

“Du bist Nummer 55’: Girls’ Education, *Mädchen in Uniform*, and Social Responsibility”

In a lecture in 1866, noted pedagogue Ludwig Adolf Wiese, who had overseen Prussian boys’ secondary education from 1852 to 1875, discussed the lopsidedness of German approaches to the education of boys and girls.

Man kann bereitwillig anerkennen, daß es bei uns weder an Interesse, noch an mannichfaltigen und kostspieligen Einrichtungen für die Erziehung und Bildung der Mädchen fehlt, und wird dennoch von einer Vernachlässigung sprechen dürfen. Aber an welche Adresse ist ein solcher Vorwurf gerichtet? Wäre von der männlichen Jugend die Rede, so würde er heute bei uns die Regierung treffen: sie hat die Schulen für Knaben und Jünglinge zu Veranstaltungen des Staats gemacht und hält darauf, daß in ihnen diejenigen Wege eingeschlagen werden, welche sicher zu den von der Staatswohlfahrt geforderten Zielen führen. (Wiese, “Über weibliche Erziehung” 94)

Referring to the schools established to serve the sons of soldiers who had fallen or been wounded in the Prussian campaigns against Austria and France in 1866, Wiese advocated the creation of similar institutions for girls and young women: “Verdienten aber die Töchter derselben nicht eine gleiche Fürsorge?” (Wiese, *Lebenserinnerungen* 256). By the time Wiese published a memoir in 1886, the educational system had changed, so that schools for girls and young women began to fill some of the gaps that had been left by the male-focused educational system in Prussia and the German Empire more broadly. Following efforts by Kaiserin Augusta, Queen of Prussia and wife of Kaiser Wilhelm I, men of varied professions solicited funds and interest in these institutions, of which the Kaiserin-Augusta-Stift was one, to be dedicated to a strict Protestant educational philosophy (Wiese, *Lebenserinnerungen* 256–57). This was an instance of

the expansion of educational opportunities for girls for which women's rights activists had long been calling alongside improvements in areas like suffrage, employment, and legal representation (Blackbourn 366–69). This expansion of girls' education was directly responsible for the school attended by Christa Winsloe (1888–1944), author of the screenplay for the 1931 film *Mädchen in Uniform* (directed Leontine Sagan), her best-known work. Winsloe's own educational experiences inspired not only this screenplay, but also her play *Der Ritter Nérestan*, the later version titled *Gestern und Heute*, the novel *Das Mädchen Manuela*, published after the film's release as a *Buch zum Film*, and Winsloe's unpublished autobiographical novel *Das schwarze Schaf*. I will refer to these intertextually related works collectively as the *Mädchen in Uniform* material.

In order to better understand Winsloe's construction of these various texts, this article will offer social, historical, and literary context. On the periphery of Winsloe's texts lies a wealth of literary and filmic material that has remained somewhat obscure, appearing in few scholarly treatments of school literature: the genre of boarding school literature (*Internatsliteratur*). Winsloe's deployment of the boarding school setting—which we can presume arises at least in part from her own educational history—and its effects on the emotional lives of its inhabitants is but one example in a long line of boarding school texts. Like other works that focus on boarding schools, Winsloe's work reflects the role of both the people in these schools and the buildings themselves, as both architectural and institutional frameworks, in the creation of an environment that is at best indifferent and at worst hostile to its inhabitants. Moreover, these texts serve both a cathartic and provocative purpose, allowing the author to convey traumatic educational experiences while also satisfying a desire among the reading public. In what follows I will discuss the form and content of the boarding school genre before describing Winsloe's own

educational background and its social context in Wilhelmine Germany and finally analyzing selected relevant passages from the novel *Das Mädchen Manuela*, which offers the most developed portrayal of boarding school life among the *Mädchen in Uniform* works.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, the number of texts devoted to education and adolescence skyrocketed, but also in the genre of boarding school literature. In German literature alone, one scholar has counted at least 125 of these texts in various forms, from short story to memoir, just between 1890 and 1930 (Johann 648–78). Most of these works offered negative, critical depictions of the topic, provoking prominent German educator Friedrich Paulsen to remark in 1907 that there was “kein beliebteres Thema als die Unterdrückung und Mißhandlung hochstrebender Söhne und Töchter durch eigensinnige, engherzige und unverständige Väter und Mütter, die Niederhaltung und Abmarterung hochbegabter, zur Selbständigkeit des Denkens emporstrebender Jünglinge durch verständnislose, pedantische, herrschsüchtige, blind am Alten hängende Schulmeister” (Paulsen 497). There was clearly a need for men and women who had survived the residential education system to convey their evaluation of the system and the emotional response it provoked in texts explicitly or implicitly about their experiences.

Often subsumed under *Schulliteratur*, boarding school literature arguably has enough of its own personality traits to make it at the very least a robust subgenre and probably its own distinct genre (Johann 13–14). Maybe the most important—while also the most obvious—distinguishing characteristic is that of the site of the action and the role it plays in the narrative. Not only does the school become a physically and geographically limiting space, but the actual institution also serves a socially organizing purpose. Like the academy in Robert Musil’s *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß*, which was based on the *Kadettenschule* at Mährisch-

Weißkirchen that both Musil and Rainer Maria Rilke attended and which constitutes a microcosm of Austro-Hungarian society at the turn of the twentieth century, subdivisions within the institutions can and do mimic external political and social realities. As Musil's narrator observes, "jede Klasse ist in einem solchen Institute ein kleiner Staat für sich" (Musil 56). Musil's novel, for example, includes exemplars of numerous elements of contemporary Austria-Hungary: e.g., Eastern European or Slavic inhabitants and peasants, liberal middle-class professionals and civil servants, Southern European (Italian) weaklings, and members of Viennese so-called First and Second Societies. Beyond the confines of the actual school, these stories will usually take the reader to a remote or peripheral location (Frackman 71–73). The school in Hermann Hesse's *Unterm Rad* (1906) illustrates this, in this case taking the reader to the edge of Württemberg (Hesse). Other common features include the arrival of a pupil at the beginning of the story and that pupil's departure at the end, as well as the trope of a narrative-concluding suicide (Ilett 17), which appears in versions of the *Mädchen in Uniform* story. In the suicide, characters often find an escape from the oppressive environment of the authoritarian institutions in which they have suffered. Although not unusual for the literary trope of suicide in general, the suicidal act in these education texts is frequently characterized as a release from the forced containment of the schools' literal and figurative structures (Noob 77, 85–86). In a way like the *Bildungsroman* or *Erziehungsroman*, boarding school literature usually imparts the tale of "Ichfindung" (Minder 82), "Daseinsverwirklichung" (Bertschinger 14), or what Musil called "Gründung eines Selbstbewusstseins" (qtd. in Minder 82). Broadly exemplary works include ones with which some readers may be familiar: Emmy von Rhoden's *Der Trotzkopf* (1885), Frank Wedekind's *Frühlings Erwachen* (1891), Else Hoffmann's *Im Waldpensionat* (1900), Rainer Maria Rilke's "Die Turnstunde" (1902), Heinrich Mann's *Professor Unrat* (1905),

Musil's *Die Verwirrungen des Zöglings Törleß* (1906), Hesse's *Unterm Rad* (1906), and Robert Walser's *Jakob von Gunten* (1908).

The aforementioned novel by Emmy von Rhoden, *Der Trotzkopf: Eine Pensionsgeschichte für erwachsene Mädchen*, was a prominent example of so-called *Backfischliteratur*, aimed at and focused on adolescent girls. The wildly successful *Trotzkopf*, which fostered sequels written by von Rhoden's daughter and others, includes popular motifs like conflicts among the pupils and between pupils and teachers, proper behaviour, and the place or undervalued importance of girls and women in German society. The genre's name comes from Clementine Helm's 1863 novel *Backfischchens Leiden und Freuden*, which was so popular that it had reached its forty-sixth printing by 1895 (Askey 19). Jennifer Drake Askey has argued that this literature, while it was ridiculed by many (mostly male) educators of the time, was not only amusing reading, but rather served as "comportment manuals for teenage girls, with each chapter delivering pointers on how to succeed in the social environment of the middle-class lady" (Askey 19–20). The nature of these stories, as both entertainment and instruction, combined with the advantageous expansion of the literary market starting especially after the middle of the nineteenth century (Askey 103). Perusing a list of texts from this period (and genre) makes clear the relative dearth of works by women, which makes Winsloe's material stand out, especially in the pre-World War II context. Depending on how liberal one is with definitions, one can find approximately twelve to fifteen boarding school texts written by women in German in the period 1870–1920; this is if one includes dramatic plays as well as other brief mentions in texts like memoirs (Johann 649–727). Part of this can be explained by the nature and discounting of girls' and young women's education, which I discuss in more detail below;

moreover, the comparative lack of opportunity to write about their experiences reduces the visibility of texts about girls' and women's schooling.

In *The School in English and German Fiction*, W.R. Hicks paints a picture of a broader literary genre in which quiet, reserved pupils are thrust into often oppressive environments. The situations in which these pupils, both fictional and non-fictional, found themselves were fodder for literary depictions in a number of forms, including autobiography, memoir, short story, and the novel. In his study, Hicks argues, citing Adolf von Grolman, that the German authors he analyzes “have a keen sense of the ‘horrid’ in life, and have to express it,” which accounts for the high proliferation of this thematic material in German literature, particularly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Hicks 81–82; Grolman 181). The growth spurt in this kind of narrative has been attributed to various sources, including the Prussian educational reform conferences of 1890 and 1900 (after which the number strikingly rose), changes in the literary depiction of the subject, and the nature of authoritarian, Wilhelmine society (Albisetti, *Secondary* 44; Johann 93; Ewers and Mieles 232–33). Hicks points to a contemporary air of “social discontent” (117), while Thomas Bertschinger argues similarly that the school in these texts is employed in order to exemplify “das Unbehagen in der Kultur der Zeit” (172).

Because of the greater availability of boarding school and school-related literary and dramatic works, and despite the favour these texts frequently had among the public, parts of the reading audience grew weary of these stories, as we can see in the following review (Ilett 2).

Des Publikums jedoch hat sich allmählich ein Gefühl des Ueberdrusses bemächtigt; man traut diesen jungen Damen und Herren nicht mehr, die bloß vor ihrer eigenen langweiligen Tür zu kehren verstanden, den das bißchen Enthüllung und Skandal wog die unerträgliche Monotonie dieser Monologe in der dritten Person nicht auf. Und wenn ein

Autor heute ein Stück seiner Jugend bloßlegen will, so muß er es schon mit sehr viel Grazie und mit einem außerordentlichen künstlerischen Aufwand tun – für die als Wahrheit verummte Talentlosigkeit sind wir nicht mehr zu sprechen. (Hirschfeld 33)

Two striking aspects of this critique, which referred primarily to Robert Musil's *Törleß*, are Ludwig Hirschfeld's thematization of the solipsistic autobiographical or memoiresque treatment of school life and the inescapable tendency to reproduce the repetitive structure of the school's procedures in the prose. Nonetheless, as Hirschfeld alludes, the prospect of "Enthüllung und Skandal" remains a draw for the reading public.

German and English literatures include many examples of the boarding school genre. An intriguing aspect of this fact is the proliferation of the subject matter given the substantive differences between, on the one hand, the diminished role played by this kind of education in German society and, on the other, the social importance of it in countries like England (Schimmelpfeng 227; Ilett 6). Interestingly, Hicks sums up the differences in these national literatures thus: "The German schoolboy of fiction is an impressionist portrait; the English boy is an incidental member of a group in a large-scale painting, where the setting dominates the individual figures" (Hicks 118). Writing about the Victorian English examples, Christopher Stray notes that the "hothouse society" in these boarding school narratives was uniquely different, if not alien, to the readers of these stories; the separated, pressurized environment in which boys and young men were supposed to become gentlemen was fascinating for social climbers looking for behavioural suggestions (ix). Referring to the British examples, literary critic John Lucas catalogues "the inherent elitism of school stories, their Empire-era myopia, their tacit approval of a class-ridden, exclusionist society" (Lucas). In his critique of these common characteristics, Lucas has also hit upon one of the likely explanations for the

proliferation of this genre when and where it occurred: specifically the rigid adherence to class distinctions. In other words, in both national examples the boarding school genre and associated tropes are serving a narrative purpose that cannot be explained purely by the relative prevalence of the educational form in the society in question. Winsloe's narrative, then, comes on the heels of an upsurge in literature with this thematic focus, but also continues generic impulses that had been coursing through German- and English-language literature since the early nineteenth century.

In the context of this genre as well as the setting she gave these narratives, it is revealing to consider Winsloe's own educational background. The historical facts surrounding Winsloe's family's arrival in and relocation to Germany are sometimes clouded by inaccurate information and confusing leads. These include false dates and entries in genealogical documents like baptism and marriage records (Hermanns 17–18). Winsloe's Scottish father, Arthur Winsloe (1849–?), was his parents' tenth child, joining a family that moved for a number of religious, economic, and personal reasons to Germany from Scotland in 1850–1851. At the age of twenty, Arthur joined the Prussian military. Little is known about Christa Winsloe's mother, Katharina Scherz (1859–1900), whom Christa's father married when he was twenty-eight. The pair had three children; Christa, born in Darmstadt, was the couple's third. When Christa was eleven years old, her mother died. Doris Hermanns cites a letter that Christa Winsloe wrote to sister-in-law Irén Hatvany in 1943 in which Winsloe describes how much of a wider disturbance her mother's death triggered, precipitating the family's relocation to a city from her mother's preferred rural home (Hermanns 24–25). Arthur Winsloe was left depressed and uncertain of what to do for his daughter's welfare when he, by then a retired Lt. Colonel in the army of

Hessen (under Prussian control), was solely responsible for his youngest child's upbringing (Hermanns 22).

Little is known about her education in the intervening years, but in 1903, three years after her mother's death, Christa Winsloe was packed up and sent to a well-respected Prussian boarding school in Potsdam. In her later teenage years she was sent to a finishing school in Switzerland, which offered a different setting for her personal behaviour training. The former institution should be viewed in the fluctuating context of German education of the time, including the debates in which the pedagogue Wiese participated above, as well as literary and later cinematic depictions of it.¹ Winsloe's arrival at this boarding school in the first decade of the twentieth century came amid lively and controversial debates about the role of women and girls in German society. From shortly before Winsloe arrived at the school until the start of World War I, nearly all of the constituent states in the German Empire reformed their educational systems, thereby allowing for young women to gain the necessary credentials and then matriculate to university (Albisetti, *Schooling* 238).

The school Winsloe attended, the Kaiserin-Augusta-Stift founded originally in Berlin-Charlottenburg in 1872 and then relocated to Potsdam in 1902, was a so-called *höhere Töchterschule* oriented toward the orphaned daughters of military officers. The high number of these schools—*Töchterschulen* for girls and *Gymnasien* and *Bürgerschulen* for boys—that existed in the nineteenth century must be seen in the context of the continued growth of the educated middle class and the fervent nationalism that flourished in the German Empire especially after the 1840s. “The middle and upper middle classes—civil servants, professionals, and businessmen—enjoyed a feeling of social, political, and economic importance unknown to them before, and sought to solidify their position by institutionalizing their cultural values and

their positivist view of German history in schools to educate their sons and daughters” (Askey 29). In the second half of the nineteenth century, the German Empire’s federalized education system was an object of international admiration, indeed “the envy of the world” (Albisetti, *Secondary* 37), while also undergoing several internal debates that hinged on Germany’s changing society. James C. Albisetti locates the most important reforms of this educational system in the 1860s, coinciding with widespread debates over the *Frauenfrage* in multiple European countries (Albisetti, *Schooling* 93). These debates, which played out in the journalistic media, feuilletons, and various forms of literature, including novels and dramas, centred on aspects of women’s emancipation, including suffrage, the right to work, and equity in pay (see, e.g., Braun; Deutsch-Evangelischer Frauenbund). In some ways, the following comment from 1866 by educator Richard Schornstein was typical:

Nach der Zeit der großen politischen Erniedrigung Deutschlands unter französischer Fremdherrschaft, als das Volk seinen Glauben mit erneuter Innerlichkeit aus dem Schutte wieder hervorgeholt und in seiner deutschen Gesinnung sich gestärkt hatte, entfaltete sich auch in der Schule eine neue, rege Thätigkeit und machte allmählich ihren Einfluß auch zu Gunsten weiblicher Bildung geltend. (Schornstein 10)

In this case prominent issues of the time like nationalistic pride (and shame) provided fodder for, or found expression in, persistent discussions of how young Germans, including young women, should be educated.

Other related, contentious issues of the period included the growing criticism of the *Gymnasien*, concerns—prominent at the turn of the century—about decadence and moral decay, and outcries against the so-called overburdening of pupils, which was believed to be a cause of a perceived increase in young persons’ suicides (Noob 62–63). The phenomenon of

Schülerselbstmord captured popular and scholarly attention (see Eulenburg; Masaryk). Other social or moral concerns about gender and class, often implicitly tied to Germany's industrialization in the nineteenth century, also permeated the discourses of education. These issues encompassed questions of accessibility to tertiary education, the proliferation of certain occupations and training, health and fitness, patriotism and cultural values, and the place of women and girls in German education, among others (Albisetti, *Secondary* 4).

Girls' education differed in both style and substance from what the boys were able to receive. Indeed, one can almost speak of two educational systems directed at girls and boys, until most girls' schools were subsumed into the larger system after about 1910. These latter schools had long been subject to far less stringent government scrutiny and regulation. Partly because of women's limited access to and roles within larger German society after schooling, but also because of their subordinate positions as females, girls' and women's schooling attracted less attention from policymakers. In other words, in German society it was obvious that young women did not need to be, and indeed could not be, prepared to become civil servants, professors, or businesspeople. Efforts to make uniform or to expand this schooling usually encountered outright obstruction or puzzlement as to why girls would need more education. Also unlike boys' education, most of girls' schooling took place in private institutions at which girls were taught primarily, but not exclusively, by women (Kraul 297). Because enrolment at universities was out of the question for most women until the end of the first decade of the twentieth century (from Baden in 1900 to Prussia in 1908), girls' schools did not offer the same preparation as boys' schools, leaving out, for example, instruction in ancient languages and thus adding an additional obstacle to women who wanted to reach the *Abitur* and advance to university. Private, supplementary courses, obviously dependent upon one's financial resources

and social class, were available for this purpose (Albisetti, “Education” 256). Until the start of the twentieth century, however, the only kind of tertiary or professional instruction available to women was to prepare them for teaching primary school or the first part of secondary school. The young women who attended these schools would not graduate with the same advantages as their male counterparts in *Gymnasien*, those who had studied classical languages and gained the bona fides and social credential of *Bildung* while also being automatically qualified for positions in the civil service (Albisetti, *Secondary* 33).

It was in the last quarter of the nineteenth century that girls’ education was more widely accepted as a means to secure the cultural and social goals of unification and greater industrial productivity in Germany. More specifically, *public* girls’ education could be a way to standardize pedagogy and provide more equitable resources for the instruction of girls and young women (Askey 30–31; Albisetti, *Schooling* 105). Educator Karl Wöbcken declared in 1865,

Muß es schon Jedem, der weiß, wie wichtig die Entwicklung der künftigen Mütter des Volks für die Entwicklung der ganzen Nation ist, am Herzen liegen, sich über die Aufgabe weiblicher Bildung klar zu werden und sie ihrer Lösung näher zu führen; so besonders einem solchen, der sich seit einer Reihe von Jahren die Bildung weiblicher Jugend zum ausschließlichen Beruf gemacht hat. (Wöbcken 3–4)

Anyone who cared for the future of the German nation and the prosperity of the German people must also have concern for the state of girls’ education. As a national public good, subsidized girls’ schools could offer a standardized curriculum for more girls and young women, while not removing parents’ choice (e.g., for home schooling) in their daughters’ education.

The related goals of educating girls and young women, on the one hand, and fostering properly gendered and class-based national values, on the other, could go hand in hand. As

Jennifer Drake Askey argues, “any discussion surrounding girls’ education was also a discussion about the place of women in society as a whole” (Askey 30), as we can see in the outcome of discussions in the Prussian *Ministerium der geistlichen, Unterrichts- und Medicinal Angelegenheiten* in 1873:

“Diejenigen Mädchenschulen, welche über die Ziele der Volksschule hinausgehen, haben die Aufgabe, der weiblichen Jugend in einer ihrer Eigenthümlichkeit entsprechenden Weise eine ähnliche allgemeine Bildung zu geben, wie sie auch die, über die Volksschule hinausgehenden Schulen für Knaben und Jünglinge bezwecken und sie dadurch zu befähigen, sich an dem Geistesleben der Nation zu betheiligen und dasselbe mit den ihr eigenthümlichen Gaben zu fördern. Das Bedürfniß einer Vorbildung für eine künftige Berufsstellung ist durch besondere Einrichtungen ins Auge zu fassen.” (“Protocolle” 575)

The consensus reached posited that “The emphasis in *Mädchenschulen* and *Töchtereschulen* would be on the particular temperamental and intellectual difference of young women from young men, as well as on the particular social requirements of a girl’s economic class” (Askey 31). That is, “The material of the curriculum, as well as its rigor, would aim to educate the ideal German woman” (Askey 31). Plans for educational and curricular development would be firmly located in the distinctions between the sexes and social classes.

Prussian and German education, and the various stages from *Kindergarten* to research universities, had enjoyed tremendous international acclaim and steady imitation in other countries (Albisetti, “Education” 244; Haines). While Fritz Ringer argues that the link between a nation’s economic or industrial development and the rigour or success of that nation’s education system is not necessarily causal, Albisetti notes that foreign educators from the Continent, the United States, and Great Britain came to observe and study these institutions and the system in

which they operated, “in part from fears of German military and economic might” (Ringer 2; Albisetti, *Secondary* 37–38; Hunter xvii). Far from monolithic, however, control of education within the German Empire rested largely with the individual states. There was nonetheless a certain predisposition toward homogeneity that allowed students to attend multiple (tertiary) institutions, for example. Some basic traits of German education that extended beyond the state borders were its segregation, typically both by sex and religion, and its severely limited reach beyond the end of compulsory schooling around age fourteen (Albisetti, “Education” 248, 253). Although the figures varied regionally, by 1910 secondary schools reached only about 5% of fifteen- and sixteen-year-olds and only 3% of seventeen- and eighteen-year-olds (Albisetti, “Education” 253). It is perhaps to be expected that the numbers of the highly educated were quite small; they were, in fact, miniscule and symptomatic of this class-divided society. Crucially, however, the curricula were designed to instill and perpetuate values about class, nationality, and gender.

The curricula these girls and young women encountered was markedly different from that which lay across the gender divide. Boys’ and young men’s secondary schooling in the *Gymnasien* focused on the traditional subjects like German, Latin, mathematics, and, to a lesser degree, writing and drawing. Much of this had been the foundations of *Gymnasium* education since Wilhelm von Humboldt’s reforms of educational policy and structure in the early nineteenth century (Thomas 221–22). Girls’ secondary schools included instruction in subjects like singing, gymnastics, and needlework. Female pupils attended fewer overall hours of instruction than did their male counterparts, although spending more time than the boys in lessons in German, history, art history, and geography (Kraul 291). Unlike the boys, however, girls had to learn, according to the Prussian education ministry, the “Pflege weiblicher Sorgfalt,

Sauberkeit und geduldigen umsichtigen Fleißes bei der Herstellung bescheidener Arbeiten” (Bosse 481). These crafts, explicitly defined by the ministry, proceeded from a shirt to towels, to more complicated knitting and the darning of stockings, finally to crocheting (Bosse 480). It was strictly forbidden to read to the girls or to engage them in foreign-language conversation during these lessons (Bosse 481). When one looks at the instruction plans and distribution of hours, it is clear that girls were being prepared for their future occupations as wives and mothers; again, boys, on the other hand, were often looking ahead to university education, civil service, and public life. As Askey has written about the array of literature available to young nineteenth-century female readers, these texts, “participated in the broader discourse of national character, national mission, and gender roles that also informed girls’ education and the cult of female domesticity” (Askey 6).

Winsloe’s schooling is relevant for the discussions of the *Mädchen in Uniform* material, whose plots are situated, depending on the text at least in part, in a boarding school similar to the one the author attended as a girl. The experiences which populate the pages of these texts echo those of other writers as well. In order to understand why and how Winsloe landed in the educational institutions she did, it is helpful to turn again to her biography. Winsloe’s father’s circumstances dovetailed with developments in the history of German education to set the stage for what would later become some of Christa Winsloe’s most productive literary and dramatic material. In her unpublished autobiographical novel, *Das schwarze Schaf*, Winsloe describes the building in Potsdam where she attended school as a “Riesengebäude, umgeben von Wald,” which “trotz Neuheit, Giebelchen, Bogenfenstern und Kappellenauswuchs nicht verleugnen [kann], dass es

eine Kaserne ist” (qtd. in Hermanns 29). Although Winsloe was there for only two years, her experiences affected her for many years to come. As Winsloe writes:

In ganz schweren Träumen finde ich mich wieder dort herumirrend in den langen weißen Korridoren, geweckt aus tiefem Schlaf von schriller Glocke und Kommandostimmen. Hungrig eine Andacht anhörend, in Eile einen mageren Wasserkakao herunterjagend, – fühle wieder das Gehen zu zwei und zwei, immer in der Angst, von rückwärts getreten zu werden oder dem Mädchen, das vor mir ging, auf die Füße zu treten. Die öden Sonntage kehren wieder, wo man die merkwürdigsten Ecken aufsuchte, um nur ein, ein einziges Mal allein oder zu zweit zu sein. (Hermanns 31)

The modus operandi of this school, an institution of Foucauldian discipline as I discuss below, was to drill into the girls their subordinate place in German society, which also reflected the young women’s position in debates over education and educational policy. Once they left school and became wives of more or less prominent men, these young women had to understand the watchwords of their gender, like “Schweigen wenn andere reden, ist christliche Tugend” and “Selber Unrecht haben ist Pflicht” (Hermanns 33).

In Winsloe’s recollection of the educational program of the Kaiserin-Augusta-Stift, one can recognize what Ian Hunter calls “education as a cultural transformation of the population carried out in the interests of the state” (Hunter 39). Hunter analyzes school structures from a Foucauldian perspective, observing the theoretical foundation lying below the educational surface, that of *dressage*, “at the centre of which reigns the notion of ‘docility,’ which joins the analysable body to the manipulable body” (Foucault 136). For Foucault and Hunter, education more generally and such disciplinary institutions specifically work to enforce individuals’ compliance with the regulatory regime: “Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic

terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience)” (Foucault 138). Schools—as disciplinary tools of the society—ideally create citizens who know the standards and norms of their society and how to follow and enforce them. For Foucault, schools were one type of institution that deployed disciplinary techniques to create the kind of people the society wants to produce. In the German debates over education discussed above one can see this idea reflected in terms of gender and class that were appropriate to nineteenth-century German society.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the Prussian school’s curriculum and method of instruction, combined with her intense feelings of inadequacy and depression, Winsloe ended up leaving the school, as she wrote to her friend Hertha von Gebhardt, “ohne eine Ahnung zu haben, wie man sich anzieht, ohne vom Haushalt etwas zu wissen, weltfremd, scheu und ängstlich, schüchtern bis zum Menschenhaß, von meinem Unwert erdrückt” (qtd. in Hermanns 34). Common to other narratives in the genres of school and boarding school literature, the institutionalized repression and enclosed environment fostered coping mechanisms, leading to melodramatic infatuations, secret admirers, and anonymous gifts. Passion-fuelled intrigue roamed the halls (Hermanns 31). Upon her confirmation at age sixteen, Winsloe was sent to a finishing school in Switzerland. In contrast to her memories of the Prussian school, Winsloe describes her experiences there in Lausanne positively, referring to a pleasant disorder that reigned over her surroundings. No one yelled at her, shouting commands that forbade every impulse (Hermanns 36–37). The autobiographical inspiration from Winsloe’s own educational history is clear in the novel *Das Mädchen Manuela*, published in Amsterdam in 1933. Winsloe used the novel form to create a more vivid picture of both the protagonist’s life and German society at the time of the story, weaving into the narrative details of class divisions, myriad

military officers, and gender expectations. In turning to the novel, Winsloe also created another text in the genre history of boarding school literature, following in the line of works on girls' boarding schools and *Pensionate*, delivering a commentary on the period's education, the expectations of pupils, and specific descriptions of the educational institutions' procedures.

In *Das Mädchen Manuela*, at the point of the protagonist's arrival at the Prinzessin-Helene-Stift, Winsloe introduces the reader to the kind of institutional power that pervades the genre. Unlike the versions of the play and the film, the protagonist, Manuela von Meinhardis, does not arrive at the boarding school until about halfway through the text. The school's imposing structure, both in its physical building and in its internal hierarchy, is striking and makes an impression by clearly communicating an emotional tone of the space. Notably, we are introduced to the institution from inside; we learn that the main entrance area has a window looking out onto the "Vorgarten und Straße" and that there is otherwise "Licht wie in einem Mausoleum" (Winsloe 140). From the beginning of the reader's encounter with the school, one is enclosed in a space that has its own personified agency: "Im Augenblick scheint das Haus zu schlafen" (Winsloe 140). The narrator continues the description of the school's interior: "Weiße Türen. Weiße Korridore. Weiße Räume zum Schlafen, zum Essen, zum Lernen, zum Lesen. Korridore, lange, helle, ohne Teppiche, ohne Vorhänge. Treppen über Treppen. Hintertreppen, gewöhnliche Treppen und dann die große in der Mitte des Hauses, belegt mit dickem rotem Teppich für Besuch, für hohe Besucher. Eine Kapelle und ein Turnsaal" (Winsloe 140). In rendering the spaces, but also in her prose style, Winsloe infiltrates the reader's consciousness of the novel's world by delivering long, list-like, and percussive sentences with extended phrases and repetitive descriptions. One encounters "die fest geschlossenen Türen," which precede further movement "aus der geschlossenen Türe" (Winsloe 140, 142). "Türe" after "Türe"

construct the space as one of containment and closed thresholds between various contained spaces (Winsloe 141). Like the repetitive, numbing disciplinary techniques we witness in the novel's narrative, Winsloe's text itself emphasizes the appearance of portals and transition spaces (windows, doors), which nonetheless are almost always closed. Foucault calls such use of "enclosure" the creation of a "protected place of disciplinary monotony" (141). This separation of the to-be-disciplined bodies increases the efficiency of the disciplinary process, locating and containing the individuals in one place, while simultaneously preventing any distraction from outside influences.

Manuela does behold the building from outside and is not welcome any more than the reader originally was. The narrator makes explicit the connection between this educational and behavioural institution and a more typical disciplinary institution (a barracks). "Manuelas erster Blick gilt dem großen Gebäude vor ihr. Zuerst glaubt sie, der Kutscher müsse sich geirrt und sie aus Versehen in eine Kaserne geführt haben. Ein riesiger Steinkasten mit Fenstern, Fenstern, Fenstern, Reihe über Reihe, und einem großen, fest verschlossenen Tor ..." [*sic*] (Winsloe 144). The size of the building is made clear, as is the description that again comes in a repeating list of descriptors. Beyond this, Winsloe's use of the suggestive ellipsis after the phrase including the "verschlossenen" portal establishes and imposing and foreboding presence.

The negative feelings evoked by the school and many of the people and things one encounters there persist, as Manuela is initiated into the institution's procedural rhythm.

Manuelas Kopf schwirrt von allem, was sie behalten muß. Zuerst hat sie zu lernen, was verboten ist. Nämlich: Eßwaren, vor allem Schokolade, Obst und Bonbons. Schmuck und Geld müssen abgeliefert werden, nur etwas Taschengeld wird ausgeteilt, aber es muß darüber ein Kontobuch geführt werden. Haarwässer dürfen nicht benutzt werden. Auch

eigene Seife wird abgegeben. Alle Wäsche muß mit dem ganzen, rot in weißes Wäscheband gewirkten Namen gezeichnet sein. Hemd hat auf Hemd zu liegen. Hose auf Hose. Taschentuch auf Taschentuch. Der Schrank ist abgeschlossen zu halten. Den Schlüssel hat man bei sich zu tragen und nicht zu verlieren. Der Schlüssel hat eine Nummer. "Du bist Nummer 55," sagt Marga. Manuela blickt auf zu der Nummer über ihrem Schrank. Eine schwarze "55." "Deine Kleider tragen die Nummer 55. Deine Schuhe gehören in die Stiefelkammer in das Fach 55, dein Mantel und dein Hut kommen unten neben dem Hauseingang in die Garderobe, Abteilung 55. Deine Waschkabine ist Nummer 55, ebenso dein Bett."

Manuela fühlte, wie sie langsam zu Nummer 55 wurde. (Winsloe 150–51)

Manuela must first learn and internalize the school's prohibitions. Foremost is the institution's policing of sensual pleasure in its interdiction of foodstuffs like sweets. The school's own soap must be used, a measure surely meant to make the girls' toilette uniform and to exclude individualized scents. Organization and utilization of space, even minutely in the clothes cabined, is regimented. Finally, another stage of Manuela's integration is complete when she is addressed immediately after this litany: "Na, kommen Sie doch rein, Nummer 55, ich weiß schon, daß Sie da sind" (Winsloe 151). Manuela is interpellated as a numbered inhabitant of the school. Like a prison inmate, and like the other characteristics that the narrator has described, Manuela has become a data point, an item on the list of pupils at the school.

One of the ways in which Foucault's study of punishment and disciplinary institutions is instructive is in its assertion that these spaces, like prisons, barracks, and schools, effect a restructuring of both the body and what he calls the "soul," which we can liken to one's subjectivity. Foucault writes, "the soul is the prison of the body," demonstrating how the

procedures of disciplinary institutions and the ways in which societies carry out punishments can and do shape both the body and the soul of the individuals who pass through them or are interned in them (Foucault 30). Ian Hunter astutely observes that one of Foucault's most important innovations is his assertion that

government does not operate through amoral coercion but through expert administrative technologies. These technologies, of which the school system is a prime example, are not dedicated to irrational repression. Instead, they work by deploying a special knowledge of the domain to be governed, and their objective is typically the optimal development of its resources, especially its human sources. (Hunter xix–xx)

Foucault illustrates how power is not only something that the state and such institutions have, but rather also something that they use or deploy. When disciplinary institutions utilize their power, including via the methods Foucault describes, the effect can be a marked change in the reciprocal relationship between body and soul. That is, as the soul or one's understanding of and response to one's reality within the disciplinary institution changes and responds to the enactment of that disciplinary power, the body will respond accordingly, leading to the establishment of more productive bodies for the uses of the disciplinary power.

Although the educational regime and the institution's building in which it is administered shape much of what happens during Manuela's time there, it is the novel's conclusion and the end of the disciplinary space's reign that come at a tragic price, Manuela's suicide, which is also typical for the boarding school genre. The protagonist's figurative release from the school with her death becomes also a release from the authoritarian frame that has enclosed the entire society in Winsloe's rendition (Fest 467–68). Preceding Manuela's death, she is resolved to tell Fräulein

von Bernburg, the teacher who is the object of Manuela's affection, that she loves her. Even in this final dramatic tension the school's building has to play a role.

Sie mußte Fräulein von Bernburg sprechen, und so stürzte sie wie gejagt zu einer Seitentreppe, um oben Fräulein von Bernburg den Weg abzuschneiden, bevor sie ihr Zimmer betrat.

Sie mußte drei Stockwerke ersteigen. Die Treppe war steil und ihre Knie schwach. Sie hatte das Gefühl, als versanken die Stufen unter ihrem Tritt. Um nicht zu fallen, hielt sie sich am Geländer, aber es gab nach. Es schwindelte ihr. Und Eile tat not. Einmal im Krankenzimmer zurück, würde sie nicht so leicht wieder heraufkommen können, und zu ihr mußte sie – und jetzt – und gleich. (Winsloe 262–63)

Once again, stairs help to channel and structure the events, while also reminding the reader of the expansive area of the school. Indeed, the architectural reality of the building, including its winding or repetitive staircases, exacerbate Manuela's fragile condition. After finding the teacher, apologizing for her past behaviour, and nearly fainting, Manuela faces the story's final indignity. Fräulein von Bernburg informs Manuela that she will have to be separated from the other pupils but, more importantly, from the teacher. "Von jetzt an wirst du nicht mehr mit den andern Kindern leben. Du wirst im Isolierzimmer wohnen. Nicht im gemeinsamen Speisesaal essen, nur den Schulunterricht wirst du mit ihnen haben," Fräulein von Bernburg says (Winsloe 266). Manuela has difficulty accepting this chastisement from her ideal, favourite person: "Wie ein Vogel, der sich in ein Zimmer verirrt hat und mit dem Kopf gegen alle Wände schlägt, rasen Manuelas Gedanken hin und her" (Winsloe 267). Crucially, Manuela will no longer have contact with the teacher; the child must be "geheilt" (Winsloe 267). Numbed by this encounter and the reality that now faces her, Manuela continues her ascent of the stairs instead of returning to join

the other girls. Teachers and pupils begin looking for her, but she has reached the top of the stairs, coming to look out a window in one of the building's many gables, just like those that Winsloe described in her own school (Winsloe 269–71).

At this dramatic moment, another threshold comes into view, both for Manuela and the narrative, as Manuela opens the window and feels the outside air on her face. This last involvement of the school building in Manuela's story will help to determine what comes of Manuela. "Die frische Luft weht um ihre Stirn. Sie ist ganz klar – ja überklar, wie die Sterbenden sind. Weit ist es da unten, aber frei und kühl wird es sein – *und sie wird draußen sein – nicht mehr drinnen – weit – draußen – und – frei –*" (Winsloe 271, emphasis added). The distinction between the authoritarian control of the school's interior and the freedom of simply being beyond the threshold is clear. Manuela's dazed resolve is also apparent in the narrator's depiction of her thoughts here; the description of the surroundings devolves into percussive flashes. The dashes that had appeared so frequently in the preceding pages cease, as Manuela recites the lyrics of "So nimm denn meine Hände," a religious song of deliverance to and acceptance of God's plan, which further illustrates the path Manuela is taking. In these final moments, she has become obedient to the moment itself, displaying none of the recalcitrance that the school's structure and curriculum worked so hard to remove. The character's death comes cinematically, with the text cutting to the fervent efforts to locate Manuela and then again to Manuela lying on the stone steps. The narrative resolution also comes with acceptance by everyone around, including the building: "Das Haus ist erstarrt. Niemand spricht. Niemand drängt sich herzu. Man läßt die beiden allein: Fräulein von Bernburg und Manuela" (Winsloe 272).

These boarding school narratives, which often evince a tincture of autobiographical melancholy, if not despair, arose from an educational system, which, although it was the envy of many nations around the world, subjected its pupils to zealous disciplinary measures in order to arrive at the desired end product, categorized by gender and class. Via the various disciplinary mechanisms, young men were to become able members of public society, whether in the civil service or the military; young women were to become able members of private society, remaining subordinate in their positions as housewives and mothers. German educators took great administrative care in their efforts to sculpt a school system, inherently authoritarian in its approach, that could meet the contemporary needs of society while also maintaining gender and class divisions. In the genre of boarding school literature one finds many textual forms with diverse variations but also consistencies in their treatment of the subject. The novel allows for a more illustrative or extensive depiction of the setting, including a greater likelihood of more autobiographical allusions. Winsloe's work illustrates this tendency. The intertextual links in the *Mädchen in Uniform* material demonstrate the importance Winsloe saw in this topic and what she must have seen as the fruitfulness of exploring it in detail in various forms. These settings remain intriguing in part because of their ability and tendency to illustrate starkly the reality of internal and external identity categories and their boundaries. In *Das Mädchen Manuela* one finds the strictly prescriptive environment demanded by the educational system; one also finds the thematization of the difficult consequences that young people undoubtedly faced in this context. From the system's perspective, Manuela is a failure, an example of pupil whose emotional constitution could not bear the demands of the curriculum and the society that created it. The novel portrays the society, the educational system it created, and even the building in which the educating would take place as having failed the pupils who populated them. Winsloe's

various *Mädchen in Uniform* texts were a part of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century wave of boarding school texts which not only clearly found an eager audience but also, more important, served a cathartic purpose for their contemporaries and reveal a diagnosis. Boarding school literature was telling the authors and the readers something about the societies in which they were conceived: rigid, divisive, and divided, with unreasonable expectations of its youngest members. The criticism that arises in these works and their creators' autobiographical responses comprises implicit and explicit concerns about the nation, politics, gender and sexuality, and the nature of education itself, all of which were subjects of the educational debate in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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¹ Because Winsloe refers to the appearance of the school's building and it arguably affected the setting of the *Mädchen in Uniform* texts, readers may wish to see images of the Kaiserin-Augusta-Stift's building. The site now houses apartments. See the Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek's collection: <https://www.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/item/DZTAOI7O7ADSVYAI2AFWNLHB4R22K42>.