The literary figure of the criminal child in German Realism is framed not as a problem of rising industrialization and urbanization but rather as a problem of the emerging bourgeois family. Theodor Fontane’s *Grete Minde* (1879) and Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach’s *Das Gemeindekind* (1887) demonstrate how the aestheticization of structures such as the bourgeois family extends to incorporate marginal figures, including the criminal child. Through the relationship between the criminal child and bourgeois family, Fontane and Ebner reveal both the allure and danger of the emerging bourgeois family as an organizing principle for late-nineteenth-century German and Austrian reality.

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