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Friedrich Schlichtegroll's *Nekrolog*. Enlightenment Biography.¹

Let the dead bury the dead. We want to see the deceased as living beings, to rejoice in their lives, including their lives as they continue after their demise, and for this same reason we gratefully record their enduring contribution for posterity.²

It is with these words that Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), theorist of Weimar Classicism and progenitor of Cultural Studies [*Kulturwissenschaften*], commences his critical review of Friedrich Schlichtegroll's *Nekrolog*, an annual collection of biographies on the lives of exceptional people recently deceased. The review, part of Herder's *Briefe zu Beförderung der Humanität* [Letters for the Advancement of Humanity] (1792-1797), outlines how the biographer's task may be understood as an intrinsically political activity, particularly when it comes to collective rather than singular narratives, which were the dominant form of biographical discourse in eighteenth-century Germany.³ However, Herder's incitation is aimed less at future biographers than at their readers. Instead of seeing obituaries as a passive act of mourning, he envisions a form of public memory that regards the lives of the departed as an inspiration for a better future: '*They are not dead*, our benefactors and friends: for their souls, their contributions to the human race, their memories live on.'⁴ Herder conceives of humanity [*Humanität*] as a communal pursuit, aimed at the development of the potential inherent in humankind. The achievements of great people, he believes, have the capacity to ignite a spark in others, encouraging those who come after to follow in their footsteps and to continue to work for the advancement of human society. But for this to take place, an active engagement with the life and work of the deceased is required, which is why the literary genre of biography, in line with German attitudes towards the Enlightenment, forms a central piece of Herder's thought. In his conception of humanity, biographical collections can serve as repositories, providing a multi-faceted view of the way in which a common goal has as its starting point the development [*Bildung*] and actions of individual human subjects.

As the German literary critic Ralf Georg Bogner has demonstrated, the genre of obituaries was at the forefront of transformation within eighteenth-century biographical discourse. As part of a system of edifying practices, the religious predecessors of the

¹ Parts of this article are based on the author's study in late-eighteenth, early-nineteenth century German theories of biography: Tobias Heinrich, *Leben lesen. Zur Theorie der Biographie um 1800*, Wien, Köln and Weimar, Böhlau, 2016.

² Johann Gottfried Herder, *Werke in zehn Bänden*, vol. 7, Frankfurt am Main, Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1991, p. 26, translated by Ed Saunders (emphasis in original).

³ Falko Schnicke, '18. Jahrhundert,' in *Handbuch Biographie. Methoden, Traditionen, Theorien*, ed. Christian Klein, Stuttgart and Weimar, Metzler, 2009, p. 243-250.

⁴ Johann Gottfried Herder, *Werke in zehn Bänden*, *op. cit.*, p. 26, translated by Ed Saunders.

secular obituary were a form of life writing, a means of mediation between the deceased as biographical subject and those they had left behind, which provided the latter with a set of precepts for the conduct of their own lives.⁵ At the same time the development of a broad reading public in the age of Enlightenment led to an ever-growing production of obituaries and eulogies, many of them written by people with no direct connection to the deceased, and familiar with them only through their writings.⁶ Obituaries served as an early way to open up the genres of life writing and literary discourse in general. Thus it comes as no surprise that Herder refers to an annual collection of obituaries as a possible archive for the achievements of humanity.

Herder's significance for the theory and practice of German biography has been widely recognized,⁷ especially in the context of nineteenth-century historicism. However, it is worthwhile to take a look at the subject of Herder's critique: Friedrich Schlichtegroll's *Nekrolog*. As the predecessor of the first German dictionary of national biography, the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* (1875-1912), the *Nekrolog* remains one of the most important historical sources for the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. However, research so far has usually been concerned with individual elements of his work, notably the sources and the impact of his account of the life of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791).⁸ Existing scholarship has failed to recognize the overall concept of the *Nekrolog* as a prime model for the didactic and sociocritical impulse of Enlightenment biography.⁹ This article aims, in contrast, to examine the methodology of Schlichtegroll's overall approach—his way of procuring and arranging the sources for his obituaries, combining the roles of editor and author—while also reflecting on the general attraction of biographical collections around 1800.

In discussing a man who spent a considerable part of his career assembling the biographies of others, it seems appropriate to briefly introduce his own life as well. Adolph Heinrich Friedrich Schlichtegroll was born on the 8th December 1765 in Waltershausen, a mere 5 miles from Gotha, residency of Frederick III, sovereign of the duchy of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg.¹⁰ After receiving his schooling in Gotha,

⁵ Ralf Georg Bogner, 'Geistliches Totengedenken? Einige Thesen zu den mehr oder weniger erbaulichen Gebrauchsfunktionen frühneuzeitlicher Nachrufe,' in *Aedificatio. Erbauung im interkulturellen Kontext in der Frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Andreas Solbach, Tübingen, Niemeyer, 2005, p. 35-47.

⁶ Ralf Georg Bogner, *Der Autor im Nachruf. Formen und Funktionen der literarischen Memorialkultur von der Reformation bis zum Vormärz*, Tübingen, Niemeyer, 2006, p. 259.

⁷ Cf. Helmut Scheuer, *Biographie. Studien zur Funktion und zum Wandel einer literarischen Gattung vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*, Stuttgart, Metzler, 1979, p. 9-34; Tobias Heinrich, "'This, I believe, is the only means of defying death': Johann Gottfried Herder's Concept of Intellectual Biography,' *Lumen*, No. 28 (2010), p. 51-67; Tobias Heinrich, 'Das lebendige Gedächtnis der Biographie: Johann Gottfried Herders "Fünfter Brief zur Beförderung der Humanität,"' in *Theorie der Biographie: Grundlagentexte und Kommentar*, ed. Bernhard Fetz and Wilhelm Hemecker, Berlin and New York, De Gruyter, 2011, p. 23-27.

⁸ In particular: Bruce Cooper Clarke, 'Albert von Mölk: Mozart Myth-Maker? Study of an 18th Century Correspondence,' *Mozart-Jahrbuch*, 1995, p. 155-191; and Bruce Cooper Clarke, *The Annotated Schlichtegroll. Wolfgang Mozart's Obituary with Critical, Historical, and Explanatory Notes*, St. Anton a.d. Jessnitz, no publisher, 1997. Clarke's book is currently only available in the Bibliotheca Mozartiana at the Stiftung Mozarteum Salzburg and online:

<https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/9324149/the-annotated-schlichtegroll-apropos-mozart>

⁹ The main exception is Christoph Köhler, 'Adolf Heinrich Friedrich Schlichtegrolls "Nekrolog der Teutschen." Zum Genre der Biographie im Zeitalter der Spätaufklärung,' in *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Literatur in Thüringen*, ed. Detlef Ignasiak, Rudolstadt and Jena, Hain, 1995, p. 180-189.

¹⁰ Up to this date, the most comprehensive biography of Friedrich Schlichtegroll is provided by Georg

Schlichtegroll went on to university, graduating from Göttingen in 1787 and soon after becoming a teacher of Religious Education, Hebrew, Latin and German in Gotha's *Gymnasium*, the main secondary school. By then the court of Ernest II (1745-1804), Frederick III's son, had made Gotha a centre of German Enlightenment and also of Freemasonry, not least because the Duke had granted asylum to Adam Weishaupt (1748-1830), founder of the *Illuminati* secret society. Schlichtegroll himself had been a novice of the *Illuminati* before he attended university. He would eventually join the Gotha-based lodge *Zum Compaß*, taking on the duties of its secretary in later years.¹¹

Considering Schlichtegroll's fascination with the ancient cultures and the importance of collections like those of Plutarch and Suetonius in preserving historical knowledge, it comes as no surprise that soon after he began teaching at the *Gymnasium*, he devised the plan to publish a biographical record of his own time that was to become the *Nekrolog* in 1791. In addition to his duties at school and his activity as a prolific biographer, he began to work in the Duke's archives and collections, alongside his father-in-law who was head of the numismatic cabinet. He left the school in 1800 to pursue his historical and archival interests full-time. In 1807, Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743-1819), who had just been appointed president of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities [*Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften*], approached Schlichtegroll about whether he was interested in joining the Academy as its secretary. Schlichtegroll had no hesitation in giving up his obligations in Gotha, including the *Nekrolog*, and accepted Jacobi's invitation, taking on the position in Munich later that year. Having been knighted by King Maximilian I just one year after his arrival in Munich, Schlichtegroll spent the rest of his life in the Academy's service. He died in 1822, aged 57.

While Schlichtegroll's work in Munich is fairly well documented in the Bavarian Academy's records,¹² we know relatively little about his time in Gotha, even though this is where he edited and published the *Nekrolog*. It is however not coincidental that Gotha was to be the birthplace of an enterprise that pioneered the documentation of the German nation through biographies.

Besides its role as the capital of one of Thuringia's principalities and as a centre of German Enlightenment and Freemasonry, Gotha was also an important hub for book publishing. In particular, the *Gothaischer Hofkalender/Almanach de Gotha* (1763-1944), a detailed register of contemporary royal houses, enjoyed widespread popularity. Initially founded by Emanuel Christoph Klüpfel (1712-1799) and published by Carl Wilhelm Ettinger (1741-1804), the *Almanach* was acquired by Johann Georg Justus Perthes (1749-1816) in 1785 to be the cornerstone of his newly founded publishing

Friedrich August Schmidt in his *Neuer Nekrolog der Deutschen* [New Necrology of the Germans], intended as a follow-up to Schlichtegroll's *Nekrolog*. Georg Friedrich August Schmidt, 'Adolph Heinrich Friedrich von Schlichtegroll,' in *Neuer Nekrolog der Deutschen*, vol. 1 (1823), Ilmenau, Voigt, 1824, p. 1-31.

¹¹ Cf. Martin Mulsow, 'Diskussionskultur im Illuminatenorden. Schack Hermann Ewald und die Gothaer Minervakirche,' *Aufklärung*, No. 26 (2014), p. 153-204, p. 161sqq; and the entry for Friedrich Schlichtegroll in the *Illuminaten-Wiki* by the Research Centre Gotha at the University of Erfurt: https://projekte.uni-erfurt.de/wist/Friedrich_Heinrich_Adolph_Schlichtegroll

¹² Cf. Monika Stoermer, 'Adolf Heinrich Friedrich von Schlichtegroll (1765-1822). Erster Generalsekretär der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften,' in *Denker, Forscher und Entdecker. Eine Geschichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften in historischen Portraits*, ed. Dietmar Willoweit, München, Beck, 2009, p. 19-37.

house.¹³ In 1791, Perthes also became the publisher of the first issue of the *Nekrolog*.¹⁴ Schlichtegroll's biographical endeavour might have partially been inspired by the *Almanach*, but it was certainly influenced by biographical dictionaries like Georg Christoph Hamberger's (1726-1773) and Johann Georg Meusel's (1743-1820) *Das gelehrte Teutschland* [The Learned Germany] (1767-1834) as well. It was, however, not Schlichtegroll's intention for the *Nekrolog* to follow the model of aristocratic genealogy or dictionaries according to profession, both of which were popular forms of cultural memory in Early Modern Europe. Rather, he explicitly wanted to promote a socially inclusive approach to biography.

Collective Biography as Social Criticism

Schlichtegroll's choice of subjects reflects a contemporary preoccupation with breaking the aristocratic monopoly on public remembrance.¹⁵ Informed by Enlightenment and Masonic ideals, he aimed for a purely meritocratic approach, and to that end, the *Nekrolog* incorporated biographies of the nobility and of the bourgeoisie and, to a limited extent also, those of commoners outside the middle class, including peasants and craftspeople. While Johann Matthias Schröckh (1733-1808), author of another contemporary German collection of biographies, the *Allgemeine Biographie* [Universal Biography] (1767-1791), had already suggested such an approach in the programmatic foreword of his periodical,¹⁶ he fell far short of this promise since only two biographies within its eight volumes concern non-aristocratic subjects, the Pietist theologian Philipp Jacob Spener (1635-1705) and the early Enlightenment philosopher Christian Thomasius (1655-1728). In contrast, Schlichtegroll's *Nekrolog* introduces a truly comprehensive collective biography to the German public.

The preface to the first issue clearly illustrates the publication's egalitarian agenda, and its refusal to acknowledge conventional class distinctions:

As death with a freely choosing hand seizes the king today and his servant tomorrow, today the celebrated, tomorrow the silent and unsung, in the same hour a hero in Europe and an honest citizen in the New World, and escorts them irrespective of rank to his silent country; so they pass here too before the reader's eye, each as on the day that was his last on earth.¹⁷

The annual journal is intended as a collection of biographies of people who stood out

¹³ Christoph Köhler, "Dass keiner was unternehme, das bloß ihm alle Vortheile, den anderen aber Schaden bringt." Carl Wilhelm Ettingers Verlagsunternehmen in Gotha,' in *Der entfesselte Markt. Verleger und Verlagsbuchhandel im thüringisch-sächsischen Kulturraum um 1800*, ed. Werner Greiling and Siegfried Seifert, Leipzig, Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2004, p. 107-128, p. 111 (Let no one engage in any undertaking that brings advantages only to himself, and that damages others).

¹⁴ Friedrich Schlichtegroll, *Nekrolog auf das Jahr 1790*, Gotha, Perthes, 1791.

¹⁵ Cf. Rolf Selbmann, *Dichterdenkmäler in Deutschland. Literaturgeschichte in Erz und Stein*, Stuttgart, Metzler, 1988, p. 2.

¹⁶ Johann Matthias Schröckh, *Allgemeine Biographie*, Berlin, Mylius, 1767, p.):(4r/v. In some cases Schröckh and Schlichtegroll use symbols to indicate the printed sheets of their prefaces rather than numbers for each individual page. The number following the symbol indicates the folio and r respectively v is my own addition to distinguish between front (recto) and backside (verso).

¹⁷ Friedrich Schlichtegroll, *Nekrolog auf das Jahr 1790*, *op. cit.*, p. 60. All further translations, if not otherwise stated, are by Oline Eaton and Tobias Heinrich.

through their 'eminent destiny, their beneficial practice, their extensive knowledge or otherwise.'¹⁸ Alongside 'princes' and the 'benefactors of the fatherland,' all of whom had a wide spectrum of commemorative practices at their disposal, Schlichtegroll's *Nekrolog* aims to raise a monument to the 'silent, diligent fellow citizen.'¹⁹ Schlichtegroll finds the life of the economically active middle-class citizen underrepresented in contemporary biography. His collection aims to commemorate those people in particular who have attracted no public recognition, but have earned 'quiet merit' through 'noble, unselfish assiduity.'²⁰

When he introduces individuals whose status and modest lifestyle would not have earned them a place in the conventional spectrum of commemorative rituals, Schlichtegroll deliberately invokes a republican tradition in his panegyric imagery: 'The greatest achievement of this collection may be its bestowing, here and there, on such a man, albeit after his death, the civic crown.'²¹ In ancient Rome, the bestowal of the *corona civica* granted a distinguished position of honour in society, comparable with that of a senator, upon common citizens who had demonstrated exceptional valour in battle.²² Thus, Schlichtegroll chooses a form of recognition that would render permeable the social order of pre-imperial Rome that was, despite its republican character, still strictly hierarchically structured:

The life of each most industrious and diligent man is eligible to our favour, and maybe most so when it was spent in silence, so that only few witnessed this righteousness and diligence.²³

Schlichtegroll believes that the main criteria for inclusion into the *Nekrolog* should be the exemplarity of its subjects' lives. He intends his collection to offer a wide range of models that its readers can aspire to follow. Therefore, he is particularly interested in the lives of people from modest backgrounds who made their fortune not due to exceptional talents, but through relentless effort and hard work.

Es scheint eine verkehrte Schätzung des Verdienstes und eine Ungerechtigkeit gegen ausgezeichnete Männer des thätigen Lebens vorauszusetzen, wenn wir ihnen nicht eben so gut, wie dem Künstler, dem Gelehrten oder dem Kriegsmanne bey ihren Zeitgenossen und der Nachwelt ein rühmliches Andenken zu verschaffen suchen [...].

It would appear a preposterous judgment of merit and an injustice towards distinguished men of the industrious sphere if we did not strive to guarantee their notable memory among their contemporaries and posterity, just as we do with the artist, the scholar or the soldier.²⁴

The most extensive of the thirty entries in the *Nekrolog*'s first issue is dedicated to what Schlichtegroll perceives as a paradigm of such a life, featuring virtues like assiduousness, veracity and conscientiousness. It is the biography of the inventor,

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 48sq.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Birgit Bergmann, *Der Kranz des Kaisers. Genese und Bedeutung einer römischen Insignie*, Berlin and New York, De Gruyter, 2010, p. 135sq.

²³ Friedrich Schlichtegroll, *Nekrolog auf das Jahr 1790*, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

publisher and politician Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790).²⁵ Spanning almost fifty pages, Franklin's entry covers significantly more space than the second longest biography, that of the German Emperor Joseph II (1741-1790), thirty-three pages long. For his obituary, Schlichtegroll was able to rely on Franklin's French autobiography, published in 1791 as *Mémoires de la vie privée de Benjamin Franklin*, to recount, in meticulous detail, the career of this self-made man. Of humble origins, Franklin became one of the most influential publishers of his time. Despite having had to abandon his formal education after just a few years, he achieved the wisdom of a polymath and ultimately became one of the founding fathers of the United States through his decisive role in drafting its constitutional documents:

If one [...] considers the immeasurable consequences of the endeavour that this book printer carried out in association with some other strong and generous people, we are astonished and amazed [...] If we take our eye from the important effects and impacts and turn to the person himself, who was mainly responsible for these incredible occurrences; how flattering is the surprise when we find a straight, simple man, who does not appear at all unusual, who only developed and perfected those gifts that each man of good will among us finds in himself, in short, a man with whom one wants to shake hands respectfully, but not a being of a higher kind to whom we must bow the knee.²⁶

In Schlichtegroll's portrayal of Joseph II, the monarch is also viewed through an Enlightenment lens, so that the foregrounded traits resemble the catalogue of civic virtues.²⁷ Schlichtegroll bases his biography on the records of Johann Pezzl, one of the most eminent political writers in contemporary Vienna.²⁸ Schlichtegroll highlights Joseph's zeal,²⁹ the modest interior of his chambers³⁰ and the emperor's aversion to the stiff court ceremonial.³¹ The key theme is how the emperor's regency followed the principles of justice and reason, despite the courtly rules of etiquette and the formal customs of the nobility:

He felt that the observance of such conventions was not necessary, that each honest and harmless person had a claim to the respect of the others, regardless of their rank.³²

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 262-311.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 264.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 154-188.

²⁸ Johann Pezzl, *Charakteristik Josephs II*, Wien, Kraus, 1790.

²⁹ 'Rarely has a monarch used the many means of his rank to so little pleasure as Joseph. Without exaggeration, it can be claimed that he worked more and entertained himself less than the lowest workman in his lands,' Friedrich Schlichtegroll, *Nekrolog auf das Jahr 1790*, *op. cit.*, p. 165sq.

³⁰ 'After the death of his father, his night-quarters consisted of mattresses filled with straw, covered by deer skin and a leather pillow, stuffed with horse hair. Even when travelling, and not only in minor lodgings, but also in palaces, he had the beds removed from his room and lay down on his straw,' *ibid.*, p. 158.

³¹ 'His usual evening's company in Vienna consisted of witty men and women alike. [...] Here, Joseph appeared simply as a citizen and companion. How much he possessed the gifts of pleasant conversation, lightness in his expression, humour and subtlety is proved by his acclaim in other countries. True, the emperor cared for his own pleasure with this unconventional conduct, and many of the great men on this earth now adopt the same manner; but if we consider the contrast of his demeanour to the Spanish customs of his father's court, one certainly has to admire the strong and noble spirit that found this natural way to enjoyment despite all obstacles,' *ibid.*, p. 166.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 164.

In a final comparison of the achievements of Joseph II and Benjamin Franklin, Schlichtegroll points out how political capacity has lost its corporatist bonds. Even if the absolute ruler is inspired by the Enlightenment, it is the common citizen who now becomes the protagonist of society's transformation.

One striking comparison between the two greatest deceased of this year imposes itself on us. *Joseph* was born in crimson; early on, he inherited shining crowns on his head; but when he closed his eyes in death, the crowns were all shaken, and he could not know which of them was to devolve to his successor. In his youth, *Franklin* went with a penny loaf through the streets of Philadelphia; and he quenched his thirst from the river; no one knew his name; but at his death he left a nation, larger than any monarchy, that venerated him as its founder; and wherever there are educated men on our globe, this citizen is mentioned with respect. Both Joseph and Franklin honoured humanity, and both have been keen defenders of its rights, even though in very different ways and with dissimilar success. Because while the mightiest of all monarchs did not succeed in his endeavour, the printer and journalist did. It is with such power that omnipotent destiny prevails over all people.³³

In the *Nekrolog*'s depiction, the emperor is judged from a commoner's perspective and thus Schlichtegroll's biographical approach treats the ruler in just the same way as it treats his citizens.³⁴ Contrasting the biographies of Joseph II and Benjamin Franklin, Schlichtegroll demonstrates the potential that is granted to individuals regardless of their social or economic background, when they recognize that they are the sole author of their fate. In line with the Enlightenment's optimism for the future, the biographical perspective of the individual no longer seems to be predetermined by birth and fortune. When corporate identity ceases to be the structural determinant of biographical writing, it becomes apparent how the son of a simple Chandler may be capable of a more potent political efficacy than the absolute monarch. In this light, the openness and versatility of one's own biography becomes central for middle-class identity and universal ideals, transgressing corporate boundaries.

Exemplary lives

In the preface to the first issue of the *Nekrolog*, Schlichtegroll extensively outlines the intention of his periodical, as regards not just its social claims, but also its heuristic value. In particular, he is concerned with the relation between biography and historiography. According to Schlichtegroll, human cognition is not capable of capturing global history in all its particulars and yet it still benefits on an individual level. 'World history shows us the fate of our kind in all climes,' 'the results of a thousand united and abhorrent forces,' but certainly 'such a scene is far too wide for the faint eye of men.'³⁵ The scope of our mind corresponds with the limited sphere of other singular lives. It is only through the perspective of the individual that we can judge reality and realign our own habits—in short, it is through biography that we can learn from history.³⁶

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 310sq.

³⁴ Cf. Michael Maurer, *Die Biographie des Bürgers. Lebensformen und Denkweisen in der formativen Phase des deutschen Bürgertums (1680-1815)*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996, p. 302.

³⁵ Friedrich Schlichtegroll, *Nekrolog auf das Jahr 1790*, *op. cit.*, p. 15sq.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 16sq.

According to Schlichtegroll, biographies, in contrast to comprehensive historiographical accounts, allow for insights that are rooted in lived experience. The reading public's own lives serve as references for the subjects of the biographical narrative. Therefore, the biography's substance does not remain exterior, abstract knowledge, but can be integrated into readers' individual existences. The biographies assembled in the *Nekrolog* are meant as examples for its readers. While it requires an act of abstraction to question one's own behaviour in the light of broader historical or political analyses, this does not apply when the experience of the object of reference is perceived as analogous to one's own. At the same time, biography still addresses the social fabric of peoples' identities. Indeed, Schlichtegroll regards biographical narratives as particularly suited to representing the complex coherences of the social and the personal on the level of singular individuals and their unique subjective experience.³⁷ Furthermore, biography benefits from the fact that, as literature, it is not merely instructive but also entertaining:

It really appears that [...] this genre [...] combines benefit and pleasure very well, as such narratives contain so much that is expedient for us and therefore our soul follows them with particularly active and engaged attention.³⁸

With regards to biography, the concept of *historia magistra vitae* remains intact and serves to legitimate Schlichtegroll's endeavour:

Has anything ever instructed, warned, directed people better than the stories of their brothers' lives, that, in previous ages, have appeared on the same stage and under similar circumstances, and have they not done even more in developing men's judgement and behaviour?³⁹

At the end of a century that has discovered the 'uniqueness of historical processes',⁴⁰ in the light of a universal faith in the possibility of progress, Schlichtegroll still regards history as a 'kind of reservoir of multiplied experiences which the readers can learn from and make their own.'⁴¹ The peculiarities of Schlichtegroll's project ensure however that his position does not appear as an anachronistic backsliding into a pre-modern understanding of history. Schlichtegroll separates the plurality of *histories* from the singular concept of history, so that, while he questions the didactic value of comprehensive historiographical approaches, the utility of biographies is made clear. Furthermore, from a methodological point of view, his focus on the immediate past, and on the biographies of people that have died within the recent year, is quite different from the broad panorama of most eighteenth-century historiography. In times of omnipresent scientific and political revolutions, Schlichtegroll's attempt needs to be regarded as a way of coping with an increasingly volatile present.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 32sq.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁴⁰ Koselleck, 'Historia Magistra Vitae. The Dissolution of the Topos into the Perspective of a Modernized Historical Process,' in Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past. On the Semantics of Historical Time*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2004, p. 26-43, p. 36.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

Mozart

Even today, Schlichtegroll is renowned as the first biographer of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. The obituary on the Salzburg-born composer appeared in the second issue of the periodical: *Nekrolog auf das Jahr 1791*.⁴² Due to the immense posthumous interest in the composer's life, Schlichtegroll's research methods for the obituary of Mozart have been extensively explored, providing a good picture of how he came about the information needed to compose his biographical accounts. As far as we know, Schlichtegroll never met Mozart nor did they correspond in any way. However, Schlichtegroll had obviously heard of Mozart, was aware of his fame, and was informed about his death. It was most probably in early 1792 that Schlichtegroll wrote to Albert von Mölk (1748-1799) in Salzburg and Baron Joseph Friedrich von Retzer (1754-1824) in Vienna, asking for information on the recently deceased composer. While it can be suspected that Schlichtegroll knew von Retzer as a prominent Mason, his ties to Albert von Mölk are more difficult to trace. Mozart scholar Bruce Cooper Clarke suspects Schlichtegroll might have heard of the Canon and Consistorial Councillor von Mölk when he studied theology in Göttingen.⁴³ Taking into regard the *Nekrolog's* explicit invitation for readers to submit obituaries to the journal themselves,⁴⁴ it might very well be that Mölk—an acquaintance of Mozart's sister Maria Anna (1751-1829), now Baroness von Berchtold zu Sonnenburg—approached Schlichtegroll in the first place, though this cannot be verified as the initial letter between the two is lost.

Regardless of the details as to how they came together, Schlichtegroll seems to have submitted to von Mölk a list of eleven questions about Mozart which von Mölk then passed to Maria Anna. She, in turn, wrote an extensive essay closely following Schlichtegroll's questionnaire. Schlichtegroll's questions are recorded in the comprehensive register of Mozart's and his family's letters and notes, published by the Salzburg Mozarteum Foundation. While initially Schlichtegroll asks for a general outline of Mozart's family history, he soon goes about to inquire into the biographical facts behind the public image of the musical genius.

1. In which year, month, and day was [Mozart] born?
2. When and where were his father and his mother born? When and where did they die? When and how did his father come to Salzburg? What was his life, in short, until he became Director of Music [Kapellmeister] for the Prince-Archbishop? What was his mother's name, and who were her parents?
3. In which year did Wolfgang Mozart appear for the first time as a musical virtuoso in his own right in front of the world?
4. What kind of travels did he undertake? In which years? Where to? And who accompanied him?

[...]

⁴² Friedrich Schlichtegroll, *Nekrolog auf das Jahr 1791*, vol. 2, Gotha, Perthes, 1793, p. 82-112, p. 84.

⁴³ Bruce Cooper Clarke, 'Albert von Mölk: Mozart Myth-Maker,' *op. cit.*, p. 162.

⁴⁴ Friedrich Schlichtegroll, *Nekrolog auf das Jahr 1790*, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

7. Which, precisely, are the most exquisite pieces that have won him the reputation of such a great and incomparable master in the eyes of the musical world?

8. Does he owe his perfection in [music] merely to his own superior genius and the early instructions of his father?

[...]

11. Were his talents restricted to music? Or was he joyfully active and gifted in any other domains?⁴⁵

Bruce Cooper Clarke's thorough analysis reveals the extent to which Schlichtegroll's obituary relied on Maria Anna's essay. For the most part, her response follows the structure laid out by Schlichtegroll's initial questions, including some comments by von Mölk or emendations that the editor himself took the liberty to make. It seems that Schlichtegroll did not receive much if any information from other sources like von Retzer, as Mozart's life in Vienna receives scarcely more than one page out of the full thirty, even though the majority of his compositions, including *Don Giovanni*, *The Magic Flute* and the *Requiem*, were created there.

Most importantly and partly due to Schlichtegroll's dependence on the account by Mozart's sister—which is the document wherein the idea originates—, his biographical narrative establishes the notion of Mozart's immaturity, depicting him as the eternal child. The *Nekrolog* reads:

Just as this rare individual early became a man in his art, so on the other hand he remained in virtually all others respects—this must in all impartiality be said of him—eternally a child. He never learned to discipline himself, and he had no feeling for domestic order, for the proper use of money, for moderation and the judicious choice of pleasures. He was constantly in need of a father figure, a guardian, who would look after the mundane matters attendant to his well-being, for his own spirit was constantly preoccupied with a host of completely different ideas and thus lost all sensibility for other serious considerations.⁴⁶

The original source for this judgment of Mozart's character has been contested. Part of the cited paragraph appears almost word by word in an addendum to Maria Anna's account; however, it was written in another person's hand, most probably that of von Mölk.⁴⁷ The relevant passage in their letter to Schlichtegroll reads as follows:

Apart from his music he was and remained almost always a child; and this is a major trait on the dark side of his character; he would always have need of a father, a mother, or some other supervisor; he was unable to handle money, married a girl not suited for him against the will of his father, and that's why there was such domestic disorder when he died and

⁴⁵ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Briefe und Aufzeichnungen*, ed. Internationale Stiftung Mozarteum Salzburg, vol. 6, Kassel *et al.*, Bärenreiter, 1971, p. 184.

⁴⁶ Translation by Bruce Cooper Clarke, 'Albert von Mölk,' *op. cit.*, p. 171.

⁴⁷ Cf. *ibid.*

afterwards.⁴⁸

In particular the final statement regarding Mozart's wife, Constanze, which is actually crossed out in the original, reveals how much this part of the letter reflects personal prejudice against Mozart's expensive lifestyle in Vienna and a marriage many of his family and friends considered improper. The validity of this judgement is further destabilized by the fact that after he left the archbishopric aged 24, Mozart only returned to Salzburg once. Thus, most of what Maria Anna and von M \ddot{o} lk's letter claims about Mozart's life as an adult would be based on unsubstantiated rumours or projections of the manners and behaviour of young Mozart onto his adult life. Schlichtegroll, however, turns this personally biased passage into a more general analysis of Mozart the genius as an archetype, along the lines of contemporary psychology:

No explorer of human nature will be surprised if a great artist, commonly admired from the particular angle of his art, does not appear of the same greatness in the other respects of life. [...] [Mozart] was small, frail, pale [...] His body was in constant movement; he always needed something for his hands or feet to play with [...] Even his face did not remain the same, but would constantly reveal the condition of his soul, in which the lower faculties, and one of them, fantasy, made him the enchanting artist, clearly dominated the higher faculties.⁴⁹

Schlichtegroll portrays the musical genius as a man governed by his emotions and imagination at the expense of rational Enlightenment ideals like reason and judgement. While the physiognomic description 'small, frail, pale' is still taken from von M \ddot{o} lk's and Maria Anna's second letter to Schlichtegroll, Clarke suspects that the remaining part of this paragraph derives from his Viennese sources.⁵⁰ This might be true when it comes to the description of Mozart as hyperactive in his behaviour, but as his overall interest in the composer is of an anthropological nature, Schlichtegroll goes on to incorporate the information into an explanatory model of Mozart's psychological state:

Men with rare virtues and dispositions [...] are phenomena that one observes with astonishment and whose accurate depiction the explorer of human nature will regard as invaluable showpieces, frequently turning back to them in order to admire the infinite scope of the human mind.⁵¹

Clearly, Schlichtegroll does not strive to present Mozart as a model for his readers but aims to examine the psychology of a genius. While most future biographers of Mozart have made extensive use of Schlichtegroll's account,⁵² spurred by the composer's lasting fame, Schlichtegroll's own interest lay not so much in the subject's musical achievements. Mozart's biography is meant to be an investigation in human nature. When his extraordinary artistic talent is compared with his seemingly underdeveloped

⁴⁸ Translation by Bruce Cooper Clarke, *ibid.*, p. 170.

⁴⁹ Friedrich Schlichtegroll, *Nekrolog auf das Jahr 1791*, vol. 2, *op. cit.*, p. 108sq.

⁵⁰ Bruce Cooper Clarke, *The Annotated Schlichtegroll*, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

⁵¹ Friedrich Schlichtegroll, *Nekrolog auf das Jahr 1791*, vol. 2, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

⁵² Cf. William Stafford, 'The Evolution of Mozartian Biography,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Mozart*, ed. Simon P. Keefe, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 200-211; Tobias Heinrich, 'Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart – Die biographische Konstruktion eines Genies,' *Der Deutschunterricht*, No. 64 (2012), p. 14-27.

other abilities, the composer can still serve as an example for the potential of the mind and its capacities, but also for the cost of a disproportion in the human faculties. While Schlichtegroll's obituary helped to spread the myth of the eternal child, the questions he initially sent to Maria Anna reveal how he was primarily interested in depicting the development of Mozart as an exceptionally talented, but all the more worldly artist. Whatever the final form of his biography may owe in part to the rise of early celebrity culture, it is still the modesty and the replicable development of Franklin's biography that provides the pattern for the *Nekrolog*'s educational impulse.

The *Nekrolog* and the question of national identity

In the preamble to the first issue of the *Nekrolog*, Schlichtegroll puts forth a universal claim, with regard not just to the social spectrum represented in the collection, but also to its cultural breadth. For practical reasons, he recognizes that most of the biographies will be concerned with people of German descent. He believes that in these cases he would be able to put forward the most reliable information. Schlichtegroll does not, however, intend to exclude foreigners altogether. Quite the opposite:

I do not want to restrict myself by withholding a place in this collection to the biographies of those eminent foreigners who have attracted the attention of the world.⁵³

Here Schlichtegroll vehemently opposes a strictly national form of biographical recognition, pointing out from a cosmopolitan perspective how biographies of significant figures, regardless of their origin, can serve as examples for anyone anywhere:

Men such as [Benjamin] *Franklin* or [John] *Howard* [both of them included in the *Nekrolog*'s first issue] or great writers likewise, from whatever nation they may come, belong not only to their fatherland but to the world, to all of humanity, in whose service they stood and acted.⁵⁴

In their ability to span both space and time, printed obituaries are, in Schlichtegroll's eyes, in contrast to public ceremonies or static monuments, a form of remembrance that furthers mutual understanding between nations, advocating a positive awareness of the other:

Funeral speeches and monuments preserve the deceased's memory only for their fellow countrymen and in a narrow compass. As long as a man regards himself just as the citizen of a town, as the inhabitant of a village, only his own churchyard and the names of his acquaintances and his immediate ancestors on its gravestones are of any importance to him. But when he comes to perceive himself, through culture or conversation, as a member of a large family, spread out over the earth, then each human being that perishes feels like a brother to him, and in each good and remarkable person, a beloved brother, worthy of

⁵³ Friedrich Schlichtegroll, *Nekrolog auf das Jahr 1790*, op. cit., p. 37.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 37sq.

remembrance, has passed.⁵⁵

In a world growing ever closer together, biography appears as an appropriate means to overcome national and intellectual boundaries. The kind of biographical collection that Schlichtegroll has in mind seems, by virtue of its plural nature, a particularly effective form of remembrance in an age marked by a developing public sphere and the free circulation of knowledge, facilitated by the printing press.

Let us therefore lay out a common graveyard and erect in it the cenotaphs of all the dead that seem to us worthy of remembrance and whose example can instruct and encourage us! Through the compilation of their biographies, let us have a memorial celebration of those departed, an All Souls' Day on which we present our gratitude and our good resolutions as offerings to the dead.⁵⁶

It is not just the singular case of one exemplary life, but the multiplicity of virtues reflected in his collection that Schlichtegroll regards as the foundation of its instructive value. The cultural variety however that he tried to achieve in the first issue of the *Nekrolog* was soon put aside. In the preface to the second issue's second volume, appearing in 1793, he notes laconically: 'Hopefully it will be commonly approved that due to the amount of material, the *Nekrolog* will be limited to remarkable *German* decedents.'⁵⁷ Beginning with the issue covering the year 1794, *Nekrolog auf das Jahr 1794*, this decision is furthermore reflected in the collection's title: *Nachrichten von dem Leben merkwürdiger in diesem Jahre verstorbener Deutschen* (*Notes of the lives of remarkable Germans that have passed in this year*). Now, Schlichtegroll calls his endeavour a 'Biographia Germanica' and a 'German Plutarch.'⁵⁸ A faint reminder of his initial cosmopolitan claim can be noted when he calls for a *Nekrolog der Ausländer*⁵⁹ (*Necrology of Foreigners*) as a worthwhile undertaking. Schlichtegroll himself, however, decides to confine the *Nekrolog* to the paradigm of national identity.⁶⁰ In this regard, he stresses how biography in its collective form can help to create and foster a sentiment of community, positioning the *Nekrolog* as an instrument of national self-exploration. He expresses his desire to 'inspire and invigorate public spirit and national interest in the tribes of the German tongue.'⁶¹ While the collection was initially meant to pursue a global perspective, the biographies are now supposed to mark out the space of the nation. Consequently, Schlichtegroll changed the name of his project once more in 1802, calling it *Nekrolog der Teutschen für das Neunzehnte Jahrhundert* (*Necrology of the Germans for the Nineteenth Century*).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 33

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁵⁷ Friedrich Schlichtegroll, *Nekrolog auf das Jahr 1791*, *op. cit.*, p.): (2v.

⁵⁸ Friedrich Schlichtegroll, *Nekrolog auf das Jahr 1795*, vol. 1, Gotha, Perthes 1796, p. XI.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. XII

⁶⁰ Michael Maurer suggests a general tendency towards collective biography as a forum of the nation around 1800, as opposed to the Early Modern corporative model, Michael Maurer, *Die Biographie des Bürgers*, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

⁶¹ Friedrich Schlichtegroll, *Nekrolog auf das Jahr 1795*, *op. cit.*, p. XI sq.

Inclusion and Exclusion: Gender and Class

Schlichtegroll's steady shift from universal towards national biography illustrates the ambivalences regarding mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in biography around 1800. Another such example would be the consideration of women. While the seventeenth and the early eighteenth century saw a whole range of biographical ventures aiming to collect the lives of learned women,⁶² by the end of the eighteenth century, those accounts were gradually integrated into general collections, seemingly intending to transgress social and gender boundaries.⁶³ Schlichtegroll emphasizes his intention to consider female alongside male biographies, but a closer look at gender roles around 1800 reveals that the preconditions for women's life writing had drastically changed. Even though educated women were able to participate in public life to some extent, as artists or *salonnières* for example, the predefined gender roles of the emergent middle class often seem even more rigid than their earlier counterparts.⁶⁴ This is not without consequence for the field of biography. While Early Modern society would undoubtedly deem the lives of female members of the aristocracy worthy of a biographical record, there was no later equivalent for the middle class. In particular, the differentiation between public and private, transmuting from permeable layers into strictly separate and gendered spheres, posed an obstacle to the inclusion of female lives in biographical collections. The normative biography is male. With regards to his *Allgemeine Biographie*, Johann Matthias Schröckh stated an intention to write about 'men' who 'have ruled, enlightened or educated the world through their minds.'⁶⁵ Schröckh was ready to include women as well, but only if 'they have risen above their gender'⁶⁶ and therefore have lived a life against the norm. Schlichtegroll initially attempts to phrase his intentions in a more neutral way. In the preamble to the *Nekrolog*, he speaks of collecting the 'lives of unusual, distinguished people' (*Menschen*). Later, however, when he writes about the specific selection, he almost exclusively uses the German term *Männer* (men), and women remain unmentioned.⁶⁷ And yet, the first issue of the *Nekrolog* already contains two biographies of women: the highly educated Countess Sabine Elisabeth Oelgard von Bassewitz (1716-1790) and Elisabeth

⁶² German examples include Johann Frawenlob, *Die lobwürdige Gesellschaft der Gelahrten Weiber*, n. p., 1631; Frantz Paullini, *Hoch- und Wohlgelehrtes Teutsches Frauen-Zimmer*, Frankfurt and Leipzig, Stössel, 1705; Johann Kaspar Eberti, *Eröffnetes Cabinet deß gelehrten Frauen-Zimmers*, Frankfurt and Leipzig, Rohrlach, 1706; Gottlieb Siegmund Corvinus (alias Amaranthes), *Nutzbares, Galantes und Curiöses Frauenzimmer Lexicon*, Leipzig, Gleditsch & Sohn, 1715; Georg Christian Lehms, *Teutschlands galante Poetinnen*, Frankfurt am Main, Hocker, 1715; Peter Paul Finauer, *Allgemeines historisches Verzeichnis gelehrter Frauenzimmer*, München, Mayr, 1761.

⁶³ Britta Rang, "'Jus fasque esse in rem publicam litterariam foeminas adscribi.' Gelehrt(inn)en-Enzyklopädien des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts,' *Paedagogica Historica*, No. 28 (1992), p. 511-549, p. 534sqq.

⁶⁴ Karin Hausen, 'Öffentlichkeit und Privatheit. Gesellschaftspolitische Konstruktionen und die Geschichte der Geschlechterbeziehungen,' in *Frauengeschichte – Geschlechtergeschichte*, ed. Karin Hausen and Heide Wunder, Frankfurt am Main and New York, Campus, 1992, p. 81-88.

⁶⁵ Johann Matthias Schröckh, *Allgemeine Biographie*, *op. cit.*, p.): (3r.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Schlichtegroll uses the term *Mensch* or *Menschen* (human beings, people) 22 times within the first twenty pages of his preface. Beginning from page 21 until the end of the preamble on page 62, the term *Mann* (man) and its plurals are used 29 times, while *Mensch* is only mentioned in 17 occasions. When Schlichtegroll makes a reference to any of the specific biographies in his collections, he talks almost exclusively of *Männer*, only rarely of *Menschen* and never of *Frauen* (women).

Wilhelmine Ludovica von Württemberg (1767-1790), Archduchess of Austria and spouse to the future Emperor Franz I. It is only in the second issue that Schlichtegroll explicitly comments on the inclusion of women, as he places an essay on the significance of female biographies before the accounts of Countess Christine von Auersperg (1754-1791) and Theresie Theschedik (1740-1791), wife of the German-Hungarian pastor Samuel Theschedik (Sámuel Tessedik, 1742-1820). 'The grave of a gallant woman is a place of enlightenment,'⁶⁸ he asserts, but at the same time he has to admit that the conditions for biographical remembrance are not in favour of women: 'in particular the whole second half of humanity has no vocation or opportunity for illustrious doings'⁶⁹ that might become subjects of public praise and living examples for others. Nevertheless, 'the noble souls of women invoke virtue and splendid deeds as much as those of men.'⁷⁰ Schlichtegroll takes it for a given that society is separated into a male public and a female private sphere that allocates women the prevailing role for the household and the family, but contrary to Schrökh, he intends to honour specifically those achievements that fall into the female domain:

[...] those difficult and venerable heroic deeds, the silent and unpraised virtues of domestic and social life, the monotonous struggles, to make oneself and those close pleased and happy, to balance and harmonize, to quietly endure the inevitable, to console everything that suffers [...]⁷¹

Following the generic dichotomy of active male and passive female, Schlichtegroll sketches the role of women as supporters and promoters of their male counterparts, paradigmatically embodied in the biography of Theresia Teschedik.⁷² Schlichtegroll makes an obvious effort not to undervalue biographies of women as he recommends them as examples to his male and female readers alike. In doing so, he implicitly places the private and domestic sphere on the same level as the male-dominated public sphere:

And would there be any better place to learn the [...] beneficent virtues than at the graves of gallant women, who were denied the strength of the male soul only to temper and dissolve the crude dissonances of life and who are an example to all classes and genders through their observance of many necessary but easily disregarded obligations. For it is sure that the all-seeing eye of the great judge of human deeds frequently beholds more true, persistent valour in the narrow chamber, where a mother, always full of hope and consolation, keeps watch with a pale lamp at her children's sickbed, than he does on the battlefield, where the general charges furiously at enemy fire.⁷³

Women, Schlichtegroll seems to imply, differ from men in the scope of their activity, but not in their virtues, as becomes apparent when he praises the valour [*Heldenmut*] of mothers watching over their children. In his portrait of Theresia Teschedik, wife of the pastor and agrarian reformer Samuel Teschedik, Schlichtegroll describes their attempt to improve the living standards of the Hungarian peasantry, usually connected with Samuel's name only, as a communal effort. He recounts how Theresia took over her

⁶⁸ Friedrich Schlichtegroll, *Nekrolog auf das Jahr 1791*, vol. 1, Gotha, Perthes, 1792, p. 138.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 139sq.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 155-163.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

husband's administrative and pastoral duties in his absence, how she studied the cultivation of silk and set up a successful silk mill in her garden, and how Emperor Joseph II bestowed the same honours upon her as upon her husband when he awarded a gold medal to each of them, bearing the words: *Virtute & exemplo*.⁷⁴ The reference to the medal's inscription highlights how Theresia Teschedik's life serves as something of a female counterpart to Benjamin Franklin's biography of the previous year. For Schlichtegroll, both individuals represent the virtues of vigour and diligence, regardless of their gender. However, to assume that Schlichtegroll was able to completely transcend the restrictions that contemporary society imposed on women would oversimplify the contradictory status of female biographies in the *Nekrolog*. While he began his essay on the value of commemorating women's lives with reference to their exemplarity for both women and men, he concludes with a passage that is aimed solely at his female readers:

Everywhere in this great, glorious world as well as in the provident and busy middle class, a woman can further the fortune of her house and her circle and contribute to the common welfare of humanity through gentle kindness, through merry mirth, through patient suffering, as also through rigorous orderliness and supportive behaviour.⁷⁵

While it seems that Schlichtegroll seeks to find a way to recount female lives as exemplary in their own right, he is unable to escape the contemporary discourse, whereby a woman's value is judged in her relation to men. Thus, his praise of female virtues oscillates between universal recognition and a specific model of female conduct, following the ideal of the indulgent, supportive woman. Apparently, there is a lack of clear criteria that would enable the editor to treat women's biographies as equal to those of men. In the last analysis Schlichtegroll's argument remains contradictory. From a modern perspective, he fails to take a clear stance against the marginalisation of female biography. At the same time, it needs to be acknowledged that Schlichtegroll's collection enables readers to question and address the limitations women had to face when considering their life prospects.

The case of Johanna Sophia Kettner (1722-1802) serves as another telling example of the ambivalences in Schlichtegroll's assessment of gender norms.⁷⁶ For more than six years, Kettner had served in the Imperial Habsburg army, disguised as a man. She was dismissed when her true identity was discovered, but still publicly honoured by Empress Maria Theresa and endowed with a lifelong pension. Johanna Kettner's life follows the biographical model outlined by Schröckh in the *Allgemeine Biographie*, as one of the *Nekrolog*'s precursors: women deserve biographies when they manage to escape the narrow boundaries of the domestic sphere and are able to establish themselves in a male-dominated world. However, this contradicts Schlichtegroll's earlier thoughts on promoting the contemporary norm for women's lives as equally worthy of biographical remembrance. His interest in the female soldier's life is mainly due to its extraordinary story: Kettner's break with social conventions and her appropriation of a male identity. Unlike earlier biographical collections of learned women, which might feature over a hundred entries on female lives in an effort to prove

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 160sq.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

⁷⁶ Friedrich Schlichtegroll, *Nekrolog der Teutschen für das neunzehnte Jahrhundert*, vol. 1, Perthes, Gotha, 1802, p. 161-166.

the universal intellectual capabilities of women, Kettner's biography presents a very specific story rather than a universal one. What makes her life worth telling is its unusual circumstances, the way it deviates from the contemporary female norm. The interest in her biography arises precisely because becoming a soldier was doubtlessly not expected from a woman like her. As a result the exemplary character of her biography seems to be diminished. Even though the circumstances of Kettner's life were exceptional, they were not altogether unique. As cases of female soldiers were sure to incite interest and excitement, a whole range of lives similar to Kettner's has been documented in the Early Modern period.⁷⁷ Often women chose to take on the life of a soldier out of immediate poverty, but sometimes also as a deliberate act of emancipation. The documentation and literary adaption of such cases prove the public's interest in the lives of women soldiers, even though, or maybe especially because, their biographies usually end with their repatriation into traditional gender roles, marriage and motherhood.⁷⁸ Even though Kettner's life is unique within the *Nekrolog*, in the context of the broader culture memory, the motif of the female soldier appears as a

frame of reference for a more general discussion of roles and rights for men and women. Biographies of women-in-arms might not lend themselves directly to an emancipatory narrative, but they serve to question the validity of gender norms and may well be a point of departure for a critical debate in this respect.⁷⁹

In spite of Schlichtegroll's claim of inclusivity, social identity, alongside nationality and gender, becomes a third distinguishing factor within the biographies collected in the *Nekrolog*. As the closed corporative structure of society gradually dissolves, new discrepancies appear. Schlichtegroll is particularly concerned with the biographical representation of those social groups from which the educated middle class, as a privileged social group with increasing economic power, tries to dissociate itself, viz. simple craftsmen, peasants, casual labourers. The habitual relation between the bourgeois elite on the one hand and the un-propertied lower class contrasts with the Enlightenment's claim that everyone, regardless of social heritage, has the potential to educate themselves, develop their mental horizons and, therefore, raise their social status.⁸⁰ Schlichtegroll's biographies aspire to reconcile these contradictions. The example of David Klaus (1718-1793), a shepherd from Halberstadt whose life is included in the *Nekrolog*'s fourth year, shows how a biography that is not set in a bourgeois environment can still serve to negotiate an implicit understanding of middle-class identity.⁸¹ The life of David Klaus seems noteworthy precisely because of his modest background. He spent every penny he could on books, acquiring an extensive

⁷⁷ Cf. Rudolf Dekker and Lotte van de Pol, *Frauen in Männerkleidern. Weibliche Transvestiten und ihre Geschichte*, Berlin, Wagenbach, 1990; Klaus Reisinger, 'Frauen und Militär in der Neuzeit. Francesca Scanagatta: Die militärische Karriere einer Frau im ausgehenden 18. Jahrhundert,' *Das achtzehnte Jahrhundert und Österreich. Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Gesellschaft zur Erforschung des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts*, No. 16 (2001), p. 59-73; Marian Füssel, 'Frauen in die Schlacht? Weibliche Soldaten im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert zwischen Dissimulation und Sensation,' in *Soldatinnen. Gewalt und Geschlecht im Krieg vom Mittelalter bis heute*, ed. Klaus Latzel et al., Paderborn et al., Schöningh, 2011, p. 159-178.

⁷⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 69sq; Marian Füssel, 'Frauen in der Schlacht?,' *op. cit.*, p. 177.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

⁸⁰ Michael Maurer, *Die Biographie des Bürgers*, *op. cit.*, p. 144sq.

⁸¹ Friedrich Schlichtegroll, *Nekrolog auf das Jahr 1793*, vol. 1, Gotha, Perthes, 1794, p. 121-163.

library of more than a thousand volumes, and, thanks to his self-acquired education, he was regarded among his peers as an authority in questions of religion and philosophy.⁸²

Establishing why he chose to include David Klaus in his collection, Schlichtegroll speculates about the idea of an infinite archive, containing accounts of each and everybody. He describes such an endeavour as a ridiculous enterprise that ‘would contradict itself and self-destruct because in the end [...] the living could do nothing more than *read* what the deceased have *done*.’⁸³ Particularly with the lower social spheres, a selection of biographies would have to be restricted to those who ‘distinguished themselves in the face of thousands of their kind.’⁸⁴ As in the case of Johanna Sophia Kettner, David Klaus’ distinguishing characteristic is his appropriation of a (male) bourgeois behavioural standard. Both portraits describe the deviation from traditional norms as exceptional cases, but they also confirm the prevailing standards as well as their social and habitual foundations. Just as the life of Johanna Sophia Kettner tells us more about the limitations of female aspirations and the standards of male warfare than about the biographical reality of a woman’s life around 1800, so the account of David Klaus conveys the necessary requirements of bourgeois behaviour for recognition outside one’s own social sphere. The concern with the lower classes is, therefore, also to be regarded as an act of bourgeois self-assurance.⁸⁵

Occasionally however, in the *Nekrolog* there are biographies that refuse to bow to the standards carved out by the culturally dominant middle class. The biography of Geuß the carpenter might serve as an example.⁸⁶ The accounts that Schlichtegroll received did not include his first name nor his date of birth, and for this reason alone his obituary would be out of the conventional biographical line. In addition the narrative itself avoids the *Nekrolog*’s common chronological pattern. Instead, it takes the form of an unsystematic collection of anecdotes, whose protagonist appears as some kind of ‘wise fool,’ questioning the way people go about their daily business through down-to-earth intelligence and skilful eloquence. Even though he repeatedly offends society’s moral principles and shows little respect for the property of others, Geuß does not appear as a negative figure or even a daunting example of criminal behaviour. Rather, he is a biting critic of his contemporaries. The anonymous author, who had sent the account of Geuß’s life to Schlichtegroll, even goes so far as to situate the carpenter alongside satirists like Jonathan Swift or critical philosophers like Socrates.⁸⁷

The tensions evident within the biographies of women and those people from outside the educated middle class reveal the ambivalent structural principles of Schlichtegroll’s *Nekrolog*. Despite the Enlightenment’s social criticism, his collection is characterized by a tendency to focus on educated middle-class individuals, which is in

⁸² The ‘educated peasant’ serves as a contemporary figure of fascination and at the same time as the projections and imaginations of public Enlightenment. Self-educated countrymen confirm the intellectual capacities of the peasantry. Cf. Heinz Otto Lichtenberg, *Unterhaltsame Bauernaufklärung. Ein Kapitel Volksbildungsgeschichte*, Tübingen, Tübinger Vereinigung für Volkskunde, 1970; Reinhard Wittmann, ‘Der lesende Landmann. Zur Rezeption aufklärerischer Bemühungen durch die bäuerliche Bevölkerung im 18. Jahrhundert,’ in *Der Bauer Mittel- und Osteuropas im sozioökonomischen Wandel des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts. Beiträge zu seiner Lage und deren Widerspiegelung in der zeitgenössischen Publizistik und Literatur*, ed. Dan Berindei *et al.*, Köln and Wien, Böhlau, 1973, p. 142-196, p. 173.

⁸³ Friedrich Schlichtegroll, *Nekrolog auf das Jahr 1793*, vol. 1, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

⁸⁵ Michael Maurer, *Die Biographie des Bürgers*, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

⁸⁶ Friedrich Schlichtegroll, *Nekrolog auf das Jahr 1799*, vol. 2, Gotha, Perthes, 1805, p. 84-96.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

line with contemporary biographical conventions.⁸⁸ On the other hand, the *Nekrolog* illustrates the potential of collective projects compared to singular biographies. Schlichtegroll's editorial conception allows him to incorporate narratives that do not comply with conventional biographical patterns. His preservation of marginal lives, such as Geuß the carpenter's, reveal how the everyday life of a large part of society around 1800 has left almost no traces in collective memory. Scarce though they may be, the deviations from the biographical norm visible in the *Nekrolog* suggest the capacity of biographical collections to reinforce a canon and/or to question it and establish counter-models.⁸⁹

Schlichtegroll's *Nekrolog* serves as an example of the fundamental principle of plurality underlying each biographical collection. Unlike individual biographies, these collections do not rely on the singularity of their subject, but thrive on the productive tension between the parts and the whole. Schlichtegroll's first and foremost goal is to open up biography as an institution of collective memory, based on social diversity. In this way, his collection offers a broad variety of role models for the lives of its readers. From a historiographical perspective, as an instrument of comparison, the *Nekrolog* bears witness to the changing shifts in political potency. In line with Enlightenment thought, the collection demonstrates a deep interest in the nature of humankind: biography as an anthropological archive. At the same time, it promotes the contemporary democratization of life writing. Schlichtegroll regards himself as a mere editor to the accounts he receives rather than as a biographer in his own right, even though it is believed that over the sixteen years of the *Nekrolog*'s existence, he wrote most of the entries himself.⁹⁰ From a modern perspective, the *Nekrolog* seems most innovative where Schlichtegroll is inconsistent in his own claims: the promotion of female biographies and the inclusion of lives apart from the aristocracy and the educated middle class. Just as he seems undecided whether to include the lives of women that don't follow a male model, he struggles to come up with a cohesive narrative for biographies outside aristocratic and bourgeois norms. It is in this respect, indicating the potential of collective biography rather than fulfilling it outright, that Schlichtegroll's *Nekrolog* is truest to the transformative dynamics of the Enlightenment.

Collective biography is, on the face of it, about a multitude of distinctive lives. What, you might ask, could be a better way of giving voice to the differences of gender, ethnicity, race, sexuality and region—the diversity and heterogeneity of the nation—than a dictionary of biography? Some, particularly those who have worked close to the coal face in such enterprises, may argue that a register of heterogeneity is indeed what collective biography achieves.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Hannes Schweiger, 'Biographiewürdigkeit,' in *Handbuch Biographie*, *op. cit.*, p. 32-36, p. 33.

⁸⁹ Hannes Schweiger, 'Die Macht der Archive. Zu Michel Foucault: "Das Leben der infamen Menschen,"' in *Theorie der Biographie*, *op. cit.*, p. 277-283, p. 282.

⁹⁰ Georg Friedrich August Schmidt, 'Adolph Heinrich Friedrich von Schlichtegroll,' *op. cit.*, p. 10.

⁹¹ James Walter, 'Seven Questions about National Biography,' in *National Biographies & National Identity. A Critical Approach to Theory and Editorial Practice*, ed. Iain McCalman, Canberra, Humanities Research Centre (Australian National University), 1996, p. 19-34. Christian von Zimmermann asserts that it is precisely the pluralisation of individuality and the simultaneous representation of diversity that motivate biography around 1800. Cf. Christian von Zimmermann, *Biographische Anthropologie. Menschenbilder in lebensgeschichtlicher Darstellung (1830-1940)*, Berlin and New York, De Gruyter, 2006, p. 53.