

Master and Subject, or Inequality as Felicitous Opportunity

Gender Relations of the Nineteenth-
Century Middle Class

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During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, basic questions of gender formed a crucible of intense debate. How should the new man and the new woman of the emergent middle class be constituted? Such questions were basic to middle-class self-construction. Answers were sought in countless philosophical tracts, in novels and plays, in medical treatises, and in popular journals. Despite innumerable differences of detail, the intellectual elites who set the tone of these debates swiftly established a normative framework.¹ They attributed gender distinctions to specific qualities, which they constructed as rooted in nature. To summarize the newly formulated gender order, which Karin Hausen characterized as a “*Polarisierung der Geschlechtscharaktere* [polarization of the sexes],” women should be passive, religious, emotional, and dependent, and their proper place was the home. They were supposed to have the particular ability of being “natural”—as Gellert had put it, for example, in his famous and most influential theory of letter writing. Men should be active and independent, committed to reason and science, and fashioned for public life. Relations between the sexes should be based on love within marriage and should resemble the bond between master and subject. This is, for example, the gist of Friedrich Schleiermacher’s sermons, and such ideas also appear in numerous other texts from the turn of the nineteenth century.²

However, this discourse of gender difference took place not only within the new reading clubs and in journals and books but also in

middle-class households.³ Furthermore, a precise reconstruction of gender relations as practiced within marriage demonstrates that the cohabitation of the new man “of sense and moderation”—as Isabel V. Hull describes him⁴—and his spouse shows that many men and woman especially of the Protestant educated middle class were almost obsessed by questions of gender difference. How was the gender system constructed, tested, challenged, and reworked, both in imagination and in daily life? How were femininity and masculinity simultaneously fixed and challenged within the couple? How did middle-class spouses read the debates on gender systems? People interpreted and wielded these debates in very diverse ways; moreover, the discourse could at times develop special dynamics of its own. This chapter will explore these dynamics and thereby the question of how the gender relations were remodeled in turn-of-the-nineteenth-century middle-class circles, using the example of the matrimonial life of Friedrich and Käthe Roth, a married couple who belonged to the Protestant educated middle class (*Bildungsbürgertum*).

Käthe Roth was born in 1792 in the free imperial city of Nuremberg, the eldest daughter of a wealthy merchant and his wife, who also originated from merchant stock. In 1806 she met Friedrich Roth, who had been born in 1780 to a Stuttgart teacher and now served as a public counsel. They married in 1809 and moved a year later to the Bavarian capital city, Munich, where Roth served initially in the Ministry of Finance and later as the most senior state official for affairs of the Protestant Church. Between the ages of eighteen and twenty-seven, Käthe gave birth to six children, five of whom reached maturity. Thanks not least to Käthe’s dowry of ten thousand guilders and her share in her parents’ business, the Roth family lived in affluence in the Maxvorstadt, Munich’s finest residential district. From its origins on the drawing board at the start of the nineteenth century, this quarter rapidly became the favored district of financial and court aristocrats and of senior Bavarian officials. The Roths circulated in this milieu, particularly among the “Protestant northern lights” of the educational establishment: professors, college presidents, royal tutors, and ministry officials.⁵ How did this educated middle-class couple construct their married life?

I.

Shortly after their wedding, Käthe Roth called her husband “the happiness of my life.”⁶ Even fourteen years later, she wrote to Friedrich,

“Oh, how I look forward to your return, my most beloved; I cannot contain my yearning much longer.”⁷ At around the same time, Friedrich Roth similarly declared his love: “You, my dearest possession . . . we [are] as one, and that surpasses everything in the world. You belong to me and I belong to you as to no other. And of that I am so certain and so assured that I need neither suppress nor constrain that affection.”⁸ Several years earlier, he had thanked God for “this highest and finest gift, that we are of one mind and one heart, ever closer each day. You have given me wonderful guidance and many great things, yet this is the greatest and most complete, indeed, the core of my life.”⁹ Heartfelt affection or love were certainly not portrayed in every relevant document of the time, nor is there any basis on which to claim that in the majority of cases married life was shaped by love. However, Friedrich and Käthe Roth clearly portrayed their marriage as a love match. In this they conformed to much of the discourse that held that the new middle-class marriage should involve love, not merely, as frequent criticism contended, a contract of convenience.

The Roths described themselves, however, as less representative of a second and no less central criterion that was repeatedly expressed in the relevant debates. Their relationship was in no way constructed as one of master and subject, as Schleiermacher put it and as it was invoked by the normative framework of the time. The Roths certainly were an unequally related couple, a couple of difference: one was more “natural,” the other more “rational.” Inequality and hierarchy however, do not necessarily imply a master-subject relationship. On the contrary, this inequality was constructed in the countless letters and diaries as the fortunate opportunity of a lifelong Bildungsroman. Inequality did not necessarily imply unhappiness or suffering, victim or perpetrator, as is widely and too quickly assumed. Rather, it could be described—and to some degree perceived—as a positive difference that begets a unique quality.

What comprised Käthe and Friedrich Roth’s lifelong Bildungsroman? An important component consisted in the unequal exchange of education (*Bildung*) on the one hand and of morals and manners on the other. The husband provided education and in return received morality and religion, which the wife cultivated in the domestic sphere.¹⁰ This was an unequal relationship for the simple reason that women were barred from institutionalized education.¹¹ Their access to schooling occurred exclusively through the mediation of brothers, fathers, or

spouses.¹² Acquisition of the rudimentary skills of, for example, foreign languages as well as knowledge of the cultural canon were thereby largely denied to women, while their attainment of the central cultural techniques of writing and reading was rendered substantially more difficult. The first hesitant attempts to establish girls' schools commenced at the beginning of the nineteenth century: Nuremberg's first private educational institution for girls opened its doors in 1811, and a state girls' school followed in 1823. These institutions emphasized religion and needlework and ignored subjects such as Latin and Greek that were studied at the boys grammar school. Objections raised against unequal access to educational establishments were only very sporadic. Neither Käthe Roth nor women such as Therese Huber or Johanna Schopenhauer, who had sought to bring about equality in education, demanded expanded formal schooling opportunities for women. On the contrary, these women unanimously affirmed that equality achieved by these means would be dangerous. It would necessarily lead to women becoming transmuted into the monstrous figure of the educated female and, as Schopenhauer put it, one's "dislike of the prospect of being considered a female scholar" was great indeed.¹³ Ultimately, no one wanted to be perceived, in Huber's formulation, as "unlovable and unnatural."¹⁴ Caroline von Schlegel's critique of Dorothea Schlözer, who, thanks to her father's instruction, had become a learned woman, is also typical: "It is true, Dörtchen is blessed with infinite talent and intellect, but this is to her misfortune. For given these abilities and her father's bizarre projects, which are bound to kindle the utmost vanity, she can expect neither true happiness nor respect. A lady is valued only according to her qualities as a lady."¹⁵

Although women were excluded from public education, they could create a new informal educational environment within the matrimonial world. Moreover, through the unequal exchange of educational skills within marriage, the kernel of a quintessentially middle-class sensibility could develop—that is, a consciousness of gaining admission to a higher realm of the sublime. The couple's educational intercourse generated the intimate cultural environment that was to become the prime credential of middle-class identity construction. Furthermore, the next generation, which, as is well known, included the founders of the middle-class women's movement, drew on what their mothers had learned in this educational environment to launch a renewed discussion of the

gender regime and to demand vociferously female participation not merely in the cultural domestic sphere of their mothers' generation but also in official educational institutions.

II.

What was the nature of the cultured couple's informal conjugal world of education, this essential element of the emergent gender order of the early nineteenth century? At its heart lay the two core cultural techniques of writing and reading.

Husbands assisted their spouses in what was termed good writing, which primarily signified stylistically meticulous letter writing. Given that women were usually less well educated in this skill, which numerous school curricula expressly required, learning from their husbands in a sense completed women's instruction in letter writing.¹⁶ At first glance, the instruction of wives by their husbands appears paradoxical, if one considers the fact that women were "the real letter writers and we men . . . only dabble," as Schleiermacher put it—after apprising his betrothed of his concept of the structure and contents of an accomplished letter.¹⁷ Since the 1751 appearance of Christian Fürchtegott Gellert's informative book, *Letters, with a Practical Discussion of Good Taste*, women had been viewed as the more gifted—indeed, exemplary—letter writers. Gellert's norm-setting reformulation of the content and function of letters contended that they were, like speech, the expression of natural beauty and should impart the "authentic imprint of the spontaneous phrasing of each individual's thoughts and utterances"¹⁸ rather than amassing a series of artificial and polite phrases in the pursuit of excessively strategic aims, as had previously been the custom. If one accepts Gellert's equation of femininity and naturalness—"My principle has always been that ladies who write well surpass us in naturalness," he wrote¹⁹—it follows that women were the superior letter writers. The seeming implicit paradox—that men privately tutored their wives in the skills of writing—disappears with the obvious assumption that a masculine complement was required to discover this special feminine talent. Women's writing may by nature be more spontaneous and genuine, but these characteristics must first be brought to light. The husband uncovers and nurtures what lies dormant in his spouse and consequently takes his place in the honorable tradition that began with Gellert, encouraging "the lady in particular to write in a natural style."²⁰

The new model of letter writing formulated by Gellert and others set a standard for Käthe and Friedrich Roth as they endeavored to write “natural” letters. Thus, a series of correspondence from the early period of their marriage concerns the husband’s instruction of his spouse in letter writing. In one of his first letters to his wife, Friedrich critically commented on Käthe’s style and orthography: “You are becoming ever more skilled, dearest one—Everything in your letter is good, both narrative and response. Not anywhere in the text is there a period missing.”²¹ For their part, wives settled into their positions as pupils, troubling their husbands with anxious questions about the merits of their letters.

Notwithstanding the ambivalence with which this peculiar matrimonial relationship may be judged, there is no doubt that, through the process of learning and teaching, married couples developed a greater mutuality, their inequality lessening to the extent that the wife’s style faithfully acquired Gellertian naturalness. Käthe Roth became not only an equally valued correspondent but also an equal conversation partner on matter of letters. Educated middle-class couples frequently conversed about the form and content of letters, discussing the merits of this or that depiction. Käthe Roth declared her astonishment that she “could write so many and such long letters” and hoped that her husband would “praise” her.²² Friedrich Roth then commented on his wife’s progress in the composition of her letters: “In the greater formality and the power of your narration I notice with pleasure the positive results of your studies. . . . I know that I could not expect this if you did not hold me dear.”²³ Thus, one sees the connection between letter writing and the conjugal bond. In short, correspondence provided a theme in common, forming a new mutuality for the couple.²⁴

Not infrequently these discussions about letters would quickly give way to a new imbalance, only in this case, of course—with reference to Gellert—to the husband’s disadvantage. Käthe Roth was perceived before long as highly competent if not superior to her husband in the skill of letter writing. This competence was unquestionably double edged, for she received considerable recognition as a letter writer while simultaneously confirming her position within the region of naturalness; she thus fixed her own narrow borders and reinforced within them a specific gender system.

As a primary means of middle-class self-presentation, letters were held in special esteem. Using Gellert’s conception, their form and style expressed changes to the self-construction of the middle class, fashion-

ing a direct counterposition to the affectation and artificiality ascribed to the aristocracy. “The immediate, just as it reaches my pen,”²⁵ was dramatized here; everything “that touches me, myself,”²⁶ Friedrich Roth averred, was written down, “directly as it strikes me.”²⁷ Letters were to be the bearers of authenticity, of naturalness, and of individuality—qualities perceived as middle class rather than aristocratic.²⁸ In short, letters—especially those written by women, who were accorded a unique competence in the realm of naturalness and authenticity—represented the expression and means of middle-class self-construction and self-presentation, whatever their actual naturalness and however much they may have concealed rather than revealed the ever-acclaimed self.²⁹

Friedrich Roth liked to read aloud his wife’s letters, demonstrating both the extent to which her writing was esteemed and the gratification she could draw from her skill.³⁰ He regularly shared Käthe’s correspondence not only in the family circle but also at the homes of close or even distant acquaintances—that is, in the cultural middle class’s public spaces of the private sphere. Domestic social gatherings frequently included readings from contemporary literature and from treatises from Roman and Greek antiquity—highly esteemed in these circles—as well as personal correspondence. If the context of their reception indicates the high regard in which letters were held, audience members’ comments on Käthe Roth’s letters demonstrate that they were manifestly accorded an aesthetic quality. Lotte Jacobi, sister of Friedrich Jacobi, the president of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences, said of one of Käthe Roth’s letters that “it is as if engraved on copper.”³¹ On another occasion, Lotte Jacobi was so enthused by one of Käthe Roth’s literary portrayals that she copied the relevant section of the letter, causing Friedrich Roth to wonder, “With what literary purpose in mind?”³² This was no mere idle question: letters were frequently copied and even published, often without the author’s knowledge.³³

One of Käthe Roth’s letters describing the Christmas festival at Nuremberg was read out not only at the Roths’ home but also at those of Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer, a Bavarian school reformer, and of Friedrich Jacobi. Jacobi’s comment that “Kant was correct to seek to know foreign lands through travel literature rather than through one’s own voyages”³⁴ emphasizes the fact that letters were viewed as literary exercises and even as literary texts. This is by no means surprising if one considers that the period around 1800 represented the heyday of the epistolary novel and that private correspondence often provided

the basis of such novels. Those written after Richardson's *Clarissa*, Sophie von La Roche's *Fräulein von Sternheim*, and Goethe's *Werther* may not have been great, but they were read just the same. Contemporaries treasured the reading aloud of epistolary novels, both printed and unpublished. The letters of Marie de Sévigné, Louis Adelgunde Victorie Kulmus, and Meta Moller have retained their fame to this day, and to complete the circle, Moller corresponded with Richardson. As this list indicates, the Gellertian thesis of woman's peculiar relationship to the letter played a significant role in the fact that many women excelled in this field.

The writing of letters not only represented the product of a successful transaction of educational goods between the Roths but also opened a door from the private domain into the public literary world. The letter, even if unprinted, was one of the most promising means by which women could reach the literary public, as the example of Fanny Lewald demonstrates.³⁵ In contrast to scientific prose, drama, or poetry, women were by no means underrepresented in the field of published letters. Käthe Roth and several other women thus experienced marital inequality not just as an opportunity for a lifelong Bildungsroman but also as the chance to move beyond that sphere into the wider, public world.³⁶ Some women exploited these extradomestic opportunities and, supported by Gellert's thesis of women's specific naturalness, could even earn money, despite the opprobrium such activities attracted for middle-class women. Among the most famous of these female authors were the romantics.

III.

An additional field in which the domestic world of education could engender new arrangements and unleash new dynamics that pointed far beyond marriage was opened up by the second important cultural activity, reading. Friedrich and Käthe Roth spent a striking amount of time reading together.

Their reading must be seen in the context of the so-called reading revolution of the eighteenth century. From the mid-1700s onward, middle-class women and men devoured increasing numbers of books, and reading became a distinguishing feature of a new *sui generis* middle-class social life. Hardly a soiree, a visit for tea, or a "comfortable gathering" occurred without some sort of reading—a play, poetry, a philosophical treatise, or even an entire novel as well as smaller pieces

such as letters, travel reports, or short works of prose composed by the participants or by others. The Roths and the educated middle class of which they were a part developed a regular obsession with this form of cultured social gathering, and alone and in company they read far more books than had their parents or grandparents.

What form did this communal reading and discussion of one's reading experience take? The literary canon received by Käthe and Friedrich Roth consisted to a large degree of contemporary German literature. They also frequently read the writers of antiquity, who were at that time highly esteemed in neohumanist circles. The couple discussed Herder's writings; Oliver Goldsmith's novel, *The Vicar of Wakefield*; the works of Lady Montagu; Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*; Schiller's poetry; the writings of famous eighteenth-century art historian Johann Joachim Winkelmann; and the legendary poet Ossian, whom they read in the original Gaelic.³⁷

Friedrich Roth had hardly arrived in Munich when he described to his wife, still residing in Nuremberg, his new acquaintanceship with Friedrich Jacobi, whose writings he recommended to her. Käthe Roth replied that Jacobi's novel, *Woldemar*, was "well known." She continued, "I would naturally prefer to read it in your company, . . . for now and again, when I come to places that are obscure to me, the elucidation you give would be much appreciated."³⁸ Käthe Roth also told her husband that she would like to hear his opinions of Goethe's autobiography.³⁹ However, the Roths' reading material did not consist solely of belles lettres—a genre increasingly read by women⁴⁰—but also included nonfiction. When they did not have the chance to read pieces together, they nevertheless discussed them, exchanging impressions from their reading of newspapers such as *Minerva*, the *Rheinischen Merkur*, the *Nürnberger Correspondenten*, and the *Nürnberger Anzeiger* as well as a number of literary magazines.⁴¹ Religious literature also appeared on the Roths' reading list, including Luther, sermons, and even hymnals.⁴²

The Roths' reading material thus corresponded to what was prevalent at the time and more particularly to the canon recommended by the writers of etiquette books as suitable for women. Moreover, the conjugal catalog of works corresponded to the books that Bavarian educational reformers Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer and Friedrich Wilhelm Thiersch recommended for German lessons in grammar schools—that is, works otherwise reserved for males, including Geßner, Schiller, Goethe, the *Nibelungenlied*, Klopstock, Jacobi,

Lessing, Winckelmann, and Herder.⁴³ Reading at home provided women with a means of gaining what they missed from German lessons at school. The parallel with the case of marital writing lessons is obvious. Thanks to their husbands' instruction, women were introduced to literature that they would otherwise have been unable to read.

The question of what was read leads directly to the question of how. As in the case of writing, the couple's transactions with respect to reading occurred, at least early in the marriage, with the husband acting as private tutor and thus as an unequal partner.⁴⁴ This dynamic changed, however, over time as Käthe and Friedrich gradually developed modes of receiving and methods of discussing reading matter that went beyond that of the teacher-pupil relationship. To the degree that discussion centered not so much on questions of which authors should be read but rather on the content and meaning of what they had read—the "joint working through of the reception experience"⁴⁵—a new mutuality developed between Käthe and Friedrich Roth. In the sense described by an acquaintance of Käthe Roth's father, Goethe, when a text is critically enjoyed and joyfully criticized, "a new work of art" is born.⁴⁶ In the Roths' discussions about a series of articles in the *Rheinischen Merkur*, for example, the husband was by no means the teacher of his wife.⁴⁷ Reading thus became a new foundation for their marital relationship—and indeed for all those who had correctly understood the legendary cry of Goethe's Lotte, who needed only to utter "Klopstock!" to communicate her feelings to Werther.

This unequal intellectual exchange produced more than a compensatory education for the wife and more than a new footing for the couple. As in the case of letter writing, women's intellectual activity revealed new possibilities, pointing far beyond the gender regime of difference and thereby alarming many contemporaries. For reading is not simply a receptive act but always also a productive act of appropriation in the sense that readers, within certain bounds, determine anew the meaning of what they read. All her husband's suggestions notwithstanding, Käthe Roth could interpret *Clarissa* in her own way. If the absence of possibilities for controlling the practice and results of reading in general posed a threat, in the case of novels it was a positive danger, and precisely this hazard received wide discussion during the reading craze. After all, questions of gender relations lay at the heart of the novel of the period: as a contemporary put it, novels are "fictitious stories of the events of love . . . for love must be the novel's actual content."⁴⁸ Each novel thus invited Käthe Roth and her friends to give

renewed thought to relations between the sexes, thoughts that could lead in their own directions and, if contemporaries are to be believed, at times even to outlandish fantasies that targeted the passions, becoming ever more “tempestuous” and threatening to tear down all defenses against “the force of the sex instinct.”⁴⁹ Through reading—especially of novels—a threatening “sentimentality and ecstasy”⁵⁰ was said to arise, releasing an absolute frenzy of feelings and desires. And this sentimentality in turn threatened to make female readers “distanced and indifferent . . . toward the ordinary affairs of domestic life.”⁵¹ Observers feared that the intense toil of domestic work would slacken, the household’s peace would be disturbed, and ultimately the entire domestic arrangement would fall to ruin, all because reading novels led the lady of the house to neglect her business.

And indeed, insofar as reading offered a pleasurable space for fantasy, these contemporaries were right. On the one hand, fantasizing could be frightening;⁵² on the other hand, it could lead to everyday responsibilities simply being forgotten. Moreover, by proffering role models that contrasted with readers’ experiences, novels stimulated women to reflect on how they might reshape their lives, as Lotte in Goethe’s *Werther* did for sections of a generation of women.⁵³ Reading can serve as a “medium of self-understanding.”⁵⁴ It can set in motion a process of reflection that goes beyond direct attempts at imitation and in the course of which alternative roles and social identities are discovered.⁵⁵ The scenes, characters, and ideas depicted in literature may inspire individuals to reconsider the course of their lives.

Just as letter writing expanded horizons and afforded a path of entry into the public world, reading doubtless meant far more to Käthe Roth, who had seen little of the world beyond Nuremberg, Stuttgart, and Munich, than to her husband, who had visited Paris as a youth. Also in the metaphorical sense, literature expanded the horizons of women whose days were spent primarily with housework, needlework, and raising children and who would otherwise rely on conversation with maids, relatives, and friends as the source of news. Perhaps Käthe Roth fared similarly to the pedagogue Caroline Rudolphi, who wrote, “Everything around me remained bleak” until she became acquainted with “worldly books”⁵⁶ as a consequence of her husband’s suggestions about literature.

No one could block these unintended expansions of horizon generated by the couple’s joint educational experience. These experiences were full of contradictions—for example, that between reading that

was determined and supervised by the husband and the possibility, inherent in every act of reading, of autonomous interpretation. A contrast exists between two possible effects of reading. On the one hand were the readings that centered on the couple in its intimate domestic sphere, the ulterior purpose of which, if one considers its subject matter, was to equip readers for the polarized roles within the gender regime that had been formulated so clearly by Schleiermacher. On the other hand, reading created possibilities of challenging, reworking, or escaping from that same gender system, even if only in one's own imagination. In the subsequent generation, this incongruity became openly articulated, as Käthe Roth's daughters expressed. In the context of the emergent women's movement, their generation demanded improved access for women to the educational institutions of the nondomestic sphere and reflected aloud about alternative gender regimes. This next cohort of women did not seek to expand educational horizons merely within the realm of the married couple but also beyond, demanding training colleges for female teachers, debating the issue of higher education for girls, and founding women's educational associations.⁵⁷

The conjugal relationship founded on the basis of unequal educational exchange was a novelty in comparison with the previous generation of the *Arbeitspaar*, the couple whose relationship was based on economic roles.⁵⁸ Of course, the new conjugal model did not always function as smoothly as it apparently did with the Roths. The few relevant extant sources suggest that Käthe Roth's sister, Elise, whose husband was likewise a member of the educated middle class, appears to have been less content with the educational transaction. Hilde Herlemann's experience is also germane. She writes that "the wife's necessary continued education is the husband's business; in this way he is always assured of his superior position."⁵⁹ Nevertheless, within this transaction a new conjugal bond was formed for that generation, and this bond led to what Heide Wunder has shown to be the replacement of the "working couple" by the "educated couple."⁶⁰

For all the possibilities that this educational transfer opened up for Käthe Roth and many other educated middle-class women, it became perhaps more important for the subsequent generation, where an autonomous dynamic developed. Much evidence indicates that wives in this later generation sought to do more than merely further their education within the conjugal sphere. Indeed, their demand for improved education for women also included the goal of widening the scope of extramarital education. The contradiction between the open-

ing of educational opportunities within marriage and the closure of the same in public appears to have been experienced more acutely by Käthe Roth's daughters, who, with redoubled energy, endeavored to open up alternative professional paths through education. Training colleges for female teachers were set up, the issue of higher education for girls was no longer merely debated, and women's educational associations created opportunities for self-help. In 1861 Mathilde Planck from Württemberg became the first woman among the Roth family's acquaintances of the generation following Käthe Roth to pass the qualifying examinations to become a teacher. Planck went on to become a cofounder of the association of Württemberg women's associations.⁶¹

This leads us back to the starting point—the question of the remodeling of the gender order, which was posed again and with renewed force in the continued process of formation of the middle class through the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The relevant texts of Schleiermacher, Gellert, and many other prominent writers as well as the debates of middle-class circles show that women were required to be passive, emotional, gentle, and modest and that marriage was to be constituted as a master-subject relationship. This suggests that the remodeling of the gender order was indeed characterized by a polarization of gender characteristics and the subjection of the wife to the husband, a suggestion that is highlighted by the practices of middle-class couples. However, couples also found rather different answers to the question of how to constitute a new and authentically middle-class gender order, as is apparent from the sketches of the Roths' everyday marital life. Instead, a new mutuality of the sexes developed through the exchange of education that occurred within marriage. New opportunities thus arose by which married women could compensate for their inadequate education. Finally, this new conjugal cultural transfer also ushered in the demands made by Käthe and Friedrich Roth's children and grandchildren that education (*Bildung*) should also be available for the female sex outside the domestic sphere. Thus, the marital life of the educated middle class formed the central site in which by way of education the couple developed a gender system of difference and inequality. Second, education offered the female sex that which it was otherwise denied. Third, foundations were laid for an expansion of horizons that enabled the growth of the demands of the women's movement.

Notes

Translated by Gareth Dale. This article was written in 1999 and is based on Rebekka Habermas, *Frauen und Männer des Bürgertums: Eine Familiengeschichte (1750–1850)* (Göttingen, 2000).

1. Ute Frevert, ed., *Bürgerinnen und Bürger: Geschlechterverhältnisse im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1988); Karin Hausen, “Die Polarisierung der Geschlechtercharaktere—Eine Spiegelung der Dissoziation von Erwerbs- und Familienleben,” in *Sozialgeschichte der Familie in der Neuzeit Europas*, ed. Werner Conze (Stuttgart, 1976), 363–93; Claudia Honegger, *Die Ordnung der Geschlechter: Die Wissenschaft vom Menschen und das Weib* (Frankfurt, 1991); Pia Schmid, *Der Beitrag der Pädagogik bei der bürgerlichen Geschlechterlehre* (Siegen, 1993); Lieselotte Steinbrügge, *Das moralische Geschlecht: Theorien und literarische Entwürfe über die Natur der Frau in der französischen Aufklärung* (Weinheim, 1987).

2. See Friedrich Ernst Daniel Schleiermacher, “Predigten über den Hausstand” (1920), in *Werke: Auswahl in vier Bänden*, ed. Otto Braun and Johannes Bauer (Leipzig, 1927–28), 3:223–398. Some researchers have inferred the reality of gender relations from the framework proposed in such debates and have concluded that the bourgeois woman was unable to live her own personality (Ute Frevert, *Frauen-Geschichte: Zwischen bürgerlicher Verbesserung und neuer Weiblichkeit* [Frankfurt, 1986]) but was instead condemned to life as an egoless individual (Barbara Duden, “Das schöne Eigentum: Zur Herausbildung des bürgerlichen Frauenbildes an der Wende vom 18. zum 19. Jahrhundert,” *Kursbuch* 47 [1977]).

3. Research on this subject concerning the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German-speaking middle class has been sparse with the exception of Anne-Charlott Trepp, *Sanfte Männlichkeit und selbständige Weiblichkeit: Frauen und Männer im Hamburger Bürgertum, 1770–1840* (Göttingen, 1996). For the British case, see Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (London, 1987); Karin Hausen, “. . . eine Ulme für das schwanke Efeu’: Ehepaare im deutschen Bildungsbürgertum: Ideale und Wirklichkeiten im späten 18. und 19. Jahrhundert,” in *Bürgerinnen und Bürger*, ed. Frevert, 85–117. See also Rebekka Habermas, *Frauen und Männer des Bürgertums: Eine Familiengeschichte (1750–1850)* (Göttingen, 2000), esp. chap. 3; Rebekka Habermas, “Der bürgerliche Wertehimmel: Frömmigkeit,” Vortrag gehalten im Zentrum für interdisziplinäre Forschung, Bielefeld, June 1997; Rebekka Habermas, “Selbstreflexion zwischen Erfahrung und Inszenierung: Schreiben im Bürgertum um 1800,” in *Der Bildungsgang des Subjekts: Bildungstheoretische Analysen*, ed. Sonja Häder and Heinz-Elmar Tenorth (Weinheim-Basel, 2004), 30–47.

4. Isabell V. Hull, *Sexuality, State, and Civil Society in Germany, 1700–1815* (Ithaca, 1996), 227–57.

5. For example, Friedrich Wilhelm Thiersch (1794–1860), Heinrich

Gotthilf von Schubert (1780–1860), Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer (1766–1848), and Friedrich Heinrich von Jacobi (1743–1819).

6. Käthe Roth to Friedrich Roth, 10 November 1810, Nachlaß Roth, no. 51, Evangelisches Landeskirchenarchiv Nuremberg (hereafter cited as EKN).

7. Käthe Roth to Friedrich Roth, 17 September 1823, Nachlaß Roth, no. 57, EKN. Several years earlier, she had revealed to him, “Yours is my fatherland’s finest love” (Käthe Roth to Friedrich Roth, 26 January 1818, Nachlaß Roth, no. 56, EKN).

8. Friedrich Roth to Käthe Roth, 15 October 1823, Nachlaß Roth, no. 43, EKN.

9. Friedrich Roth to Käthe Roth, 6 November 1817, Nachlaß Roth, no. 42, EKN.

10. A second sphere, which I do not discuss here, was that of *Erziehung*. [Translator’s note: *Erziehung* also means education but connotes upbringing or breeding, whereas *Bildung* connotes culture or civilization.] See Habermas, *Frauen und Männer*, 365–71.

11. See James C. Albisetti, *Schooling German Girls and Women: Secondary and Higher Education in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, 1988); Elke Kleinau and Claudia Opitz, eds., *Geschichte der Mädchen- und Frauenbildung*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt, 1996).

12. Exemplary here are such sibling relationships as those between Cornelia and Wolfgang Goethe, Knebel, Schleiermacher, Hegel. The Schlözer father-daughter relationship is legendary in this regard (Bärbel Kern and Horst Kern, *Madame Doctorin Schlözer: Ein Frauenleben in den Widersprüchen der Aufklärung* [Munich, 1988]). Therese Huber lucidly summarized the educational situation of her childhood, which was characterized by family circumstances: “I heard my father talk on archaeology, Blumenbach on natural history, my brothers on anatomy and medicine, my uncle Brandes on government and political history” (Therese Huber to Karl August Böttiger, 10 January 1816, in *Therese Huber: “Die reinste Freiheitsliebe, die reinste Männerliebe”*: *Ein Lebensbild in Briefen und Erzählungen zwischen Aufklärung und Romantik*, ed. Andrea Hahn [Berlin, 1989], 159).

13. Johanna Schopenhauer, *Ihr glücklichen Augen: Jugenderinnerungen, Tagebücher, Briefe*, ed. Rolf Weber (Berlin, 1978), 81.

14. Therese Huber, “Über die Ansprache des weiblichen Geschlechts zu höherer Geisteskultur,” in *Therese Huber*, ed. Hahn, 151.

15. Caroline Michaelis [Schlegel] to Luise Gotter [late October 1781], in Caroline Schlegel, *Briefe aus der Frühromantik nach G. Waitz vermehrt*, ed. Erich Schmidt, vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1913).

16. See Bruno Richter, *Der Brief und seine Stellung in der Erziehung und im Unterricht seit Gellert* (Leipzig, 1900), 16–100. For letter writing, see the standard text, Georg Steinhausen, *Geschichte des deutschen Briefes: Zur Kulturgeschichte des deutschen Volkes* (1889–91; Berlin, 1968); see also Reinhard M. G. Nickisch, *Die Stilprinzipien in den neuen Briefstellern des 17. und 18.*

Jahrhunderts (Göttingen, 1969); Angelika Ebrecht, Regina Nörtemann, and Herta Schwartz, eds., *Brieftheorie des 18. Jahrhunderts: Texte, Kommentare, Essays* (Stuttgart, 1990). On gender and letter writing, see Reinhard M. G. Nickisch, "Die Frau als Briefschreiberin im Zeitalter der Aufklärung," *Wolfenbütteler Studien zur Aufklärung* 3 (1976): 29–65; Anita Runge and Lieselotte Steinhauer, eds., *Die Frau im Dialog: Studien zu Theorie und Geschichte des Briefs* (Stuttgart, 1991); Marianne Schuler, "Aus den Tagen Briefe: Meta Klopstock," in *Frauen in der Ständegesellschaft: Leben und Arbeiten in der Stadt vom Mittelalter bis zur Neuzeit*, ed. Barbara Vogel and Ulrike Weckel (Hamburg, 1991), 265–84.

17. Friedrich Schleiermacher to Henriette von Willich, 14 December 1808, in *Schleiermachers Briefwechsel mit seiner Braut*, ed. Heinrich Meisner (Gotha, 1919), 251.

18. Karl Phillip Moritz, *Anleitung zum Briefschreiben* (1783), VIII, cited in Nickisch, *Stilprinzipien*, 196.

19. Cited in Schuler, "Aus den Tagen Briefe," 271.

20. Christian Fürchtegott Gellert, "Briefe, nebst einer Praktischen Abhandlung von dem guten Geschmacke in Briefen, Vorrede und Abhandlung" (1751), in *Brieftheorie*, ed. Ebrecht, Nörtemann, and Schwartz, 58.

21. Friedrich Roth to Käthe Roth, 12 December 1810, Nachlaß Roth, no. 37, EKN.

22. Käthe Roth to Friedrich Roth, 23 November 1810, Nachlaß Roth, no. 51, EKN.

23. Friedrich Roth to Käthe Roth, 3 July 1813, Nachlaß Roth, no. 38, EKN.

24. In this respect, sister and brother Cornelia and Wolfgang Goethe formed a similar pair. As he wrote on 6 December 1765, "Write your letters upon a divided sheet and I shall respond and comment beside it. . . . Note this: write as simply as you would speak and then you will write a fine letter" (cited in Ulrike Prokop, *Die Illusion vom großen Paar: Weibliche Lebensentwürfe im deutschen Bildungsbürgertum, 1750–1850* [Frankfurt, 1991]: 2:110). A little later, he wrote, "I am enchanted by your letter. . . . I behold a mature mind. Your simple perception, your uncommon sincerity, your naïveté; these conquer your brother's intellect, worldly knowledge, and criticism" (11 May 1776, cited in Prokop, *Die Illusion*, 121).

25. Henriette von Willich to Friedrich Schleiermacher, 17 November 1808, in *Schleiermachers Briefwechsel*, ed. Meisner, 210.

26. Friedrich Roth to Käthe Roth, 24 July 1816, Nachlaß Roth, no. 41, EKN.

27. Friedrich Roth to Käthe Roth, 13 November 1810, Nachlaß Roth, no. 51, EKN.

28. Cf. Karin Sträther, *Frauenbriefe als Medium bürgerlicher Öffentlichkeit: Eine Untersuchung anhand von Quellen aus dem Hamburger Raum in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt, 1991), 17–30.

29. Richter, *Der Brief*, 14, observes that during this period, “one’s reputation with ‘society,’ one’s recognition by the cultured classes, one’s external happiness and inner peace directly depended on the capacity to provoke admiration through the style of one’s correspondence.” On the postulate of the naturalness of letters, see also Sträther, *Frauenbriefe*, 17–30.

30. In this connection we may draw attention to the letter’s impact on the female culture, the spatial scope of which was much more constricted than that of the male. First, correspondence enabled women to initiate social contacts that immobile women would otherwise have been unable to create. Second, letters offered an opportunity for intellectual discourse. Thus, Henriette Feuerbach wrote to her brother, Christian Heydenreich, “So, dear Christian, your letters are my sole intellectual nourishment” (26 May 1841, in *Henriette Feuerbach: Ihr Leben in ihren Briefen*, ed. Herman Uhde-Bernays [Berlin, 1912], 53–54). She also wrote, “Now I wish to write to you because I feel so completely alone and abandoned and have nothing but the longing for a lively intellectual life . . . so I cling to your genius” (38). Third, letters provided a means of engaging in private intercourse with friends, which was particularly important where the oppressive constrictions of the woman’s situation were felt most grievously—for example, for Fanny Lewald during the transition between childhood and adulthood: “This correspondence was my real life at that time” (Lewald, *Freiheit des Herzens: Lebensgeschichte, Briefe, Erinnerungen*, ed. Günter de Bruyn and Gerhard Wolf [Berlin, 1992], 133). Fourth, women’s correspondence entailed the special function of managing the “extension and upkeep of the network of social contacts” (Sträther, *Frauenbriefe*, 123).

31. Friedrich Roth to Käthe Roth, 9 July 1813, Nachlaß Roth, no. 38, EKN.

32. Friedrich Roth to Käthe Roth, 11 July 1813, Nachlaß Roth, no. 38, EKN.

33. Johanna Schopenhauer to Arthur Schopenhauer, 28 November 1806, in *Die Schopenhauers: Der Familien-Briefwechsel von Adele, Arthur, Heinrich Floris, und Johanna Schopenhauer*, ed. Ludger Lütkehaus (Zurich, 1991), 122.

34. Friedrich Roth to Käthe Roth, 17 December 1817, Nachlaß Roth, no. 42, EKN.

35. Lewald’s literary career began when her uncle published one of her private letters to him in the magazine he edited, *Europa*, without informing her. See Lewald, *Freiheit*, 155–60.

36. See esp. Silvia Bovenschen, *Die imaginierte Weiblichkeit: Exemplarische Untersuchungen zu kulturgeschichtlichen und literarischen Präsentationsformen des Weiblichen* (Frankfurt, 1979).

37. Käthe Roth to Friedrich Roth, 12 July 1815, Nachlaß Roth, no. 54, EKN; Käthe Roth to Friedrich Roth, 7 December 1817, Nachlaß Roth, no. 56, EKN; Käthe Roth to Friedrich Roth, 15 December 1817, Nachlaß Roth, no. 56, EKN; Käthe Roth to Friedrich Roth, 17 December 1817, Nachlaß Roth,

no. 56, EKN; Käthe Roth to Friedrich Roth, 5 August 1816, Nachlaß Roth, no. 55, EKN; Friedrich Roth to Käthe Roth, 6 December 1810, Nachlaß Roth, no. 37, EKN; Käthe Roth to Friedrich Roth, 5 August 1816, Nachlaß Roth, no. 55, EKN.

38. Käthe Roth to Friedrich Roth, 23 November 1810, Nachlaß Roth, no. 51, EKN; Friedrich Roth to Käthe Roth, 1 December 1810, Nachlaß Roth, no. 37, EKN.

39. Käthe Roth to Friedrich Roth, 30 May 1814, Nachlaß Roth, no. 53, EKN. Lily Parthey also describes this work being read: see Parthey, *Tagebücher aus der Berliner Biedermeierzeit*, ed. Bernhard Lepsius (Berlin, 1926), 80.

40. Erich Schön, *Der Verlust der Sinnlichkeit oder Die Verwandlung des Lesers: Mentalitätswandel um 1800*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart, 1993), 182, speaks of a regular division of labor between the sexes.

41. Käthe Roth to Margarete Merkel, 14 April 1824, Familienarchiv Merkel im Stadtarchiv Nuremberg 1380; Käthe Roth to Friedrich Roth, 27 May 1814, Nachlaß Roth, no. 53, EKN; Friedrich Roth to Käthe Roth, 4 April 1828, Nachlaß Roth, no. 45, EKN.

42. Käthe Roth to Friedrich Roth, 5 August 1816, Nachlaß Roth, no. 55, EKN. Roth admired Luther very much and published a selection of Luther's texts.

43. On Thiersch's reading plan, see Elma Schwinger, *Literarische Erziehung und Gymnasium: Zur Entwicklung des bayerischen Gymnasiums in der Ära Niethammer und Thiersch* (Bad Heilbronn, 1988), 241–50; on Niethammer's canon, see 105–6.

44. On the husband as reading tutor, see Erich Schön, "Weibliches Lesen: Romanleserinnen im späten 18. Jahrhundert," in *Untersuchungen zum Roman von Frauen um 1800*, ed. Helga Gallas and Magdalena Heuser (Tübingen, 1990), 20–40.

45. Schön, *Der Verlust*, 208.

46. Cited in *ibid.*, 209.

47. Friedrich Roth to Käthe Roth, 28 May 1814, Nachlaß Roth, no. 39, EKN.

48. Pierre Daniel Huet, "Von der ächten Beschaffenheit, Bestimmung, und Werth der Romane und das Vergnügen, welches aus Lesung derselben entspringt," in *Vermischte Beyträge: Zur Philosophie und der schönen Wissenschaften* (Breslau, 1762), vol. 1, pt. 2, 222–42, 323, cited in Schön, *Der Verlust*, 37.

49. Johann Georg Heinzmann, *Über die Pest der deutschen Literatur: Appell an meine Nation* (1795), 450–51, cited in Alberto Martino, *Die deutsche Leihbibliothek: Geschichte einer literarischen Institution (1756–1914)* (Wiesbaden, 1990), 15.

50. Aloys Bauer, ed., *Die Jungfrau im häuslichen und öffentlichen Leben* (Stuttgart, 1830), 193.

51. J. H. Campe, *Von den Erfordernissen einer guten Erziehung von Seiten der Eltern vor und nach der Geburt des Kindes* (Hamburg, 1785), 176, cited in Martino, *Die deutsche Leihbibliothek*, 17. On Campe's cautions against the reading craze, see also Dagmar Grenz, "Von der Nützlichkeit und der Schädlichkeit des Lesens: Lektüreempfehlungen in der Mädchenliteratur des 18. Jahrhunderts," *Schiefertafel* 4 (1981): 75–92.

52. That seems to have been the case with Amalie Sieveking, who contends that one should not read too many novels because of their "emotional" effect, which is accompanied, "almost always, by embarrassment, anxiety, oppression." See Emma Poel, *Denkwürdigkeiten aus dem Leben von Amalie Sieveking in deren Auftrag von einer Freundin derselben verfaßt, mit einem Vorwort von Dr. Wichern* (Hamburg, 1860), 102.

53. The degree to which the pathways between reality and reading have been subject to radical displacement since the eighteenth century has been demonstrated, using the example of the fictive and the real Lotte from Goethe's *Werther*, by Eckhardt Meyer-Krentler, "Die Leiden der jungen Wertherin: Weibliche Sozialisation durch Literatur im späten 18. Jahrhundert," in *Zwischen Aufklärung und Restauration: Sozialer Wandel in der deutschen Literatur (1700–1848)*, ed. Wolfgang Frühwald and Alberto Martino (Tübingen, 1989), 225–40. In similar vein, Lewald, *Freiheit*, 144, recounts reading the writings of Rahel Varnhagen: "The bequeathed letters of this woman were a revelation and a salvation for me. Rahel Levin . . . had endured everything that can crush humans the most, and thanks to the power residing within her, survived triumphantly." Similar thoughts were expressed by Henriette Feuerbach in a letter to her brother, Christian Heydenreich, on 28 December 1841: "Now I must tell you something in confidence," she wrote. Although embarrassed by the perception that "in Rahel . . . this leads to the ruination of her femininity," Feuerbach admitted that "in my manner of thinking I feel kinship with Rahel" (*Henriette Feuerbach*, ed. Uhde-Bernays, 71).

54. Pia Schmid, *Zeit des Lesens—Zeit des Fühlens: Anfänge des deutschen Bildungsbürgertums* (Berlin, 1985), 110.

55. Gerhard Sauder, "Gefahren empfindsamer Vollkommenheit für Leserinnen und die Furcht vor Romanen einer Damenbibliothek," in *Colloquium der Arbeitsstelle Achtzehntes Jahrhundert, Gesamthochschule Wuppertal, Leser, und Leserinnen im 18. Jahrhundert* (Heidelberg, 1977), 82–89.

56. Caroline Rudolphi, *Schriftlicher Nachlaß* (Heidelberg, 1835), 15.

57. See Ann Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood in Germany, 1800–1914* (New Brunswick, 1994).

58. Heide Wunder, "*Er ist die Sonn, sie ist der Mond*": *Frauen in der Frühen Neuzeit* (Munich, 1992).

59. Hilde Herlemann, *Die Frau als Erzieherin in der Sicht des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt, 1934).

60. Wunder, "*Er ist die Sonn, sie ist der Mond*."

61. See Juliane Jacobi, "Zwischen Erwerbsfleiß und Bildungsreligion—Mädchenbildung in Deutschland," in *Geschichte der Frauen*, ed. Michelle Perrot and Georges Duby (Frankfurt, 1994), 4:267–81. On Planck, see Adolf Palm, "Mathilde Planck: Wegbereiterin der Frauen- und Friedensbewegung aus Baden-Württemberg," in *Lebensbilder aus Baden-Württemberg*, ed. Gerhard Tadden and Joachim Fischer (Stuttgart, 1994), 18:418–46.