

*Chapter 1*

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**THE ALTE JUNGFER**



*I*n mid-nineteenth century Prussia, an etiquette book for young ladies promised its readers that it would guide them toward acquiring the proper disposition necessary for a successful marriage. The author, Henriette Davidis, was a prolific writer of cookbooks and other forms of female prescriptive literature. Davidis offered an extraordinary range of counsel, instructing her readership on the importance of prayer and moral character, advocating a strict schedule (no more than twenty minutes spent on dressing in the morning; every Monday as laundry day), and detailing the steps toward keeping home and body clean and healthy. Davidis maintained that because of “the heightened demands and increasing requirements of our time, it is of decisive importance that the young lady fundamentally prepares herself for her later calling of a housewife”; if she did not, the prospective husband might well look elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> If girls followed her advice, Davidis believed that competence would replace income as the most crucial factor in forming marriages: “With such a feminine education, respectable men without an income will be able to risk choosing disadvantaged daughters as life partners . . . And certainly such a choice would not be regretted!”<sup>2</sup> Davidis’ guidance sought to secure for each reader a family of her own.<sup>3</sup>

Most young middle-class German women in the second half of the nineteenth century anticipated that they would marry. Their education, both formal and informal, sought to prepare them for wedlock.<sup>4</sup> Over thirty years after Davidis extended her recommendations, another book of guidance directed potential brides to develop skills that would attract exemplary husbands. These qualities included an “understanding reception of his opinions, sensitive consideration of his tastes and personal wishes in the questions which concern your mutual fu-

ture, loving forethought on that which would embellish his strengths to achieve his life's destiny."<sup>5</sup> The primary purpose of female development was to mold the feminine nature toward embracing the beliefs and goals of the prospective husband. Marriage would be the central achievement of a woman's life. Advice book author Amalie Baisch asserted that the sole life objective of a female was "to wear the veil, to prevent the terrifying old maidenhood once and for all. She will have a husband at any price, and if the husband that she has dreamed about does not come, she will take just anyone who does."<sup>6</sup> Baisch warned against this sense of desperation and urged her readers to search responsibly for a husband. Still, the message was clear: marry, marry well, and marry young—in every way make oneself as desirable a future wife as possible.

In Imperial Germany, marriage—and marriagelessness—encompassed the category of womanhood, at least as far as the law was concerned. The German Civil Code of 1900 continued the centuries-old practice of defining women on the basis of marital status, making them legally beholden to husband or father.<sup>7</sup> Independent single women did not have a fixed place in the German social order. Only 7 percent of *Kaiserreich* residences were classified as single-person households, with most of those headed by men.<sup>8</sup> Female singles lived in the shadows of the bourgeois family ideal which, in an age of increasing industrialization and urbanization, seemed for many to offer a protective zone outside of the competitive sphere of public life.<sup>9</sup> Law and society placed unwed independent women in a murky, marginalized realm.

The terrifying specter of the *alte Jungfer*, the German incarnation of the old maid, fueled the insistence on marriage as the fulfillment of the female destiny. The social and cultural construction of the old maid in Imperial Germany echoed centuries of Western thought on the proper female role. A woman belonged in the private sphere, economically dependent and physically controlled through the institution of marriage. Woman as a wife, subjugated to the husband financially and legally, secured the integrity of the family and the purity of the state. Woman unattached challenged the social order. Such ungoverned women had been subjected to various forms of persecution through the ages, including accusation of witchcraft and condemnation as moral threats. But in the nineteenth century, unwed women took on a new role: idleness. In the English context, historian Martha Vicinus has noted that "increased wealth and the consolidation of the bourgeois social values in the early nineteenth century condemned spinners to unremitting idleness and to marginal positions in the home, church, and workplace."<sup>10</sup> In Germany as well, conventional anxieties young women might have had about remaining unmarried intensified as the bourgeois family model gained stature and economic advancement made redundant many of the traditional domestic activities of single family members. If the middle-class single woman could not find a place in her own home and family, she had no choice but to locate herself elsewhere. And if she did not inherit an income or earn a salary, she was fated to become something of a nuisance.

The dominant literary construction of the *alte Jungfer* in Imperial Germany was that of pariah. While many observers of the day expressed sympathy regarding the dilemmas that confronted single women and anticipated that derogatory depictions of old maids might become outmoded, the governing images of single women in literature and social commentary nonetheless served to label unwed females as outcasts. This form of marginalization intensified during the *Kaiserreich* due to the perceived displacement of the unwed woman from her stereotypical role as family helpmeet. As Katharina Gerstenberger found in a study of female autobiography at the turn-of-the-century, middle-class German women “assessed the modern age by measuring their own experience of family life against the bourgeois family ideal.”<sup>11</sup> As women and their observers began to contemplate the challenges of a life led distant from that family ideal, the advances of the industrial era transformed archaic anxieties about the old maid into contemporary threats to the greater social order. This chapter considers the social and cultural constructions of the *alte Jungfer* by demonstrating the ways in which single women increasingly came to be portrayed as useless personages in turn-of-the-century rhetoric.<sup>12</sup>

### Family Blossom Turned Family Burden

Raised to plan and hope for a future distinguished by love and protection, many young women who did not marry confronted enormous disappointment. These despairing figures formed the prevailing literary depiction of unwed German women. While undoubtedly a fair number of unwed middle-class German women chose not to marry, authors of popular and prescriptive literature chose to ignore the possibility that singlehood might have been an elected state. Women who remained single spanned the spectrum of German women as a whole, not a group about which one could make sweeping generalizations. The representations of unwed women set forth in advice manuals and in fiction certainly could not reflect the variety and complexity of single women’s experiences, hopes, and beliefs. Prescriptive literature, in particular, trafficked in a “discourse of female subordination.”<sup>13</sup> It is important not to imply a correlation between the advice given in prescriptive literature and the advice taken by its readership—indeed, it is difficult to make claims as to how carefully young bourgeois German women read the proliferation of advice manuals. This chapter follows the example of Russian historian Catriona Kelly in its approach to prescriptive literature by viewing the texts “primarily as contributions to ideology, rather than contributions to practical life.”<sup>14</sup> In its ideological formulation, the portrait of single woman as a victim—both of the times and of her own shortcomings—predominated in the literary representation of the *alte Jungfer*.

A girl must be a young maid before she becomes an old one. The notion of one’s own home and family predominated in images of the future, for every girl

“thinks about being a bride, a wife, and a mother, and imagines and pictures herself in her own home, lovingly and agreeably created and maintained.” The prospective husband occupied the center of the vision: “He, the dream with marvelous qualities, suddenly stands there in any variety of shapes, and all cherished ideals and wishes take on a distinct form—the young heart loves and wants her love to be returned!”<sup>15</sup> This expectation and desire for fulfillment was repeated and perpetuated through novels, magazine articles, and advice books. But a 1900 guidebook pointed out that, for all too many, the dream would not be realized:

Then comes the time of comprehension, for some earlier, for some later. There stands the cold, sobering reality which states: this type of happiness is not meant for each, not even for half. The yearning eyes, the heart full of love must watch as the bliss for which one had hoped turns toward another—perhaps the sister, perhaps the girlfriend, perhaps someone quite unexpected, that one never considered as worthy! From this moment on an internal struggle begins for those not chosen for whatever reason.<sup>16</sup>

The struggle manifested itself both in the quest to fashion a new identity and in the search for a feasible manner in which to support and fulfill oneself usefully.

For the German old maid, the contrast between romanticized notions of marriage and the incipient symptoms of spinsterhood created a stark existential crisis:

How rapidly the years pass by, the only years in which happiness could come to her!—If the girl were twenty-three or twenty-four years old, a shiver passed over her heart at first quite quickly, softly, furtively: Why has he still not come? And ever stronger, longer, more icily the shudder next asks: Why will no one come to me? And not long thereafter: Why have I been rejected? Am I more wicked than the others, more humorless, more clumsy, more stupid? Because that was the worst of her vain hopes—not disappointment, although her rose had faded—not fear of a bleak future, although this fear clutched at her heart—the worst was the shame, the rejection, to be thrown away as worthless.<sup>17</sup>

Descriptions of the onset of *Altjungferntum* emphasized the loss of a certain destiny as much as they mourned fleeting youth. The idyllic bourgeois marriage may have been illusory, but at least a wife could come to terms with her unfulfilled expectations in the security of a home of which she was the mistress.<sup>18</sup> Never to manage a home, never to confront the challenges of life partnership—these missed opportunities constituted failure for the archetypal spinster. The losses expanded exponentially when the forsaken unmarried woman considered that she would never be a mother.

Gabriele Reuter's 1895 novel, *Aus guter Familie*, demonstrates the maddening course of hopes quashed and imagination stifled. The reader is introduced to the protagonist Agathe Heidling at the celebration of her confirmation. Among the gifts she receives is a book entitled, “*The Female as Maiden, Wife and Mother.*” The book might well have been a companion piece to the works of Davidis and Baisch.<sup>19</sup> But Agathe would not marry; her parents had invested their fortune in their only son's education and gambling debts, leaving no dowry for Agathe. She is fated to remain a maid becoming old, never experiencing marriage and

motherhood. The novel's tragic heroine is brought to a nervous breakdown by the gradual awareness that she will always live under the shame of having been spurned. At the moment of her collapse, Agathe reflects on the dreams of her youth: "Her whole life should have been love, love, love—nothing but love was her life's purpose and destiny... The wife, the mother of future generations ... The root which supports the tree of humanity ... Yes—but if a girl raises her hand and wants only to drink from the glass which has enticingly been held before her lips from childhood on ... Shame and disgrace!"<sup>20</sup> Agathe is institutionalized and treated with "baths and sleep medication, electricity and massage, hypnosis and suggestion."<sup>21</sup> After two years she is released, but the life that follows is empty, almost a "living death."<sup>22</sup>

As the novel ends, family members try to secure a place for Agathe in a woman's home, because "one can hardly take her into one's home, where there are children—a girl, who was in a clinic for nervous disorders. And Agathe perhaps has a long life before her—she is still not forty years old."<sup>23</sup> Doomed by marital status, Agathe Heidlind's story is in many ways the inversion of Theodor Fontane's *Effi Briest*, another enormously successful novel of the Wilhelmine era.<sup>24</sup> Both heroines suffered from the expectation of wedded bliss—Effi condemned by the marriage forced upon her; Agathe damned by the nuptials that had eluded her. Their dual tragedies highlight the tense cultural milieu of bourgeois marriage in the *Kaiserreich*.

Reuter's novel of the *alte Jungfer* struck a chord in turn-of-the-century Germany. Helene Lange and Helene Stöcker, single women and ideologically disparate activists, shared the view that the novel grasped something essential in the German female experience. Lange described the portrayal of Agathe as "true, true, eerily true," while Stöcker called the novel "a cry for help which could only be derived from the interminable, boundless martyring of a woman."<sup>25</sup> Reuter herself contended that "my novel had the effect of breaking through a dam behind which the floods had long been pent up ... All of Germany was preoccupied with the book."<sup>26</sup> While the author may have exaggerated the German obsession, the book nonetheless was a highly successful bestseller.<sup>27</sup> Agathe's tragic tale undoubtedly resonated both with girls hoping to marry and mature women unlikely to wed. The book also raised critical questions about the education of girls and the place of unmarried females in modern German society. Linda Kraus Worley has described Agathe's confining life through the lens of gender: "Agathe is denied access to 'masculine' pursuits, science, politics, even rational thought, and she experiences the few extra-familial opportunities open to unmarried women as one-sided and demeaning. The literal and social texts offered her are those of romantic love and dutiful filial piety."<sup>28</sup> But love and family offered her no return. Reuter dramatized an *alte Jungfer's* futile search for a new identity and left her heroine with a sterile, solitary existence. Agathe's fate captures an essential component of the spinster paradigm: betrayed hope. Worley notes that Agathe's "decay has not been caused by rebelling against the social codes, but by idealistically embracing them."<sup>29</sup> Deluded by the promises of youth, Agathe becomes a

despondent, forsaken adult. Reuter's character comes to despise the childhood expectations she could never escape.

Depictions of single women repeatedly portray their development as halted at the point at which they recognize that they will not secure a man. '*Alte Jungfer*' was a label of consensus; an old maid became such when both she and those around her expected that she would never marry.<sup>30</sup> While that realization occurred at no single moment, the designation necessarily existed as an acknowledgement of the disappearance of youth. Only the blossom of youth offers the promise of a future. When that future became elusive, the unwed girl joined the ranks of the spinsters who inevitably looked back at the coming of age with emotions ranging from nostalgia to wistfulness to bitterness. While Reuter's Agathe came to despise the hopes of her youth, others sought to remain fixed in time: "We can forgive the aging girl the wish to extend . . . youth, the desire to find happiness at the twelfth hour which seems to her to be the only thing worth striving for; but it is extremely sad to watch those efforts which each girl makes to reach that goal."<sup>31</sup> Whether she sought to recreate her youth artificially or denounced it with sorrow, the old maid could not escape being defined by that time during which she had failed to meet her calling.

Her *Beruf* (vocation, calling) had been envisioned quite simply: to become wife and mother. Failing that, anything else was at best a substitute. For Marie Calm, yet another author of guidebooks for young women, the *alte Jungfer* was defined precisely by the fact that she had failed in pursuit of her destined *Beruf*: "She did not find marriage, the natural occupation of the woman, and has not chosen another one. She takes her place in life without specific duties, without real work."<sup>32</sup> Calm advocated seeking other occupations, but single women would remain conspicuous because of their uselessness. The emphasis placed upon female utility is evident in the nomenclature. The English term "spinster" is etymologically derived from a traditional pre-industrial occupation of the single woman: spinning.<sup>33</sup> While the German terms "*alte Jungfer*" and "*alleinstehende Frau*" are not as occupationally precise, their late nineteenth-century usage implied a fate of displacement: the oxymoronic old virgin and the woman standing alone—the modifying adverb designating her isolation as noteworthy. The old maid either stood alone or became a burden on family specifically and society generally.

Most bourgeois single women did establish an income, either through inheritance or work. But the onerous nature of the *alte Jungfer* was an essential element of the pariah paradigm. No conventional route to social interaction lay before the single woman. Marie Calm reflected that as long as she lived with her parents, she had some social security. But without a family, her conspicuousness condemned her to an uncertain fate:

*O welche Lust allein zu sein!  
Allein zu stehn—O, welche Pein!*

(Oh what joy to be alone! To stand alone, oh what pain!)<sup>34</sup>

Standing alone, she fruitlessly sought community. In order to find it, the single woman regularly had to inflict herself on those with richer companionate lives. Amalie Baisch observed that, “if [a female] did not get a husband and along with that the only sphere of activity for which she had been raised was closed off to her, she consequently must seem to be a superfluous member of human society, useless as the fifth wheel on a wagon.”<sup>35</sup>

In his 1854 *Natural History of the German People*, historian and journalist Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl asked, “How should we deal with solitary women? How should we reduce the legions, increasing daily, of those who through no fault of their own are pushed outside of the family to stand desolately in the selfish ... world, unoccupied, destitute, [and] mercilessly damned ... to a failed, aimless life?” Offering no demographic evidence of the mounting legions, Riehl’s tone was sympathetic as he noted that the aimless unwed had not purposely pursued such a pointless path. But his rhetorical solutions sounded a more unfeeling note: “Should they be barricaded in the cloister? ... Should the surplus of family-less females be sent across the sea to Australia? Should they be struck dead?”<sup>36</sup> One can only hope that his hyperbole was intended as a sad attempt at humor. The most practical solution to the plight of the unwed, Riehl suggested, was a familial culture that would provide loving sanctuary to their single sisters. Ironically, precisely those families who pushed her out into the cold world were to act as the saviors of the surplus woman.

Most observers of old maidenhood shared in the belief that other family members would likely be forced to carry the burden of the unattached woman. And some of them viewed their unwed relatives not only as intruders into the social realm, but, far worse, as parasites on limited family resources:

The evil exists, who can deny it? It is large and widespread and it seems to grow from year to year. In certain levels of society, there is hardly a family that will not be affected by it. I know no one who does not have among his nearest relations an aging aunt, cousin, or sister-in-law, who without support is more of a burden than a help to her family. Here live grown daughters as dilettantes, busying themselves with books and notes, an endless worry to advancing parents; there we find a sister as the hostess for her brother who for her sake denies himself fulfillment of the most passionate desires of his heart; in another place the sister of the wife is lodged in the house of her brother-in-law as a controlling biddy, a thorn in the flesh of the children.<sup>37</sup>

While this portrayal exudes hostility, its themes are not unusual. Male relatives had been forced to sacrifice and suffer because of the unexpected addition to the family sphere. The uselessness of the surplus woman was most offensive to those who had to work to support her. She was less a person than an object, “a piece of house furniture, an accessory that one reluctantly and with difficulty drags along, a necessary inconvenience to the family.”<sup>38</sup> Such depictions transformed the image of the *alte Jungfer* from a sheltered figure to a troublesome, dehumanized object that obstructed normal social and economic intercourse.

The objectification of the single woman implies both intractability and inertia. In some of the most damning accounts of old maidenhood, the forsaken women were charged with willfully creating their onerous status. These arguments maintained that middle-class surplus women did not desire to transform their dependency, but instead relished the life of leisure provided by aimlessness. Such women concerned themselves with “the dilettantish collection of music, French, literature, and often are also busy with extremely quiet hopes, but incidentally—they are perfectly useless.” A solution followed: “What means should be employed to remedy this evil? I think it is the means that the poor employ, that is—work.”<sup>39</sup> Vilified as a lazy supplicant existing solely on the goodwill of others, the spinster in this vein was a freeloader who consciously created her own neediness. Victimizer rather than victim, she was to be condemned rather than pitied. Such a character stood in opposition to Reuter’s Agathe Heidling, who had constantly sought to be useful, but had been held back due to parental prohibitions.

Instead of noting the real hardships that faced middle-class women seeking independence, such commentators blamed single women themselves for the lack of professional and educational opportunities that they faced. The aphorism “whoever wants to work can always find work” characterized assessments of idle unwed women.<sup>40</sup> The charge of selfishness sometimes extended into a medical diagnosis. Leipzig physician Carl Reclam asserted that in order to improve what he believed to be the generally weak health of old maids, “the best remedy is work; mental and physical activity in daily succession, serious exertion towards a goal,—in this manner one forgets one’s own ‘I’ and its petty troubles.”<sup>41</sup> But philosopher Eduard von Hartmann doubted that unmarried women of means had the capacity to work: “They now know well the tediousness of unemployment, but not the tediousness and exhausting monotony of all professional work.”<sup>42</sup>

Such representations held that an unmarried woman could only overcome her egocentrism if she renounced the comforting prospect of family support. But these critics did not consider the impediments that family placed before single women seeking independence, nor the shame that bourgeois society attached to women truly standing alone. Condemnations of the *alte Jungfer* relied upon a double standard. The old maid was a cast-off, left barren by the vagaries of the marriage market and betrayed by her dreams of a happy future, yet she was simultaneously also the crafty engineer of a lifetime of ease and dependency. The unmarried woman was thus both ridiculed and feared. Portrayed as deliberately desperate, the *alte Jungfer* was a cultural construction central to the debates about the position of women in Imperial Germany.

### **The Shrew, the Romantic, and *die Tante***

It was difficult for contemporaries to reconcile consistently the images of heart-broken girls such as Agathe Heidling with the portrayals of dilettantes who lived



a leisurely life oblivious to the burden placed on those families who worked to support their whims. While views on the origins of single status differed, many observers of the day agreed that once a girl became a spinster, her character, her belief system, and even her body altered dramatically. The resulting old maid was a stock character in the cultural panorama, though the specific characteristics varied to accommodate both victims and lazy dilettantes. In 1906, the novelist Adelheid Weber offered a threefold characterization of traditional *alte Jungfern*: the bitter shrew; the simpering, foolish romantic; and the beloved aunt. While Weber viewed these caricatures as fading remnants of a judgmental era, a review of the literature suggests otherwise.

The most widespread parody of the *alte Jungfer* was that of vile harridan. Weber described her in the following manner: “[She is] large, gaunt, with a pointy nose and stabbing eyes. She has a small inheritance, lives alone with a herd of cats and a lapdog, despises children with a dry, grim, merciless hatred and horrifies the young girls whose reputations and happiness she pitilessly attacks. Lonely, hated, and hateful she lives and dies. And yet she had so much love to give that no one ever coveted. This she gave to her cats and dogs.”<sup>43</sup> Notorious for both her physique and her character, this figure is malicious. Yet she is also tragic in Weber’s eyes, for her life has been determined and destroyed by lack of love. Other accounts were not so charitable, inspecting every physical characteristic in relentless detail: “A young girl becomes old and ever older, the desired deliverance from virginity never comes. Youthful freshness is lost, rosy cheeks pale, skin wrinkles and folds; hair that framed a cute, sweet face used to be full and opulent, but now it becomes thin—the mop almost looks like a wig (and sometimes it really is one); the face develops an angular form with plunging eyebrows, a pointy nose, a yellowed complexion, dried lips, all of which sit atop a neck that is sometimes narrow and long, sometimes short and fat.”<sup>44</sup> While the physical aspects depicted might be attributed, however harshly, to the benign process of aging, the description explicitly links her appearance to the unfulfilled calling of the unwed woman—never achieving true womanhood as a wife and mother, her body has betrayed her literal and figurative fruitlessness.

Yet physical decay is only one aspect of a much greater deterioration. The old maid of this first type is utterly consumed by bitterness. The aged incarnation of the selfish dilettante, the spinster nag sees nothing but her own pain, lashing out at everyone and everything around her. Disappointment is the central component of her unhappiness, but a lifetime of stigmatization and ostracization has made her malevolent as well. Gertrud Bülow von Dennewitz, an advocate of women’s rights who wrote under the pseudonym Gisela von Streitberg, saw the origins of such nasty creatures in the culture of bourgeois youth. A girl terrified of never marrying knew well “the heartless mockery of young girls toward unmarried old women of harmless nature who might here and there show some peculiar traits.” Such adolescents dreaded a similar fate: “[They] know only too well how soon they themselves will be written into the register of the aged . . . and already carry in their hearts the embarrassingly pressing fear that they themselves will be

left behind ... From such an individual then develops the embittered, jealous, malicious, in a word, unbearable *alte Jungfer*, of whom it is doubtful whether she makes her own or other's lives more miserable.<sup>45</sup> Even this sympathetic portrayal concedes the misery that is spread by such a harpy. Another account describes the solitary woman as an increasingly angry figure: "Through the habits of intellectual stagnation she becomes petty and bitter, she scatters her stubborn narrow-mindedness and inconsistency, making her environment contentious and stultifying [and] giving the designation '*alte Jungfer*' its sinister timbre."<sup>46</sup>

Embittered, the unmarried woman spreads bitterness; unloved, she is only capable of hate. The model of the shrew is the most prominent among the various lampoons of the spinster. The image fueled charges that the only true destiny for the female sex was marriage and motherhood. The following 1873 analysis of the *Frauenfrage* sums up the attributes of this most unfortunate female:

There is an army of deformities and abnormalities which develop into peculiarities and by which one can precisely designate the *alijungfräulich* ... Sharp, surly criticism of the passions of youth which one can no longer enjoy; condemnatory envy which cannot look joyfully on the happiness of others ... sorrowful satisfaction when someone married encounters misfortune; generally loveless behavior toward others; eavesdropping curiosity and a gossipy desire to report something 'new'; pushy interference into the affairs of others; ... pedantic emphasis on dull, meaningless things and adherence to order.<sup>47</sup>

Yet the same text also renders a profile of the shrew's opposite: the foolish romantic, a figure who exhibited "neglect of all order and unreliability in all affairs; ridiculous affection for particular loved ones, even animals; ... oversensitivity [and] tears at the slightest cause, and then further self-satisfied tears over those tears; ... repulsive excesses in the desire to please the palate; and more of the same sad things."<sup>48</sup>

While neither of these parodies likely made for good company, both figures suffered from the ill effects of life without marriage. These two stereotypes existed in a dialectic—one cold and critical, the other excessive and emotional. What accounts for the stark differences between the two ridiculed figures? Both of these clichéd illustrations were based upon the experience of forsaken hope. But while one stereotype responds with bitterness, the second model of the old maid reacts to her fate with remarkable denial, her hopes still painfully intact, forever expectant of a transformation and forever unfulfilled.

This fanciful figure is more pitiable than the ruthless and angry shrew, for anger might at least serve as an outlet for pain. But the expectant romantic lives in a condition of denial. Never reconciled to her fate and never attempting to readjust, this fanciful figure exists as if frozen in time, waiting for her prince to come. This version of *alte Jungfer* is obsessed with remaining young and is therefore immediately recognizable.

Because she does not want to allow herself to become old, she desperately attempts to pass as a *Backfisch* by wearing coquettish hats, light dresses with stripes and polka-dots, [and]

ribbons in the hair in order to carry and polish herself like a lass of seventeen or eighteen years. Her behavior also remains naïve, she blushes and bats her eyes bashfully low if a young man speaks to her, and if any more or less natural topic is discussed in society, she will act as if she believed in the “Tales of the Stork,” she laughs loudly where it is entirely inappropriate, behaves childishly, ... endlessly thinks all young men are courting her and are in love with her, so that she finally is a comic figure. The poor foolish thing is laughed at by all sides.<sup>49</sup>

An element of craving might be added to the parody, pointing out “a perennially coy teenage smile ... yearning gazes of desire toward gentlemen ... suits of bright and garish colors ... These and other similar effusions of unsatisfied longing form her repertoire.”<sup>50</sup>

This romantic is indeed hopeless. Her myopic vision and evidently low self-esteem encouraged condemnation of the unmarried as a whole—if the women themselves could not move beyond a belief in fairytale endings, why ought society to help them? The extreme nature of the depictions made the single woman alternatively an object of humor, disdain, mockery, pity, and condemnation. The more extraordinary the lampoon, the less seriously any calls for reform could be taken. And, paradoxically, the more difficult and intractable the plight of unmarried women became.

Not all representations mocked as meanly as those just described. Adelheid Weber’s image of the addled romantic described a gentle woman who kept any hopes quietly to herself while working for her family: “Small, fine, with intimidated eyes and a smile always asking for forgiveness, [she was] the drudge mule of the family who did everything no one else liked to do ... who had a thousand duties but none of them great, precise, or liberating ... and from all she implored forgiveness for her worthless existence with her entire being.”<sup>51</sup> Weber evoked a kind, submissive, selfless figure instead of a thoroughgoing fool. If this romantic maintained dreams, they were suppressed under an awareness of her present superfluity. Still, she could not escape the verdict of her youth and lived her life in the shadow of greater promises.

In her sympathetic description of this meek old maid, Weber set up the third member of her unmarried trinity: the beloved *Tante* (aunt). Neither angry like the shrew nor absurd like the starry-eyed ninny, the final model of the *alte Jungfer* was a figure to be emulated:

Our dear guardian angel to whom we as children bring our cuts and bruises, to whom young girls carry our hearts’ troubles, and brothers while students bring their empty wallets, and our mothers bring concerns about household and children. And who has for us all needles and stain remover, consolation and understanding, a penny in time of need, good advice and above all a loving word. Our aunt who has so entirely overcome life that she only lives for others, and has the best spirit that can be for a very lonely woman with a very large heart after a long bitter life.<sup>52</sup>

Weber’s mixed review provided a glimmer of hope for unmarried women. While still afflicted by pervasive loneliness, the aunt is also cherished in the domestic

realm—where, of course, she ought to have been all along. The comforting embrace of a family could prevent a single woman from becoming vindictive or silly by giving her the opportunity to be “selfless, caring only for others, never for herself.”<sup>53</sup>

Through such selflessness—the antidote to the more ridiculous forms of old maidenhood—the unmarried woman could as much as possible approximate the experience of marriage. Supportive aunts needed to conform to the goals and desires of the families to which they were attached by internalizing family concerns and making them their own. This subjugation of self to family or parish, community or country, was the only way in which a spinster could participate in any sort of “mutual future.”<sup>54</sup> The intimate details of family interaction could create a purpose in life for even the most deprived single women. Amalie Baisch’s version of *die Tante* “in spite of everything would always save a couple of pennies in order to provide sweets for the children of the house.”<sup>55</sup> The children crave the sweets and satiate the forsaken woman’s need to love. The plight of the surplus woman might have been solved by something as simple as giving candy to babes.

But what if penny candy could not solve the problem? The pariah paradigm of the *alte Jungfer* hinged precisely on the exclusion of the surplus woman from such cozy moments of family life. The shrew was embittered by her rejection from the family; the romantic was tragicomic in her zeal to be welcomed into it. Only the beloved aunt was partially saved, for through her good works she earned a place in the domestic sphere. But what if no family was available, or needy, or sympathetic? The cycle of rejection continued and the female unmarried was doomed to a more pathetic fate.

### ***Buddenbrooks’ Anti-Modern Old Maids***

Thomas Mann’s epic novel, *Buddenbrooks: The Decline of a Family*, employs the pathetic old maid as a symbol of stagnation in a society wrestling with the challenges of modernity. The book is set in nineteenth-century Lübeck and engages the saga of a prominent merchant family whose pursuit of success ultimately brings about its downfall. Success for the Buddenbrooks came in many forms: esteemed reputation, material comfort, pious respectability, civic influence—each of which could be acquired through two key means: a thriving business and successful marriages. But the family business encounters more bust than boom toward the end of the century, and Buddenbrook marriages falter and fail based on foolish choices and hollow bonds. When the last male Buddenbrook dies of typhoid fever in his teens, all that remains of the family’s former glory is a roomful of forsaken, unwed women. In that hopeless circle, the family’s decline is fully realized.

*Buddenbrooks*, published in 1901, was the bestselling German novel of the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>56</sup> While the novel follows the story of the core Buddenbrook family, constant witness to the many achievements and tribula-

tions of the family is a sextet of *alte Jungfern*: governess Ida Jungmann; finishing school director Sesemi Weichbrodt; paternal cousins Friederike, Henriette, and Pfiffi, known collectively as the Broad Street Buddenbrooks; and poor maternal cousin Clothilde. These important supporting characters in the novel emerge at every baptism, marriage, holiday, and deathbed, and are resiliently unchanging in their response to the drama of the main family. Their perpetual presence at family gatherings is a key way in which “the novel chronicles lives that are constantly anchored in the need to stylize experience into recurring rituals.”<sup>57</sup>

Mann’s use of these flat characters echoes the typologies of old maidenhood found in prescriptive literature and in parodies of the women’s movement. Ida Jungmann, daughter of a deceased innkeeper, becomes a buttress to the Buddenbrooks, for “her rigid honesty and Prussian notions of caste made her perfectly suited to her position in the family. She was a person of aristocratic principles, drawing hair-line distinctions between class and class, and very proud of her position as a servant of the higher orders.”<sup>58</sup> Her lower middle-class roots make her a supportive bit player in the elitist strivings of the Buddenbrooks, a woman who is delighted to “boast of having grown gray in the service of the best society.”<sup>59</sup> Yet her indulgent spoiling of little Johann (Hanno), the ill-fated last male Buddenbrook, contributes to the boy’s weakness. After devoting much of her life to the family, Ida is dismissed after nearly a half-century of service and disappears from the tale.

Therese Weichbrodt, nicknamed Sesemi, bears the physical markers of the decrepit *alte Jungfer*. “So humpbacked that she was not much higher than a table,” Sesemi had “shrewd, sharp brown eyes, a slightly hooked nose, and thin lips which she could compress with extraordinary firmness.” Fräulein Weichbrodt runs the pension where the Buddenbrook daughters finished their adolescence and, through the years, she became an extended member of the family. Mann portrayed Sesemi as “somewhat comic, yet exact[ing] respect” due to her “religious assurance that somewhere in the beyond she was to be recompensed for the dull, hard present.”<sup>60</sup> She is a “lively old maid,” who, despite continuing certainty that “the end was not far off,” outlasts most of the novel’s protagonists.<sup>61</sup>

The aggrieved Broad Street Buddenbrooks form a carping chorus that consistently criticizes the airs of the wealthy merchant family. Their father had lost much of his inheritance through the willful choice of a wife of whom his family disapproved. The sisters are introduced as a dowry-deficient trio, none of whom “was, unfortunately, likely to marry.”<sup>62</sup> The two eldest are variously described as “tall and withered-looking” and “long and lean,” (physical prototypes of the shrew), while their younger sister, Pfiffi, fills out as “much too little and fat” . . . “with a droll way of shaking herself at every word, a drop of water always . . . in the corner of her mouth when she spoke.”<sup>63</sup> Though Pfiffi resembles the foolish romantic, her nature—like that of her older sisters—is more resentful than ridiculous. Their favorite target of derision is their cousin Antonie, nicknamed Tony, whose two divorces and ceaseless pursuit of the family’s glory form an important tributary of the Buddenbrook decline. After Tony’s first divorce, they explain to

her that “it is every so much better never to have married at all.”<sup>64</sup> Throughout the novel, the Broad Street sisters “dart sharp glances at one another” as they take “speechless joy” in the accumulating failures of their wealthier cousins.<sup>65</sup> Mann portrays the sisters’ passive-aggressive mode of mocking the core Buddenbrooks through a mean-spirited intimacy that can only be gleaned through the continual proximity of family life.<sup>66</sup> The Broad Street sisters expose the flaws in the façade of upper-bourgeois respectability so craved by the Buddenbrooks. In developing these figures, Mann embraced and furthered a cutting depiction of hopeless, embittered *alte Jungfern* who had only “sharp, spiteful smile[s] at everything and everybody,” and who seemed to gain “mild satisfaction” in life only when viewing the “impartial justice of death.”<sup>67</sup>

These minor figures never waver from their initial characterizations. Ida and Sesemi are unfailing in their commitment to the Buddenbrook project of advancement, codependents paying their penance of earthly service in exchange for eternal salvation. Never seeking personal influence, affluence, or change, Ida and Sesemi champion the ambition of the Buddenbrooks even as they themselves remain fixed in time. Their static presentation and consistent selflessness provide a most anti-modern inversion of the Buddenbrook quest. Alternatively, in their roles as resident harpies, the Broad Street sisters defy modernity much more defensively. While Ida and Sesemi are fulfilled by their absolute acceptance of middle-class servitude (much like Adelheid Weber’s *Tante*), the *Fräulein* Buddenbrooks are pointedly and resentfully resigned to their fixed status (in the same vein as Weber’s shrew). Advertisement of that status becomes their *raison d’être*. Mann’s old maids collectively stand as the most anti-modern creatures in a tale of failed modernization.

Mann’s employment of the *alte Jungfer* in *Buddenbrooks* comes to its richest embodiment in the character of poor cousin Clothilde. Clothilde was based upon Mann’s paternal cousin, Thekla. According to Thomas Mann’s sister, Julia, Thekla was an unattractive, “pious, dreary soul,” the opposite of Mann’s aunt Elisabeth (the engaging prototype of Tony Buddenbrook).<sup>68</sup> Clothilde is the most recurring of Mann’s ensemble of single women. Raised in the family circle after being left an orphan, eight-year-old Clothilde is introduced as “an extraordinarily thin small child, dressed in a flowered print frock, with lusterless ash-colored hair and the manner of a little old maid.”<sup>69</sup> Her prospective old maidenhood is established well before adolescence; by the age of 21, “her long face already showed pronounced lines; and with her smooth hair, which had never been blond, but always a dull grayish color, she presented an ideal portrait of a typical old maid.”<sup>70</sup>

Clothilde exhibits two pronounced yet seemingly irreconcilable characteristics: hunger and resignation. Her hunger serves as a source of both wonder and cheap laughs: “Truly it was amazing, the prowess of this scraggy child with the long, old-maidish face ... She ate: whether it tasted good or not, whether they teased her or not, she smiled and kept on, heaping her plate with good things, with the instinctive, insensitive voracity of a poor relation—patient, persevering, hungry, and lean.”<sup>71</sup> At a family baptism, she “is moved by the words of Pas-

tor Pringsheim and the prospect of layer-cake and chocolate;<sup>72</sup> on a summer afternoon after coffee, “Clothilde, looking thin and old-maidish in her flowered cotton frock, was reading a story called ‘Blind, Deaf, Dumb, and Still Happy.’ As she read, she scraped up the biscuit-crumbs carefully with all five fingers from the cloth and ate them.”<sup>73</sup> Her hunger is larger-than-life: “It was a mystery how much good and nourishing food that poor Clothilde could absorb daily without any result whatever! She grew thinner and thinner ... Her face was long, straight, and expressionless as ever, her hair as smooth and ash-coloured, her nose as straight, but full of large pores and getting thick at the end.”<sup>74</sup> The insistent refrain of Clothilde’s insatiability bears the imprint of a sexual anaesthetic, diseased through disuse.<sup>75</sup> Mann’s pen led Clothilde toward her destiny as an increasingly unattractive old maid whose cravings can never be met. But Clothilde’s complete resignation to her fate as an inborn *alte Jungfer* equals her ravenous hunger: “She was content; she did nothing to alter her condition. Perhaps she thought it best to grow old early and thus to make a quick end of all doubts and hopes. As she did not own a single sou, she knew that she would find nobody in all the wide world to marry her, and she looked with humility into her future.”<sup>76</sup>

Clothilde combines the characteristics of the stereotypical trio; though she looks like a shrew, her insatiability mirrors the folly of the romantic—and she lives the selfless devotion of *die Tante*. Clothilde’s destiny is complete when she secures a spot in a home for single women from elite families (through the extant, if wavering, influence of her cousins).<sup>77</sup> Only an institution specially made for archaic misfits could be Clothilde’s destination in the advancing world of the *Buddenbrooks*. Along with the other old maids of the novel, Clothilde cannot be made modern. Mann elucidates this point in a passage in which Thomas Buddenbrook, the last head of the family, ruminates on his own limitations and on his (ultimately futile) desire to extend a paternal bridge to his sensitive son, Johann:

Sometimes when the family were invited to dinner, Aunt Antonie or Uncle Christian would begin to tease Aunt Clothilde and imitate her meek, drawling accents. Then little Johann, simulated by the heavy red wine which they gave him, would ape his elders and make some remarks to Aunt Clothilde in the same vein. And then how Thomas Buddenbrook would laugh! He would give a loud, hearty, jovial roar, like a man put in high spirits by some unexpected piece of good luck, and join in on his son’s side against poor Aunt Clothilde, though for his own part he had long since given up these witticisms at the expense of his poor relative. It was so easy, so safe, to tease poor, limited, modest, lean, and hungry Clothilde, that, harmless though it was, he felt it rather beneath him. But he wished he did not, for it was the same story over again: too many considerations, too many scruples.<sup>78</sup>

Throughout the novel, Thomas Buddenbrook combats his scruples, believing that his overactive conscience prohibits him from becoming “a Caesar even in a little commercial town on the Baltic.”<sup>79</sup> Thomas asks himself, “Why must he be for ever opposing these scruples against the hard, practical affairs of life? Why could he never learn that it was possible to grasp a situation, to see around it, as it were, and still to turn it to one’s own advantage without a feeling of shame? For

precisely this, he said to himself, is the essence of a capacity for practical life! And thus, how happy, how delighted, how hopeful he felt whenever he saw even the least small sign in little Johann of a capacity for practical life.”<sup>80</sup> Bourgeois advancement rested precisely in that capacity for practical life. Fearing that he had passed a scrupulous and philosophical nature on to his son, Thomas Buddenbrook yearned for signs that his son would grow to be a reasonable man. Despite his better instincts, Thomas is delighted whenever Hanno abandons his artistic presentiments and engages in the pedestrian and eminently practical exercise of ridiculing the family old maid.

Such gamesmanship meant success in the modern world—and Mann utilized unwed women as key items in the game. Ceaselessly objectified (indeed, Tony describes Ida as a standing piece of furniture),<sup>81</sup> Mann’s timeless, resilient *alte Jungfern* provide the old-fashioned mark against which Buddenbrook success would be measured. The old maids of the novel stand in opposition to all of the markers of modernity: bourgeois ambition, personal vanity, technological advancement, and, most of all, the corruption of an idealized domestic sphere through marriages based on acquisitiveness. As Tony remarks to Clothilde in the book’s closing pages, “You are just as well off as we are now. Yes—so it goes. I’ve struggled against fate, and done my best, and you have just sat there and waited for everything to come round. But you are a goose, you know, all the same.”<sup>82</sup> Tony’s history of failed marriages reveals how the pursuit of ambitious advancement destroyed the family that it was intended to enhance. The last male Buddenbrook—sensitive, overwhelmed Hanno—cannot survive the world of bourgeois capitalism and the barren competition of modern ambition. But the old maids remain, ridiculously placid and fixed in their passive opposition to a world of change.

In the novel’s final scene, the old maids (absent Ida, who has been dismissed) are joined by Tony and her daughter Erika, both of whom have been rejected by marriage and have stumbled into the ranks of unwanted women through calamitous divorces and separations. As they gather to say goodbye to a departing Gerda (Thomas Buddenbrook’s widow and mother of the dead Hanno), they reflect on all that has been lost. Mann underlines the family’s destruction by closing his epic with “eight ladies . . . dressed in black.”<sup>83</sup> He revisits the stock caricatures, evoking the Broad street sisters wearing “their old affronted and critical air” and Clothilde having “done wonders at the supper table . . . lean and gray as of yore.”<sup>84</sup> The last word of the novel is given to the immutable Sesemi, who swears with spiritual fervor that there will be a reunion of all Buddenbrooks in the afterlife. The battle in this life has been spent, and the Buddenbrooks have been vanquished. But old maid Sesemi stands ironically as “a victor in the good fight which all her life she had waged against the assaults of Reason: hump-backed, tiny, quivering with the strength of her convictions, a little prophetess, admonishing and inspired.”<sup>85</sup> Reason fails, but the old maids live on.

*Buddenbrooks* is a novel of the *Kaiserreich*, reflecting the slowly mounting crisis of a culture of untrammelled gain. In his minor cast of single women, Thomas Mann set forth a feminine sphere that could never compete in that culture of



gain. At the end of the novel, they stand as they did in the beginning: the ultimate losers of the nineteenth-century sweepstakes. The family's failure to advance is complete when it is relegated to the hands of these unwed, unwanted women. Who better to demonstrate the final futility of that process than the *alte Jungfer*, Mann's iconic caricature of anti-Reason? Refusing ambition, the unmarried women of the novel occupy a passive space in bourgeois culture, never adorning its garb nor pursuing its material rewards. The Buddenbrook family stands between capitalist advancement and "the worrisome ministration of old traditions—an unconscious regression from the work of creating a future for [the family] house."<sup>86</sup> The sphere into which the Buddenbrook family inexorably regressed was the anti-modern world embodied by Mann's *alte Jungfern*.

\* \* \*

Adelheid Weber concluded that the trinity of the shrew, the romantic, and *die Tante*, "were the *alte Jungfern* of the past ... For our current girl no longer becomes an *alte Jungfer* ... she knows her own strength and is proud of herself."<sup>87</sup> Weber believed that the women's movement and the changing economy had created a variety of opportunities for single women. As the following chapters illustrate, discussions about the female surplus did transform perceptions of women's capabilities and contributed to the broadening debate about the nature of the female calling. But the spirit of the old maid did not fade from the cultural landscape. One reason for its abiding power was simply that single women had for so long been taunted, vilified, and feared. The historical roots of the *alte Jungfer* went too deep to wither easily.

Yet the signification of unmarried women as social and cultural pariahs gained new qualities and a deeper urgency in Imperial Germany. The picture of the productive spinster faded away as representations of the idle old maid gained sway. The advances of industrialization bolstered this notion of the spinster as an economic encumbrance. As embodied in Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks*, the old maid is resolutely unchangeable amidst the tides of modernity. The less useful single women were believed to be, the more extreme the characteristics attributed to them: spinsters became shrews, romantics became simpletons, beloved aunts became desperate codependents. The *Kaiserreich* characterization of single women as burdens provided fresh energy to the iconography of the *alte Jungfer*.

## Notes

1. Henriette Davidis, *Die Jungfrau. Worte des Rathes zu Vorbereitung für ihren Beruf* (Bielefeld, 1857), vi.
2. *Ibid.*, 199.
3. *Ibid.*, 74.

4. On the dominance of the bourgeois family ideal in nineteenth-century Germany, see David Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century. A History of Germany, 1780–1918* (New York, 1997), 213–214; Ute Frevert, *Women in German History*, trans. Stuart McKinnon-Evans (New York, 1989), 109–112; Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte, 1800–1866* (Munich, 1984), 114–130; and Nancy Reagin, “The Imagined Hausfrau: National Identity, Domesticity, and Colonialism in Imperial Germany,” *Journal of Modern History* 73(1) (2001): 54–86. Peter Borscheid, in “Von Jungfern, Hagestolzen, and Singles: Die historische Entwicklung des Alleinlebens,” in *Lebensform Einpersonenhaushalt*, ed. Sylvia Gräbe (New York, 1994), 38–41, describes the intensification of the bourgeois marriage ideal from the “family cult” of the Biedermeier era through the turn-of-the-century escalation in anxiety about sexual morality.
5. Amalie Baisch, *Ins eigene Heim. Ein Buch für erwachsene Mädchen und junge Frauen* (Stuttgart, 1893), 44.
6. *Ibid.*, 31.
7. *The German Civil Code*, trans. Chung Hui Wang (London, 1907) § 2, 1303, 1354, 1355, 1356, 1617.
8. Borscheid, “Jungfern,” 23.
9. *Ibid.*, 39.
10. Martha Vicinus, *Independent Women. Work and Community for Single Women, 1850–1920* (Chicago, 1985), 3.
11. Katharina Gerstenberger, *Truth to Tell: German Women’s Autobiographies and Turn-of-the-Century Culture* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2000), 178.
12. Important material for this chapter was found in Kassel’s *Archiv der deutschen Frauenbewegung*, where a folder entitled “Alte Jungfer,” compiled by archivist Jutta Harbusch, contains a historian’s gold mine of newspaper clippings, short stories, encyclopedic entries, and excerpts from scientific works. For a sampling of other representations of German unmarried women, see Bärbel Kuhn, *Familienstand Ledig*, (Cologne, 2000), 27–58.
13. A. James Hammerton, *Cruelty and Companionship: Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Married Life* (New York, 1992), 75; pp. 73–82 discuss the ways in which English prescriptive literature promoted an ideal of companionate marriage based upon mutual affection.
14. Catriona Kelly, *Refining Russia: Advice Literature, Polite Culture, and Gender from Catherine to Yeltsin* (New York, 2001), xxv.
15. Tony Schumacher, *Vom Schulmädchen bis zur Grossmutter* (Stuttgart, 1900), 195–196.
16. *Ibid.*, 196.
17. Adelheid Weber, “Die alte Jungfer von einst und das reife Mädchen von heut,” *Die Gartenlaube* 39, supplement *Die Welt der Frau* (1906): 609.
18. See Reagin, “Hausfrau,” for a discussion of the “imagined community of German Hausfrauen.” Reagin argues that, “‘domesticity’ functioned within the German bourgeoisie as a project of class formation but also ... became attached to a gendered national identity” (2001, 58).
19. Gabriele Reuter, *Aus guter Familie* [1895], 27<sup>th</sup> ed., (Berlin, 1931), 16.
20. *Ibid.*, 374.
21. *Ibid.*, 378.
22. Gabriele Rahaman, “Gabriele Reuter’s *Aus guter Familie* in the light of Klaus Theweleit’s Concept of ‘Entlebensdigung,’” *German Life and Letters* 44:5 (October 1991): 467.
23. Reuter, *Familie*, 380.
24. Theodor Fontane, *Effi Briest* [1894], 11<sup>th</sup> ed., (Berlin, 1903); for a comparison of *Effi Briest* and *Aus guter Familie*, see Alan Bance, “The Novel in Wilhelmine Germany: From Realism to Satire,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern German Novel*, ed. Graham Bartram (New York, 2004), 32–36.
25. Helene Lange, “Aus guter Familie,” *Die Frau* 3(5) (1896): 317; Helene Stöcker, “Gabriele Reuters *Aus guter Familie*,” *Die Frauenbewegung* 2(4) (1896): 38; both quoted in Linda Kraus Worley, “Girls from Good Families: Tony Buddenbrook and Agathe Heidling,” *The German Quarterly* 76(2) (2003): 196.

26. Gabriele Reuter, *Vom Kinde zum Menschen*, (Berlin, 1921), 474; quoted in Rahaman, "Reuter's," 467.
27. Worley, "Good Families," 196.
28. *Ibid.*, 200.
29. *Ibid.*, 201.
30. See for example Marie Calm, *Die Sitten der guten Gesellschaft* (Stuttgart, 1886), 93; Julius Weiss and R. Kossman, *Mann und Weib in ihren Beziehungen zur Kultur der Gegenwart* (Stuttgart, 1908), 420.
31. Calm, *Sitten*, 93.
32. *Ibid.*, 94.
33. *The Compact Oxford English Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (1989), s.v. "Spinster."
34. Calm, *Sitten*, 95.
35. Amalie Baisch, *Aus der Töcherschule ins Leben* (Stuttgart, 1890), 8.
36. Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl, *Die Familie*, vol. 3 of *Die Naturgeschichte des deutschen Volkes als Grundlage einer deutschen Socialpolitik*, 2d ed. (Stuttgart, 1855), 106; cited in Borscheid, "Jungfern," 42.
37. A. Kühne, *Giebt es ein Mittel, die Lage der unversorgten Mädchen und Wittwen in den Mittelständen zu verbessern?* (Berlin, 1859), 3.
38. Emma Vely, "Die unverheiratete Frau in früheren Zeiten und heute," *Illustrierte Sonntags-Zeitung* 42 (1898/1899): 659–660.
39. Kühne, *Giebt es ein Mittel*, 8–9.
40. Gisela von Streitberg, [pseud. Gertrud Bülow von Dennewitz], *Die Verehelichten und die Ehe-losen Frauen* (Berlin, 1891), 82.
41. Carl Reclam, *Des Weibes Gesundheit und Schönheit*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Leipzig, 1883), 266.
42. Eduard von Hartmann, "Die Jungferfrage: Schluss," in *Die Gegenwart* 35 (1891): 131.
43. Weber, "Alte Jungfer," 610.
44. Weiss and Kossmann, *Mann und Weib*, 416.
45. Streitberg, *Verehelichten*, 67.
46. Andrea Pauloff, "Alte Jungfern," in *Die Frau* 1 (1893–1894): 602.
47. *Die Frauenfrage und ihr Kern: Das Leben einer alten Jungfrau* (Gütersloh, 1873), 30–31.
48. *Ibid.*, 31.
49. Weiss and Kossmann, *Mann und Weib*, 416–417.
50. Hermann Heinrich Ploss, *Das Weib in der Natur- und Völkerkunde*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (Leipzig, 1902), 587.
51. Weber, "Alte Jungfer," 610.
52. *Ibid.*
53. Henriette Keller-Jordan, "Tante Hannchen (Eine Erinnerung)," *Hessenland* (1901): 113.
54. Baisch, *Ins eigene Heim*, 44.
55. Baisch, *Töcherschule*, 6.
56. Donald Ray Richards, *The German Bestseller in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (Bern, 1968), 55.
57. Martin Swales, *Buddenbrooks: Family Life as the Mirror of Social Change* (Boston, 1991), 105.
58. Thomas Mann, *Buddenbrooks* [1901], trans. H.T. Lowe-Porter (New York, 1984), 6–7.
59. *Ibid.*, 192.
60. *Ibid.*, 69.
61. *Ibid.*, 197, 442.
62. *Ibid.*, 134.
63. *Ibid.*, 196, 430, 196, 602.
64. *Ibid.*, 197.
65. *Ibid.*, 226, 320.
66. *ibid.*, 226–227, 345–346.
67. *Ibid.*, 430, 476.
68. Julia Mann to Thomas Mann, 8 September 1897; reprinted as "Tante Elisabeth," *Sinn und Form* 15(2–3) (1963): 487; A running joke in the novel emerges from Julia Mann's description

of Thekla and Elisabeth: “‘You and Thekla, you are the beauties of the family!’ our father said one time to his sister Elisabeth in order to pique her most greatly” (1963, 487); in the novel, Thomas Buddenbrook recurrently makes the same joke about Clothilde and Tony; see Mann, *Buddenbrooks*, 77–78; 309–310.

69. Mann, *Buddenbrooks*, 7.

70. *Ibid.*, 149.

71. *Ibid.*, 22.

72. *Ibid.*, 327.

73. *Ibid.*, 77.

74. *Ibid.*, 200–201.

75. See Chapter 2.

76. Mann, *Buddenbrooks*, 149.

77. *Ibid.*, 437–438.

78. *Ibid.*, 505–506.

79. *Ibid.*, 227.

80. *Ibid.*, 506.

81. *Ibid.*, 379.

82. *Ibid.*, 603.

83. *Ibid.*, 601.

84. *Ibid.*, 602.

85. *Ibid.*, 604.

86. Gertrud Bäumer, “Thomas Mann, der Dichter der *Buddenbrooks*” [1903], in Jochen Vogt, *Thomas Mann* (Munich, 1983), 153.

87. Weber, “Alte Jungfer,” 610.