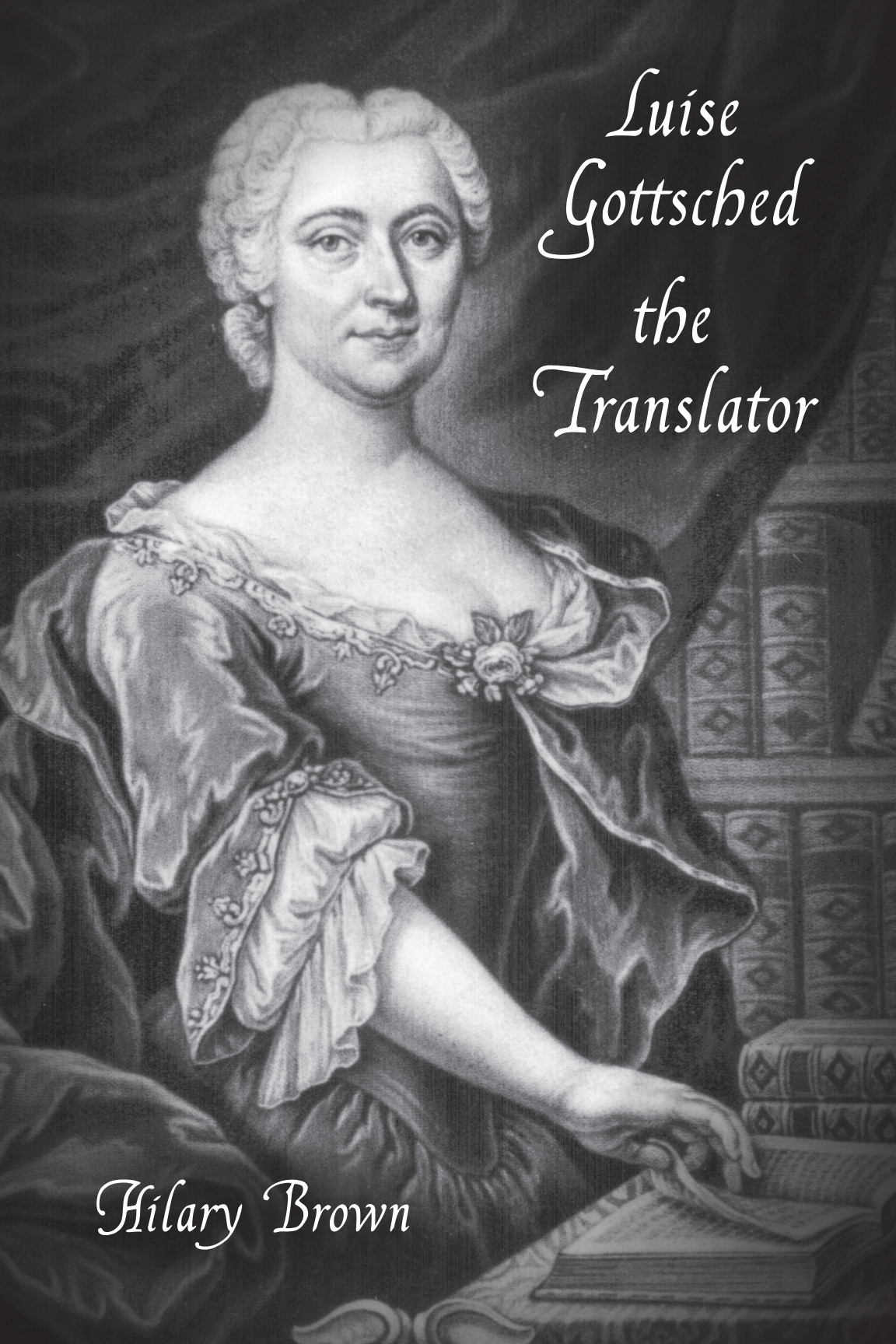

Luise Gottsched the Translator

Hilary Brown

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Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture

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CAMDEN HOUSE
Rochester, New York

This research project was supported by the Arts and
Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

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First published 2012
by Camden House

Camden House is an imprint of Boydell & Brewer Inc.
668 Mt. Hope Avenue, Rochester, NY 14620, USA
www.camden-house.com
and of Boydell & Brewer Limited
PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DF, UK
www.boydellandbrewer.com

ISBN-13: 978-1-57113-510-0
ISBN-10: 1-57113-510-3

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Brown, Hilary, 1976–
Luise Gottsched the translator / Hilary Brown.
p. cm. — (Studies in German literature, linguistics, and culture)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN-13: 978-1-57113-510-0 (hardcover : alk. paper)
ISBN-10: 1-57113-510-3 (hardcover : alk. paper)
1. Gottsched, Louise Adelgunde Victorie, 1713–1762—Knowledge—Language and languages. 2. Translators—Germany. 3. Translating and interpreting—Germany—History—18th century. 4. Books and reading—Germany—History—18th century. 5. Germany—Intellectual life—18th century. 6. English language—Translating into German. 7. Enlightenment—Germany. I. Title.
PT2253.G1Z57 2012
832'.5—dc23

2012008036

This publication is printed on acid-free paper.
Printed in the United States of America.

Contents

Acknowledgments vii

Introduction 1

1: Gottsched as Female Translator 9

2: Philosophy and Religion 48

3: Journalism 84

4: Drama 108

5: Poetry and Literary Prose 136

6: Science and Scholarship 159

7: Translation and "Original" Writing 184

Conclusion 201

Appendix: Luise Gottsched's Translations and Adaptations 207

Works Cited 215

Index 241

Acknowledgments

RESEARCH FOR THIS BOOK was made possible by grants from the Leverhulme Trust, the British Academy, and Swansea University's School of Arts Research Committee. I was greatly aided in the final stages of the project by an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Research Leave Award. I am grateful to Swansea University and the Modern Humanities Research Association for supporting the publication of the book.

I have benefited from the interest and support of various colleagues, among them Anne Baillot, Jeannine Blackwell, Helen Chambers, Jim Hardin, Nigel Harris, Kevin Hilliard, Susanne Kord, Alison Martin, Roger Paulin, Helmut Peitsch, Ritchie Robertson, and Brunhilde Wehinger. I would like to express my gratitude to my wonderful colleagues in Swansea, in particular Brigid Haines, Duncan Large, and the other Germanists, and to Ian Glen and the interlibrary loan staff at the University Library. I am grateful to Ryan Peterson and Jim Walker at Camden House for their help and kindness throughout the production process.

This book is dedicated to Christian Böhm, who has lived with the project for a number of years and whom I cannot thank enough.

Introduction

In October 1757 Frederick the Great of Prussia visited Leipzig, a city occupied by his troops throughout most of the Seven Years' War (1756–63), and held a series of private audiences with the famous professor Johann Christoph Gottsched. The very first thing the king wanted to know from the professor was whether his wife had really translated Pierre Bayle, presumably referring to Bayle's landmark *Dictionnaire historique et critique*. At the second audience the king bombarded him with more questions about Mrs. Gottsched: "Was hat seine Frau sonst geschrieben? Machet sie auch Verse? Kann sie auch Briefe schreiben? Schreibt sie auch französisch? Kann sie auch Latein? Kann sie auch griechisch? Ich möchte wohl was von ihren Sachen sehen. Bringe er mir etwas von allem mit." Johann Christoph obediently returned the next day with samples of his wife's work. He had with him two translations: *Der Lockenraub*, a version of Alexander Pope's mock-epic poem *The Rape of the Lock*, and *Zwo Schriften, Das Maaß der lebendigen Kräften betreffend*, some letters on the force of bodies in motion by the French scientists Emilie du Châtelet and Jean-Jacques Dortous de Mairan. Johann Christoph seems to have felt that his wife's translations would best represent her achievements and would most interest and impress the king.[1]

Today Luise Adelgunde Victorie Gottsched, née Kulmus (1713–62), is known primarily as a dramatist rather than a translator. She is recognized as one of Germany's most significant early women of letters, but critics usually focus on her work in comedy and tragedy. She published a handful of comedies, which are considered important for the development of the genre in Germany, and one tragedy, which is thought to be the first ever penned by a German woman. Her plays are much more readily available to the modern reader than her translations, many of which were never reprinted after the eighteenth century.[2] Yet Gottsched was first and foremost a translator. She devoted most of her life to translation and produced or contributed to over fifty volumes of translations in total, many of these several hundred pages long. She turned her hand chiefly to contemporary French and English works, rendering texts into German across an extraordinary range of genres and disciplines, from poetry and drama to philosophy, history, archaeology, and theoretical physics. She translated works by many well-known figures of the European Enlightenment, among them Addison, Pope, Newton, Molière, Voltaire, and Châtelet. In her lifetime Gottsched's fame as a translator spread throughout the

Engraving of Luise Gottsched. Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig, Portraitstichsammlung, Portraitstich Luise Gottsched.

German-speaking lands. Some years before Frederick the Great quizzed her husband she had herself been granted an audience in Vienna with Empress Maria Theresa, who was duly admiring and presented her with a magnificent diamond brooch.

In some ways it is surprising that this impressive body of translations has faded from view and that Gottsched's reputation now rests on her relatively modest output as a writer. This is not to say that her plays are not interesting and worthy of attention; recent feminist rereadings, for instance, have pointed out how Gottsched appears to have thematized gender issues in her plays and even subtly subverted the ideas of her dominant husband.[3] This focus on the "literary" part of her oeuvre, though, reflects more general trends in research on German women's writing of the period: there is a growing number of excellent studies in this field but they almost invariably look at women as novelists, dramatists, poets, letter writers, or even journal editors rather than translators. This is surely due to a tendency to regard translations as ephemeral, unoriginal, uncreative, or offering little scope for feminist analysis.

Indeed, for the most part Gottsched's translations have received short shrift in the secondary literature. Many critics lament the fact that she spent so long on what they regard as menial commissions from her husband and did not develop her own career as a dramatist. In Gerda Lerner's view this is one of the eighteenth century's "horror stories":

> [Johann Christoph Gottsched] utilized his wife's considerable talents and erudition to avail himself of the French and English philosophical and dramatic literature of his day. . . . Her own production of poems, some articles and plays was spread out over three decades and quite obviously had to fit into the rare periods when she was not occupied with her husband's work. . . . This woman, who might have been an important playwright . . . instead spent most of her active life doing literary drudgery work for her husband.[4]

The few who have discussed the translations tend to concentrate on literary texts. Most focus on the comedy *Die Pietisterey im Fischbein-Rocke*, an adaptation of *La femme docteur ou la théologie tombée en quenouille*, by the French Jesuit Guillaume-Hyacinthe Bougeant.[5] Even this is often treated as an "original" work, particularly by feminist critics who offer various interpretations of its portrayal of a group of (pseudo-) intellectual women.[6] Some pay no attention at all to the fact that it is based on a foreign source.[7] Studies that probe deeper into the translation process have been known to place source and target text alongside each other and judge the quality of Gottsched's efforts — Molière: "a failure"; Pope: "a triumph, with limitations."[8] The non-literary texts, which form the bulk of Gottsched's output, are virtually passed over. In her monograph *Luise Gottsched: A Reconsideration* (1973), for example, Veronica C.

Richel writes that "Frau Gottsched's renditions of scholarly material, such as philosophical and historical tracts, are executed with competence and require no further comment."[9]

But Gottsched's translations do require further comment. In the first place, translation is emerging from the margins of research to occupy an increasingly important place in literary and cultural studies. There is now a widely accepted view that translation should be understood as anything other than mechanical and ingenuous. This has come about in part following the "cultural turn" in translation studies in the 1990s, which placed new emphasis on translations as products of their cultural context and on the role of translation in shaping native literary and political traditions.[10] The translator is assigned new importance, and his or her work is no longer so readily classed as inferior to that of the original author. Critics emphasize the creativity of the translator and the potential for the translator to become visible in his or her creation. Translation is regarded as "a dangerous act, potentially subversive and always significant," and the translator as "a powerful agent for cultural change."[11]

The new five-volume *Oxford History of Literary Translation in English* (2005–) is testament to this shift in interest. It presents translations by Dryden, Smollett, and others as works of literature in their own right and seeks to demonstrate the profound impact translation has had on the English literary tradition. Similarly, cultural historians have begun to draw attention to translations of non-fictional texts and the crucial role they play in carrying information and ideas from one culture to another.[12] Moreover, there is a growing body of research that suggests that translation has had a special significance for women in past centuries.[13] Where women have not had the same opportunities to participate in cultural life as their male counterparts, translation at least has been perceived to be more socially acceptable than other intellectual pursuits. Critics have argued that women have been able to appropriate the seemingly modest role of translator to engage and publish in fields traditionally out of bounds to their sex and to voice surprisingly controversial ideas. Aphra Behn's choice of Fontenelle's *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* (1686), for example, which she translated in 1688, enabled her to apply herself to empirical sciences when this was a taboo subject for women.[14] Studies of women in various European countries from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century have given some indication of the numbers who undertook translation and have begun to map out their activities.[15]

This study provides the first detailed survey of Gottsched's activities as a translator. It offers an introduction to a little-known corpus of primary literature and places Gottsched's translations within the context of intellectual, literary, and cultural history. It is informed by the recent critics writing on translation who assume that rendering texts from one language into another can be an act loaded with cultural significance. It

gives due consideration to Gottsched's position as a female translator and seeks to tease out any links between her gender and her translation work. Overall it aims to open up new perspectives on Germany's most important eighteenth-century woman of letters.

The book is divided into seven broad chapters. Chapter 1 provides information on the circumstances in which Gottsched produced her translations, looking to see how her translation work might be related to her position as a woman in early eighteenth-century German society. Chapters 2 to 6 are devoted to the main subject areas with which Gottsched concerned herself: "Philosophy and Religion," "Journalism," "Drama," "Poetry and Literary Prose," and "Science and Scholarship." The translations are presented under these headings rather than chronologically because Gottsched returned to different genres and disciplines at various stages in her career. Inevitably there is some overlap between the chapters because the disciplines were not separated in the same way during the Enlightenment as they are today. Science had not yet established itself as distinct from philosophy, for example, and was also referred to at the time as "natural philosophy." Further, there are a number of texts eligible for inclusion in more than one chapter, Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* being a case in point since it is a work of scholarship that gives much column space to theological and philosophical topics (Bayle will be discussed in chapter 2). In each chapter I consider the circumstances that led to the translations, Gottsched's translation methods, and the reception of the works. In chapter 7 the discussion turns to the relationship between Gottsched's translations and her so-called original works in order to come to a better understanding of the place of translation in her oeuvre as a whole. The study concludes with an appendix that provides the most complete list to date of Gottsched's translations with titles of the source texts; it will hopefully prove to be a useful resource for future scholars.

By moving away from a focus on literature this monograph will cast Luise Gottsched and her work in a new light. It should complement recent research on the Gottscheds — undertaken in the main not by literary scholars but by those working in disciplines such as philosophy and cultural history — that makes a strong case for acknowledging the pair as central figures of the early German Enlightenment. A team at the Sächsische Akademie der Wissenschaften in Leipzig led by the historian Detlef Döring, for example, is currently preparing a twenty-five-volume historical-critical edition of the Gottscheds' letters that is revealing a wealth of new information on the range of their intellectual interests and correspondents.[16] Much of this new research has concentrated on Johann Christoph Gottsched; here it is Luise's turn to take center stage. This study of Luise Gottsched as a translator should help build a more complete picture of a major woman of letters and reassess her contribution to cultural life in eighteenth-century Germany.

Notes

[1] Johann Christoph wrote about his audiences with Frederick in letters to Countess Bentinck. See those from the end of October and beginning of November 1757 and from 10 November 1757 in Katherine Goodman, ed., *Adieu Divine Comtesse: Luise Gottsched, Charlotte Sophie Gräfin Bentinck und Johann Christoph Gottsched in ihren Briefen* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2009), 103–6 and 101–15. To differentiate between the pair in this study, Johann Christoph Gottsched will be referred to as "Johann Christoph" and Luise Gottsched as "Gottsched."

[2] There have been various editions of her plays in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The most recent is Luise Gottsched, *Die Hausfranzösinn, oder die Mammsell: Ein deutsches Lustspiel, in fünf Aufzügen*, ed. Nina Birkner (Hanover: Wehrhahn, 2009).

[3] See for example Susanne Kord, *Little Detours: The Letters and Plays of Luise Gottsched (1713–1762)* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2000), and Barbara Becker-Cantarino, "'Wenn ich mündig, und hoffentlich verständig genug seyn werde . . .': Geschlechterdiskurse in den Lustspielen der Gottschedin," in *Diskurse der Aufklärung: Luise Adelgunde Victorie und Johann Christoph Gottsched*, ed. Gabriele Ball, Helga Brandes, and Katherine R. Goodman (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), 89–106.

[4] Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-Seventy* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993), 224–25. See also Ruth H. Sanders, "'Ein kleiner Umweg': Das literarische Schaffen der Luise Gottsched," in *Die Frau von der Reformation zur Romantik: Die Situation der Frau vor dem Hintergrund der Literatur- und Sozialgeschichte*, ed. Barbara Becker-Cantarino (Bonn: Bouvier, 1980), 176: "Die deutsche Literatur kann als um vieles ärmer angesehen werden, da Luise einen großen Teil ihrer Zeit und ihres Talents in verhältnismäßig geistlosen Beschäftigungen unter der Aufsicht ihres Mannes verschwendete. . . . Was hätte sie hervorbringen können, wenn sie mehr Lustspiele geschrieben hätte?"

[5] A recent article on the Gottscheds' reception of French culture in general picks out *Die Pietisterey im Fischbein-Rocke* as its case study for Luise's work; see Helga Brandes, "Im Westen viel Neues: Die französische Kultur im Blickpunkt der beiden Gottscheds," in *Diskurse der Aufklärung: Luise Adelgunde Victorie und Johann Christoph Gottsched*, ed. Gabriele Ball, Helga Brandes, and Katherine R. Goodman (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), 191–212. Another version of this paper appeared as Helga Brandes, "Johann Christoph und Luise Adelgunde Victorie Gottsched und der deutsch-französische Aufklärungsdiskurs," in *Ostpreussen — Westpreussen — Danzig: Eine historische Literaturlandschaft*, ed. Jens Stüben (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2007), 237–57.

[6] See for example Nancy Kaiser, "In Our Own Words: Dramatizing History in L. A. V. Gottsched's *Pietisterey im Fischbein-Rocke*," in *Thalia's Daughters: German Women Dramatists from the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, ed. Susan L. Cocalis and Ferrel Rose (Tübingen: Franke, 1996), 5–15; Kord, *Little Detours*, chapters 5 and 6; and Paola Bozzi, "'Heroine of Scholarship' and Woman Writer: L. A. V. Kulmus Gottsched's *Die Pietisterey im Fischbein-Rocke oder die doctormäßige Frau*," in *Harmony in Discord: German Women Writers of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century*, ed. Laura Martin (Bern: Peter Lang, 2001), 69–93.

[7] See for example Richard Critchfield, "Beyond Luise Gottsched's *Die Pietisterey im Fischbein-Rocke oder die doctormäßige Frau*," *Jahrbuch für Internationale Germanistik* 12, no. 2 (1985): 112–20. Kaiser recognizes that the play is largely a word-for-word rendition of Bougeant, but this does not seem to be important for her reading and she never quotes from the French source text; see Kaiser, "In Our Own Words."

[8] See the subheadings in the chapter on "Frau Gottsched as Translator" in Veronica C. Richel, *Luise Gottsched: A Reconsideration* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1973). See also A. Vulliod, *La Femme docteur: Mme Gottsched et son modèle français Bougeant ou jansénisme et piétisme* (Lyon: Rey; Paris: Fontemoing, 1912), 80 ff.

[9] Richel, *Luise Gottsched*, 57.

[10] See for example Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, eds., *Translation, History and Culture* (London: Cassell, 1990).

[11] Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 9. See also Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2008).

[12] See Peter Burke and R. Po-Chia Hsia, eds., *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007).

[13] For a general discussion of these issues see Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission* (London: Routledge, 1996), esp. chapter 2.

[14] See Mirella Agorni, "The Voice of the 'Translatress': From Aphra Behn to Elizabeth Carter," *Yearbook of English Studies* 28 (1998): 181–95.

[15] For other research on women in Britain see Margaret Patterson Hannay, ed., *Silent but for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators and Writers of Religious Works* (Kent, OH: Kent State UP, 1985); Tina Krontiris, *Oppositional Voices: Women as Writers and Translators of Literature in the English Renaissance* (London: Routledge, 1992); Susanne Stark, *"Behind Inverted Commas": Translation and Anglo-German Cultural Relations in the Nineteenth Century* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1999). For France see Jean-Philippe Beaulieu, ed., *D'une écriture à l'autre: Les femmes et la traduction sous l'ancien régime* (Ottawa: Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 2004); and Marie-Pascale Pieretti, "Women Writers and Translation in Eighteenth-Century France," *French Review* 75, no. 3 (2002): 474–88. For Russia see Wendy Rosslyn, *Feats of Agreeable Usefulness: Translations by Russian Women 1763–1825* (Fichtenwalde: Göpfert, 2000). For more general collections see Jean Delisle, ed., *Portraits de traductrices* (Ottawa: Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 2002); Gillian E. Dow, ed., *Translators, Interpreters, Mediators: Women Writers, 1700–1900*, European Connections 25 (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007); and Brunhilde Wehinger and Hilary Brown, eds., *Übersetzungskultur im 18. Jahrhundert: Übersetzerinnen in Deutschland, Frankreich und der Schweiz* (Hanover: Wehrhahn, 2008).

[16] Johann Christoph Gottsched, *Briefwechsel: Unter Einschluß des Briefwechsels von Luise Adelgunde Victorie Gottsched*, ed. Detlef Döring et al., 25 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007–). At the time of writing the first four volumes have appeared, covering the years 1722–30 (2007), 1730–33 (2008), 1734–35 (2009), and

1736–37 (2010). New publications connected to this project include Manfred Rudersdorf, ed., *Johann Christoph Gottsched in seiner Zeit: Neue Beiträge zu Leben, Werk und Wirkung* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007). Gottsched scholars have long benefited from a critical edition of Johann Christoph's works, but it is not comprehensive and most of the volumes contain works of literature or literary theory; see Johann Christoph Gottsched, *Ausgewählte Werke*, ed. Joachim Birke, 12 vols. in 25 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1968–95).

1: Gottsched as Female Translator

Why did Germany's most famous eighteenth-century woman writer devote most of her life to translation? Was she coerced into it by a domineering husband and forced to sacrifice her literary ambitions to his agenda as many critics would have us believe? Would she have seen translation as a second-rate literary activity more suited to her as a woman than other forms of writing? Here we will attempt to reconstruct the circumstances in which Gottsched produced her translations.

Studies of Gottsched's sisters in other countries have usually emphasized a link between translation and the gender of the translator. Through the ages translation has been figured as something feminine. The language and metaphors used to discuss it are often highly gendered: translation is spoken about in terms of fidelity, faithfulness, inferiority, and betrayal. Like women themselves, translations have been viewed as untrustworthy, inferior, flawed. In the words of the eminent sixteenth-century translator John Florio, they are always "defective," hence "reputed females."[1] Critics have pointed to a correlation between the lowly status of translation (as compared to original writing) and the lowly status of women in society (as compared to men), meaning that translation has been one of the rare forms of literary activity deemed acceptable for the "fair sex" in the past. Women have been able to work on and even publish translations without appearing to trespass on the territory of the (male) author. Susanne Stark, for example, has done a considerable amount of research on female translators in nineteenth-century England such as Harriet Martineau, Martineau's cousin Sarah Austin, and Marian Evans. Austin, who concentrated on German historical works and travel writing, seems to have favored translation as a suitably modest activity for a woman rather than original writing. Her granddaughter wrote of her in a memoir: "From prudence she confined herself to translating, though she had all the faculties that go to produce original work. But, as she often told me, she feared by publishing anything of her own to expose herself to criticism, and she always considered it improper in a woman to provoke a possible polemic, which generally ends in a manner disagreeable to herself."[2] Elsewhere, Austin herself wrote about her "calling as a translator" and how she had secured herself "behind the welcome defence of inverted commas."[3]

This does not mean, however, that women merely accepted their role as humble mediators of someone else's words. Critics have demonstrated how women sometimes appropriated the modest mask of translator to

surprising ends. Women are shown engaging with or manipulating other people's texts as a way of asserting their own agency, be it through their choice of authors, their methods of presentation (dedications, prefaces, notes), or their interventions into the source material. Austin, for example, wrote learned prefaces to the works she translated and thus displayed her self-assurance in the role of mediator. In the preface to her translation of a work by the German historian Leopold Ranke she hid behind inverted commas — literally! — to quote the great Goethe, but assert nevertheless her conviction of the importance of her task: "'Every translator,' says Goethe, 'ought to regard himself as a broker in the great intellectual traffic of the world, and to consider it his business to promote the barter of the produce of the mind. For whatever people may say of the inadequacy of translation, it is and must ever be one of the most important and dignified occupations in the great commerce of the human race.'"[4] Sarah Austin became renowned for her reflections on translation theory and was clearly well-versed in both English and German writing on translation. In the end she advocated a role for the translator that was far from humble but instead autonomous, creative, and even manipulative.[5]

What is more, translation appears to have offered some women a way into the world of publishing and thus helped them launch their careers as writers. On the one hand, venturing into print first as translators gave them an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the workings of the book trade and the confidence to pursue bolder projects; on the other, the act of translation itself helped to hone their literary skills and could provide inspiration for their own writing. Marian Evans is a striking example. Before publishing her first novel, *Adam Bede*, in 1859 under the pseudonym that would make her famous (George Eliot), she spent over a decade rendering Spinoza and contemporary German theology into English. She appears to have had an ambivalent attitude toward translation work, believing it in general to be of lower status than creative writing: "Though a good translator is infinitely below the man who produces *good* original works, he is infinitely above the man who produces *feeble* original works."[6] It is telling that she did not feel obliged to conceal her gender on the front cover of her translation of Feuerbach's *Das Wesen des Christentums*, the only work that ever appeared under her real name. And yet her time as a translator appears to have been of fundamental importance to her as a form of literary apprenticeship: it taught her how to negotiate with London publishers and opened her eyes to foreign authors whose scholarly or ethical ideas would later be echoed in her novels. It has been convincingly argued that Marian Evans's translations "fulfilled a crucial and indispensable purpose in her literary development" and that "without them she would have been unlikely to develop into George Eliot, the novelist."[7]

Now, will we be able to interpret Luise Gottsched's translation activity in a similar way, that is to say as a suitably feminine and modest

occupation that may nevertheless have given her opportunities to make her voice heard "behind the welcome defence of inverted commas"? Is this why she devoted most of her career to translation? To answer this question we will need to take into account the role of translation in early eighteenth-century Germany, to consider the activities of women translators in general at the time, and to look more closely at Gottsched's own particular circumstances. We will see that the situation in nineteenth-century Britain, when Sarah Austin and Marian Evans were doing their translations, was in fact very different from the situation in early eighteenth-century Germany.

Translation during the German Enlightenment

When we consider the place of translation during the German Enlightenment, there is little to suggest that Gottsched would have believed her translation work to be in any way menial or unimportant. Throughout Europe the Enlightenment was characterized by a new receptiveness to foreign languages and cultures, and nowhere was this truer than in Germany. In the early eighteenth century, Germany was opening itself up to influences from abroad as part of a far-reaching process of modernization and reorientation, and when Luise moved to Saxony in 1735 as the young bride of the eminent Professor Gottsched, she would find herself at the heart of these developments in avant-garde, cosmopolitan Leipzig.

Germany in the early eighteenth century was a very different place from established nation-states such as France and Britain. The German territories were held together by the boundary lines of the sprawling Holy Roman Empire: it was a fragmented country composed of numerous self-ruling principalities without the political and cultural center that would have been provided by a capital city. The Thirty Years' War (1618–48) had been fought on German soil with devastating effects on the population, infrastructure, and economy. There were rigid class structures in place, and the petty rulers tended to foster a climate of servitude. While France and Britain were growing in prosperity and influence, Germany was on a path to becoming a political, economic, and cultural backwater. Unsurprisingly, Paris and London would come to be at the center of the revolutionary intellectual movement of the Enlightenment.

Germany in this period lacked a coherent national identity. There was no sense of this patchwork of territories sharing a common language and culture. For centuries Latin had been the language primarily used in politics, the Church, and the universities. In 1650, for example, over 70 percent of the titles listed in the Leipzig Book Fair catalogues were in Latin;[8] it was quite usual even for works of "high" literature to be composed in Latin at the time. Then in the second half of the seventeenth century, French became fashionable in some circles. The ruling classes became

gripped by Francophilia, awed by the power and prestige of the Bourbon monarchs and French culture of the golden age. German princes modeled their courts on Versailles; they copied French fashions, read French literature, watched Italian opera, and nearly always spoke French rather than German. (Even Frederick the Great, the philosopher-king of Prussia, regarded his mother tongue as the language of barbarians, "created for addressing animals,"[9] and surrounded himself at Sanssouci with men of letters enticed away from France, such as Voltaire.) The influence of French was not limited to the nobility: among society at large, those who could afford to educate their children in French did so. German itself, not well-regarded, had been invaded by loanwords: fashionable expressions from the Romance languages, Latin terminology imported by the clergy and scholars, French military vocabulary that had caught on during the Thirty Years' War. At the turn of the eighteenth century there was still no standard form of written German, which was used by only a handful of professionals; French and Latin were the preferred languages of public life. The great German philosopher and mathematician Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz (1646–1716), for one, published most of his works in French or Latin.

But there were some who perceived a need to regenerate German culture. The early years of the seventeenth century saw attempts to establish German as a literary language and to promote the work of German writers. Translation was viewed as key to this process. In 1624 we find Martin Opitz in his seminal *Buch von der Deutschen Poeterey* arguing that translation was the first necessary step in raising the standard of the vernacular. Taking his lead from Roman writers such as Pliny, he advocated working on translations as a way of improving one's poetic style. Authors should practice translation before embarking on their own compositions: "Eine guete art der vbung aber ist / das wir vns zueweilen auß den Griechischen vnd Lateinischen Poeten etwas zue vbersetzen vornemen: dadurch denn die eigenschafft vnd glantz der wörter / die menge der figuren / und das vermögen auch dergleichen zue erfinden zue wege gebracht wird."[10] Opitz believed that the work of classical and modern European writers should be used as models for German literature, and alongside his theoretical writing he published many examples of how this could function in practice. Through his translations and adaptations he helped establish many different genres in German-language literature, from prose (his translation of Barclay's *Argenis* provided a model for the courtly novel) through drama (his translations of Seneca and Sophocles provided examples of verse tragedy) to opera libretto (his text for the first German-language opera was a translation of Rinuccini's *Dafne*).

The baroque period also saw the foundation of *Sprachgesellschaften*, which flourished above all in the middle decades of the seventeenth century. The *Sprachgesellschaften* were modeled on foreign institutions such

as the Accademia della Crusca in Florence. They aimed to improve the moral well-being of the nation by cultivating the German language and German literature. They set out to purify the language, to rid it of loanwords, and to develop its literary qualities. Here, too, translation was seen as an important part of refining the language and as a useful exercise for writers.[11] Some societies, such as the Deutschgesinnte Genossenschaft (founded 1643), insisted that their members be active as either writers or translators. Most literary men during the baroque period belonged to at least one society, and many became enthusiastic and prolific translators, such as Georg Philipp Harsdörffer, Sigmund von Birken, and Johann Rist. They translated a range of texts from classical and modern languages, including much contemporary French and Italian literature and belles lettres. Indeed, within the societies translations were valued almost as highly as original works. Johann Wilhelm von Stubenberg, for example, a member of the Fruchtbringende Gesellschaft, achieved fame almost solely from his translations, which included the courtly novels *Il Calloandro*, by Giovanni Ambrogio Marini, the *Eromena* trilogy by Giovanni Francesco Biondi, and Madeleine de Scudéry's *Clélie*.[12] As Harsdörffer, co-founder of the Pegnesische Blumenorden, wrote in the preface to Stubenberg's *Eromena* (1650): "Es ist fast so löblich eine Sache wol übersetzen / als selbsten aus eigenem Gehirne etwas zu Papier bringen."[13]

These ideas continued into the early decades of the eighteenth century; there were renewed efforts to modernize the country and breathe new life into German culture. It was felt in some quarters that there was too much dependence on foreign languages, which were spoken only by the elite. The whole Enlightenment movement, which used French as its lingua franca, was not having an impact on a wide public in Germany. There were calls for Germans to take pride in their own language and identity and to strive toward establishing a unified national language and culture. It was hoped that Germany would ultimately become a weighty presence in its own right on the European stage. More intensely than ever before, Germans were looking abroad to more established nations for inspiration and rendering texts into their mother tongue across a huge range of disciplines, from politics, economics, and the natural sciences to journalism and literature.

The initiator of this new wave of reforms was Johann Christoph Gottsched, a pastor's son from Königsberg, in East Prussia.[14] Johann Christoph's eyes had been opened early to cultural life outside the borders of the German states. His formative years were spent at Königsberg University, where he heard lectures on classical and European literature by Johann Valentin Pietsch and was exposed to the work of foreign philosophers such as John Locke. In 1724 he moved to Leipzig to escape conscription and took up a post as tutor in the house of Johann Burkhard Mencke, where he was drawn into an intellectual milieu that

was cosmopolitan through and through. Leipzig was home to the leading German university and the center of the German book trade. Johann Christoph's employer was a professor at the university and owned the largest private library in the town. Mencke was also editor-in-chief of the first learned periodical in the German states, the *Acta Eruditorum*, which had been set up in 1682 by Mencke's father and was modeled on foreign publications such as the French *Journal des savans* (1665–1782), the English *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society in London* (1665–), and the Italian *Giornale de Letterati* (1668–81). Like these it was international in scope and featured pieces by and about a range of European scientists and philosophers. Mencke had a network of correspondents all over Germany and abroad.

Keenly aware of what was happening in the European republic of letters, Johann Christoph became convinced of the need for an all-pervasive cultural revival in Germany. He was the heir of Opitz (he acknowledged as much), but his plans were even more wide-ranging and ambitious. He did not direct his reforms just at the elite, but wanted them to have an effect at all levels of society, and he did not limit his ideas to literature, but brought his reforming zeal to religion, education, and politics. At the heart of his mission was a desire to spread the ideas of the European Enlightenment among large swathes of the population — not in Latin or French but in German — and to bring the country into line with other European nations by establishing a single, modern form of the language and promoting German culture at all turns. He channeled his energies into a huge range of projects, publishing tome after tome, working together with actors, corresponding with churchmen, schoolmasters, and politicians, and trying to establish a German Academy to rival the Académie Française. A professor at Leipzig University from 1730 on, he was one of most influential cultural figures of the time.

Translation was a crucial part of these reforms. Johann Christoph and his circle composed some of the earliest reflections on translation theory in Germany.[15] Johann Christoph posited that translators had a crucial role to play in making the "best" foreign works available to a wide readership, that is to say the works that best chimed with the Enlightenment concept of *prodesse et delectare*.[16] He made no distinction between works of different genres and argued that the common man would benefit from translations in all fields of knowledge. In his preface to an edition of the writings of the Greek writer Lucian of Samosata, for example, Johann Christoph took issue with those who maintained that only religious works needed to be translated, since scholars could read everything else in the original language anyway:

> Denn wie? Soll der unstudirte Adel, Bürger und Landwirth, auch von der Weltbeschreibung, und Geschichte; auch vom Hofleben

> und Soldatenstande; auch vom Handel und der Wirthschaft; auch von der Baukunst, und Schiffarth; auch vom Ackerbaue und Forstwesen; auch von der Jagd und Fischerey; auch von Bergwerken und dem Mühlenbaue; auch von Künsten und Handwerken nichts in deutschen Büchern finden können? Ich sage noch zu wenig. Soll man auch vom Rechnen und Feldmessen, von der Mechanik, von der Sternwissenschaft, von der Zeitkunde und Kriegsbaukunst nichts anders, als aus lateinischen Büchern wissen? So muß man entweder alle Chronicken, und Haushaltungsbücher, alle Geographien und Reisebeschreibungen, u.s.w. ja endlich alle Rechenbücher und Calender aus der deutschen Sprache verbannen. Kurz, man muß uns wiederum in den barbarischen Zustand versetzen, daraus Kaiser Carl der Große seine Deutschen mit so vieler Mühe zu reißen gesucht. Man muß diejenigen Zeiten der Finsterniß wiederum einführen, darinn das fürchterliche Münchslatein allein geherrschet, alle Layen aber so dumm erhalten worden, daß sie weder schreiben noch lesen gekonnt, und sich ihren, obwohl selbst blinden Führern, blindlings überlassen müssen.[17]

Echoing classical notions and Opitz a century earlier, the act of translation itself was seen as something that would help bring about cultural renewal. Johann Christoph declared translation to be "die nützlichste Uebung in der Schreibarbeit."[18] Budding authors should choose foreign texts as models and work on translations in order to improve their own style. They should aim to turn out texts that sounded elegant in German — not necessarily exact reproductions of the original but texts that, while retaining the essential character of the original, would be acceptable to German readers. In general, the sense or message should take precedence over the form. The translator was thus permitted to take some liberties with the source text, indeed even to correct and improve it with the target audience in mind. It was a task requiring great skill and would stand the translator in good stead when he came to composing his own works. Once again, the idea was in circulation that translation was of fundamental importance as a training ground for a new generation of German writers.

Johann Christoph himself worked tirelessly on translations. He returned frequently to classical authors and prided himself on having helped to reintroduce their works in Germany. He translated numerous modern texts too, chiefly from French but also from English and Italian.[19] He often chose writings on philosophy, religion, or empirical science in order to popularize these among his countrymen. He translated Fontenelle's *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes*, aimed at introducing the layperson to astronomy, and Leibniz's *Essais de Théodicée sur la Bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l'homme et l'origine du mal*, a landmark philosophical treatise on good and evil. His own works are peppered with translated passages or reflections on the translation process, showing how deeply he

was indebted to the work of foreign authors. His famous rule book on poetics, *Versuch einer critischen Dichtkunst vor die Deutschen* (1729), for instance, began with a parallel-text version of Horace's *Ars poetica* instead of an introduction. He never tried to disguise the influence that foreign writers had on his thinking. In the preface to the second edition of the *Critische Dichtkunst* (1737) he listed those who had helped to shape his theories of literature:

> Ich trage also . . . keine Bedenken, zu gestehen, daß ich alle meine kritischen Regeln und Beurtheilungen, alter und neuer Gedichte, nicht aus meinem Gehirne ersonnen; sondern von den größten Meistern und Kennern der Dichtkunst erlernet habe. *Aristoteles, Horaz, Longin, Scaliger, Boileau, Bossü, Dacier, Perrault, Bouhours, Fenelon, St. Evremond, Fontenelle, la Motte, Corneille, Racine, Des Callieres* und *Füretiere*; ja endlich noch *Shaftesbury, Addison, Steele, Castelvetro, Murault* und *Voltaire*, diese alle, sage ich, waren diejenigen Kunstrichter, die mich unterwiesen, und mich einigermaßen fähig gemacht hatten, ein solches Werk zu unternehmen.[20]

Even one of his few "original" literary works, his verse tragedy *Sterbender Cato* (1732), was a reworking of Addison's *Cato* (1713) and Deschamps's *Caton d'Utique* (1715).

Johann Chrisoph also encouraged others to apply themselves to translations. In the late 1720s, he created a Deutsche Gesellschaft in Leipzig whose members met every week in order to work together on translations among other things.[21] Many of the resulting translations appeared in the hefty volumes of *Der Deutschen Gesellschaft in Leipzig Eigene Schriften und Übersetzungen, in gebundener und ungebundener Schreibart* (1730–39), primarily works of classical literature and philosophy (Ovid, Horace, Seneca, Cicero) and contemporary French literary theory (Fontenelle, Saint-Evremond, Temple). One of the journals Johann Christoph founded, *Neuer Büchersaal der schönen Wissenschaften und freyen Künste* (1745–50), targeted at academics and non-academics alike, contained reviews of foreign texts that often concluded by suggesting that the texts should be published in German.[22] He edited and wrote prefaces to a large number of translations produced by others, from Virgil and Cicero to Swift and Helvétius. He was also involved in a number of large-scale, collaborative translation projects. He contributed to the first complete German edition of Addison and Steele's moral weekly the *Spectator*, for instance, and oversaw the first German edition of Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, a four-volume reference work for the general reader providing details of key figures and concepts in political life, religion, and philosophy from antiquity to the present day.

Johann Christoph built up a network of associates throughout the German states and beyond, and a number engaged in translation projects at

his instigation. In 1751, for instance, a Prussian lieutenant-colonel, Baron Heinrich Eberhard von Spilcker, contacted Johann Christoph from Potsdam to volunteer his services as a translator after reading about the Russian writer Antioch Kantemir in Johann Christoph's journal *Das Neueste aus der anmuthigen Gelehrsamkeit*. During the next year Johann Christoph managed to encourage him to put together a complete German translation of Kantemir's satires, one of the earliest attempts to introduce the German reading public to the new secular tradition in Russian literature. Another of Johann Christoph's correspondents, Heinrich Engelhard Poley, who was the court librarian in Weißenfels, was persuaded by the professor to undertake the first German translation of Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.[23]

There was also an ever-increasing number of translators working independently of the Leipzig professor. There were pockets of translation activity, for example, in Hamburg and Zurich. Hamburg had long-established trade links with Britain and was a center for the early reception of English literature in Germany. It was the base of Ludwig Friedrich Vischer, the translator of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719); his *Leben und die gantz ungemeine Begebenheiten des Robinson Crusoe* (1720) was one of the first English works of fiction to achieve widespread popularity in Germany.[24] Hamburg was also the home of the poet Barthold Hinrich Brockes (1680–1747), who translated Pope and Thomson. In Zurich the scholars Johann Jacob Bodmer and Johann Jacob Breitinger were absorbed in English letters too. Bodmer published a translation of *Paradise Lost* in 1732, and this led the pair to develop new ideas about literature and to argue — against the rationalism of the Gottsched camp — for the importance of the imagination. They also began to develop new ideas about translation methods, with Breitinger advocating more faithfulness in form as well as content and a shift from the Gottschedian reader-oriented to a more author-oriented approach. The Leipzig and Swiss schools would quarrel with each other, but the result would be the opening up of new terrain for German translators: "[Bodmers] Verdienst war, den Umriß eines neuen Kanons anzugeben, den auszufüllen Übersetzeraufgabe für hundert Jahre und mehr wurde . . . [und] zu dem neben Vergil, Ariost, Tasso nun auch Milton, Dante, Homer, Shakespeare, Cervantes, das Nibelungenlied und Wolfram von Eschenbach gehörten."[25]

The Leipzig Book Fair catalogues testified to the growing number of translations in circulation.[26] Up until the turn of the eighteenth century the catalogues listed at most one or two translated titles per year, but in the early decades of the eighteenth century they featured an increasing number of foreign works, mostly from the French, and spanning a broad range of subjects. The Book Fair catalogue for Easter 1710 lists seven titles translated from the French, including works on architecture, geography, morals, and politics; the catalogue for 1720 has four from French (philosophy,