilie's depiction as a feminine ideal changes when she and Charlotte remain together on the estate after Luciane's departure. I focus on the portrayal of the mother-daughter bond between Charlotte and Otilie, of the distribution of roles between them before and after the birth of Charlotte's son. My objective is to also compare the models of femininity that Goethe's text postulates in Charlotte's, Otilie's, and Luciane's characterization in order to analyze how Charlotte is positioned after the series of tragic events such as Otto's drowning, Otilie's self-starvation, and Eduard's death. Altogether, my goal is to offer an exhaustive interpretation of Goethe's attitude towards prevalent late Enlightenment social practices as displayed through his representation of femininity in Die Wahlverwandtschaften.

3. Shared Desires and Joint Mothering between Charlotte and Otilie

While Goethe's portrayal of Luciane and the roles that she plays in the character constellation 'Charlotte—Luciane—Otilie' built the primary focus of the previous chapter, in the following, I concentrate on Goethe's similarly complex depiction of the interrelation between Otilie and Charlotte after Otilie's arrival at the estate. I focus on three central aspects that govern Charlotte's and Otilie's relationship:

- Charlotte's parental impact on Otilie's identity development,
- The ways in which Otilie's and Eduard's unfolding liaison shapes Otilie's relationship with Charlotte,
- Charlotte's and Otilie's joint motherly care for Otto.

My objective is to trace potential changes in the portrayal of their interactions and to examine how such changes affect their evolution as subject and their femininity.

In the context of the boarding school, Goethe's text portrays Otilie as an optimal example of late Enlightenment idealized femininity. For example, this portrayal is accentuated by Otilie's conscious choice to turn away from the learning process and by her failing the public examination. With the above in mind, it is important to highlight again that Goethe postulates two different and conflicting assessments of Otilie's character traits and behavior patterns. Based on this apparent distinction, I have argued that Goethe may have intended to distance his narrative from the gender relations of his time mainly because his approach allows for thinking about arbitrarily defined gender

characteristics and gender roles in relative terms rather than viewing them as absolute and universally ‘given.’

As to Ottilie’s relationship with Charlotte, their symbolic mother-daughter bond shows great complexity since Goethe’s narrative positions Charlotte as the single parenting figure in a ‘fatherless’ family unit. Charlotte can, therefore, be simultaneously viewed as a representative figure that stands for maternal love and also for paternal authority and morality, namely for the rules of the social order. The complexity of the connection between Ottilie and Charlotte is further accentuated by Eduard’s and Ottilie’s problematic affection for one another and by Goethe’s later emphasis on Charlotte’s and Ottilie’s shared maternal responsibilities after Otto’s birth.

Considering the above, I now explore the changes in the dynamics of this mother-daughter bond parallel to Ottilie’s unfolding devotion to Eduard.

The Adoptive Mother-Daughter Bond

Let me start my investigation with the most apparent aspect of Charlotte’s and Ottilie’s relationship, namely the adoptive mother-daughter bond that ties them together into one family unit with one another and with Luciane. I have emphasized at various points that Goethe’s depiction of Ottilie shows her as a young adult with character traits that can be perceived as exemplary attributes of women during the late Enlightenment. The expressions that are often used to describe her, such as “Zurücktreten” (Goethe 293), “Mäßigkeit im Essen und Trinken” (313), “Dienstbeflissenheit” (314), and “Liebenswürdigkeit” (355) reflect feminine qualities that were praised in the social

context of the late Enlightenment. Further instances of Otilie's idealized depiction can be detected in the narrator's descriptions of her after her arrival at the estate: "Charlotte gab dem neuen Ankömmling nur wenige Winke, wie es mit dem Hausgeschäfte zu halten sei. Otilie hatte schnell die ganze Ordnung eingesehen, ja was noch mehr ist, empfunden" (Goethe 312). A few pages later, the narrator once more points out Otilie's devotion to household duties:

Otilie war indessen völlig Herrin des Haushaltes, und wie konnte es anders sein, bei ihrem stillen und sichern Betragen. Auch war ihre ganze Sinnesweise dem Hause und dem Häuslichen mehr als der Welt, mehr als dem Leben im Freien zugewendet. (Goethe 327)

This illustration of Otilie's 'natural' and inborn talent for the management of household duties ties her character exclusively to the domestic sphere of life. The lengthy and detailed characterization also highlights Otilie's attentive yet quiet presence, and this behavior further reflects late 18th century feminine ideals as women were 'instructed' to take on the role of listener and 'student' in their relationship with men.

Eduard's flattering comment about Otilie can also be viewed as yet another indication of her positioning as an apparent representation of idealized feminine attributes:

Sie [Otilie, Z.R.] schien aufmerksam auf das Gespräch, ohne daß sie daran Teil genommen hätte. Den anderen morgen sagte Eduard zu Charlotten: es ist ein angenehmes und unterhaltendes Mädchen. Unterhaltend? versetzte Charlotte mit Lächeln: sie hat ja den Mund noch nicht aufgetan. (Goethe 312)

This exchange between Eduard and Charlotte demonstrates the confrontation of the couple's distinct viewpoints when it comes to the assessment of Otilie's attentive and quiet presence: While Eduard finds Otilie's presence (silence) entertaining, Charlotte's reaction disputes the legitimacy of Eduard's comment by highlighting the inherent contradiction in his statement.

Charlotte's disagreement with Eduard's opinion is symptomatic of an underlying subtext in the narrative that stresses the necessity of critical thinking that goes beyond the 'simple' acceptance of arbitrarily defined roles and limitations in society. This brief verbal exchange reinforces Charlotte's positioning as an independently thinking woman and foreshadows the impact of her motherly guidance in relation to Otilie. Charlotte is shown to take her maternal responsibilities towards Otilie seriously when it is indicated that she takes time to read earlier reports from the boarding school in order to obtain a better understanding of Otilie's personality and behavior:

Charlotte nahm indes die älteren Papiere wieder vor, die sich auf Ottilien bezogen, um sich in Erinnerung zu bringen, was die Vorsteherin, was der Gehülfe über das gute Kind geurteilt, um es mit ihrer Persönlichkeit selbst zu vergleichen. Denn Charlotte war der Meinung, man könne nicht geschwind genug mit dem Charakter der Menschen bekannt werden, mit denen man zu leben hat, um zu wissen, was sich von ihnen erwarten, was sich an ihnen bilden läßt, oder was man ihnen ein für allemal zugestehen und verzeihen muß. (Goethe 313)

If we consider that Charlotte almost entirely withdraws from any direct contact with Luciane during her visit to the estate and she considers Luciane 'ready for the world,' the

narrator's detailed reference to Charlotte's thorough review of her correspondence with the school regarding Otilie suggests that she views Otilie as a young woman still in need of further development and maternal guidance.

Subsequent to her thoughtful considerations, Charlotte encourages Otilie to change certain habits that clearly conform to late Enlightenment feminine ideals. Whereas Goethe's text indicates that Charlotte is pleased with Otilie's commitment to domestic service and with her talent for household management, she is also delighted with Otilie's willingness to speak more freely during their conversations in French: "Die Frauenzimmer hatten untereinander festgesetzt, französisch zu reden, wenn sie allein wären; und Charlotte beharrte um so mehr dabei, als Otilie gesprächiger in der fremden Sprache war, indem man ihr die Übung derselben zur Pflicht gemacht hatte" (Goethe 312). Otilie's more pronounced verbal presence restricts itself to her conversations with Charlotte and to speaking in a foreign language. I view this detail as Goethe's way to reinforce that Otilie by choice withdraws from verbality in her interactions with other characters. This moment in the narrative shows Otilie as a female character who chooses to act as a cultivated young woman in accordance with Campe's definition.¹¹¹ After reading through the letters from the boarding school, Charlotte is shown to be concerned about Otilie's poor eating and drinking habits, and she seeks to change her clothing style:

Sie [Charlotte] fand bei dieser Untersuchung [der älteren Papiere] nichts neues, aber manches Bekannte ward ihr bedeutender und auffallender. So konnte ihr

¹¹¹ This narrative moment is reminiscent of the earlier reference to Otilie's conscious refusal of learning in the boarding school.

[Charlotte, Z.R.] z.B. Ottiliens Mäßigkeit im Essen und Trinken wirklich Sorge machen.

Das nächste was die Frauen beschäftigte war der Anzug. Charlotte verlangte von Ottilien, sie solle in Kleidern reicher und mehr ausgesucht erscheinen. (Goethe 313)

Charlotte's attempt to teach Ottilie to express herself more freely, to dress in more sophisticated and stylish clothing as well as her worries about Ottilie's minimal food consumption suggest that Charlotte is shown in her maternal role as an initiator of potential changes in Ottilie's conduct. Overall, Charlotte encourages less modesty in Ottilie's behavior implying that her existence should not be primarily defined by submission, service to others, and self-denial.

Charlotte's suggestions regarding Ottilie's behavior reflect Charlotte's non-conforming and dominant presence in her role as Ottilie's mother figure. Furthermore, Charlotte's intervention suggests yet again that the narrator's and the schoolmaster's complimentary and favorable views of Ottilie's behavior are put in relative terms and (at least in part) contested. It can, therefore, also be argued that Goethe's text reveals an underlying critical position that questions some of the limitations that were imposed on women in the late Enlightenment. Charlotte's selective attempts to change certain aspects of Ottilie's behavior, such as her speaking, eating, and clothing habits, but not her commitment to service and household duties can further be interpreted as Goethe's way to reveal the contradictory nature of late Enlightenment social expectations with regard to gender roles. Goethe's text continues to offer an ambiguous portrayal of Charlotte: While

she is positioned as a law abiding and socially respected woman, her maternal guidance and verbal dominance coupled with her implied position of authority on the estate hardly show conformity to contemporary expectations towards women. In the context of Charlotte's advice to Ottilie, the narrator's repeated references to her delight in Ottilie's commitment to domestic service can be perceived as the law-abiding side of her character. At the same time, the fact that Charlotte encourages Ottilie to renounce her modesty in clothing, verbal expression, and other oral functions can be seen as a significant element of Goethe's representation of femininity in his Wahlverwandtschaften: Charlotte is depicted as a woman who, from time to time, abandons socially defined idealized feminine roles and behavior patterns while at the same time she is also portrayed as the representation of authority and order. The fact that her socially acclaimed position is not impaired by her 'unusual' qualities postulates more flexibly defined gender relations and a less marginalized position for women in the social contract than was advocated in late Enlightenment theories on gender. The importance of this detail in the narrative is further reinforced by Goethe's reference to Charlotte's desire to teach similar skills to Ottilie.

Based on my analysis of Ottilie's portrayal in the school, it can be argued that Goethe depicts Ottilie as a stationary and static image-like female character. If we consider Kristeva's theory of subjectivity formation and Goethe's depiction of Ottilie as a modest and law-abiding young adult who also consciously refrains from linguistic self-expression, it can be argued that Ottilie is shown as a female figure who operates in the symbolic modality under the Law of the Father. Despite her symbolic existence, Ottilie is

simultaneously portrayed as a young adult who consciously refuses to participate in linguistic signification. If analyzed through the lens of Kristeva's theory, Otilie's character correlates with Kristeva's notion of the "subject of desire" that stops all his/her desires "to the extent that a subject has attempted to remain on its path" (Revolution 132).

Kristeva further explains:

When language is not mixed with the drives and, instead, requires an extreme repression of the drives' multiplicity and/or their linearization in the development of the unitary subject, what results is a culmination of subjugation to the Law of the Signifier in which the living person himself becomes a sign and signifying activity stops. (132)

I argue that Kristeva's notion of the "subject of desire" offers an optimal way to categorize Otilie's withdrawal from learning and using linguistic expression in the boarding school because her behavior is marked by an extreme repression of her drives. After Otilie's arrival at the estate though, Charlotte's maternal function gains special significance because her guidance initiates changes in Otilie's sign-like existence by encouraging her to show less extreme modesty and be more talkative. According to Kristeva, speaking as well as signification help the repression of drives beneath language because the drives are then mixed in with language (Revolution 132). Since one of the changes that Charlotte encourages in Otilie entails more speaking, this change in Otilie's behavior reveals at this point in the novel the possibility of a transformation of her sign-like character into a 'living person' with a 'living body.'

In this context, it is important to note that Charlotte's guidance indeed leads to changes in certain aspects of Otilie's behavior: She starts to dress more fashionably and also converses with Charlotte more freely in the foreign language:

Charlotte beharrte um so mehr dabei, als Otilie gesprächiger in der fremden Sprache war. [...] Sogleich schnitt das gute Kind die ihr früher geschenkten Stoffe selbst zu und wußte sie sich, mit geringer Beihülfe anderer, schnell und höchst zierlich anzupassen. Die neuen modischen Gewänder erhöhten ihre Gestalt [...].
(Goethe 312-313)

Except for these details, however, it is also apparent that no further changes can be noticed compared to her earlier behavior pattern: Her negligible food consumption and minimal participation in conversations with other characters continue to remain a predominant part of her disposition. For instance, multiple narrative references demonstrate that besides Otilie's outstanding talent for and joy in the organization of the household – which is clearly welcomed by Charlotte – her attentive, yet mostly quiet and hardly noticeable presence continues to define her character primarily:

[Die Dienstbeflissenheit Otiliens] wuchs mit jedem Tage. [...] Ihre ruhige Aufmerksamkeit blieb sich immer gleich, so wie ihre gelassene Regsamkeit. Und so war ihr Sitzen, Aufstehen, Gehen, Kommen, Holen, Bringen, wieder Niedersitzen, eine ewige angenehme Bewegung. Dazu kam, daß man sie nicht gehen hörte, so leise trat sie auf. (Goethe 314)

It is also emphasized in the narrative that Otilie's commitment to domestic service is a fundamental part of her existence: "Otilie war indessen schon völlig Herrin des

Haushaltes, und wie konnte es anders sein, bei ihrem stillen und sichern Betragen (Goethe 327). Based on the above, it can be argued that such references to Otilie by the narrator as a young woman who is quiet around others except for Charlotte, attentive, and service driven more predominantly define her rather than some isolated indications of slight changes in her conduct that reflect Charlotte's guidance.

Considering the findings of my analysis of Goethe's characterization of Otilie before and after her arrival at the estate, it can be argued that Otilie's behavior on the estate demonstrates some changes towards a more dynamic and less repressed as well as less submissive existence. Yet at the same time, Goethe's text continues to depict her as a female character whose traits show compliance with predefined late Enlightenment gender roles and who, in Kristeva's terminology, hardly engages in meaningful signification. Therefore, Otilie's character can also be viewed as placed into the position of the 'other,' and/or the object rather than into that of the 'One' and/or the subject: Since Otilie, by choice, consciously withdraws from participating in conversations and thus from signification, Goethe depicts her as a young woman who mostly refuses to take a 'position.' In Kristeva's theory, taking a 'position' is an essential step in the process of subjectivity formation that is first tied to the mirror stage and to the child's distinction between him-/herself (the One/the subject) and his/her image (the other/the object) for the first time. In this context, taking a 'position' is indispensable because it is a most fundamental part of one's existence in the symbolic modality and because it is the precondition of the child's ability to differentiate between subject and object as well as to operate in the position of the subject. This detail is especially important in the context of

Goethe's portrayal of Otilie because, if analyzed through the lens of Kristeva, Otilie is shown as someone who operates in the symbolic order under the Law of the Father. Therefore, her conscious withdrawal from verbality implies a voluntary regressive step on the continuum of subjectivity as a process that can be perceived as her renunciation of the position of the subject.

Goethe's depiction of Otilie through her service to others can be viewed as an implication of her position of the 'other' especially in her relationship with Eduard: Otilie's mirroring of Eduard's headache (311), her ability to perfectly imitate his handwriting (355), as well as the narrator's reference to her as Eduard's "Schutzgeist" (320) are narrative details through which Otilie's positioning as the 'other,' is reinforced. One illustrative example is when the narrator says:

Was er [Eduard, Z.R.] wünschte, suchte sie zu befördern, was ihn ungeduldig machen konnte, zu verhüten, dergestalt, daß sie in kurzem wie ein freundlicher Schutzgeist ihm unentbehrlich ward und er anfang ihre Abwesenheit peinlich zu empfinden. (Goethe 320)

Based on the above considerations, it can be concluded that Otilie's depiction shows some slight changes in her overly modest and withdrawn behavior as a result of Charlotte's encouragements. Nevertheless, Otilie apparently continues to be primarily portrayed as a service driven, abstinent, and submissive female figure. Otilie's characterization on the estate – similarly to her portrayal in the boarding school – continues to show correspondences with Kristeva's notion of 'subject of desire.' Whereas Otilie is shown to operate in the symbolic modality, her withdrawal from linguistic

expression can also be viewed as an indication that she is defined by the complete repression of drives without signifying activity.

Otilie and Eduard

Let me now turn to Goethe's depiction of Otilie's growing affection for Eduard, a fundamental part of her portrayal and another essential facet that colors her relationship with Charlotte. What makes this romantic liaison significant with regard to Otilie's identity development and to the mother-daughter bond between Otilie and Charlotte is that Eduard's and Otilie's mutual attraction signifies an unethical relationship according to the Law of the societal order. Thus, situations in which Otilie's emotional attachment to Eduard is illustrated seem to create an inherent conflict in the narrative: On the one hand, Goethe depicts Otilie as a female figure defined by self-denial and exceeding repression of unconscious drives. On the other hand however, Otilie's emotional attachment to Eduard creates a moral tension that threatens to undermine the narrator's laudatory representation of her purity and innocence. The first illustrative example in the novel that clearly indicates Otilie's affection is tied to her copy of Eduard's manuscript:

Otilie schwieg, aber sie blickte ihm mit der größten Zufriedenheit in die Augen.

Eduard hob seine Arme empor: Du liebst mich! Rief er aus: Otilie du liebst mich!

Und sie hielten einander umfaßt. Wer das andere zuerst ergriffen, wäre nicht zu unterscheiden gewesen. (Goethe 355)

Due to the moral implications that arise from Eduard's marital status, this illustration of Otilie's desire for his closeness and affection can be perceived as a detail of her

characterization that stands in contrast to her thus far idealization in the context of the late Enlightenment gender discourse.

Otilie's emotionally open and unrepressed conduct in her interactions with Eduard implies a more pronounced shift in her actions toward less self-denial and modesty. If considered in light of Kristeva's theory, this shift may imply a change in Otilie's existence that can be better defined through the heterogeneous operation of both symbolic and semiotic modalities in her consciousness. As a result, it can further be argued that Goethe no longer characterizes her as an image-like, static, and unified figure who exemplifies attributes associated with late Enlightenment expectations towards women; the way he presents her as of this point can rather be described as a dynamically changing "subject-in-process" whose development is guaranteed by the manifestations of repressed desires in signifying language.

Goethe describes the effect of Otilie's growing affection for Eduard on her tie to Charlotte: what so far has been depicted as a close mother-daughter bond now appears to shift into a competitive and conflict-laden relationship. The changing dynamics of this complex tie between Charlotte and Otilie is significant because – after Charlotte's renunciation of her desire for the Hauptmann – Charlotte's ambition to save her marriage highlights the moral tension inherent in the growing intensity of Otilie's and Eduard's relationship. Similarly to Charlotte's actions in relation to the Hauptmann, Goethe's portrayal of Charlotte suggests that she assumes a leading role in this romantic triangle, and that her actions signify morality and order in the micro-environment of the estate:

She not only watches and controls Otilie more closely but also intends to remove her from Eduard's presence:

Charlotte schließt Ottilien näher an sich, beobachtet sie strenger, und jemehr sie ihr eigen Herz gewahr worden, desto tiefer blickt sie in das Herz des Mädchens. Sie sieht keine Rettung, als sie muß das Kind entfernen. [...] Ottilie konnte in die Pension zurückkehren; der Hauptmann entfernte sich, wohlversorgt; und alles stand wie vor wenigen Monaten, ja um so viel besser. Ihr eigenes Verhältnis hoffte Charlotte zu Eduard bald wieder herzustellen, und sie legte das alles so verständig bei sich zurecht, daß sie sich nur immer mehr in dem Wahn bestärkte: in einen früheren Zustand könne man zurückkehren, ein gewaltsam Entbundenenes lasse sich wieder in Enge bringen. (Goethe 361)

Goethe's portrayal of Charlotte's conscious planning and deliberate actions is significant in the context of his portrayal of femininity because parallel to her earlier characterization in the novel, Charlotte's actions continue to reveal apparent ambiguities about her character: On the one hand, Charlotte's intention is to re-establish a stability that conforms to the Law of the surrounding social order and that would also guarantee her socially acclaimed position. On the other hand, her very actions associated with this goal depict her as a female character that does not conform to the expectations of her time. Charlotte is namely shown yet again in a 'leadership' position as a proactive, dynamic, thoughtful, and rational woman who takes the initiative and formulates a plan in order to reach her objective.

Charlotte's proactive and preventive response to the moral threat posed by Otilie's and Eduard's mutual affection initiates an adverse reaction not only in Eduard but also in Otilie:

Auch Otilie entfremdete sich einigermaßen von Charlotten und dem Hauptmann. Als Eduard sich einst gegen Ottilien über den letztern beklagte, daß er als Freund und in einem solchen Verhältnisse nicht ganz aufrichtig handle, versetzte Ottilie unbedachtsam: es hat mir schon früher mißfallen, daß er nicht ganz redlich gegen Sie ist. Ich hörte ihn einmal zu Charlotten sagen, wenn uns Eduard mit seiner Flötendudelei verschonte: es kann daraus nichts werden und ist für die Zuhörer so lästig. Sie können denken, wie mich das geschmerzt hat, da ich Sie so gern akkompagniere.

Kaum hatte sie es gesagt, als ihr schon der Geist zuflüsterte, daß sie hätte schweigen sollen; aber es war heraus. (Goethe 362)

This critical and emotionally laden utterance may first be surprising if we consider that Otilie has thus far been predominantly characterized by her overall modesty and by her withdrawal from almost any form of verbal expression. In light of Kristeva's theory of subject formation, it can be argued that Otilie has been defined by her Law abiding and censored existence that entails the repression of forbidden feelings and desires. This atypical and rare comment made by Otilie implies that Goethe may have aimed at depicting her as a character who is capable of symbolic signification and of the repression of her unconscious drives beneath linguistic utterances; Otilie's depiction as a female figure who can no longer be described as a "subject of desire" demonstrates a

fundamental change in her characterization because this shift in her behavior and utterances, at least in part, undermines and questions her thus far association with idealized femininity as perceived in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

The conflict between mother and daughter that is also revealed in Charlotte's ambitions to separate Otilie from Eduard induces adverse reactions in Otilie. In the context of this tension between Otilie and Charlotte, it is also important to note that Otilie is shown as well aware of the fact that she should have refrained from the observation she made to Eduard: Based on her inner ambivalence about the appropriateness of her statement, it can be argued that Goethe shapes a multifaceted female character in her that is of similar complexity to his depiction of Charlotte and Luciane. Otilie's consciousness oscillates between an inner self-censoring on the one hand, and an uncontrollable desire to defy Charlotte and the prohibitions she stands for on the other.

In light of Kristeva's theory, Otilie's distance and adverse feelings towards Charlotte and the Hauptmann can be perceived as a form of rejection, i.e. abjection. In this context, it is important to point out that Kristeva does not exclusively correlate the abject with the maternal function but, as Oilver emphasizes, the abject can also be described as:

a moral infraction, a threatening otherness that Christianity calls a 'sin.' [...] The abject is what is on the border, what doesn't respect borders. It is "ambiguous," "in-between," "composite." [...] [The abject, Z.R.] is a relationship to a boundary, its other side, a margin. The abject is what threatens identity. It is neither good nor

evil, subject nor object, ego nor unconscious, but something that threatens the distinctions themselves. The abject is not an object that corresponds to an ego; rather, it is what is excluded by the superego. (Reading Kristeva 56)

This side of the definition of the abject is important because it allows for an interpretation of the socially/ethically problematic romantic connection between Otilie and Eduard as an abject that seems to challenge and question the validity of Otilie's thus far highly idealized portrayal. Since Otilie's attributes are repeatedly praised by the narrator, the schoolmaster, and later by the young architect, this change in her conduct may also imply that Goethe's narrative – through the ambiguities of Otilie's depiction – also offers a critique of the rigid gender boundaries of his era.

In Die Wahlverwandtschaften, we find a complex portrayal of Otilie's character that shows shifts in her existence between what Kristeva would call the complete repression of drives and the uncontrollable surfacing of semiotic operations. The complexities of Otilie's portrayal are further accentuated by Goethe's clear indication of her feelings for Eduard when she engages in a correspondence with him that they try to keep secret from others:

Er [Eduard, Z.R.] entschloß sich ihr zu schreiben, sie um einen geheimen Briefwechsel zu bitten. [...] Otilien wurde das Blättchen in die Hand gedrückt, den ersten Augenblick wo er sich ihr nähern konnte.

Otilie versäumte nicht ihm zu antworten. Ungelesen steckte er das Zettelchen in die Weste, die modisch kurz es nicht gut verwahrte. Es schob sich heraus und fiel, ohne von ihm bemerkt zu werden, auf den Boden. Charlotte sah es und hob es auf,

und reichte es ihm mit einem flüchtigen Überblick. Hier ist etwas von deiner Hand, sagte sie, das du vielleicht ungern verlörest. (Goethe 363)

The reference to this secret exchange of messages can be perceived as a further sign of changes in Otilie's character and apparent deviations from her earlier portrayal. This secret action signals her confrontation with and rejection of Charlotte's authority and supervision. The conflict between Charlotte and Otilie is further accentuated by Charlotte's close supervision of Otilie as well as her plan to send Otilie away (Goethe 361). This underlying tension becomes even more apparent when Otilie fails to take note of Charlotte's weak and inconspicuous attempts to separate her from Eduard because she fully trusts and accepts Eduard's favorable forecast of their future:

Wie sehr wünscht sie [Charlotte, Z. R.] jenen beiden auch zu Hülfe zu kommen. Entfernung, fühlte sie wohl, wird nicht allein hinreichend sein, ein solches Übel zu heilen. Sie nimmt sich vor die Sache gegen das gute Kind zur Sprache zu bringen; aber sie vermag es nicht; die Erinnerung ihres eignen Schwankens steht ihr im Wege. Sie sucht sich darüber im Allgemeinen auszudrücken [...] Sie will warnen und fühlt, daß sie wohl auch noch einer Warnung bedürfen könnte. Schweigend hält sie daher die Liebenden noch immer auseinander, und die Sache wird dadurch nicht besser. Leise Andeutungen, die ihr manchmal entschlüpfen, wirken auf Ottilien nicht: denn Eduard hatte diese von Charlottens Neigung zum Hauptmann überzeugt, sie überzeugt, daß Charlotte selbst eine Scheidung wünsche, die er nun auf eine anständige Weise zu bewirken denke. (Goethe 363-364)

This passage and Otilie's involvement in forbidden exchanges with Eduard are relevant in the context of Otilie's and Charlotte's relationship because they signal that Otilie's attention is no longer directed toward Charlotte, but that her focus have shifted to Eduard and his guidance. In light of Kristeva's theory, Otilie's rejection of Charlotte can be viewed as a form of abjection indicative of an attempt of her separation from Charlotte and the maternal function that she represents.

This passage carries relevance with regard to Charlotte's portrayal as well. It is indicated that Charlotte still operates under the impact of her emotional attachment to the Hauptmann: "die Erinnerung ihres eignen Schwankens steht ihr im Wege" (Goethe 363). Charlotte is differentiated from Otilie though because she is portrayed yet again as consciously aware of the perilous implications of her uncensored emotion, and she has also openly relinquished this desire (Goethe 358). Considering Goethe's distinct characterization of how Charlotte and Otilie are able to cope with such 'forbidden' emotions, it can be argued that Charlotte is positioned as a law abiding woman who is well aware of her prescribed position in the gender hierarchy. At the same time, this distinction between her and Otilie also reveals an apparent shift from Otilie's overall characterization as a young woman with idealized feminine qualities such as her overly quiet and passive existence: Her secret correspondence with Eduard portrays her as a more proactive young woman who no longer censors and represses her desire for Eduard.

Otilie is initially shown as dependent on Charlotte's parental guidance and censorship. As Otilie's emotions for Eduard unfold and become a more prominent part of her characterization, Goethe's text shows one further shift that manifests itself when

Otilie distances herself emotionally and physically from Charlotte and directs adverse feelings towards her and the Hauptmann. Both Otilie's morally problematic affection for Eduard and Charlotte's attempts to remove her from the estate instigate these apparent (temporary) changes in Otilie's conduct.

With regard to Charlotte, despite the fact that her actions are motivated by self-interest in the preservation of her own social position, Goethe's indication of her persistence to reinstate the original marital harmony further reinforces her status as the symbolic representative of order and morality. At the same time, in light of Kristeva's theory, her internal ambivalence and oscillation between desire and repression also imply that her character exemplifies a "subject-in-process" that operates on the basis of the very tension between the unity of the symbolic order/meaningful signification and the return of rejection (Revolution 118). It cannot be overlooked that as part of her marriage and as Otilie's mother figure, a fundamental aspect of Charlotte's characterization is that she is predominantly shown as the embodiment of authority and the agent of morality, i.e., the representation of the Law/ the superego. This ambivalence in the way Goethe depicts Charlotte's actions is founded on her commitment to order and morality as well as on her emotional attachment to the Hauptmann. Charlotte is also shown to be aware of this conflict inherent in her character. This explains her prevalent position in the entire narrative. While her internal ambivalence weaves through the novel, her choice to relentlessly preserve harmony and order results in a series of tragic events: I view this aspect of Charlotte's portrayal crucial in regard to Goethe's attitude towards the prevalent social order because by placing Charlotte, i.e., a woman into an authoritative position and

by depicting her as someone who cannot find self-fulfillment, Goethe in this novel postulates a critique of rigid gender roles and displays the contradictory nature of social conventions in the late Enlightenment.

Charlotte's and Otilie's Joint Motherhood

The third significant stage in the ongoing development of Otilie's and Charlotte's relationship begins with Eduard's departure from the estate. His leaving effects another change in Otilie's and Charlotte's relationship because his and the Hauptmann's absence brings about an extended period of amicable and serene co-existence between them. In spite of the continuous presence of male guests, Charlotte and Otilie are from now on portrayed as the central characters whose initial distance from one another is gradually alleviated, especially after Luciane's extended visit. Otilie's participation in the maternal care for Charlotte's newborn baby brings the two distanced female characters together again through their roles associated with motherhood.

Otilie's depiction continues to show conflicting tendencies after Eduard's farewell. This can be exemplified by the narrator's account that focuses on her diminishing hopes for Eduard's return to the estate:

So war es ihr [Otilie, Z.R.] um desto auffallender, als Charlotte von einer bevorstehenden Heirat des Hauptmanns, wie von einer ganz bekannten und gewissen Sache sprach, wodurch denn alles ein andres Ansehn gewann, als sie nach Eduards frühern Versicherungen sich vorstellen mochte. Durch alles dies vermehrte sich die Aufmerksamkeit Otiliens auf jede Äußerung, jeden Wink,

jede Handlung, jeden Schritt Charlottens. Ottilie war klug, scharfsinnig,
argwöhnisch geworden ohne es zu wissen. (Goethe 380-381)

Since the adjectives Goethe uses are clearly distinct and new in the context of Ottilie's character, it can be argued that she is no longer shown as a young adult who is focused on selfless submission to Charlotte's regulative guidance, on the service of others, and on duties entailing the management of the household on the estate: She has become watchful and vigilant, and this fundamental difference from the way she had been described before is a reflection of her continued affection for Eduard that has lead to her rivalry with Charlotte. Thus, Ottilie's "Scharfsinn" and "Argwohn" signal that her uncontrollable and irrepressible feelings for Eduard overwhelmingly influence her actions and trigger a distrustful attitude toward Charlotte.

This very tension is also thematized by the narrator by saying that "Ottilie hatte Eduarden nicht entsagt" (Goethe 384). In Kristeva's terminology, this detail presents an additional sign of Ottilie's abjection of Charlotte; Ottilie's wishes are distinguished from Charlotte's hope for a future friendship between Ottilie and Eduard:

Wie konnte sie [Ottilie, Z.R.] es auch [Eduarden entsagen, Z.R.], obgleich
Charlotte klug genug, gegen ihre eigene Überzeugung, die Sache für bekannt
annahm, und als entschieden voraussetzte, daß ein freundschaftliches, ruhiges
Verhältnis zwischen ihrem Gatten und Ottilien möglich sei. (Goethe 384)

Parallel to Goethe's indications of such changes, there are also numerous references by the narrator that imply her unawareness of what is actually happening to her. It is suggested in the text that Ottilie is not conscious of and therefore not in control of her

altered behavior. This state of unawareness is signaled by statements like “ohne es zu wissen” (Goethe 381) and “Otilie bemerkte kaum” (Goethe 405). Such narrative references seem to alleviate the gravity of the moral conflict between Otilie and Charlotte while also implying a sense of childlike innocence rooted in her oblivion. The narrator’s positively biased perception of Otilie’s naïveté and innocence is repeatedly suggested by references to her as “das gute Kind” (Goethe 379-380).

The narrator’s (379-380, 405, 423) and the architect’s (437-438) attitudes toward Otilie are positive and favorable, similar to that of the schoolmaster as expressed in his letters (294-295) and during his visit to Charlotte and Otilie (445-447): Both the narrator and the architect – either by their descriptive statements or by their actions – frequently associate Otilie with childlike innocence and purity, and they infer angelic qualities in her. Otilie’s association with the transcendental sphere is, for example, suggested when the narrator describes the resemblance between her and the faces of angels painted by the architect onto the ceiling of the chapel:

Durch eine anhaltende Übung gewannen Otilie und der Architekt bei den letzten Bildern mehr Freiheit, sie wurden zusehends besser. Auch die Gesichter, welche dem Architekten zu malen allein überlassen war, zeigten nach und nach eine ganz besondere Eigenschaft: sie fingen sämtlich an Ottilien zu gleichen. (Goethe 406)

The narrator continues to make frequent flattering comments about Otilie’s dominant traits of modesty, silence, and submission even when her actions and utterances already indicate a shift in her conduct towards less abstinence and compliance: The implied

correlation between Otilie's character and the angel faces can even be perceived as an accentuation and continuation of her depiction as flawless and pure.

Based on the above, it can be concluded that the complexity of Goethe's portrayal of Otilie lies in the fact that she can hardly be perceived as a subject of linear development: While Otilie is shown as a young adult whose dominant attributes more or less conform to the late Enlightenment definition of idealized femininity, she is later on also defined by her continued inner struggle and tensions that originates from her irresistible and overwhelming desire for Eduard, i.e., an ethically problematic affection.

Subsequent to Eduard's departure and Otilie's awareness of Charlotte's pregnancy, Goethe depicts Otilie once more as someone who withdraws from linguistic expression. In addition to her mostly quiet presence, Goethe's text suggests a more and more pronounced association of Otilie with a transcendental and saintly existence. Otilie's renewed renunciation of verbal expression after more unbound conversations with Charlotte and Eduard is shown when she reacts to the news of Charlotte's pregnancy:

Otilie, nachdem auch ihr Charlottens Geheimnis bekannt geworden, betroffen

wie Eduard, und mehr, ging in sich zurück. Sie hatte nichts weiter zu sagen.

Hoffen konnte sie nicht, und wünschen durfte sie nicht. Einen Blick jedoch in ihr

Inneres gewährt uns ihr Tagebuch, aus dem wir einiges mitzuteilen gedenken.

(Goethe 393)

It is interesting to observe that Otilie's return to silence suggests a significant distinction from Goethe's earlier depiction of her as someone who voluntarily chose to take on the

role of a quiet listener. The narrator's reference to Otilie's journal entries suggests that her verbal modesty solely refers to orality but not to her self-expression in writing.

The scope of this dissertation does not allow for an in-depth analysis of why Goethe included and put repeated emphasis on yet another strikingly distinct facet of Otilie's complex portrayal as suggested by her thoughtful, reflective, and in part philosophical diary entries. However, I consider Goethe's inclusion of these entries in the novel an important aspect of Otilie's characterization because they reveal Goethe's objective to also show her as a young woman with sophisticated reflective ability and a remarkable capacity with language. Her lengthy, perceptive, and astute observations about philosophical concepts such as love (Goethe 432), freedom (Goethe 433), art (Goethe 433), and nature (Goethe 451) demonstrate similar intellectual qualities to those of Charlotte. The diary entries depict Otilie with a remarkable intellect and verbal guile similar to Charlotte. This detail in the narrative can be viewed as a renewed indication of Goethe's problematization of conflicting late Enlightenment social conventions and his critique of the limitations that were imposed on women. The fact that Goethe's text only highlights Otilie's intellect and verbal talent in the context of her diary entries and presents these abilities as mostly repressed in her character otherwise can be perceived as yet another indication that Goethe's portrayal of Otilie can hardly be reduced to her idealization in the context of the late Enlightenment gender discourse. She is much rather depicted as a female figure of great complexity whose identity is defined by narrative implications of change and evolution that is rooted in her continued oscillation between

conflicting tendencies in her consciousness and that is represented by her similarly conflicting actions and utterances.

If read on the basis of Kristeva's theory, Goethe's portrait of Otilie illustrates a developmental stage in the symbolic mode of representation because of two reasons: On the one hand, her quiet modesty maintains the stability of the symbolic modality of the social order because she follows its rules according to which women are defined by silence and by their exclusion from the signifying practice. On the other hand, her journal entries are a medium for her self-expression and signal her continued participation in signification. As Kristeva claims, signification allows for the drives to be repressed beneath language, and if this fails to happen, an extreme repression of drives is necessary that leads to the masochistic transformation of the living body into a sign. Based on the above, Otilie's diary entries can be perceived as his association of Otilie with signifying language use. Otilie's characterization as a verbally active and self-expressive young woman signals that her existence is characterized as that of a 'living person' rather than of a fixed image/sign. Thus, Goethe's frequent references to and repeated inclusion of Otilie's diary entries as an important part of her life after Eduard's departure suggests a significant deviation from her initial depiction as an image-like character: Otilie's character can no longer be viewed as a "subject of desire" because her renewed choice of silence represents only her withdrawal from verbal utterances. Her participation in the signifying practice is demonstrated by the continued insertions of her written reflections in her diary entries.

Considering this modified depiction of Ottilie as a woman of unmistakable intellect and reflective ability, I argue that Goethe may have wanted to imply some similarities between Ottilie and Charlotte through the detailed insertion of Ottilie's diary entries. Furthermore, Goethe's inclusion of the journal also signals a growing interconnection between these two women that reaches beyond a mother-daughter bond. This close connection is accentuated by their immediate co-dependence and co-existence on the estate. It can be viewed as a co-existence that reaches its peak after Charlotte's delivery of her baby when Ottilie gradually takes on maternal responsibilities as well.

As I indicated above, while Ottilie's renewed withdrawal from oral utterances becomes apparent in the narrative, the narrator also repeatedly alludes to her association with the transcendental realm by invoking her purity and innocence. It can be argued that this association of Ottilie with purity and flawlessness becomes even more predominant in her character when the architect insists on her participation in a still performance of a painting about Mary and Jesus on Christmas Eve. The narrator's absolute praise of Ottilie's performance can be interpreted as a sign of her symbolic identification with the Virgin Mary:

Ohne Ottilien war die Sache nicht auszuführen. Der junge Mann [der Architekt, Z.R.] hatte sie in seinem Sinn zur Mutter Gottes erhoben, und wenn sie es abschlug, so war bei ihm keine Frage, daß das Unternehmen fallen müsse. Ottilie halb verlegen über seinen Antrag wies ihn mit seiner Bitte an Charlotten. Diese erteilte ihm gern die Erlaubnis, und auch durch sie ward die Scheu Ottiliens, sich jener heiligen Gestalt anzumaßen, auf eine freundliche Weise überwunden. [...]

Ottiliens Gestalt, Gebärde, Miene, Blick übertraf alles was je ein Maler dargestellt hat. (Goethe 438-439)

The narrator's description reveals admiration for Otilie's incomparable presentation, and the implication of such a correlation between Otilie and Mary further accentuates Otilie's characterization as the signifier of divine existence, holy purity, and spiritual motherhood. These concepts represent some facets of the roles associated with the Virgin Mary in the tradition of Catholic Christianity. In this context, Geoffrey Ashe explains in the Prologue of his book The Virgin (1976) that

Catholic Christianity has hailed her [Mary] over the centuries as the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven [...]. She is the Madonna, patroness of countless churches, prayed to in countless guises and grabs. She is the spiritual mother of all the faithful. She is the Co-Redeemer with her Son [...]. (Ashe 1)¹¹²

In her book, The Virgin Mary in the Perceptions of Women (2008), Joelle Mellon also emphasizes that Mary became "a radical and powerful force in the world" (Mellon 1).¹¹³

In her study of the historical reception of Mary by women, Mellon seeks an answer to the question as to what factors contributed to the significant decrease of Mary's role in the spiritual life of contemporary people. Like Ashe, Mellon also points out that "[o]nly a few hundred years ago, the Virgin Mary could be found everywhere – from the most private of sacred books to gardens, pub signs, jewelry, and spiritual vacations known as pilgrimages" (1). She further stresses the role of the Catholic Church in the formation of the "cult of the Virgin" when she writes:

¹¹² Geoffrey Ashe, The Virgin (London: Routledge, 1976).

¹¹³ Joelle Mellon, The Virgin Mary in the Perceptions of Women (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2008).

Official Church encouragements of what has become known as “the cult of the Virgin” led to an explosion of Marian devotion. It crossed all economic and social boundaries – everyone from the Pope to the lowliest of peasants had Mary at the heart of their spiritual lives. Medieval women especially looked to her to answer their prayers, be their role model, and serve as their advocate in heaven. They prayed to her several times a day and slept with Marian devotional objects on their bodies at night. She was invoked at all major life passages – baptisms, weddings, childbirths, and funerals. (1)

In this context, it is also important to mention that the rise of the Protestant religions brought significant changes in the way Mary was perceived. Mellon points out that “[p]rotestant leaders considered the veneration of Mary idolatry, so they declared war on her” (3). Ashe also stresses this shift in the Marian tradition when he writes:

Protestants reject the Marianist doctrines in any form. But they cannot shake off the Marianist inheritance. It descends through the Middle Ages, inspiring art and literature and a less barbaric Christian attitude towards women; and because of all these things, it remains embedded in Christianity and its culture. (Ashe 231)

With the above in mind, I now devote some attention to the analogy that is postulated between Otilie’s character and the role of ‘spiritual motherhood’ associated with the Virgin Mary in the Christian tradition. I seek to demonstrate how Mary’s elevation to divinity as ‘Mother of God’ and ‘Queen of Heaven’ in the Catholic tradition has affected the representation of femininity in the patriarchal social and gender context. A large corpus of scholarship has sought to analyze the impact that Catholic dogma on

the Virgin Mary has had on social representations of femininity over centuries. This corpus of scholarship on the Virgin Mary has also sought to understand Mary's significance and the symbolism in the Catholic Christian tradition. It is important to note that Mariology (the study of the Virgin Mary) does not limit itself to strictly theological questions but that it also encompasses studies of various other disciplines such as history, psychology, literature, feminist studies, and others.¹¹⁴

The symbolic significance of the Virgin constitutes an important, yet rather small mosaic piece in the scope of this dissertation. However, I believe that Goethe's undeniable association of Otilie's character with the Virgin Mary gains special significance in her complex portrayal if one takes her responsibility for Otto's death and her voluntary self-starvation into account as well. While examining the implications of this correlation between Otilie and Mary, I consider Kristeva's analysis of how the 'image' of Mary created in the Christian, and particularly in the Catholic tradition influenced social representations of femininity.

Based on Goethe's continued emphasis on Otilie's inborn maternal talent in the second part of the novel, I restrict my focus on one central aspect of the 'Mary discourse,' namely her representation of an earthly yet divine maternal figure. In this context, I

¹¹⁴ It would be an unattainable undertaking to try to provide an exhaustive overview of the vast body of Mariology scholarship in the context of this dissertation because the relationship of Otilie to Mary constitutes only a minor portion of my analysis of the three central female characters and of Goethe's overall portrayal of femininity. Thus, it is not my objective to cover the extensive variety of themes that scholars have explored with regard to the evolution of Mary's image within the institution of the Catholic and Protestant Churches, in society, i.e., in social representations of femininity over time or even in works of literature, music, and visual arts. However, I find it necessary to mention a few illustrative examples of studies in Mariology that have looked at different aspects of, as George H. Tavard calls it, the "Mariological problem," such as Geoffrey Ashe, *The Virgin* (London: Routledge 1976); Amy-Jill Levine, ed., *Mariology. A Feminist Companion* (New York: T&T Clark International 2005); John Gatta, *American Madonna. Images of the Divine Woman in Literary Culture* (New York: Oxford UP, 1997); Joelle Mellon, *The Virgin Mary in the Perceptions of Women. Mother, Protector and Queen Since the Middle Ages* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2008).

explore how and in what ways the image of Mary as both a historic human and a divine maternal figure has affected changes in the representation of maternity over time and, more specifically, how it has contributed to women's inferior positioning in the patriarchal social context.

A multitude of studies in various disciplines have dealt with numerous facets of the "cult of the Virgin Mary." However, in my investigation of the correlation between Otilie's depiction as Otto's surrogate mother figure and the Virgin's earthly yet divine motherly existence, I primarily rely on Kristeva's essay "Stabat Mater" ([1983] 1987) because she focuses on how fundamentally the myth of the Virgin Mary has shaped the symbolic representation of femininity that is absorbed in and has restricted women to motherhood in Western society. Kristeva's focus on the Christian representation of Mary's role as mother is what makes her essay relevant to my analysis.

Kristeva offers a compelling analysis of the historical evolution of the "programmatic imaginary construct" of motherhood and how maternity has become "the only function of the 'other sex' to which we can absolutely attribute existence" ("Stabat Mater" 234).¹¹⁵ She provides a thorough illustration of how femininity became completely absorbed in the maternal in many forms of civilization. She argues that Christianity brings this process to its peak through the evolution of the myth around the figure of the Virgin Mary:

In the first place, there was the matter of drawing parallel between Mother and

Son by expanding the theme of the immaculate conception, inventing a biography

¹¹⁵ Julia Kristeva, "Stabat Mater," *Tales of Love*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia UP, 1987) 234-263.

of Mary similar to that of Jesus, and, by depriving her of sin to deprive her of death. Mary leaves by the way of Dormition or Assumption. [...] Mary was to be proclaimed queen, given the attributes and paraphernalia of royalty and, in parallel fashion, declared Mother of the divine institution on earth, the Church. Finally, the relationship with Mary and from Mary was to be revealed as the prototype of a love relationship and followed two fundamental aspects of western love: courtly love and child love, thus fitting the entire range that goes from sublimation to asceticism and masochism. (“Stabat Mater” 238)

According to Kristeva, Christianity has offered a sophisticated symbolic construct through the myth of the Virgin Mary in which femininity is absorbed in maternity. Kristeva further argues that the symbolic identification of femininity with maternity and thus with the ‘virginal Maternal’ reduces women to the existence of the ‘other’ as opposed to men who occupy the position of ‘one’ in the social order. While the Virgin represents

ideal totality that no individual woman could possibly embody, [she] also became the fulcrum of humanization of the West in general and of love in particular. It is again about the thirteenth century, with Francis of Assisi, that this tendency takes shape with the representation of Mary as the poor, modest, and humble—Madonna of humility at the same time as a devoted, fond mother. (“Stabat Mater” 246)

In the context of Kristeva’s analysis of the so called “cult of the Virgin Mary,” Oliver maintains that

[a]n identification with the Virgin is an identification with the mother and the Symbolic at the same time. It is an identification with the perfect, immortal, holy Mother. But it is also an identification with the Word that marks and defines her. She is, after all, a symbolic mother. By identifying with the Virgin, women can identify with the mother within the Symbolic. (Reading Kristeva 50)

One further important detail about such an identification is, as Oliver points out, that it needs to be a masochistic one because it also means that the identification with the semiotic maternal body has to be sacrificed: “The Virgin’s is not a real motherhood. She does not have the mother’s ambiguous relationship to the child. This is precisely the way in which the cult of the Virgin controls the semiotic in order to maintain the Symbolic” (Reading Kristeva 52). Kristeva’s discourse on maternity is critical of the Christian and more specifically the Catholic discourse of motherhood because of its repression of the semiotic maternal body and the abject maternal body in it. As Oliver concludes, the prohibitions of the symbolic order are directed against the maternal body, and thus against the semiotic “chora.” The abject maternal body – which is considered off limits – threatens and points to the fragility of the borders of the symbolic order (Reading Kristeva 56). Kristeva’s analysis of the religious representations of the Virgin and their impact on the social perceptions of motherhood and femininity provides valuable insights into the importance of this Christian tradition and its role as the facilitator of a fixed and marginalized representation of femininity.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Kristeva’s theoretical considerations about the historical evolution of the representation of motherhood in western culture constitute a significant contribution within a broader feminist discourse on maternity in the 1970s and 1980s. In her book The Mother-Daughter Plot Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), Marianne Hirsch formulates the

The question that arises from the parallel between Mary's divine yet earthly and immaculate motherhood of God and Goethe's characterization of Otilie is whether with Otilie's character, Goethe's objective was to 'create' a true role model for women of his time. It also needs to be contemplated whether Goethe's portrayal of Otilie can be viewed as part of a pedagogical 'project' with underlying didactic implications that are meant to be in concordance with the 'teachings' of late Enlightenment thinkers such as Rousseau, Campe, and others. In order to be able to provide a comprehensive analysis of this question, it is essential to look at Goethe's portrayal of Otilie's actions and behavior in the subsequent narrative. If we think about Otilie's involvement in Otto's drowning

problematic and divisive nature of feminist theorizing of motherhood as follows: "To be sure, the term "mother" and the discourse about/of mothering are objects of sometimes radical division within feminist analysis. The question that needs to be confronted is a question of definition: "What is a mother? What is maternal?" It is a question that situates itself at the breaking point between various feminist positions: between presence and absence, speech and silence, essentialism and constructivism, materialism and psychoanalysis. Is motherhood "experience" or "institution"? Is it biological or cultural? Is the mother present or absent, single or divided, in collusion with patriarchy or at odds with it, conformist or subversive?" (163). Hirsch claims that the perception that maternity is solely and foremost a projection of patriarchal social practices resulted in a fundamental separation between feminist and maternal discourse and caused the general avoidance of the motherly perspective in feminist writings and theories (164). This phenomenon also contributed to the emergence of the metaphor of sisterhood in the 1970s, a fantasy of reciprocal surrogate motherhood that highlights the maternal as function, but rejects and makes invisible the actual mother, who infantilizes the daughter and fails to encourage autonomy (164). In the context of feminist theorizing in the 1970s and 1980s, Hirsch highlights that Kristeva's approach to the maternal presents a significant attempt to challenge the established distance between theoretical feminism and maternal experience: "The mother as split subject, as locus of the semiotic, as both phallic and castrated, present and absent, omnipotent and powerless, the body before language, unrepresentable, inexpressible, unsettling, has become the privileged metaphor for a subversive femininity. [...] Kristeva's discourse of maternity highlights both the endangering qualities of the undifferentiated space it inhabits and its tremendous potential for subversion. At the same time, maternity remains virtually inaccessible, except by way of mediation through the symbolic, the paternal, the phallic – a mediation Freud and Lacan also perceived as crucial" (171-172). Hirsch is critical of Kristeva's theorizing because, as she claims, Kristeva's "maternal discourse remains firmly embedded in structures of representation which place the mother outside or on the margin. It thus makes it impossible to distinguish between the discourse of the mother and the discourse about her" (173). However, she also acknowledges that Kristeva "points to the difficulties of such a proposition by showing that maternal experience is always already mediated by structures of representation which shape a particular and narrowly circumscribed image of maternity" (174).

and about her voluntary self-starvation as further significant parts of her life path, these events – because they undermine Otilie’s pure and flawless existence – present a noteworthy conflict with her idealized attributes such as innocence, purity, and her inborn mothering talent emphasized thus far. Since I discuss these tragic events later in this chapter in greater detail, I now want to point out that an interpretation that primarily presents Otilie’s character as a potential role model for women in the early 1800s can only be viewed as a reductionist approach to the overall representation of femininity in Die Wahlverwandtschaften.

The “Presepe,” i.e., the most indicative example of Otilie’s association with the Virgin Mary, is staged shortly prior to the birth of Charlotte’s baby, whose resemblance with Otilie is undeniable. Thus, it foreshadows Otilie’s ‘new’ role in the novel. Her implied association with the virgin mother Mary is accentuated by the baby’s physical resemblance with Otilie rather than with Charlotte, and also because Goethe depicts Otilie as the primary caretaker of the newborn’s basic needs when he writes: “Sie [Otilie, Z.R.] hatte vorzüglich die Sorge für das Kind übernommen, dessen unmittelbare Pflegerin sie um so mehr werden konnte, als man es keiner Amme zu übergeben, sondern mit Milch und Wasser aufzuziehen sich entschieden hatte” (Goethe 461). The tie between Otilie and the baby is further strengthened when the resemblance between their eyes is revealed:

Den Gesichtszügen und der ganzen Form nach glich das Kind immer mehr dem Hauptmann, die Augen ließen sich immer weniger von Ottiliens Augen unterscheiden. Durch diese sonderbare Verwandtschaft und vielleicht noch mehr

durch das schöne Gefühl der Frauen geleitet, welche mit zärtlicher Neigung umfassen, ward Otilie dem heranwachsenden Geschöpf so viel als eine Mutter, oder vielmehr eine andre Art von Mutter. Entfernte sich Charlotte, so blieb Otilie mit dem Kinde und der Wärterin allein. (Goethe 482)

These references to Otilie's care for the newborn coupled with the similarity between their eyes allude to Mary's immaculate conception: Otilie becomes a mother figure for Otto, and the baby shows obvious resemblance with her even though they are not genetically related. These characteristics reinforce Otilie's symbolic identification with spiritual motherhood, purity, and transcendental existence, i.e., notions that have shaped the image of Mary in the Catholic Christian tradition. At the same time, beneath this dominant layer in the narrative, the physical resemblance between Otilie and Otto also signifies Eduard's and Otilie's affection for one another, and with that in mind, this detail shows Otilie in the context of an underlying moral conflict as well that I discuss later in this chapter in more detail.

If we further consider the implications of Otilie's association with Mary, it is worthwhile to note that both the narrator (Goethe 495) and the architect (Goethe 438-439) compliment and favorably comment on Otilie's very character traits that connect her with the Virgin. Thus, it seems that the perspective of these male figures displays conformity to the prevailing late Enlightenment social discourse according to which femininity was defined by women's reproductive, i.e., maternal role, by their existence as

wives and household managers as well as by idealized traits like modesty, compliance, and humility.¹¹⁷

In light of Kristeva's considerations about the myth of the Virgin and her theory of maternity, Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften suggests a symbolic connection between Otilie and the Virgin Mary that manifests itself in Otilie's masochistic withdrawal from almost any form of orality. Otilie in her role as Otto's caretaker demonstrates striking resemblance with the Christian representation of Mary as an earthly yet divine mother of perfection, immortality, and holiness. Such a portrait of Otilie can be perceived as comparable to Kristeva's concept of the symbolic mother, i.e., the mother that is marked and defined by the Law/Word and thus by the paternal social order.

While both the narrator and various male characters idealize Otilie's femininity during her stay on the estate, Goethe's narrative also posits yet another underlying subtext that seems to undermine Otilie's 'Mary like' immaculate motherhood, innocence, and humility. This opposite, i.e., unholy and imperfect pole of Otilie's depiction is best exemplified by her apparent responsibility for Otto's drowning. The accident gains special significance because it happens after the romantic encounter between Otilie and Eduard that ended in a kiss. In my view, Otilie's encounter with Eduard sheds new light on her behavior up to that point in time. It seems now that Otilie's actions and perceptions can be explained by her – thus far repressed – desire for Eduard rather than by voluntary abstinence and self-denial:

¹¹⁷ Also see my detailed discussion of the didactic writings of Rousseau and Campe in the context of the late Enlightenment definition of "gender characteristics" in Section A, Chapter 1 of the main body of this dissertation.

Ich gehorche deinen Befehlen, rief Eduard, indem er sie erst leidenschaftlich anblickte und sie dann fest in seine Arme schloß. Sie umschlang ihn mit den ihrigen und drückte ihn auf das zärtlichste an ihre Brust. Die Hoffnung fuhr wie ein Stern, der vom Himmel fällt, über ihre Häupter weg. Sie wähten, sie glaubten einander anzugehören; sie wechselten zum erstenmal entschiedene, freie Küsse und trennten sich gewaltsam und schmerzlich. (Goethe 493)

In light of Kristeva's concept of the "subject-in-process," during this incident, Otilie's subjectivity — that can be otherwise perceived as consciously withdrawn from signification in the symbolic realm – is marked by her emotional attachment to Eduard. This attraction is marked as forbidden by the Law. Thus, the way Goethe depicts Otilie's behavior during this encounter can be viewed as a sign of disruptions in her symbolized and repressed existence by energy charges originating from the semiotic modality. Following the emotional and secret meeting and as the semiotic modality becomes dominant in Otilie's actions, she is described with adjectives such as "verwirrt" and "bewegt." Goethe's text also refers to her temporary inability to think clearly and responsibly. The narrator openly describes her emotional instability and her fixation on Charlotte's impatience if she returns with the baby to the house later than expected:

Otilie stand verwirrt und bewegt; sie sah nach dem Berghause hinüber und glaubte Charlottens weißes Kleid auf dem Altan zu sehen. Der Umweg war groß am See hin; sie kannte Charlottens ungeduldiges Harren nach dem Kinde. Die Platanen sieht sie gegen sich über, nur ein Wasserraum trennt sie von dem Pfade, der sogleich zu dem Gebäude hinaufführt. Mit Gedanken ist sie schon drüben, wie

mit den Augen. Die Bedenklichkeit, mit dem Kinde sich aufs Wasser zu wagen, verschwindet in diesem Drange. Sie eilt nach dem Kahn, sie fühlt nicht daß ihr Herz pocht, daß ihre Füße schwanken, daß ihr die Sinne zu vergehen droht.

(Goethe 493-494)

If we consider that Ottilie's intimate meeting with Eduard has such a grave impact on her consciousness, it can be argued that her subsequent inability to prevent the baby's tragic death calls into question the narrator's earlier references to her correlation with the Virgin. At the same time, the narrative continues to imply Ottilie's symbolic association with Mary's figure and the heavenly realm in the image of a weeping Ottilie over the baby's dead body. In addition, the narrator's indication that her call for help has been heard and favorably responded to is yet another indication that Goethe aimed at giving Ottilie attributes that signify holiness and some kind of transcendental connection:

Mit feuchtem Blick sieht sie empor und ruft Hülfe von daher, wo ein zartes Herz die größte Fülle zu finden hofft, wenn es überall mangelt. Auch wendet sie sich nicht vergebens zu den Sternen, die schon einzeln hervorzublinden anfangen. Ein sanfter Wind erhebt sich und treibt den Kahn nach den Platanen. (Goethe 495)

There is however a problem with this sanctified image of Ottilie, especially if we look at the portrayal of her actions after this tragic incident: On the one hand, Ottilie, unlike the Virgin, has been involved in an ethically problematic relationship with a married man. On the other hand, besides the symbolism of Ottilie's immaculate motherhood and her tears over the baby's dead body – both of which create an allusion to

Mary – it cannot be overlooked that her rushed decision to take the baby into the boat is shown to be the cause of the fatal accident.

Based on this apparent contradiction in Otilie's portrayal, Goethe's text could be interpreted as an exemplary, or even didactic demonstration of the tragic consequences of women's uncontrolled and uncensored behavior. Such an interpretation would reinforce the view of a great number of scholars who claim that Goethe's overall portrayal of women in his Wahlverwandtschaften reflects his advocacy for the rigid gender hierarchy prevalent in his era.¹¹⁸

I argue that Goethe's multifaceted, complex, and often contradictory characterization of the female figures in his Wahlverwandtschaften cannot be reduced to such a one-dimensional interpretation. If one considers Goethe's depiction of Otilie's remorseful repentance and her voluntary self-starvation after Otto's death, her suicidal death can be viewed as yet another event that problematizes and undermines her earlier association with the Virgin because suicide is a sin in the Christian tradition.

The baby's death and Otilie's self-starvation are just as essential parts of the narrative as the allusions to her Mary-like character because a contradictory discourse is shaped about Otilie that destabilizes and challenges the validity of the narrator's continued references to her perfection, holiness, and idealized qualities. Such implications of Otilie's exemplary femininity – based on the extreme abstinence, silence, and humble modesty that she returns to after the baby's death – continue to remain a

¹¹⁸ Even though in their studies, Elizabeth Boa and Norbert Puszkar analyze different facets of Goethe's portrayal of Otilie and Luciane respectively, both of these essays can be viewed as illustrative examples of a large corpus of Wahlverwandtschaften scholarship that emphasizes that in his novel, Goethe displays conformity with the prevailing gender discourse. See a detailed review of the above studies in Section A, Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

dominant part of her characterization until the very end: Otilie's death is described more like a sleep-like condition that alludes to Mary's Dormition: "Der fortdauernd schöne, mehr schlaf- als todähnliche Zustand Ottiliens zog mehrere Menschen herbei" (Goethe 495). In addition, the narrator's reference to Otilie's healing power is yet another sign of her transcendental abilities: "Zärtliche Mütter brachten zuerst heimlich ihre Kinder, die von irgend einem Übel behaftet waren, und sie glaubten eine plötzliche Besserung zu spüren" (Goethe 527).

Otilie returns to complete silence and extreme oral modesty, which, in light of Kristeva's framework, can also be viewed as a return to the way she was initially portrayed in the novel, namely to the sign- or image-like existence of a "subject of desire" (Revolution 132). As I indicated earlier, Kristeva defines the "subject of desire" as a being that can be characterized by the extreme repression of drives without meaningful signification. It can, therefore, be argued that Otilie's depiction changes again, and her existence is signified by renewed silence, self-denial, and the renunciation of any desire for Eduard. If viewed through the lens of Kristeva's theory, Otilie's character is presented by Goethe as a sign because she has consciously 'stopped' her desires and repressed them together with language rather than beneath language.

Based on all of the above, Goethe depicts Otilie as a complex and rather ambiguous character whose role in the novel remains open to a variety of interpretations. The narrator's predominant idealization of Otilie's pure, holy and thus Virgin-like character as a pedagogical example for women represents only a partial image of this multifaceted female figure. In my view, the idea of interpreting the text as a didactic

‘lesson’ for women is challenged and problematized by the underlying implications that such a life of self-denial, asceticism, and repression under the rules of the social order leads to sign-like existence, i.e., to a “subject of desire” (rather than to the life of a ‘living being’) exemplified by the tragic death of Otilie. While, if read on the basis of Kristeva, Otilie’s exemplary feminine identity would guarantee the stability of the paternal symbolic order because of her compliance with the rules and prohibitions dictated by the Law. But the tragic example of Otilie’s life and death can hardly represent a viable option of self-fulfillment for women. Goethe’s complex and ambiguous portrayal of Otilie creates a subtext in the narrative that critiques the prevailing late Enlightenment gender discourse and its claim to its universal and absolute legitimacy.

Concluding Thoughts About the Interrelation among Charlotte, Luciane, and Otilie

Having looked at Goethe’s portrayal of the complexities and ambiguities of both Luciane’s and Otilie’s characters, the dynamics of their conflict-laden yet complementary relationship, and the impact of Charlotte’s maternal actions in relation to them, let me now focus on these three central female characters with special attention to the main goal of this dissertation, namely to offer a comprehensive analysis of how Goethe’s representation of femininity in his Wahlverwandtschaften relates to prevalent social practices. In his depiction of Charlotte, Luciane, and Otilie, Goethe created three similarly complex and distinct yet related experimental models of femininity in Die Wahlverwandtschaften. Since Goethe’s narrative unites these three women in an unusual fatherless family unit, I further argue that Charlotte, Luciane, and Otilie are portrayed

not only as different but also as closely interrelated and interdependent female figures who undergo significant changes and who mutually influence one another's identity formation. In the following, I will now take a final look at what conclusions can be drawn from Goethe's depiction of a continued co-dependence among these three female figures about the gender discourse posited within the narrative and about Goethe's approach to the gender relations in the late 18th and early 19th century.

First, I focus on the implications of Charlotte's characterization, and more specifically of her survival at the end of the novel. In light of these implications, I then briefly revisit Goethe's depiction of Luciane's and Otilie's exit from the narrative comparing them with Charlotte's characterization at the very end of the novel in order to explore what Luciane's return to her 'true' excessive nature coupled with her upcoming wedding and with her role as future wife may signify about Goethe's overall representation of femininity. Furthermore, based on my findings earlier in this chapter, I once more reflect on the implications of Goethe's portrayal of Otilie in light of her self-starvation and death. In conclusion, I look at the interconnection among Charlotte, Luciane, and Otilie by considering key concepts of Kristeva's theory of subjectivity formation and examine the bond among these female characters that – in my view – can be understood as a psychological unity of fundamental parts of human consciousness on a personal level.

A Kristevian Reading of 'Charlotte's' Concluding Reflections

In Goethe's text, Charlotte is portrayed primarily as an independent, dynamic, rational, and reflective female figure whose dominant position throughout the novel suggests that her character represents the Law in the micro-environment of the estate and is associated with the paternal symbolic order. This positioning is frequently reinforced by narrative references to Charlotte's persistent attempts to preserve and rehabilitate the original marital harmony and the moral equilibrium on the estate.

Positioning Charlotte in such a way creates an inherent tension in her portrayal and in the depiction of her survival because her leadership role on the estate coupled with her female sex threatens the very same paternal symbolic order that she simultaneously represents and protects. This fundamental inner conflict posited by Goethe's portrayal of Charlotte as a woman with authority and control over the microcosm of the estate goes against and suggests a critique of the male dominated gender discourse of the Goethe era. Considering that Charlotte views herself as responsible for the tragic death of her son and that Otilie's and Eduard's fate is shown to be in Charlotte's hands, it can also be argued that Charlotte's own personal tragedy – that also entails her failure to find self-fulfillment – lies in her relentless persistence in restoring harmony and morality to the estate that guarantees the stability of the paternal Law of society. Charlotte's analysis of her own mistakes illustrates her realization that even her law abiding preventive actions – with which she attempts to reinstate harmony – cannot always overcome the power of fate and of overwhelming as well as fateful emotions:

Ich willige in die Scheidung. Ich hätte mich früher dazu entschließen sollen; durch mein Zaudern, mein Widerstreben habe ich das Kind getötet. Es sind gewisse Dinge, die sich das Schicksal hartnäckig vornimmt. Vergebens, daß Vernunft und Tugend, Pflicht und alles Heilige sich ihm in den Weg stellen; es soll etwas geschehen was ihm recht ist, was uns nicht recht scheint; und so greift es zuletzt durch, wir mögen uns gebärden wie wir wollen. (Goethe 497)

Whereas Charlotte continues to blame herself for the tragedy as an indirect outcome of her mistake to marry Eduard, I find the first part of her analysis just as important because she critically addresses the question as to whether and, if so, how far morality and the Law of the paternal social order can be regarded as valid and absolute under all and any circumstances. If one takes a closer look at Charlotte's relentless commitment to reinstate and protect the 'order' of life on the estate as one important factor that has led to multiple fatalities, Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften can be perceived as a critical and divisive discourse that confronts social and gender relations that were prevalent in his lifetime.¹¹⁹

With all of the above in mind, let me now briefly compare the unfavorable critical implications of Charlotte's final thoughts and reflections with the propositions that Luciane's and Ottilie's life paths seem to insinuate. In Luciane's case, Goethe's text explicitly indicates that on her departure from Charlotte's home, she has returned to her

¹¹⁹ However, I am also aware of the suggested ambiguities of Charlotte's character and that her actions can be perceived as the instigators of the multiple tragedies in the end of the novel. Based on such an interpretation, Charlotte's leadership and authority could be perceived as a warning sign that if women transgress prescribed boundaries, such deviations threaten the stability of the paternal social order and can lead to chaos as well as disasters. At the same time, I also believe that Goethe's decision to depict Charlotte as the embodiment of order and harmony followed by her survival at the end of the narrative contradicts and maybe even negates the validity of that interpretation.

true “Natürlichkeit,” namely to her excessive behavior pattern and that despite – or perhaps rather because of – this uncontrolled conduct, she enjoys her fiancé’s and others’ acceptance and acclaim around her. Luciane exits the narrative as a future wife, i.e., a recognized young woman in the macrocosm of the society. All of the above further reinforces my position that Goethe in his Wahlverwandtschaften created female characters like Charlotte and Luciane, who, from time to time, violate and transgress arbitrary gender boundaries can represent viable life paths for women in continued social recognition.

As to the portrayal of Otilie’s final days of life, in Kristeva’s terminology, her actions signify an idealized sign- or image-like existence that ends with self-starvation and death. Otilie’s ‘fate’ is, therefore, clearly contrasted with both Charlotte’s and Luciane’s, who stay alive and enjoy social acceptance and recognition. On the one hand, Otilie is predominantly portrayed as a young woman whose overall modesty, commitment to service, and passivity embody idealized late Enlightenment feminine qualities. On the other hand, Goethe’s simultaneous depiction of her openly manifested affection and desire for Eduard, of her negligence that leads to Otto’s drowning, as well as her suicidal death seems to underscore my hypothesis that in Goethe’s Wahlverwandtschaften a subtext can be revealed that challenges the validity of the predominant gender relations of the late 1700s and early 1800s.

As opposed to Charlotte’s and Luciane’s characters, Otilie presents a model of femininity that is not viable because extreme voluntary abstinence and withdrawal from meaningful signification, i.e., self-expression can only lead to either an image-/sign-like

(non)-existence or to death. At the same time, Charlotte's and Luciane's life paths can be interpreted as representations of viable models of femininity even if they seem to paint a bleak picture of a mere survival that is dissociated from any sense of self-fulfillment.

Uniting Goethe's Three Distinct Models of Femininity

As part of my concluding reflections, I would like to return to the 'fatherless' family discourse that Goethe's narrative postulates among the three central female characters. Goethe offers a multifaceted and rather ambiguous portrayal of all three central female characters according to which Charlotte, Luciane, and Ottilie are depicted as substantially distinct yet closely interconnected, and even co-dependent female figures. Therefore, I argue that Goethe's text can be perceived as more than 'simply' three separate possible representations of feminine identity: In my view, these three female figures should be viewed as fundamental mosaic pieces of a whole, i.e., as indispensable fragments of feminine existence, all of which together are necessary for the formation of feminine subjectivity. This is the point where Goethe's narrative and Kristeva's psychological discourse on subjectivity can be brought together one last time. With Kristeva's notion of the "subject-in-process" in mind, it becomes possible to see Charlotte, Luciane, and Ottilie as interconnected and co-dependent characters who can be perceived as distinct aspects of femininity and who suggest that subjectivity needs to be viewed as a continued and endless process rather than a static stage in women's life. More specifically, Goethe's portrayal of Charlotte, Luciane, and Ottilie seems to

advocate that feminine identity can hardly be signified by a stationary and fixed existence barred behind arbitrary gender boundaries.

Based on the above, Luciane's uncontrolled and unrepressed behavior can be associated with the realm of the semiotic "chora," the drives, and thus the human unconscious. If we further consider Kristeva's analysis of the myth of the Virgin Mary, Otilie's predominant symbolic association with the Virgin can be interpreted as an indication that her desires are completely repressed without covering them up beneath language and meaningful signification. In Kristeva's terminology, Otilie's initial and final characterization by her extreme modesty in virtually every area of life can be identified with "the subject-of-desire," with a sign- or image-like, static, and stationary existence that is detached from the subject's continued fluctuation between symbolic harmony and the disruptions of the semiotic modality. While Luciane's actions can be perceived as manifestations of the human unconscious, Otilie's characterization invokes a sign-like existence, a 'cul-de-sac' of subjective development that prevents and hinders further steps in the ego formation process.

As opposed to Luciane's and Otilie's opposite trajectories, Charlotte can be perceived as a simultaneous combination of the symbolic and semiotic modalities. She represents the Law, she lives by the very same Law, but she also demonstrates desires that fall into the category of unacceptable according to the Law. It can, therefore, be concluded that Charlotte is shown as a woman who operates in the symbolic modality because she is shown as a verbally dominant character throughout the novel who is capable of meaningful signification and thus, also of repressing her drives beneath

language. The narrative implications of Charlotte's association with order and morality can also be interpreted as an indication of her correlation with the superego on the personal level of human consciousness.

Goethe's Depiction of Femininity and the late Enlightenment Gender Discourse

What makes Goethe's representation of femininity as a reflection of the gender discourse of his era so intriguing for scholarly analysis is precisely the very possibility of conflicting interpretations, and that such interpretations remain dependent on the expectations of the readership and on theoretical models used for the exploration of the multitude of underlying subtexts in Die Wahlverwandtschaften. While Goethe's text unmistakably offers an open and ambiguous representation of femininity, it is also left open to the reader/literary scholar to consider and conclude which opinion posited in the narrative could display the most viable depiction of feminine identity. Therefore, Goethe's novel seems to present a 'playful' narrative experiment, or it may even play a 'game' with the readers' expectations that is meant to be thought provoking and to initiate critical thinking through this open-ended and unconventional approach to a multitude of contemporary social issues including gender relations.

Considering Goethe's complex, multifaceted, and ambiguous depiction of femininity in three interrelated, complementary, and co-dependent female characters, it could even be maintained that Charlotte, Otilie, and Luciane bring separate attributes and qualities together and unite them in one single representation of feminine identity. In the context of Kristeva's theory, their portrayal can be perceived as a rare unity of the

semiotic and symbolic modalities. Otilie's extreme and Virgin-like symbolic existence, Luciane's unrepressed and excessive semiotic existence, as well as Charlotte's controlled symbolic being with manifestations of semiotic disruptions can together shape a feminine "subject-in-process," a subjectivity that is not limited to the institutionalized symbolic existence of the wife and the mother, but that is both 'equipped' to experience and handle semiotic operations as well as to participate in the signifying practice. Therefore, the uniquely complex 'conglomerate' of Charlotte, Otilie, and Luciane as presented by Goethe may constitute an alternative portrayal of femininity when compared to the late Enlightenment 'scientific' construct of feminine identity. Femininity, in Goethe's representation, can be perceived as an identity in which submission, modesty, and self-denial are united with free and unrestricted behavior as well as with self-expression, independence, and active agency. Whereas I share the view that understanding Goethe's ambiguous and indefinite positioning of Charlotte's, Otilie's, and Luciane's characters has been and remains open to distinct scholarly approaches, it is my interpretation of Goethe's text that it offers a rather critical stance in relation to the dominant gender discourse during the late Enlightenment. While the female characters' lives on the estate are indeed founded on traditional gender roles, the narrative – if read on the basis of Kristeva's theory of motherhood and her approach to femininity – also offers alternative discourses that suggest a looser definition of these roles by 'testing' the 'viability' of characters that – at least temporarily – are shown to transgress the rigid boundaries set by the gender discourse that was prevalent in the late 18th century.

IV. Conclusion

Having laid out the most important findings of this dissertation, it appears timely and necessary to return to one fundamental question that has so far remained unanswered in this investigation: Can an analysis of Goethe's representation of feminine identity in his Wahlverwandtschaften be regarded as an innovative, constructive, and valuable contribution to Goethe scholarship if such an exploration is executed through the lens of Julia Kristeva's late 20th century semiotic and psychoanalytic theory of subjectivity and motherhood? In order to offer a thorough response to this pivotal question, I first briefly revisit the main objectives and the initial hypotheses of this study. I then evaluate in retrospect in what ways Kristeva's psychoanalytic framework has proven to be a valuable tool in my attempts to decode the complexities and ambiguities of Goethe's depiction of central male and female figures in various character constellation centered around Charlotte in order to offer an analysis of the implications of Goethe's attitude towards late Enlightenment feminine ideals as postulated in his Wahlverwandtschaften. I find it also necessary to consider the strengths and weaknesses of utilizing Kristeva's psychoanalytic theory in order to then summarize what new insights that this dissertation has added to the extensive corpus of research on Die Wahlverwandtschaften.

Objectives and the Initial Hypotheses

My analysis, in which I have aimed at offering new insights into the enigmas of Goethe's representation of femininity, was primarily inspired by his complex and

ambiguous portrayal of Charlotte as a woman whose behavior, to some degree, shows conformity to late Enlightenment feminine ideals and who simultaneously also demonstrates qualities such as self-reliance, reflective ability, verbal dominance, and creative energy that suggest her ability to operate at times outside of socially predefined late Enlightenment gender boundaries.

Goethe's ambiguous representation of feminine identity has been studied extensively by scholars, and such studies have led to conflicting results with regard to his attitude towards the prevalent gender paradigm of his time. My objective with this dissertation was to examine multiple facets that Goethe may have 'compiled' into Charlotte's character and that are displayed through her actions, interactions, and dominant presence throughout the narrative. Above all, my goal was to decipher what Charlotte's dominant and influential presence as the epicenter of the narrative reveals about Goethe's representation of the gender relations in this novel and about his attitude towards the existing gender discourse of his time. With regard to Goethe's central positioning of Charlotte, I have found that she is shown to undergo cyclical changes that are conditioned by the roles she assumes in specific character constellations. As Charlotte is always portrayed in relationships with other characters, I have also concluded that Goethe's depiction of her feminine identity has to be analyzed together with and in relation to other characters, and in particular to Luciane and Ottilie. I have further found that Charlotte's character is not presented as stable but as someone who constantly shifts between socially prescribed and untraditional gender roles. These shifts seem to be primarily determined by the relationship dynamics within specific character groupings.

Based on these findings, I argue that Goethe seems to depict Charlotte primarily and Luciane and Ottilie secondarily as characters who are constantly in flux and in search of some form of self-fulfillment. Goethe's emphasis on the ambivalent nature of these characters and on their constantly shifting identities underscores a certain degree of temporality and instability of prescribed gender relations in the late Enlightenment social discourse.

My decision to concentrate on Goethe's depiction of various character constellations with Charlotte at the center is rooted in the widely overlooked emphasis that Goethe placed on her character in his Wahlverwandtschaften: Throughout the entire novel, Charlotte is positioned as a central figure of authority in relation to all other female and male characters, and thus, it seemed surprising to me that relatively little attention has been devoted to Goethe's characterization of her and particularly of the dynamics that govern her relationships with Eduard, the Hauptmann, Luciane, and Ottilie. My major aspiration with this analysis was to offer new perspectives on Goethe's multifaceted and enigmatic portrayal of femininity in his Wahlverwandtschaften and to shed light on his overall attitude towards the late Enlightenment definition of feminine ideals.

In order to achieve this goal, I have utilized focal concepts of Kristeva's semiotic and psychoanalytic approach to the process of identity formation as my primary resource for this analysis. In psychoanalytic theory, special significance is attributed to the dynamics of the mother—father—child(ren) relationships in the child's ego formation. In the theories of subjectivity and maternity that Kristeva developed in the 1970s and 1980s she also emphasizes the pivotal role of the family dynamics, and particularly of the

maternal function, and claims that it is the mother's loving and regulative unity with the child – rather than exclusively the father's prohibition and authority – that facilitates and/or delays the child's entry into the cultural order. Goethe's portrayal of femininity can be perceived as embedded into various character constellations that unite Charlotte, who is placed into the center of all groupings, with other characters into symbolic and, for the most part, unconventional family unit.¹²⁰

Considering that these family constellations play a pivotal part in Goethe's portrayal of femininity in this text, I set out to trace potential underlying psychological processes that Goethe tried to communicate when he created his characters' distinct behavior patterns and verbal utterances. My choice of Kristeva's theories of subjectivity formation and motherhood was driven by the fact that I was able to observe striking parallels between Kristeva's characterization and explanation of the operation of human consciousness and the way Goethe motivated Charlotte's and other central characters' behavior patterns, actions, utterances, and interrelationships in Die Wahlverwandtschaften. While expecting a 'perfect' overlap between Goethe's early 19th century portrayal of femininity and Kristeva's late 20th century characterization of conscious and unconscious processes that instigate, facilitate, and/or hinder the formation of the child's ego would have been highly unrealistic, I, nevertheless, hypothesized at the beginning of this study that Kristeva's systematic approach to the infant's/child's identity development

¹²⁰ The main character constellations that I have identified in Goethe's novel can also be viewed as symbolic and mostly unconventional family units. While in the first part of the novel, Charlotte is tied to Eduard and the Hauptmann in distinct forms of partnership, in the second part of the novel she is shown as the mother figure of Luciane, Ottilie, and Otto in multiple configurations of almost exclusively female characters such as the groupings of 'Charlotte—Luciane—Ottilie,' 'Charlotte—Ottilie—Eduard,' and 'Charlotte—Ottilie—Otto.'

could reveal psychological processes that seem to drive the narrative and could thus help to better understand to what extent Goethe sets himself apart from the gender discourse of his time. I further postulated that making such processes more transparent would shed new light on Goethe's, for the time, exceptional understanding of the human psyche and on thus far unexplored facets of the complexities and ambiguities of his representation of femininity in Die Wahlverwandtschaften. Kristeva's framework allowed me to attain a more thorough understanding of the clashes between the gender relations as displayed in the narrative and the idealized notion of femininity that was promoted by Campe and others during the late 18th century.

Final Reflections on the Value of Kristeva's theory in the Context of My Analysis

After having reiterated the main objectives of this study, it is now necessary to reflect on the question in what ways Kristeva's psychological insights into the operation of the human psyche before and after the subject's cultural integration have been instrumental to my exploration of Goethe's portrayal of the dynamics within various character constellations surrounding Charlotte. I also find it necessary to re-evaluate in retrospect to what extent Kristeva's theory of subjectivity formation as well as her approach to the experience of motherhood have helped me to provide explanatory models for understanding the characters' development, and more specifically the changes in Charlotte's, Luciane's, and Ottilie's behavior patterns, actions, utterances, and interactions.

The benefit of a psychoanalytic approach to Goethe's portrayal of femininity lies in the fact that Kristeva's theories with regard to the process of evolution and with regard to the operation of human consciousness have allowed for an analysis of the characters' actions and interactions that reaches beyond 'simply' diagnosing and describing how Goethe places Charlotte, Luciane, and Otilie into the center of the narrative and 'uses' them to test and critique the late Enlightenment gender discourse. In other words, Kristeva's psychoanalytic framework would not have been necessary to identify and describe the complexities and ambiguities of Goethe's portrayal of Charlotte in relation to other male and female figures within various character groupings. Thus, it can rightly be argued that, even without taking some of Kristeva's key concepts into consideration, Goethe's depiction of Charlotte, Luciane, and Otilie shows them as women who demonstrate distinct yet interrelated and, for their time, unusual forms of femininity, even though all of them, at the same time, seem to be anchored to some degree in traditional gender roles. Kristeva's theory would not have been necessary either to reveal that Goethe portrays these three central female figures in such a way that they from time to time 'abandon' their predefined gender roles.

Based on the fact that Goethe repeatedly created shifts in the behavior patterns of his female characters having them oscillate between conformity to and deviation from idealized femininity, I concluded that Goethe's representation of femininity in his Wahlverwandtschaften can be perceived as an experimental discourse on femininity. Considering all of the above, Goethe's text, in my view, not only offers discrete models of feminine identity but also tests their viability in the surrounding late Enlightenment

social context. Goethe's decision to place his female characters into the environment of the estate and/or the boarding school, both of which are distanced and isolated from the macrocosm of society, further reinforces the experimental nature of the portrayal of gender roles in the narrative.

I am aware that reading Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften on the basis of Kristeva's theory of subjectivity formation and maternity would not have been useful to analyze to what extent his text reflects sensitivity for social issues in the late Enlightenment context. However, Kristeva's theory has enabled me to identify and reveal Goethe's possible motivations for such an experimental portrayal of the complexities of his characters. Kristeva's framework has also helped me to identify significant character constellations as well as to trace the roles that the individual male and female figures are shown to assume in relation to one another, and thus, I was able to analyze the dynamics of relationships among the characters within each grouping. By doing so, Kristeva's psychoanalytic focus on the importance of the mother—father—child family triad in the context of the child's ego formation process has helped me to reveal symbolic and/or unorthodox family units within the social environment of the late Enlightenment that Goethe may have intended to showcase and critique within each character constellation.

Even though Goethe portrays adult age characters and their interactions within groupings surrounding Charlotte, Kristeva's theory, that primarily focuses on the child's subjectivity formation process, has allowed me to suggest an explanatory model for why Goethe may portrayed his characters as, in part, deviant from and not fitting for gender roles that were considered 'normal' in the late Enlightenment social context.

Furthermore, central concepts of this semiotic and psychoanalytic framework, such as Kristeva's definition of the semiotic and symbolic modalities, of the imaginary father, and of abjection, have also proven to be valuable in so far as they have allowed me to trace and reflect on why Goethe may have placed considerable emphasis on characters who undergo significant changes that are shown to be instigated by the similarly changing dynamics of their relationships within each character grouping.

In Kristeva's feminist psychoanalytic framework, human actions, behavior patterns, and verbal utterances are described as manifestations of the unconscious, and femininity is considered as a cultural construct and a 'product' of linguistic representation. Therefore, through the lens of Kristeva's feminist psychoanalytic framework, I have been able to elucidate that Goethe, in his Wahlverwandtschaften, offers experimental and alternative representations of femininity to late Enlightenment ideals and that in his portrayal of the characters' actions, utterances, and behavior patterns, Goethe may have intended to conceal complex psychological processes as pivotal parts of their identities. Kristeva's framework has helped me to perceive Goethe's narrative not only as a critique of fixed late Enlightenment gender boundaries but also of the supposedly 'scientific' foundation of the gender theories of his time. This is an important aspect because Charlotte's characterization as a dominant and decisive woman with high intellect, reason, and authority contradicts the late 18th century theorizing of a strictly hierarchic gender paradigm: Charlotte's abilities and leadership undermine the 'scientific' foundation of gender specific attributes and roles that were defined as opposite and complementary to those of men and that were deduced from physiological

and anatomical differences between the sexes. In addition, these differences were declared as determined by the ‘law of nature’ and the ‘will of God.’ By placing Charlotte into the epicenter of the narrative and by depicting her as the representative of the Law, Goethe offers a critique of a presumably absolute and unquestionable differentiation between the sexes with regard to their social roles.

Kristeva’s psychoanalytic theory of femininity and motherhood has been strongly criticized by some feminist theorists and philosophers as an essentialist view of women’s identity and for accepting the patriarchal implications embedded in Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis.¹²¹ I, however, argue that the strength of Kristeva’s theory may actually lie in its very weakness: While Kristeva indeed regards the maternal to be a central building block of femininity, it is just as important to emphasize that she by no means defines maternity as a precultural and thus exclusively semiotic and submissive feminine existence. For Kristeva, maternity unites the semiotic and symbolic modalities because, by combining love and regulation, the maternal function prefigures the paternal function that signifies prohibition and authority in the symbolic order. I share Kelly Oliver’s view, who points to the essence of Kristeva’s theory of maternity when she writes that “Kristeva argues that maternity calls into question the boundary between culture and nature. She chooses maternity as a prototype [of the “subject-in-process,” Z.R.] precisely because it breaks down borders between culture and nature, subject and object” (Reading Kristeva 9) and because “its [the maternal body’s] unity is called into question by the other within, an other-in-process” (13).

¹²¹ For a detailed discussion of feminist theorists’ and philosophers’ criticism of Kristeva’s theories of maternity and femininity, see the Introduction of this dissertation.

Based on the above, I argued that Kristeva's approach to feminine identity and maternity shows correlations with Goethe's representation of gender in his Wahlverwandtschaften because Goethe offers models of femininity that can be perceived as alternatives to the idealized late Enlightenment representation of womanhood, and he puts the viability of these models to the test throughout the novel. However, it is important to keep in mind that Goethe's narrative, despite the isolated location of the estate, is deeply rooted in the contemporary patriarchal social discourse that is postulated as the macro-environment of the narrative.

In Goethe's text, I have identified various character constellations centered around Charlotte in which primarily her but, at times, also Luciane's and Ottilie's actions, utterances, and interactions with others suggest that they, from time to time, assume roles and demonstrate attributes that fail to conform to idealized feminine qualities and behavior. By placing female characters into the center of Die Wahlverwandtschaften and by forming discourses in a substantial proportion of the novel that are dominated by women, Goethe's novel shapes a narrative environment in which femininity is not tied to narrowly prescribed roles for women in the late 18th century but it is rather represented as a more loosely defined and flexible form of existence within the existing social order.

In conclusion, the seemingly odd 'coupling' of Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften and Kristeva's feminist psychoanalytic theory has enabled me to reveal and underscore Goethe's remarkable understanding of masculine and feminine subjectivity as a process rather than a unified existence in men and a fixed and static condition in women. Considering key concepts of Kristeva's framework in the context of Goethe's portrayal of

femininity in his Wahlverwandtschaften has also helped me to highlight Goethe's extraordinary sensitivity for the operation of the human consciousness that is signaled by his complex and multifaceted portrayal of the central characters in his Wahlverwandtschaften.

With potential future implications of this dissertation in mind, I postulate that Kristeva's psychoanalytic approach to femininity and maternity may also serve as a beneficial theoretical foundation for further analyses of Goethe's portrayal of other female characters of high complexity like Iphigenie, Adelheid, Mignon, "die schöne Seele," and even Margarete. As I illustrated in my review of feminist research on Goethe, feminist scholars like Becker-Cantarino, Zimmermann, Hart, and others have looked at various aspects of Goethe's multifaceted depiction of such central female figures. Looking back on what so far has been done in feminist scholarship on Goethe, I am convinced that further analyses of female characters of central significance in a multitude of his literary works through the lens of Kristeva's psychoanalytic and semiotic framework could lead to new and valuable insights into and a more comprehensive understanding of Goethe's overall representation of femininity.

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Zsuzsanna's accomplishments at UT include presentations at a number of professional conferences, including the Annual Conference of the Foreign Language Association of North Carolina (2002), the Annual Conference of TFLTA (2003), the Mountain Interstate Foreign Language Conference (2004), and the Annual Meeting of the American Society for 18th Century Studies (2009). She participated in the Annual

Meeting of Women in German (2005) with a poster presentation. She also co-authored a book review for the *Modern Language Journal* in 2007. Zsuzsanna has been the recipient of several departmental awards and scholarships, such as the John C. Osborne Fellowship (2005), the Award for Excellence in Teaching in German (2008), the Award for Best Paper by a Graduate Student in German, in Category PhD Level (2008), and a Stipend provided by the Reinhold and Katherine Nordsieck Memorial Endowment (2008).

Zsuzsanna is also interested in second language acquisition and in the use of literary works in the teaching of foreign languages.