WOMEN IN
German
Feminist Studies in German Literature & Culture
Edited by Helga Kraft and Maggie McCarthy
YEARBOOK
Volume Twenty-two
2006

University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London
Excerpts from the novel
Entfahrung, S. Fischer Verlag
GmbH, 2006, are reprinted and translated here by the generous permission of the publisher.
© 2007 by the Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska. All rights reserved. Manufactured in the United States of America. Published by arrangement with the Coalition of Women in German.
ISBN-10: 0-8032-1113-9 (Cloth)
ISBN-10: 0-8032-5972-7 (Paper)
ISSN: 1058-7446
The Making of Transnational Textual Communities: German Women Translators, 1800–1850

Andrew Piper

By portraying the work of female translators from the first half of the nineteenth century, this essay explores how women created new textual communities that capitalized on the increasing diffusion of print networks. In doing so, women used translation to negotiate new relationships to print and publishing that facilitated their emergence as a professional writing class. Translations by women also promoted the creation of new, increasingly international cultural geographies in which translation functioned not as a force for homogenization, but as a means of identifying cultural differences. (AP)

"How shall our voices, on a foreign shore
(We answer'd those whose chains the exile wore,)
The songs of God, our sacred songs, renew?"
—Felicia Hemans’s translation of Camões, “Sonnet 239”

In chapter 5 of book 1 of Goethe’s Wilhelm Meister’s Journeyman Years, Hersilie hands Wilhelm a translation one evening that he is to read before going to bed. The translation is entitled, “Die pilgernde Thörin” (“The Foolish Woman on a Pilgrimage”), and Hersilie is said to be its translator. The translation was based on an eighteenth-century French novella, La folle en pèlerinage (1786), which Goethe himself had translated. Not only did “Die pilgernde Thörin” serve as the opening novella published in Goethe’s two-decade-long publication of Wilhelm Meister’s Journeyman Years (functioning like a Tor [gate] to the larger project), but Hersilie herself would go on to play one of the most important authorial roles within the entire novel (Piper 133–36). In his late literary work Goethe had seen the woman translator as a key figure for thinking about authorship and writing, and yet we scholars have taken
little notice of her as either a fictional construct or real-world practitioner.

Much work has been done on the importance of translation to the field of German literature around the turn of the nineteenth century (Huyssen; Apel; Tgaht). As Clemens Brentano famously exclaimed, “The Romantic itself is a translation” (Godwi 294). Studies abound on the role of translation in the work of A.W. Schlegel, Friedrich Hölderlin, or Goethe, and yet translation played an integral role in the work of women writers too, such as Dorothea Tieck, Sophie Mereau, and Fanny Tarnow. At the turn of the nineteenth century, numerous women writers were actively translating and contributing to the rising circulation of literary works across Europe. While recent studies by scholars such as Daniel Purdy, Britta Hannemann, Sabine Messner, and Michaela Wolf have begun to address the intersections of women and translation around 1800, we are only just beginning to understand the extent to which women were translating, the questions that most urgently occupied them, and the impact they exerted on the larger literary landscape.

In her work on gender and translation, Sherry Simon has asked whether discussing women as translators is a way for women writers to lose their voice, whether it reproduces a gender hierarchy of men as producers and women as reproducers. This is an important question to bear in mind, and yet in leaving translation out of women’s literary history we recreate a generic hierarchy that denigrates women’s writing. The more we uncover about women’s writing and the important position that translation has played as both a practice and an idea within it, the more translation becomes a space to recover, not lose, women’s voices. As a growing body of theoretical work on the relationship of women’s writing to translation has argued (Godard; Flotow 1991, 1997; Levin; Lotbinière-Harwood; Simon; Chamberlain; Brisset), translation captures the mediations, displacements, and contradictions that surrounded, and continue to surround, women’s place in the literary market. It brings to the foreground precisely those aspects of women’s writing that have been emphasized in recent feminist literary histories, like Catherine Gallagher’s emphasis on the poetics of dispossession in women’s writing, Susanne Kord’s argument about the problem of the proper name for emerging professional women writers, Barbara Hahn’s notion of the “broken lines” of women’s literary history, or Margaret Ezell’s emphasis on shifting the site and definition of “publication” and “public” in order to recover women’s innovative contributions to the world of writing. Translation can be seen as a key component of such paradigmatic scholarly models that try to capture the fundamental and enduring mediations surrounding women’s writing.
At the same time, leaving translation out of literary history in general, whether by men or women, does a disservice to the important and very often innovative role that translation has played within the evolution of literary form. Including translations in our histories—and our classrooms—is a way of emphasizing the increasingly crucial role that translation plays today in creating new cultural, political, and media geographies. It allows us to rethink notions of authorship and creativity as far less sovereign undertakings and far more collaboratively organized. It emphasizes the process of adaptation over origination. At the same time, it identifies the encounter with a foreign language, with language as something foreign, indeed, with language itself, as an impetus to creativity.

This essay thus contributes to a larger history of the relationship between women writers and the field of translation, as well as translation's relationship to the field of literary study. In offering a portrait of different women translators' works, it aims to do away with the older, more simplistic notion of women as les belles infidèles and asks instead why, what, and how women were translating. What were the strategies women used to get into print, to circulate foreign literary texts, whether by men or women, and, in the process, to create new textual communities? How did such communities establish alternative and increasingly international publics? With the emergence of various nationalisms at the turn of the nineteenth century, how did translation, and particularly translations by women, potentially allow for new cultural geographies to emerge that capitalized on the increasing spread and diffusion of print networks? How was translation understood by women not as a force for homogenization, but instead as a way of identifying cultural differences?

While an enormous amount of research has been done in the past two decades on the nationalism of writing and literature at the turn of the nineteenth century, we have overlooked the growing internationalism of writing and authorial identity during this same period and the important role that women played in this process. My work thus takes as its point of departure such important new books as David Damrosch's *What Is World Literature?* and new series such as Princeton's "Translation/Transnation" series edited by Emily Apter. These works emphasize precisely the international identity of literary communities and the crucial role that translation assumed within their construction. I want to explore how the emergence of the professional woman writer around 1800 transpired in an always intimate relationship to the foreign and the practice of translation. How might this fact force us to rethink not only our understanding of this particular period in literary history, but also
the larger issue of writers’ relationships to their own language and works that have subtly shaped the profession of literary criticism?

* * *

While Goethe’s Hersilie offers us a particular ideal of a woman translator, there was in fact no one model at the turn of the nineteenth century. Nineteenth-century women translated a variety of source texts from different languages, genres, and periods in numerous ways with varying degrees of recognition and compensation. Some female translators, such as Henriette Schubart (Sophie Mereau’s sister), who translated, among other things, Walter Scott’s ballad collection into German (orig. 1802/3, trans. 1817), suffered their entire lives from not making enough money through translation. Others, however, were well compensated for their work, like Mereau herself, who commanded as much as any man for a translation (Schwarz), or Fanny Tarnow, who in 1846 stopped translating altogether because she had simply earned enough (Wägenbauer). Indeed, Tarnow enjoyed a reputation as one of the nineteenth-century’s great translators, evidenced by repeated accolades in reviews of her translations. As the editors of the Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung (Journal for Literary Entertainment) flatly stated, “Fanny Tarnow translates better” (12 Mar. 1842). Or as they recommended in an earlier review, “The German public does not need to long for the original; the best of it has been given to us by the translatress [Nachbilderin], who is certainly also superior in style to its British author; for how many writers either here or abroad can compare themselves in matters of style with Fanny Tarnow?” (17 July 1826).

If women’s fortunes from translating varied greatly, so too did their relationship to their source texts. One needs only to compare the relative “fidelity” of Dorothea Tieck’s translations to her English and Spanish originals with the interventions that Elise von Hohenhausen sometimes offered in translating Byron (see below) or Therese Huber’s invented ending for Jean-Baptiste Louvet’s Emilie de Varmont, ou Le Divorce nécessaire (Emily of Varmont, or The Necessary Divorce; orig. 1791, trans. 1794), where Emilie remarries in the German translation but not in the French original. As Wilhelmine von Gersdorf argued in the preface to her translation of Redwood: A Tale (orig. 1824, trans. 1825), which was mistakenly attributed to James Fenimore Cooper but was actually written by Catherine Maria Sedgwick:

Such reasons moved me to translate this work into German. I did not anxiously bind myself to its style and language, but rather concerned myself with abridging this all too verbose narrative, like
a gardener who cuts the ivy's overly exuberant protuberances with his sheers. I hope that friends of my work will not consider this current one a superfluous endeavor for their entertainment.\footnote{7}

Gersdorf's image of the translator as a gardener pruning the unruly ivy of her original should certainly be added to the archive of translation anecdotes, like Cervantes' quip that reading a translation was like looking at the back of a Flemish tapestry.

Some women concentrated almost exclusively on translating canonical texts by men, such as Hohenhausen, who contributed translations to the German editions of Byron's and Walter Scott's collected works. Others, such as Sophie Mereau, concentrated largely, but not exclusively, on creating a female literary canon (Madame de Lafayette, Ninon de Lenclos, Maria de Zayas, but also Boccaccio). Finally, translation played differing roles in the lives of women. For some, like Mereau, it stood alongside a rich body of original works, while for others, such as Sophie Mayer (pen name: Sophie May), who translated numerous volumes by Walter Scott and other early nineteenth-century novelists, it was their sole activity as writers. Women remained both very present on the page in their translations, as in Hedwig Hülle's translation of Homer's \textit{Odyssey} (trans. 1826), but also concealed and anonymous, as in the case of Dorothea Tieck, whose name never appeared on any of her translations and who was referred to by her father in print as ``mein junger Freund (my young male friend).'' Finally, the idea of translation also played an important role in women's original writing as well, whether it was Mary Shelley's Frankenstein monster, who overhears a young woman learning foreign languages while wandering far from home; Jane Austen's Elizabeth Inchbald, who adapts Kotzebue's \textit{Lover's Vows} in \textit{Mansfield Park} as Inchbald did in real life; or Madame de Staël's multilingual heroine, who translates Shakespeare in \textit{Corinne, ou L'Italie} (\textit{Corinne, or Italy}, 1807), which was then translated into German by Dorothea Schlegel (1807). Translation was thus not only a key element to fictional women's imaginative universes, but as in the case of \textit{Corinne}, it also seemed capable of motivating its practice and continuing this international network of translating women.

Due to the particular nature of women's education around the turn of the century, the acquisition of foreign languages was an integral part of a woman's upbringing (Hooke-Demarle). It is simply astonishing for a modern reader to encounter someone like Dorothea Tieck, who was able to read English, Italian, Portugese, Spanish, Latin, ancient Greek, and of course her mother tongue German.\footnote{8} And it is important to emphasize that women not only learned and contributed to the circulation
of modern language texts, but were also deeply familiar with classical languages as well, and in certain instances contributed to their translations. By far the boldest literary experiment in this direction was Hedwig Hülle’s translation of Homer’s *Odyssey*, a text that had become in Johann Heinrich Voß’s translation (1781) and Werther’s imagination one of the key works that motivated the formal revolutions of German poetics around the turn of the nineteenth century. Hülle’s experiment almost half a century after the rebirth of Homer in German literary circles implied a series of reversals from the Voßian revival, first and foremost in her choice of rhyme and meter. While Voß had draped Homer in dactylic hexameter, a form made popular through Klopstock’s argument that it was precisely the dactyl and not the iamb that was the rhythm more closely related to the nature of the German language (Klopstock), Hülle, on the other hand, used the much shorter and swifter form of rhyming iambic tetrameter. One need only compare Hülle and Voß to feel the full force of her compression of the original, as in the passage from Odysseus’s encounter with the Cyclops:

**Hülle:** Da, mit listigem Bemühn,
Sprach ich: du willst meinen Namen
Wissen; gerne sag’ ich’s dir:
Niemand heiß’ ich; doch nun reiche
Die versprochne Gabe mir. (224)

[Then, with cunning attention,
I spoke: you want to know my
Name; gladly I tell it you:
Nobody am I called; now give
Me the promised gift.]

**Voß:** Meinen berühmten Namen, Kyklop? Du sollst
ihn erfahren.
Aber vergiß mir auch nicht die Bewirtung, die du ver-
hießest!
Niemand ist mein Name; denn Niemand nennen mich
alle,
Meine Mutter, mein Vater, und alle meine Gesellen.
(163)

[My famous name, Cyclops? You shall learn it.
But do not forget the hospitality that you promised!
Nobody is my name; for everybody calls me Nobody,
My mother, my father, and all of my friends.]
If Hülle's translation could be read in one sense as an answer to Voß, as the enactment of what Hersilie said about the role of women in a patriarchal society—namely, that they reversed the maxims of men and thus challenged their universality—it was also in conversation with its poetic environment. Faust's opening monologue in the rhyming couplets of Knittelvers—also iambic tetrameter—was naturally one important source for Hülle, as was the echo of Faust's “mit heißem Bemühnen” in Odysseus's “mit listigem Bemühnen.” But the larger nineteenth-century revival of Shakespeare, too, was a constant pull on German poetry to be more English. In the same year as Hülle’s translation of Homer, Dorothea Tieck’s translation of Shakespeare’s sonnets appeared in the journal Penelope, twenty-six examples of iambics arranged according to a very rigid rhyme scheme.

Hülle thus inserted herself into one of the most influential poetic debates at the turn of the nineteenth century, which revolved around the difficult question of incorporating and domesticating a foreign text into the German cultural landscape. In place of Werther’s fantasy of Homer offering the reader a reassuring image of the patriarchal home (Werther 59), Hülle saw in Odysseus the playful trickster capable of reversing fortune at numerous turns. Her own “playful translation” (freie Nachbildung) importantly does not begin with an appeal to the muse, like Homer’s source text, thus effacing in the process one of the more prevalent and restrictive notions of femininity as the male poet’s silent inspiration. Instead she begins with the word “Hellas” and, unlike many of her peers, places her proper name front and center on the title page of her translation, turning woman as muse into woman as author. Translation, like the fortune-reversing hero of the work Hülle chose to translate, became a means of reversing not only the text’s particular fortuna, but also a woman’s relationship to writing in general.

If Homer represented one of the central points of attraction for nineteenth-century translators, then it was of course Shakespeare who occupied another key position (Arac; Habicht). While a good deal of work has been done on the impact of the so-called “Schlegel-Tieck” edition of Shakespeare’s works, which still remains a standard edition used today, very little work has been done on Dorothea Tieck’s role in its production, and even less has on her work on the sonnets (Jansohn). In another problematic case of the relationship between gender and naming, the Schlegel-Tieck edition was named after Dorothea’s father, Ludwig Tieck, who helped edit the translations but contributed none of his own, unlike Dorothea, who contributed six to the overall project (Coriolanus, Timon of Athens, Macbeth, Cymbeline, The Two Gentleman of Verona, and A Winter’s Tale).
In addition to her work on the plays, Tieck also became the first author to translate the entirety of Shakespeare's sonnets into German. While the sonnet, particularly the translation of sonnets, played an important role in romantic poetic production in both England and the German states (Curran; Mönch; Kemp), Shakespeare's sonnets always maintained an uncomfortable relationship to such sonnet revivals. The romantics' circumvention of Shakespeare's sonnets was part of a persistent uncertainty about their position within both the Shakespearean "corpus" as well as the literary canon itself. To take up the sonnets in their entirety was thus to address precisely those problems of supplementarity that were at the heart of both translation and women's position in the literary market. How was a work, a corpus, or even a canon to be constituted, closed, and completed?

Such questions about the place of the sonnets were of course not only limited to textual concerns surrounding the sonnets, but were also integral to the content of Shakespeare's sonnets as well. The dialogical structure of this epideictic genre, the emphasis on begetting and reproduction in Shakespeare's opening subset, and the gender reversals enacted through addressing a young man all posed problems to early-nineteenth-century poetic theory. Such problems challenged the translator, and in particular the woman translator, to reflect on her art. The intricate nexus of exchange and loss that coursed through Shakespeare's sonnets offered uniquely interesting material for Dorothea Tieck to explore her relationship to writing, literature, and the rising public sphere of printed material.

Tieck not only spent much of her writing life engaged with Shakespeare, but also translated Cervantes' last novel, *The Trials of Persiles and Sigismunda* (1837; *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*, 1617). In translating *Persiles and Sigismunda*, Tieck was doing for Cervantes—and German nineteenth-century literature—precisely what she had done for Shakespeare in attending to the "supplementary" genre of the sonnets. Cervantes's final novel was extraordinarily different from *Don Quixote*, which Tieck's father had translated in 1799–1801 and which had become one of the key landmarks for a romantic aesthetics of the novel. In place of the wit and humor of the earlier work, *Persiles and Sigismunda* was a more somber novel, one produced by an old man, who, like Goethe in his late work, had become historical to himself.

*Persiles and Sigismunda* is interesting, however, not just for this turn from the comic to the serious, from the revelatory to the reflective, but also because it enacted its own fantasies about the possibility of world literature. On the one hand, the text repeatedly called attention to the difficulties of interlingual communication, with numerous scenes
deploying the figure of the interpreter and the problem of misunderstanding. At the same time, in its depiction of a multinational, multilingual band of pilgrims on a spiritual quest from the farthest reaches of the North (Thule) to the Catholic center of Rome, it also argued for a particular trajectory, a move away from the difficulties of communication and toward its possibility. The novel opens in the following way:

Voces daba el bárbaro Corsicurvo a la estrecha boca de una profunda mazmorra, antes sepultura que prisión de muchos cuerpos vivos que en ella estaban sepultados, y, aunque su terrible y espantoso estruendo cerca y lejos se escuchaba, de nadie eran entendidas articuladamente las razones que pronunciaba sino de la miserable Cloelia, a quien sus desventuras en aquella profundidad tenían encerrada. (117–18)

[At the top of his voice Corsicurbo the barbarian was shouting into the narrow mouth of a deep dungeon which seemed more a tomb than a prison for the many living bodies buried there. And although the terrible and frightening din could be heard both near and far, no one clearly understood his words except miserable Cloelia, whose misfortunes held her locked in those depths.] (Weller 17)

Dorothea Tieck translates:

Laut rief der Barbar Corsicurbo vor der engen Öffnung einer tiefen Grube, welche eher einem Grabe, als einem Kerker für eine Anzahl lebendiger Leichen glich; und obgleich seine furchtbar tönende Stimme nahe und fern gehört wurde, so vernahm doch die ausgesprochenen Worte nur die unglückliche Clelia deutlich, welche ihr Mißgeschick in jener Kluft gefangen hielt. (3)

[Loudly the barbarian Corsicurbo called in front of the narrow opening of a deep cave, which seemed more like a grave than a prison for a number of living corpses; and although his horrible sounding voice was heard near and far, his spoken words were only clearly understood by unhappy Clelia, whose misfortune held her captive in that abyss.]

The novel begins with a scream by the “barbarian” (from Greek *barbaros* for ‘foreigner,’ although linked to the Latin *balbus* for ‘stammer’) and continues with an opening that only one person could understand (“his spoken words were only understood by unhappy Clelia”). It begins, in other words, with the narrowing of communication. The novel ends, however, in the “South” at the Catholic kingdom of Rome with Persiles and Sigismunda shedding their pseudonyms and their fictional sibling relationship, since they have posed as brother and sister
throughout their journey. As Cervantes’s final work and Dorothea Tieck’s final translation, we end with a text that proposes—in anticipation of Benjamin’s landmark translation essay almost a century later—the possibility of a universal language in place of national vernaculars. It ends not so much with the notion of *translatio imperii* as with the idea of the *translatio spiriti* and a universal mode of communication and understanding.

Dorothea Tieck and Hedwig Hülle thus engaged through their translations of Homer, Shakespeare, and Cervantes three of the most important points that defined the horizon of “classics” for nineteenth-century German literature. And in each case their work offered a counterpoint to these authors’ reception by male poets and writers. They provided a significantly different perspective on what their texts meant, not as a form of rejection or protest, but instead as an alternative or a supplement. Their work identified ways of redefining the classical itself as something open and in motion.

Where Tieck’s career was largely determined by translating the work of canonical texts by men, thus having her identity simultaneously obscured by them, Sophie Mereau, on the other hand, established a corpus of translations largely of seventeenth-century women authors (Purdy; Hannemann). In translating the letters of and writing a biography of Ninon de Lenclos, as well as translating the novellas of María de Zayas, *Novelas Amorosas y Ejemplares* (*Exemplary and Amorous Novellas;* orig. 1637, trans. 1804), Mereau not only recovered, promoted, and shaped a literary tradition by and about women, she also actively promoted the sexual freedoms of women that posed a direct challenge to the common turn-of-the-century image of decorous, proper women. As one reviewer said of Mereau’s translation, which listed her as editor, not translator: “What? The Mad. Mereau, who was once so celebrated by us, is now writing Spanish novellas, is writing sonnets, burlesques? She too inclines to that invidious school? Down with her immediately!” (*Der Freimüthige* 118).

What was equally, if not more interesting about the works Mereau chose to translate were the communicative transgressions they enacted. Taken together, one can see how the works she chose to translate consistently addressed the central problem of “overhearing”: the risks, but also possibilities, inherent in the increasing appropriatability of narrative material. From the characters of Zayas’ novellas to the Princess in Madame de Lafayette’s *La Princesse de Clèves* (*The Princess of Clèves;* orig. 1678, trans. 1799), which was one of the earliest works Mereau translated, we repeatedly encounter situations in which characters are not in complete control of their own narratives. On the one
hand, such a poetics of communication framed translation as an act of empowerment, a means of appropriating material that was not addressed to oneself. Precisely that which Socrates had criticized about writing in the *Phaedrus*—that it could be taken out of its context of address and thus lose or change its meaning—was here valorized by Mereau as a source of power and a means of entry into the written world. Both the growing circulation of printed texts and the practice of translation that capitalized upon and promoted such circulation were understood by Mereau to be the very preconditions for new voices to be heard.

Such a point was amplified in how Mereau chose to translate her source texts at certain moments. In moving the princess’s confession from direct to indirect speech in her translation of Lafayette, for example, Mereau narratologically highlighted the mediation and overhearing already at the heart of the confessional moment overheard by the object of the princess’s confession, M. de Nemours, and then later anonymously circulated at court. As the narrator speaks for the princess—precisely during the otherwise deeply individualized speech act of the “confession”—she underscores the appropriatability of the princess’s narrative material that the narrative itself will then enact. Mereau inserts a formal device, in this case indirect speech, into her translation that motivates the very poetics of overhearing encoded in her source text, thus emphasizing for women writers a way of facilitating their entry into the world of writing. Whether formal or thematic, such overhearing authorized women writers to construct their own literary tradition from the existing canon of world literature, which had excluded them as either addressee or addressee.

At the same time, such narratives of overhearing also offered Mereau the opportunity to explore the limits that such taking implied. How was one to make someone else’s material, whether a single work or an entire literary heritage, one’s own? The complex lines of communication developed in the stories Mereau translated were mirrored in the vertically “broken lines,” to use Barbara Hahn’s expression, of the same narratives’ genealogical structures, whether it was the death of the mother in Lafayette, the fatherless daughters and motherless sons in Zayas, or the breaking of the incest taboo in the biography of Lenclos, who unknowingly sleeps with her own son. There were very palpable limits to the ownership depicted in such texts of overhearing that Mereau chose to translate. In her translation, for example, of a novella from the tenth day of Boccaccio’s *Decameron* entitled “Nathan,” which concerned the impossibility of ever assuming another person’s identity, Mereau explored through translation the essential limits of translation. Her corpus of translations thus aimed to explore the increasingly
complex circuitry of transmission and partial ownership made possible by the expanding landscape of print communication around 1800 and in which translation had an increasingly important role to play. In addressing this crisis of address, Mereau highlighted the contradictions that continued to surround women’s roles as writers.

Women writers at the turn of the nineteenth century were not only engaged with the preservation and discovery of older texts, they were also active participants in the growing market for new material. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the translation of contemporary novels. And no one seemed to rival the productivity and popularity of Fanny Tarnow, who, between 1830 and 1846 and after publishing an edition of her own collected works, produced fifty translations from French and English sources (Wägenbauer). While it is hard to discern a definitive pattern from Tarnow’s translation choices, which included many novels that have been lost or forgotten like Pfarrer Moritz (Pastor Moritz, 1837), certainly her choice of novels, such as Honoré de Balzac’s Eugenie Grandet (orig. 1833, trans. 1835) and George Sand’s Indiana (orig. 1831, trans. 1836), indicates a programmatic move to circulate works that commented upon and redefined women’s role in nineteenth-century society. Both Balzac’s and Sand’s works belonged to that genre of the female utopia, providing the construction of alternative, feminine universes whose power of social critique, as in all utopian fictions, is divided between the unity of its vision and the impotence of its explicit fictionality. At the same time, few works of fiction addressed more directly the particular social plights of women in the nineteenth century. The success of each depended, one suspects, on their capacity to hold both of these registers in well-orchestrated tension.

Among its various allures, including the intersecting positions of the colonial and the feminine, George Sand’s Indiana was most famous for its depiction of the wife who rejected her procreative duties. With its version of the female Bartleby who proclaims “I prefer not” in the bedroom and not the office, Sand’s novel explored a way to articulate woman’s sexuality that was not implicated in the traditionally patriarchal structures of sexual exchange. Such exchanges included the marriage contract and the harsh servitude it entailed for women (at one point Colonel Delmare, Indiana’s husband, almost crushes her head with his boot in anger). They also included the extra-marital affair whose benefits, as portrayed by Sand, largely accrued to the man and whose risks were borne by the woman (Indiana’s servant Noun is ultimately driven to her death when she becomes pregnant through her affair with Raymon). The novel was thus a larger exploration of cultural resistance in general, of how to say no in a greater sense. In place of open
opposition, heroics that were explicitly compared in the novel to Don Quixote breaking his lance against a windmill, Sand developed a much more nuanced theory of resistance, one very suggestive of the indirect role that translation itself might play as a form of cultural resistance. In the powerful words of defiance uttered by Indiana to her husband:

Vous avez usé de violence en m’enfermant dans ma chambre: j’en suis sortie par la fenêtre pour vous prouver que ne pas régner sur la volonté d’une femme, c’est exercer un empire dérisoire. J’ai passé quelques heures hors de votre domination; j’ai été respirer l’air de la liberté pour vous montrer que vous n’êtes pas moralement mon maître et que je ne dépend que de moi sur la terre. (226)

[You used violence in locking me in my room. I left by the window to prove to you that if you don’t control a woman’s will, your power over her is a mockery. I spent several hours beyond your power. I went to breathe the air of liberty, to show you that morally you’re not my master and that I depend only on myself on the earth.] (Raphael 177)

Rendered by Tarnow as:

Sie haben eine Gewaltthat gegen mich verübt, als Sie mich in mein Zimmer einsperren und ich bin aus dem Fenster gestiegen um Ihnen zu beweisen, daß es eine lächerliche Anmaßung ist, den Willen einer Frau beherrschen zu wollen. Ich habe mich auf einige Stunden Ihrer Herrschaft entzogen, ich habe die Luft der Freiheit geathmet, um Ihnen zu beweisen, daß Sie nicht moralisch mein Herr sind und daß ich auf Erden nur von mir selbst abhänge. (97)

[You exercised violence against me when you locked me in my room, and I climbed out through the window to show you that it is a laughable assumption to want to rule over the will of a woman. I removed myself from your rule for a few hours, breathed the air of freedom, in order to show you that morally you are not my master and that on earth I depend only on myself.]

While Tarnow lost some of Sand’s vocabulary that emphasized the husband’s monarchical status (régner, empire, nonetheless captured in Herrschaft), she made Indiana’s rejection of his reign far more emphatic. In place of Sand’s conditional, “que ne pas régner sur la volonté d’une femme, c’est exercer un empire dérisoire” (“if you don’t control a woman’s will, your power over her is a mockery”), Tarnow asserted the absolute position, “daß es eine lächerliche Anmaßung ist, den Willen einer Frau beherrschen zu wollen” (“it is a laughable assumption to want
to rule over the will of a woman”). According to Tarnow, one could never control the will of a woman and thus could not rule over her.

Fanny Tarnow was of course not the only woman who translated numerous novels in the course of her career. One should also mention the work of Elise von Hohenhausen, Sophie Mayer, or Wilhelmine von Gersdorff, who all participated in the vigorous industry of translating Walter Scott’s poetry and novels in the nineteenth century. Indeed, it is interesting to note that so many of Scott’s translators were women. What was it about this corpus that made it attractive to nineteenth-century women writers and how did they treat his works in translation?13

However much women partook in the rise of novels around the turn of the century, they were also intimately involved in poetic translation as well. I have already mentioned Hülle’s Odyssey translation, but I would like to focus for a moment on the work of Elise von Hohenhausen, whose translations of Byron are some of the most interesting poetic translations of the nineteenth century. In addition, they contributed to the growing celebrity of Byron as a writer capable of appealing to both male and female readers. Hohenhausen’s engagement with Byron could thus be seen as the contemporary equivalent of Tieck’s engagement with Shakespeare or Hülle’s with Homer.

Beginning in April of 1820 in a series for the Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände (Morning Newspaper for the Educated Classes), Hohenhausen published translations of excerpts from Byron’s Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage (1812–18), signing each one. The very act of selection suggested an important stance toward her original, i.e., that it was something that could be disassembled. Her translations thus seemed to empower readers to interact with the texts that they read, not to treat them as sacred objects, but as malleable, multifaceted materials for further creativity.

At the same time, the parts that Hohenhausen chose to translate, the way she translated, and, at times, the way she invented new lines in her translation, suggested important points about a woman’s relationship to Byron’s poetry. In her second selection for the Morgenblatt, Hohenhausen chose Childe Harold’s own farewell song, “Good Night,” performed after the thirteenth stanza of the first canto. On the one hand, the choice of translating a lyric interlude from within a narrative poem, indicated for readers by the quotation marks that were reproduced in the translation, intensified the poetic voice’s individuality so crucial to Byron’s international celebrity (Mole). This choice also reversed or covered over precisely the pluralization of voices that a translation necessarily performed.
On the other hand, in choosing a selection that began with the words, "‘Adieu, adieu! My native shore’" (26), rendered into German as, "‘Leb wohl, mein Heimathstrand, Ade!’" (Morgenblatt 24 Apr. 1820), Hohenhausen constructed a feminine poetics that transgressed confines and expanded identities, whether those of the national tongue or the walls of the domestic home. The foreign word that remained untranslated, although respelled ("Adieu/Ade") in Hohenhausen’s selection disclosed—at both the linguistic and semantic level—the fundamental condition of departure or exile that defined a woman writer’s position and that was echoed in Felicia Hemans’s translation of Camões’s sonnet cited as my epigraph above. "Adieu/Ade" signified "departure" both in its literal meaning and non-meaning as a foreign word. And yet at the same time, in not being translated it also emphasized that a common thread connected such internationalism, that something stayed the same even when it crossed borders. In this we can see how Hohenhausen functioned as an exemplary participant in a larger project by women writers to establish their own international republic of letters.

In its typographical appeal to direct speech alongside its linguistic appeal to the foreign, the first line of Hohenhausen’s selection thus condensed the essential competing tensions of any translation. It simultaneously appealed to the reader to overlook the multiple personages behind the reconstruction of this singular voice at the same time that it drew immediate attention to the limits of what could be “brought over” (übersetzen). One of the sources of Byron’s international fame was arguably his work’s concern with internationalism itself (Cardwell), and in this regard he offered ideal material for the translator to address the role of translation in giving shape to such transnational literary networks.

A year later Hohenhausen published another excerpt, this time from stanzas 98–109 of the third canto, which she entitled, “Der Morgen am Genfersee” (“Morning on Lake Geneva”), and in it we can witness not only some of Hohenhausen’s most exquisite work in moving from English to German, but also her capacity to work with gender as she did so. From Byron’s lines:

The morn is up again, the dewy morn,
With breath all incense, and with cheek all bloom,
Laughing the clouds away with playful scorn,
And living as if earth contain’d no tomb,— (133)

Hohenhausen writes:

Der Morgen kommt zurück mit Perlenthau,
Mit Balsamathem und mit Blumenwangen,
Mit leichitem Spiel theilt er der Wolken Grau,
Als wär kein Grab mehr in der Erdenau  (Morgenblatt 10 July 1821)

[Morning returns with pearls of dew,
With balsam breath and floral cheeks,
With ginger playfulness he divides the clouds' grey,
As if the earthy meadow contained graves no more.]

If the opening lines attested to her sheer poetic facility (turning “dewy morn” into “Perlenthau” and the repetitive “all incense” and “all bloom” to the alliterative “Balsamathem” and “Blumenwan gen” with its subtle phonic shift from “Bal” to “Blu”), we can also see in the seventh stanza (stanza 104 of the original) the way she highlights the feminine in Byron’s otherwise ungendered original:

Byron:  ’Twas not for fiction chose Rousseau this spot,
Peopling it with affections; but he found
It was the scene which passion must allot
To the mind’s purified beings; ’twas the ground
Where early Love his Psyche’s zone unbound,
And hallowed it with loveliness; ’tis lone,
And wonderful, and deep, and hath a sound,
And sense, and sight of sweetness.

Hohenhausen:  Der Dichtkunst wegen, wählte wohl allein
Einst Rousseau diese himmlischen Gefilde,
Er fand: hier sey der Ort, wo Liebe rein
Den Gürtel Psyche’s löst im Glutverein,
Wo lieblich blühen geistige Gebilde, –
Wohl weht auch hier ein wonnesüßes Seyn,
So wunderbar erhaben, doch voll Milde.

[It was for poetry alone Rousseau once
Likely chose these heavenly fields,
He found: here is the spot, where pure Love
Psyche’s girdle unbinds in fervid union,
Where lovely bloom such spiritual shapes, –
Well wafts here too a blissfully sweet self,
So wonderfully sublime, yet full of mildness.]

Psyche’s “zone unbound” in Byron became in Hohenhausen “wo Liebe rein / den Gürtel Psyche’s löst im Glutverein” (“where pure love / Psyche’s girdle unbinds in fervid union”), a substitution of important and vivid proportions. Imagination as the object of literature was given a distinctly female body, and the horizontal and vertical expansions
implied in "zone unbound" are transformed instead into an erotic undressing, into an act of focalization, concentration, and penetration. In echoing Faust's imaginary encounter with Gretchen and the elaborate drama of unwrapping it enacted (lines 2678–2804), Hohenhausen's translation participated on one level in a larger turn-of-the-century hermeneutical discourse in which translation was understood as a crucial mode of interpretation and "uncovering" (Antonetti; Kittler 9). At the same time, Hohenhausen identified in her translation an altogether different "self" who occupied this space of sustained attention, not one marked by its sensuality and femininity (the undressed woman's body), but instead as wonnesüß ("blissfully sweet"), erhaben ("sublime"), and voll Milde ("full of mildness," but also "full of clemency"). It was both a site of contradiction (sweetness, sublimity, and charitable tenderness all at once), but more importantly a site of exchange captured in the final word, Milde ("mildness," but also "clemency"). In addition to the element of erotic discourse, Hohenhausen's translation highlighted the giving and reciprocity that seemed to motivate a particular way of thinking about the translator's relationship to her source text. In her attention to the notion of exchange, one could see Hohenhausen doing something similar with her translation of Byron as Dorothea Tieck had done with Shakespeare's sonnets, where translation itself was figured not as an act of falling away or secondariness, but importantly as a return, a giving back, a reply, and perhaps most interestingly, as a form of clemency or pardon for the original.

Hohenhausen's trials in the Morgenblatt were a key testing ground for her work as a translator and ultimately made possible her participation in the translated collected edition of Byron's works. Hohenhausen translated the entirety of volume eighteen, containing Cain and Prophecy of Dante, and volume nineteen, which contained a collection of shorter poems, including such important Byronic poems as "Prometheus" and "To Thyrza." It is to the eighteenth volume that I would like to turn as my final example, offering us a case where we can observe a woman's relationship not just to a single "work," but also to the media object of the "book" as well.

The eighteenth volume opens with an excerpt taken from Goethe's periodical, Ueber Kunst und Alterthum (On Art and Antiquity) in which he wrote a review of Byron's Cain. On one level, such a gesture worked to domesticate and contain Byron's challenging and, in terms of the larger literary market of its day, scandalous play. It placed the controlling voice of the canonical German poet as the frame through which readers could approach this increasingly canonical English poet. On the other hand, such a gesture only increased the polyphony surrounding
this work. Not only did Goethe’s judgment follow Byron’s own dedication to another writer, Walter Scott, but Goethe’s review was only written in response to his having read a review of a French translation of Byron’s play in *Le Moniteur universel* (“[T]hus he once again spiritedly awakens our own reflection”). Furthermore, when the narrator who inserted Goethe’s piece emphatically concluded, “So sagt Göthe” (“so says Goethe”), which I suspect might have been written by Hohenhausen, we are meant to see a certain amount of irony in this proclamation. Significantly, what Goethe has just said at the end of his piece, which belongs to one of the most cited judgments about Byron’s play, is in fact said to have been by someone else, named by Goethe as “an ingenious woman who is related to us in her high estimation of Byron,” believed by scholars to be Goethe’s daughter-in-law, Ottilie von Goethe, later editor of the multilingual journal *Chaos*. In other words, the prefatory material that seemed to perform a stabilizing function contributed in fact to the increasing proliferation of “I’s” that populated this volume and the growing distance between the reader and the source. Additionally, the words, “So sagt Göthe,” refers instead to a woman’s indirect mode of speech, and this was precisely how Hohenhausen assumed her own speaking position in the volume, although in reverse: instead of Ottilie being spoken for by Goethe, Hohenhausen was speaking for Byron. Whether speaking for or being spoken for, women in Hohenhausen’s “book” only ever achieved an indirect presence in print.

I want to emphasize that the very three words that Goethe’s daughter-in-law identified as so crucial to the history of world literature—Cain’s last words, “But with me!”—are rendered by Hohenhausen instead as two words (to remain metrically consistent) followed not by an exclamation point but a question mark: “Aber ich?” In place of the certainty of the final judgment we have a question, and it is importantly a question about the status of the “I.” The emphasis shifted in Hohenhausen’s translation from the damnation, and thus definition, of this “me” to its disintegration. Her organization of the codex, and the material it contained, was thus arranged to emphasize the multiplying and unraveling positions of speaking subjects that made translation conceptually possible. The book itself was thus arranged according to a poetics of translation.

* * *

In a letter to her friend Friedrich von Uechtritz on being a translator. Dorothea Tieck wrote. “I think translation is actually more of an
activity for women than men, precisely because it wasn’t bestowed upon us to produce something of our own [etwas Eigenes hervor zubringen].” (Sybel 157). On the one hand, Tieck articulated a familiar and deeply engrained cliché about women writers’ lack of inventiveness, which could be found in the correspondence of numerous other contemporaneous women. As Fanny Tarnow wrote to a friend, “I have no creative genius [kein schaffendes Genie], no new ideas, everything is just appropriated” (Wagenbauer 179). But on the other hand, Tieck was also making a powerful argument about the nature of women’s writing and its relationship to textual property. What women writers lacked, according to Tieck, was something of their own (“etwas Eigenes”), and by association, something they could own (Eigentum ‘property’). In place of a poetics of genius (Tarnow’s notion of the “schaffendes Genie”) that depended on the exclusive ownership of one’s language and work, what we find in the work of women translators and in the work of women writers is a far more dialogical poetics of interaction and exchange. And yet such “dialogue” had much more in common with Sophie Mereau’s notion of “overhearing” than any Habermasian idea of equal exchange. There was always an incompleteness, a partiality to these exchanges, whether it was the deficiencies of what one could take in Mereau or the empowering, deforming appropriations of Hülle, who effaced the self-effacing Muse. Translations by women did not simply highlight what was lost or found, however, but were also seen as a form of amplification, whether it was the multiplication of the “I’s” in Hohenhaus’s volume of Byron or Tarnow’s project of reproducing, and thus extending, feminist narratives like Sand’s of the woman who says no.

These are just a few of the examples of the way translation intersected with the life and work of women at the turn of the nineteenth century. There is of course still much that we do not know. How many more women were active as translators, whether alongside their other writerly activities or as their sole means of production? We need much more reliable bibliographic details to begin to recover and record such activity. At the same time, there is also a tremendous amount of work to be done to recover the correspondence of women translators with publishers to gain a better understanding of their own agency in the translating process. How much were these selections the choices of women writers versus the choices of their publishers or other, very often male, intermediaries? Finally, we need more information on how women thought about translation, whether gleaned from the prefaces that often accompanied their translations, their diaries, or their correspondence with one another.
The value of such an undertaking, however, is that the work of women translators opens up for us a literary space that transcends the narrow confines of a single national and linguistic entity. Their work illustrates for us how texts themselves articulated the protocols to motivate their own continued circulation, how literature was and continues to be used and adapted to promote more international cultural configurations. Like Dorothea Tieck’s choice of Cervantes’s *Persiles and Sigismunda*, we can find numerous examples of translations by women that dealt with the very issues of translation and transnational identity. At the same time, studying translations is a way of internationalizing the study of national languages and literatures. It illustrates for us the limits and the constructedness of working in one single language. It forces us to be more attentive to the mobility of texts, a mobility that is only increasing today with the accelerating expansion of communications technologies. Finally, studying translations also allows us as literary historians to construct more interesting histories with far more complex synchronic and diachronic grids. Through a synchronic account of German women writers around 1800, one also encounters a group of writers who pass through the temporal and spatial points of Homer, Boccaccio, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Lafayette, Balzac, and George Sand—a far more accurate representation, in my view, of how individuals were reading and thinking about writing at the turn of the nineteenth century.

Notes

I would like to thank Anna Sigg and Olivia Landry for their assistance in researching this article.

1 All translations from the German are my own unless otherwise noted. Brentano’s text reads in the German: “Das Romantische selbst ist eine Übersetzung.”

2 Ezell writes: “We still need histories of authors and readers, often women, who resided away from the centers of publishing and technology of ‘modern’ authors. In short, we still need studies that are not focused on the ‘advanced’ or modern concept of authorship during this period of transition but instead on all the varied aspects of the material culture of literature” (11–12).

3 See Apter for a discussion of translation as the foundation for a “new comparative literature.”
For the sake of clarity, all works of translation cited in this essay are listed separately below and not in the body of the article.

"Fanny Tarnow übersetzt besser."

"Das deutsche Publikum braucht sich nicht nach dem Original zu sehnen; das Beste davon reicht ihm die Nachbilderin, die gewißlich auch an Styl dem Briten überlegen ist; denn wie viele Schriftsteller des In- und Auslands dürfen sich an Gediegenheit der Schreibart wohl mit Fanny Tarnow vergleichen?"

Diese Gründe haben mich bewogen, das Werk in’s Deutsche zu übersetzen. Ich habe mich nicht ängstlich an den Styl und die Sprache gebunden, vielmehr mich bemüht, die allzu wortreichen Erzählungen abzukürzen, wie der Gärtner mit seiner Schere die allzu üppigen Auswüchse der Rankengewächse verschneidet, und hoffe, daß die Freunde meiner Arbeiten auch die gegenwärtige für eine zu ihrer Unterhaltung nicht überflüssige Bemühung halten werden."

For a self-description of Tieck’s reading list, see her correspondence with the writer Friedrich von Uechtritz (Sybel).

"Wir Frauen sind in einem besonderen Zustande. Die Maximen der Männer hören wir immerfort wiederholen, ja wir müssen sie in goldenen Buchstaben über unsem Häupten sehen, und doch wüßten wir Mädchen im stillen das Umgekehrte zu sagen das auch gólte, wie es gerade hier der Fall ist” (“We women are in a unique position. We persistently hear the maxims of men repeated, indeed we have to see them above our heads in golden letters, and yet we young women knew to say them to ourselves in reverse, which also proved to be true, as is the case here”; Goethe, Wanderjahre 326).

As Margreta de Grazia has demonstrated in her work on the history of editing Shakespeare, the sonnets persistently occupied a troubled position within Shakespearean editions and criticism well into the twentieth century.

"Wie? die von uns so gefeierte Mad. Mereau—schreibt jetzt Spanische Novellen, schreibt Sonetts, Burlesken? auch sie neigt sich zu der gehässigen Schule?—Sie muß gleich herunter!"

In Plato’s Phaedrus we read: “When it has once been written down, every discourse rolls about everywhere, reaching indiscriminately those with understanding no less than those who have no business with it, and it doesn’t know to whom it should speak and to whom it should not” (81).

For a discussion of Scott’s translations from the 1820s, see Ebert.

"[S]o weckt er unsere eigene Betrachtung wieder lebhaft auf” (Kunst 53).

Goethe’s review reads, “Alles was religios [sic] und sittlich in der Welt gesagt werden könne, sey in den drey letzten Worten des Stücks
enthalten” (“Everything religious and ethical in the world that can be spoken is contained in those last three words of the play”; 56).

16 “eine geistreiche, in Hochschätzung Byrons mit uns verwandte Freundin” (Kunst 56).

17 Discussed in Goethe, Ueber Kunst und Alterthum 991.

18 The entire metrical unit reads: “Cain: O Abel! Adah: Peace be with him! Cain: But with me!” (Byron 938).

19 “Ich glaube, das Uebersetzen ist eigentlich mehr ein Geschäft für Frauen als für Männer, gerade weil es uns nicht gegeben ist, etwas Eigenes hervor zu bringen.”

20 “Ich habe kein schaffendes Genie, keine neue Ideen, es ist alles nur angenehnt.”

Works Cited

Translations


Secondary


*Der Freimüthige* 118 (14 Jun. 1804).


