Ruth Whittle
Gender, Canon and Literary History

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The Changing Place of Nineteenth-Century
German Women Writers

DE GRUYTER

Contents

Introduction

The early and mid-nineteenth century is arguably of central importance to the way Germans have experienced their historicity over the last one hundred and fifty years. Many of the facets of this historicity have been explored, but the role of literature by German women writers in this has so far not been subjected to the same scrutiny as that of German nationalism[1], the German university[2], German Studies[3], or the history of canonized figures such as Goethe.[4] The first historical survey of women's literature was undertaken by Gisela Brinker-Gabler in her angry article "Die Schriftstellerinnen in der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft: Aspekte ihrer Rezeption von 1835 bis 1910". There she demands an "umfassende Neubewertung der Frauenliteratur" (Brinker-Gabler 1976: 26) and it can be said that such a reappraisal has come to pass in many different ways.[5] In her article "The Ladies' Auxiliary of German Literature. Nineteenth-Century Women Writers and the Quest for a National Literary History", Herminghouse (1998) went further, and was probably the first to call for a systematic investigation of the intersection between literary history, the establishment of a canon, and the loss or outright exclusion of the majority of women writers from literary histories, and hence from the canon.[6] She also – correctly – asserts that a major obstacle to such a study might be the sheer volume of work that would have to be investigated (1998: 145). The task is made even more complex if one attempts to avoid categorising the whole of the nineteenth century as one monolithic entity, as has happened not infrequently (e.g. in Brinker-Gabler 1976; Herminghouse 1998; Günther 2007; Richter 2012).

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1 Amann/Wagner 1970; Berger 1997; Koch 2006; Planert 2000; Leerssen 2006a, 2006b, 2007, 2008; Pohlsander 2008; See 1994; See 2001; Tschopp 2004; Wodak 1998.

2 Barth 2008; Bey 1998; Hempel-Küter 2000; Wegeler 1996.

3 Barner 1996; Batts 1993; Fohrmann 1994; Hohendahl 1985a and 1985b; König 1993; König 2003; Weimar 2003; Tvrdík 2006.

4 Barner 1992; Träger 2004; Braungart 2004; Fischer 1987.

5 Apart from new editions of women's works, there are numerous collections of essays on specific aspects of women's writing more generally as well as works on specific works and authors, e.g. Brinker-Gabler et al. 1986, Brinker-Gabler 1988; Gnüg/Möhrmann 1985 and 1999; Kord 1996; Catling 2000; Bland/Müller-Adams 2007 and 2008; Brown 2007; Eckold 2008; Fronius/Linton 2008; Colvin/Watanabe O'Kelly 2009; Bielby/Richards 2010; early seminal works are by Möhrmann (1983), Brinker-Gabler (1976, 1986 and 1988), Cocalis (1986) and Gnüg/Möhrmann (1985, 2nd rev. ed. 1999).

6 See also Günther's call for an investigation of the link between processes of canonisation and gender (2007: 75).

Nevertheless, *Gender, Canon and Literary History* attempts the kind of investigation Herminghouse called for through case studies based, in the main, on a number of literary histories.

Before outlining why literary histories are important sites for women's (non-) reception, three key terms which are used throughout my discussion should be clarified. These are 'discourse', 'narrative' and '(female) agency' as a translation of the more differentiated German term of '(weibliche) Handlungsspielräume'. The term 'discourse' is used here in the sense defined by Foucault. It implies that talking about women and anything that may be associated with them is describing "the surface linkages between power, knowledge, institutions, intellectuals, the control of populations, and the modern state as these intersect in the functions of systems of thought" (Bové 1995: 55 f). In the period under discussion, discourses on gender difference were invariably linked both with discourses on beauty and of agency, albeit in increasingly delineated spheres of influence, as well as on what constituted Germanness. For the purpose of this book, narrative will be defined according to Fludernik's understanding:

> Narrative is all around us. [...] The significance of narrative in human cultures can be seen from the fact that written cultures seek their origins in myths which they then record for posterity. In an explanatory process rather like that of individual autobiographical narratives, historians then begin to inscribe the achievements of their forefathers and the progress of their nation down to the present in the cultural memory in the form of histories or stories. (Fludernik 2009: 1–2)

I thus propose to use the term discourse when referring to expressions of power relations at a synchronic level, whereas the term narrative is to refer to the diachronic dimension, i.e. to myths underlying the way the 'becoming' of Germany or German culture was imagined and re-imagined. Narratives of 'becoming' then inform the discourses at any particular point, though this must not be imagined as a harmonious or linear process.

The term of agency ("Handlungsspielräume") is borrowed from Frindte/ Westphal (2005), who have used it to highlight that gender discourses in the eighteenth and nineteenth century were heterogeneous, i.e. that opportunities for interpreting women's (and men's) writing would be missed if one ignored, "daß das Verhältnis der Geschlechter längst nicht so festgefügt war, wie die Forschung lange Zeit angenommen hat" (Frindte/Westphal 2005: 4). Rather than assuming gender separation on the basis of "Geschlechtscharakterzuschreibung", opportunities for women's participation in public and particularly in semi-public discourses should be explored, together with the uptake of such opportunities.

Having clarified the key terms to be used here, and by doing so having given a first insight into my approach, the significance of the genre of literary history in

relationship to canon formation will be expounded. In fact, this genre represents a prime site for analysing the linkage of a range of discourses with, as it turns out, largely unreflected narratives of the origins of the values and hierarchies which underlie them. The interplay between discourses on aesthetic qualities, agency, domestic order and moral soundness, together with the discourses on gender determines the agency given to women writers in literary histories. Agency here is not simply a matter of space (or denial of space) but is also to do with the extent to which women are seen as participating in the nationhood narratives. Their positioning shifts over time, in line with shifts in dominant narratives on the becoming (and imagined future) of a united Germany. The impact of these shifts for the role of women in literary history turns out not to be predictable; and changes in emphasis do not occur in linear fashion. Instead, competing discourses can lead to positioning women at opposite ends of the spectrum of significance, particularly from the end of the nineteenth century onwards.

The narratives which literary histories relate to and privilege are the cultural forces behind the unificatory power of German nationalism (Hohendahl 1985: 159; Leerssen 2006a; Schumann 1996). Barner (1996: 119) calls literary history a "Leitgenre" which occupies a particularly secure position as it is anchored in the institutions of the university and the school. Heine pointed out how literary histories could achieve a heightened status decades before they actually did: "Die Literaturgeschichte ist die große Morgue, wo jeder seine Toten aufsucht, die er liebt oder womit er verwandt ist" (Heine [1835] 1979: 135). Literary histories in the nineteenth century, much like the "great works" of authors such as Shakespeare or Goethe, tell the cultural tales of the – emerging – nation and thus help to define the specificity of its character, i.e. how it is different from the nation next door (Leerssen 2008: 16). In Germany, they initiated the debate and canonized the status of the classical period, and that period has formed THE point of departure for the narratives on which the position of writers in the canon after 1835 has relied (Hohendahl 1985: 159–165). The significance of the status of the classical period is so far-reaching because of the national context in which it was set.

> 'Die Klassiklegende' wird erst verständlich vor dem Hintergrund einer spezifischen historischen Konstellation: Der wachsende deutsche Nationalismus suchte nach einer kulturellen Identität. Der Frühliberalismus fand sie in der deutschen Dichtung und fixierte sie historisch durch die Kategorie eines klassischen Literaturzeitalters. (Hohendahl 1985: 162)

The narrative on the meaning of the classical period for Germany is key to our investigation of the intersection between literary history, the establishment of

a canon, and the loss or outright exclusion of the majority of women writers from literary histories. It underlies literary histories that are otherwise quite different (Hohendahl 1985: 165), written for different readerships. Nineteenth-century German literary histories expound a cultural definition of nationality for consumption in schools, universities or the general (educated) populace (Iggers 1999: 19; Weimar 2003: 282). They share a common understanding of the significance of classical Weimar as well as of the link between race and language, which had been proposed by Jacob Grimm and others. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the latter had become a commonplace assumption not just in German-speaking countries but in Europe (Leerssen 2006b: 207). This would hardly have been possible without Herder's *Abhandlungen über den Ursprung der Sprache* (1770), where he had formulated a connection between language and historiography (Tschopp 2004: 28) or Fichte's *Reden an die deutsche Nation* (1807/8) where the philosopher had formulated the link between German language, German characteristics and German nationality. He saw education as the basis for perfecting Germanness (Pohlsander 2008: 41 f). In this context, literary histories can be understood to be a paradigmatic genre where "discursive patterns of self-identification, exoticization and characterization" could be developed (Leerssen 2006b: 17; Schaser 2007: 40) and self-images instrumentalized (Hohendahl 1985: 160 – 164).[7] Nineteenth-century literary histories thus relied on assumptions made in texts that had already entered the canon (Grimm, Fichte, Herder) and they felt in a position to construct canons, all the while claiming that they portrayed a logical "Entstehung".[8] I therefore argue that the genre of literary history offers a context within which can be fruitfully explored the relationship between the position of women writers, canon formation and the narratives around the formation of the nation.

Owing to the wealth of material, it was necessary to limit the number of literary historians I could consider. Beginning with a section on the earliest literary historian, Georg Gottfried Gervinus, my main analysis concentrates on Rudolf Gottschall (1823 – 1909) and August Vilmar (1800 – 1868). In order to position

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7 Cf Judith Schildt's definition of the canon: "Kanon ist […] ein wertungsanzeigender handlungsein- und ausgrenzender Begriff, der die Bedingungen des Ein- und Ausschlusses widerspiegelt und dabei notwendig die konkrete lebensweltliche Verankerung inhaltlich miteinfaßt […] (quoted in Korte 2010: 16) and Winko's definition, which emphasizes its exclusive function in a similar way: "Kanones erfüllen verschiedene Funktionen für ihre Trägergruppe, sie stiften Identität, […]; sie legitimieren die Gruppe und grenzen sie gegen andere ab; sie geben Handlungsorientierungen, indem sie ästhetische und moralische Normen wie auch Verhaltensregeln kodieren, sie sichern Kommunikation über gemeinsame Gegenstände" (Winko 2001: 300).
8 Cf Charlier 2009b: 51.

my findings in Gottschall and Vilmar and bring into sharper relief their respective approaches to women, I will contrast them with some of their significant colleagues, particularly with the prolific critic and literary historian Julian Schmidt and the liberal and educator Friedrich Kreyßig.

My selection is well-founded: together with Gervinus, Gottschall and Vilmar were viewed as "guiding lights" for other literary histories (Batts 1993: 42, 201); Schumann assesses Gottschall as exemplary for the representation of a consensual interpretation of culture and history for the literary intelligentsia of the second half of the nineteenth century and the reception of Gervinus (Schumann 1970: 33a). In 1835, three years after Goethe's death, the first volume of Gervinus' literary history was published, and with it the notion was expounded that the most important period of German literary history so far had come to an end. Whilst Gottschall criticizes Gervinus for ignoring contemporary literature, both Gervinus and Gottschall take it as read that Germany has just experienced a classical period. This is in contrast to Schlegel and Goethe who saw their own writings as the beginning of an era, and had no notion of Goethe as the climax. Goethe in fact assumed that one needed both a cultural centre and national unity in order to bring forth 'classical' literature (Hohendahl 1985: 160f). Vilmar stands in contrast to Gottschall in so far as he is certain of the decline following Goethe and Schiller's deaths and therefore neglects literature after 1832, much like other significant literary historians had done. One of the later representatives of the group of literary historians who paid no attention to literature post Goethe in his literary history is Wilhelm Scherer, though he dealt with more recent works in his lectures and other publications. But that did not mean that writers post 1832 remained left out of literary histories. Successor editors introduced them whilst leaving Vilmar's original text – and tone – largely intact![9] Vilmar and Gottschall thus had a common point of departure. However, they came from very different schools of thought and backgrounds in other respects. Gottschall, who can be considered a 'Freischaffender Künstler', was a liberal during the 1848/49 Revolution, he was radically anticlerical and anti-state, whilst Vilmar worked with the authorities. The latter had initially studied and qualified in Deutsche Philologie, he first held positions of significant responsibility in schools and later in school administration in Hesse. He then became a Protestant theologian and was appointed extraordinary professor by the University of Marburg in 1855 where he held a chair in theology to his death.

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9 This also happened in the case of Scherer's literary history, of which the first edition was published in 1883. The successor editor Walzel added more recent writers (Scherer/Walzel 4rth ed. 1928).

It is unfortunate that editions of literary histories at the time did not give any information on print runs or numbers of copies. However, more or less subtle hints in the texts make it clear that literary historians saw themselves in competition with each other. Thus Gottschall contends in the foreword to the second edition of his *Nationalliteratur* that it was not only the numbers of copies sold that made a literary history successful. In this context he probably refers to his arch-rival Julian Schmidt whose literary history had already appeared in its 5th edition in 1866 (see Gottschall 1881: vol i, vii). Vilmar's work, however, exceeded both that of Gottschall and Schmidt by far, in terms of numbers of editions as well as in profile. Surely, it is partly for self-serving purposes that Gottschall conceives of a new chapter in his fourth edition of 1875 (vol. ii) called "Literatur- und Kulturhistoriker" where he gives an overview of literary histories so far.[10] There, he summarily deals with Vilmar, who was, of course, dead by then:

> Eine in Bezug auf die Tendenz entgegengesetzte Richtung der Litteraturgeschichte wird von Vilmar in seinen weitverbreiteten 'Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der deutschen Nationallitteratur' (1847, 11. Aufl. 1867) vertreten. Dies Werk verdankt seine Hauptanziehungskraft der geschmackvollen Reproduktion des Inhalts der älteren, deutschen Dichtungen; unsere großen Dichter dagegen werden von einseitig pietistischem Standpunkte aus beurteilt; Schiller und Goethe gegen die Anklage, Jugendverführer und Christenverstörer zu sein, nur damit verteidigt, 'daß sie allerdings es menschlich dachten, übel zu machen, während die Führung aus der Höhe es gut durch sie gemacht hat'. (Quoted in Gottschall 1881: ii, 301)

Gottschall may well not have been alone in criticizing what he thought was a misguided treatment of Goethe and Schiller; however, it certainly did not distract from the popularity of Vilmar's work. Frederick Metcalfe, who transposed (rather than translated) Vilmar's literary history into English (1858), chose this particular author from among the many of whom he clearly had knowledge because he wanted to provide his Oxford students with an accessible work on the subject. He perceived Vilmar as a precursor to all subsequent literary historians. It is the number of editions, the work's political and religious neutrality and the style that make Vilmar a suitable choice for this endeavour (Metcalfe 1858: v – x), and for inclusion in our analysis.

Gottschall's interest in literature written after Goethe's death is allied with a greater interest in women writers compared to Vilmar, and his initial political

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10 Here Gottschall considers the sequel by Karl Goedeke of the original *Grundriß zur Geschichte der deutschen National-Literatur. Zum Gebrauch auf gelehrten Schulen* (1827) originally by Koberstein, which Goedeke edited from 1857 onwards, to be one of the best literary histories of its time, both as a "ein Denkmal erstaunlichen Sammelfleißes" and a fair-minded and independent work (Gottschall [5]1881: ii 302).

stance means that women in general are not so much a second sex as a potential enrichment of German culture and nationhood. This goes hand in hand with Gottschall's greater interest in the Romantic period.

Whilst Gottschall prepared every edition of his literary history himself, until his death in 1909, Vilmar was only responsible for the first twelve editions, up to his death in 1869. From then on six editors or editor partnerships took on the work, and some of them must have published in competition with each other.[11] All were bound by Vilmar's last will that the original text was not to be changed. At most, footnotes including the latest research could be expanded, continued or rewritten (Vilmar [24]1894: viii, in the foreword to the 21st edition edited by Karl Goedeke). All successor editors express their respect for Vilmar's achievement in their respective forewords and promise to honour his last will. It was only for the 22nd edition (1886) that the publisher Elwert asked for an update on current works and commissioned Adolf Stern to provide this. It is added as an appendix with the title "Die Deutsche National-Literatur vom Tode Goethes bis zur Gegenwart" and contains around two hundred pages. Although Stern does not share the suspicion with which Vilmar viewed literature after Goethe, he is at pains to point to the common ground between Vilmar and himself. In the first edition for which he is responsible he voices the conviction that both he and Vilmar feel "eins in der nationalen Gesinnung" (in the foreword to the 22nd edition, by A. Stern 1886, reproduced in Vilmar [24]1894: x). Stern had his finger on the literary pulse of the time. In his edition of 1901 he explains in the foreword that other literary histories and their success had made further additions to Vilmar's original work necessary, and in this context he praises the literary history by Adolf Bartels (Stern in the foreword to Vilmar [25]1901: Stern xif), the very work which would later contribute to a radical thinning out of names in literary histories according to the principles of 'Blut und Boden' ideology.[12]

I will concentrate on literary histories up to around the turn of the century, by which time the editors of the first histories had died or retired (Gervinus, Vilmar) and at least one successor generation had emerged. At the same time, from around the

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11 August Vilmar. *Geschichte der deutschen National-Literatur*. Marburg: Elwert, 1845, [4]1850, [6]1856, [12]1867. August Vilmar. *Geschichte der deutschen National-Literatur*. Revised by G. Th. Dittmar. Elwert [17]1875. August Vilmar. *Geschichte der deutschen National-Literatur*. Revised by Karl Goedeke. Marburg: Elwert [21]1883. August Vilmar. *Geschichte der deutschen National-Literatur*. Revised by Adolf Stern. Marburg: Elwert, [22]1886, [24]1894, [25]1901, [26]1905. Subsequently quoted as Vilmar, edition, year, editor and page number. The biographical information given here is taken from König's entry "Vilmar, August Friedrich Christian" (2003).

12 Stern refers to Bartels' (1900/1) *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, 2 vols, Leipzig: Avenarius and praises it. But see Fischer (1987: 13), who describes this work and its subsequent editions as a "Handbuch der literarischen Judenfrage".

period of German Unification in 1871, a new generation of literary historians had attained positions of influence in academic institutions, e. g. Wilhelm Scherer and then Erich Schmidt in Berlin, and August Sauer in Prague. Literary histories were no longer the preserve of liberal historians such as Gervinus wanting to do "Oppositional Science" [Oppositionswissenschaft], directed against the philologist approach of the emerging discipline of German Studies [Germanistik] (Bontempelli 2004: 35). With the coming about of German Unification and the 'kleindeutsche Lösung', the key terms of the 1848/49 Revolution, "Einheit" and "deutsch" had been defined by Bismarck (whilst the definition of "Freiheit" remained unclear) (Wülfing 2004: 210). 'Outing' oneself in this debate was now no longer an act of opposition; instead it was even encouraged by the state. Whilst the traditional philological methods of reconstructing texts, preparing seminal editions of canonized writers and researching the history of the German language and its Indo-Germanic roots continued, Germanists also engaged in what we would today call the political aspects of their subject, and literary history became a key genre in which they expressed their engagement.

The new generation of Sauer, Scherer and Erich Schmidt appropriated the field of literary history, in a period of growing anti-Semitic and 'völkisch-national' thinking whilst Goethe and even more recent literature were being firmly established in the lecture hall (Michler 1996: 236). However, the concepts and their rhetoric had already been there long before, and the radicalisation in tone and intent, which affects the reception of women writers, first needs to be explored with the initial generation of writers of literary history. *Gender, Canon and Literary History* will thus examine this issue through detailed case studies rather than aspiring to a comprehensive overview.

For Jewish intellectuals it became particularly important to be involved in the narratives around Germanness, and to participate in the discourses of the day in order to be seen to be part of the collective of Germans (Landfester 2000: 70). Rahel Varnhagen's writings have been considered as attempts, by her, to participate in those discourses (e. g. Landfester 2000: 66–82). Around a century on, the assimilated Jewish academic Ludwig Geiger in Berlin wanted recognition as being truly "deutsch" and "frei" in the sense of being a Jewish German as well as a German Jew, free to choose subjects related most closely to the German cultural discourses; in his own view and that of many others this was predominantly Goethe. By choosing such a central figure he was hoping to establish for himself a career on the same terms and conditions as any other German academic.[13] At the same time, Germanists working on the margins of the Ger-

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13 Although the Act of Emancipation of the Jews became law in the whole of the Reich in 1871, this did not mean that institutions such as universities put it into practice; in fact internal

man-speaking empire such as August Sauer in Prague and Wilhelm Scherer in Strasbourg wanted to be seen to subscribe to "deutsch" (as opposed to Czech or French) and "frei" (as opposed to marginal in Prague or under occupation in Strasbourg). The understanding of "deutsch" by these academics impacted on their choice and treatment of women writers; how and why is discussed throughout this book.

The women writers whose reception will be examined are some of the first nineteenth-century women who were successful in being published and widely read: "Im 19. Jahrhundert erobert die schriftstellernde Frau den deutschen Literaturmarkt," claims Brinker-Gabler, and goes on to quote from Robert Prutz's *Deutsche Literatur der Gegenwart* (1859) "'Die Frauen sind eine Macht in unserer Literatur geworden; gleich den Juden begegnet man ihnen auf Schritt und Tritt'" (Brinker-Gabler 1976: 15).[14] The focus will be on the Romantic women Bettina von Arnim and Rahel Varnhagen von Ense as early receivers (not just) of Goethe, on Annette von Droste-Hülshoff as the incomparable female, non-Jewish writer before 1848, and Fanny Lewald and Louise Aston as two of the important women writers who thematized 1848, but for whom the German Revolution also provided a key experience in the formation of their view of themselves, of Germany and of writing.

I will consider the reception in the time around the German Revolution of 1848/49, since immediately after the Revolution living and working conditions had improved for some women writers. At the very least the Revolution had provided a 'Schreibanlass' and a few women were able for the first time to take an open, if limited, interest in the politics of the day. As examples, Möhrmann (1982: 317) and Boetcher-Joeres (1982: 590 – 614) name Fanny Lewald, Luise Mühlbach, Mathilde Franziska Anneke, Louise Otto-Peters, Ida Hahn-Hahn, Louise Aston, Therese von Bacheracht, Luise Dittmar and Claire von Glümer.[15] It should follow that women of this time appear in literary histories with greater regularity.

Furthermore, 1848 must be considered the first German 'Vergangenheit' in a period of rising nationalism which could not be considered to have been imposed by a foreign attacker such as Napoleon in 1806, when Prussia had been

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discrimination could be understood to be an act of opposition to the dictates of the state (König 2002: 64).

14 Sulamith Sparre sees Jews and women as a kind of ' Schicksalsgemeinschaft': they are two groups who have a minority status, "der von der Aufklärung keinesfalls genügend reflektiert wurde" (2007: 43). According to her, Jews presuppose their inferiority by embracing the particular goal of Enlighenment that wanted to make human beings out of Jews (43). Jewish women are thus doubly marked by inferiority.

15 See also Whittle/Pinfold 2005.

defeated comprehensively. The 'Vergangenheit' of 1848 is thus different from previous defeats. However, both 'Vergangenheiten' needed to be 'bewältigt'. In Helmut Plessner's *Das Schicksal des deutschen Geistes im Ausgang seiner bürgerlichen Epoche* (1935) the author contends that the reasons for the rise of National Socialism could be found in the "Formung unseres nationalen Selbst- und Leitbildes" during the early nineteenth century. This self-image is inseparably linked with Germany's "Geistesgeschichte und ihren Voraussetzungen" (Plessner 1935: 14). Interestingly, it is only in the introduction to the edition of 1959 with the changed title *Die verspätete Nation* that he affirms the intricate relationship between the lack of a German Nation State at a time when France, England and other countries experienced golden periods, German 'Geistesgeschichte' and an inadequately developed memory of the past as well as of a critical attitude towards authority (Plessner 1959: 11; 13 – 17). A relationship between these factors first manifested itself in 1848/49. With the publication under its new title, Plessner contributed to a topical debate: the term 'Vergangenheitsbewältigung' had been coined in the particular context of coming to terms with the Third Reich but, in Plessner's approach, it had to go back to the 'Vergangenheit' of 1848 when the first German struggle for a change in the hierarchical structure of authority was fought. It could be argued, though, that this history of ideas started earlier, with Gervinus's establishment of the concept of Weimar Classicism, or even in Friedrich Schlegel's *Wiener Vorlesungen* of 1812 where he introduced moral and national criteria for examining literature (Weimar 2003: 280). Authority here is not a result of a foreign nation imposing its values, nor a state imposing its religion or taxes, but is a result of 'Geistesbildung' which was assumed to undergo organic growth. Literary histories consider themselves to be recorders of this growth, at the same time aligning any growth with their preferred national narrative and finding their own explanation for its 'Entstehung'. A brief look at histories of English or American literature reveals that preoccupation with the struggle of aligning ideas about the development in literature and of the nation was a feature specific to German literary histories.

J. J. Jusserand, who was actually a Frenchman, called his one-volume work *A History of the English People from the Origins to the Renaissance* by (1st ed. 1894, 2nd ed. 1907) in order to express his conviction that "the people" and indeed the nation expresses itself in the literature of a country, including the output by its philosophers (Jusserand 1907: iixf). He finds key figures who contributed the most to the expression of "the people's genius" (ix) by considering those buried in the Chapter House of Westminster. In a later seminal literary history, by Albert C. Baugh (ed.), we find an admission that "no single scholar can control" the "accumulated scholarship" of and around English literature (Baugh 1948: v). For him this is clearly not just a matter of volume but also one of authority.

He is much less interested than many of the German literary historians in controlling the narratives of English literature – not the least because he seems to assume that there is an underlying discourse, which was decided long ago and which is largely on matters of periodization, genres and great names. Barrett Wendel, whose *A Literary History of America* was first published in 1900 (edition used here republished in 1968) starts from the uncomplicated premises that literature is "the lasting expression in words of the meaning of life" (Wendel 1968: 2) and that kinship comes about through a common language – here the English language (3). It is only in the nineteenth century that American writers had sufficiently emancipated themselves from England that they could write their own literature, albeit still in English. A literary history such as Wendel's is meant to demonstrate to American readers as much as to the world what American literature has "so far contributed to the literature of our ancestral English language" (10). Although there is a hint that American literature needs defending as an established literature with its own pedigree, this is by no means as ardent a conflict as observed in the German literary historians considered in *Gender, Canon and Literary History.*

Preceding the chapters on women writers in literary history (chapters 2 to 4), chapter 1 prepares the ground for the range of case studies in literary histories by demonstrating how the discourses on gender were dependent on other discourses of 'the other', and in particular on the dichotomies which gained in prominence in the last quarter of the nineteenth century such as sickness vs. health, mad vs. sane, Jewish vs. German and weak vs. rational and strong. These discourses all have to do with emerging orders in the German 'house' (state), and had the potential of opening opportunities for women as well as jeopardizing degrees of agency they may have had earlier in the century. However, these discourses can also be shown in competition with each other; they were not just imposed by Prussian patriarchy but contested and censored within groups of women as well.

The literary histories chosen here are discussed in chapters 2 to 4. Chapter 2 investigates the general provision for women made in the literary histories under consideration. In particular, it explores the role ascribed to Romanticism and the link between that period and Classicism with regards to the consideration of 'gender' in literary history. As the period in which the construction – or re-construction – of what was 'German' was first attempted in modern times (Hohendahl 1985: 160, Leerssen 2006a: 568, Leerssen 2008: 14–18; Gervinus 1853: i, 9; Iggers 1999: 20), Romanticism is the period most under discussion in literary histories. Was Romanticism to be considered a decadent, effeminate period (Gervinus) or could the work of the period be integrated into literary history? The link

between 'Romantic' and 'effeminate' brings into relief the issue of women think-
ers and writers of the period.

Chapter 3 comprises case studies of the reception of Bettina von Arnim,
Rahel Varnhagen and Annette von Droste-Hülshoff in the literary histories
under investigation. I will show how the precarious status of the Romantic peri-
od was of significance for their respective reception in different ways, and high-
light the reasons for and context of changes over the period under consideration.

Chapter 4 presents a case study on the reception of Fanny Lewald and Louise
Aston. Their reception is characterized by different, and competing, discourses
on female as well as national emancipation in relationship to the nationhood
narratives. In literary history, Aston and Lewald are not just set up as question-
able and praiseworthy writers respectively. This chapter shows how their posi-
tioning is closely linked with their negative and positive role in the cultural
and therefore national enterprise of the formation of a strong Germany under
Prussian leadership.

After concentrating on the reception of women in literary histories, where
women were indeed variously treated as exceptions, chapter 5 examines another
genre which also had didactic aims, but where women represented a majority. It
discusses images of (writing) women in nineteenth-century 'Frauenbilder'. The
term of 'Frauenbilder' has traditionally been applied in a fairly vague manner,
both to primary texts and commentaries on texts written by women. In the con-
text under consideration here, 'Frauenbilder' form part of the genre of 'Lebens-
bilder', 'Charakterbilder', and 'Lebensaufrisse', which were produced both inside
and outside the university during the nineteenth century (Anton 1995: 129). First
and foremost it will be interesting to consider the reasons given for presenting
'Frauenbilder' and to identify their intended readership. Second, the selection
of women needs to be examined and compared with the women who appear
in and disappear from literary histories. Of particular interest here is the aspect
of Germanness in the choice of models. Third, it will also be important to inves-
tigate why the respective authors sometimes preferred 'Frauenbilder' as a genre
over academic treatises.

My close readings illustrate issues beyond the gender and nationhood de-
bate. They provide indicators for phasing roughly one hundred years of recep-
tion, they mark the lines along which the canon was formed from a gendered
perspective[16], and shed light on how modern German philology has evolved –

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16 Neuhaus observes that the examination of literary histories, dictionaries and reading lists is
not very useful in so far as these genres do not usually reflect on their selection criteria (Neu-
haus 2002: 20). In my view, however, selection criteria do not need to be made explicit in order
to become apparent, e.g. in section headlines (see e.g. Kord 1996: 138, Herminghouse 1998: 151,

or stagnated (Hahn 2000: 273). At the same time they allow us to differentiate at least two commonly held assumptions: first, that women's literature overall was considered of marginal socio-political or literary value, if only because of being dependent on the limitations within which women operated at the time; and second, that throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century in portraits of women as well as in literary histories a Jewess was considered different and an outsider in the sense that she was "nicht namensfähig – und damit traditionsunwürdig" (Sparre 2007: 11).

Brinker-Gabler 1976: 16), in their prefaces and through comparing them systematically as well as chronologically.