Popular novels by German women operated within a set of social assumptions and conventions recognized and shared by German readers of that fiction. This imaginary was, however, not always readily identifiable in translation as German per se, except insofar as American readers associated it with the patterns outlined above. “German” was most visible as genre and brand and thus not always as the product of deeply rooted and profoundly felt historical conditions. Nevertheless, as artifacts produced under a specific set of historical circumstances, the novels bore a relationship to their national origin and in the end transferred cultural information, social assumptions, and mores.

The regional settings of most of these novels, for example, reflect German particularism and the continued imagining after 1871 of culture as made in the regions rather than in a modern urban center, a regionalism that characterizes canonical work of German realism as well. Some of these novels even evoke the topography of specific German regions. Marlitt’s *Little Moorland Princess*, for example, opens with a description of the Lüneburg heath; Werner sketches a German Alpine landscape in *The Alpine Fairy*, and Heimburg and Lewald the Baltic in *Her Only Brother* and *Hulda*, respectively.

Stock figures in the novels are likewise tied to particular historical circumstances. For example, the Jews who surface occasionally in these texts as helper figures—as literary agents or money lenders (demonized or not)—bear an at least tenuous relationship to perceived German realities and to ambivalence on the part of the majority culture toward the Jewish minority.
The unworthy soldier-brothers reflect both the militarism of Wilhelmine Germany and enduring middle-class allegiance to the idea of civilian volunteers, as opposed to career soldiers, in such times of national need as the Napoleonic wars and the Franco-Prussian War.

The business and industrial undertakings—successes and failures—that shape plots in such novels as Marlitt's *At the Councillor's* and Werner's *Alpine Fairy*, furthermore, reflect the boom and bust economy of imperial Germany, as the strikes in Werner's *Good Luck!* and *Clear the Track!* point to the emergent workers’ movements and the strategies developed and employed to counteract them. Likewise, anti-Catholicism, anti-Pietism, and questions of religion and science that circulate in such novels as *The Second Wife*, *At the Altar*, *Only a Girl*, and *Margarethe* reflect the intellectual and religious controversies of the age. The Woman Question, as it is examined in *Only a Girl*, also preoccupied Germans. Moreover, far-off Brazil, as in Marlitt’s *Countess Gisela* or Manteuffel's *Violetta*, or Africa, as in Werner's *Fata Morgana*, serve as destinations for exiled protagonists, scientific undertakings, and ambassadorial missions (as they do also in never-translated German realist works by men). These destinations are but one of many indications that popular German women writers wove a growing, if primitive, global awareness into stories of romance, love, and remarriage; as Todd Kontje has demonstrated, all of Marlitt's novels negotiate the discourses of empire and colonialism that characterized imperial Germany.¹

American reviews, however, seldom mentioned these specific elements, even if they occasionally insisted that certain of these novels depicted German life as it really was, and even though Griswold included most of these books in his list of popular novels depicting “life in Germany.” It is doubtful, moreover, that American consumers of “wholesome” and entertaining fiction read with a finely analytical historical awareness to begin with. Their critical awareness lay rather in their ability to judge the authors’ skill in depicting affairs of the heart, that is, the personal, private, and yet universally legible. Some of these books, however, more insistently directed readers’ attention to historical conditions and events even as they told personal stories. Heimb erg’s *Die Andere* (1886; *The Other One [Woman]*) , translated in 1889 with a quotation from Tennyson as *Two Daughters of One Race*, presents a case in point.

*Two Daughters of One Race* offers yet another of Heimb erg’s excruciating accounts of family tensions in a regional setting, including a bad soldier-brother, who emigrates to America, and a selfish sister, Lotta, who captures the affections of Fritz, the narrator’s true love, only to abandon him for Otto, the local prince. Readers who, confident of a happy ending, enjoyed Heimb erg’s
harrowing depictions of family cruelty and the sufferings of good women had plenty to occupy their attention. Nevertheless, Heimburg deviated here from her pattern of narrating transhistorically. Instead she relied on the Franco-Prussian War to extricate her characters from an impasse and to bring about and safeguard the private domestic bliss of the female protagonist.

In *Two Daughters* the Franco-Prussian War provides the first-person narrator with the opportunity to nurse her beloved Fritz back to health when he is wounded, and this intimacy at long last enables him to recognize her worth. The war also punishes the selfish Lotta. Since Lotta is not of sufficient rank to become a royal consort, Prince Otto divorces her upon ascending to the throne after his older brother dies in combat. His duty to his family and his home territory supersedes his private happiness. Later Lotta marries an Austrian, this new husband’s nationality resonating significantly after 1871. The Austrians, who earlier in the century might have ruled a united Germany, are now excluded from imperial Germany. Lotta is thus multiply repudiated: by her first husband, by the German principality he rules, and by the German nation as constituted within the new empire. The narrator, by contrast, is securely established in the region and the Reich. In closing, she sentimentally speaks of her bliss, invoking the oak tree as the symbol of the new empire: “Then we turned to look at our children playing in the shadows of a mighty German oak. In our old-fashioned house dwell happiness and peace.”

In *Two Daughters* Heimburg links domestic contentment with national unity, depicting the ways in which the Franco-Prussian War was felt and the manner in which it altered the course of events even in a tiny town in an insignificant principality. Nevertheless, despite the author’s mention of explicit dates and battles and the reliance of the plot on the war, only two of the seven American notices I have found mention the war and its role in the novel. But in fact the female protagonist and her husband, Fritz, ultimately encourage readers to ignore history when they themselves turn their backs on public, political life to devote themselves to their private happiness. When the little town of Rotenberg rejoices in the Frankfurt peace treaty with a banquet, Fritz, the wounded veteran, does not attend. Instead he and the narrator marry, and the newlyweds retreat to their own garden to sit under a linden tree and reflect on their personal history “and how wonderfully it had all come about” (326). Even as she instrumentalizes German history in her plot, Heimburg intimates that personal happiness exists outside history. Domestic bliss is, as in *Lieschen*, transhistorical—and as far as American readers were concerned, transnational.
While the majority of the novels in our dataset do not rely explicitly on German historical events to tell their stories, as we have seen, German history does, for example, figure centrally in From Hand to Hand and, to some degree, In the Schillingscourt and The Old Mamselle’s Secret. German history, however, comes to the fore most emphatically in a subset of Werner’s works and in most of Luise Mühlbach’s translated novels. While even here history remains more, in the words of Lilian Furst, an “insistently acknowledged background” and an “omnipresent context for the action” than a “dynamic set of circumstances,” the specific sets of circumstances and conflicts that constituted German history do matter to plot and character, to the production of gender, and to the cultivation of domesticity within which individual choice and action signify. The novels, moreover, affirm the German nation-state and celebrate the achievements that led to the founding of the empire as the telos of German history.

Werner’s Germany:

The Achievement of Masculinity and the Course of German History

Werner’s fiction emerged during the Franco-Prussian War, the founding of the Reich, and its immediate aftermath, and thus in a period of intense engagement with ideas of nation, family, and gender. Hermann, the title of her debut novella (1870; Die Gartenlaube, nos. 45–52), had patriotic connotations for Werner’s German readership, since Hermann/Arminius, the Cheruskan chieftain who defeated the Roman army in 21 c.e., had regularly been celebrated in German nationalist discourse. As it turns out, the title’s patriotic resonance gives a false impression of the content; the story has little to do with military conflict or current events. It does, however, conclude with the eponymous hero’s achievement of manhood when he marries and enters into service to the state. In subsequent novels Werner repeatedly depicted such attainment of manhood as it affects family, property, community, and industry, and she often connected it to specific national events. Her signature favoring of male protagonists enabled a more direct engagement with the national imaginary as it was produced outside the immediate sphere of the home, though home remained of central importance.

Werner’s labor on behalf of an explicitly German masculinity becomes especially visible in a subset of five novels that evoke world-historical events. Four of these turn on nineteenth-century conflicts with neighboring coun-
tries: *Held der Feder* and *Flammenzeichen* set in the Franco-Prussian War, *Heimatklang*, which takes place during the Danish-German War of 1864, and *Vineta* set in the Polish uprising of 1863. A fifth novel, *Um hohen Preis*, concerns German internal affairs. Each novel views historical events through the lens of family romance in which the protagonist’s love of a woman figures significantly.

**The Order of Gender and the Franco-Prussian War:**

*A Hero of the Pen*

When *Ein Held der Feder* was serialized in 1871 (*Die Gartenlaube*, nos. 14–28), newly unified Germany was celebrating victory over France. The novel exhibits strong allegiance to those times, investing heavily in the production of gender tied to ethnicity and national unity: it recounts both how femininity and ethnicity are restored to a woman of German birth who grew up in the United States and how a German bookworm achieves masculinity in war.

*Ein Held der Feder* first became available in English to American readers in book form in 1875 from William F. Gill and Company as *A Hero of the Pen* in a translation by Frances A. Shaw. Three additional translations followed. One of these translations, *The Quill-Driver*, was reprinted at least as late as 1900 with E. A. Weeks. In 1897 the *Chicago Tribune* carried an advertisement for Weeks’s “Dartmouth Edition of select classics and modern literature,” which promoted the novel side by side with works by Austen, Dickens, Eliot, Hardy, Scott, Stevenson, and Thackeray, as well as novels by Heimburg and Marlitt.

Touted in advertising from 1875 as “the most brilliant novel of the season,” *Hero of the Pen* recounts how headstrong Jane Forest journeys from the Mississippi to the Rhine only to find herself in a region at war with France. Raised by her German parents in America and devoid of sentiment for Germany, Jane promises her dying father to return to the land of her birth in search of her lost brother. Although she plans to make an expedient marriage with the American Henry Alison, she loses her heart to the German Walter Fernow. The title of the novel alludes derisively to this professor who, Jane believes, is all talk and no action. Over the course of the novel the Americanized Jane recovers her ethnic roots as well as her femininity, and Fernow transforms from a professor into a heroic officer in the “band of brothers” that defeated the French.
Shaw recognized that Werner aspired to link her fiction to real places and historical events and that her American readers needed to be oriented to the German setting and required more specificity to believe in the American one. Whereas Werner’s original opens with the line “Ein klarer Januartag lag über einer jener Städte des Mississippi” (A clear January sky lay over one of those cities of the Mississippi), Shaw wrote, “The scene of our story is a town on the Mississippi about midway in the course from Lake Itasca to the Gulf; the time is a cloudless January day of the year 1871.” Shaw, however, mistook the date by one year, for the Franco-Prussian War has not yet begun when the novel opens. Yet Shaw tried, with the addition of the date, to signal to American readers that the story begins in the penumbra of that war.

Professor Fernow has little to recommend him. A caricature of the withdrawn, awkward, and sexless academic akin to the odd male figures in such Carl Spitzweg paintings as The Bookworm (1850), The Hypochondriac (ca. 1865), and Newspaper Reader (ca. 1860), “the consumptive professor,” as he is termed, has little practical knowledge; nothing that is “not bound in calf” exists for him, and certainly not women (49). When Alison fears a rival in Fernow, the jaundiced Atkins, Jane’s American business associate and nominal guardian, assures him that Fernow is a “precious example of a German scholar, who with his investigations, and thousand-year-old rubbish and hieroglyphics, devotes himself to the good of humanity and meantime withers up into a mummy” (48). This mention of arcane studies suggests the German romantic, a type that is rampant in the sluggish “land of poets and thinkers” and hardly to be admired by practical and energetic Americans—and certainly not by Jane.

The narrative, however, moves quickly to attach the Americanized German-born woman to the German professor. Significantly, they meet by chance along the Rhine. Thus in this novel Werner’s signature encounter of hero and heroine in nature is doubly coded, both erotically and patriotically. Jane hears the “mist-voices” (25) of the Rhine, and Walter stoops to retrieve a twig with the first spring buds that Jane has carelessly crushed. Jane does not yet have the heart for German sentiment and nearly becomes angry when Fernow reproaches her for having trampled on German nature.

A sacred geographical space in nineteenth-century German nationalist discourse, the Rhine eventually works its magic on Jane. She recalls her early childhood and the songs and legends her mother taught her. The text makes explicit that her awakening feelings for the Rhine are attached to the man who stood near her when she first heard the whispers of the river. Despite her outward disdain for Fernow, at the Rhine Jane has always been able to
see a vigorous man beneath the exterior of the sickly professor. As in the case of Arthur Berkow in Good Luck! the wrong sort of education has not only ruined Fernow’s health but also driven poetry from him, even if his reaction to the trampled twig suggests otherwise. The task of the narrative is thus to restore him to health and manhood. In the pair’s second encounter by the Rhine, that purpose seems nearly accomplished: in a passionate comparison of the Mississippi to the Rhine, Fernow stands “erect and tall, his face almost transfigured by an inner light. . . . The chrysalis had suddenly fallen from the pale suffering form, which . . . soared to its true place” (42). Thereafter, the Rhine returns repeatedly as a dreamscape in which Jane hears in the German version of her name on Fernow’s lips the “melody of . . . her childhood” (103).

Poetry, however, does not suffice for the practical Jane, who insults Fernow with the epithet “hero of the pen” (44); nor is it enough for Germany. The transformation of the shrinking eccentric can only be completed once Professor Fernow responds to the call to arms against France and becomes Lieutenant Fernow. As part of that transition, he first rises to his poetic calling with a stirring exhortation to the German people that echoes Frederick William III’s patriotic call to his people to rise up against Napoleon, and then he heeds that call himself despite his poor health. Combat reinvigorates him: “the forehead and cheeks were deeply sunburned, the blood coursed vigorously through the veins, the blonde hair . . . waved in luxuriant profusion under the helmet,” and what is more, “the once smooth chin wore a heavy beard” (85). With the mention of the heavy beard, the text, in the euphemistic language of the nineteenth century, figures his transformation into a fully sexual and social male. It falls to Atkins to characterize the new German type embodied by Fernow that has emerged in wartime: “Once tear them from their commonplace ruts in which they have been wont to tread, and they go on in unaccountable ways. It is so with solitary individuals, it is so with the whole nation. They hurl the pen into a corner, and draw the sword from its scabbard, as if this had been their sole business their whole life long.” Atkins predicts German dominance: “for the next hundred years we shall not forget in what hand the pen lay!” (99).

Werner describes the response to the call for total war as a mobilization of a united German manhood and womanhood on the battlefront and the home front, respectively. With the exception of gender roles, all divides—class barriers, the fissure between north and south—are bridged in the national cause. As Germany and Fernow enter full manhood, heterosexual love grounded in explicit roles for both genders is critical to the process and the new order.

The second “specimen” of German man whom Jane meets is, unknownst to her, her lost brother, Frederic, whom she has come to Germany
to find. A giant of a man, this German male is loyal, boorish, dull witted, and effeminate in his role as Fernow’s factotum. The text eventually sacrifices him in service of country and the marriage plot. Rather like the oafish and brawny Ulrich Hartmann in Good Luck! the dim Frederic, who has “grown up in wretched servitude” (133), represents a male type that is superfluous to the new German family. Frederic sacrifices himself for his sister at the very moment she discovers his true identity, and his death helps restore her to femininity. For years dry-eyed, she can finally weep “as a woman weeps in hopeless anguish and despair” (136). But in fact, once he is sacrificed, the new familiar and, by extension, national order, which will be supported by complementary gender roles, American money, German poetry, and German might, no longer needs him.

The strong interest of the text in masculinity does not prevent Werner from attending to her heroine; she has, moreover, not forgotten the vicarious pleasure of the female reader who might identify with Jane. The Americanized Jane, as a complement to the male hero, undergoes a transformation as a result of her encounter with the land of her birth and a newly “manned” German male. Initially she offends her German relatives with her haughtiness. Accustomed to freedom and wealth in America, she finds Germans “slavish,” and “the exclusiveness of certain circles ridiculous” (30). She especially detests Fernow as the embodiment of much she dislikes about the Germans. Yet as romance readers know, a heroine’s hatred for a handsome man promises narrative titillation and a romantic union. The search for her brother and thus the restoration of family, moreover, permits Jane a series of adventures, including playing the role of detective. Her quest takes her not only across the Atlantic but also behind enemy lines.

At the same time Jane faces quandaries that inscribe her in traditional roles and that address women readers’ finely tuned knowledge of decorum. In response to Fernow’s declaration of love, she cannot bring herself to speak of the possibility of incest but falls back instead on propriety: she is irrevocably engaged to another. When she subsequently learns that Fernow is not her brother, she continues to insist that she is bound to Alison. While her loyalty to her vow could signal her moral authority, her fealty in point of fact consists in mere adherence to social convention that supports male prerogative. As it turns out, Alison exploits that prerogative to force her against her will.

Six months after the end of the war, in a chapter that Shaw, maintaining the connection between international politics and romance, titled “The Balance of Power,” Jane remains trapped by her pledge. Rather than break her word, she asks only how Alison can demand that she marry him when he knows that she loves Fernow. The balance of power does not tip in her favor
until she conforms to her womanly role with gestures previously not in her repertoire, that is, when she submissively falls to her knees and begs.

Werner’s story concludes with springtime on the Rhine. Jane has become Johanna, having relinquished her American ties for life in a newly united Germany. She will use her American dollars, as Atkins dolefully predicts, to support the career of her future husband, who will probably become Germany’s next celebrated national poet. Readers have the satisfaction of knowing that in the German Fernow, Jane has found a partner who fully recognizes her charm and has never cared about her money. With this union of differentially gendered partners, Werner shows how gender and nationality are to be construed and enforced in the new empire. Difference as romance can of course be titillating, and the swelling springtime on the Rhine promises sexual fulfillment even as the text supports separate spheres. If Louisa May Alcott’s sentimental preunification German professor, Mr. Bhaer, was too grandfatherly for some American readers who hoped for more romance for Jo March, Werner’s postunification Fernow gave them a German professor-soldier-poet who could satisfy romantic dreams of war and peace.

The relatively long afterlife of Werner’s *Hero of the Pen* in America may perhaps be attributed in part to its romantic enforcement of gender and nationality, insofar as it echoed America’s own in that time period. In post-bellum America, in June 1871, at the very moment in which *Hero of the Pen* was running in *Die Gartenlaube*, Reverend William A. Harris, president of a Methodist college for women in Virginia, preached once again to his female pupils the doctrine of separate spheres: woman “is most admirably adapted to the sphere of private life, and, above all, to the home circle,” the reverend asserted. “This, it is true, is a narrow sphere; but it is, nevertheless, a high and holy one. . . . Of all the institutions of society, that which is the most important to its order and happiness is the constitution of the family, and its government.”

**Learning to Love the Father(land):**

*The Sign of Flame*

Twenty years later, at a watershed moment for the German empire, Werner’s *Flammenzeichen* opened the 1890 volume of *Die Gartenlaube* and ran in fourteen installments for just over half a year in the then-biweekly magazine. Even as Werner wrote nostalgically of masculinity proved in the Franco-Prussian War, the erratic William II succeeded in forcing the resignation of the longtime chancellor Otto von Bismarck, who, as the historian Peter Gay
formulates it, had “practically invented the German Reich” and had become a legend in his own time.\textsuperscript{11} While a German empire without Bismarck was, on the one hand, nearly inconceivable, in his absence significant changes in foreign and domestic policy transpired immediately. In the year 1890 the empire was therefore on its way to becoming unrecognizable to the generations that had come to maturity in the first two decades of the Reich.

Although Gay barely mentions \textit{Flammenzeichen}, his trenchant analysis of the tenor of \textit{Die Gartenlaube} in 1890 helps situate Werner’s novel historically and suggests why it resonated in America. In 1890, Gay observes, \textit{Die Gartenlaube} gave little indication of an empire in crisis, never directly confronting the circumstances of Bismarck’s departure from office or any other politically significant issue. Gay sees the absence of politics not as a confirmation that the magazine intentionally served as a prop to an increasingly aggressive German imperialism but rather as a symptom of the anxiety of the times, a sign that the empire was in the “grip of profound and pervasive anxieties.” This bland, apolitical volume signaled a “regressive flight into literally childish ways of seeing the world” as a way of evading a profound “uneasiness too exigent to be managed by rational conduct” (163–64). The evasions of \textit{Die Gartenlaube} therefore “betray not merely a self-satisfied surrender to the powers that be,” Gay argues, but also “a way of coping with a deeply felt, often deeply concealed need: the need to be reassured that all was, after all, well” (164). As we shall shortly see, Gay’s sense of a culture in denial aptly characterizes the modus operandi of Werner’s optimistic narrative of a reconciled father and son and the overcoming of obstacles to a love match in the midst of the Franco-Prussian War.

North American presses and translators hurried to publish \textit{Flammenzeichen} in English. Given nearly two decades of success with Werner in translation, publishers saw renewed opportunity in this latest novel. By November 1890 \textit{Book Chat} had reviewed the first American translation, \textit{His Word of Honor}, which must have been rendered directly from the serialization. The London publisher Bentley brought out \textit{Beacon-Fires} the following year. Likewise, two American firms published a third and fourth translation, \textit{The Northern Light}, appeared with Bonner, translated by D. M. Lowrey, and \textit{Flames} appeared with Donohue, Henneberry and Company, its translator identified only as “The Adaptor.”\textsuperscript{12}

A fifth and sixth translation appeared in the United States over the following decade: \textit{Beacon Lights} in 1899 with Munro by Mary Stuart Smith and Gessner Harrison Smith and \textit{The Sign of Flame} (1902) by Eva F. Hart and E. van Gerpen. Smith and her son had begun translating the novel in late 1890, hoping to place it with Bonner, but they were not quick enough and
were scooped by Lowrey.\textsuperscript{15} Their manuscript lay fallow for eight years. After an unsuccessful attempt in 1897 to place it with A. L. Burt, who apparently wanted to start a new series of German books with “something fresh” and thus put the Smiths off for the time being, Smith placed it with Munro.\textsuperscript{14} Meanwhile, A. L. Burt, having missed the opportunity to bring out the Smiths’ work, published Hart and Gerpen’s translation in 1902. This final rendering remained available for purchase until at least 1912. On January 20, 1912, Frederick Loeser and Company advertised \textit{The Sign of Flame} in the \textit{New York Times} as a featured volume of the “1500 Volumes of the Home Library for 25c. a Volume,” marked down from “40c. to 45c.”\textsuperscript{15} Americans thus read \textit{Flammenzeichen} in an array of English versions for at least twenty-two years, 1890–1912.

Street and Smith marketed its edition of \textit{His Word of Honor} in its “Seashore and Mountain Series” as summer reading.\textsuperscript{16} The light green binding stamped with a repeated pattern of a cluster of pink flowers with green leaves suggestively feminizes the book but may merely signal “light reading.” Ella Dorman Ward Short entered her name in her copy of the work in the middle of the summer, on July 1, 1904, and presumably then settled in to enjoy a good read. If Ella read other books in the Seashore and Mountain Series, she would have found \textit{His Word of Honor} in the company of Werner’s \textit{The Price He Paid}, as well as that of such favorite international works as R. D. Blackmore’s \textit{Lorna Doone}, and novels by S. Baring-Gould, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Charles Reade. Street and Smith promoted the book on the title page as another by E. Werner, the author of \textit{The Price He Paid} and \textit{She Fell in Love with Her Husband}, but did not make visible its origins in another language and culture.

In 1891 \textit{Belford’s Magazine} pronounced \textit{The Northern Light} a novel that “stirs one’s heart and holds one’s interest to the very last line.”\textsuperscript{17} Smith, however, who elsewhere expressed admiration for Werner, fretted over how to render the book in English so that it did not sound bombastic.\textsuperscript{18} There was good reason to worry in the early 1890s about bombast in a narrative of heroism and German superiority as William II aspired for a German “place in the sun.” Yet, however overblown, the novel adhered to beloved patterns that Werner had established years earlier when unified Germany and \textit{Die Gartenlaube} still bore traces of their national liberal origins.

“The Adaptor” of \textit{Flames}, who dedicated the book “To my Mother, in recognition of the lavish affection bestowed upon me, and with true filial devotion,” had passionate views about the merit of Werner’s somewhat old-fashioned novel, believing it important to make the work available to Americans: \textit{Firstly:} To turn aside the current of the rushing stream of highly
sensational, realistic, nineteenth century novels, and *Secondly*: To etch upon the reading public a lasting imprint of a good moral lesson and of a worthy hero and heroine” (5). Eschewing “the French school of absolute, lurid naturalism” and “Tolstoism,” the Adaptor defended *Flames* as “an exact portrayal of the soldiers and officers of the world’s army” and as wholesome and “worthy of circulating and penetrating into the hearths of every American home” and lauded the novel’s advocacy of “the right of the true Christian heart over the mind” and its condemnation of “the illegal marketing propensity of parents” (5). The last formulation points to the liberal message of the novel, according to which individuals can overcome the determinism of biological and familial inheritance. Couched in vehement yet oblique language, this praise points to what the translator understood to be the book’s outlook, namely, an emphasis on the ethical and religious as opposed to the social and political. The Adaptor’s preface can of course be read less charitably: in its abhorrence of the depiction of pain and also of social and political questions, it duplicates the modalities of denial that Gay detected in *Die Gartenlaube* in 1890.

In the backstory of *Flammenzeichen*, the passion of the Prussian officer Falkenried for a foreign woman with “dark demoniacal glowing eyes,” whom he married against his parents’ wishes, tore his family apart.19 The blond, blue-eyed Falkenried later divorced his adulterous wife to preserve his honor, but not before the couple had produced their only child, Hartmut. Especially since Hartmut has inherited his Romanian mother’s looks and passionate temperament, Falkenried fears her moral influence as well and has therefore kept Hartmut in ignorance of her whereabouts and her scandalous behavior. Moreover, to combat the biological burden of this maternal inheritance, he has disciplined his son harshly for a career in the army.

The restless seventeen-year-old chafes at restrictions imposed on him by military discipline and his strict Prussian upbringing. When his mother reappears and entices him to leave with her, he cannot resist the freedom she appears to offer and abandons military school. Although he has not yet sworn the officer’s oath of allegiance, his departure is regarded as dereliction of duty. He has also shamefully broken his promises to his father. Replacing the name Falkenried with his mother’s maiden name, Hartmut commences a nomadic life with his immoral mother, who, unbeknownst to him, also works as a spy.

In her portrait of Hartmut’s parents, Werner deploys crass stereotypes, linking Germanness and the virtues of manhood, on the one hand, and foreignness and the deficiencies of womanhood, on the other. In following his mother and taking her name, Hartmut not only repudiates his German homeland but also endangers his manhood. The central plot is devoted to his
recognition of his error and his struggle to mend his ties to his father and his country. German national history enables a happy resolution of family conflict, war constituting the venue in which honor can be restored and individuals can fulfill high ideals.

Hartmut’s travels lead him back to the South German territory where he was raised. Here he meets the icy, blond North German Adelheit von Wallmoden. A young, duty-bound woman who has married an older man to help her family out of financial difficulty, Adelheit contrasts starkly with his dark, seductive mother and embodies the virtues of his father. In the end her high ideals save him from himself. When the Franco-Prussian War erupts, she uses her influence to enable him to serve as a volunteer in the German army under an assumed name. In the war Hartmut proves his mettle by undertaking a dangerous mission to warn of an impending attack, saving the day for the Germans, and rescuing his father. At the conclusion of the novel, the recently widowed Adelheit has lost her icy demeanor in response to Hartmut’s new vigor. Hartmut, who is a poet, has, for his part, learned to write poems different from his passionate “Arivana,” which once took the literary world by storm. The text leaves little doubt about the nature of the “different spirit” breathed by his new poetry. He has learned “to know his fatherland and his home” (371).

As an American reviewer noted, \textit{Flammenzeichen} repeats familiar motifs and conceits that circulate throughout Werner’s oeuvre. However, it is significant that in 1890, at an uneasy moment in the life of the empire, Werner returned to a great moment in the empire’s story of itself, the Franco-Prussian War. Her conceit that fighting the French for the love of country makes a man of even the most abject is underlined by her signature comic side plot. In this secondary plot Willibald, the dull-witted mama’s boy, also becomes a man upon donning a uniform. He throws off his domineering mother Regine’s yoke and marries the woman he loves—to his mother’s horror, a former actress. Even Regine recognizes that he has gained something that she had been unable to teach him; he “had never before seemed so handsome in her eyes, for his military life and discipline had given him a fine, stately bearing” (361). As Werner tells the story, the new empire restores the gender order at the expense of overweening mothers, too. Regine, having relinquished her power over her son, is now prepared to accept a proposal of marriage from the forester whom she has long held at arm’s length. She promises to be “a good and true wife,” in essence surrendering control to her new husband (369).

The illegible but tantalizing German title \textit{Flammenzeichen} relates to several motifs in the novel. “Flammenzeichen” alludes to the \textit{ignis fatuus},
the treacherous will-o’-the-wisp, that accompanies Hartmut when he su-
cumbs to his passionate nature and his longing for freedom, most notably
when he breaks his word to his father and when he nearly commits suicide.
The same term signifies the healing and redemptory flames of the Franco-
Prussian War. The location also concludes the novel as the beacon of the
happy future awaiting the couple and Germany. The six English transla-
tions of this title provide insight into the ways the novel may have been read in
nineteenth-century America.

Mary Stuart Smith was of the opinion that “the simplest term . . . Signs
of Fire or Signs of Flame” was the best. Choosing in the end Beacon Lights,
the Smiths relied on the author herself to know how best to title her work.
The variations Flames, Sign of Flame, and Beacon-Fires also approximate the
German original, but, unlike Flammenzeichen, none of these applies equally
well to the multiple contexts in which “Flammenzeichen” appears in the
original and instead privilege the vaguely patriotic message and happy end-
ing. Smith’s son, Harry, had suggested “Adelheit” as an alternative to Wer-
ner’s opaque title, a title that could appeal to readers who were looking for
female protagonists. Had they titled the translation Adelheit, the Smiths
would have highlighted the femininity that figures centrally in this story of
war and redeemed manhood. Lowrey obliquely emphasized precisely this
femininity in choosing the title The Northern Light. As Hartmut observes,
the reserved heroine possesses a face like a “northern light, above a sea of
ice” (133). The sixth title, His Word of Honor, by contrast, centers attention
on Hartmut, his moral failing and his troubled relations with his father and
country.

None of these choices suggests that the translators and their publishers
expected readers to take up the novel as one concerning specific world-his-
torical events; rather, they presented it as a story of an affair of the heart and
of proper (manly) behavior supported by armed combat. The Franco-Prus-
sian War served the genre and provided the therapy necessary to a desirable
outcome in a family drama. Americans could read past Werner’s insistent
patriotism and German ethnocentricity, focusing instead on family conflict
and romance. In 1890 the outcome of a war that had ended nineteen years
earlier was probably not of burning interest to American novel readers.

The optimism of the novel, however, must have appealed to readers like
the Adaptor. Although Flammenzeichen trades in the stereotypes and preju-
dices of its time, the hero triumphs over the forces of inheritance and bad
upbringing, and this happy message was what regular Werner readers could
expect from each new novel. Indeed, Werner’s works display persistent faith
in the power of individuals to overcome adversity, a belief that is otherwise
undermined in late-century, now canonical German literature, literature that at the time found little resonance in America. A pessimistic story by Werner’s German contemporary Theodor Storm provides a useful point of comparison.

Storm’s “Carsten Curator” first appeared in Westermanns Monatshefte, thirteen years before Werner’s novel ran in Die Gartenlaube. It did not become available in English until 1936, however, and thus could not have provided a counterimage for American Anglophone readers before that time. It recounts the story of a stolid North German middle-class man who foolishly falls in love with a young and flighty Frenchwoman. Significantly, the upheaval of the Napoleonic era, the time that many late-century Germans saw as the worst in recent German history, brings the pair into contact. Their son, Heinrich, bears the genetic burden of his mother’s nature: he is undisciplined, unprincipled, and incapable of shouldering his manly responsibilities despite his widowed father’s efforts to raise him properly. Storm narrates a deterministic tragedy; the eruption of passion in an otherwise sober man produces a defective son who destroys them both. Werner, by contrast, works in the mode of romance, happy endings, and affective individualism. Individual will and action can overcome defects of origin and past mistakes, no matter how heavily these weigh.

If Storm’s tragic and deterministic work represents the nineteenth-century German literature and culture we now think we know, Werner’s optimistic work was the German literature that nineteenth-century American novel readers thought they knew and, moreover, the one they wanted to know. Werner’s Germany was also—if Gay’s analysis is correct—the Germany that many German Gartenlaube readers wanted it to be. Werner made certain in 1890 with Flammenzeichen that a vision of Germany as the grateful canvas for affective individualism was attached to the founding of the Second Empire, a tagging that may not have registered deeply with American readers, even when they, as did the Adaptor, fully understood and relished the text’s optimistic liberalism.

Cousin Marriage and Ethnic Conflict: Vineta

Flammenzeichen resembles not only Hero of the Pen but also Vineta (Die Gartenlaube, nos. 27–52 [1876]). Vineta, set on the German-Polish border and obviously influenced by part 2 of Gustav Freytag’s best-selling Soll und Haben (1855; Debit and Credit), recounts how Waldemar Nordeck, the product of a
marriage of convenience between a middle-class German man and a Polish aristocratic woman, brings order to his property after his Polish nationalist mother has allowed it to go to wrack and ruin. By May 1877 the newly founded Estes and Lauriat was advertising Frances A. Shaw’s translation, *Vineta; or the Phantom City*, as a “Thrilling Novel of German and Polish Life.”

In keeping with the anti-Polish sentiments of Bismarck’s Prussia, the novel criticizes Polish nationalism, yet it also recreates the somewhat positively coded stereotype of the gallant Polish aristocracy that will never declare the Polish cause lost, a stereotype that traces its origins in the German-speaking world to the German Left’s sympathy with the Polish rebellion of 1830. The Polish uprisings of 1863–64 did not at first directly involve the Germans but took place in territories claimed by Russia. Prussia, however, eventually aided the Russians in suppressing the rebellion. The issue, as presented in the novel, concerns the use by Waldemar’s mother and uncle of his estates on German territory as a staging area to abet the rebels across the border on Polish Russian territory.

Waldemar shows little sign of his mother’s heritage; only the prominent blue vein on his forehead indicates the strong will they share. His Polish nationalist and strongly prejudiced Polish family greatly underestimates the unsophisticated Germanized Waldemar, scarcely realizing that he has returned to claim his inheritance and to “impress something of the ‘History of Germany’ upon [his] Slavonic estates.”

As a boy Waldemar fell in love with his Polish cousin Wanda, who mercilessly ridiculed him. Now that both are grown up there exists an unmistakable attraction between the two, despite their mutual animosity. Nature signals that they belong together when Waldemar and Wanda, whose union appears nearly impossible at this juncture, behold a mirage on the Baltic: the sunken city Vineta. In addition to foreshadowing the union of the cousins, the vision, in comprising an entire city and thus a social system, also implies a context for love fulfilled. It intimates that not only will the cousins unite but also that there will be a place for them to live.

*Vineta* concludes with the defeat and flight of Waldemar’s Polish uncle and mother, who, undaunted, will continue to support the Polish cause. Waldemar illegally helps his uncle and future father-in-law escape, thereby obtaining his blessing for his marriage to Wanda. Following the flight of the elder Polish generation, the cousins marry and the novel thus reaches its happy conclusion. Unlike the previous generation, they will live on Waldemar’s estate in German territory free from national animosity, that is, Polish national animosity.
The American actor Frank Mayo’s adaptation with John G. Wilson of *Vineta* as *Nordeck* (1883; premiere May 25, 1884, Chicago) testifies not only to the currency of Werner’s novel in the United States but also to an additional manner in which Americans adapted and made meaning of this German cultural material. Mayo’s many performances of *Nordeck* with his itinerant acting company, over approximately ten years, left a trail of press reviews across the country from New York to San Francisco that bespeak mixed success. In his adaptation Mayo allowed himself poetic license and romance by setting his drama not in a Prussian province in the 1860s but in “German Poland near the border of Russian Poland” in the “latter part of the eighteenth century.”27 The five-act play streamlines the principal events of the novel, sharpens the ethnic conflict, portrays Waldemar’s mother, uncle, and brother with even less sympathy than does Werner, and makes of a minor character, the forester Osiecki, a major villain.

By shifting emphasis from delineation of character, setting, and the developing love between Wanda and Waldemar to dramatic conflict for the stage, Mayo and Wilson rendered the events more improbable and opaque than they are in the novel. In late middle age, Mayo played the part of young Waldemar Nordeck, sporting a mustache and shoulder-length hair, fur-trimmed cape, and over-the-knee boots, with more than a hint of swashbuckling.28 Upon the New York debut of the play in 1885, the *New York Times* remarked that it was imbued with romance and dealt “with persons removed from the sphere of everyday existence.”29 Although he doggedly tinkered with the play, Mayo never quite managed to tailor his romantically embellished rendition of Werner’s domestic fiction to match the taste of American theater audiences. His finances in ruins in 1894, in part because of his misplaced faith in *Nordeck*, Mayo put renewed efforts into a new adaptation, this time of American fiction: *Pudd’nhead Wilson*. Unlike the German *Nordeck*, this play brought him reliable revenues as had, in his younger years, the American plays *Davy Crockett* and *The Streets of New York.*30

**Returning to the German Fold:**

*The Spell of Home*

Twice rendered into English in the United States, Werner’s *Heimatklang* (1887) also expressed German national allegiance within a love story resulting in cousin marriage. Wister translated it for *Lippincott’s Magazine* as *The Spell of Home*, where it appeared in February 1888 as the featured novel of the month. In 1887 Lippincott had determined to publish twelve novels per year
in toto in the twelve issues of the monthly magazine to benefit authors and readers: readers would enjoy getting the novels “straight instead of mangled out of shape and recognition by the serial process, which has so long been the curse of fictitious literature.” Authors in turn would no longer have to write to produce artificial climaxes at the end of each installment. *The Spell of Home* appeared one year into the experiment and was expected to help procure and retain magazine subscribers. In that same year Werner’s novel appeared a second time in English, this time translated by E. W. Conduit with Munro in the pocket edition of the Seaside Library, priced at twenty cents. The venue of both publications promised readers entertainment.

The wish to provide pleasurable reading prompted an additional noteworthy American edition of *Heimatklang*. In 1903 New Haven high school German teacher and future German department head at Vassar College, Marian P. Whitney, published the novel in German with Holt with an instructional apparatus for school and college German courses. Whitney’s preface provides evidence, first, that the novel was still being read and, second, of how and why it was read. “This is a modern novel, dealing with love and patriotism and with a touch of fighting; it is well constructed and the action moves forward without a break,” Whitney asserted. Given its simple style and the absence of philosophizing and irony, the novella offered a picture of German life and thought that, while “perhaps not always realistic, correspond[ed] to the ideals of a large class of Germans.” Furthermore, her reader had been tested, she claimed, and had proven “interesting and stimulating to both boys and girls.” She touted especially the ability of *Heimatklang* to entertain. Approved by German professors at Yale and Harvard, it would teach the “very important lesson that a German book is a thing to be read and enjoyed, not merely to be translated into English.” Unlike her contemporary Otto Heller, Whitney regarded popular literature kindly if it could engender an affective relationship to German language and literature. She moreover believed—and was not entirely mistaken in this point—that *Heimatklang* could convey to Americans how many contemporary Germans thought.

Werner’s *Heimatklang* does offer a fast-paced and simple plot. Set in Schleswig during the Danish-German War of 1864, one of the three wars that facilitated German unification under Prussian hegemony, it tells the story of Baron Hellmuth von Mansfeld, who must learn to love his German homeland, which at the outset of the novella is still under Danish rule. As a result of his mother’s second marriage to a Danish count, Hellmuth is estranged from his German family and feels no allegiance to the German cause. His grandfather’s fondest dream is for Hellmuth to marry his cousin Leonora and be restored to the family and his true heritage. While
Leonora’s origins in a misalliance between aristocrat and bourgeois have left her without a dowry, Hellmuth’s faulty education and development result from another kind of misalliance that has left him without a country. This international misalliance is much more troubling at this historical juncture. While in Flammenzeichen and Vineta conflicted loyalties arise from mixed biological heritage, here estrangement from one’s birthright and true self results from a bad upbringing.

The plot conflates the love story—the simultaneous repulsion and attraction of the cousins—with Hellmuth’s wavering attitude toward the Danish-German War. In the end the protagonist awakens to the “spell of home,” confesses his love for his cousin, participates in the resistance to the Danes, and separates himself from his Danish stepfather. As a local patriot affirms, he has thereby become “a true man.”34 The novella concludes mid-war with Leonora and Hellmuth’s impending marriage and with Leonora’s urgent message: “Wait, and hope!”35

Thirty Years after 1848:
At a High Price

Of Werner’s explicit historical treatments Um hohen Preis (Die Gartenlaube nos. 9–37 [1878]) was doubtlessly the most opaque to a foreign audience, yet the publication history of the book in translation indicates that it generated considerable interest in the English-speaking world. In 1879 it appeared in Great Britain translated by Christina Tyrrell as No Surrender and in the United States translated by Mary Stuart Smith as At a High Price in Estes and Lauriat’s Cobweb Series. Its spine announced it as by “Ernest Werner.” Smith’s translation remained in print until at least 1897 in a reprint with Fenno. Tyrrell’s translation circulated under two new and different titles in the United States and remained in print there as The Price He Paid until at least 1902, when both Street and Smith and Rand McNally republished it. Schlesinger and Mayer advertised it in the Chicago Daily Tribune just in time for Christmas as one on a list of twenty-five-cent “standard books for everybody” in “large type, fine laid paper, artistic cloth covers.”36

A novel in which social-political unrest plays a critical role, Um hohen Preis appeared in Germany three years after the establishment of the Socialist Workers’ Party (a merging of the General Union of German Workers and the Social Democratic Workers’ Party) of Germany in 1875; its serialization concluded just one month before the German parliament passed the Anti-Socialist Laws banning socialist and social-democratic organizations
and their activities in the German empire. Seven years after the founding of the empire, old-fashioned German national liberalism (the politics of the founder of *Die Gartenlaube*) had been soundly defeated to be replaced in positions of power by conservative parties with whom Bismarck, once allied with the National Liberal Party, established closer ties. The year 1878, the thirty-year anniversary of the failed revolution of 1848, constituted an occasion for reflection on the brutal state repression of the revolutionary activity of another era and on the first and unsuccessful attempt to forge German unity under liberal governance. For many, however, the anniversary was not so much a moment to reflect on yet another failure of liberal and left-wing causes but instead a reminder of social unrest and revolution.

The crushing of the March revolutions had led to the emigration of political radicals, many of whom, such as Carl Schurz, Friedrich Hecker, Franz Sigel, and Reinhold Solger, settled in the United States, where they supported the Union and, as did Schurz, Hecker, and Sigel, served in the Union Army. By 1878, many of these men had in the interim risen to prominence in the countries where they found asylum and where they sometimes became outspoken patriots on behalf of their adoptive country. Schurz had become Secretary of the Interior in the United States, Solger had served under Abraham Lincoln, Hecker had become involved in the German-language press and the Republican Party while farming in Illinois, and Sigel had become a newspaper editor in New York, active in Republican politics. Just beyond the German border in Zurich, another former radical, Johann Gottfried Kinkel, who had fled Prussian incarceration in 1850, was teaching archeology and art history at the Polytechnikum. Many of these men flourished in exile even as Werner wrote this novel, which seeks reconciliation, redemption, and justice and is therefore haunted by men such as these former radicals.

*At a High Price* opens in Switzerland, the nearby destination for exiled 1848 revolutionaries, where Dr. Rudolph Brunnow long ago sought asylum after being arrested for his radical activities. Werner never explicitly names 1848, but her German audience could easily understand her meaning. She proceeds to intertwine a love story and family drama with politics in a novel that explores the long-lasting effects of revolutionary activity on family and country. The conclusion offers an illegible picture of contemporary German politics, yet the text clearly worries over social unrest in the empire and obliquely over the German government’s response to it under Bismarck’s chancellorship.

The budding radical George Winterfeld has become friends with the political exile Brunnow. He also loves Gabrielle von Harder, the ward of Baron Arno von Raven. Both affiliations potentially impede his promising
government career under the regime of the iron-fisted Arno. The imperious Arno has a secret, namely, that he himself is a former radical whom fortune treated differently from his coconspirators. Although he was incarcerated along with Brunnow, he was subsequently and inexplicably released. He then married the governor’s daughter and ascended to the aristocracy, thereafter becoming the governor of the province. A hardworking opportunist, Arno has ruled autocratically, suppressing any sign of rebellion. His charisma has helped him maintain his power, and his tough-mindedness has benefited the province in some respects. When the novel opens, the days of his harsh regime are numbered.

The narrative takes an unexpected turn when it begins to present the flawed Arno sympathetically. Initially, he appears to be the villain of the story, resembling some of Marlitt’s nefarious men in power, but he, and not young George, turns out to be the novel’s central character. When seventeen-year-old Gabrielle, who is secretly engaged to George, falls passionately in love with Arno, who is at least thirty years her senior, the author’s intention of gaining reader sympathy for him becomes clear.

By the conclusion of the novel, his power in shambles and exposure of his hypocrisy and radical past imminent, Arno determines that his honor can be restored only in death and therefore engineers a duel with Brunnow, his former friend and now sworn enemy. The sorely goaded Brunnow shoots to kill, while Arno, the far better shot, fires in the air. In a dramatic scene of male bonding, Arno dies in Brunnow’s arms, thanking him for his honorable death and begging his forgiveness. The mild-mannered Brunnow must now be eternally tormented by the thought that he had perhaps misjudged his former friend.

Despite this affecting account of Arno’s death, the text leaves little doubt that a new day has dawned to the good of this province; best of all, in Werner’s liberal, gradualist vision, revolution has become unnecessary because power is now in the proper hands: “The last four years had wrought many changes . . . ,” the narrator summarizes. “The once persecuted and oppressed liberal party now stood at the head of affairs, and with this complete reversal of the situation a revolution of opinion had come about in every sphere of official activity.” Middle-class George has under these circumstances risen in the ranks and become a more suitable partner for the aristocratic Gabrielle. In the end Gabrielle, who can never forget Arno, with whom she experienced the “pinnacle of human bliss” (306) (though this happiness lasted only a matter of hours), consents to marry George. The narrator explains that although she fell in love with Arno, she never stopped loving George. As a “true woman” she is only too ready to experience love in a self-sacrificing
mode, that is, through the happiness she can give to others by disciplining herself. In case readers are not convinced of the propriety of her marrying George with the memory of Arno (and the implied longing for ecstatic sexual fulfillment) still fresh, the narrator explains, “Gabrielle felt that life and love were given back to her, but remembering the price paid, she felt too, that love, life, and happiness were dearly bought!” (307)—in the original German “um hohen Preis” (at a high price).

By ambiguously citing her own title as the last words of her novel, Werner appears once again to shift her focus, for these words no longer invoke the price that Arno paid for his success but rather Gabrielle’s loss, the death of the fascinating man who was not good for her. At the same time, the impersonal formulation suggests that many have paid a price for the new order. The text thus obliquely asserts that the happiness of the younger generation has been forged on the suffering and sacrifices of the previous one. The price of purchase has been the toppling of an oppressive regime and a revisiting of and atonement for the injustices of 1848.

The variations in the English titles suggest different readings. The German *Um hohen Preis* is rendered literally in Smith’s translation as *At a High Price*, retaining in the impersonal formulation the ambiguity of the original. The title of Christina Tyrrell’s translation, *No Surrender*, aptly reproduces the dramatic turn the novel takes when it focuses on Arno’s heroic determination to end his life and his career on his own terms. Tyrrell and her British publisher thus expressed the novel’s attempt to gain readers’ admiration for Arno. When the American Munro reprinted Tyrrell’s translation in the Seaside Series, however, the old title was replaced by the lengthy *At a High Price, or The Price He Paid*, a title that duplicates Smith’s but by virtue of the extension distinguishes itself as a new product. Only Tyrrell’s name linked the Munro edition to the earlier *No Surrender*. The second part of the Munro title, *The Price He Paid*, like the English *No Surrender*, focuses attention on Arno, though less on his heroic stance than his mistake, the price paid to achieve power and influence, when he betrayed his radical friends and abandoned his political cause to collude with the conservatives. When in the 1890s Street and Smith, Lupton, and Rand McNally began publishing Tyrrell’s translation without crediting her, the book was renamed *The Price He Paid*, this final title giving way to the more moralizing reading.

American reviews of the various translations are mixed, but some of them do take up the politics in Werner’s “story of love and German politics curiously interwoven.”38 In 1879 *The Independent* remarked in this vein on the “strongly drawn” Baron von Raven.39 Seventeen years later, the political aspect was still visible: the *Medical Age* found the book a “most interesting bit
of fiction dealing with German politics, revolution, and love."\textsuperscript{40} This reviewer was, however, less interested in Arno than in a minor character who belongs to Werner’s signature secondary comic plot, a man who changes his pragmatic views on marriage to embrace love. In 1896 the \textit{Literary World}, noting that \textit{The Price He Paid} felt a little “passé and absurd,” nevertheless conceded that the novel was interesting for its “glimpses” of “German life in certain official circles.”\textsuperscript{41} A review from 1891 mentioned the novel’s political grounding only to hint that it was tedious.\textsuperscript{42}

A brief look at the never-translated \textit{Eulenpfingsten} by Wilhelm Raabe, a leading German realist, provides a sense of the incomplete picture of German literary treatment of politics that Americans had if they had access only to German fiction in translation.\textsuperscript{43} At the same time it reveals the proximity of popular writing such as Werner’s to more pretentious literary production such as Raabe’s. Serialized in 1874 in \textit{Westermanns Monatshefte} and later anthologized in book form as one of several \textit{Krähenfelder Geschichten} in 1879, \textit{Eulenpfingsten}, like \textit{At a High Price}, treats the long-term effects on German families (and by extension Germany) of the brutal treatment of revolutionaries. It involves the suppression of radicals that had occurred in the German states over the course of the nineteenth century and that in the 1870s was again on the horizon. In both Werner’s and Raabe’s novels, state-sponsored repression and individual collusion with it have indelibly marked families and individuals.

\textit{Eulenpfingsten} (literally “Owl’s Pentecost”), meaning “once in a blue moon,” concerns a family divided by politics and betrayal in the politically repressive 1830s. When the novel opens the Nebelung family awaits the return of Aunt Lina from New York, where she has lived for twenty years. It is Pentecost, May 22, 1858, ten years after the March revolutions and the May opening of the Frankfurt parliament. This day of reunion is, as the narrator asserts, St. Nimmerleinstag (St. Neverkin’s Day), meaning something like “when pigs fly.” With the novel’s title and the invented saint’s day, the narrator, from the start, expresses skepticism about the reconciliation and the happy ending that he recounts.

Thirty years earlier, while Alexius, Lina’s older brother, was currying favor with the local prince of a tiny principality, young Lina was at home knitting socks, reading the left-wing German Jewish writer Ludwig Börne, and thinking of her true love, Fritz, the local radical. When Fritz was arrested, the Nebelungs found many of his papers with Lina, and these were used to convict him. When Lina stood up to her family on Fritz’s behalf, they sent her away. Thereafter she emigrated to America, thereby sharing the fate of many male political radicals. Alexius meanwhile prosecuted Fritz, who was imprisoned and later escaped to Switzerland where, his radical edge blunted,
he married, fathered three children, and became a tanner. When Lina arrives in Frankfurt, where her brother, Alexius, now lives with his daughter, Käthchen, she is not surprised to find her mean-spirited family in disarray.

In the lightly ironic, chatty, convoluted, and experimental narrative style for which the author is known, *Eulenpfingsten* recounts how Alexius by chance meets Fritz, whom he does not recognize; how he is shaken out of his complacency and prevented from simply erasing the past and pretending that all is well; and how he must finally stop quarreling with his neighbor and give his consent for his daughter to marry his neighbor’s son, Elard. Lina herself exploits the opportunity of thwarted young love to interfere in family affairs and to make certain that this time a comedy and not a tragedy plays on the world stage.

The novel concludes not only with the union of Käthchen and Elard and a reconciliation of sorts of brother and sister, but also Lina’s reunion with the now-married Fritz. Of that, we have only Lina’s ambiguous “Oh Friedrich!” and the astonishment of Alexius and his neighbor. Meanwhile, Elard and Käthchen remain oblivious to the pain of the previous generation: “ein rosig durchleuchtet Gewölk trug sie, und Arm in Arm schwebten sie ins Paradies hinein” (a rosy cloud, flooded with light, carried them and they floated arm in arm into paradise), and happily, no one attempts to call them back down onto solid ground. Even as he supplies the requisite happy ending of comedy and romance, the narrator remarks on the egotism of the lovers and uses their happy ending to obscure Lina’s, Fritz’s, and Alexius’s stories, which remain unresolved.

In taking up the tumultuous past of nineteenth-century Germany, Raabe and Werner both suggest that its long-term effects remain, yet their texts, both of which end in romantic union, offer different ideas as to how the wounds of the past are healed through love and marriage. Raabe’s narrator does not fully believe in his happy ending; Werner’s text, through the perspective of a sadder but wiser Gabrielle, does, even if the “golden sunshine” is momentarily pathetically “blotted out by a tear” (307). This was the sentimental Germany loved by American novel readers and sometimes scorned by American reviewers. It was one that by 1879 they had encountered in a different dress in the historical novels of Luise Mühlbach.

**Prussian Family Romance as German History:**

**The Historical Novels of Luise Mühlbach**

For approximately half a century, in the years between the Civil War and the First World War, Americans avidly read the historical romances of Luise
Mühlbach in translation, published by D. Appleton. This historical fiction was consumed and marketed alongside the novels that have hitherto been our focus; indeed, the publication of three Mühlbach novels about Frederick the Great, translated by Ann Mary Chapman Coleman and her daughters (published 1866–67), and two novels about Prussia’s Great Elector, translated by Mary Stuart Smith (published 1896–97), comes close to bracketing the entire translation enterprise under scrutiny here.

Mühlbach’s novels delighted the American public with stories of the German past told through the lens of ruling families, their courts, and their romantic attachments. The immediate success of these historical novels in postbellum America suggests that they struck a chord with readers recovering from the bloody Civil War; chapter 7 considers the translator and southern sympathizer Coleman herself as just such a reader of these books. In the Prussian/German history purportedly mediated in these works, Americans could enter an alternate world of conflict and resolution, resolution brought about by the interventions of forceful individuals and sealed in royal families. As Drew Gilpin Faust observes of southern elite women’s reading during the Civil War as a source of consolation, “waking excursions into the realm of books and intellect offered them a world beyond suffering, war, and death, a world in which they found an order, a meaning, and a sense of control and purpose too often lacking in their disrupted, grief-filled lives.”45

The five volumes that opened and closed Appleton’s historical series provide a representative picture of Mühlbach’s fiction and the version of Germany therein. The record of consumption of them in America reveals, moreover, a long afterlife of this picture of Germany in the world of American novel readers, publishers, and booksellers. All five were written before German unification and share in the national ethos of the liberals of that era, an ethos fueled by belief in affective individualism and dependent on top-down reform. They promote a Prussian-centered view of German history whose telos was realized in 1871 with the founding of the German Reich.

By the end of the period in which they were read in America, these novels were, however, rather antiquated in genre and in worldview. The belated publication of the two Great Elector novels in the later 1890s did not create much of a stir in the literary press, even though the two volumes did expand the Appleton series of Mühlbach’s historical novels from eighteen to twenty and, as part of this set, sold in several editions with multiple publishers. Indeed, old-fashioned or not, as late as 1917 Mühlbach’s novels were advertised with Frederick Loeser and Company in the New York Times: “Muhlbach [sic] (Frederick the Great)” in four volumes available in full leather for $4.00 just in time for Christmas 1917.46 Loeser marketed the German author as
a classic side by side with Dante, Eliot, Emerson, Fielding, Flaubert, Hawthorne, Maupassant, Poe, Plato, Schiller, Turgenev [sic], and Tarkington—to name a few of the American and international authors appearing in the cheapest group of the standard sets advertised, namely, “Standard Sets at $2 to $7.50.” Mühlbach’s novels likewise could be obtained for $22.00 in twenty volumes bound in half calf or in “full limp leather” for $22.50. Here the works found themselves in the good company of Balzac, Bulwer-Lytton, Dumas, Dickens, Maupassant, Hugo, Scott, Voltaire, and Wilde. Mühlbach’s novels, bound in limp leather, were thus destined to find a place on the shelves of the well-heeled book buyer intent on assembling a solid home library. The volumes of a partial set of these historical novels published by the University Society and once owned by Fay B. Harder contain a carefully penned record of Fay’s acquisition of them in May 1911, thus testifying to consumption of the books well into the new century and, notably, by a woman.47

**Frederick the Great and the Disciplining of Desire**

As Brent O. Peterson outlines in his study of the German historical novel, Mühlbach devoted approximately four thousand pages in fifteen volumes to her “Frederick cycle,” beginning in 1853 with Friedrich der Große und sein Hof and concluding with the multipart Deutschland in Sturm und Drang, published 1867–68.48 The three Frederick novels, translated by Mrs. Chapman Coleman and her daughters, that belonged to this cycle captured American attention. With American English-language editions and reprint editions numbering at least fifty (Frederick the Great and His Court), forty (Berlin and Sans-Souci, or Frederick the Great and His Friends), and thirty-five (Frederick the Great and His Family), these three novels rank in my dataset, respectively, as second and third after The Old Mam'selle's Secret and fifth after Gold Elsie among the most often reprinted. Unlike these two Marlitt novels, however, they were translated only once for book publication.

The Frederick trilogy focuses on the first half of the forty-six-year reign of Frederick the Great, opening in 1740 during the last months of the reign of Frederick William I and concluding in 1763, not long after the Third Silesian War, with Frederick aging from twenty-eight to fifty-one. The three Silesian wars, which mid-nineteenth-century German nationalists regarded as German civil wars, constitute a dimly lit backdrop for personal interactions spotlighted in the foreground. As Peterson explains, Mühlbach’s Frederick novels number among many German attempts to rewrite and popularize Frederick the Great of Prussia in service of the German national project of
the nineteenth century. Mühlbach’s three Frederick novels, however, out-
sold all others on both sides of the Atlantic, and as popular reading marked
by “hero worship,” they played a seminal role in creating and disseminating
an image of Frederick sympathetic to national-liberal Germans and of a past
that was being woven into Germany’s unifying, and later unified, story of
itself.

The naming of the Prussian ruler and nineteenth-century German
national icon in the titles of the three novels in the trilogy signals a read dif-
ferent from that of the domestic fiction of Marlitt, Heimburg, Werner, and
others. In her Frederick novels Mühlbach places Frederick the Great himself
at the vortex of conflict and action and sets the works largely at the Prussian
court or in the pleasure palaces of the ruling Hohenzollerns. Thus these nov-
elves do indeed contrast with those we have hitherto examined, which, even
when they are informed and shaped by historical events and conditions and
purport to tell the story of such events, feature invented, not historical char-
acters and tend to be set in areas marginal to politics.

Yet for all their inclusion of historical material, the Frederick novels
resisted easy generic categorization in their own time. They did not, for
example, focus on the middling hero in the manner of Walter Scott’s then
well-known historical novels. At the same time, though professing to be
historical, they included such elements from the European romance tradi-
tion as transvestism, rulers traveling incognito, exotic women, and separated
but steadfast lovers. The Catholic World despaired of classifying them, pro-
nouncing them “too historical for romances and too romantic for histories.”

The Old Guard formulated the resistance of the books to generic conven-
tion in yet another way: Mühlbach’s novels were not “historical romances,”
because they lacked a plot altogether. The reviewer admitted, however, that
they “embody much of the very romance of history,” aptly describing them
as “exhibiting [the notable personages of history] in a sort of panoramic ‘dis-
solving view’ to the public,” or, in other words, as episodic. Recognizing
their generic ambiguity, John Esten Cooke tried, as we noted in chapter 2, to
categorize Mühlbach’s “system” in her historical fiction as producing “his-
tory dramatized.”

The discomfort of contemporaries with the resistance of these books
to easy classification as either history or romance encourages us to think
about them differently, and in our specific context, to think about them
as domestic fiction. As Nancy Armstrong characterizes it, domestic fiction
depends on affective individualism and psychology and a conception of the
family as the locus of the production of identity, gender, desire, and agency.
As will shortly become clear, despite the historical characters, events, and
settings of Mühlbach’s novels, their vision and ethos cohere with this broad idea of domestic fiction. Certainly there is evidence that they were marketed in America to some of the audiences who read Marlitt, Heimburg, and Werner.53

Even as the Frederick novels insist on their historicity with, for example, frequent footnotes identifying sources for an utterance or an episode or notes asserting the factuality of an episode, they are situated in a family—a highly exceptional one to be sure—yet a first family that can also be read as the quintessential German family. As the Prussian king, Frederick is burdened not merely by affairs of state and foreign wars but also by family tensions. These conflicts weary him, taxing his ability to assert his will and his capacity to balance desire and duty and to manage his household and, by extension, his kingdom. Throughout the cycle, he must admonish himself, his unruly family, and his retainers to do their duty; this duty—in the case of his siblings—largely involves suppressing desire and marrying the appropriate partner. In Mühlbach’s account, individuals make world history at the expense of the royal heart at the heart of the nation. Once seen in terms of family dynamics and portraits of individuals, the three Frederick novels betray a consistency that lends them the shape that their episodic (albeit chronological) structure does not. Their dramatization of historical anecdotes aside, the three works consist in the end largely of an account of the vicissitudes of the royal family and Frederick’s struggle as its head to press its members into service to the nation.

Frederick the Great and His Court, the first in the trilogy, opens when Frederick is still crown prince of Prussia. The well-known painful experiences of his adolescence are behind him; he is married to Elizabeth Christine, in fulfillment of his father’s command, but is living a relatively unencumbered life apart from her that allows him to devote himself to artistic and philosophical pursuits. Mühlbach exploits this moment to offer vivid and entertaining parental portraits.

In the opening pages Queen Sophia Dorothea takes advantage of the temporary incapacity of the bedridden King Frederick William I to wear the royal diamonds, play cards, and invite the court to indulge in frivolity otherwise forbidden. The king, however, recovers and restores order, commanding his rebellious wife to lie down, fully dressed, in her coffin in a spectacular public performance. The royal pair thereby reminds the entire court of their mortality, and the king puts his wife in her place.

With this episode, the text establishes that—in the extravagance of its gestures and in the sweep of the canvas upon which it writes its story—this family is like no other. Yet in its straight-laced piety in small matters
such as playing cards and displaying vanity, it must have been familiar to
nineteenth-century readers on both sides of the Atlantic. If readers wonder
about the family events that unfold in the following pages or question Fred-
erick’s virtues and motives, they can ponder the psychological impact of the
family drama signified by the episode with the two coffins. The thwarted
Sophia Dorothea in any case means to exercise influence over her son once
he becomes king as compensation for her long years of domestic oppres-
sion. Frederick will parry his mother’s attempt to dominate him, and yet, as
readers learn in Berlin and Sans-Souci, he reveres his mother and mourns
her passing, just as any virtuous bourgeois son should. Frederick thus plays
a part designed to delight the hearts of a nineteenth-century middle-class
audience.

Mühlbach also works the territory of the novel of remarriage that looms
so large in the German domestic fiction translated into English. Although
the historical facts and the circumstances of a royal, as opposed to bourgeois
or aristocratic, family set limits to her deployment of this plot, its outlines
become visible in Frederick the Great and His Court as the text milks the
well-known estrangement of Frederick the Great and Elizabeth Christine for
its pathos. In Mühlbach’s version of this dynastic marriage, Elizabeth loves
Frederick deeply even though he disdains her. Throughout the three nov-
els she suffers from her husband’s lack of interest in her and from jealousy
when other women attract him. In a sympathetic portrait of a woman who
normally merits little more than a historical footnote, the novel imagines the
queen’s private thoughts and motivations. She is so cowed in the presence of
her adored husband, whose disregard sorely wounds her, that she is barely
able to speak to him on the rare occasions when he addresses her. With its
affinity to the novel of remarriage, however, the first book in the trilogy pro-
vides her with some validation. As the New York Times remarked, “the long-
suffering constancy of Queen Elizabeth is very touchingly portrayed.”

When Frederick finally accedes, the court wonders whether he will
divorce the wife forced on him by his father and marry another. Elizabeth
wants to be queen, not because it will bring her power but because she loves
Frederick. When he asks her shortly before his coronation whether she is
“willing to remain Queen of Prussia, and nominally wife of the king,” she
answers affirmatively. This odd proposal of remarriage for the sake of
public image does not, however, bring the couple closer together. Frederick
assumes that they are both doing their duty for the benefit of their people
and promises her that she will ever find in him a “true friend, a well-meaning
brother” (181). Elizabeth can only weep at this declaration, and Frederick
obtusely interprets her tears to serve his own intention never to consummate
the marriage in continued defiance of his deceased father's tyranny. Mühlbach could have made this scene the conclusion of the Elizabeth plot but instead supplied her readers with a modicum of the emotional satisfaction that the novel of remarriage can deliver, that is, she provided Elizabeth with personal, emotional acknowledgment from her neglectful husband.

Mühlbach brings about this acknowledgment with a masked ball on the eve of Frederick's departure for the First Silesian War. First, Elizabeth appears unmasked in the role of queen, glittering with the diamonds that Frederick (unlike his father) wants his royal women to wear as a sign of their rank. Ever hoping for approval, Elizabeth has bedizened herself to please Frederick, and his affirmation of her provides public acknowledgment of her wifely status. The evening, however, also grants Elizabeth private acknowledgment.

Concealing her identity with a black domino, Elizabeth arranges an interview with the king. Meanwhile, Frederick has just rebuffed a former love interest who wishes to insinuate herself into his good graces. The woman has previously given Elizabeth cause for jealousy and embarrassment. Readers who feel sympathy for the neglected queen thus perceive that the masked ball is to deliver her several small triumphs. When Frederick then turns to Elizabeth, who appears before him heavily veiled, she expresses her desire to hear his voice once more before he goes into battle and admonishes him to guard his life on behalf of his country, people, and family. At last finding her own voice, Elizabeth tells Frederick that he is deeply loved and that she knows a woman who would "die of despair" if he should perish in combat (374). But she does not stop with this oblique declaration; she goes on to assert explicitly that his queen adores him. The all-wise Frederick of Mühlbach's construction recognizes his wife in the lady in black, but respecting her disguise he asks her to tell the queen that he "honors no other woman as he honors her" and that he considers her "exalted enough to be placed among the women of the olden times" (374). He will think of her on the battlefield and gratefully remember her prayers for him (375). Weeping, Elizabeth retreats to her chamber to pray with the satisfaction of knowing at least that she is in her husband's thoughts.

Insofar as she could in the case of a historical couple notorious for living apart and never consummating their marriage, Mühlbach provides the queen with acknowledgment from her husband, the highest authority in the land. From then on, Elizabeth recedes into the background, periodically called upon to play the role of the mother of the country who has a sympathetic ear for members of the royal family, courtiers, and other retainers, while her husband shows a sterner mien to the world. Her unfulfilled, enduring love for the king affirms his potential worth in the heterosexual economy, even
if (in Mühlbach’s version) he chooses not to participate in it for the sake of
duty. We will return below to Mühlbach’s handling of Frederick’s own desire.

Mühlbach’s reliance on domestic plots to hold her dramatized histori-
cal episodes together becomes visible also in the attention accorded the
romances and state marriages of four of Frederick’s siblings: Augustus Wil-
liam, Henry, Ulrica, and Amelia. Frederick the Great and His Court spotlights
Henry’s thwarted romance with the virtuous Laura von Pannewitz. Berlin
and Sans-Souci turns to the sisters Ulrica and Amelia. Frederick the Great
and His Family completes Amelia’s story as well as William Augustus’s and
focuses especially on Henry and his marriage to Princess Wilhelmina of
Hesse-Kassel.

In her unfolding of the romance between Laura and Augustus William in
Frederick the Great and His Court, Mühlbach allows Laura to assert the pri-
macy and unruliness of emotion: “love is not given by command, it cannot
be bestowed arbitrarily” (230). Schooled in duty, the queen mother, Freder-
ick, and in the end none other than the long-suffering Queen Elizabeth her-
sel admonish the prince and his beloved to suppress feeling. “It is the duty of
all in our station to veil our feelings with a smile,” Elizabeth instructs Laura
(240). Duty creates a dynamic of expression and suppression of feeling that
informs all three novels.

When, hundreds of pages later in Frederick the Great and His Family,
Louise von Schwerin is forced to wed a man whom Frederick supplies so as
to prevent Prince Henry from marrying her, Mühlbach offers another twist
on the arranged marriage. To revenge himself on Louise, the clueless Henry
himself assents to a state marriage negotiated by Frederick only to fall in love
with his wife, the woman he had once scorned as a mere political pawn. His
wife, however, proudly rebuffs him, disbelieving in the mercy of the second
chance.

The suit of the king of Sweden for the hand of Amelia opens Berlin and
Sans-Souci. The Calvinist Amelia, who does not wish to marry a Lutheran
and who also dreams of true love, resists the match. Believing that she is
merely discouraging Sweden, she becomes an unwitting accomplice to Ulri-
ca’s cynical and successful pursuit of the Swedish crown. Ulrica is the only
Hohenzollern sibling to pursue dynastic alliances through marriage as a stra-
tegic life plan. However, since she contracts this loveless marriage to serve
her pride and not her country, she proves to be the only Hohenzollern sibling
without a heart and hence does not come off well.

Meanwhile, Amelia falls in love with the dashing Baron von Trenck.
Their love provides plot interest until the conclusion of the following novel,
Frederick the Great and His Family. As descriptions of Amelia’s courage and
combativeness repeatedly make clear, in the stubbornly loyal Amelia, Mühlbach created Frederick's female counterpart. When Trenck is imprisoned, Amelia immediately begins plotting his escape, and when he is imprisoned yet again, she spends a fortune trying to secure his release.

Amelia does not merely sacrifice her fortune to aid Trenck, but also her beauty to keep her vow to marry no one but him. When Frederick tries to force her to wed the king of Denmark, she throws acid on her face and hideously reflects back to Frederick the wounds that duty inflicts on the royal family. This portrait of the conflict between the siblings blunts Mühlbach's seemingly unrelenting admiration for Frederick, instead pushing family drama to the fore. In fact, Mühlbach does not manage to justify Frederick's harshness toward the wayward Trenck and instead calls upon readers' sympathy in repeated accounts of Trenck's abjection and courage during his shockingly inhumane imprisonment and in descriptions of the physically disfigured and exhausted Amelia's single-minded determination to free him. Trenck's liberation finally comes about only because Frederick allows it out of the compassion he feels (and has allegedly always felt) for his sister. Even if the reader has otherwise accepted Frederick's insistence on suppression of feeling in favor of duty to the nation, this belated compassion casts the Prussian king in a dubious light.

The struggles of the members of the royal family with duty and desire are amplified by subplots concerning proposed marriages that breach social barriers of courtiers and other retainers. While in Frederick the Great and His Court, Frederick declares his hatred of misalliances, which he will not tolerate at his court, love blooms everywhere. With the many subplots that portray romance as well as marriages cynically contracted to aggrandize personal wealth and status, these novels operate in the affective world of love, marriage, and family. Even in Frederick the Great and His Family, where the Seven Years' War and Frederick's time in the field command readers' attention over several chapters, a love story surfaces on the battlefield. Two valiant and inseparable brothers-in-arms reveal themselves to Frederick as a man and woman who wish to marry.

Mühlbach's narrative also investigates Frederick's desire but from the start suggests that this desire weakens the king. When Frederick accedes, the impecunious courtier Pöllnitz schemes to penetrate the secrets of his heart in the hope of controlling him through his emotional attachments. Pöllnitz's machinations fail when Frederick turns his back on women and love. Nevertheless, in the following novel, Berlin and Sans-Souci, Mühlbach improbably invents a heterosexual romance for Frederick, based on Antoine Pesne's famous portrait of the dancer Barbarina that still hangs in Sans-Souci Palace.
Frederick is happy in this love until Barbarina destroys their romance by trying to rule him. The end of their affair terminates his risky sally into affect. A desiring monarch is a vulnerable one, as Pöllnitz recognizes, and Frederick concurs. As Peterson rightly observes, Mühlbach “relies primarily on means other than romance to make Frederick attractive to her readers.”

Instead, Mühlbach painfully constructs a solitary sovereign who can ultimately assert his will within his family but who must also separate himself from them emotionally to live happily ever after, as it were, with his dogs and his flute. If these novels in any sense provide the happy ending expected of romance and characteristic of the fiction that we have hitherto examined, this ending consists in the endurance of the monarch and Prussia after the three Silesian wars and in his abiding and heroic devotion to his paternalistic duty to his people, even when this duty requires his personal sacrifice or brings misfortune to family and friends. In other words, in a version of history that sees Frederick and his family in terms of the telos of Prussian ascendance and national unification, their sacrifice of personal happiness and freedom for the greater good of Prussia can be seen as a happy one. In the 1850s, when Mühlbach wrote the novels, the greater good of Prussia was becoming ever more associated in the minds of nationalists with the greater good of an imagined German nation. This was a nation that would merit sacrifice on the part of all Germans and not just the royals—this was the happy ending that nationalists yearned for and finally seemed to achieve in 1871.

The Great Elector and the Achievement of a Happy Ending

If the three Frederick novels end on a melancholy note, with the happy ending sublimated in the preservation of the nation and the monarch, Mühlbach’s double-decker about the Great Elector, Frederick William, who commenced his rule exactly one hundred years before Frederick the Great, exploits historical material to return to romance and a happy ending that functions somewhat like that of the novel of remarriage but with strongly patriotic implications. The Youth of the Great Elector commences around 1638 in the midst of the Thirty Years’ War, a war that nineteenth-century nationalists regarded, like the Silesian wars of the Frederick novels, as a kind of civil war. The second part, The Reign of the Great Elector, concludes approximately fourteen years later. In this period of his reign, the elector of Brandenburg is still seeking to consolidate his power and to unify the disparate territories under his rule.
Written just over ten years after the Frederick novels, this two-part account of the Great Elector is much less episodic in structure. The historical circumstance of the Great Elector’s marriage to his Dutch cousin Louisa Henrietta of Orange, which produced the son who was to crown himself king in Prussia, enables a more felicitous combination of the trajectories of domestic fiction and the recounting of Prussian history than did Frederick’s notorious resistance to his marriage to Elizabeth. The text also intertwines a fictional subplot—the story of the painter Gabriel Nietzel and his Jewish wife, Rebecca—with the personal and political stories of the Hohenzollerns.

As in the Frederick novels, the royals dominate in this duology. While Mühlbach once again personalizes history, the national telos of this Prussian history becomes clearer here. Furthermore, in keeping with the historical moment in which the two novels were written, the central story of the growth into manhood and of the love match of the Great Elector is firmly tied to the forging of Prussia from a disunited set of fiefdoms—in effect, ex nihilo. The Great Elector is to have the privilege “to create [his] own state” and will owe his position thereafter to “[his] own powers.” As in Werner’s novels, hard-fought masculine maturity here plays a central role in the making of German history.

The Youth of the Great Elector opens as Electress Elizabeth Charlotte and Elector George William, like concerned middle-class parents, worry over their disobedient son. While the narrative puts this family turmoil in a larger historical context according to which the prince-elector is being manipulated by opposing forces—agents of France, on the one hand, and, on the other, of the Holy Roman Emperor in Austria—it maintains the personal focus. As his parents fear, Frederick William is in love, and as it turns out, with the wrong woman, a cousin named Ludovicka who does not have his best interests at heart. While he is in danger of being persuaded by her to contract a hasty marriage that will estrange his parents, put his inheritance in danger, and place him under the control of France, he has the good luck to encounter yet another cousin, the child Louisa Henrietta of Orange, a “fair apparition” with “such a wondrous magic, so superhuman a loveliness, that it might have been supposed that an angel from heaven had descended” (111). Frederick William is immediately captivated, despite his love for Ludovicka. The motif of the bewitching child who stirs the heart of a young man only to become his later love interest circulates in such Werner novels as Fata Morgana as well.

As the text makes ever clearer, Frederick William’s relationship with the alluring Ludovicka is the aberration of the unruly desire of male adolescence. When Frederick William encounters the child Louisa Henrietta a sec-
ond time, this time in her dairy, where, dressed in a royal version of the national costume of Dutch peasantry, she oversees the milking of a cow, he is reminded of his duty to his country. Louisa has been taught “that the Princesses of Holland must seek their greatest renown in becoming wise and prudent housewives, and understanding farming thoroughly, in order that all the rest of the women of Holland may learn from them” (132). She “should be the first housekeeper of the Dutch people” (132–33). After this sweetly quaint expression of domestic virtue, Louisa presciently invents a device for Frederick William in a mock knighting ceremony: “Be a good man,” she instructs him (134). The prince-elector is not being a good man at the moment, but Louisa, a model of duty, will put him on the right path.

In the following scene at the meeting of a secret society, a mannered allegory contrasts starkly with the solidly grounded world of animal husbandry of the previous one. In the very moment in which Ludovicka nearly entices the intoxicated prince-elector to sign a marriage contract putting him under obligation to France, he hears Louisa’s voice admonishing him to be a good man. He resolves to return home to fight openly for his love instead of eloping. Ludovicka wants no part of this more difficult path. Thus Frederick William must return, lovelorn, to his father, who has become a testy old man, envious of the signs of his young son’s superiority.

The internal family struggle continues, fueled by Count Schwarzenberg, who is allied with the Catholic Holy Roman Emperor. When Schwarzenberg arranges for the prince-elector to be poisoned, the latter refuses to take any medicine but milk. While his call for milk—as an antidote for poison—shows his awareness that his illness stems from an assassination attempt, in the narrative economy of the novel milk is strongly associated with Louisa Henrietta, who will become the mother of the country, and with the domestic virtues of discipline, work, and duty that are helping Frederick become a good man. Upon his recovery, he reins himself in and waits out the remaining years of his father’s rule, ever the dutiful but unappreciated son.

His courting of Louisa Henrietta provides the stuff of the second novel. As the elector of Brandenburg, he must contract a state marriage because “he has a whole nation to love, and he owes it to his people to give himself a wife, the throne a successor, the princely house a family.”

Our second look at a now grown-up Louisa Henrietta is awash in milk as Louisa goes about her tasks tending the dairy in the Hague, proving herself a stern but fair taskmaster and a skilled and thrifty manager of the domestic economy. In portraying her as a good and sensible housewife who knows the value of money, Mühlbach exalts the future mother of the first Prussian king as a female role model for a nineteenth-century German nation, styled
accordance to bourgeois virtues. She moreover transforms the match of Frederick William and Louisa from a state marriage into a romance. Louisa has allegedly loved her cousin since she first met him and has recently resisted a state marriage on his account. Moreover, Mühlbach’s Louisa sentimentally preaches “true love” as “unselfish and self-sacrificing”; love asks “no earthly possession, yet possess[ing] what is inalienable, herself, and in herself the purest enjoyment. Every desire of her nature is concentrated in the one wish, to know the object of her devotion blessed, and for this she lives, for this she would gladly die!” (138). In its use of feminine pronouns, Smith’s translation retains the grammatical gender of the German word “Liebe,” making doubly clear that Louisa, in her avocation of true love, fulfills the sentimental gendered conventions of domestic fiction. Frederick William for his part falls in love with Louisa, believing that in her he has “found a mother for my people, a wife for my heart” (151). What began “only as a question of policy had now become . . . an affair of the heart” (196). At their wedding he confirms the felicitous combination of duty and desire, averring that this hour “gives to my heart a wife, to my people a noble Sovereign!” (200).

To reaffirm the sentimental tenor and national import of this union, Mühlbach engineers spousal estrangement by reintroducing Ludovicka, who nearly succeeds in separating the couple. When Ludovicka proves a knowledgeable connoisseur of art and music, the electress believes herself a “poor, pitiable woman” who compares badly with her sophisticated cousin (388). In a private meeting with Ludovicka, the elector confesses that “only his hand” is wedded to his wife and not his “heart and soul” (405–6). Nevertheless, he immediately succumbs to jealousy when Ludovicka convinces him that Louisa loves another.

The “remarriage” occurs on Louisa Henrietta’s new farm in Brandenburg. In this domestic setting the elector catches up with his wife as she sings a pious song to be published in a book dedicated to none other than himself. In this “hallowed moment” of reconciliation between the elector and electress, much like the novels of remarriage of Marlitt, Heimburg, and others, the elector “held his beloved wife in his arms, and she leaned on him in the blissful consciousness that on his breast was her true, her inalienable home” (415); she is content that her husband has fully acknowledged her and rejected her rival. Readers have the further satisfaction in the following chapter of seeing Ludovicka sensationally unmasked as not only a political schemer but also a sexually profligate woman who has borne many children out of wedlock.

This episode leads to a general housecleaning, as it were, that seals the elector’s attainment of maturity. Having conquered his passion for Ludovicka,
he also banishes Burgsdorf, a retainer loyal to him in his youth in a scene that recalls Prince Hal’s repudiation of Falstaff in Henry IV, Part 2. When Mühlbach finished the novel in 1866, German unification was not far off. The allusion to Shakespeare’s Henry plays, which conclude with the glorious defeat of France by the “band of brothers,” presciently anticipated the German armies that would defeat France in 1871. Mühlbach closed The Reign of the Great Elector with Frederick’s pious wish for God’s help “so that from the little Electorate of Brandenburg may spring up a mighty and united kingdom!” (426).

The sensational fictive subplot interwoven with the sentimental, allegedly historical account likewise idealizes the good wife and conjugal fidelity. In this plot the Jewish Rebecca has married a Christian, the painter Gabriel Nietzel, but promised her father never to give up her faith. The interfaith marriage is roundly condemned, but the spouses remain loyal to one another. When the nefarious Count Schwarzenberg coerces Nietzel into poisoning the prince-elector by holding Rebecca and their child, Raphael, hostage, Rebecca determines to rescue the prince-elector to redeem her husband and to avoid the stain of crime that would brand their child. She saves Frederick William’s life but loses her own when Schwarzenberg strangles her.

Meanwhile, Nietzel, who expected to meet her with their son in Italy, spends years trying to find her. Realizing at last that she has been murdered, though this fact is not confirmed until Rebecca’s skeleton is found in a secret chamber in the Berlin castle, Nietzel castigates himself relentlessly, gives up his son for adoption, and lives the life of a beggar, considering penury, loneliness, and suffering his due. Twists and turns in the plot lead to his condemnation as a sorcerer, a charge that he refuses to dispute, since he wishes to atone for Rebecca’s death and to die so as to be reunited with his wife “who would again receive him, purified of his sin, to her love and her blessed embrace” (354). With these words, Mühlbach’s idealized Jewish heroine oddly takes on aspects of the Madonna. Certainly the names of the men in her family—her husband, Gabriel, and son, Raphael—surround her with an aura of archangels. The beautiful and courageous Jewish redeemer figure Rebecca may have been influenced by the idealized healer figure Rebecca in Walter Scott’s perennially popular Ivanhoe.

The text graphically describes Nietzel’s beheading but then transforms the public execution into an apotheosis of spousal love and fidelity: Nietzel’s corpse is set on fire on a pyre, and “soon nothing was to be seen but a pillar of fire rising up bright and high, from which monstrous black clouds floated up to the sky. This pillar of fire was Gabriel Nietzel’s grave. And upon the clouds his beautified spirit soared upward to heaven” (354).
The University Society, the publisher of one of the later American editions of *The Youth of the Great Elector*, had a sense of the importance of the exceptional, idealized Jewish woman to the overall sentiment of the novel and reader interest in America. The frontispiece consists of a photographic reproduction of Rembrandt’s *Saskia as Flora* (1634). Rembrandt is, however, not identified as the painter, and the image is relabeled “The Jewess in her Bridal Dress,” thus transforming Rembrandt’s fanciful depiction of the garb of the goddess of flowers and spring into an idea of exotic Jewish dress. Although Rebecca’s wedding has occurred before the novel begins, it is here accorded central importance, and in placing what is to be read as a bridal image at the front of the novel, the publisher pushed the virtuous wife Rebecca and her marriage into the foreground.  

Americans first read Mühlbach’s Great Elector novels in English more than thirty years after they were written in pre-unification Germany and twenty-five years after German unification. By this time Americans had decades of reading both German domestic fiction and Mühlbach’s historical novels behind them. Much that in the late 1860s might have felt new and resonant with postbellum America may by the mid-1890s have seemed quaint and derivative. Indeed, when in *The Reign of the Great Elector* Frederick William finally bids the memories of Ludovicka adieu by casting away the lady’s blue slipper, which he has treasured as a souvenir of their love, readers of Marlitt’s *Second Wife* might have recalled the scene in which Liana scolds Raoul for the unhealthy collection of mementos from his sexual past, in particular the “faded, light-blue satin slipper” that sets a bad example to his son.

*The Second Wife* shares additional details with Mühlbach’s novel: a character named Gabriel, the wheelchair of the Hofmarschall (recalling Elector George William’s wheelchair), and the anti-Catholic sentiment. Mühlbach certainly could have influenced Marlitt, for *The Second Wife* appeared in Germany a decade after the Great Elector novels. But if alert to these common features, the American public, which had enjoyed *The Second Wife* for more than twenty years, must in the case of the Great Elector novels have thought Mühlbach derivative of Marlitt. Be that as it may, the resemblances signal the propinquity of Mühlbach’s historical romances to the German domestic fiction popular in America.

By spotlighting Frederick the Great and the Great Elector, their courts and their families, and by occasionally deploying such conventions of historiography as footnotes, these five novels claim proximity to history writing. Werner by contrast narrates stories of fictive characters, to whom German history matters personally to their identity and maturation, the discovery
and expression of desire, and the founding of family. Despite these differences, Werner’s and Mühlbach’s novels share the reliance on affect, family conflict, and characters that play familiar gendered roles; both authors focus on male acquisition of a sense of duty, responsibility, and authority as critical to the historical process and the national story. In Mühlbach’s novels, like Werner’s, male maturity and authority must be negotiated within family settings, and these settings are the feminized territory of affect. Indeed, even Frederick’s courtiers aver not first and foremost their obedience and subordination but their love for their king. Like domestic fiction, Mühlbach’s novels invest in female characters, even when male historical figures stand at their center. Women figure as objects of desire, moral and social educators, mothers, sisters, temptresses, opponents, redeemers, and inspiration to men. In its focus on men and women, Mühlbach’s brand of historical fiction addresses translator Mary Stuart Smith’s wish for greater emphasis on women and domestic life in history writing in general: “Eliminate from the life of any one man all those actions to which he has been prompted by the desire to please the woman who stands closest to his heart,” Smith admonished, “and it were indeed strange if some of the fairest achievements of his life are not lost.”

The Germany that nineteenth-century American readers encountered in novels by Werner and Mühlbach reflects the German liberal bourgeois self-image as it was shaped by discipline, duty, responsibility, loyalty, work, and emotion. In this national projection the actions and private feelings of individuals who assent to complementary gender roles matter to the foundation, cohesion, and future of the whole—Prussia (understood as Germany) in Mühlbach’s works, united Germany in Werner’s. That this Germany—the Germany of happy endings, reconciliation, acknowledgment within marriage, emotion, and gendered virtue—was imaginary hardly needs repeating, yet it was the Germany American novel readers enjoyed. The following three-chapter section examines the labor, enterprise, and critical reading of translators and publishers that for half a century ensured the availability of this feminized German imaginary in American translation.