Bluestocking Feminism and British-German Cultural Transfer, 1750-1837

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Johann David Michaelis, translator of Vandenhoeck’s edition of *Clarissa*, was a professor of Near Eastern languages and literatures at the University of Göttingen. He was internationally known for his biblical translation and exegesis; a member of the Academies of Sciences in Paris and London, he was also named a Knight of the North Star by Swedish king Gustavus III. He gained prestige as advisor to the royal Danish expedition to Yemen, carried out by Carsten Niebuhr and others from 1761 to 1768, an undertaking Michaelis hoped would demonstrate how studies of contemporary Near Eastern culture could shed light on practices of biblical antiquity. Much respected in Britain, he enjoyed the favor of the British king and queen and corresponded frequently with notable scholars such as Sir John Pringle, Benjamin Kennicott, Robert Lowth, Jacob Bryant, Robert Wood, and Charles Godfrey Woide. Possessed of tremendous self-assurance, he was a lively speaker said to arrive at the lecture hall in riding gear, with his sword at his side and a Bible under his arm. He came to enjoy the highest salary of any Göttingen professor, owned the biggest house in town, and entertained renowned guests such as Benjamin Franklin, Lessing, Goethe, and Alexander von Humboldt.¹

In 1745 he was new to the Göttingen campus; he had traveled in England from the spring of 1741 to the autumn of 1742, learned the language, met important personages, and had read Samuel Richardson’s groundbreaking epistolary novel *Pamela*. He was therefore apprised of
the innovation and celebrity of Richardson, and when in 1747 Albrecht von Haller, the illustrious professor of medicine, Anglophile founder of the Göttingen Academy of Sciences, and editor of the prestigious Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen, suggested that he translate Richardson’s new novel, Michaelis agreed to undertake the task.2

The translation of Clarissa, which was published in segments between 1748 and 1753, was pivotal and marks a significant moment in the literary and cultural relationship between Germany and Britain. The novel was an international sensation and no less significant in the German principalities than it was to Denis Diderot and the French; it spawned literary imitations, popularized sensibility, and inspired new understandings of feminine expression and female agency.3 The story is made up of epistolary exchanges between Clarissa, her friends, family, and her deceiving suitor and pursuer Lovelace; it engendered lively debates about the wisdom of arranged marriages, the extent of female autonomy, and the social efficacy of bourgeois virtues. It contributed at midcentury to a new sense of women’s subjectivity, offering a compelling model both of a writing female subject and a self-willed being. Göttingen daughters, influenced by such representations as well as by the upbringing in their unusual academic environment, felt empowered to assert a new approach to personal, literary, as well as political freedom. Michaelis’s version of Clarissa demonstrates how translation involved far more than the movement across national boundaries of literary ideas; it implied the transfer of cultural registers and epistemologies with very real implications for transnational social understanding and gender politics in particular. I therefore invoke a broad Latourian definition of translation, one closer attuned to its Latin root meaning “carrying across” than simply probe the rendering of a text into another language, although I consider this as well. Hence we view a transformative moment in British-German cultural transfer, a dynamic and mutual interchange moving beyond simple ideas of reception or influence and challenging essential notions of national identity.4

I consider Michaelis’s translation of Clarissa not only as a way of assessing eighteenth-century theories of translation, then, but also as a means by which protofeminist debate was carried over into Germany with impacts on the next generation. For the Göttingen daughters, who themselves formed a tightly knit social and intellectual community enmeshed and alongside that of their fathers, ended up furthering the process of the cultural transfer of British ideas, among other things by translating literature themselves. Like Johann David Michaelis’s
approach, their theory of translation suggested that a generally faithful rendition of the books translated would facilitate the absorption of British ideas of liberty in the German context. An interesting contrast emerges when we probe translation in the other direction: the theory governing Mary Wollstonecraft’s translation of German educational writing is one of “naturalization” and of cultural influence viewed with circumspection. Such different attitudes toward literary cultural transfer exist despite their chronological simultaneity and the surprisingly similar situations of the translators: Caroline Michaelis, Therese Heyne, and Meta Wedekind lived conflict-ridden personal lives, grappled with poverty, and addressed issues of gender and politics in ways remarkably similar to Mary Wollstonecraft, Catharine Macaulay, and Charlotte Smith in Britain. At the same time, the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, as well as the discourses surrounding them, altered the avenues and aims of cultural transfer within the Personal Union. Following a discussion of Michaelis’s *Clarissa*, the issues raised for translation theory and the intellectual and cultural context, I will consider three case studies: first I will compare translations of Meta Wedekind Forkel and Mary Wollstonecraft. These translations measure the changing cultural relationships between Germany and Britain at the end of the eighteenth century and suggest how a look at the Personal Union highlights women’s role in furthering reformist discourses—discourses substantially inflected by the ongoing transnational exchange of ideas of gender and nation within the context of the French Revolution. This point will then be expanded upon with a conclusion discussing British publisher Joseph Johnson’s larger project of German translations, focusing on his edition of GutsMuths’s *Gymnastics for Youth* of 1800: the history of this book returns us to the question of western European networks and the need for viewing translation through the *terrains vastes*, as Johnson, like Georg Forster in the case of Meta Forkel’s work, used translations both to influence national politics and deepen transnational links, now under the pressure of Napoleon’s increasing sway.

1. Johann David Michaelis: Translation and Gender in Göttingen

Johann David Michaelis, translator of the Bible and an expositor of ancient literary texts, was also interested in questions of women’s education and was influenced by British gender ideas on his travels to England. Soon after arriving at Göttingen in 1745 he published a letter to Fred-
erick the Great proposing a university for women: “Allerunterthänigste Bittschrift an Seine Königliche Majestät in Preussen, um Anlegung einer Universität für das schöne Geschlecht” (A Most Humble Appeal to His Royal Highness in Prussia concerning the Establishment of a University for the Fair Sex). It takes up the cause of Mary Astell and Daniel Defoe on the need for women’s academies. As did Astell and Defoe, he declines imagining equality between the sexes; he shares Defoe’s view that women’s intellectual and moral powers were clearly to be employed in support of men. Women, he wrote, take the role of “Lehrerinnen / Von munterm Geist, von aufgeklärten Sinnen / Die . . . uns von ihrem Fleiss den süßen Honig gönnen” (teachers / of a lively spirit, of enlightened minds / who . . . do not begrudge us the sweet honey of their hard work). In appended verses addressed to poets in this text, he imagines a new Athens guarded by women empowered through knowledge and virtue: “Athen nimmt statt der Legionen, / Ein Heer von tapfern Amazons / Zum Schutz in seine Mauren ein, / Dass niemand unsern Fleiss verstöre, / Und beydes unsre Ruh und Ehre / In unsern Zimmern sicher seyn” (Instead of legions Athens takes / An army of courageous Amazons / Into its walls for defense / So that no one can disrupt our industry / And both our peace and honor / Are secure in our offices). The development of taste in a nation depends upon women, as Michaelis suggests elsewhere: “Je freyer unter einem Volke das Frauenzimmer erzogen wird, und je mehr es in Gesellschaften koemmt, desto zaertlicher wird hierinn auch unter Europäern der Geschmack” (The more women are raised at liberty among a people, and the more they come into society, the more taste will become refined even among Europeans). Such ideas about the social efficacy of the feminine would have been familiar to British readers of the Spectator and other popular periodical literature; Michaelis is clearly inspired by such ideas in his own formulations.

Michaelis thus appreciated the shifting gender roles he perceived in British culture and furthered the idea of an enhanced social role for German women; his protofeminism is not only visible in his views on women’s education but also is apparent in his translation of Clarissa (first published in England in three sections between December 1747 and December 1748; translation published 1748–53), where he foregrounds the abilities of writing women. He does feel compelled to justify the translation of a sentimental novel: in the preface to Clarissa he first explains the bookseller’s compelling reason for publishing this book (because Haller, the most famous critic in Germany, had suggested it) and why he himself was chosen to undertake the work (because he had
lived in England sufficiently to have superb command of the language and an ability to render the story in a manner appealing to Germans). Going beyond Vandenhoeck’s reasons for publishing a work of belles lettres—such a popular book was by no means a typical title for the university bookseller Vandenhoeck, though the firm did occasionally publish fiction—Michaelis says that he feels translating this text will be a real benefit to the world. He hopes a reasonable reader will not think him vain: he aims for no glory, since he plans to establish his reputation with other works, and he is so overburdened with his own writings and university lectures that he would never give up the chance to spend time with good friends if this project were not of such significance.8

Michaelis balances his urge for justification and his extravagant stance of humility with a forceful gender argument: “Some have felt that Clarissa writes better than a woman could,” he says, but in fact, he argues, there are women of understanding and learning who can write better than men, such as Madame de Sevigné. He goes on to prove this point expressly by refusing to translate one passage, the famous “Ode to Wisdom.” This Ode was inserted by Richardson into the text of Clarissa as verses “by a Lady,” and the unacknowledged female contributor, whose identity was only revealed later, turned out to be none other than the learned Elizabeth Carter.9 To show how well a woman can write, Michaelis says, he “did not venture . . . to translate the Ode, because according to the British author it is written by a Lady, and it redounds to the honor of the Sex” (vii–viii). Richardson commissioned music for a number of the verses and had the song engraved on a separate fold-out sheet that was then pasted into the volume. This drew attention to Carter’s “Ode to Wisdom” and displayed it in type large enough to be deciphered and performed by readers at their instruments. Consumers of the novel could thereby deepen their identification with the protagonist on another level as they sang and played themselves into what the story suggested was the moral, lyrical, and musical imagination of the talented Clarissa. Michaelis the protofeminist let Carter’s words stand on their own in order to show German readers what an Englishwoman had accomplished and what respect her verse commanded from a famous, best-selling British author.10

Translation theory today questions openness to foreign literary influences; issues of gender and nation are seen to complicate rather than enable transfer, so that an approach like Michaelis’s is anachronistically interpreted as naive and weak on the one hand or minimizing difference on the other. Sherry Simon discusses the “historical continuity of
gendered theorizing of translation,” with the original seen as masculine and active and the translation as passive and feminine.\textsuperscript{11} Drawing on Jacques Derrida she argues that the rigid binary must be deconstructed; “the hierarchy of writing roles, like gender identities, is increasingly to be recognized as mobile and performative.”\textsuperscript{12} From such a perspective Michaelis’s goal to offer Germans a new view of women’s potentialities via the English text is rendered problematical, since the target culture with its prejudices is as involved in constructing the translation as in absorbing it. Lawrence Venuti has questioned the process of “domesticating” translation. If the translator is “invisible” and the work is incorporated seamlessly into the target culture, the translator has obscured his imperial goals of cultural appropriation. In this view the very success of Michaelis’s translation is held against him while the value he ascribes to the English work and author is called into question.

Venuti draws on the theory of Friedrich Schleiermacher to argue that translators should instead “foreignize” texts, estranging the original to make the cultural difference of the text readily apparent.\textsuperscript{13} One could argue that Michaelis, in leaving the “Ode to Wisdom” untranslated, has in effect done just this. Yet one might also suggest that there is a danger involved in highlighting the foreign and what is different. Nationalist theorists during the Napoleonic wars insisted that the foreignness of a work be flagged so that Germans might not absorb alien influences unawares. “Foreignizing” can therefore further nationalistic ends as much as it can promote anti-imperialistic ones. Stuart Gillespie and Robin Sowerby have argued against Venuti’s conclusion in the Enlightenment British context by suggesting that a survey of translations in that period shows they generally worked to expand the canon and encourage literary innovation; “the translator’s objective was . . . the reproduction of the original’s qualities by any means possible.”\textsuperscript{14} In the German context, a look at translations and translation theory suggests that, while thinkers in the early nineteenth century may have raised issues spurred by baldly nationalist views, earlier mid-eighteenth-century German innovators like Michaelis espoused a less vehement, more confident viewpoint. The worthy literary products of another culture, recognized as different but rendered understandable to Germans, could, they felt, be incorporated harmoniously, enhancing German literary and cultural life.

Michaelis’s translation should therefore be viewed within its historical context; it should be evaluated internally and externally as an agent of reciprocal cultural transfer rather than as a narrowly national political document. As Márta Minier has concluded, many voices, not just one or
two, “make themselves heard in the translation process,” not only on the part of authors and translators but of readers as well. As a result, “cultural differences inevitably shape the result of the translation process,” both in production and reception. Consequently to situate Michaelis in the mid-eighteenth century both in terms of the debates about theory and the historical context, I would suggest that his *Clarissa* offered a pre-Napoleonic demonstration of the possibility of not “either-or” but “both-and” translation in a liberal Göttingen environment not yet jolted by revolutionary upheaval and militarization.

This middle-of-the-road approach, seen from the production side, recalls John Dryden’s notion of “paraphrase” (as opposed to the word-for-word “metaphrase” on the one hand and the much freer “imitation” on the other). Such a sense of translation sought to offer the target audience access to the best fruits of a foreign culture, thereby implying a wish for the absorption of these ideas, and at the same time demonstrated a recognition of that culture’s difference. Michaelis’s translation of *Clarissa* was in the first place a faithful one, aiming to stay as close as possible to the original text while making it understandable to his German target audience. At the same time, by leaving the Ode untranslated, Michaelis allowed the English writer, and the English woman’s voice, to come through unaffected. The Ode could offer uncompromised access to the original culture’s estimation of women’s creative powers and thereby teach German readers about female potential, which was then further reinforced in the unfolding plot about Clarissa’s trials rendered into German. Such a move suggests that Michaelis was fully aware of the alteration forced by any translation, and at the same time it shows that he did not embrace “invisibility,” “weakness,” or, on the other hand, a coercive, domesticating, cultural-imperial agenda. Translation in general, whether literal or free, faithful or spirited, domesticating or foreignizing, can instruct about or exploit another culture or both, and to determine the actual political valence of the translation we have to look more closely at the particular work and its consequences; the type of translation itself cannot convey this information. Michaelis’s approach to and the subsequent history of the *Clarissa* translation show that his work set in motion significant cultural shifts in a Germany poised for the kinds of transformations that the ideas of the text—especially about women’s roles—were ready to offer.

In terms of reception, the Göttingen context supplied not only the advantages of a modern university but also an Enlightenment ethos of lay education and therefore of an engaged public. Haller’s interest in
the *Clarissa* translation was part of his larger support for Anglo-German exchange, but this was only one facet of his concern to create a vibrant university and university community. Along with founding the Academy of Sciences and editing the *Göttingische Anzeigen*, he initiated the botanical garden, the anatomical institute, and the first continental women’s clinic. He engaged himself in constructing a building for the Reformed Church, of which congregation he was a member alongside Anna Vandenhoeck. Later in life he wrote three novels with the intention of depicting the advantages of different types of political organization: *Usong* (1771), *Alfred* (1773), and *Fabius und Cato* (1774). His poetry, particularly his most famous composition, *The Alps*, was translated into several languages. The tradition of Göttingen scholars’ engagement in public education and popular culture—that is, intended for women and laypeople as well as academics—continued into the late eighteenth century, and not only via reviews in the *Göttingische Anzeigen*. Michaelis intended his biblical translations and annotations to benefit the laity (“*Ungelehrte*”). Georg Christoph Lichtenberg, the physicist and astronomer, wrote for periodicals and, tellingly, compiled a pocket calendar every year from the late 1770s to the early 1790s. Such calendars were fashionable, portable items to delight and instruct a broad public. The 1781 edition, for example, included not only lists of moveable feasts, phases of the moon, eclipses, zodiac signs, and the birthdays of the nobility but also historical anecdotes, anthropological observations, short essays about the placement of the universe, commentary on lifestyles, and amusing pictures of women’s coiffures in Berlin, England, and Leipzig (as a way of both comparing and satirizing them). Illustrations by the famous printmaker Daniel Chodowiecki offered comical depictions of men of different ranks and occupations proposing marriage. As I mentioned in chapter 1, Lichtenberg also edited a literary magazine with Georg Forster, published a book on Hogarth engravings, and acted as tutor to the British princes during their Göttingen residences. The interests of Göttingen professors were wide ranging, and university leaders such as Münchhausen and Haller encouraged the full pursuit not only of a variety of academic disciplines but also lay education and public involvement. That these activities were remunerative doubtless must have increased their attraction to professors who needed to multiply their sources of income: typically, for example, they had to charge students to attend their lectures and to board students at their houses. Connections between academic and public culture were therefore close and lively.

Regarding the context of Göttingen in the mid-eighteenth century,
one sees that Johann David Michaelis participated in forcefully promoting a liberal agenda, in all its cosmopolitan and conformist complexity. With him, international, national, and personal impulses coincided, and a distinctive attitude toward gender and class took shape. Michaelis’s translation of the English work _Clarissa_, though more literal than free, implied a vigorously pursued politics with protofeminist and bourgeois implications. His reluctance to translate the “Ode” in _Clarissa_ did not emerge from anxiety, but as a genuine, if paternalistic, tribute to the accomplishment of a talented woman, with the intention of reorienting readers’ ideas about women’s potential. Therefore the evidence we have of Michaelis’s own views of language, British culture, and women’s education reinforce his centrist view of translation. His desire to foreground Elizabeth Carter’s “Ode” by leaving it untranslated reflects a genuine appreciation for the strengths of Clarissa as a character, Carter as a female poet, women as readers and textual interpreters, and the German public overall as capable of valuing English poetry and song in the original.

2. *Göttingen Daughters and the Drive to Translation*

Michaelis’s upbringing of his daughter Caroline corroborates this. Caroline Michaelis (1763–1809) lived in the magnificent house in which Michaelis taught classes and entertained luminaries. It was filled with student-boarders, some of whom became Caroline’s tutors. She was therefore well educated for a girl of her time, regularly exposed to new ideas and accustomed to academic discussions. Michaelis’s encouragement of his daughter was not unusual; Caroline was only one of a group of highly accomplished daughters of Göttingen professors who offered one another companionship as well as competition. The progressive nature of the university was thus extended into the professors’ own homes without necessarily undermining the professors’ substantial self-regard or assumptions about male superiority.

The best known of the Göttinger protégées, Dorothea Schlözer (1770–1825), was a daughter of the historian and political scientist August Ludwig Schlözer, who actually conducted an educational experiment on his bright firstborn child as a way of challenging the theories of German educationalist Johann Bernhard Basedow, founder of the famous “Philanthropic” school at Dessau. Contra Basedow, who followed Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s ideas of sex-differentiated “natural” education,
Schlözer felt there should be an empirical basis for pedagogical theory, and he threw himself into his project. At the age of fifteen months Dorothea commanded “87 words and 192 ideas, if I have counted correctly,” wrote Schlözer. At eighteen months she was able to express herself clearly and was learning the ABCs via Schlözer’s new method. Schlözer took pride in strolling around Göttingen with two-year-old Dorothea and astonishing passersby as they heard a toddler conversing as though she were six. At thirty-two months she learned the Low German dialect; she began to study German reading and writing at four years and two months. From there she studied English, Swedish, and Dutch. French and Italian were squeezed in; Latin instruction began when she was eleven years old; Greek commenced at fifteen (Kern, 52–53). At five and a quarter years she was taken to Schlözer’s colleague Kästner for private instruction in mathematics (a field to which Schlözer felt himself unequal). In keeping with Schlözer’s notions about practical education—as evidenced in the progression of modern, conversational languages—he took Dorothea on a number of trips, including an extended trip to Italy (fall 1781 to spring 1782), where she was expected, as an eleven year old, to perfect her command of Italian. He desired moreover to further her understanding of mineralogy through a six-week expedition to various German mines, a number of which she visited on her own in 1786 (Kern, 64–65). The study of literature was ignored entirely as a waste of time, though Dorothea was expected to acquire the feminine accomplishments of knitting, sewing, home economics, drawing, music, and dancing (Kern, 54). Even here Schlözer’s program opposed that of Basedow, who, leaning on Rousseau, fostered in women attentiveness to masculine authority over practical accomplishments. Dorothea’s upbringing, based on a belief in rationality and empirical outcomes, thus became an elaborate experiment in human development that was viewed in Göttingen as an unqualified success and that resulted in Dorothea Schlözer receiving in 1787 the first PhD awarded to a woman by the university.

The example of Schlözer demonstrates the intensity with which pedagogy and the education of girls were approached in Göttingen. Although Johann David Michaelis did not experiment with his children in the same way, his well-educated, independent-spirited daughter Caroline nonetheless became equally famous. She may sometimes have lamented the relentless rigor of Dorothea Schlözer’s education, but what Caroline’s life and the lives of her friends Therese Heyne and Meta Wedekind tell us are how the progressive Göttingen approach, its embrace of British culture, and their later revolutionary ideals shaped their experience
and their thought, influenced their broader life choices, and appeared in their translations and other literary endeavors.¹⁹  

Caroline Michaelis is better known today by her married names Böhmer-Schlegel-Schelling. Her first husband, the doctor Johann Franz Wilhelm Böhmer, died in 1788, four years after they were married; two of her three children died the next year. With her much-loved daughter Auguste she returned to live with her father in Göttingen and then with her brother in Marburg. In 1792 she moved to Mainz, which in the fall came under French control. There she took part in the circle of French revolutionary supporters, in particular Georg Forster and his wife Therese, born Heyne, her childhood playmate. 

Therese Heyne (1764–1829) was the daughter of Christian Gottlob Heyne, a professor of ancient civilizations and director of the famous Göttingen University library. She and Caroline had an uneven childhood friendship, sometimes lively and involved and sometimes characterized by mistrust and competition. Perhaps growing up in the fishbowl of academic Göttingen contributed to this.²⁰ In 1785 Therese married Georg Forster. Forster had lived in England for many years and when he was seventeen old, as assistant to his naturalist father Johann Reinhold, set sail on James Cook’s Second Voyage; the publication of his Voyage Round the World (1777), which appeared in German as Reise um die Welt (1778–80), assured his fame. After that exploration he returned to Germany to secure employment. First he taught in Kassel; then he received a professorial position in Vilnius, at the time part of Poland. Therese joined him there and life was difficult, primarily because funds that Forster had been promised were not forthcoming. After searching about for alternatives, Forster was called to become librarian at the University of Mainz.

Given Forster’s British upbringing, it is not surprising that life at the Forsters’ house had an English flavor. He appears to have assumed the role of country gentleman or aristocratic host—perhaps he was also inspired by South Sea hospitality—entertaining many travelers for extended visits. Such guests commented on how the Forsters daily served high tea. Wrote one visitor: “One gathered at seven o’clock, after work was done, around a tea pot, according to English custom, and remained together until nearly nine o’clock.”²¹ Newspapers were perused and current events discussed. “At Forster’s in the evenings one read the latest edition of the ‘Moniteur’ with news from Paris” (Siegel, 99). And Caroline wrote to a friend that “we are participating in a most interesting political era, and that gives me, in addition to the wise things that I hear
evenings around the tea table, a good deal to think about." Given the radical politics espoused by this circle, it is not surprising that Forster maintained contact with the British radical circle surrounding the publisher Joseph Johnson, whose books Forster brought back after a trip to London in 1790. He set those around him in Mainz the task of translating the revolutionary texts Johnson himself had promoted in England.

Georg Forster’s most prolific translator was Meta Forkel (her chosen nickname and the surname of her first husband, Johann Nikolaus Forkel; sometimes she is listed under Margarethe Liebeskind, with the surname of her second husband). Another Göttingen daughter, Meta was born in 1765, a year after Therese and two years after Caroline. Her father was a professor of philosophy and a Protestant minister whose sermons preached a practical morality reminiscent of British essays in the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, which had been translated into German soon after their British publication. He addressed not only public issues but also discussed domestic questions such as housekeeping, medical remedies, and childrearing. He decried aristocratic excesses, women’s enslavement to fashion, and the taste for French luxury, and Meta absorbed her father’s enlightened bourgeois views. Nonetheless she became a controversial social figure because she separated from (and eventually divorced) the Göttingen music historian Johann Nikolaus Forkel; she came to Mainz and lived with Caroline, who wrote to a friend that she could not understand the outcry against this perfectly reasonable person.

Göttingen daughters and Germans in general enjoyed greater access to divorce in this period than the English did. In England divorce required a private act of Parliament, something only very wealthy men could afford and something pursued almost exclusively in cases of infidelity. By contrast in many parts of Germany there reigned a Protestant understanding of marriage as subject to natural right and, increasingly through the period, as a contractual arrangement that could be dissolved. Madame de Staël, visiting Germany in 1803–4, remarked on the ease with which women were able to divorce and remarry: “They change husbands with as little difficulty as if they were arranging the incidents of a drama.” In Göttingen, a city with a population of about eight thousand, 190 divorce cases were filed between 1740 and 1840. The majority of cases was brought by working-class women whose most frequent complaint was that their husbands were abusive and wasteful or even threatened their lives as a consequence of alcoholism. Men’s general complaint was that women failed in housekeeping, wasted money, or cooked badly. In Berlin, according to one calculation, there were 1,020
divorced women around the year 1800. Consequently, while divorce was rare, and while it still affected a woman’s reputation negatively, it was an option that could be considered and invoked in extreme cases.

The Göttingen daughters were all involved in divorce. Meta and Caroline saw their cases through and then remarried, and Therese began the process though Georg Forster died before she had completed it. In a 1794 plea to the University court to remarry, Meta Forkel wrote: “Meine Heyrath an den Herrn Doctor Forkel ist bekanntlich gleichsam in meiner Kindheit geschehen, wo ich noch keine hinlängliche Einsicht, und Überzeugung von der ehelichen Verbindung und deren Verpflichtung haben konnte. . . . Dagegen bin ich nun durch bittere Erfahrung zu besserer Überzeugung gekommen, und dadurch weiser gemacht, kann ich mich fähiger hoffen, bey einer anderweitigen Verheyrathung die Pflichten einer Gattin und Mutter zu erfüllen” (My marriage to Dr. Forkel, as is well known, happened virtually in my childhood, when I could not yet have an adequate understanding and conviction about the marriage bond and its obligations. . . . However now I have come to a better conviction through bitter experience, and, having been made wiser by it, I can hope to be more capable, in a future marriage, to perform the duties of a wife and mother). Meta was sixteen years old when she first married, hence her emphasis on being a naive child as she entered matrimony with Forkel. In her plea she was forced to adopt a bourgeois embrace of housewifely duties, though her biography shows that she espoused a more progressive politics: her attempts to live independently through her work as a translator, and the radical ideas in the books she agreed to translate, suggest that she was animated by hopes of profound social and gender transformation.

Such a double view may appear contradictory today, but Göttingen’s progressive environment simultaneously insisted on a solid bourgeois ethic, and divorce, though available, provoked scandal. The conjunction of the two competing tendencies can be illustrated in the life and writings of the poet Philippine Gatterer Engelhard (1756–1831), the third of fifteen children born to one of Göttingen’s professors of history, Johann Christoph Gatterer (1727–99). Philippine displayed her emotions and expressed her opinions freely. Seventeen-year-old Caroline Michaelis, judgmental in evaluating her female cohort, wrote of Philippine, “for a woman she is too bold, thinks and speaks too freely,” and Wilhelm Grimm commented much later that “she speaks bluntly.” Her first two volumes of verse were brought out by the Göttingen publisher Dieterich when she was twenty-two and twenty-six years old. She married a civil
servant and moved to Kassel, where she remained the rest of her life, raising ten children. Other collections of her poetry appeared in 1787, 1789, and, after a long hiatus, in 1821. At age seventy-four she translated and published verses of the French poet Pierre-Jean de Béranger. She was one of the best-loved German women poets of the eighteenth century, and while her verses tended to focus on subjective reflections, from time to time she considered the position of women in general, as in the 1779 poem “Mädchenklage” (The Girl’s Lament), where she decries the limitations of gender roles: “Oft hab ich mit Thränen / Und innigem Sehnen, / Verwünscht mein Geschlecht! / Es fesselt fast immer / Mich Arme ins Zimmer— / Wie frey gehn die Männer! Selbst Knabe und Knecht” (How oft with damnation / And tears of frustration / My gender I curse! / Its ban ever dooms / Us girls to our rooms; / How freely men move! Even youngster and serf.) Therefore even a daughter with more conservative inclinations nonetheless absorbed the interest in gender politics prevalent in Göttingen and found a means of self-assertion and self-expression through print.

For her part, Meta Forkel’s politics can be seen most clearly in her desire to translate for Georg Forster the most controversial texts produced in what has been called his “translation factory.” This expression was used satirically to describe the way in which German translations were churned out prodigiously, seemingly mechanically, by entrepreneurs at a time that saw an overwhelming interest in foreign literature. The increasing market for such works opened the possibility of independence for an educated woman like Meta Forkel, so that she could pursue what the figure of Clarissa modeled—a writing woman who, in a quandary concerning marriage, proceeded to make up her own mind in accord with her conscience. Forkel’s translations can therefore be interpreted on levels both personal and political; her work measures the extent to which the market for intra-European translation in this period offered Göttingen daughters the means to avoid Clarissa’s fatal end.

Indeed, translation became for the Göttingen women a textual means of liberation from financial distress, obscurity, sexual restriction, and political powerlessness. It offered a way of earning their bread respectfully and participating in the republic of letters. The great demand in this period for books translated into German created a lucrative market, which resulted in the establishment of a translation infrastructure where translators, unable to keep up with the demand on their own, would subcontract translations and then correct the work, supplying also introductions and notes: hence the rise of the “translation factory.”
The rapid increase in translation affected intra-European cultural transfer on many levels, including socioeconomic and political exchange, and increasing studies of this phenomenon have exposed weaknesses in reigning interpretations of European national ideas. Margaret Cohen and Carolyn Dever’s edited volume *The Literary Channel: The Inter-National Invention of the Novel* (2002), for example, fundamentally contests most long-standing interpretations of “the rise of the novel.” National paradigms have anachronistically been imposed on literary history, contributors to the volume argue; the novel actually emerged from a transnational, intercultural milieu that was affected but not determined by capitalist development. According to Joan DeJean, “No genre has had a history more closely bound up with nomadic conditions of production than the modern novel. To forget this and write the novel’s history as though each national tradition were an entity unto itself, as though each had developed without the stimulus of foreign artists, is to blind ourselves to a particularly significant type of literary interconnection.”

She discusses the “diasporic conditions” of many innovators of the novel and questions whether the country of their birth or the language in which they wrote ought to determine to which literary history they belong. Mary Helen McMurrans points out that during the long eighteenth century, translations were omnipresent and central. She shows that in Britain from 1660 to 1770, “translations of French romances and novels constituted as much as 36% of the published prose fiction in a given year and hovered around 15–30% up to the late eighteenth century.” From 1700 to 1740 four of the best-selling narratives were translations (*Telemaque, Don Quixote, Arabian Nights, Guy of Warwick*), and from 1750 to 1769, six out of the twenty most popular novelists were foreigners, two of them female authors: Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni, Voltaire, Jean-François Marmontel, Miguel de Cervantes, Rousseau, and Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont. Nor was the situation in France different. McMurrans concludes: “Just as translations of novels in the eighteenth century did not represent a move from one cohesive nation and national literature to another (to the extent that an established cultural and literary value system inflected the translation, its reception, and its influence), the contact between France and Britain cannot be properly described as the simple intersection of two distinct others but was a more fluid interaction based on a history of cultural intimacy.”

Cohen and Dever’s volume has greatly enhanced the discussion of translation’s meaning for literary and cultural history; however, exchange moved beyond “the Channel zone” of France and England, and adding
a consideration of German examples affords a fuller and more complex picture. James Raven, for instance, has offered the astonishing statistic that in 1776, 76 percent of the novels published in England were translated into German. Such a fact needs to be reflected in historical scholarship, and fortunately recent work such as Stefanie Stockhorst’s anthology *Cultural Transfer through Translation* takes up this challenge.\(^3\) In keeping with the essays of that volume, I consider not only the novel but also other literary genres, since the remarkable flow of texts between countries involved both established and emerging forms. Moreover, stylistic and aesthetic issues reveal significant ideological orientations; consideration of the cultural politics emerging within the context of the Personal Union allows us to expand beyond English-French relations and gauge the ongoing reformist content of women’s participation.

### 3. Meta Forkel in Georg Forster’s Translation Factory

Meta Forkel and Mary Wollstonecraft, born only six years apart, belonged to the same generation of progressive-minded bluestockings. Both faced anxious personal lives, with their first liaisons falling apart, children born out of wedlock, and a desperate need to earn a living. In order to do so, they entered the literary marketplace. Forkel published her first novel, *Maria*, in 1784; Wollstonecraft’s first novel, *Mary*, appeared in 1788. Both books, containing autobiographical content, were also responses to Richardson’s *Clarissa*, depicting sentimental heroines who wished to retain independence despite social pressures and gender roles that dictated marriage and customary behavior for women. Both authors were gifted with languages and completed translations. Both saw in the progressive movements around them possibilities of freedom; they attached themselves to revolutionary circles; they were motivated to publish in the interest of furthering radical political ideas.\(^3\) Their lives and literary careers thus parallel each other in substantial ways. However, their approaches to translation reveal distinct radicalisms and demonstrate differences in how the French Revolution was received within the Personal Union; the ramifications were significant for women seeking reform, for gender politics, and for national self-definition.

Meta Forkel separated from her husband in 1788 to move to Berlin, where she studied literature and translation with Johann Jakob Engel and began her career. She needed to make money, and having from childhood been talented in languages she found in translation the most
suitable means of earning a living. In 1789 she visited Mainz, where her brother Georg Wedekind was a doctor, and there she got to know Georg Forster, the university librarian, who was married to her childhood friend Therese Heyne. The Forsters were friends of her brother’s—the Forsters and Wedekinds were godparents to one another’s children—and she began to translate books for Georg Forster. Moving between Mainz and Göttingen, where she was seeking to find a solution to her marital problems with Forkel, Meta continued translation work all the while.  

Georg Forster had good connections, especially with the Berlin publisher Christian Friedrich Voß. Voß recognized that Forster would lend prestige to his publishing list, and he wished in particular to cash in on current interest in international travel literature by embarking on an entire series of voyage accounts. Forster had not only journeyed around the world with James Cook but he had also written several travel books of his own, had contributed countless articles and reviews to significant publications such as the Göttingische Anzeigen (a periodical he helped to edit for a time), and had lively, ongoing connections with British booksellers. He was a star on the literary and intellectual scene. Later, Alexander von Humboldt would estimate Forster’s academic contributions highly: “Durch ihn began eine Ära wissenschaftlicher Reisen, deren Zweck vergleichende Völker- und Länderkunde ist. . . . Nicht etwa bloß in seiner trefflichen Beschreibung der zweiten Reise des Kapitän Cook, mehr noch in den kleinen Schriften liegt der Keim zu vielem Großen, das die spätere Zeit zur Reife gebracht hat” (Through him an era of scholarly travels began, whose goal is comparative ethnology and geography . . . Not only in his excellent description of Captain Cook’s second voyage, but even more in the short writings there lie the seeds of many great things that later times have brought to fruition”). Voß was therefore willing to compensate him handsomely as editor of a series of travel accounts that Forster himself would select. For his part Forster harbored elevated literary ambitions; he wished not only to communicate to readers accurate, factual descriptions of newly explored parts of the world but also to offer well-edited travel narratives with literary merit. Moreover, Forster needed the money. Never able to keep ahead of his personal expenses, he welcomed a second income and set up his translation factory. Voß paid Forster well, offering up to eight taler a sheet for the translations. With more work than he could undertake himself, Forster subcontracted translations to Forkel, Ludwig Ferdinand Huber, and others for about two to three taler a sheet, and then he would go over the translations, editing and supplying introductions and explanatory notes.
The work was undertaken in haste, since competition between publishers was fierce and the dates of the Leipzig and Frankfurt book fairs always loomed. Fortunately Meta Forkel worked fast. Her husband Johann Nikolaus, she discovered, had used up her dowry buying music manuscripts and, when he saw Meta earning money for translating, he confiscated that income also. Forster therefore wrote to his father-in-law Heyne in Göttingen, asking him to advance pay directly to Meta so that Johann Nikolaus could not take it. As was the case with all of Forster’s sub-translators, Meta’s work needed editing; Forster valued her as his most productive subtranslator. Forkel rendered a number of travel accounts into German for Forster. She began with Mathurin Jacques Brisson’s *Geschichte des Schiffbruchs- und seiner Gefangenschaft*, translated from the French, followed with Hester Lynch Piozzi’s *Reise durch Frankreich, Italien, und Deutschland*, Maurice Benyowsky’s *Reise durch Sibirien und Kamchatka*, as well as Thomas Anburey’s *Reise in das Innere von Nordamerika*.

Most interesting, however, are the texts that most stimulated Forkel herself: revolutionary books that had first emerged from the circle surrounding Joseph Johnson, the liberal London publisher. These works not only represented ready money to Forkel; she felt they were important contributions to human thought and human freedom. With Forster and her brother, who also joined the Jacobin Club, she fully supported revolutionary ideals. She began with David Ramsay’s *History of the American Revolution* and followed with Thomas Paine’s *Rights of Man*. She went on to translate the novels of women in the radical British circle: Elizabeth Inchbald’s *A Simple Story*, Charlotte Smith’s *Desmond* and her later novel *Celestine*. (Mary Bell Price and Lawrence Marsden Price also list a 1795 translation of William Godwin’s *Caleb Williams, or, Things as They Are* and a 1797 translation of Smith’s *Marchmont*, though I have been unable to locate these). The fictional works reinforce the kinds of social and gender questions that Meta Forkel pursued in her own novel *María*, so it is not surprising that she felt moved to translate these texts in particular. She also tackled the radical *Ruins* from the French of Constantin-François de Chassebeouf, the Count of Volney. After Meta divorced and remarried the civil servant Johann Heinrich Liebeskind in 1794 she moved to Königsberg and then Ansbach and other places associated with Liebeskind’s commissions. Relocating frequently, finding publishers on her own, and less pressed financially, she translated fewer works, favoring titles that would instantly interest a bookseller and readily find a market: the gothic fictions of Ann Radcliffe, for example, and James Boswell’s acclaimed *Life of Samuel Johnson*, works that despite
their popularity nonetheless offered literary novelty and experiments in genre.

Meta Forkel’s work on Thomas Paine’s *The Rights of Man*, translated in revolutionary Mainz and first published in German in 1792, is especially interesting because Georg Forster did not dare to take on the translation of such a radical work himself. Writing to Voß in the summer of 1791, he explained: “Sie heißt The Rights of Man und ist wider Herrn Burke gerichtet. Vier Editionen sind schon vergriffen. Sie ist aber so demokratisch, daß ich sie wegen meiner Verhältnisse nicht übersetzen kann. Madame Forkel übersetzt sie und ich will sie ihr revidiren” (It is called The Rights of Man and is directed against Mr. Burke. Four editions have already gone out of print. But it is so democratic, that because of my circumstances I cannot translate it. Madame Forkel will translate it and I will revise it for her).\(^{40}\) Unlike the normal practice, with Forster subcontracting the work, Forkel in this instance actually negotiated her translation fee directly with Voß. Such a circumstance suggests Forster’s concern to distance himself from the controversial project in case there were legal repercussions. Forkel wrote to Voß: “Sie haben Herrn Forster sehr gütig geschrieben, ich möchte das Honorar für den Bogen bestimmen, allein Sie werden mir verzeihn, wenn ich das nicht thue. . . . Wäre ich nicht in der Lage, wo es mir Pflicht ist, meine Zeit auch in anderer Hinsicht einträglich zu benutzen, so würd ich ein ganz eignes Vergnügen drein setzen, diese Arbeit ohne jede Vergütung als die meines eignen Wohlgefallens daran, gemacht zu haben, so aber überlasse ich es ganz und gar Ihnen selbst, was sie an jenem Ersatz mir bestimmen” (You have very kindly written Mr. Forster that I should set the rate for the manuscript; however you will forgive me if I do not do that. . . . If I were not in the position, where I am obliged to use my time lucratively also in other respects, I would take a personal pleasure in having done this work with no more reward than that of my own enjoyment in it; as it is I will leave it entirely to you, what you determine my compensation to be). She knew the importance of the work and became impatient when at first Voß hesitated, for fear of retribution, to publish a book she viewed as something “das als Urkunde der Menschheit anzusehen ist” (that is to be viewed as a charter of humanity).\(^{41}\) In the end Voß did issue the text and Forster contributed an unsigned preface.

Forkel contributed her own preface to the translation of Charlotte Smith’s *Desmond*, an epistolary novel that takes the French Revolution as its theme and critiques both political and domestic tyranny. Publishing this text in 1793 was another risky venture for Forkel; however, she
forestalls criticism in her preface by insisting (in a masculine voice) that readers are sophisticated enough not to mistake the views of characters with those of an author, let alone a translator:

Das Publikum ist schon gewohnt, den dramatischen Schriftsteller von den Grundsätzen frei zu sprechen, die er seinen Personen in den Mund legt: sollte ein Uebersetzer sich denn nicht eine gleiche Bil-ligkeit von seinen Lesern versprechen dürfen? Er fürchtet daher um so weniger, dass man die von ihm hier treu übersetzte hin und wieder mit verführerischem Schimmer aufgestellte Bemerkungen über die französische Staatsumwälzung für sein politisches Glaubensbekenntniss ansehen werde, wenn er gleich den Text durch keine berichti-gende Note zu unterbrechen sich erlaubte.

[The public is already accustomed to acquit the author of the principles that he puts into the mouth of his characters: shouldn’t a translator be able to expect the same fairness from his readers? He therefore does not fear that one will interpret the observations about the French Revolution, that are here faithfully translated and that now and again shimmer seductively, as a statement of his own political beliefs, even if he has not allowed himself to interrupt the text with a corrective comment.]

Having conceded that she has not mitigated any of the enthusiasm expressed about the French Revolution, she goes on to suggest that many friends of humanity were drawn to a dream that was later shattered, not because the dream was unworthy, but because harsh experience has shown that the original principles—ones one could only admire—were not upheld. These are courageous words for a woman who was soon, as Germans retook the region in 1793, to be imprisoned for her support of the Mainz Republic.

Given the timeliness and importance of Meta Forkel’s translations, not to mention the social repercussions that followed upon them, it is curious that her contribution has been largely ignored by scholars; moreover, the scant attention she has received has been paid to (mis)perceptions of error in her translations. As I have suggested, circumstances imply that, while Forkel’s translations may have needed the kind of editing that was typical for quickly completed “translation factory” products, they proved highly marketable and popular; they were frequently reprinted, and she was able to find work as soon as she sought
it. In particular, Forkel’s Paine translation was deemed solid enough to be reprinted as late as 1973 by the respected Suhrkamp Verlag in a “Theorie” series edited by Jürgen Habermas, Dieter Henrich, and Jacob Taubes. The editor and introducer of the volume, Theo Stemmler, insists that: “Bei objectiver Beurteilung ihrer Übersetzung gelangt man zu dem Ergebnis, daß diese Leistung durchaus anerkennenswert ist: Frau Forkel übersetzt auch schwierige idiomatische Wendungen in ein lesbares Deutsch, folgt meist genau dem Wortlaut des Originals, ohne jedoch pedantisch an der syntaktischen Konstruktion der Vorlage festzuhalten”

(In an objective evaluation of her translation one comes to the conclusion that this achievement is perfectly commendable: Mrs. Forkel even translates difficult idiomatic expressions into a readable German; she generally follows the wording of the original without holding on pedantically to the syntactical construction of the model). 43 The perfunctory dismissals of Forkel’s work would therefore appear to reflect not only a paternalistic attitude to a woman writer but also a general denigration of translation as a serious literary endeavor. And yet, translation was pursued, theorized, and lauded by the greatest writers of the time.

Indeed, most significant European authors of the period saw translation as central to literary life and many engaged in this type of cultural transfer. 44 Samuel Johnson expressed surprise at the rare author who could become eminent without doing translations, and the work of German translators was held in high esteem in Europe, witness Germaine de Staël’s essay on translation, or Thomas Carlyle, who in 1827 would write:

The Germans study foreign nations in a spirit which deserves to be oftener imitated. It is their honest endeavour to understand each, with its own peculiarities, in its own special manner of existing: not that they may praise it, or censure it, or attempt to alter it, but simply that they may see its manner of existing as the nation itself sees it, and so participate in whatever worth or beauty it has brought into being. Of all literatures, therefore, the German has the best as well as the most translations. 45

Although Carlyle’s laudatory words suggest a neutrality in German translation, the earlier practitioners studied here did harbor designs in their choices of texts and modes of translation. Forster’s and Forkel’s theories of translation followed on the type of modified literal translation offered by Johann David Michaelis and Luise Gottsched in the belief that Germans would benefit from adopting foreign ideas faithfully rendered
into the German. Gottsched had felt that German letters would improve; Michaelis had, among other things, sought to increase the status of women; and Forster and Forkel wished to increase the liberty of Germans overall. The benefits of a largely literal translation were thus perceived to accrue on many levels, political, social, and literary. Meta Forkel’s translation of Paine’s *Rights of Man* or Smith’s *Desmond* can therefore be said to embrace English-language contributions to German culture and to represent an international as well as protonationalist moment. Clearly Forkel felt that certain ideas expressed in English contained force explosive enough to alter German political consciousness—the legal consequences to Paine’s English publisher Joseph Johnson suggested this (he was convicted and imprisoned for selling a seditious pamphlet), as did Forster’s and Voß’s reluctance to handle the volatile text. Forkel saw Paine’s work as a document for all of humanity, an “Urkunde der Menschheit,” whatever its national origin, and Smith’s novel offered trenchant insight into revolutionary politics and domestic life. Embracing cosmopolitanism, Forkel saw translation as a means of sharing mutual human assets rather than breaching walls that separated cultures, even if this occurred in the interest of improving German life in particular.

Sherry Simon has suggested, in keeping with a generally held view, that the German Romantic attitude to translation contrasted with the French—the free style in the tradition of “les belles infidèles”—and that, conveyed to Madame de Staël by such thinkers as August Wilhelm Schlegel, Staël embraced it as she visited Germany in the early nineteenth century. Although one can argue for a widespread German approach to translation, I have been suggesting that this was not a nineteenth-century Romantic phenomenon but one that had far earlier roots, a much longer history, and that this timeline is significant not only for the study of translation but also for our understanding of emerging nationalism and the gender politics that shifted alongside it in the early nineteenth century.

The universalist imperative coincided with the feminist impulse Forkel sought to advocate; at this moment she perceived the advancement of women incorporated within a general vision of liberty and therefore as likely to profit from revolutionary change. Mary Wollstonecraft, whose translation of Christian Gotthilf Salzmann’s *Moralisches Elementarbuch* seeks explicitly to foreground female agency, surprisingly delimits cultural transfer in the interest of an insularity she is reluctant to breach. Wollstonecraft’s focus on women in her translation from the German paradoxically coincides with a retreat to particularities of sex as well as
nation, and this represents a different epistemology that has been traditionally associated with Romanticism but that is clearly inflected by the different circumstances of late-eighteenth-century British politics and gender politics. Considering Wollstonecraft’s translation reveals how two women, similarly positioned with like aims in two nonrevolutionary countries, nonetheless were affected differently by the ideological forces surrounding them.48

4. Mary Wollstonecraft’s Translation of Salzmann

While German radicals such as Meta Forkel were interested in disseminating English ideas, so too English radicals were interested in German ones. There was in particular a prevalent British fascination, as I have suggested, with new German pedagogical theories: those theories led to substantial experimentation on the part of the Göttingen political scientist August Schlözer with his daughter Dorothea, and also stimulated the group of Rousseauian “Philanthropists,” including Johann Bernhard Basedow (whom Schlözer challenged), Joachim Heinrich Campe, and Christian Gotthilf Salzmann. These men founded institutions, ran prolific presses, and composed many works on educational theory and practice in the late eighteenth century. German influence on English radicals can be discerned, among other places, in Wollstonecraft’s translation of Christian Gotthilf Salzmann’s *Moralisches Elementarbuch* (1783), rendered into English as *Elements of Morality for the Use of Children* (1790), an acclaimed German work that proved equally popular among English readers: there were at least eleven editions published in England, Ireland, and the United States between 1790 and 1811.49

Christian Gotthilf Salzmann was born in 1744 in a town near Erfurt to a Protestant minister. He felt his own schooling was rigid, and as a young pastor increasingly concerned with the fate of the poor, he concluded that much of the pain and suffering of the world was derived from people’s inadequate education. He wrote a book about the best way to teach children religion, but when this was rejected by his superiors, Salzmann was happy to accept a position at the Philanthropist school founded in 1774 by Basedow, who was supported by the liberal Prince Leopold Friedrich Franz of Anhalt-Dessau.50 There, still reacting against an education he felt remained insufficiently experience-based, Salzmann developed his ideas in various publications, including his *Moralisches Elementarbuch*, and persuaded the liberal Duke of Gotha, Ernst II—like Friedrich Franz
a freemason—to support his purchase of an estate at Schnepfenthal, where he built his own school. He admitted his first pupils in 1785 and by 1800 there were fifty-eight students. Education was practical, and the curriculum included—along with academic subjects—gymnastics, sex education, music, and travel. In addition to Salzmann’s many publications, his fellow teacher Johann Christoph Friedrich GutsMuths wrote a number of well-known texts on physical education: Gymnastik für die Jugend, discussed below, was translated into English and published by Joseph Johnson in 1800. Christian Carl André became a teacher for girls, whose instruction took place in a separate building but enjoyed a parallel curriculum; he published books about their studies and especially the benefits of field trips to their development. Henry Crabb Robinson, visiting Schnepfenthal in 1804, paid particular attention to the physical education and also noted that “[w]ith edifying improvements, Salzmann translated Mary Wollstonecraft’s ‘Rights of Women,’ and he was in correspondence with her.”

Salzmann wrote dozens of educational texts for children, teachers, and parents, even issuing a periodical, “Der Bote aus Thüringen,” for twenty-eight years at the Schnepfenthal press. The work translated by Mary Wollstonecraft, the Moralisches Elementarbuch, was his most popular; it remained in print until the mid-nineteenth century with several editions each decade, and appeared also in an amended version for Catholic youth. Salzmann’s book was illustrated by the famed artist Daniel Chodowiecki, Germany’s most prolific liberal book illustrator.

Mary Wollstonecraft’s treatment of this work confirms the significance of British-German cultural transfer and at the same time shows how a translation of the revolutionary era reworked the aims of the earlier generation, imposed national binarisms, and shifted away from earlier forms of feminism. The book was offered as a new, English product. William Blake’s role as illustrator reinforced the drive to reinterpret and re-present the text. He adjusted the composition of the original illustrations and even added some new ones to further a radical metaphysics that proved so significant to Wollstonecraft’s version of this book.

Therefore while the literal translations of Michaelis and Forkel into the German were intended directly to effect sociopolitical change, the freer translation of radical Mary Wollstonecraft, I argue, paradoxically tended toward privatization and protonationalism. Adumbrating Romantic notions of authorship, Wollstonecraft offered simultaneously domestication and transcendence at moments that in the German origi-
nal are presented as straightforward social and ethical concerns. As a result Wollstonecraft’s translation limited the moral compass of the original text to highlight instead an omniscient, nearly omnipotent female figure whom I will call the mother-instructor, who reflects Wollstonecraft’s own view of what ought to be women’s new domestic sovereignty, with the home as microcosm of the polis and the mother as unacknowledged legislator.

In this, then, she adopts an “ultra-radical” epistemology, to use Barbara Taylor’s characterization, that jumps from the domestic to the transcendent in an abrupt move uncharacteristic of other contemporary feminist approaches, whether liberal, conservative, or even radical. Barbara Taylor writes that the political ambitions of “most 1790s radicals . . . were limited and pragmatic,” but that the millenarian influence of Richard Price lent to Wollstonecraft’s thought a utopian thrust, an “unwavering faith in divine purpose that, suffusing her radicalism, turned anticipations of ‘world perfected’ into a confident political stance.” Wollstonecraft’s unusual apocalyptic view is shown, via a comparison to the German text, ultimately to undermine her radical aims. The focus on gender questions becomes here, in the Romantic ferment of the French Revolution, a privatizing move despite her claims to a freer and more feminist approach.

Mary Wollstonecraft’s earliest works, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787) and *Original Stories from Real Life* (1788), reveal an author fiercely involved with issues of morality and women’s education, and it is therefore not surprising to find her at this time taking up Salzmann’s collection of tales about the Herrmann family concerned with the moral development of children. Salzmann’s own practical theories of pedagogy pervade the stories of the *Elementarbuch*. Despite Wollstonecraft’s political and epistolary links with Salzmann, however, she makes meaningful if subtle changes in her version of Salzmann’s treatise. Critics have tended to follow Ralph Wardle by emphasizing Wollstonecraft’s addition of a story about Indians and her attention-getting remark in the preface (actually translated directly from Salzmann) that children should be told matter-of-factly about human reproduction. But there are more significant aspects to Wollstonecraft’s translation that shed a brighter light on her writing career and politics in general; her *Elements of Morality for the Use of Children* (1790) finally moves away from the bourgeois German book not only to deepen the role of the mother, called Mrs. Jones in her version, but also to demonstrate Wollstonecraft’s views
on the advancement of civilization, the need for a reformation of manners to facilitate such advancement, and the ways the mother in particular can lead civilization to its perfected state.

Wardle has been the only Anglophone scholar to take a close look at Wollstonecraft’s “Englishing” of Salzmann. He briefly analyzes some of her modifications but does not consider changes in the role of the mother. Instead he focuses on the subtle ways Wollstonecraft reveals her radical opinions on class distinctions by diminishing the material possessions of the wealthy. On the Continent, German scholar Ingrid-Charlotte Wolter has concluded that Wollstonecraft adjusts the original by foregrounding personality development over Salzmann’s emphasis on social morality. In my view the “Englishing” tendency on the part of Wollstonecraft needs to be examined more closely, since it highlights how questions of gender and nation are intertwined. Wollstonecraft significantly terms this process one of “naturalizing” the text.

I term it a translation, though I do not pretend to assert that it is a literal one; on the contrary, beside making it an English story, I have made additions to, or altered many parts of it, not only to give it the spirit of an original, but to avoid introducing any German customs or local opinions. My reason for naturalizing it must be obvious from this—I did not wish to puzzle children by pointing out modifications of manners, when the grand principles of morality were to be fixed on a broad basis.

Wollstonecraft worked from the German original aiming to offer something specifically English, with the paradoxical goal of conveying transcendent principles. Adhering to national—“natural”—customs will simultaneously allow readers to avoid the distractions of national difference.

To complicate this strained argument, national difference, to Wollstonecraft, appears to be defined to a significant degree by French culture. Wollstonecraft in the preface actually praises the German text for its non-Frenchness: “Though I have not copied, I have endeavoured to imitate the simplicity of style and manners which I admired in the original. If it had been a French work, I should, probably, have had to curtail many smooth compliments, that I might not have led my little readers to the very verge of falsehood.” Behind Wollstonecraft’s concern to transcend nation by invoking it rests the abiding British obsession with French character and culture. As did Samuel Johnson, she scoffs at French influences, leaning heavily on unflattering stereotypes.
At the same time she may be convincing her readers that she is not translating from a French version but from the German original. Since in this period some British translators of German works actually retranslated French versions, Wollstonecraft by contrast wants to emphasize that she had worked from Salzmann’s own text. She says she undertook the translation from the German in order to improve her language skills; she asked Joseph Johnson to send her a German grammar book, and she includes sections from the German work—notably the “Introductory Address to Parents”—that do not appear in the existing French translation.

Oddly enough, however, if she had adhered to the French version of this text, she might have remained closer to the German. Wollstonecraft evinces a more national stance toward the German text than does her French-language counterpart. Where the translator into the French pointedly avoids “Frenchifying” the text (by introducing French characters in a French context), Wollstonecraft “Englishes” the text in precisely this way because, as we have seen, she believes it will be more “natural.” The French translator explains his reasons for retaining the German setting and characters:

Les personages de ce livre sont la plutôt part Allemands, parce que l’auteur a principalement écrit pour sa nation. Je les ai laissés tels, en ne changeant rien à leurs moeurs, à leur façon de penser, ni à leur ton. Cela sera plaisir à des lecteurs qui, exempts de préjugés nationaux, aiment à connaitre d’autres caractères et d’autres moeurs que celles de leur nation.

So the French translation consistently hews to the German text. Interestingly, the French translation appears to have been undertaken by a German translator (Johann Christoph Schwab) and published in Leipzig by Siegfried Lebrecht Crusius beginning in 1785. Salzmann or his translator may have desired less to influence the Francophone market across the border (teaching the French German ways) than to reach an aristocratic one within the German principalities (i.e., teaching Francophilic German aristocrats bourgeois German ways). Wollstonecraft by contrast “Englishes” and domesticizes her text so that her work becomes a proto-Romantic translation resting on an assumption of cultural difference rather than claiming to participate in a cosmopolitan endeavor as is asserted by the (German) French translation.

Therefore, while critics have suggested that Wollstonecraft chose to
offer an adaptation rather than a literal translation because she was just learning German and was therefore incapable of exact translation, I am arguing instead that her translation, generally remaining faithful to the original, purposefully veers from her source at specific junctures in order to promote the feminist and national project Wollstonecraft favors. Wollstonecraft’s entrenched views of national character—especially in light of the French version’s consistent faithfulness to Salzmann’s original—are exposed in her “natural” aims at “Englishing.” Despite her interest in and admiration for Salzmann’s German text, she harbors a sense that it is too foreign and that this difference has a deeply gendered basis.

Already in the introduction she changes the German focus on the boy to “children” in general. Her concern to naturalize involves careful attention to sex, but this becomes part of her larger project to address “grand principles” and articulate these on a “broad basis.” Englishing and naturalizing her text involve magnifying the moral significance of everyday events, creating a continuum between inner and outer landscapes, and muting the physical, demonstrative nature of the characters while intensifying their self-consciousness. Even her apparently intermittent and merely descriptive alterations ultimately serve to push a quintessentially material Enlightenment original toward a more metaphysical Romantic and British expression. I will argue that her emendations reveal a determinist conception of history as well as a sense of poetic transcendence that finally undermine any pragmatic aim of social transformation, something clearly the goal of the practical German text. Ironically, then, even as Wollstonecraft rearranges the book to put women at the center, she unwittingly contributes to their ultimate marginalization.

Like a number of her other writings, the *Elements of Morality* demonstrates how Wollstonecraft envisions the home as metaphor for the polis, depicting women as self-scrutinizing governors of their families who take up their deserved place as the unacknowledged legislators of an ideal nation.

5. “Englishing” the Elements of Morality

Wollstonecraft’s views do not shift significantly over the course of her short career. In the *Original Stories*, for example, one of Wollstonecraft’s earliest works, Mrs. Mason’s moonlight reverie about improving the world despite personal tragedy leads directly to the kind of pronouncement in the *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*
(1796), published the year before Wollstonecraft’s death, where Wollstonecraft’s “favorite subject of contemplation” is “the future improvement of the world.” The ideas we see distilled in Wollstonecraft’s alterations to Salzmann’s *Elementarbuch* demonstrate the consistent nature and means of that improvement: progress depending on the behavior of a mother who acts as teacher, poet, and prophet. Unfortunately, this “mother-instructor” can finally operate only via metaphor to effect social and political change; by relying on synecdoche Wollstonecraft ultimately undermines her own revolutionary aims.

Numerous subtle but consistent modifications go a long way to reveal Wollstonecraft’s agenda in her translation. As a way of adapting the German story for her British readers, Wollstonecraft alters the accoutrements and routines of daily life, for example. She consistently changes descriptions of meals: in the German, the curate’s family eats cheese for supper, but Wollstonecraft substitutes bread; while the Germans consider meat as well as soap necessary household expenses, Wollstonecraft leaves out the meat. One detects Wollstonecraft’s distaste, not merely for heavy meals, but for overindulging in general: “gluttony.” That deadly sin occasions the most vehement of Wollstonecraft’s inserted diatribes. In Salzmann’s version a servant, caught snatching food, is simply told by the mistress of the house, “Was kann ich denn dazu, daß ihr eine so häßliche Gewohnheit angenommen habt? Wenn ihr euch nicht selbst bei Ehre erhalten wollt, so kann ich es auch nicht” (How can I help it if you have cultivated such an ugly habit? If you do not wish to be honorable, then I cannot do it for you). Wollstonecraft, by contrast, has Mrs. Jones lash out at the maid:

> But is it my fault that you have acquired such an hateful habit? I have once or twice reproved you gently; now, since you have not listened to me, I must expose you to the family, to see if that will cure you. Nay, the pimples on your face expose your gluttony; we should seldom look ugly, or be obliged to take nasty medicines, if we did not greedily overload our stomachs; and if we forget our duty in private, and cheat our fellow-creatures of their share, it is but just that we should be laughed at in company, and called what we really are, gluttons. (II:35)

Far from committing a simple fault to be amended, the servant has revealed a disease that must be cured and a duty to others that has basely been abandoned. In the German version the offense is merely taking snacks (“naschen”), not gluttony; Wollstonecraft wishes to escalate the
action to a religious and moral crime. Wollstonecraft manipulates by means of shame and guilt. She has Mrs. Jones descend to derision of the servant’s physical appearance as well as threaten to “expose” the servant to the ridicule and laughter of the family. Leaning on theories of physiognomy, Wollstonecraft reveals that her aims are broader and metaphysical in contrast to the practical German goals of behavior modification. According to Wollstonecraft, one’s small, private actions must pass muster in the larger scheme of things.

Repeatedly Wollstonecraft raises the moral stakes in what would appear to be less than earthshaking events. When the Jones family returns after a feast, their moderate eating habits are contrasted with those of the other guests, who have overindulged in “artificial high-seasoned dishes” and are now feeling ill. “Is it possible that such a hodge-podge should digest, or that such artificial compositions should not injure the blood, and interrupt the simple course of nature?” I have emphasized Wollstonecraft’s addition; again she heightens the moral stakes, taking Salzmann’s straightforward point about health and the simple life and extending it to encompass cosmic concerns. “Nature” itself is upset as artificial foods infect the blood of the people, who are after all the blood of the nation and the world. Everyday events, ones as mundane as meals and digestion, have far-reaching consequences, not only for the well-being of the characters but also for the function of nature itself, for the very workings of the universe. Thus Wollstonecraft establishes a link between body and state, as each citizen’s blood, via synecdoche, fuels a larger world; the duty to eat right takes on exaggerated ethical and political significance.

Given the metaphorical links between people and their natural, social, and political world, Wollstonecraft’s further alterations to the German text—delineating a way of life that is less active, demonstrative, and violent than that in Salzmann—have broader implications as well. For example, instead of amusing children at a party by setting up a game involving the shooting of birds, Wollstonecraft wants to entice the young with cherry-picking and a walk through the garden. While in the German Herr Heilberg’s house suggests baroque effusiveness by containing large paintings by the greatest artists of elaborate rural scenes and lively ancient myths, along with costly mirrors and sumptuous furniture, Sir William’s place in the English version (note the elevated social rank absent in the German) reflects symmetry and restraint, with cool “pillars of fine marble” and “beautiful statues.” Wollstonecraft shares a pride in heightened English sensitivity and prefers a refined neoclassical interior.
Such delicacy, as Wollstonecraft portrays it, has sexual as well as national implications. While Salzmann suggests that a woman is a prostitute, has disreputable men coming and going, Wollstonecraft omits it. In Salzmann a bad innkeeper slaps his wife across the face, while in Wollstonecraft’s version he merely throws a handful of cards at her. This appears to suggest a greater tolerance among Germans for violence, but even positive emotions are more vehemently expressed: when, in Salzmann, the main protagonist Herrmann feels overcome by admiration for a virtuous innkeeper, he throws himself around the man’s neck and gives him a big kiss, whereas in Wollstonecraft “Mr. Jones was so full of respect for this good man, that he shook him heartily by the hand.” Wollstonecraft’s version lacks the vigor and perhaps the realism of the German original. Commotion and tumult are internalized in Wollstonecraft; vitality and agitation remain largely mental events.

Thus, though Wollstonecraft insists in her preface that “all the pictures are drawn from real life” (I:iv), she does not wish that life to look too harsh or physically unrestrained; the enhanced inwardness and physical restraint she introduces not only spare female characters violent encounters and abuse, they also make of an energetic German Enlightenment model a muted English Romantic copy: they shift the arena of action from the robust and rugged world (to which Salzmann wished to introduce his pupils) to the minds of the characters and readers. There are repercussions. In Wollstonecraft, thousands of infinitesimal activities of the body—eating, drinking, walking, playing—are given profound weight, and the inner mental and physiological events of a contained body come to constitute determining world occurrences. Wollstonecraft creates a synecdochic link between inner and outer world—self and nation—and suggests that events in one significantly affect events in the other.

Given the links between inner and outer worlds, a mother, especially one who eats correctly and maintains self-control, simultaneously gains command of social circumstances by virtue of her dominion over self and family. Wollstonecraft’s feminism, seeking to expand the sphere of women’s power, paradoxically takes a turn that will have antifeminist repercussions. In Salzmann’s “Introduction to Parents,” for example, he explains how a mother who employs his storytelling system will be rewarded by having better-behaved children:

Grosser Lohn wartet deiner, wenn du dich diesem Geschäfte unterziehen wirst. Es wird dir bey deinen übrigen Geschäften die ange-
nehmste Aufheiterung geben. Die Gesellschaft deiner Kinder, die dir vielleicht sonst so lästig war, wird dir nun, wenn sie immer gehorsamer, thätiger, gefälliger werden, mehr Vergnügen schaffen, als irgendeine andere. (xviii)

[Great reward awaits you, if you will undertake this task. It will most pleasantly brighten your other tasks. The society of your children, which was otherwise perhaps a burden to you, will now—as they become ever more obedient, busy, and obliging—supply you with more pleasure, than any other.]

Wollstonecraft, by contrast, focuses solely on the mother and her frame of mind.

If you have sufficient resolution to persevere, you will be amply recompensed for the trouble this employment gives you, and it will become, after you have acquired a taste for your duty, your most agreeable relaxation. The society of your children, which was, perhaps, sometimes a little troublesome to you, will soon, when you are anxious to improve them, become your dearest enjoyment. (II.11)

Only the mother’s frame of mind, not the children’s behavior, is changing in Wollstonecraft’s sentences, in contrast to Salzmann’s. Mothering becomes more enjoyable because of the mother’s own “resolution to persevere,” words not used in the German, where it’s simply a job to be done. In Wollstonecraft it is the mother’s new “anxious” desire to do her “duty”; moreover the focus falls on the mother’s improving the children, rather than, as in Salzmann, on the children themselves becoming obedient, busy, and obliging.

Indeed, Wollstonecraft consistently emphasizes duty in a way Salzmann does not, and again this is because of the social, national, and cosmic implications Wollstonecraft reads into the performance of one’s vocation. She has the father of the family in the text, Mr. Jones, laud a farmer’s industry by saying, “not only a good harvest will be the reward of your labour, but you will have health and cheerfulness whilst looking forward to it, and doing your duty in the station in which God has placed you” (II.7). Salzmann makes no mention of God and the duty dictated by one’s God-given social station.67

Even though the seemingly random addition of a single phrase would appear beneath notice, it again demonstrates the depth of Wollstone-
Craft’s agenda when taken in the context of her other works. Filling the duty of one’s station recurs as a theme throughout her writings, and it is particularly pronounced in the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Many commentators have analyzed Wollstonecraft’s depiction of the active citizen mother, but I would emphasize how the mother’s “doing the duty of her station” has millennial implications. Wollstonecraft’s citizen mother studies history and political science to learn her natural place; she breastfeeds her children and creates a neat and happy home.

I have . . . viewed with pleasure a woman nursing her children, and discharging the duties of her station with, perhaps, merely a servant maid to take off her hands the servile part of the household business. I have seen her prepare herself and children, with only the luxury of cleanliness, to receive her husband. . . . Whilst my benevolence has been gratified by contemplating this artless picture, I have thought that a couple of this description, equally necessary and independent of each other, because each fulfilled the respective duties of their station, possessed all that life could give.

As in the example of the farmer from the *Elements of Morality*, whose hard work not only brings a plentiful harvest but also justifies his place in the larger scheme of things, so too does the mother justify her existence in the moral universe by “fulfilling the duties of her station.” This phrase takes on a millennial quality when Wollstonecraft links it to the prophecy of Isaiah:

> [T]hough I have compared the character of a modern soldier with that of a civilized woman, I am not going to advise them to turn their distaff into a musket, though I sincerely wish to see the bayonet converted into a pruning-hook. I only recreated an imagination . . . supposing that society will some time or other be so constituted, that man must necessarily fulfil the duties of a citizen, or be despised, and that while he was employed in any of the departments of civil life, his wife, also an active citizen, would be equally intent to manage her family, educate her children, and assist her neighbours.

The father and mother fulfill their duties in good bourgeois fashion. Isaiah 2:4 prophesies that “they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks.” Richard Price, Wollstonecraft’s mentor,
had delivered and published a sermon drawing on this millennial passage, preaching it to the “Supporters of a New Academical Institution among Protestant Dissenters.” The millennial and educational context of Wollstonecraft’s own sentences suggests Price’s influence, and she had in fact written the *Vindication of the Rights of Men* to defend Price from Edmund Burke’s attacks; the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* followed from that earlier polemical work.

Characteristically, Wollstonecraft superimposes the millennial vision onto her model of social existence, so that Isaiah’s prophecy becomes, via Price, a vision of civic life as a representation of God’s millennial order. As mothers and fathers fulfill the duties of their station, Wollstonecraft will read out of their behavior a moral progress indicating the days of plowshares and pruning hooks. This direction in her thinking is later overtly articulated in the *Historical and Moral View of . . . the French Revolution* and the *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*, where she spells out her theory of the advance and eventual perfection of civilization. Time and again she speculates about the necessary ingredients for achieving social felicity, and the central ingredient consistently remains individual morality. Hence the focus of her travels is to observe “the present state of morals and manners, as I trace the progress of the world’s improvement.”

Although Wollstonecraft retains a focus on the mother-instructor’s multifaceted role, she moves increasingly toward an elevated analysis in which she considers larger systems and ties them to larger solutions. This may appear to be politically more efficacious and more feminist; however, it also becomes more removed and conceptual. Wollstonecraft refines the imagined link between individual, family, and nation: “man has been termed a microcosm; and every family might also be called a state.” She spells out her metaphorically linked concentric spheres, with the model mother-instructor, governor of a microstate, at the center. Filling the duty of her station, this mother acquits herself simultaneously in all spheres: within her microcosmic disciplined self, within the well-run family, within the state composed of active, dutiful citizens, and from the perspective of the macrocosmic millennial order.

Wollstonecraft’s alterations to Salzmann’s *Elementarbuch* offer her system in distilled form. For instance, when the Jones family receives an invitation from Sir William, little Mary is not allowed to go along because her bonnet is dirty. In Salzmann’s German version, by contrast, the daughter Luise’s entire dress is covered with beer and grease stains. The draconian punishment—missing what turns out to be
half a week’s outing—corresponds to some extent with the magnitude of the crime. Moreover the explanation for the punishment is more straightforward. Luise’s father will not allow her to go along, he says, because Luise’s dreadful appearance would reflect badly on her mother’s reputation as a housekeeper; she might be thought “eine unordentliche Frau” (a disorganized woman) by her peers. The other children will also not want to play with “ein so schmutziges Mädchen” (such an unkempt girl) (8).

In Wollstonecraft’s version, by contrast, it is the mother rather than the father who denies Mary the pleasure of going along. And, as if to emphasize the mother’s authority, Wollstonecraft has the denial proceed from the mere dirty bonnet rather than from a completely unpresentable dress. Wollstonecraft also increases the amount of guilt Mary feels: Mary’s appearing in the dirty bonnet would shame her mother rather than simply reflect on her housekeeping skills; moreover, by not being allowed to go, Mary is diminishing the pleasure of her mother in the party:

I must leave you at home, because I should be ashamed to let you appear in company such a dirty figure. I shall not enjoy half the pleasure I expected, now I am obliged to leave you at home. (I.9)

And of course it is all Mary’s own fault: “But remember, that the disappointment entirely arises from your own thoughtlessness, and your not paying proper attention to my example, who always keep my clothes in order” (I.9). Little Mary must pattern her behavior on the ideal mother-instructor’s example.

Later in the book both Luise in the German and Mary in the English version have learned the lesson that they must keep their clothes clean. Their mothers look into their closets and smile approval at the order they find there. Little Luise tells her mother:

ich will auch immer so ordentlich seyn, liebe Mutter, daß Sie mir gut seyn können, und ich nicht wieder so weinen darf, wie letzthin—ach, da hat es mich gar zu sehr gedauert, daß ich zu Hause bleiben mußte!
(246)

[and I always want to be so neat, dear Mother, so that you can be pleased with me, and I do not have to cry again, as before—oh, I felt so unhappy that I had to stay at home!]
Again, Wollstonecraft makes subtle but significant changes:

I will never be careless again that you may always look at me as you
do now, and that I may never cry as bitterly as I did when I saw the
coach drive off—Oh!—that was a sad day, I shall never forget it!—no,
never! (II 160)

The “dear Mother” is tellingly left out, the mother’s powerful gaze is
emphasized (“that you may always look at me as you do now”), and the
relentless repetition of “never,” the acute pain expressed in Mary’s cry-
ing “bitterly,” the coach driving off in front of her face, and the repeated
dashes and three exclamations suggest Wollstonecraft’s desire to height-
en the drama of this didactic moment.

But Wollstonecraft goes even further. She adds a full paragraph, not
found in Salzmann, to explicate and justify the governing power of the
mother:

All my commands have the same tendency, said her mother; I assist
your weak mind, and I am endeavouring to make you wise and happy,
when I deny you any present pleasure: for you are yet too young to
know what is really good. (II 160)

Not only does Wollstonecraft’s mother-instructor offer a perfect exam-
ple; with her elevated mind she is in touch with the Good and therefore
owns the authority and the power to control her daughter’s life in its
minutest detail by denying pleasures. Even the smallest event shapes the
mind, reflects on large moral questions, and therefore must be scruti-
nized if the child is to develop into a highly evolved, civilized, and civiliz-
ing force like her mother.

Wollstonecraft’s emerging Romantic view is expressed in this tran-
scendent turn. Increasingly discouraged by the failures she encoun-
ters in instructing people in her own life, Wollstonecraft leans less on
demonstrable causality and more on metaphorical, concentric links that
are to empower the mother-instructor. As with characters in Wollstone-
craft’s earlier writings—the governess Mrs. Mason, the schoolteacher
Anna Lofty, and Mary—it is their dignity of manners that attests to their
mental strength and wherewithal to fight depression and exist indepen-
dently: one needs to “have in this uncertain world some stay . . . and
this stay it is, which gives that dignity to the manners, which shews that a
person does not depend on mere human applause for comfort and sat-
isfaction.”\textsuperscript{73} Having experienced the inevitable harms of the world, these women have learned to avoid the most painful sensations by demanding little but by controlling the people in their sphere. In particular, directing the mental development of girl children represents a form of self-renewal and self-discipline that prepares the mother-instructors for eternity. Unfortunately the act of translating did not offer Mary Wollstonecraft herself the kind of self-renewal that would have filled her sails or her coffers. To George Blood she wrote, “I am so fatigued with poring over a German book, I scarcely can collect my thoughts or even spell English words.”\textsuperscript{74}

6. Anti-French Reaction

Despite Wollstonecraft’s personal fatigue, her influence on her German translator, Georg Friedrich Christian Weissenborn, was vigorous and direct. Weissenborn had just joined Salzmann’s faculty as instructor for classical and modern languages and had been educated at the universities of Jena and Göttingen.\textsuperscript{75} He married one of Salzmann’s daughters and was clearly a Wollstonecraft aficionado. After completing the translation of \textit{A Vindication} he translated the \textit{Original Stories} (1794) and edited the English version of the \textit{Elements of Morality} (1796), which he used in his classes to teach the English language. In addition, in 1799 he published a translation of Godwin’s \textit{Memoirs of the Author of A Vindication of the Rights of Woman} (1798) as \textit{Denkschrift auf Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, die Vertheidigerin der Rechte des Weibes}. He wrote a feminist essay, “Über den Richterspruch in der Sache des weiblichen Geschlechts gegen das männliche” (On the verdict in the case of the female sex against the male) in 1800, which called on women to demand their rights: “Suchet das zu werden, was Ihr seyn sollet; und man wird gezwungen seyn, Euch das zu geben, was man Euch schuldig ist! Lernet Eure Pflichten kennen: und man wird Euch Eure Rechte nicht vorenthalten können!” (Seek to become that which you ought to be, and one will be forced to give you what you are owed! Become familiar with your duties and one will not be able to deny you your rights!).\textsuperscript{76} Such a sentiment strongly echoes Wollstonecraft’s own language in the \textit{Vindication} and attests to the views prevalent in progressive circles in this period.

However, Salzmann, for his part, added an introduction and footnotes that tend to mitigate and alter Wollstonecraft’s most radical pronouncements in that book—most notably in his support for the aristoc-
racy (introduction, 124). These are what Henry Crabb Robinson had described as Salzmann’s “edifying improvements.” Perhaps this was done to avoid offending a patron or students’ parents. In any case, while Joseph Johnson had hired Wollstonecraft to translate Salzmann’s text aiming to further liberal ideology by teaching English readers progressive German approaches, even those German educationalists succumbed to nationalist tendencies in the early years of the nineteenth century in reaction to French incursions in the Napoleonic wars. Salzmann came to see education as a means of teaching love of the fatherland to defend against French aggression.

The upshot of the Terror and the Napoleonic wars was no less unsettling and vehement for the Göttingen professors’ daughters. Caroline Michaelis-Böhmer and her daughter Auguste, along with Meta Forkel and her mother, were arrested and imprisoned in the Königstein fortress as they sought to escape Mainz, which had been recaptured by the Germans in 1793. This incarceration became particularly dangerous when Caroline found she was pregnant by a French soldier, since the assumption of her captors would be that the traitor, Georg Forster, known to be a friend, was the father of her child. So she needed to find a timely way to be released, which was fortunately arranged by her brother and an acquaintance from Göttingen, August Wilhelm Schlegel.

As has been suggested, not only Caroline but most of the Göttinger daughters joined their fellow male radicals in believing in sexual freedom, and they bore children out of wedlock: Meta became involved with and ultimately married Ferdinand Liebeskind, having earlier given birth to his son, Adalbert, in 1792. Therese Forster became the lover of houseguest and translator Ludwig Ferdinand Huber, whose continued presence in their home was tolerated by Forster. Therese was beginning divorce proceedings when Forster, having traveled to Paris in early 1793 to seek annexation of Mainz, died there in January 1794. Therese married Huber in April.

After three months’ incarceration at Königstein Caroline was released, but she was banned from the Rhein provinces and could not return to Göttingen either. Schlegel arranged for her to come under the protection of his brother Friedrich near Leipzig. Realizing she needed a protector, and perhaps out of gratitude for Schlegel’s concern for her, she agreed in 1796 to become his wife and moved to Jena to join him. There she hosted a lively salon of progressives, including her husband, Ludwig Tieck and his wife Amalie, Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg) and his fiancée Julie von Charpentier, Friedrich Schelling, Johann Gottlieb
Fichte, and Friedrich Schlegel and his mistress and future wife Dorothea. She helped her husband with the translation of Shakespeare and contributed to the Athenäum, the literary periodical edited by the Schlegels that came to define early Romanticism. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel came to reside in the same house in 1801. It is this spirited intellectual atmosphere that Henry Crabb Robinson describes as he enrolled at the University of Jena, attended lectures by Schelling, met famous writers and visited Goethe, Schiller, Wieland, Herder, Kotzebue, and others in nearby Weimar, translated German poetry, and published explanations of Kantian philosophy, especially for a British journal, the Monthly Register.78

Schlegel and Caroline separated and in 1803 finally divorced; Caroline, having been involved with Friedrich Schelling, married him and lived with him, mostly in Würzburg and Munich, until her death in 1809. Caroline Michaelis-Böhmer-Schlegel-Schelling thus lived a tempestuous life, one characterized by many of the same conflicts we see not only in her childhood friends but also in Mary Wollstonecraft. Wives, mothers, lovers, writers, critics, translators, republicans: their lives register changes in the horizons of women’s expectations and roles that emerged as possibilities in this period, but that were thwarted not only by antirevolutionary backlash—the most common explanation—but also by the very ideologies that should have offered independence and freedom.79

7. Joseph Johnson and the Anti-Napoleonic Fitness Fad

The kind of interiority and transcendence that Mary Wollstonecraft lent to her writings was not prevalent in all the German translations published by Joseph Johnson; indeed, her “ultra-radical” approach, as I have suggested, was first and foremost a response to her perception of woman’s untenable gender position in that period. After the French Terror and the fall of Maximilien Robespierre, the increasing military power of the French called forth other styles of response. I would like to draw attention to one in particular, a text that carried substantial ideological force despite its focus on physical culture: the exercise manual Gymnastik für die Jugend, published by the Schnepfenthal press in 1793 and brought out by Johnson in 1800 as Gymnastics for Youth.80 After initially supporting the French Revolution and suffering disappointment in the excesses of the Terror, Johnson sought through this translation to promote progressive scientific approaches to physical culture in England even as he joined an international effort to promote fitness as a means
of countering increasing French encroachment. British interest in German publications, so often seen around the year 1800 solely in terms of philosophical writings, is shown to have a broader scope and wider range of impulses.

Johnson had ongoing continental connections, and his noteworthy interest in translating German books was most influenced by his close association with Henry Fuseli, a Swiss artist and writer who became a trusted literary consultant and lifelong friend from the 1760s on. Fuseli maintained ties to Swiss authors, for instance the physiognomist Johann Kaspar Lavater, whose *Aphorisms on Man* he translated for Johnson in 1788. Johnson brought out Goethe’s *Iphigenia in Tauris* (1793) and Schiller’s *Fiesco; or, the Genoese Conspiracy* (1796) as well as works by less celebrated but popular authors. Johnson’s connections with the Hamburg booksellers James and William Remnant, for instance, led to the publication of Leonhard Wächter (pseudonym Veit Weber) and Wieland; he supplied Samuel Taylor Coleridge with a letter of introduction to William Remnant—along with an order for books—when Coleridge traveled to Hamburg in 1798. All the while Johnson published notices about German literary productions in his critical periodical the *Analytical Review* (1788–98).

After Johnson brought out the *Elements of Morality*, the Schnepfenthal press reciprocated by translating Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, which Johnson had published in 1792, as *Rettung der Rechte des Weibes* (1793). These reciprocal translations reveal a mutual effort undertaken between Johnson’s circle and the instructors of the Schnepfenthal institution to promote transnational reform through progressive pedagogies. Surprisingly, however, far from being interpreted as promoting a liberal sociopolitics and influencing supporters of women’s self-reliance, GutsMuths’s exercise book has been viewed by some historians as a harbinger of reaction in the Napoleonic period and beyond. It therefore becomes helpful to evaluate the historiography surrounding GutsMuths and the translations of his *Gymnastics*. To determine the meaning of Johnson’s publication, it is necessary to “follow the actors” in the vein of Latour; this helps us to dodge a restricted, nation-based evaluation of this text that otherwise leads to an inevitable story about the construction of not only German but also British national identity.

Indeed, GutsMuths’s text has been evaluated narrowly, most recently being pegged as launching German fascination with sports training, a fascination, as Michael Sosulski and others have argued, that led to Nazi youth programs and the athletic obsessions of the German Democratic Republic. Sosulski defines his historical and narrative trajectory by con-
sidering GutsMuths not merely the grandfather of school gymnastics, as commentators have long claimed, but also the grandfather of German national identity-building, concluding that, “Whether we consider East German athletic pride and win-at-all costs mentality regarding the Olympics, National Socialist promotion of amateur sports and the accompanying fetishization of the well-toned human physique, or the [Friedrich] Jahn-inspired gymnastic festivals that continued throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century . . . the idea of constructing, recovering, or strengthening nationhood through physical exercise and achievement has inarguably been characteristic of German attempts at self-definition throughout the modern era.”

Kai Reinhart and Michael Krüger similarly lay at GutsMuths’s and the Philanthropists’ door the idea of sports as a means of inculcating the discipline, bodily strength, and obedience necessary for sustaining dictatorship. Reinhart and Krüger engage the theories of Michel Foucault regarding discipline and the state to discuss Hitler and then to focus on late-twentieth-century East Germany. These interpretations therefore identify GutsMuths’s book as a contribution to a German Sonderweg or “special path.” I will not discuss twentieth-century German history or enter the long-standing debate about whether a Sonderweg existed in the period of World Wars I and II; it is beyond the scope of this study. I do, however, wish to suggest that for a discussion of GutsMuths’s 1793 book, the notion of the special path is too narrow and a look at transfer suggests why.

Although there are passages in GutsMuths’s book that support ideas about the disciplinary power of gymnastics, and while there is no doubt of his influence on later German proponents of gymnastics, selective use of the text and of isolated quotations constitutes a unidimensional and therefore ultimately incomplete evaluation of GutsMuths. Moreover it encourages in readers a prejudgment of GutsMuths’s text based on subsequent events. Perhaps responding to this reading, and to what are perceived as tendentious interpretations, opposing historians have sought to raise GutsMuths’s reputation through sunnier but equally narrow interpretations: they argue that GutsMuths’s book promoted a generous cosmopolitanism, spurred democratization, and encouraged peaceful competition inspired by ancient practices, ultimately lending impetus to the revival of the Olympic Games.

A broader survey of the cultural impacts of GutsMuths’s gymnastics book, a view of the terrains vastes, enables a more nuanced interpretation that finds a route between debunking and deification. GutsMuths’s activities and writings had a multivalent impact, and, seen embedded
in the context of European and American events, demonstrate shifts in ideas about politics, gender, and nation for which we ought to account. Although GutsMuths is a figure crucial to the history of gymnastics, and while his methods were central to the adoption of physical education in much of the Western world, it would be precipitate to call Gymnastik für die Jugend a spur to reactionary political activity or even to class his early work with that of the nationalist “exercise father” Friedrich Jahn in generating German paramilitary organizations.

GutsMuths’s Gymnastik für die Jugend inspired modern gymnastics programs across Europe and America. It was grounded in Lockean psychology and Rousseauian ideas about natural education, and these were developed in Germany among the Philanthropist pedagogues. GutsMuths practiced this pedagogy at the famous Schnepfenthal school founded by Salzmann. He taught physical education there and published Gymnastik für die Jugend based on exercises he undertook with the pupils. GutsMuths’s program aimed to increase the strength of different muscle groups, promote balance and mobility, refine eye-hand coordination, expand the breath, improve the circulation, and above all render the body capable of the exertion that daily life might demand of it.

Henry Crabb Robinson, the British writer, visited the Schnepfenthal school in 1804. He commented:

Salzmann has made himself generally known by the very elaborate and solicitous attention he pays to the gymnastical part of education, by the anti-disciplinarian principles, and by the universal tendency and direction of the studies. I saw that the boys were healthy, happy, and courageous. And Salzmann seemed to have succeeded in the difficult task . . . of giving liberty and repressing licentiousness. The boys are on no occasions struck,—this is a fundamental law. Another is to give them freedom in everything not obviously dangerous. They botanize and study natural history, and take long journeys with their preceptors on foot over the mountains. They climb trees, jump over hedges, swim, skate, &c., &c., and, as far as general culture of the active powers is concerned, there is much to be applauded, but I fear solid learning is neglected.87

Crabb Robinson was only one among many prominent visitors to Schnepfenthal interested in its progressive pedagogy.

Given its contemporary status as a progressive document, how is it that GutsMuths’s Gymnastics for Youth has been described as reactionary,
protonationalist, and militaristic? This conclusion is largely based on subsequent events, particularly Napoleonic occupation and the activities of Friedrich Jahn, called “Turnvater Jahn” or the father of German exercise. Jahn was a visitor to Schnepfenthal in 1807; perhaps inspired by GutsMuths he developed his own ideas that he wrote up nine years later in *Die Deutsche Turnkunst* (*The German Art of Exercise*, 1816). But there was no contact between the two men for the rest of their careers, and while they occasionally expressed respect for each other’s work in public, they consistently sought to promote their own different visions of physical culture and education. Jahn’s version was decidedly more militaristic. Under Jahn’s influence gymnastics indeed became a nation-building enterprise in the early nineteenth century: Jahn rejected the foreign term gymnastics and instead used the old German word “Turnen.” He organized a system of clubs, called *Turnvereine*, and staged gymnastics meets at his outdoor exercise grounds at the Hasenheide where participants numbering in the hundreds would demonstrate stunts. Jahn’s energetic organizing, his missionary zeal, and his attention-getting gymnastics events lent a crusading aura to the activity. By 1819, after one of Jahn’s gymnasts murdered the conservative writer August von Kotzebue, aristocrats felt threatened; they blamed post-Napoleonic social unrest on Jahn’s operations and on the activities of the *Burschenschaften* or fraternities, who were often involved in the gymnastics programs. Jahn was imprisoned and on probation for five years and the organizations were banned—in Prussia the Turnen movement was in abeyance for twenty-three years. Jahn thus represented opposition to the reactionary forces of the aristocracy.

Nonetheless, as scholars have argued, he buttressed nationalism since, as Teresa Sanislo argues, the gymnastics movement fed into militarism and nationalist ideology in the Napoleonic period: “The new gymnastics [became] a training ground for manly citizen-soldiers. . . . Propaganda, designed to stir patriotic sentiment and sacrifice, along with the Prussian king’s call to arms in 1813, put heroic manliness at the center of the ‘liberation’ project.” Heikki Lempa has described how certain guerrilla warfare units within the volunteer militia of Major von Lützow were formed from Jahn’s gymnasts, whom Jahn had trained to be “active, brutal, and tribal male[s] fit for guerilla attacks.” Jahn’s organization, the fervor with which it was pursued, and its close ties to anti-Napoleonic combat fed into German militarism. It is worth noting, at the same time, that even Jahn’s nationalist activities take on another aspect when seen in a transnational and colonial context: for instance,
it was he who inspired the American Turnvereine and school gymnastics programs, which were first introduced in 1825 at Massachusetts’s Round Hill School and then at Harvard by followers of his. He was, moreover, wooed unsuccessfully to head Boston’s first public gymnasium.\textsuperscript{92} His work was clearly viewed at that point in America as a way of successfully furthering national liberal-democratic aims, though its ultimate purport there remains to be evaluated.

GutsMuths’s book, generated well ahead of Jahn’s activities, was part of a dynamic process of transfer that changed its meanings and its impacts, for better or worse, so that it is best interpreted in a context that goes beyond mere German identity formation. Indeed in the Napoleonic period the text was seen as a means of preparing populations to resist invasion and occupation. *Gymnastik für die Jugend* was widely translated: into Danish (1799), into English (with a London edition in 1800, and a Philadelphia edition in 1802), French (1803), Dutch (1806) and Swedish (1813), as well as into Italian (1825) and Greek (1837).\textsuperscript{93}

Following upon the translations, different nations developed their own institutionalized versions of GutsMuths’s program, or they imported someone to develop such an operation for them, and these undertakings were generally housed in educational and military establishments, as a quick survey will demonstrate:\textsuperscript{94} In Denmark, for example, Franz Nachtegall (1777–1847), inspired by GutsMuths’s book, opened a private gymnasium, and he was then made the first director of the Institute for Military Gymnastics in 1804; subsequently as national director of gymnastics he devised the first systematic mandatory gymnastics program for schools. Pehr Ling (1766–1839), having studied gymnastics in Copenhagen with Nachtegall, moved to Sweden and developed a gymnastics system that spanned educational as well as military and medical aims. He opened the Royal Central Institute of Gymnastics in 1813, wrote manuals on gymnastics and bayonet fencing for the army, and is credited with developing Swedish massage. Ling moreover inspired massive gymnastics demonstrations called Lingiads, which took place in the 1930s and ’40s and were then replaced by international Gymnaestrada festivals in 1953 that still convene every four years. In England an American-born Swiss man, Phokion Clias, was invited by the king to develop GutsMuths-inspired gymnastics programs in 1821. He taught at the royal military and naval schools as well as at the Charterhouse public school. His text *Anfangsgründe der Gymnastik oder Turnkunst* (1816) was rewritten for the English as *An Elementary Course of Gymnastics Exercises* (1823, fourth edition 1825), and Clias prefaced it by saying, “It has never been our wish to
make any secret of our mode of instruction, and gratitude to the English
nation especially, from whom we have received such liberal encourage-
ment, makes us anxious to impart to them, as extensively as possible, these
advantages, which have been highly appreciated on the Continent." In
Switzerland GutsMuths’s ideas influenced Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi,
who founded a famous school at Yverdon in 1805 where he taught Guts-
Muths’s exercises before devising his own strategies. Pestalozzi in turn
inspired the Spaniard Francisco Amoros, who headed an academy in
Madrid and then, after the fall of Napoleon, moved to France. There
Amoros opened an outdoor gymnasium in the style of Jahn’s Hasenheide
and trained students, firemen, and soldiers. In 1820 he was made direc-
tor of the “Gymnase normal militaire”; he published the Manuel d’Éducation
physique, gymnastique, et morale (Paris 1830).

Such a short survey clarifies how gymnastics training, spurred by
GutsMuths’s method, looks remarkably similar from country to country.
The British response is therefore typical. Nations in the early nineteenth
century—following on the American and French Revolutions and dur-
ding the Napoleonic wars—predictably desired a strong youth and a ready
military; they systematized physical education in institutions that often
spanned military and civilian missions. Gymnastics became an interna-
tional fad that saw experts visiting foreign institutions to study methods,
founding gymnasiums and school programs, devising apparatuses and
new exercises, and publishing and translating texts. GutsMuths’s book
thus launched a far-ranging movement that, for one thing, explains why
we have all grown up taking mandatory P.E.

Whatever militaristic upshot GutsMuths’s book inspired among gov-
ernments, however, he himself intended it as a spur to individual lib-
erty in the Philanthropist vein. He dedicated his book to the Danish
prince Fredrik, “the defender of human rights,” who “with a mildness
friendly to humankind broke the shackles of slavery in north and south.”
(Denmark in 1792 had legislated, though not yet enforced, an end to
the slave trade.) Ideas of freedom for women followed. While German
Philanthropist pedagogy included girls from the start, and while Guts-
Muths’s book cursorily addressed the issue of their physical education, it
was his followers who devised programs specifically for women and these
were particularly notable in the British and colonial context. Phokion
Clías composed a book on women’s gymnastics based on his English
experience, Kalistenie oder Uebungen zur Schoenheit und Kraft fuer Maed-
chen (1829). He inspired the work of J. A. Beaujeu and his wife, who
settled in Dublin, opened a gym, and published A Treatise on Gymnastic
Exercises, Or Calisthenics for the Use of Young Ladies (1828). Madame Beaujeu then moved to the United States and, under the name Mrs. Hawley, opened a Gymnasium in Boston at the corner of Tremont and Bromfield Streets, and then moved on to New York and opened another gym on Eighth Street. There were also French and German books on women’s exercise. These texts advocated rigorous exercises for women with the clear intention of making them agile and strong. Jan Todd writes of Beaujeu’s text: “In addition to the unusually high strength levels his exercises required and produced, and to his apparently egalitarian attitude toward women, Beaujeu’s small textbook is noteworthy in another way. He appears to be the first author to recommend [in print] a distinct gymnastic costume for women. . . . The available evidence suggests that Beaujeu was not alone in his egalitarian approach to exercise.” Inspired by these developments Catharine Beecher, in the United States, actively promoted exercise for women at her Hartford Female Seminary in the 1820s and eventually published a volume devoted entirely to it: Physiology and Calisthenics: For Schools and Families (1856), which broadened its domestic and institutional application.

Consequently a view of GutsMuths’s Gymnastics for Youth and its repercussions allows one to reach a number of conclusions that shed light on British-German cultural transfer at work within Euro-American movements. First, it draws attention to the ways in which most Western nations functionalized GutsMuths’s work. They systematized physical training across their schools (before Germans did) in order to further their own educational and military goals, which they then tailored to their own perceived needs. Second, we see that it is problematical, in the context of cultural transfer, to argue that GutsMuths’s book supplies stepping-stones for a late eighteenth-century German Sonderweg. GutsMuths wrote not only for Germans; moreover, other nations, inspired by him, promoted athletic bodies with the calculation that, given certain political necessities, those bodies could be switched into fighting ones. A careful parsing of transnational political valences becomes crucial. Although in the twentieth century Nazi youth movements certainly drew on the by-then long tradition of German gymnastics and physical education, nonetheless, a close look at the early nineteenth century reveals how military programs with careful physical training existed across the Western world, and in those countries fitness found its way into daily life. Organizations promoting exercise proliferated. YMCAs in the United States, for example, took inspiration and sometimes even derived real estate from the German American Turnvereine, which had been inspired by Jahn’s
more explicitly militaristic exercise program. Physical fitness became integrated into a larger economic and moral project intended to counteract the negative, deracinating effects of capitalist expansion, as young men leaving the country to seek work in the cities were offered not only equipped gyms but also housing and Bible study. Far from a German Sonderweg, we see European and American nations creating parallel programs that communicated across borders and across the years.

Third, a German-only view of GutsMuths leads to a proliferation of European Sonderwege, most notably a British one. The bifurcated understanding of British “sports” versus “exercise,” for example, needs to be interrogated in this context. Given the transfer history revealing the role played by Phokion Clias and others in contributing exercise elements to British training, the touted British preference for sports and games over calisthenics should not be viewed as a clear dichotomy and a British Sonderweg, as has been suggested. Significantly, the desire to define Britishness via physical culture has resulted in privileging the one term over the other. Thus the rugby-playing public schoolboy conveys a singular and appealing British identity: a “sport,” like rugby, becomes something healthful and desirable, good clean fun, while “exercise,” by the logic of the binary, comes to represent the unfun activity of the Other—that is, the compensatory striving of girls, the wannabe pastime of the middling classes, or the driven drudgery of Germans.

But of course “sport” existed in Germany too; the nation did not limit itself to dreary exercises, and we should resist the unhelpful reinscription of national stereotypes. In 1796 GutsMuths himself published a book on games called Spiele und Erholung des Körpers und des Geistes (Games and the Recuperation of the Body and the Spirit). He also produced a text on swimming, Kleine Lehrbuch der Schwimmkunst (Little Textbook on the Art of Swimming), that appeared in 1798. In 1801 he brought out a book on making things by hand, Mechanische Nebenbeschäftigungen für Jünglinge und Männer (Mechanical Avocations for Youths and Men). These later books supplemented the Gymnastics by furthering types of physical culture endorsed in Philanthropist theory and they demonstrate the broad view that GutsMuths maintained throughout this period about what constituted physical mastery. GutsMuths also published a second, fully revised edition of Gymnastik für die Jugend in 1804, probably in the hope that his system, which had met with such widespread application abroad, would finally be adopted at home. And in 1817, twenty-four years after the first publication of Gymnastik für die Jugend, two years after Napoleon’s defeat, and one year after the publication of Jahn’s popular Deutsche Turnkunst,
GutsMuths himself published a book called *Turnbuch für die Söhne des Vaterlandes* (*Exercise Book for the Sons of the Fatherland, 1817*). This nationalist book nonetheless represents an attempt to distinguish between Jahn-inspired *Turnen*, which he calls a preparation for soldiers, and *Gymnastics*, a practice of general physical education that he argues can serve as a preparation for *Turnen* without depriving students of their human right to free individual development ("ohne das heilige Jugend- und Menschenrecht der freien Entwickelung zu verletzen"). Even while furthering the new nationalist tone, then, GutsMuths would appear to be making a space for individualist Philanthropic approaches. In any event, GutsMuths’s writings after *Gymnastik für die Jugend* did not have the same international impact. Though GutsMuths wanted to make money on sequels (he needed to finance a daughter’s dowry), and though he felt that these works encouraged as yet unexplained categories and strategies of movement, international readers were not interested to the same extent. Apparently *Gymnastics for Youth* had already done the cultural work those international readers required: it had supplied ways of systematizing physical training for schools and soldiers.

Consequently I question the readiness of historians to interpret GutsMuths as paving the early nineteenth-century German *Sonderweg*, as leading the way in defining early nationalism, and as aiming to initiate a masculinist and militaristic German identity. As I have shown, a consideration of cultural transfer suggests that a similar story could be told for Britain and any number of other European and American nations, ones that applied GutsMuths’s methods before Germans did, continued on to create intense athletic-training programs, promoted sports through cradle-to-grave organizations, and staged spectacular athletic festivals. Historiography becomes skewed if GutsMuths’s work is viewed narrowly in a confined national context, and if questions of gender are left underaddressed. His determined focus on physical mastery combined with the idea of the human rights of the individual theoretically left a space for the development of women and people of all classes, something later writers interested in physical culture took into account. By looking at the *terrains vastes*, by “following the actors” in the manner of Latour, and by considering decisions that appear to have dead-ended, the historian sees broad European and American trends, with the result that local challenges are set in relief, historical shifts are brought to the fore, the road theoretically conceived but not taken until later—women’s nonmilitary participation, for example—alters the frame, and realignments in GutsMuths’s thinking during the Napoleonic period, as evidenced in his later publications, come to light and alert us to ideological shifts. Recognizing
these contingencies adds depth to our understanding not only of Guts-Muths but also of Philanthropist pedagogy, the place of sport and exercise in nation-building projects across the developed world, the involving role of women, and the tricky ideological shifts between progressivism and reaction as well as internationalism and nationalism in the period.

Johnson’s translation of GutsMuths was dedicated to Thomas Beddoes, a fellow supporter of the French Revolution before the Terror, an author of antiwar pamphlets in the 1790s, a man who had studied at the University of Göttingen, and founding director of the Bristol Pneumatic Institution, where he conducted experiments with gases in an attempt to find treatments for lung ailments.¹⁰¹ Patients afflicted with consumption were particularly to benefit from a gymnastics program. Johnson’s translation of GutsMuths’s text thus promoted enlightened scientific and educational ends, sought to enhance human development by cultivating individual well-being and autonomy, even as the book itself, an actor in a Latourian network, became an international player in a project for public health and national strength.

* * *

Mary Wollstonecraft and the Göttingen professors’ daughters, attempting to get beyond personal difficulties, also became part of a larger network. First energized by the French Revolution, they positioned themselves within liberal circles that allowed them to publish their feminist visions of social change. Cultural transfer in the form of translation facilitated the articulation of their favored political alternatives. With the Terror and the Napoleonic wars, however, they became deeply disillusioned and were constrained to seek spaces of equilibrium and safety—German lands were literally overrun by the French, and Wollstonecraft sought metaphysical transcendence. In both Germany and Britain, faith in the consequences of the American Revolution nonetheless remained undiminished for many, and the recently created United States came to represent a place of potential freedom that beckoned some to move there and start afresh, sometimes in utopian experiments that could be undertaken in a republican context. Thus travel offered an alternative way of moving beyond European troubles, of conceiving of different modes of being, and travel literature, discussed in the next chapters, allowed writers a discursive ground on which to examine the consequences of the strongly gendered, militarized culture created through the wars of Napoleon and by those determined to stop him.