



Rhine Crossings

FRANCE AND GERMANY IN LOVE AND WAR

edited by
Aminia M. Brueggemann & Peter Schulman

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PART I
INTRODUCTION





FRANCE AND GERMANY

A Tempestuous Affair

Aminia M. Brueggemann and Peter Schulman

François Truffaut's famous film, *Jules et Jim*, which depicts a fiery love triangle between a young French writer, a German poet, and a seductive yet troubled femme fatale from the belle époque until 1933, captures the volatile dynamic that has characterized the French-German symbiosis throughout many centuries. Caught in an intense relationship oscillating between love and hate, France and Germany have engaged in a dialectic marked both by aggression and mistrust, on the one hand, and a mutual fascination and respect, on the other. In this book, we explore the explosive and ongoing exchange between the two nations as they struggle not only with their individual identities, but also with their collective European ones. *Rhine Crossings* takes us on a journey from the literary salons of the eighteenth century to the trenches of the twentieth, from love-hate interactions to ones of cooperation and peace, from literature, to politics, to history. Indeed, this book spans several time frames and discourses as it investigates this unique and charged relationship.

Beginning with the intense cultural exchanges that characterized the French and German artistic worlds in the Middle Ages, France and Germany have punctuated European civilization by their two different outlooks on life and society. Taking, as a paradigmatic example, two radically different twelfth-century “takes” on the grail legend—Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzifal* and Chrétien de Troye's *Perceval le Gallois*—significant clichés have emerged and have been sustained, even magnified throughout centuries. Certain iconic representations have not only

been perpetuated, but also have fed the propaganda machines which stoked three bloody and increasingly brutal Franco-German wars. Indeed, two significant cultural stereotypes have emerged from the contrast between the two national interpretations of the Perceval legend alone: on the one hand, the image of the German warrior driven by iron-clad notions of honor and battle; on the other, the more playful French knight who is more preoccupied with the subtleties of chivalry and romance than his more somber German counterpart. Yet, it was the disagreement of the two European superpowers in 1519 that laid the foundation to the so-called *Erbfeindschaft* between Germany and France when Spain and France decided to fight for dominance on German territory. When the German dukes favored Karl of Spain and his money, France became one of Germany's bitter enemies—simply because the political situation demanded it.

During the course of the nineteenth century, the legacy of the odd German-French medieval dialectical match resurfaced, when French and German artists rediscovered their respective “others” through the prisms of a romanticized Middle Ages. Friedrich Schlegel, for example, was moved to catholic conversion after visiting Notre-Dame de Paris while, in *Le Génie du Christianisme*, Chateaubriand fused notions of a universal Christianity with Gothic architecture. Victor Hugo also looked eastward, towards the ruins of gothic castles on the Rhine for inspiration in *Le Rhin*. The Rhine was a literary gold mine for Hugo who saw catalysts for the fantastic and the mystical in its dreamlike landscape. Gérard de Nerval would be so enchanted with Germany's past that he would even declare: “*La vieille Allemagne, notre mère à tous, Teutonia!*” (*Old Germany, the mother of us all, Teutonia!*)¹ The German and French attitudes toward each other moved like a pendulum between hatred and fascination: For example, Frederick II, King of Prussia, wrote letters of enthusiasm to Voltaire, and the Bavarian rulers commissioned smaller copies of Versailles built in their country. If, in the eighteenth-century, Voltaire, for example, did no great service to Franco-German relations in his parody of what was for him the quintessential German with an unpronounceable Teutonic name, the blustering Baron Thunderten-Tronck, Mme de Staël's seminal work, *De l'Allemagne*, written in 1800, more than made up for her fellow countryman's caricature. *De l'Allemagne* was one of the first major French works to spawn a genuine

appreciation of Germany. It in fact sparked a huge literary attraction to Germany among French writers and artists. Similarly, Melchior Grimm's letters about Paris (from 1753–1793) enchanted and encouraged generations of Germans to seek out their French neighbors. German poets would flock to Paris and even write their poems in French. The German “*Wesen*” and the French “*Esprit*” would merge in a maelstrom of creativity that would find its peak in the twentieth century during the thirty year interval between 1900 and 1930 documented by the Paris-Berlin exhibit at the Pompidou Center in 1978.²

Indeed, there was an incredible amount of interdisciplinary creative traffic between Paris and Berlin since Mme de Staël and Grimm. In the mid-nineteenth century, for example, the eminent literary critic Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve dreamed of an ideal Académie Française whose members would all be German while Heinrich Heine, who saw intense parallels between the French Revolution and German philosophy, proclaimed the Rhine the “Jordan” that separated the “promised land of liberty” from the land of the Philistines. German music also found a home in the Parisian cultural *milieu*. In J. K. Huysmans's novel *A Rebours*, it is by listening to Wagner that Des Esseintes is able to flee what he perceives as the ugliness of the French bourgeoisie. In real life, it was in fact Jacques Offenbach, born in Cologne, who became the toast of Paris under Napoleon III while Hector Berlioz, fascinated with Goethe's *Faust*, became a huge success in Berlin. Similarly, Gérard de Nerval became obsessed with Albrecht Dürer, and wrote of an ideal poetic space where Mozart and Weber are playing in the background while Goethe admired Eugène Delacroix's masterful representation of Faust, and goes so far as to say that even though the French may have been critical of Delacroix's enthusiasm, he could always find a home in Germany. “Delacroix has surpassed my own vision,” Goethe wrote, “[. . .] readers [of Faust] will find all of this quite lively and superior to what they might have expected.”³

The traffic between France and Germany hardly let up in the twentieth century. Walter Benjamin's captivation with Paris led to his extraordinary work on Baudelaire and fin de siècle Europe; Rainer Maria Rilke moved to Paris, even wrote poems in French and featured it in *The Notebooks of Malte Laurids Brigge*; Guillaume Apollinaire's boat trip along the Rhine inspired him to write his Rhénane poetry. In the art

world of the early twentieth century, Berlin became the center for French art, as it celebrated exhibits by Henri Matisse, Charles-Eugène Delaunay, and Raoul Duffy at the expense of German artists, while in Paris, German artists flocked to Le Dôme, the famous Montparnasse café, to exchange ideas and techniques as Paris became their subject and muse.

It is with the birth of DADA and surrealism, however, that the most intense exchanges took place. As a reaction to the nationalism and boundaries that allowed the carnage of World War I to take place, the Dadaists and Surrealists forged an international interchange which meant to destroy the artificial constructs that drove a wedge between the two countries. A veritable explosion of cross-cultural and interdisciplinary activity was hatched in the interwar period, for example, as Tristan Tzara, Francis Picabia, Paul Eluard, Pierre Reverdy engaged in lengthy correspondences and discussions with Hans Arp, Carl Einstein, Hugo Ball, and Franz Jung. Outside the Dada/Surrealist worlds, other writers developed historic connections as well: Thomas Mann and André Gide, for example; Stephan Zweig and Romain Rolland. French writers wrote novels with German protagonists, such as Jacques Rivière's *L'Allemand*, or with protagonists in the disputed Alsace-Lorraine region such as Jean Giraudoux's novel *Siegfried et le Limousin*. In cinema, G. W. Pabst made the most potent films on war and resolution between France in Germany with his *Westfront 1918* (1930), a harrowing account of soldiers at the front during the last days of World War I which ends with a delirious and dying German soldier holding the hand of a French soldier as he cries out: "*Moi, camarade . . . pas ennemie*" (I am a friend, not an enemy). With the Franco-German production of *Kameradschaft* (1931), Pabst's portrayal of French and German miners uniting to help some French miners trapped in a mine accident at the French/German border vividly showed the possibilities of cooperation and healing after the trauma of World War I. Pabst's versatile and empathetic understanding of French and German culture reached its peak in the 1931 Franco-German-American production of *The Three Penny Opera* which he shot both in German and in French with two different casts but using the same sets.

Since Napoleon's rule, however, clichés and foe images continuously crept into French-German politics and public opinion until the twentieth century. According to Joseph Rovin, the first quarrel between Karl and Franz I, and the Second World War bracketed twenty-three

military French-German conflicts, which played themselves out mainly on German territory.⁴ German-Franco relations were being reduced to interplay between victory and defeat, humiliation and revenge. The railway car of Compiègne—witness of German surrender during the First World War and the French defeat during the Second World War—serves as one of the most potent symbols of this ominous catenation.

Yet, beyond politics there is always art and the artists. World War II would usher in an obviously intense and complex artistic production between the two countries. Literary production was particularly ambiguous in France. On the one hand, such clandestine works of resistance as Vercors's *Le Silence de la Mer* urged French readers not to be taken in by the seemingly nice, "good" Germans behind whom lurked the horrors of Hitler and Nazism; on the other, pro-Fascist writers such as Robert Brasillach (who would be the first writer to be hanged after the war for war crimes) and Lucien Rebatet wrote pro-German novels and newspaper articles. The notorious Céline produced horrific anti-Semitic pamphlets such as the infamous *Bagatelles pour un massacre*, but used his modernist, dizzying literary style to depict his flight from France towards Germany as he joined a host of collaborators during the German retreat in his trilogy *D'un château l'autre*, *Nord*, and *Rigodon*. In Germany, there were writers such as Ernst Jünger who wrote graphically about his war experiences in occupied France and the slippery figure, Otto Abetz, the German Francophile diplomat who became very close to Pierre Laval during his term as Hitler's ambassador to France during the Vichy years. He was neither trusted by the Germans, who sent him back to Berlin shortly after the American landing in North Africa, because they were suspicious of his close ties to France, nor by the French who sentenced him to forced labor after the war for war crimes; he was involved in the deportation of French Jews and the assassination of Georges Mandel in 1944.

After 1945, Germany and France were forced to confront two different situations: Germany lost its national unity, experienced a moral discreditment, and had to be ruled by allied forces. France was able to retain its borders as well as its historic self-esteem and a sense of entitlement of being a great power. Although France led a tough policy, its attempts to revive Germany's cultural infrastructure encouraged Germany to catch up to contemporary cultural trends. At first, mainly brave and socially engaged private citizens attempted to overcome deeply

embedded historical fears. On a regional level, town twinnings soon offered a forum for the renewed German-French dialogue. Within the framework of a European community, politicians of both countries attempted to bridge the gap. In 1963, the Elysée-contract—signed by Konrad Adenauer and Charles de Gaulle, ensuring continuing French-German cooperation—underscored this attempt by making international law out of the flourishing French-German relationship. The “mutual declaration,”⁵ which accompanied the contract, reinforced the conviction that the reconciliation between the French and German people not only marked the end of a centuries old rivalry, but also represented a historical event which rebuilt the relationship of both countries. The caricaturist Klaus Pielert interpreted the contract as a marriage between Marianne and Michel, the national stereotypes. The proud fathers of the couple, de Gaulle and Adenauer, followed closely. Nowadays, regular political consultations, military cooperations, and youth exchanges characterize the daily life of these neighboring countries.

As Germany climbed economically out of the ruins of the Second World War towards the economic boom led by the strong German currency (*Deutsche Mark*) entering the so-called phase of the *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic miracle) and France emerged from its confused wartime past with thirty years of prosperity known as the *trente glorieuses*, the French and German cultural symbiosis was slower in coming. Yet, less than ten years after the war, Alain Resnais probed the immediate trauma of the apocalyptic scars of the Holocaust and Hiroshima with his landmark films, *Night and Fog* (1952), the most detailed and vivid documentary on the Holocaust the world had seen up until that point, and *Hiroshima mon amour* (1961), with a screenplay by the novelist Marguerite Duras, about a French woman and a Japanese man who have an affair in Hiroshima as they try to heal the respective anguish that they had buried after the war. On a more lighter note, François Truffaut’s *Jules et Jim* (1962) would serve as a metaphoric coming to terms with the French-German relationship, as it represented a beautiful but troubled love triangle between a German, a Frenchman, and a seductive French woman.

It was with Marcel Ophüls’s groundbreaking epic documentary, *Le Chagrin et la Pitié* (1969) that France really began to confront its Vichy past that De Gaulle had seemingly swept under the rug after the Allied victory in order to promote an internal healing within France. Ophüls

opened a floodgate of French introspection that led the way in the 1980s and 1990s to the famous trials of war criminals such as Maurice Papon and Klaus Barbie (about whom Ophüls would film another documentary, *Hotel Terminus*, in 1988).

Working together with the French cinematographer Henri Alekan and the Austrian writer Peter Handke, the German film director Wim Wenders accomplished the act of combining present and past, as well as the multicultural and multilingual aspects of Germany in his film *Wings of Desire* (1987). In Wender's film, the war-scarred and still divided city of Berlin provides the backdrop for an unusual love story between an angel and a French trapeze artist. Berlin becomes "a spatial link between the past and present, where history is preserved in the flesh of its inhabitants."⁶ *Wings of Desire* goes beyond the simple telling of a love story but rather it zeros in on the weight of material history, the traces of the past, the fluidity of borders, and the beauty of transient humanity.

It is both encouraging and at the same time an almost logical and obvious culmination of the French-German codependency that despite so many centuries of Franco-German violence, trauma, destruction, and reconstruction, the Centre Pompidou held its extraordinary exhibit, titled *Paris-Berlin*, in 1978, and that both countries declared the fall of 1996 as a French and German season during which a series of cultural exchanges, exhibits, film, and music festivals, culminating in a paradigmatic exhibit titled *Marianne et Germania, 1789–1889, A Century of Franco-German Passions*, were held jointly in Paris and Berlin.

Today, cooperation and competition distinguish the economic relations. In 1945, France was dominated by agriculture, after 1945, France became the leading supplier of advanced technologies in air and space, traffic systems, and energy technology. In fact, France has become one of the most important export partners of Germany's industry. Yet, in spite of all this economic activity, consumers of both countries continue to identify their products in terms of national characteristics. Product advertisements still use the established clichés: *Savoir-vivre*, the French way of living a joyful and sensual life, continues to be juxtaposed with *savoir-faire*, German perfectionism and organizational talent.

Germany's unification and the changes within Eastern Europe proved to be another challenge for the French-German friendship. Latent distrust towards a seemingly overpowering Germany burdened

bilateral relations. The “*D-Mark-Diktat*” and France’s nuclear experiments caused irritations on both sides. Yet, after a period of initial hesitation, France has emerged as an active partner within the German unification process while also taking advantage of opportunities to invest in the new German states. The German-French cooperation in air and space technology (Aerospaciales and DASA) provided new and vital impulses for cooperation. Jacques Chirac’s state visit in June 2000 in Berlin, the first state visit of a French president since the German unification, was a diplomatic highpoint of France-German relations in the past decade. As he declared:

It is now more than half a century that we have been working together. Between us, reconciliation is a fact. It is self-evident. A reality of daily life which is so much a part of our landscape that we no longer perceive its true dimension.

. . . What France and Germany have experienced and undergone in history is unlike anything else. Better than any other nation, they grasp the deep meaning of peace and of the European enterprise. They alone, by forcing the pace of things, could give the signal for a great coming together in Europe. Together, as their voyage of mutual rediscovery has grown more intense, as the commitment of their peoples has deepened, they have moved the idea of Europe forward. [*Seit mehr als einem halben Jahrhundert arbeiten wir Hand in Hand. Zwischen uns ist die Aussöhnung abgeschlossen. . . . Was Deutschland und Frankreich im Laufe ihrer Geschichte erlebt und erlitten haben, ist ohnegleichen. . . . Nur sie vermögen Europa voranzubringen, sei es bei der Verwirklichung seiner Ziele, bei der Ausweitung seiner Grenzen oder bei seiner Verankerung in den Herzen . . .*]⁷

In August 2003, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dominique de Villepin, met his German counterpart, Joschka Fischer, in order to discuss many subjects on which France and Germany cooperate such as their common stand on Iraq, the Middle East peace process, and the results of the European Convention. Apparently, the Franco-German alliance has developed into such a strong bond that Dominique de Villepin privately voiced his thoughts that the two countries—having the economies and populations within the European Union—could merge into one union.⁸ Perhaps Einstein’s comment that prejudices are harder to crack than atomic nucleuses is slowly being contradicted.

Although France and Germany have had a long and storied affair, this present volume does not attempt to provide an exhaustive historical or political analysis of the Franco-German dynamic throughout the centuries. We have endeavored, instead, to offer a mosaic of different insights and connections that have not hitherto been covered by historians or literary critics. By branching out from the early sentimental eighteenth-century epistolary beginnings to the vanguards of film and photography, *Rhine Crossings* seeks to cross various disciplines as well as the geographical boundaries that have come between these two nations.

In chapter 1, Beatrice Guenther explores the paradigmatic commonalities that have characterized Madame de Staël's and Sophie von la Roche's epistolary fiction. While Madame de Staël is widely considered as having inspired a new appreciation of Germany among the French through her seminal work, *De l'Allemagne*, Guenther reveals how de Staël's epistolary fiction can also shed light on and contribute to French-German sensibilities. Similarly, Guenther explains how, thirty years later, Sophie von la Roche, who is considered Germany's first female novelist, picks up on and has a dialogue with de Staël's theories of education which she integrates into her own fiction. For Guenther, the two writers demonstrate how acts of reading and education help women shape their own judgment and conduct as well as affect the communities around them in a positive manner while using national characteristics as a form of stereotypical shorthand; in fact they call into question assumptions of social place and national rootedness.

In chapter 2, Heidi M. Schlipphacke examines the surprisingly contradictory nature of G. E. Lessing's reception of France and the French. Perhaps carried away by his wish to create a national German theater independent from the firmly established French academy, Lessing instrumentalizes and ultimately exploits France by equating France with decadence and ridicule.

In chapter 3, Sarah Juliette Sasson attempts to trace the French reception of Heinrich Heine as a source of errors or illusions. Heine, who regarded Paris as the capital of *esprit* and creativity, was also blessed with a "Voltairean" irony that secured his place in the French literary landscape. Yet, it appears that not only his writing, but also his persona was being interpreted by enthusiastic critics thus transforming the poet into a mere *image*.

In chapter 4, Terri J. Gordon undertakes a study of the cabaret revue, the troupes of girls that stormed the stages of Paris and Berlin in the interwar period. A testimony to the prosperity of the Roaring Twenties, the revue was comprised of troupes of girls that performed in perfectly synchronized units, giving rise to reiterated images in the French and German press of the military body and the mass-produced machine. By taking up the image of the “femme-machine” in mass culture and a number of works by avant-garde artists Man Ray and Hans Bellmer, Gordon argues that the displacement of the (male) machine and/or male soldier onto the body of woman reveals culturally disjunctive responses to the trauma of the war. The similar reception in the press in Paris and Berlin suggests that the revue held a common appeal for the inhabitants of the two cities. Unlike the psychic and social fragmentation expressed in the machine art of Dada and surrealist photomontage, the revue produces images of health and wholeness, symbolically putting the individual and military body back together again. In this sense re-membering is forgetting.

In chapter 5, Andrea Gogroß-Voorhees focuses on Charles Pierre Baudelaire’s and Friedrich Nietzsche’s strategies of resistance to physical and cultural decline. The article shows how Baudelaire and Nietzsche, swimming against the tide of their times, defend values such as originality, courage, honesty, will power, beauty, and style in an increasingly modernized age, characterized by a misguided optimism and the erroneous belief that technological and scientific progress guarantees moral improvement. Baudelaire and Nietzsche see original art and thought being buried under frenzied activity that leads nowhere but to chaos, mediocrity, and emptiness. Their strong work ethics reflect an understanding of work as a self-paced activity through which one expresses and resolves inner conflicts and channels one’s creative energies. Their insistence on hygiene grows from a deep concern to cultivate those qualities within us that we wish to promote. Whether these qualities are “good” or “bad” is not for them the question as much as the strength of character and taste that determines one’s choice. The aesthetic expression of this choice and taste is precisely what Baudelaire and Nietzsche call “style.” As Nietzsche pointed out, “to give style to one’s character, is a rare art.”

In chapter 6, Jennifer Forrest examines the effort to take Frank Wedekind at his word on what he was trying to do in his creation of Lulu

(e.g., the eternal woman), combined with that of associating his ideals with both the era's great philosophical dialogues (Nietzsche, Schopenhauer) and Western literary and artistic archetypes (Pandora, Eve, Antoine Watteau's paintings depicting Gilles) has led to grand pronouncements on his often awkward yet earnest treatment of "serious" subjects. However, failure to analyze seriously Wedekind's German Lulu in terms of French popular culture leaves critics unsatisfactorily scrambling for ways to reconcile the multiple stylistic and ideological currents composing the plays. This essay explores how instrumental the late-nineteenth-century Parisian circus and pantomime were in Wedekind's creation of his *fin de siècle* femme fatale.

In chapter 7, Michael Payne looks at the productive and continuing tension between aesthetics and ideology as found in Walter Benjamin's unfinished writings on Paris and Berlin. Payne compares Benjamin's associations with Paris and the "aesthetic" (including Baudelaire, speculation, playfulness, and flaneurism) to his associations with Berlin and Bertolt Brecht's Marxist critique of ideology. Payne also underlines the importance of Benjamin's discourse on these two cities on the continuing discussion between critical and cultural theorists today.

In chapter 8, Kimberley Healey demonstrates how a little known interdisciplinary collaboration between the German photographer Karl Blossfeldt and the controversial French writer and essayist Georges Bataille led to an original artistic communication between the two writers at a time when dialogue between their respective countries was at a standstill with the looming approach of World War II. Healey argues that, through a unique "language of flowers," the two artists were able to merge their idiosyncratic aesthetics into a language that defied the usual stereotypical production that was emerging from the two nations at that time. Healey contends that Bataille and Blossfeldt's textual and visual dialogue was at odds with conventional representations of nature between the wars which ideologically tended to reject and embrace nature and the natural in various ways. Through a botanical language, Bataille and Blossfeldt were able to transcend the "unnatural" nationalistic barriers of the era by creating a multilayered and multiangled critical voice of their own.

In chapter 9, William J. Cloonan brings attention to the life and works of the French sculptor Aristide Maillol and his ambiguous role

during the German occupation. As Cloonan examines Maillol's friendship with the German sculptor Arno Brecker, he suggests that while Maillol's work found favor in the Reich, and Maillol had certain affinities with the German regime, he was not a Nazi or a Nazi sympathizer. Rather, Cloonan contends that Maillol simply echoed a political and artistic conservatism that had already been widespread and accepted in France and Europe as a whole between the wars.

In chapter 10, Philip Watts examines the period immediately after World War II as he reassesses two films the popular French filmmaker made right after the war. One, *La Bataille du rail*, released in 1946, was a documentary-style account of French resisters triumphing over the Germans, while *Les Maudits*, released a year later, depicted the flight of Fascists and collaborators as they headed for South America in a submarine. Watts compares the contrasting reception of each film (*La Bataille du rail* was a great success while *Les Maudits* had been excoriated). Through a cinematographic and historical analysis of these films, Watts provides key insights not only into how history is represented by Clément during France's fragile period right after the war, but also into the relationship between aesthetics and politics through the eyes of a nation desperately attempting to come to terms with its traumatic past.

In chapter 11, Elliot Neaman attempts to solve the puzzle of the high status of German writer and World War I hero Ernst Jünger in France. On the one hand, Jünger was part of the military occupying force that was responsible for the shooting of hostages and other coercive acts against the citizens of Paris from 1940–1944. On the other hand, Jünger's diaries from 1942 onward, published after the war, revealed a man who carried out his official duties even though he was deeply disturbed by the atrocities committed during the war in the name of the German people. This paper suggests that the postwar French reception of Jünger reflected the ambivalence of the French people themselves, faced with the dilemma of either accepting the Vichy regime's cozy relationship with the German occupiers, even if that meant tolerating the deportation of Jews and other crimes against humanity, or resisting the regime and risking imprisonment or death. Jünger's diaries provided a soothing justification for cultural collaboration between the two nations and an interpretation of the roots of fascism that blamed modernity and mass democracy, thus resonating with a long tradition of anti-Enlightenment, conservative thought in France.

In chapter 12, Nina Zimnik examines the myth of Romy Schneider through the complex Franco-German reception of her 1982 film, Jacques Ruffio's *La Passante du Sans-Souci*. As Zimnik delves into Schneider's own past, which was filled with abusive relationships linked to Germany's wartime crimes, and her present, a life as a German émigré in Paris, a city in which she felt absolutely free, Zimnik draws a more general parallel between the film and the actress. For Zimnik, the release of *La Passante*, as well as a conspicuously edited version of the film shown relatively recently on German television, point to the ways Schneider's life was mythologized in a manner that revitalized the romantic Francophile gaze of Germans wanting to escape the problems of postwar Germany. For Zimnik, the "mythology" centered around Romy Schneider's life and acceptance in France was similar to the passerby she plays as she seemingly embodies a certain "coming to terms with the past" that was reflected in a generation of women in the 1970s. Through the many symbolic "branches" of Ruffio's film, Zimnik traces the ways in which Romy Schneider's "star essence" could be seen as a focal point for German and French attempts to grapple with the Holocaust.

In chapter 13, Sande Cohen's paper discusses four conceptions of history that are often associated with Parisian radicalism of the 1930s and the German slide into nihilism of the same period: Simone Weil's critique of "uprootedness," Alexandre Kojève's installation of history at an end, Hannah Arendt's attempt to recover "taste" and judgment after Nazism, and Walter Benjamin's notion of history as messianism and social urgency. These writers are juxtaposed for having made conceptions of history that have helped bring the very concept of history to a state of paralysis: it is easier today to speak of "history-for" rather than "history-of." These writers invoked conceptions of history as a response to some of the terrors of the twentieth century; one of the implications is that today intellectuals and writers do not have the "resource" of historical theory at their disposal.

NOTES

1. Quoted by Wolfgang Leiner, "De la vision française de l'Allemagne" in *Marianne et Germania, 1789–1889: Un siècle de passions franco-allemandes* (Paris: Musée du Petit Palais, 1998), pp. 41–47.

2. For a full view of this exhibit see *Paris-Berlin* (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou/Gallimard, 1992). This book version of the exhibit gives detailed analyses and graphic imagery of the links and contrasts between France and Germany in art, architecture, graphic design, literature, industrial art, cinema, theater, and music. It is indeed one of the most comprehensive works on this subject.

3. Quoted by Anna Czarnocka in *Marianne et Germania, 1789–1889: Un siècle de passions franco-allemandes* (Paris: Musée du Petit Palais, 1998), p. 188.

4. Joseph Rovin and Georges Suffert, “A New Row between an Old Couple,” in *When the Wall came down: Reactions to German Unification*, eds. H. James and M. Stone (New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1992).

5. Compare <http://www.documentarciv.de/brd/elysee1963.html>.

6. *The Cinema of Wim Wenders* ed. Roger F. Cook and Gerd Gemünden (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), p. 164.

7. Staatspräsident Jacques Chirac, addressing the German parliament on June 27, 2000. For further information see <http://www.bundestag.de>.

8. For further information, see the *New York Times* articles, “France and Germany Flex Muscles on Charter” by Elaine Sciolino. *New York Times*, 10 December 2003.

PART II
PRE-ROMANTIC CURRENTS



Chapter 1



RE-CONSTRUCTING A “GENDERED” *BILDUNG*

Mme de Staël’s and Sophie von la Roche’s
Epistolary Fiction

Beatrice Guenther

About thirty years separate Sophie von la Roche’s *Die Geschichte des Fräuleins von Sternheim* (1771) and Mme de Staël’s *Delphine*, published in 1802. Despite both historical and geographical differences, however, several provocative intersections suggest themselves—which will, I hope, illuminate the larger question of this collection of essays: the French-German connection. The two novelists’ works waver between Enlightenment ideals and a sensibility associated with romanticism or its precursors in Germany: *Empfindsamkeit*¹ (sensibility) and *Sturm und Drang* (storm and stress). Both writers also transcended their national borders, finding translators to introduce their works to readers across the Rhein.² Sophie von la Roche is credited with being Germany’s first female novelist, besides being recognized in England, France, and Switzerland,³ whereas there is surely no need to explain Staël’s cultural prominence as author, literary and social critic, and flamboyant personality of late eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Europe. Of greatest interest to me, however, is that both writers actively concerned themselves with the education of women and both chose educated, female characters as the protagonists of their novels.

If we are to see how both Staël and la Roche helped to stretch and redefine assumptions about how women were to be educated, our first move must be to explore the status quo that they challenged through their epistolary fiction. In fact, although it would be a mistake to treat

the status quo as a homogenous and simple set of conventions, for the purpose of this chapter, it does make sense to use Jean-Jacques Rousseau's widely read *Émile, ou traité de l'éducation* (1762) as a foil to la Roche's *Sternheim* and de Staël's *Delphine*. This move seems particularly appropriate in light of the fact that Staël gently mocks her mentor's work: ". . . l'espèce de soin que Rousseau exige de l'instituteur pour suppléer à l'instruction . . . obligerait chaque homme à consacrer sa vie entière à l'éducation d'un autre . . ." [. . . the kind of care Rousseau demands from the teacher in order to provide instruction . . . would oblige each man to devote his entire life to the instruction of another].⁴

Book V of *Émile*,⁵ which develops at length the portrait of an ideal woman—Sophie, who is bred to become a model wife and mother—ends, not surprisingly, with the news that Sophie is expecting her first child. The text covers multiple subjects, such as Sophie's physical and moral attributes, the means of regulating Sophie's appetite, her relationship to clothing and cleanliness, her understanding of religion and approach to household chores—all this in order to lay out the characteristics of a proper or, rather, "safe" mate. Two premises govern the elaborate plan set forth by Rousseau: (1) that men and women are constituted differently ("*l'homme et la femme ne sont ni ne doivent être constitués de même, de caractère ni de tempérament*") [man and woman are not and should not be constituted in the same manner—neither in character nor in temperament (E, V, 440)]; and (2) in that men's relation to the opposite sex is governed by desire whereas women's relation to men is governed by desire and by need, women's education must reflect this difference in mutual dependence (E, V, 439). One of Rousseau's fundamental assumptions—and one that is perhaps most difficult to consider seriously at this point in time—reads:

Ainsi toute l'éducation des femmes doit être relative aux hommes. Leur plaire, leur être utiles, se faire aimer et honorer d'eux, les élever jeunes, les soigner grands, les conseiller, les consoler, leur rendre la vie agréable et douce: voilà les devoirs des femmes dans tous les temps . . . tous les préceptes [qui s'écarteraient de ce principe] . . . ne serviront de rien pour leur bonheur ni pour le nôtre (E, V, 440). [Thus, the whole education of women must be relative to men. Pleasing them, being useful to them, making themselves loved and honored by them, raising them when young, caring for them when grown, advising them, consoling them, making their lives

agreeable and sweet: these are the duties of women at all times. . . . All precepts [which would diverge from this principle] . . . would provide them with nothing—neither for their happiness nor for our own.]

According to Rousseau, the female mind knows nothing but should be like cultivated earth, ready to receive grain in order to yield some unidentified crop (E, V, 503). The aggressive rhetoric in this passage likens the mind's subjective capacities to a passive, to-be-worked-upon object and slyly suggests that the work of a woman's mind simply reproduces the unreflected, involuntary work of her womb.

The reasons behind this need to bind women's intelligence are not too difficult to identify. According to Rousseau, females' precocious linguistic ability (E, V, 447, 469) seems to give them an unfair advantage over boys and men; their ability to dissemble and deceive can only be outwitted by disregarding what their mouths say. In short, eyes, complexion, and respiration communicate more truly than a woman's tongue (E, V, 469). Rousseau also cautions men to avoid a woman who might prefer to "shine" rather than to please—who might, indeed, prefer the role of teacher over disciple to her mate, who might establish a literary court at home over which she can preside (E, V, 501). In order to contain this threat, Rousseau advises educators to withhold books from girls; their source of knowledge should consist ideally of conversations with their fathers and mothers, their own reflections, and observations resulting from their limited knowledge of the world (E, V, 484). The goal seems to be to create a woman able to think (*réfléchir*) and engage or entertain her husband without being knowledgeable.

Rousseau does diverge from his dogmatic pronouncements when he allows his Sophie to read one book, *Aventures de Télémaque* (1699)⁶—and this more ambiguous moment shall be the last example drawn from *Émile*, an example whose explicit purpose in the text is undercut by its narrative function. When Sophie first reads *Télémaque*, her imagination is fired by the protagonist, causing her to fall in love with an idealized, fictional being, her overexcited sensibility and imagination potentially causing her to succumb to her deathly obsession (E, V, 495). Rousseau "playfully" imagines Sophie wedded to that fatal obsession, which destroys her life and replaces the wedding altar with a tomb—before abandoning that plotline. When, however, Sophie meets Emile, her future husband, her knowledge of *Télémaque* actually seems

to prepare her ability to love her mate. In effect, through the narrative triangulation of desire, Sophie seems to have been socialized to fall in love with her “proper” mate (E, V, 510). Despite the explicit injunction against reading, then, Rousseau’s text seems to create an ambiguous space for reading books—even narratives or prose poems—within the program of female education.

The contrast of la Roche’s and de Staël’s ideal female education with Rousseau’s is of necessity rather complex, since one needs to take into account a double focus in both women’s works. The education enjoyed by the propertied Delphine or Sophie von Sternheim cannot be read as an ideal *Bildung* meant to be accessible to all women⁷—and this is especially true in *Sternheim*, where multiple plans to organize schools for destitute girls are all informed by very precise, utilitarian goals, meant ultimately to reconcile the young female students with their lower social station, their proper place.⁸

If one focuses on the education of the exceptional woman, however, it becomes clear that la Roche and de Staël emphatically reject Rousseau’s censorship of books—and indeed, an education meant to produce dependent submission. In *Sternheim*, Sophie’s critique of court life—its egotism, decadence, and disregard for humanitarian values—seems to stem in part from her familiarity with moral teachings she has gleaned from books.⁹ The books are confiscated by Sophie’s court-obsessed aunt, but this removal only serves to prove that Sophie’s autonomous, moral sense, resulting in large part from her readings, is no longer in need of “leaders and interpreters” in order to lay bare the shortcomings of courtly life. Most significantly, the work *Sternheim* is itself written to advance the development of virtue and wisdom among the mothers and daughters of the German nation—this according to the novel’s editor, Christoph Martin Wieland, who took it upon himself to publish la Roche’s work anonymously (St, 10).

In *Delphine*, on the other hand, the importance of reading is not dramatized explicitly. However, throughout de Staël’s own literary career, she writes an impassioned defence of the importance of reading. In “De l’étude” (“On Studying”), part of her 1796 study of *De l’influence des passions sur le bonheur des individus et des nations* [*On the Influence of Passions on the Happiness of Individuals and Nations*], she argues that an individual perfects him/herself by contemplating the ideas of others, such reflection ultimately permitting a greater detachment from the self,

clearing the way for a more global understanding of the universe.¹⁰ In her *Essai sur les fictions* [*Essay on Fictions*] (1795), Staël adds the insight that texts construct a community of like-minded sensitive souls able to offset the pull of a blunted, mediocre *Zeitgeist*. According to de Staël:

. . . sans cesse condamnées, [les âmes] se croiroient seules au monde, elles détesteroient bientôt leur propre nature qui les isole, si quelques ouvrages passionnés et mélancoliques ne leur faisoient pas trouver dans la solitude, quelques rayons du bonheur qui leur échappe au milieu du monde.¹¹
[. . . condemned incessantly, (these souls) would believe themselves alone in the world, they would soon detest their own nature which isolates them, that is, if several impassioned and melancholic works would not allow them to discover in their solitude some rays of happiness that escape them in the midst of people.]

Even as late as 1810, in her *De l'Allemagne* [*On Germany*], Staël recommends the study of foreign languages as the core of any educational program. Through translation, the student learns to recognize analogies and probabilities (*vraisemblances*)—an activity, she argues, that can truly develop the faculty of thought. She goes on to claim that the study of grammar gradually permits the student to grasp the metaphysics of thought: “l’exactitude du raisonnement et l’indépendance de la pensée” [accuracy in reasoning and independence of thought (DA, 142)].¹² We can conclude: where Rousseau saw in the transgressive act of reading the threat of pathological individuality but, paradoxically, also the potential socialization of girls, la Roche and, particularly, de Staël discover in the act of reading the emergence of an individual consciousness, able to judge and transcend inadequate social conventions. Through the contrast with Rousseau’s *Émile*—where the needs of the individual seem for the most part rather at odds with the needs of community—we should consider, then, how the two women writers reconcile the refining of an autonomous consciousness with the female subject’s integration within a larger social frame.

The next step in this study must be to juxtapose the characteristics of la Roche’s Sternheim and Staël’s Delphine, a step that should make clear how both novelists redefine—in contrast to Rousseau—what should constitute the goals of women’s education. De Staël and la Roche