In 1981 Peter Handke published the semi-autobiographical text *Kindergeschichte*, containing reflections on the early years of life with his daughter Amina. During these years, Amina frequently wrote and drew in her father’s notebooks. This article considers Amina not only as the subject of her father’s work but also as a kind of co-author, by grounding the narrative thematization of the interaction between child and adult in the concrete interaction of their writing and drawing practices in Handke’s notebooks. The observation of his child’s entry into the material-semiotic systems of writing, I suggest, heightened Handke’s awareness of the visuality and materiality of his own compositional practice. Much like the “lessons” he learned from the painter Paul Cézanne in composing *Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire*, Amina’s emergent drawing and writing practice, her concrete “Suche nach Formen” on the pages of her father’s notebooks, was intertwined in the ongoing evolution of her father’s project of writing as it took shape in *Kindergeschichte*.

*Keywords:* Peter Handke, authorship, materiality of writing, writers’ notebooks, children’s drawings

For the occasion of Peter Handke’s seventieth birthday in 2012, Suhrkamp Verlag published new editions of works from throughout the writer’s career. For these re-editions, the writer commissioned from his own daughter, Amina Handke (born 20 April 1969), a cross-media artist based in Vienna, fifty-eight pencil drawings to serve as cover illustrations (A. Handke, “58 Drawings”). Amina’s drawing for the new cover of her father’s *Kindergeschichte*, originally published in 1981, is a tracing of the fingers of a hand, a performance of the trope of the earliest kind of drawings a young child will often produce (Piper 7) (see Figure 1). Mimicking this originary drawing, the tracing of the hand is an index in the Peircean sense, pointing to the absent presence of the artist’s hand. As an image of the hand, the bodily instrument of drawing itself, the drawing is also self-reflexive. If the hand often serves as a metonym for the author or artist, this particular hand tracing is doubly metonymic, for it also glosses Amina’s and her father’s own surname, Handke, a diminutive form of the German Hand with the suffix -ke. Not only did she design the cover: the book for which Amina drew her own hand—traced in the position of holding the book open to read (Belz)—was, in fact, a book about her. Beneath
her father’s name, the trace of Amina’s hand reaches onto the surface of a work that she participated in creating.

Kindergeschichte is the third book in the tetralogy “Langsame Heimkehr,” which also includes Langsame Heimkehr (1979), Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire (1980), and Über die Dörfer (1981). Largely autobiographical, Kindergeschichte represents the first ten years of Handke’s life with his daughter, who become figured within the story as the allegorical characters “der Erwachsene,” the adult, and “das Kind,” the child. In the volume Slow Homecoming, which includes English translations of the first three works of the tetralogy, the title Kindergeschichte is translated “Child Story”—rather than “children’s story,” which would be the more common translation of the term—underscoring the unusual nature of Handke’s text. Instead of a text for children, such as a bedtime story, Handke’s “Child Story” is a tale of and about a child, a story of Amina one could say; through its title, Handke’s work literalizes the semi-autobiographical nature of this tale of his child and their relationship. At the same time, Handke’s Kindergeschichte is part of a transformative shift in the writer’s process and authorial self-conception that began to emerge over the prior decade, a shift that can be understood, in part, through his relationship to Amina and his roles as writer and parent as explored in the story.

But as this article will suggest, Kindergeschichte is not only about a child; it can also be considered to be a story by a child. In contrast to the title’s presentation on the cover of the original edition, the splitting and hyphenation of the compound word Kindergeschichte on the 2012 edition defamiliarizes the term and hints at a more multifaceted relationship between the “child” and the “story” in the text. The use of one of Amina’s drawings for the 2012 cover also had a precursor in Handke’s earlier commissioning of cover drawings for several of his works from the young Amina: Über die Dörfer (1981), Die Geschichte des Bleistifts (1982), and Der Chinese des Schmerzes (1983). These original covers included a pencil drawing of a pencil for the first edition of Kindergeschichte (see Figure 2). For a time, in fact, it was unclear to scholars who actually authored the drawing: the ten-year-old Amina or her father (Kepplinger-Prinz; Handke and Unseld 419, note 2). Amina is not just represented in Peter Handke’s text; rather, she is deeply imbricated in its emergence from the beginning. Her drawings for the various covers, which become paratextual portals through which we enter it, are an expression of the complex dynamic through which the work was generated. Amina’s involvement in producing the covers, and the entwining of her creative process with that of her father, thus stands as a metaphor for the Kindergeschichte itself.

Like many of Handke’s texts, Kindergeschichte emerged out of a layered writing process that originated in the author’s notebooks, which also served as an important site for the development the young Amina’s drawing practice, alluded to through the inclusion of her drawings on the books’ covers. Beginning in the early 1970s, Handke began a practice of daily note taking: he took notebooks with him everywhere and wrote in them constantly, using various writing
Figure 2. Cover, Peter Handke, *Kindergeschichte*, 1981. Illustration by Amina Handke. © Suhrkamp Verlag, Berlin.
utensils in numerous colours. Handke’s notebooks are of different formats and qualities of paper, small enough to fit into a jacket pocket, bound in varied materials, and sometimes reinforced with tape or adhesive bandages (“Notizbücher”). Sixty-six of the notebooks inscribed between 1975 and 1990 are now housed at the Deutsches Literaturarchiv in Marbach, Germany. Together, they contain almost ten thousand pages filled with observations, descriptions, and notes on the landscapes through which Handke travelled and on paintings he saw during museum visits, as well as formulations of passages that would later appear in print (Bülow; Kepplinger-Prinz and Pektor; Kasper).

Throughout the notebooks of the 1970s and early 1980s, Amina is a constant presence: there are frequent references to her, descriptions of things she did or said, alongside Handke’s momentary observations and notes for texts. Among the ephemera that provide a physical trace of these notebooks’ journeys throughout Europe and North America, Polaroid photographs of Amina were occasionally inserted between the pages. Such traces bear witness to Amina’s presence in her father’s life and in the sphere of his writerly work.

Yet Peter Handke was not the only one to write and draw in the notebooks. In these early notebooks, one finds numerous drawings and stories by the young Amina interspersed between, and at times occupying the same pages as, her father’s notes. This article explores the potential of these doodles to affect and reverberate throughout both Handke’s process and his published products (or textual productions). The drawing of Amina’s hand on the cover of Kindergeschichte is thus a metonym not only for Amina but for a space in which their writing and drawing literally, at times, overlapped, a space that lay outside, but was intimately connected to, the published text: the notebooks.

That Handke twice chose Amina’s drawings to serve as cover illustrations for his text, a text that itself narrates his experience of her childhood, has thus far evaded serious scholarly attention. Hiding in plain sight, the covers have appeared to simply literalize the theme of the book itself—a story about a child. Yet, by involving his daughter in the cover design, Handke turned the book into a product of both the father’s and the child’s hands. This literal collaboration, I suggest, is paradigmatic of Amina’s multifaceted participation, reflected in the interaction of adult and child in the plot of Kindergeschichte, in the creation of this work. Amina’s influence on the emergence of the text—and, in turn, on her father’s aesthetic project more broadly—goes beyond her role as a “character” in the semi-autobiographical story, and beyond her role in designing the cover illustrations for two editions. This study takes seriously the following question: to what degree did Amina participate in the authorship of Peter Handke’s Kindergeschichte? Or, taking a prompt from Kindergeschichte’s own form, the 2012 cover, to what degree is the work a product of Amina’s hand? In this article, Amina’s hand is seen to be bound up much more recursively with the text itself. Its final emblazonment upon the cover of the 2012 re-edition indexes a long material relationship between Peter and Amina Handke, a collaboration—for
that is what it was—that raises questions about the limits of artistic influence and the boundaries of authorship.

Considering Amina as a constitutive participant in the production of her father’s literary work, this article expands the locus of authorial agency constituting Handke’s creative practice, and articulates a model of inter-authorship for Handke’s text that may be applicable to other modernist projects. In describing the inter-authorship of *Kindergeschichte*, I do not mean that Amina literally composed the language of the text. Rather, I read the generation of this text as a product of the interaction of two agencies, two writing processes—that of the writer, Peter Handke, and that of the young child, Amina. If some might describe the “influence” of Handke’s daughter on his work, the notion of inter-authorship puts pressure on the constitutive nature of this influence; the six-year-old Amina, in the process of developing and orienting to the world, and her own doodling and writing in her father’s notebooks, as material/medial practice, were key influences on Handke in the production of this work and the emergence of his aesthetic project, influences that can be considered, as I will explore, components of the authorship of *Kindergeschichte*.

Understanding the notebooks as key to the finished text of *Kindergeschichte* means opening up the boundaries of the work to the materiality of its production, and drawing material process into textual product. It also prompts us to consider the way that Handke’s interest in materiality and visuality created a space of agency for his daughter as a creative subject. The materiality, mediality, and visuality of a writer’s texts in the process of their generation—be they manuscripts in pen or pencil on paper, machine- or hand-edited typescripts, or digital documents—always have the potential to produce recursive effects on the creative process itself (Hurlebusch 29). In the work of Handke, such recursions of textual production are particularly conspicuous, as the visual effects of the page become thematized in Handke’s published texts and quite literally visualized, in some cases, through their facsimile reproduction. In light of this, Amina’s production in the space of her father’s notebooks, intermingling with his notes and observations, might be considered in its potential to exert an influence on Handke’s production. While Amina was clearly an influence on her father’s life and work more generally, this article considers Amina less as a passive subject to be rendered in narrative than as a writerly hand whose material products, and the processes they made visible, became the subject of Handke’s attention.

A range of theoretical approaches that ask us to reconsider the phenomena of authorship, agency, and textual production might be brought to bear on Peter and Amina Handke’s entwined production. Bibliographic scholarship on the sociology of the text (McKenzie) has drawn attention to the host of human agents who play a role in the production of texts and textual meaning: writers, editors, designers, printers, publishers, distributors, and readers, among many others. With respect to Handke studies in particular, the entire correspondence of Handke with Suhrkamp Verlag editor-in-chief Siegfried Unseld has recently
been published, as well as a study of the role of Handke’s reader Elisabeth Borcher in the generation of Langsame Heimkehr (Barner). Further perspectives from the fields of Editionswissenschaft and critique génétique, which have destabilized the traditional boundary between text and avant-texte, between Werk and Beiwerk, might challenge us to consider Handke’s notebooks and text drafts as constitutive parts of his work, rather than mere materials that led to the publication of them (Grésillon 26–28; Nutt-Kofoth 169–70). Media theory, in particular recent scholarship on the Schreibszene, which approaches writing as an unstable, interactive ensemble of language, instrumentality, and gesture (Campe 760; Stingelin 14), can push us to consider the ways in which Handke’s various writing utensils, the material form and format of his notebooks, and his physical, embodied practice of note taking play a participatory role in the authorship of his texts. As Friedrich Nietzsche famously wrote, “UNSER SCHREIBZEUG ARBEITET MIT AN UNSEREN GEDANKEN” (sic) (61; Stingelin 8). Or, in other words, “the medium [is] a part of the mind” (Schilleman 26).

These diverse provocations collectively offer ways of expanding the locus of authorship beyond the boundaries of human subjectivity (traditionally defined) and can be positioned in relation to poststructuralist displacement of the origin of textual meaning from the Author onto language (Barthes, “Death” 143–45). Actor-network theory and so-called new materialist theories disperse agency even further, providing an expanded definition of agency that might be deployed by literary studies to encompass a wider host of factors that participate in the authorship of texts. In Vibrant Matter, for example, Jane Bennett, drawing on Spinoza, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, and Bruno Latour, defines agency as being “distributed across an ontologically heterogeneous field, rather than being a capacity localized in a human body or in a collective produced (only) by human efforts” (23). Latour similarly emphasizes that all social activities are constituted by the interactive association of a diversity of participants, both human and non-human (71–72). Yet if actor-network theory and new materialism have often been marshalled to emphasize that “objects too have agency” (Latour 63), we must keep in mind that underlying concepts of agency include non-human and human factors, material and subjective actants. Bennett writes of her own textual work that

[The sentences of this book also emerged from the confederate agency of many striving macro- and microactants: from “my” memories, intentions, contentions, intestinal bacteria, eyeglasses, and blood sugar, as well as from the plastic computer keyboard, the bird song from the open window, or the air or particulates in the room, to name only a few of the participants. (23)]

To these, of course, we would have to add the range of human actors who also participated in constituting “the sentences” of her book—editors, designers, and printers, among others. And, of course, there is also everyone listed in the acknowledgements: “This book,” Bennett writes—indeed, most books—“is the
effect of a fortuitous assemblage of friends, colleagues, interlocutors, and other things” (xxi). Authorship, in short, is always inter-authorship.

At the centre of this article, however, is a six-year-old child. What does it mean to marshal such theoretical armatures in describing the agency of the six-year-old Amina—or, more precisely, that of her doodles, drawings, and stories? If we acknowledge the relevance of Handke’s notebooks, their contents, format, and materials, for understanding Handke’s aesthetic project, then so too must we consider their authors, and the idea that Peter Handke may have been looking as carefully at what Amina inscribed there as at his own notes and drawings. We would have to take seriously the notion that Amina, as a co-creator and a fundamental influence—in terms of method, approach, concept, and process—on her father’s work and practice, must be included as a component of the agental assemblage that constituted the production of Handke’s texts.

This article thus draws on recent reconceptualizations of materiality, mediality, and the agency of textual production as a backdrop against which to interrogate the influence of Handke’s daughter on the literary work of *Kindergeschichte* as encountered in published form. It would be easy to mistakenly dismiss Amina’s role and her agency in these encounters. Handke let Amina draw in his notebooks as a means to occupy her during periods of boredom, and the material products of these moments might be disregarded as the simple by-products of the strategy of a coping parent. Yet the observation of his child’s entry into the material-semiotic system of writing, into the universe of the page, I demonstrate, exerted an influence on Handke, heightening his awareness of the visuality and materiality of his own inscriptive practice.

All of this, we must remember, was happening during the mid- to late 1970s, a crucial period in Handke’s career—a crisis of writing (Handke and Gamper 59–60; Herwig 196; Carstensen 16) overcome through the emergence of a new aesthetic program, a “classical turn” (Höller 198, 203) or a “turn to nature” (Huber 111)—a moment of pivot that scholars have examined closely but never through this lens (Handke and Gamper 182; Barner 357; Kastberger 3; Carstensen 15). Although *Kindergeschichte* has been acknowledged as both documenting the prehistory of this shift in Handke’s poetics and fully realizing the aesthetic and writerly program articulated in *Langsame Heimkehr* and *Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire* (Timpe 319), *Kindergeschichte* has received far less scholarly attention than the first two texts in the tetralogy. Amina’s activity in her father’s notebooks offers a new way to think about this shift in Handke’s poetics and writerly practice. As Handke was looking for artistic inspiration in the painter Paul Cézanne, so too did he find inspiration in his own daughter. Like the “lesson” Handke would learn from Cézanne that became *Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire*, Amina’s emergent drawing and writing practice, her concrete “Suche nach Formen” (Handke, *Langsame Heimkehr* 9) on the pages of her father’s notebooks, can be viewed as critically intertwined with, even co-constitutive of, the ongoing evolution of Handke’s project of writing as it took shape in *Kindergeschichte*. 
In the opening of *Kindergeschichte*, Handke narrates the entry of “das Kind” into the world of “der Erwachsene” (10–11), his subsequent separation from his wife in the years thereafter (46), and his move to France, where he is alone for the first time with the child. The story that unfolds is of a learning process, as the relationship between adult and child begins to define itself—a process replete with struggle, agitations, and frustrations that ultimately gives rise to trust, understanding, and inspiration. At the same time, the story is of the struggle between Handke the parent and Handke the writer. Handke describes the omnipresence of the child—“das immer anwesende Kind” (39)—within the domain of his work; he narrates moments of harmony, of aligned rhythms, and moments of discord, in which the child becomes a distraction. Handke writes:

Ein solches Glück war es auch für die erste Zeit allein mit dem Kind, daß Tag für Tag eine schon zuvor begonnene Arbeit weiterzuführen war. Gleich am Abend des Abschieds, in der Schlafstunde des Kindes, zieht es den Erwachsenen geradezu diebisch zu seinem Stückwerk hin [...] (47)

Soon, however, the adult begins to experience the child’s presence as a burden, producing a laming effect on his work: “[...] bald [...] bedeutete das Haus mit dem Kind eine schlimmere Eingeschlossenheit und Unbeweglichkeit als je zuvor. Damit erst kam die Verlassenheit [...]” (48). “[Er erfuhr] die fast ausschließlich aus Kindergeräuschen und Kindersachen bestehende, im Kinderzeit-rhythmus ablaufende Tagtätigkeit, arbeitslos, wie er zudem war, immer heftiger als brutales und sinnloses Verhängnis” (50).

Through this internal conflict, the adult ultimately comes to find and embrace his task as a writer: “er mußte zum Herrn seiner Einsichten werden; und dazu benötigte er eben doch wieder das Tätigsein” (119). He decides to part with his child for a year, during which time she will live with her mother in Germany. “[N]ach einem halben Dutzend Jahre fast immer allein mit dem Kind durfte er einmal versuchen, aufs Ganze zu gehen; und das schien ihm nur möglich ohne Abgelenktein, in der alles sonst ausschließenden Konzentration” (120). Yet during this year away from her, the adult continually encounters children who become his “helpers” (122), and children become the guardians of ever new possibilities: “mit jedem neuen Bewußtsein begannen die immergleichen Möglichkeiten, und die Augen der Kinder im Gedränge—sieh sie dir an!—überlieferten den ewigen Geist” (126).

*Kindheit* and *Kindlichkeit*, childhood and a childlikeness, not only are thematicized in *Kindergeschichte* but also bear a fundamental relationship to the aesthetic project and conception of narration that emerged for Handke during this time: a project of mythologizing the everyday, of re-auraticizing of the contemporary world (Melzer 53–59; Carstensen). The child appears for Handke as both “Vorbild und Urbild” (Dinter 160). He writes in *Die Geschichte des Bleistifts*: “Die *Form* des Kindes bestimmt noch viel zu wenig mein tägliches Dasein” (300). Echoing the Romantic yearning for unity and idealization of childhood,
Handke describes “[d]as Kind als Gedanke, welcher das Endliche und das Unendliche verbindet” (Geschichte 59; Metcalf 285). In Handke’s notebooks from the mid- to late 1970s, embedded among notes not only for Kindergeschichte but also Langsame Heimkehr and Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire, there are copious notes about “A.” (Amina) and about children and childhood more generally. As Karl-Lorenz Timpe suggests, Kindergeschichte provides the prehistory of the poetic project developed in Langsame Heimkehr and Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire and represents its “Durchführung,” its execution or realization (319). As such, the thematization and elevation of childhood in Kindergeschichte is based on observations and notes that Handke collected from throughout the entirety of his preceding notebook production, alongside and intertwined with his initiation of and experimentation with a new aesthetic mode in Langsame Heimkehr and Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire.

While Kindergeschichte is about the first ten years of Peter and Amina Handke’s coexistence, it is at the same time a distillation of a relationship that unfolded in real time on other pages. That unfolding took place in Handke’s notebooks, which offer the means of observing their collaboration as it reshaped his practice. Amina was an active co-producer of her father’s notebooks, writing and drawing in them with frequency. In at least one case, the notebook itself, the physical object in which Handke wrote, was constructed by Amina, then age six, as a gift on the occasion of her father’s birthday (Pektor, “Ohne”; A. Handke, personal interview), inscribed with the dedication “bonne fête papa, et je t’embrasse beaucoup. Amina” (see Figures 3 and 4). However, Amina’s writing in her father’s notebooks was far more extensive than this simple inscription. For example, the following story is found in the pages of the earliest notebook housed at the DLA (see Figure 5):

NATHALIE / l’histoire de charis / il _ i _ avet une foi une / méchante petite / fille qui s’apelet charis / et elle a tirée la queue / d’un chien et sa / maman lui / a donné 4 bone / fésé. FIN

Composed in French with several spelling errors, typical of a writer who has not yet mastered the relationships between phonetic and graphic representation, the story occupies the space of a single page, the end of the page physically dictating the end of the text. Amina opens the story, “il _ i _ avet une foi une / méchante petite / fille,” employing the conventional opening of fairy tales or children’s stories “il y avait une fois.” The conclusion of the story with “four good spankings” from the mother similarly evokes the moralizing punishment with which many fairy tales conclude. Amina’s “histoire de charis” is a Kindergeschichte in multiple senses: a story written by child, a story that plays with the generic conventions of the children’s story, and a story whose physical form, replete with messy, error-laden attempts to form words on a page, characterizes a child’s entry into the visual and material economy of writing.
Figure 3. Amina Handke, cover, Notizbuch 6, June–July 1976. Marker on paper, laminated. 7.7 × 11 cm. Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach, HS.2007.0010.00006.
As a young child taking up her father’s pen and paper, Amina was an emergent writer, not fully indoctrinated into the media conventions of writing. In turn, Amina’s attempts to navigate the material forms and writerly conventions of the notebook page, its space, layout, and format, highlight features of the notebooks’ material forms (Kress 57–58). That Handke was attentive to Amina’s practice is clear: at times, he provides a caption for Amina’s drawings, annotated with the location in which they were penned. Moreover, his awareness of and attention to her drawings are demonstrated by his habit of writing around and in between them, literally entwining his own mature practice with her more hesitant attempts on the space of the page. In Handkeonline, an electronic research platform that documents the archival sources resulting from the production of Handke’s texts (Kastberger, Pektor, and Keplinger-Prinz), Amina is often listed as a “beteiligte Person,” literally a “participating person.” When mentioned in Handke scholarship, however, Amina’s “Beteiligung” is rarely described in more than a sentence. While there is little scholarship on Amina’s drawings, and none on Handke’s relationship to them, what scholarship there is acknowledges the occasional difficulty in untangling Amina’s hand from that of her father.

lengthiest discussion of Amina’s drawings is provided by Christoph Kepplinger-Prinz and Katharina Pektor, who, in delineating “sechs Arten des zeichnenden Notierens” in Handke’s notebooks, include Amina’s drawings in the category of “einfache schematische Zeichnungen” (8). Although some of these drawings are “zweifellos Kinderzeichnungen und stammen von Peter Handkes Tochter Amina, die 1976 sieben Jahre alt war,” the authorship of others is indeterminate: “nicht alle Zeichnungen dieser Gruppe lassen sich ohne weiteres dem Kind zuordnen. Einige wirken zu gekonnt für ein Kind dieses Alters und zugleich zu kindlich, um sie einem Erwachsenen zuzuschreiben” (8–10). If Peter and Amina Handke’s hands at times look quite similar in the notebooks, this suggests that, occasionally, the father may have been impersonating the drawing techniques of his child—that he imitated her, studied her, learned from her.

Within the notebooks, the interaction between the two writers reveals a mutual influence. In Notizbuch 1, we find numerous texts and drawings by Amina (see Figures 6 and 7) that are striking for the simple fact that they are upside down with respect to her father’s notes, opposite the “proper” orientation of writing in the notebook. From the way in which Handke’s notes frame Amina’s
drawings on the right-hand page, it is clear that she inscribed these pages before he did. It is unclear, however, whether Handke had already begun writing in the notebook when Amina drew these images, or whether the notebook was still blank. Amina may have been unaware that she was drawing upside down. But by the time these drawings were composed, Amina would have been five or six years old, and thus familiar with the top/bottom conventions of the page. It is possible that she was deliberately writing upside down, flouting convention, or, at times, her father may have held his open notebook across the table for her to draw in. In any case, Handke’s decision to then inscribe these pages in their more standard directionality—instead of, say, following the inscriptive orientation set by his child—draws attention to the error of her ways, her missteps and mistakes in writerly conventions vis-à-vis his own, and perforce caused Handke to reflect upon how exactly those conventions are materially and visually defined.

The influence, of course, worked bidirectionally: if Amina participated in shaping her father’s writerly project, we must also recognize his active, one might say parental, role in shaping hers. After numerous pages in which Amina draws and writes upside down, we discover that the remainder of Handke’s notes are also upside-down with respect to his earlier notes, suggesting that he himself inscribed the notebook from both ends. Again, the temporality of the inscriptive act is in question. Might Handke have been already inscribing the notebook from both ends before Amina drew in them? Or might he have resumed his note taking from the back of the notebook after she inscribed the pages upside down, in effect conforming his compilation of notes to the orientation of Amina’s drawings? The analysis of the physical interaction of Handke’s notes and Amina’s drawings in the notebook allows a collaborative space to emerge, a space of mutual influence, one equally of Amina’s learning and of Handke’s encouragement of and wonderment at this process and its products.

This wonderment finds thematic echo in several passages in Kindergeschichte that centre on the child’s embodied acts in a new or foreign system of signs. For example, in listening to and watching the child speak a foreign language, the adult observes:

Wenn es dann, auch außerhalb des Schulbetriebs, mit den Einheimischen verkehrte, glaubte der Erwachsene oft sein eigenes Kind nicht zu kennen: mit der anderen Mundart bekam es eine andere Stimme, zog andere Mienen und vollführte andere Gebärden. Aus der fremden Sprechweise folgte also auch ein ganz fremder Bewegungsablauf [...] (115–16)

The adult is similarly struck watching his child write in a foreign language:

“War der Erwachsene, als er erstmals das von dem Kind gemalte, andere Schriftbild sah, nicht bewegt wie der Zeuge eines historischen Augenblicks (und zugleich auf dessen klare Erkenntnis aus, wie einst der Geschichtsschreiber)?” (78–79; emphasis added).
The foreignness of the child within the sign system depicted in this passage, which elaborates upon a set of themes relating to experimentation with verbal and written composition, can also be observed on the pages of Handke’s notebooks. Amina’s perhaps unconscious or naive uses of the notebook—that is, writing upside down—might have sparked his interest, provoking or conditioning his own thinking. But other cases display indicators that Amina was actively thinking about the page and its relationship to words and images, working through a set of problems that were of interest to him as well. We can thus examine Amina’s drawings the way someone would who wanted to attribute agency to her—someone like her father.

The vertical inversion of the texts and images from Notizbuch 1 prompts us to turn the notebook upside down and read them in reverse. In doing so, the drawings on pages 34 and 33 can be approached as drafts of a text whose “final” version is penned on page 32. The first, simplest drawing (p. 34) shows a duck, an empty speech bubble, and what appears to be the head of a goat, each crossed through with a single X. In the second version (p. 33), the duck is set upon waves, and the drawing of the goat’s head becomes more detailed. Out of the waves, a fish arises, with bubbles (representing speech?) emanating from its mouth. Amina seems to have begun to inscribe the speech bubble before crossing it out and beginning the drawing anew. In a third version (p. 32), the image has become more detailed: the duck has disappeared, a boat is set upon the waves, and clouds populate the sky. The text inside the speech bubble reads: “Ich erfinde CHINESEWÖRTER / aminia heist amina.” Here, Amina plays with the notion of a foreign language, and her own foreignness (through that of her name) in that language. In penning the text, Amina twice writes a capital A and deliberately crosses it out, instead beginning the names with lower-case letters, forgetting orthographic conventions or perhaps, as it might appear from an adult’s perspective, toying with them.

The physical space occupied by the text, and the relationship between text and image, are also noteworthy. Given the way in which the clouds are set behind the speech bubble, it is clear that the former were drawn after the latter. The line demarcating the speech bubble almost perfectly conforms to the space occupied by the text; as such, we can assume that she first wrote the text and then drew the speech bubble around it, before completing the rest of the image. This stands in contrast to the previous drawing (p. 32), in which Amina first drew the speech bubble before attempting to inscribe it and then crossed it out in frustration and rejection, perhaps abandoning it because she realized her words would not fit. Amina thus draws out a relationship between text, image, and page layout, placing these elements into a formal relationship that must be thought through visually, orthographically, and temporally in order to coordinate them properly. This operation took multiple attempts that left abandoned efforts as an index of her struggle.

Amina’s attempts to navigate these tensions and relationships between language and its visual representation find a parallel in several brief, purely textual stories, or versions of a story, which she composed in French (see Figure 8).
The spelling and grammar errors are typical for a young child for whom the connections between the aural dimension of speech and the alphabetic system of writing are not yet codified. In this case, these tensions are heightened by Amina’s acquisition of a new language, writing not in her German mother tongue but in the French she learned while living in Paris with her father. Of particular interest, however, is the visual form of this text. Whereas the title “L’histoire de AMINA,” struck through, is, following convention, placed at the top of the page, the story itself begins midway down the page. In the fourth line, Amina begins to write the word *elle* but does not account for, or mentally visualize, the amount of space the word will occupy before she begins writing. She writes the first two letters before reaching the edge of the page, where, running out of space, she strikes through these letters and jumps the gutter, writing all the way to the edge.
of the adjacent page before returning to the first. When she makes the leap, the letter size, unconstrained by surrounding text, expands into the capaciousness of the blank page. Three lines down, she seems to find a solution to the physical constraint of the page edge, continuing the word méchante directly across the gutter. Like the errors in French spelling, these “mistakes” highlight Amina’s status as an emergent writer and reveal creative, which is to say non-standard, attempts to navigate the semiotic system of writing, both orthographically and paginally (Kress 70–71, 118).

Variations of this story of Charis appear on the following pages (see Figure 9).

charis est mechante et / son papa lui a donnee / 2 bonnes feses /

Amina fais p /

drolehistoire / Anima p fais peur a / charis et charis fait / caca dans sa culotte /

charis a est trai trai / mechante et elle f / fait pipi dans sa / culott et elle fait / caca
As in the first story, there are spelling errors, and in two cases (“œ” and “û”) Amina begins a word before realizing it will not fit on the page, then crosses it out and writes it on the line below. Amina plays innocently with the hard C sound of the Greek name Charis (/ˈkɛrɪs/) and the words caca, coca-cola, and culotte, unknowingly deploying the poetic device of alliteration through her perhaps naive delight in the sounds of language. The additive syntax of this story, in which each represented event is connected to the next with the coordinating conjunction et, produces a repetition that intensifies the effect of this alliteration. The oral dimension of a child’s alliterative, additive speech is thus set into text. As in the other stories, the end of the text coincides with the end of the page, as if Amina cannot yet conceive that written stories might continue beyond the page’s frame. The space of a single page also confines and contains the third and final story, discussed above, which opens by invoking the genre of the Kindergeschichte with the phrase “il y avait une fois” (see Figure 5). Amina’s is thus a Kindergeschichte in its material and visual dimensions as well as its semantic content and generic formulation.

In an evocative mirroring of Amina’s non-conforming writerly attempts, all three versions of the story itself describe Charis as méchante, or naughty: she misbehaves; she breaks the rules; she does what she is not supposed to do. In the story on pages 36–37 (see Figure 8), the word méchante spans the gutter, calling attention to this word that is central to both Amina’s stories and their forms. For Amina’s stories are similarly méchante, “naughty,” in their spelling mistakes, their unawareness of or disregard for the inscriptive conventions of the page, and in their content: these stories about “pipi” and “caca” in the “coca-cola” are not the kind of stories one is allowed to compose in writing lessons at school, nor would her messy orthography, the irregular size and shape of the letters underscored by the contrast to the measured units of the graph paper upon which she wrote, have been tolerated in the strictly regulated exercises of composition and writing lessons in the French classroom. Rather than simply the products of pure naïveté, we might thus also conceive of this writing practice in her father’s notebooks as a kind of transgressive play in an alternative space of writing, an alternative to the space of the Schulheft, that afforded her the much more active position of deliberate experimentation, play, and rule breaking: a space for writing “naughtily.”

Like her texts, Amina’s early drawings reveal a similar engagement with and test of the limits and form of the page. In many cases, Amina does not seem to encounter the page as a neutral drawing surface but rather plays with the lineal graph paper, tracing and filling in squares, allowing the visual form of the paper to structure the representation of, for example, a human head (see Figures 10 and 11).
Figure 10. Amina Handke, drawings and designs, Notizbuch 1, November 1975–January 1976, 56. Ballpoint pen and fineliner on paper. 9.6 × 14.7 cm. Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach, HS.2007.0010.00001.
Figure 11. Amina Handke, drawing of head, Notizbuch 2, March 1976, 20. Fineliner on paper. 7.4 × 11.8 cm. Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach, HS.2007.0010.00002.
This attentiveness to the visual particularities of the graph paper may have been conditioned by French writing lessons in school, where densely gridded sheets were employed to precisely guide and structure the size and shape of handwritten letters (A. Handke, personal interview). But in structure, Amina finds play. In the notebooks, she routinely manipulates the visual surface of the paper to create images from its patterned matrix: vertical lines, for example, become stems of plants (see Figure 12). The way in which the form of the page structures her drawings is apposite to that of the written texts we have examined, texts whose length and visual form are conditioned by the physical page itself, by the page’s break or the notebook’s gutter.

For Amina, the page was not merely a blank drawing surface for the inscription of representational content. Her attentiveness to the material and visual form of the paper, the ways in which she allowed the format of the paper to physically—and thereby also semantically—define and constrain the shape of her stories and drawings, was not lost on her father. Turning in the next section to an analysis of Handke’s texts will demonstrate that the young Amina, as an untrained writer and drawer, became a model for her father in his emerging practice of note taking, guiding Handke’s hand, teaching him to see and to write in ways that would become central for understanding his writing process, his poetic project, and his published work.

By no means, however, do I intend to suggest that Amina was the primary determining influence on Handke’s new aesthetic project; indeed, hers was one among a host of influences. And Amina’s influence on Handke’s work must be grasped differently from that of Spinoza, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, or Adalbert Stifter, who, among numerous others, were key influences on Handke’s writing during this period. In considering Amina’s participation in the development of Handke’s new project of writing, it was above all her process, her entry into and negotiation of multiple material-semiotic systems of language and representation—orality and literacy, writing and drawing—that influenced Handke. As Gerhard Melzer writes, “Zu Handkes Vorstellungen von Kindlichkeit gehört auch eine ‘unschuldige’ Sprache, ja es ist überhaupt erst die Sprache, die solcher Kindlichkeit den angemessenen Entfaltungsräum bietet” (56). Handke witnessed the process—which took place, in part, in the space of his own notebooks—of Amina’s emergence into subjectivity, the constitution of her agency, through and in relation to the semiotic systems that so consequentially mediate humans’ relationship to self, others, and the world. In the next section, I explore how this process reappears—reproduced or re-enacted, in a way—in Peter Handke’s “own” writing.

Amina’s writing and drawing were at once unconventional and experimental but at the same time slow and measured; she laboured over her letters and forms. And it was this combination of deliberation and experimentation in material inscription that helped shape the emergence of a poetics of slowness and the project of close looking found in the “Langsame Heimkehr” tetralogy and crucial for Handke’s later style more generally (Barthes, “Cy Twombly” 159, 164, 172; Hummel 79–80; Huber 333–37). Housed in the Deutsches Literaturarchiv
Figure 12. Amina Handke, drawings and designs, Notizbuch 2, March 1976, 69. Fineliner on paper. 7.4 × 11.8 cm. Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach, HS.2007.0010.00002.
(Marbach) and the Literaturarchiv der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek (Vienna), Handke’s notebooks, manuscripts, typescripts, and hand-corrected page proofs, as well as a range of other objects—maps, hiking shoes, and walking sticks (which themselves sometimes became writing surfaces) that accompanied Handke on his journeys—bear witness to Handke’s heightened attention to the materiality and visuality of his writing and drawing practice. They reveal the range of human and non-human agents that played a role in the generation of his texts, and that Handke self-reflexively incorporated into their thematics. Handke’s notes, in both their semantic content and their material form, contain traces of the different locations, environments, and weather conditions in which he wrote—in descriptions and drawings of places and objects, as well as in the ephemera (receipts, Polaroid photographs, newspaper clippings, pressed plants) inserted between the pages.

For many authors and critics, such materials might be relegated to mere avant-texte, that is, that which precedes or leads to the published text but remains categorically separate from it. For Handke, however, the process of note taking, and the materiality of his notebooks and writing implements, held extraordinary significance and was frequently thematized in his works. In Langsame Heimkehr, for example, we find descriptions of notebooks resembling Handke’s own, as well as the activity of flipping back through them, which constituted a key part of Handke’s composition process: “Sorger breitete die Hefte mit den Aufzeichnungen über den Tisch, so daß jedes einzelne mit seiner besonderen Farbe erschien [...]” (190) and “schaute die Aufzeichnungen der letzten Jahre durch” (189). Throughout his published work, one can find moments in which the content and visual form of Handke’s notebook pages are not only described but mediated in other ways in printed form. Handke’s so-called Journalbände contain notes excerpted from the notebooks—edited, reordered, and recombined to varying degrees—in the form of a traditional printed collection of aphorisms, separated by spaces in the typographical layout of the page. In the preface of Das Gewicht der Welt (1977), Handke presents his note taking not simply as a preliminary phase of writing but as an artistic project in and of itself, a project of “unmittelbare, simultan festgehaltene Reportage” (6). In the blurb on the book jacket of Am Felsfenster morgens (1998), the notes are described as “Notizen von intensiver Gegenwärtigkeit, die den Leser auf jeder Seite wiederholte Male dazu einladen, mitzuschauen, mitzudenken, mitzuentdecken.” “An den damaligen Niederschriften,” Handke writes in the preface of the same volume, “die in diesen Text übergangen sind, habe ich freilich in sich kaum ein Wort geändert” (5–6). In the publication of these journal volumes, Handke translates his notes from the notebooks, which might otherwise be treated as avant-texte, into finished, published text.

The notebooks were particularly crucial for Handke in the mid- to late 1970s, at the moment we begin to observe a shift in his poetics, when he is navigating the crisis of writing that is overcome with Langsame Heimkehr. Out of this struggle emerged a new aesthetic program that Handke announced in his
This places Amina’s childhood efforts at a key moment in her father’s development. Handke begins to cultivate more self-consciously a project of note taking, mediating this key scene of writing in printed form by compiling notes into journal volumes and reproducing facsimile images of notebook pages and drawings. Handke opens up his published work to multiple kinds of representation and textuality, not only by mediating the form and content of the notebooks in his printed books, but also by drawing attention to the variety of sources and influences through which his works emerge, influences that are documented in his notebooks.

Although Handke wrote in several notebooks off and on beginning in the early 1970s, there is a marked shift, both in his approach to note taking and in the sheer number of volumes he filled, during the mid-1970s (“Notizbücher”). It is precisely during this period that we find the greatest density of Amina’s drawings and writings in the notebooks. Pektor identifies one particular notebook, inscribed between 17 January and 22 February 1976—directly after writing, or perhaps while still writing, in Notizbuch 1—in which a decisive shift in Handke’s process of note taking can be observed: Das Notizbuch ist ein wichtiger Beleg für die Veränderung von Handkes Arbeitsweise und Poetik. Es zeigt einerseits den Übergang vom ausschließlich projektorientierten Notieren seiner frühen Jahre (hier zu Die linkshändige Frau) zum Journalschreiben —einem täglichen spontanen Mitschreiben von Beobachtungen ohne Projektbezug. (“Linkshändige Frau”)

Temporally, this shift in Handke’s practice of note taking corresponds directly to Amina’s increased activity in the notebooks. As Handke reconsidered his process, it would seem, he increasingly welcomed Amina’s contributions, observing the materiality and visuality of her process at the same time he was observing his own.

It is also after Amina—literally and metaphorically—that Handke increasingly begins to draw. From simple sketches of leaves and silhouettes of mountain terrains, more elaborate, detailed, multicoloured drawings begin to emerge, during this period, in the author’s notebooks (Kepplinger-Prinz and Pektor). These drawings become a constitutive component of his note taking and integral to the published work, routinely reproduced in his printed texts and used as cover illustrations. The covers of the first editions of Langsame Heimkehr and Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire feature drawings from notebooks, and an entire page is reproduced as the cover of Handke’s first journal volume, Das Gewicht der Welt (1977). In Die Wiederholung (1986), a drawing of a table and hiking stick from Notizbuch 15 is reproduced on the final page. In Abschied des Träumers vom Neunten Land: Eine Wirklichkeit, die vergangen ist. Erinnerung an Slowenien (1991), multiple complete notebook pages, containing both drawings and text, are reproduced; as such, the notebook page itself becomes an image. Such transpositions of the scene of note taking into Handke’s published texts continue to the present day. In 2015 a facsimile edition of one notebook was
released with Insel Bücherei (*Notizbuch*). The edition includes a partial facsimile of the notebook with a transcription by Handke. And in the most recent journal volume, *Vor der Baumschattenwand nachts* (2016), numerous colour reproductions of drawings from Handke’s notebooks are interspersed among the transcribed and printed notes.

While Handke directly transposed his notes and drawings into his books, he also inscribed the importance of the process of observation they traced into the narratives of the books, particularly in the two works that immediately precede *Kindergeschichte* in the tetralogy, *Langsame Heimkehr* and *Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire*. In *Langsame Heimkehr*, Handke narrates the semi-autobiographical experiences of a European geologist, Valentin Sorger, who, like Handke in 1978, travelled to Alaska and struggled with his own process of transcribing nature. Sorger becomes engaged in a “Suche nach Formen” (9), a search that is organized around the difficulty of employing the conventions of scientific surveying and drawing to represent nature. This struggle unfolds over time, through experimentation, question­ing, and multiple attempts—much like Amina’s own process of learning to write and draw.

In *Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire*, Handke recounts two journeys to Aix-en-Provence to travel the route Cézanne; he narrates how Cézanne’s mode of seeing and his process of transcribing or “realizing” nature through the physical, gestural process of painting became models for Handke’s own practice of close observation and writing (Bartmann; Jones; Köhnen; Kurz; Wiethölter). Cézanne’s experimentation with a new mode of representation, challenging conventions of perspective, parallels the way that Amina’s work unfolded for Handke, as a series of efforts to avoid the limitations of convention through a material exploration of form. In the opening of the chapter “Das Bild der Bilder,” Handke speaks of Cézanne as a “teacher”: “Bisher handelte es sich hier vor allem um einen Maler und einen Schriftsteller; um Bild und Schrift. Jetzt aber wird es fällig, zu erzählen, wie der Maler Paul Cézanne mir als ein Menschheitslehrer—ich wage das Wort: als der Menschheitslehrer der Jetztzeit erschien” (58–59). Handke focuses in particular on Cézanne’s concept of *réalisation*, which is described, quoting Cézanne, as follows:


Observing Cézanne’s experimental mode of representation, his struggle to “realize” forms through the process of painting, Handke undertook his own “Suche
nach Formen.” He learned that the value and meaning of the finished painting is not dissociable from the material processes that brought it into being. The “Ding-Bild-Schrift-Strich-Tanz” (79) of the painter’s hand and the ontological project that gave rise to it became fundamental for how Handke conceives of the process of moving through the world, notebook in hand, inscribing the instantaneity of experience and impression into writerly forms. In this respect, Handke’s close observation of Cézanne’s brushwork, traces of his material process of painting, mediated the author’s observation of his own material practice of inscription in his notebooks. What Cézanne sought to achieve in the medium of painting, Handke sought to achieve in the medium of writing.

Handke’s search for a new mode of narration is at the heart of the self-reflective poetical project underlying the seemingly heterogeneous works of the “Langsame Heimkehr” tetralogy. But these works only seem heterogeneous unless viewed through the lens of this poetic project and practice of writing—learned from Cézanne but also from Amina. If Cézanne was for Handke a “Lehrer” in this respect, so too was his daughter Amina. For Handke was simultaneously observing his own daughter’s childlike transcription of reality, her “Suche nach Formen.” This was a searching, a journey, that took place in the space of his own notebooks. If Handke would directly credit Cézanne for breeding an attentiveness to form, he indirectly points to the role of Amina—transformed into the allegorical figure “das Kind” within the impersonal space of the third-person narrative of *Kindergeschichte*—as a catalyst of this emerging poetic project. After a decade of life with the child, reflecting back on his experiences, the adult acknowledges that the child has become *his* teacher, training his gaze on the world.

So blieb der Meister immer noch das andere, indem es ihn lehrte, mehr Zeit für die Farben draußen zu haben; genauer die Formen zu sehen; und in der Folge tiefer—nicht bloß in Stimmungen—den Ablauf der Jahreszeiten an einem sich entrollenden Farn, einem zunehmenden ledigen Baumblatt oder den wachsenden Ringen eines Schneckenhauses zu empfinden.

Von ihm erfuhr er auch das Eigentliche über das Wesen der Schönheit [...]. (131–32)

And at an earlier moment in the text, Handke explicitly describes the child as a teacher: “Er war überzeugt, daß das Kind da ein großes Gesetz verkörperte, welches er selber entweder vergessen oder nie gehabt hatte. War es ihm denn nicht im ersten Moment schon erschienen als sein persönlicher Lehrherr?” (63). Handke thus acknowledges her influence, her agency in quite literally teaching him to see.

If the child, Amina, can be viewed as “Meister” or “Lehrherr,” it is precisely because of her *untrained*, childlike perspective on the world, her attentiveness to details and colours and forms, to visual and material features of the environment that often go unnoticed by adults (Metcalf 286). Amina’s naïveté, moreover, can
be correlated to Cézanne’s cultivated naïveté, his desire to unlearn painting in order to approach colour and form in a purer way (Schiff 165–200). In turn, Amina’s inscriptive practice, her drawings and writings in Handke’s notebooks, might be thought to be “masterful”—a guide for Handke’s own emerging process of close looking and recording, a “Gesetz” that he attempts to uncover—precisely because of her non-mastery of the conventions of drawing and writing, her creative navigation of the space between the world and its material representation. The very notion of a Kindergeschichte is therefore layered, referring to the formal and thematic conventions of children’s stories as well as the visual and material form of children’s writing. The notion of the Kindergeschichte also captures Handke’s own effort of unknowing and unlearning. These layers find a space, quite literally, in the emergence of Handke’s Kindergeschichte within the notebooks that he and Amina co-inscribe.

Handke noticed Amina’s drawing and writing process in the early notebooks at the time they were created, a period of time described in Kindergeschichte. He had a second opportunity to see them and consider them as he was writing the Kindergeschichte itself, in 1980. Like Sorger, who “schaute die Aufzeichnungen der letzten Jahre durch” (Handke, Langsame Heimkehr 189)—which is itself an image of Handke’s own practice—Handke flipped through and reread his own notebooks as he was writing, culling notes and observations. Amina’s hand appears again in the notebooks of 1979–80, during the time when Handke was drafting Kindergeschichte. In Notizbuch 22 (November 1979–October 1980), we discover two pencil drawings of a hand, one holding a pencil and eraser, the other empty, drawn by an older, more skilled Amina at the age of ten or eleven (see Figure 13). On an earlier page of the same notebook, we find words that appear to have been penned by Amina at a much younger age, in what might have been a blank notebook that Handke would only come to use years later (see Figure 14). And in Notizbuch 24 (December 1979–March 1980), which contains a great concentration of notes relating not to Kindergeschichte but rather to Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire, one finds, amid notes examining Cézanne’s mode of viewing and painterly process, a page boasting Handke’s portrait seen through the eyes and captured by the hands of his young daughter, ripped out of an earlier notebook (see Figure 15)—a physical trace of Handke’s process of flipping through old notebooks while writing in new ones.

Thus, not only did Amina’s activity influence or intervene in her father’s process of writing and note taking in the mid-1970s, but material traces and reminders of these critical early drawings and writing crept into the pages of notebooks that Handke would come to inscribe years later. These chronological recursions become indices of a process of watching Amina learn to read and write, which he had witnessed over ten years and which he revisited in writing Kindergeschichte, directly thematizing the role of the child in his work.

In concluding this study, I return to the questions posed in the introduction: to what degree can we consider Handke to have been influenced by his
daughter’s methods? To what degree did the young Amina thus participate in the authorship of *Kindergeschichte*, as a component of the heterogeneous assemblages of people, places, observations, memories, and materials through which this work came into being? To what degree can we consider *Kindergeschichte* to be the product of Amina’s hand? These questions are less about how much of the text can be attributed to Amina than about her agency in its production. Amina can be thought to have played a role in guiding Handke’s aesthetic reorientation, in modelling the techniques that turned Handke’s writerly process towards materiality, sensory experience, and close observation.

Scholarship to this point has been willing to grant Amina a position on the margin. Kepplinger-Prinz and Pektor conclude their brief remarks on Amina’s drawings thus:

Für die Forschung sind die Zeichnungen der Tochter von anderem Interesse: Da Handke seine frühen Notizbücher noch nicht konsequent journalartig führte und seine Einträge nicht täglich datierte, ermöglichen die Kinderzeichnungen in einzelnen Fällen überhaupt erst eine Datierung des Notizbuches—entweder, weil Amina zu ihrer Zeichnung ein Datum schreibt oder weil Handke die Zeichnung seiner Tochter beschriftet. (10)
In this view, Amina’s drawings, mere bywork, are only useful insofar as they tell us something as quotidian as the date of Handke’s note taking.

But as this study has sought to illuminate, Amina’s childhood drawings played a much more influential role in the evolution of Handke’s poetic project. The inability to attribute certain drawings either to a six-year-old child or to her father, a major contemporary author, speaks to the mutual imbrication of Amina and Peter Handke’s drawing processes at this time: Peter Handke, we might imagine, oversaw and guided Amina’s drawing practice but also began to draw after Amina, attempting to learn from her untrained hand, to see and represent the world as a child. Amina’s practice of drawing, much like Cézanne’s process of painting, was formative for Handke’s own practice of writing and drawing. In the sense that Cézanne’s influence on the writer is entirely established in the scholarship, it would not be controversial in the least to say that Handke learns to draw, learns to see the world, to recognize the colours and forms of nature, through his engagement with the visual production of others, a fact that is verified through the numerous notes on paintings in his notebooks. But as we have seen, that engagement took place not only in the halls of great museums but also in the much more proximate, intimate, and shared space of the notebooks in relation to Amina’s inscriptive practices.

Part of the reason Amina’s influence has been ignored is surely that she was a child. But it is also that Handke himself effaced her. While Handke’s thematization of the child’s influence on the adult’s work would seem to point to his daughter’s real influence, Handke simultaneously erases Amina, both her name and her gender, by transforming her into “das Kind,” “der Lehrherr,” and “der Meister.” His process of mediating his sources meant that he inscribed Amina’s process within himself—he internalized it, as he did Cézanne’s process, and then reproduced it in the writing, not at the level of narrative, but at the level of structure and method. In commissioning her to draft the cover illustration of the first edition, Handke paradoxically hides Amina on the surface of the book; she becomes hidden precisely because she was so fully inscribed methodologically within the work, indeed within the entire “Langsame Heimkehr” tetralogy. Amina, then, is present in her absence, but also absent in her presence. This transformation stands in stark contrast to Amina’s self-representation in the childhood stories with which she filled notebook pages, stories in which she does not refer to herself in an abstracted first-person je, but rather continually declares her name, Amina, in the third person.

However, Amina’s identity and her participation in the generation of Kindergeschichte resurfaced in 2012. Amina’s pencil tracing of a hand, designed for the re-edition of Kindergeschichte, appears on the home page of the artist’s professional website (www.amina.at) as a kind of self-portrait and claim to her personal authorship. In the 2012 re-edition, Amina emblazoned herself—or, more specifically, her hand—on the cover of a work that her very hand had helped shape, a work in which she, all along, had been inextricably present. Yet the young Amina’s interaction in the evolution of her father’s project of writing

98 JACOB HAUBENREICH
extends far beyond *Kindergeschichte*—and not only through her subsequent design of the cover illustrations for *Über die Dörfer* (1981), *Die Geschichte des Bleistifts* (1982), and *Der Chinese des Schmerzes* (1983). If largely invisible, Amina became a paradigmatic presence in her father’s work, as a passage from *Kindergeschichte* proleptically suggested she would. Describing the adult’s daily walks to school with the child, Handke writes, “In der fast täglichen Wiederholung dieses Wegs hörte das Kind auf, eine Traglast zu sein, und verwandelte sich in einen Körperteil des Trägers” (28). In this formulation, the antithetical relationship between adult and child is transformed into a synthetic one, and the boundary between two isolated subjects dissolves; no longer a “burden,” the child becomes a part of the adult, an inextricable piece of a body that will walk through the world daily (in its own practice of *Wiederholung*) in order to write. As Amina’s drawings of a lone hand would come to so potently underline, “das Kind” is not incorporated into the *Körper* in general but into a specific *Körperteil*, the hand of the author who writes and draws, a hand that has absorbed the child’s practice of transcribing. And although the child, “das immer anwesende Kind,” was always present, guiding the adult’s own practice of looking and writing, it is not always fully present in his memory. Narrating the adult’s reflection on the early years of his life with the child, Handke writes:


The child is present in everything, in every moment, in every action, in every memory, even if it is not visible, not graspable, not directly figured. So too, I suggest, might we reconsider the presence of Amina’s hand in Handke’s *Kindergeschichte* and in his broader corpus. As this study has suggested, Amina’s role should not be grasped as a mere influence, one in a list of many that shaped Handke’s writing. As Amina’s role has come into view, it has raised the questions of how to account for the interaction of multiple authorial agencies, and to whom these works ultimately belong. In turn, we might then reframe Handke’s decision to commission Amina to design the cover illustrations for the new editions of his work as a retroactive acknowledgement, conscious or not, of her inter-authorship of this body of work, a gesture to her instigation and transformation of his project of observing and writing, which would come to define the ways we have understood Handke’s writerly practice and, therefore, his literary project.
Notes

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2 I extensively interviewed Amina Handke for this article, both in person and over email. Though memories are of course incomplete, she has clear memories of writing in her father’s notebooks.

3 All citations from Kindergeschichte are from the 1981 edition.

Works Cited


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The Inter-Authorship of Peter Handke’s Kindergeschichte


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