

ARTICLE

Paine's *Rights of man* in Germany

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Abstract

This article traces the immediate reception of Paine's *Rights of man* (Part One) in Germany. It especially focuses on the publication history of the complete translation published in Berlin in 1792, featuring the translator Meta Forkel, her collaborator Georg Forster, and the publisher Christian Friedrich Voß. This reconstruction affords insight into the process of translation as a collaborative enterprise and clearly demonstrates the translator's agency. When the publisher proved reluctant, publication was dependent on Forkel's initiative, which highlights the factor of contingency and the willingness to take risks. By detailing the modifications a book might undergo even in the case of a very faithful translation, this article also exemplifies strategies employed in the dissemination of radical works and the adaptation to new cultural and political contexts. Finally, the evidence presented here shows that Paine's work was considered central by German contemporaries and should be placed alongside the reception of Burke's in future scholarship on the Revolution debate in Germany.

Thomas Paine's *Rights of man* was an extraordinary success. Two months after its publication in March 1791, 'some 50,000 copies' of Part One 'were said to be in circulation'.¹ A French translation appeared in May, and Dutch as well as German editions soon followed.² Still, Thomas Munck has claimed that Paine

¹ Mark Philp, 'Paine, Thomas (1737–1809)', *Oxford dictionary of national biography*, XLII, p. 405. But William St Clair, *The reading nation in the romantic period* (Cambridge, 2004), has warned that 'the extent of its actual circulation within the reading nation appears to have been much exaggerated both at the time and by subsequent historians' (p. 257) and fixed the print run in the 1790s at 'more than 20,000' (p. 624). For their feedback on this article, I am grateful to my three anonymous reviewers.

² *Droits de l'homme; en réponse à l'attaque de M. Burke sur la Révolution française* [sic]. Par Thomas Paine, traduit de l'Anglois, par F[rançois] S[oulès]. Avec des notes et une nouvelle préface de l'auteur (Paris: Buisson, 1791); *Rechten van den Mensch, of De Aanval van den Heer Burke of de Fransche*

'had little impact in the German-speaking world, and virtually no impact at all elsewhere in continental Europe' and even speaks of the 'failure of his *Rights of man*, in this respect'.³ In contrast, Hans Arnold has stated that '*Rights of man* brought him to the centre of political controversy and caused him to become famous and notorious' in Germany.⁴ This article reopens the investigation and traces the immediate reception of Paine's *Rights of man* (Part One) in Germany, focusing especially on the publication history of the complete translation published in Berlin in 1792. Its reconstruction, including some practical aspects, affords insight into the process of translation as a collaborative enterprise and that of negotiation between translators and publishers, clearly showing the translator's agency in this case, where the publisher proved reluctant. By detailing the modifications a book might undergo even in the case of a very faithful translation, it also exemplifies strategies employed in the dissemination of radical works.

I

While scholarship on the Revolution debate in Germany has neglected the reception of Paine's work, it has paid considerable attention to Edmund Burke's.⁵ Yet both are necessarily intertwined and the so-called German Burkeans clearly recognized *Rights of man* as the most sensational reply to Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. In 1793, the latter's translator Friedrich Gentz declared the following about *Rights of man*:

Omwenteling Beantwoord Door Thomas Paine (uit het Engelsch vertaald) (Rotterdam and Amsterdam: Meyer and Brongers, 1791); *Die Rechte des Menschen. Eine Antwort auf Herrn Burke's Angriff gegen die französische Revolution. Von Thomas Paine. Aus dem Englischen übersetzt. Nebst der von Ludwig XVI. angenommenen Konstitutions-Acte* (Berlin: Voß, 1792). In addition, a Swedish translation from 1792 is mentioned by Thomas Munck, 'The troubled reception of Thomas Paine in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Scandinavia', in Simon P. Newman and Peter S. Onuf, eds., *Paine and Jefferson in the age of revolutions* (Charlottesville, VA, and London, 2013), pp. 161–82. John Barrow, *Travels in China* (Philadelphia, PA: M'Laughlin, 1805), claimed that 'the mischievous doctrines of Tom Paine, expounded in his "Rights of man", were translated into various languages, and industriously attempted to be propagated among the Eastern nations, by means of French emissaries', but gleefully reported that 'the golden opinions of Tom Paine could not be transfused into the Chinese language' (p. 266n). Allegedly, the Chinese were 'contented in having no voice in the government' – 'it has never occurred to them that they have any rights' (p. 266).

³ Munck, 'The troubled reception', p. 161.

⁴ Hans Arnold, 'Die Aufnahme von Thomas Paines Schriften in Deutschland', *PMLA*, 74 (1959), pp. 365–86, at p. 369. All translations are my own, all emphases original.

⁵ The absence of scholarship on Paine was already lamented by Horst Dippel, 'Thomas Paine und die französische Revolution', *Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung*, 3 (1976), pp. 237–41. But see now Helmut Peitsch, *Georg Forster: Deutsche 'Anteilnahme' an der europäischen Expansion über die Welt* (Berlin, 2017), ch. 10, who argues that the north German Paine reception should be understood as a debate over free speech. On the German Burke reception, see especially the recent explicit contributions by Jonathan Allen Green, 'Friedrich Gentz's translation of Burke's *Reflections*', *Historical Journal*, 57 (2014), pp. 639–59; idem, 'Edmund Burke's German readers at the end of Enlightenment, 1790–1815' (Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, 2017); and László Kontler, 'Varieties of Old Regime Europe: thoughts and details on the reception of Burke's *Reflections* in Germany', in Martin Fitzpatrick and Peter Jones, eds., *The reception of Edmund Burke in Europe* (London, 2017), pp. 313–29.

This work is the most famous of all that have been written on the French Revolution in England. More than any other, it has spread the principles of this revolution, the liking for it, and the wish to emulate it in every part of Great Britain, and in most countries of Europe, where it has been read and worshipped, among all classes of people.⁶

Gentz, who was considered an 'impartial' observer by the German translator of James Mackintosh's *Vindiciae Gallicae*,⁷ found this 'tremendous success' to be quite simply 'inexplicable'.⁸

Two years earlier, in 1791, both August Wilhelm Rehberg and Ernst Brandes had singled out Paine's reply from the 'great number of rebuttals' of Burke and reviewed it in conjunction with the latter's writings, squeezing it in their discussions of *Reflections, A letter from Mr. Burke to a member of the National Assembly* and *An appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*.⁹ They had nothing good to say about it. Rehberg found it to be an incoherent 'rhapsody' driven by hatred for the monarchical constitution and called it a 'miserable booklet'.¹⁰ Brandes agreed and saw nothing original in Paine's writing, which was 'teeming with the most ordinary commonplaces of the ordinary class of democratic writers'.¹¹ Both hastened to assert that Paine did not speak for the majority of the British public but a small and unimportant 'French party' and that his notions were utterly uninteresting to a German audience.¹² They certainly did not want to see *Rights of man* translated.

The first German translations from Paine's *Rights of man* – based on selected excerpts from a French edition published in Hamburg – were not a product of sympathy either.¹³ Rather, they were used to combat and discredit republican ideas in the lengthy annotations. A sympathizer of Paine's (the Kiel-based theologian and publicist Carl Friedrich Cramer) described the 1791 Leipzig edition as 'mutilated'.¹⁴ While it appeared anonymously, the Leipzig publisher Johann Gottfried Dyk soon owned his editorship and translation

⁶ *Betrachtungen über die französische Revolution. Nach dem Englischen des Herrn Burke neu-bearbeitet mit einer Einleitung, Anmerkungen, politischen Abhandlungen, und einem critischen Verzeichnis der in England über diese Revolution erschienenen Schriften von Friedrich Gentz*, II (Berlin: Vieweg, 1793), p. 328.

⁷ *Vertheidigung der französischen Revolution und ihrer englischen Bewunderer in England, gegen die Anschuldigen des Herrn Burke; nebst abgerissenen Bemerkungen über das letzte Werk des Herrn von Calonne, von Jakob Mackintosh. Nach der zweyten Auflage aus dem Englischen übersetzt, trans. Friedrich Leopold Brunn* (Hamburg: Hoffmann, 1793), p. III.

⁸ *Betrachtungen über die französische Revolution*, II, p. 328.

⁹ *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, 243, 8 Sept. 1791, pp. 513–20, at p. 513.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 513, 515 [elende Broschüre].

¹¹ *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen*, no. 190, 26 Nov. 1791, pp. 1897–911, at p. 1908.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 1907.

¹³ *Kurzer Abriß der Entstehung der französischen Revolution. Von Thomas Payne, einem Americaner. Mit Anmerkungen des Uebersetzers* (Leipzig: Dyk, 1791); *Droits de l'homme ou Réponse à l'ouvrage de Monsieur Burke contre la Révolution françoise, par Thomas Paine* (Hamburg: Herold, 1791).

¹⁴ Carl Friedrich Cramer, *Menschliches Leben. Siebentes Stück. Gerechtigkeit und Gleichheit! Neeseggab oder Geschichte meiner Reisen nach den caraischen Inseln. Viertes Stück* (Altona and Leipzig: Kaven, 1791), p. 432: 'verstümmelt'.

publicly.¹⁵ In his preface, he reports rumours of plans for a full translation of *Rights of man* and makes clear that he does not consider that a good idea. 'Mister Payne is a political zealot [Schwärmer]', after all, 'who either has not understood Mister Burke, or deliberately did not want to understand him'.¹⁶ In his view, *Reflections* was 'a book, for which one cannot thank Mister Burke enough, for it withholds nations from folly and disaster'.¹⁷ Dyk's preface alone sufficiently shows to what extent he was interested in Paine's original views: he avows fear that they would 'confuse the heads of people who have not thought about politico-philosophical matters'.¹⁸ As a reviewer in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* pointedly observed, Paine's name served mainly as a 'figurehead' or 'vehicle' to make public Dyk's own anti-revolutionary views; 'the last note, prompted by Paine's judgement on the heredity of succession to the throne, is longer than the entire Painean outline'.¹⁹ Indeed, half of the booklet is a text by Dyk, arguing for hereditary monarchy. In the last sentence, he declares his intentions: to help 'save my dear compatriots from the French political swindle'.²⁰ The footnotes which provide a running commentary on the translations from *Rights of man* serve the same purpose, contradicting and correcting Paine's statements according to Dyk's judgement.

It is telling that the person who reviewed Dyk's edition for the *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen* lauded his effort and simultaneously considered Paine's 'notorious work' unworthy of translation into German.²¹ They saw Dyk's enterprise as a bid to forestall the full translation that had been announced and applauded him for taking the wind out of its sails. Rather than anything else, Dyk's *Abriß* must thus be seen as an effort to contain the spread of Paine's ideas among the German reading public, or a campaign of discreditation. That strategy did not serve its purpose, however. When Dyk admitted his authorship in 1792, he also expressed regret that *Rights of man* had now appeared in its entirety at Voß's Berlin publishing house.²² His adversary Cramer, on the other hand, was full of praise for the complete German translation of *Rights of man* and proclaimed it to be the feat of 'a man who is a man'.²³ In fact, the translator was a woman.

¹⁵ *Litterarische Denkwürdigkeiten oder Nachrichten von neuen Büchern und kleinen Schriften vorzüglich der Chursächsischen Universitäten, Schulen und Lande*, II (Leipzig: Dyk, 1792), Beylagen, p. 102. This outing followed Cramer's misattribution of *Kurzer Abriß* to Georg Schaz in Cramer, *Menschliches Leben*, p. 432.

¹⁶ *Kurzer Abriß*, p. 4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

¹⁹ *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, 197, 22 June 1797, p. 758.

²⁰ *Kurzer Abriß*, p. 132.

²¹ *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen*, no. 8, 14 Jan. 1792, p. 79.

²² *Litterarische Denkwürdigkeiten*, II, Beylagen, p. 102.

²³ Cramer, *Menschliches Leben*, p. 431n.

II

The idea to translate Paine's *Rights of man* from English and in its entirety initially came from Georg Forster, the naturalist made famous by his participation in Cook's second voyage and the publication of *A voyage round the world* in 1777. Forster already translated in his youth and later came to make publishing and translating his business, capitalizing on the fact that he was fluent in German, French, and English.²⁴ Forster's family had moved to England in 1766, when his father became a professor in the dissenting academy at Warrington, alongside Joseph Priestley and others.²⁵ Forster had thus spent his teenage years in Britain and referred to it as 'the island, where I received my Education'.²⁶ That he should have grown up in a radical or dissenting milieu is certainly significant for his later political views.

In 1788, Forster and his wife Therese (née Heyne; they had married in 1785) moved to Mainz, where Forster was from then on employed as librarian to the archbishop and elector. He was also an extremely busy translator, not least because he was always short of money, and worked closely with the Berlin publisher Christian Friedrich Voß. Rather than making all translations himself, Forster often commissioned and sometimes collaborated on translations, occasionally revised and annotated them, and added a preface for sales purposes, since he was a celebrity and an authority on all matters relating to travel and natural history.²⁷ The notion of his running a 'translation factory' (that was already used contemporaneously, albeit pejoratively)²⁸ in Mainz has become firmly established.²⁹ Prominently involved in these proceedings were Forster's wife Therese, their mutual friend (and Therese's later husband) Ludwig Ferdinand Huber, and Margaretha Dorothea (Meta) Forkel. Despite the notion of the translation workshop, Forster's own role as an agent of cultural transfer has been

²⁴ See Johann Georg Forster's *Briefwechsel. Nebst einigen Nachrichten von seinem Leben*, I, ed. Th[erese] H[uber], née H[eyne] (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1829), p. 13; and Michael Maurer, *Aufklärung und Anglophilie in Deutschland* (Göttingen, 1987), p. 373.

²⁵ See Forster's *Briefwechsel*, I, p. 12, and Maurer, *Aufklärung und Anglophilie*, p. 371.

²⁶ *Georg Forsters Werke*, XIV, ed. B. Leuschner (Berlin, 1978), p. 336: Forster to Joseph Banks, 22 May 1785.

²⁷ Todd Kontje, *Georg Forster. German cosmopolitan* (University Park, PA, 2022), describes Forster as 'the equivalent of an astronaut' (p. 1). More generally, see Antoine Lilti, *The invention of celebrity, 1750–1950*, trans. Lynn Jeffress (Cambridge, 2017).

²⁸ As when Meta Forkel was described as a 'day labourer in...Forster's English translation factory' in a vicious play: *Die Mainzer Klubbisten zu Königstein. Ein tragi-komisches Schauspiel in einem Aufzuge* (n.p., 1793), p. 2.

²⁹ See Geneviève Roche, "'Völlig nach Fabrikenart". Handwerk und Kunst der Übersetzung bei Georg Forster', in *Weltbürger – Europäer – Deutscher – Franke. Georg Forster zum 200. Todestag*, ed. Rolf Reichardt and G. Roche (Mainz, 1994), pp. 101–19. The quotation in the title is from Forster himself (letter to Spener, 2 Nov. 1786); Roche first applied the contemporary satire of large translation enterprises in Friedrich Nicolai's *Sebalduß Nothanker* (1773–6) to Forster. For instance, Ludwig Uhlig, *Georg Forster. Lebensabenteuer eines gelehrten Weltbürgers (1754–1794)* (Göttingen, 2004), p. 271, also speaks of Forster's literary workshop ('Die Mainzer Schriftstellerwerkstatt').

recognized, but not the fact that this was essentially a collaborative undertaking.³⁰

Forster was well placed to spot new titles for translation, given his connections. Throughout his life, he retained a large international network and supposedly close connections with British publishers like Joseph Johnson. Alessa Johns asserts that Forster 'had lively, ongoing connections with British booksellers' and even 'maintained contact with the British radical circle surrounding the publisher Joseph Johnson', but she does not detail the evidence.³¹ What transpires from Forster's correspondence, on the other hand, is that from 1790 (after Forster's last visit to London, accompanied by Alexander von Humboldt), the German-born bookseller, printer, and librarian Charles Heydinger acted as his literary agent in London.³² In a letter from 1802, Therese (formerly Forster, now) Huber explains that the key to profitable (novel) translation was having a connection in England to procure originals as soon as they left the press, so one could be quicker in announcing new books than potential competitors.³³ (According to Christine Haug, public announcement by a bookseller would secure the privilege of translation for a year.)³⁴ It seems that Heydinger played precisely this role. Based in London, he would inform Forster of new publications early on (for which service he was paid) and sometimes even managed to get hold of books that were still being printed, thus giving Forster a head start.

The supply chain would then run to Mainz via Göttingen, which was well connected to Britain on account of the personal union that made the elector of Hanover king of England. Apparently, Heydinger sent books via a courier that went from London to Hanover every three months.³⁵ Forster's key contact in Göttingen and a crucial member of his supply chain was his friend and father-in-law Christian Gottlob Heyne. As director of the university library,

³⁰ See, for instance, Thomas Grosser, 'Die Bedeutung Georg Forsters als Kulturvermittler im Zeitalter der französischen Revolution', in *Georg Forster in interdisziplinärer Perspektive: Beiträge des Internationalen Georg Forster-Symposiums in Kassel, 1. bis 4. April 1993*, ed. Claus-Volker Klenke (Berlin, 1994), pp. 211–54, and *Georg-Forster-Studien, XIX: Georg Forster als interkultureller Autor*, ed. Stefan Greif and Michael Ewert (Kassel, 2014).

³¹ Alessa Johns, *Bluestocking feminism and British-German cultural transfer* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2014), pp. 55, 50.

³² Heydinger is identified as Forster's 'correspondent in London' in *Georg Forsters Werk*, XVI, ed. Brigitte Leuschner and Siegfried Scheibe (Berlin, 1980), p. 203: Forster to Heyne, 14 Nov. 1790. On Heydinger, see Graham Jefcoate, 'Mr Cavendish's librarian: Charles Heydinger and the library of Henry Cavendish, 1783–1801', *Library & Information History*, 32 (2016), pp. 58–71, and Graham Jefcoate, *Deutsche Drucker und Buchhändler in London, 1680–1811* (Berlin, 2015), ch. 11.

³³ *Therese Huber: Briefe*, I, ed. Magdalene Heuser (Tübingen, 1999), p. 374: Huber to C. Carus, 24 Sept. 1802.

³⁴ Christine Haug, "'Diese Arbeit unterhält mich, ohne mich zu ermüden'. Georg Forsters Übersetzungsmanufaktur in Mainz in den 1790er Jahren', *Georg-Forster-Studien*, 13 (2008), pp. 99–128, at p. 118.

³⁵ Forster mentions that Heydinger sent Burke's *Reflections* in this way ('mit dem Hannöverschen Quartals Courier') in *Forsters Werke*, XVI, p. 204: Forster to Voß, 14 Nov. 1790. On the so-called 'Quartalskuriere', see Benjamin Bühring, *Die Deutsche Kanzlei in London. Kommunikation und Verwaltung in der Personalunion Großbritannien – Kurhannover 1714–1760* (Göttingen, 2021), pp. 117–21.

Heyne ordered vast quantities of English books. He also ran the periodical *Göttingische Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen*, to which Forster contributed many reviews (he was indeed an extraordinarily busy reviewer, totalling 130 contributions for various periodicals). Forster also contributed histories of English literature for the years 1790 and 1791 to Johann Wilhelm von Archenholz's *Annalen der Brittischen Geschichte*.³⁶ He thus had a very firm grip on new publications and the literary market generally, and was uniquely placed to make recommendations.

In November 1790, only two weeks after Burke's *Reflections* had appeared, Forster suggested to his publisher Voß that he translate the book and announce so in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* right away.³⁷ This was even before he had received the book from his London correspondent but, as Forster explained to Voß, time was of the essence and a book by Burke could reasonably be expected to be worthwhile.³⁸ Once he had actually read it, he was of a different mind. In December 1790, he wrote Heyne: 'Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* are such miserable drivel that I do not dare to translate it.'³⁹ He found himself confirmed by Heyne's judgement and told his publisher the same.⁴⁰

When Forster read Paine's *Rights of man*, instead, he was delighted. In his contribution to Archenholz's *Annalen der Brittischen Geschichte des Jahrs 1791*, he would praise its 'bold republican language...which had hardly been known in England since Milton's and Cromwell's times'.⁴¹ (He was less impressed by Paine himself when they met in Paris in 1793, whom he found to be highly moody, egoistic, and 'very ugly'.)⁴² He first suggested the translation of this 'admirable work by Thomas Paine the American, the famous author of *Common sense*' to Voß in a letter from early June 1791 and added: 'It is however so democratic that I cannot translate it, due to my circumstances. Madame Forkel translates it and I want to revise it for her.'⁴³

Meta Forkel had already collaborated with Forster on the translation of travel accounts such as Pierre Raymond de Brisson's *Histoire du naufrage et de la captivité* and Hester Lynch Piozzi's *Observations and reflections made in the course of a journey through France, Italy, and Germany* (as his correspondence shows).⁴⁴

³⁶ *Annalen der Brittischen Geschichte des Jahrs 1790. Als eine Fortsetzung des Werks England und Italien von J. W. v. Archenholz*, V (Hamburg: Hoffmann, 1791), and *Annalen der Brittischen Geschichte des Jahrs 1791. Als eine Fortsetzung des Werks England und Italien von J. W. v. Archenholz*, VII (Hamburg: Hoffmann, 1793).

³⁷ The announcement is printed in *Forsters Werke*, XVI, p. 206.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 204: Forster to Voß, 14 Nov. 1790.

³⁹ Johann Georg Forster's *Briefwechsel. Nebst einigen Nachrichten von seinem Leben*, II, ed. Th[erese] H[uber], née H[eyne] (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1829), pp. 48–9: Forster to Heyne, 9 Dec. 1790.

⁴⁰ *Forsters Werke*, XVI, p. 214: Forster to Voß, 11 Dec. 1790; *ibid.*, p. 215: Forster to Heyne, 14 Dec. 1790; *ibid.*, p. 216: Forster to Voß, 18 Dec. 1790.

⁴¹ *Annalen der Brittischen Geschichte des Jahrs 1791*, p. 81.

⁴² *Forsters Werke*, XVI, p. 460: G. Forster to Th. Forster, 17 May 1793.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 299: Forster to Voß, 4 June 1791.

⁴⁴ *Geschichte des Schiffbruchs und der Gefangenschaft des Herrn von Brisson aus dem Französischen mit einer Vorrede von Georg Forster* (Frankfurt: Andreä, 1790), and *Bemerkungen auf der Reise durch Frankreich, Italien und Deutschland von Esther Lynch Piozzi. Aus dem Englischen mit einer Vorrede und*

Like Forster, Forkel was an extremely busy translator. Reportedly able to translate from French and English to German simultaneously, she produced a large number of translations in a very short span of time; at her most active, in the decade following 1789, she translated about thirty different books. Many consisted of several volumes and half of them appeared in the years 1791–3 alone. Apart from travel accounts, Forkel's repertoire included several histories and many novels, including such bestsellers as the works of Ann Radcliffe and James Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*.

In addition to her language skills, Forkel's political sympathies made her a likely accomplice in the dissemination of Paine's work. She was part of the republican circle around Forster and her brother Georg Wedekind, who would lead the Jacobins at Mainz together.⁴⁵ If a vicious slur downplayed Forkel's agency by calling her a day labourer in Forster's translation factory, it still ranked her explicitly among the 'clubbists'.⁴⁶ It is telling that she was among those imprisoned for several months at Königstein Fortress after the forceful dissolution of the Mainz Republic in 1793.⁴⁷ Further striking evidence for the contemporary perception of Forkel's political commitments is provided by a letter from Forster's sister Antonie, written after meeting Forkel (now called Liebeskind) in 1794. There, she says that the Liebeskinds had to leave Riga (where they had just moved for an advocate's job) because they were suspected of Jacobinism and thus expelled.⁴⁸ Forkel's political enthusiasm is also remembered by Therese Huber (formerly Forster) decades later, in 1819, when she mentions that the latest letters from Forkel (now called Liebeskind) were vividly reminiscent of the year '92, meaning the days and months leading up to the Mainz Republic: Huber found Forkel invariably attached to ideas of opposition.⁴⁹

Anmerkungen von Georg Forster (2 vols., Frankfurt and Mainz: Varrentrapp and Wenner, 1790). Forster mentions that he revised Forkel's translation of both works in letters to Heyne: *Georg Forsters Werke*, XV, ed. Horst Fiedler (Berlin, 1981), p. 345; Forster to Heyne, 6 Oct. 1789, and *Forsters Werke*, XVI, p. 26; Forster to Heyne, 4 Mar. 1790. On Forkel's agenda as a translator, see also Elias Buchetmann, 'Mœurs des femmes et critique sociale entre Grande-Bretagne et Allemagne: Forkel, Carlisle et Wollstonecraft', *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, 411 (2023), pp. 47–72.

⁴⁵ For a recent account of Wedekind's politics, see Amir Minsky, 'The men who stare at cathedrals: aesthetic education, moral sentiment, and the German critique of French revolutionary violence, 1793–1794', *Central European History*, 53 (2020), pp. 23–47. On Forster, see Frederick C. Beiser, *Enlightenment, revolution, and romanticism: the genesis of modern German political thought, 1790–1800* (Cambridge, MA, and London, 1992), pp. 154–88, and Jürgen Goldstein, *Georg Forster: voyager, naturalist, revolutionary*, trans. Anne Janusch (Chicago, IL, and London, 2019).

⁴⁶ *Die Mainzer Klubbisten zu Königstein*, p. 2.

⁴⁷ The episode at Königstein Fortress is recounted in detail in a travelogue by Forkel's later husband: [Johann Heinrich Liebeskind], *Rückerinnerungen von einer Reise durch einen Theil von Teutschland, Preußen, Kurland und Liefland, während des Aufenthalts der Franzosen in Mainz und der Unruhen in Polen* (Strasburg, 1795).

⁴⁸ *Georg Forsters Werke*, XVII, ed. Klaus-Georg Popp (Berlin, 1989), p. 798: A. Forster to S. Reimarus, 30 Mar. 1794. Compare [Liebeskind], *Rückerinnerungen*, pp. 336ff.

⁴⁹ Huber to Wilhelmine Luise von Wedekind, 25 Aug. 1819, Abt. O, 1/30, Hessisches Staatsarchiv Darmstadt. Scraps of two letters from Forkel to Huber in 1819 have been printed in Ludwig Geiger, 'Bayerische Briefe', *Forschungen zur Geschichte Bayerns*, 9 (1901), pp. 12–68, at pp. 49–50.

Forkel's interest in the dissemination of radical ideas can also be detected in other parts of her translation work. Significantly, she translated Volney's *Ruins* (again in collaboration with Forster, who contributed a preface) and several so-called English Jacobin novels in the 1790s, namely Elizabeth Inchbald's *A simple story*, Charlotte Smith's *Desmond*, and William Godwin's *Things as they are; or, the adventures of Caleb Williams*.⁵⁰ Forkel's 1793 preface to *Desmond* suggests that she did see translation as a means to spread radical ideas without having to take full responsibility for them.⁵¹ She explicitly invokes impunity when she writes – in a male voice – that there is no reason to fear that readers will mistake the title character's view of the French Revolution for her own personal political creed.⁵² Yet her translation of *Desmond* effectively acquainted readers of German with another critical contribution to the British Revolution Controversy and an ardent defence of the revolutionary cause. It was certainly no coincidence that Forkel repeatedly translated radical works, and her engagement on behalf of Paine's *Rights of man*, with its incisive defence of popular sovereignty, effectively proves her determination to disseminate radical ideas.

Forster may well have known that, in Britain, *Rights of man* had been 'printed by Joseph Johnson for publication on 21 February 1791, then withdrawn for fear of prosecution. J. S. Jordan stepped in and published it on 16 March.'⁵³ According to Richard Whatmore, Paine's ideas 'were so extreme in a British context that the radical printer Joseph Johnson refused to publish them, recalling the first copies when he realised their content'.⁵⁴ The Berlin publisher Voß seems to have had doubts as well and his reply to Forster's suggestion that he publish *Rights of man* in translation was negative. But that was not the end of it. When Forster made 'a whining face', Forkel took the initiative

⁵⁰ *Die Ruinen. Aus dem Französischen des Herrn von Volney* (Berlin: Vieweg, 1792); *Eine einfache Geschichte. Aus dem Englischen der Mistriß Inchbald von M. Forkel* (4 vols., Leipzig: Heinsius, 1792); *Desmond: eine Geschichte in Briefen. Aus dem Englischen der Mrs Charlotte Smith* (3 vols., Hamburg: Hoffmann, 1793). I have not been able to locate a copy of Forkel's German translation of Godwin's *Things as they are; or, the adventures of Caleb Williams* (London: Crosby, 1794), but a contemporary reference work confirms that it was published at Riga in 1795; Carl Wilhelm Otto August von Schindel, *Die deutschen Schriftstellerinnen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, I (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1823), p. 316. On Volney's *Ruins*, see for instance Minchul Kim, 'Volney and the French Revolution', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 79 (2018), pp. 221–42. On the English Jacobin novel, see the classic accounts by Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the war of ideas* (Oxford, 1975), and Gary Kelly, *The English Jacobin novel, 1780–1805* (Oxford, 1976), as well as Deidre Shauna Lynch, 'Philosophical fictions and "Jacobin" novels in the 1790s', in J. A. Downie, ed., *The Oxford handbook of the eighteenth-century novel* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 440–55.

⁵¹ That the genre of translation provided such a chance is also suggested by Hilary Brown, 'The reception of the Bluestockings by eighteenth-century German women writers', *Women in German Yearbook*, 18 (2002), pp. 111–32, at p. 120, and Elystan Griffiths, 'Cosmopolitanism, nationalism and women's education: the European dimension of Sophie von La Roche's journal *Pomona für Teutschlands Töchter* (1783–84)', *Oxford German Studies*, 42 (2013), pp. 139–57, at pp. 143 and 151.

⁵² *Desmond: eine Geschichte in Briefen*, I, p. XIV.

⁵³ Philp, 'Paine', p. 405.

⁵⁴ Richard Whatmore, '"A gigantic manliness": Paine's republicanism in the 1790s', in Brian Young, Richard Whatmore, and Stefan Collini, eds., *Economy, polity, and society: British intellectual history, 1750–1950* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 135–57, at p. 146.

and pressed Voß to accept her translation of Paine's revolutionary book.⁵⁵ While acknowledging the unusualness of her direct correspondence and risking to appear 'unfeminine', she wrote (rather tongue-in-cheek and flatteringly) to convince Voß to publish despite possible dangers.⁵⁶ She insisted (as did Forster) that Forster knew nothing of the contents of her letter, which was enclosed with his.⁵⁷ If he saw the book, Forkel told Voß, he would not be able to resist printing it, 'even if it was charged with high treason, and of course it is high treason to tear down the consecrated idols of many centuries'.⁵⁸ When apparently no reply was forthcoming, she submitted the manuscript to the printer anyway.⁵⁹

Voß protested no more after that. By early September 1791, the translation of *Rights of man* was completed and Forster still sent Voß a portrait of Paine he had cut from another publication. (But it seems Voß found one of higher quality, for he did not use the engraving by William Sharp after George Romney that is contained in the new edition of Paine's *Letter to the earl of Shelburne*, which Forster mentions in his letter.)⁶⁰ By the end of the month, Forkel sent Voß the translated French Constitution that was appended (as discussed below) and a preface.⁶¹ The latter was dated to the 1791 Leipzig book fair at Michaelmas, whose catalogue listed the work too,⁶² and Cramer discusses it in an entry headed 16 December 1791.⁶³ Although dated to 1792, *Die Rechte des Menschen* may thus still have appeared in 1791.

In the end, Forkel left it to Voß to determine her remuneration, insisting that this work carried a value that was 'higher than the mercantile value' and that she found it rewarding to see it published.⁶⁴ She even declared that she had 'translated no other work with such great pleasure'.⁶⁵ What she did explicitly ask for were several copies of her 'German Paine' (and of the Constitution, should it also be published separately).⁶⁶ Even Forster's latest biographer, who mentions Forkel nowhere but in connection with the Paine translation, considers it 'a testament to Forkel's commitment that Voss was brought around'.⁶⁷ She did more to get *Rights of man* printed in German

⁵⁵ *Forsters Werke*, XVI, p. 538: Forkel to Voß, 28 June 1791 [Jammergesicht].

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 309: Forster to Voß, 2 July 1791.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 538: Forkel to Voß, 28 June 1791.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 554: Forkel to Voß, 21 Aug. 1791; *ibid.*, p. 335: Forster to Voß, 22 Aug. 1791.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 344: Forster to Voß, 9 Sept. 1791. Thomas Paine, *A letter to the earl of Shelburne. A new edition* (London: Ridgway, 1791).

⁶¹ *Forsters Werke*, XVI, p. 564: Forkel to Voß, 27 Sept. 1791. She had sent the first part of the translated Constitution three days earlier already: *ibid.*, p. 564: Forkel to Voß, 24 Sept. 1791.

⁶² *Allgemeines Verzeichniß der Bücher, welche in der Frankfurter und Leipziger Michaelismesse des 1791 Jahres entweder ganz neu gedruckt, oder sonst verbessert, wieder aufgelegt worden sind, auch inskünftige noch herauskommen sollen* (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1791), p. 251.

⁶³ Cramer, *Menschliches Leben*, p. 431 and n. If the dates given in this book are reliable, then it was itself postdated; the last entry is dated 4 Mar. 1792, although the title page says 1791.

⁶⁴ *Forsters Werke*, XVI, p. 564: Forkel to Voß, 27 Sept. 1791.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 564: Forkel to Voß, 10 Sept. 1791.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 554: Forkel to Voß, 21 Aug. 1791.

⁶⁷ Goldstein, *Georg Forster*, p. 156.

than the man whom Engels called the German Paine (i.e. Forster).⁶⁸ And instead of being discouraged by the difficult process, or the fact that the Saxon authorities seized her translation of Volney's *Ruins* from the press at Leipzig, she set to work on the second volume of Paine's *Rights of man* when it appeared.⁶⁹

III

The German edition provides more than just a translation of Paine's text. *Die Rechte des Menschen* was an eclectic product that involved an original German preface, a faithful translation of Paine's English text supplemented with a few footnotes providing cultural contextualization, and a translation of the French Constitution of September 1791 that accounted for a quarter of the book. It was an ambitious project and a collaborative enterprise, although Forkel did the lion's share of the work. While initial reviewers thought the author of the preface and the translator were the same person, we know that they were not.⁷⁰ Most of the anonymous preface was contributed by Forster and, indeed, considered '[e]xtremely Forster-like' by Forkel, who saw in her friend a 'formidable leader for politics and democracy'.⁷¹ Since Paine's revolutionary text with its famous attack on Edmund Burke and incisive defence of popular sovereignty is well known and Forkel's translation was very faithful, the focus here is on the additions to the German version.

The preface vindicates the calling of each rational being to contemplate for themselves the meaning of truth, freedom, and right. This is buttressed by the invocation of Paul's advice to the Thessalonians to '[p]rove all things; hold fast that which is good'.⁷² Overall, the first paragraphs advocate the 'way of reason' as leading to progress.⁷³ It is only natural that an event like the Revolution in France should occupy everybody's thoughts and demand their contemplation. Here, the preface briefly introduces Burke's position, mentioning his speech in parliament (meaning Burke's speech on the army estimates given in the House of Commons on 9 February 1790) and that eleven editions of his book had sold out. (Adding up the numbers given in William St Clair's *The reading nation*, that amounted to 19,500 copies.)⁷⁴ 'Yet many voices rose against him', among them

⁶⁸ *The Northern Star, and National Trades' Journal*, Vol. VIII, No. 417 (8 Nov. 1845), 'The state of Germany. Letter II': 'Why not glorify GEORGE FORSTER, the German THOMAS PAINE, who supported the French Revolution in Paris up to the last, in opposition to all his countrymen, and died on the scaffold?' (in fact, he died of illness). The letter is included (in German translation) as Engels's work in *Karl Marx - Friedrich Engels, Werke*, II (Berlin, 1980), p. 577.

⁶⁹ Forster mentions this in a letter to Voß, 15 May 1792: *Forsters Werke*, XVII, p. 117.

⁷⁰ Cramer, *Menschliches Leben*, p. 431n; *Neue allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*, 8, no. 1 (Kiel: Bohn, 1794), p. 120. Soon after Forster's death, contemporaries knew too, with reference works identifying Forkel as translator and Forster as author of the preface, e.g. Johann Georg Meusel, *Fünften Nachtrags erste Abtheilung zu der vierten Ausgabe des gelehrten Teutschlandes* (Lemgo: Meyer, 1795), p. 394.

⁷¹ *Forsters Werke*, XVI, pp. 563-4: Forkel to Voß, 24 Sept. 1791.

⁷² Cited according to the King James Version here.

⁷³ *Die Rechte des Menschen*, p. IV.

⁷⁴ St Clair, *The reading nation*, p. 583.

Thomas Paine, who is introduced to the German reading public as having been 'born in a different part of the world', meaning America (which is incorrect), and 'the champion of his fatherland's equality'.⁷⁵ His *Rights of man* saw seven editions too and '[a]ll England was divided between him and Burke'.⁷⁶ The British, famously enjoying freedom, saw no danger in listening to both sides. Then comes the rhetorical coup, asking whether Germans were 'less happy, less free', 'more restless and insecure', or should equally hear both sides and learn from this clash of opinions.⁷⁷ Burke's *Reflections* had already appeared in German translation (not in Gentz's famous edition, but from Stahel in Vienna) and now the reading public was offered its counterpart, the translation of Paine's *Rights of man*. Their perusal would make every rational reader 'a wiser citizen, a better human, a richer being'.⁷⁸ Reason itself demanded the right to do so, rendering 'the most unlimited freedom of the press an inviolable duty for all rulers'.⁷⁹

Presenting Paine as an American was an important part of a hedging strategy. Forster adduced this circumstance to explain and relativize Paine's irreverence for kings and other 'things that are important and venerable to others'.⁸⁰ As an American, Paine was so unused to the political institutions and customs of Europe that he could no more 'rhyme them with his forms of thought'.⁸¹ The 'powerful influence on the way of thinking' exercised by 'habit and education' was equally visible in the case of Paine's opponent Burke: both judged the new French Constitution in direct comparison with their own (the American vs. the British) and accordingly lauded or detested it.⁸² Forster even goes so far as to suggest that Paine might have waxed lyrical about 'the German constitutions' and nobility, had he been born a German.⁸³

This is where Forster turns to defend the enterprise of translating Paine's work at all, which had been discouraged by several critics, as seen above. He concludes that, despite Paine's 'nationalism – if we may dare such an expression – and a few paradoxes', much may still be learned from *Rights of man*.⁸⁴ Specifically, Forster defends Paine against a certain 'slavish German reviewer', as Forkel described him in her correspondence.⁸⁵ Contemporaries clearly identified the preface as a rebuttal to Rehberg's review in the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* cited above, chiding the latter for his bias. One observed that the writer of the preface 'defends his author very well against *Rehberg's* invectives', which they condemned as an extraordinary display of 'injustice,

⁷⁵ *Die Rechte des Menschen*, p. V. The stress on Paine's American identity pervades the German debate.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. V.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. V.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. VI.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. VI.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. VIII.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. VIII.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. IX.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. X.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. X.

⁸⁵ *Forsters Werke*, XVI, p. 563: Forkel to Voß, 24 Sept. 1791.

partiality and sophistry'.⁸⁶ This also enables Forster to take Paine's side and reveals where his sympathies actually lie, but in a way that was accepted without outcry by contemporaries.

The preface was important in making the book palatable for a German audience, and it seems to have fulfilled that function admirably well. According to Cramer, it was 'a masterpiece, this prologue, [of] how, in a country where *press slavery* reigns, one can dress such an unpleasant dish as the Painean book and make it go down smoothly'.⁸⁷ Indeed, it had been Forster's intention to write a preface for Forkel's Paine translation 'with which it will hopefully be able to defy all censures'.⁸⁸ So Forster tailored the preface, pleading for all sides of the debate to be heard, to circumvent censorship. But he uttered the same sentiment in his private correspondence, where he inveighed against 'party spirit', telling his father-in-law Heyne that 'we should be able to listen to everything freely and without bias'.⁸⁹ In any case, his strategy proved successful, because the book was not prohibited.

Apparently, the publisher Voß himself was unhappy with the translation, or regretted publication, and complained to Forster, who apologized in a letter from November 1791, shifting the blame to Forkel for 'her flawed work'. He claims to have revised only the translation of the French Constitution because he was too busy at the time and regrets 'the useless edition' without having read it yet (allegedly).⁹⁰ That seems hard to square with an earlier letter from Forkel which suggests that Forster had reviewed the translation of Paine's text and added notes.⁹¹ Voß's 'displeasure', in turn, is hard to square with his apparent further collaboration with Forkel on the second part of *Rights of man*, which Forster mentions in a letter from May 1792.⁹²

In any case, reviewers were rather more positive about the translation. Cramer praised it as 'excellent' and the work of 'a man, who is a *man*; understood his author perfectly, and possesses a rare suppleness in *his* language'.⁹³ A reviewer for the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* wrote: 'We have compared [the

⁸⁶ *Neue allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*, p. 120. Rehberg is also identified as the preface's target in Cramer, *Menschliches Leben*, p. 431n.

⁸⁷ Cramer, *Menschliches Leben*, p. 431n.

⁸⁸ *Forsters Werke*, XVI, p. 350: Forster to Voß, 17 Sept. 1791.

⁸⁹ *Forster's Briefwechsel*, II, pp. 134, 135: Forster to Heyne, 21 Feb. 1792.

⁹⁰ *Forsters Werke*, XVI, p. 379: Forster to Voß, 21 Nov. 1791. This seems to suggest that the book was already produced. In any case, the notion that Forkel's letter to convince Voß to publish followed this complaint (as found in the essential biography of Forkel by Monika Siegel, "Ich hatte einen Hang zur Schwärmerey...". *Das Leben der Schriftstellerin und Übersetzerin Meta Forkel-Liebeskind im Spiegel ihrer Zeit* (Ph.D. diss., TU Darmstadt, 2001), p. 101) does not match the chronology; it is dated 28 June 1791 (*Forsters Werke*, XVI, p. 538).

⁹¹ *Forsters Werke*, XVI, p. 554: Forkel to Voß, 21 Aug. 1791. In contrast, the notes are treated as Forkel's in Thomas Paine, *Die Rechte des Menschen*. In *zeitgenössischer Übertragung von D. M. Forkel*, ed. Theo Stemmler (Frankfurt, 1973), and Sophia Scherl, *Die deutsche Übersetzungskultur in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts. Meta Forkel-Liebeskind und ihre Übersetzung der Rights of man* (Berlin, 2014).

⁹² *Forsters Werke*, XVI, p. 379: Forster to Voß, 21 Nov. 1791. See *Forsters Werke*, XVII, p. 117: Forster to Voß, 15 May 1792.

⁹³ Cramer, *Menschliches Leben*, p. 431n.

translation] with the original and found it faithful.’⁹⁴ A third reviewer, who offered lengthy excerpts in comparison with English excerpts, agreed that the translation was ‘truthful and correct’ but lacked Paine’s characteristic ‘suppleness, lightness and liveliness of style’.⁹⁵ Dyk of course called the translation bad. He also took up Cramer’s play on the translator’s manliness, belittling it in contrast when he speaks of a ‘weak homunculus’ instead.⁹⁶ In fact, Forkel’s translation still seemed good enough to be re-issued by Suhrkamp in 1973.⁹⁷

Forkel’s rendering of *Rights of man* is very faithful indeed. Prudently, she omitted Paine’s observation in his preface to the English edition that ‘every thing suffers by translation’.⁹⁸ And there are modifications for a German audience that justify speaking of a process of cultural translation taking place in the paratext, even beyond Forster’s preface. There are several notes explaining Paine’s allusions to English literature for a German audience, naming *The pilgrim’s progress* when Paine refers to ‘Bunyan’s Doubting Castle and Giant Despair’,⁹⁹ or introducing Sternhold and Hopkins as ‘[a]uthors of a bad translation of the Psalms’.¹⁰⁰ The meaning of Paine’s allusion is further detailed in the case of the biblical reference to ‘loaves and fishes’, explaining how this applies to the English government’s policy.¹⁰¹ One note clarifies that it is the crown that is meant by the object lying in the Tower of London.¹⁰² Another explains what rotten boroughs are and that many of them lie in Cornwall, thus familiarizing German readers with a peculiarity of the British political system.¹⁰³

Finally, there are notes that reflect political circumstances in Germany. The adding of a reference to Swift’s *Tale of a tub* where Paine only uses ‘Peter’ as stand-in for the pope may be due to the fact that Mainz, where Forster was employed and Forkel translated *Rights of man*, was a Catholic electorate and archdiocese.¹⁰⁴ Naturally, Paine’s comments on German governments were especially touchy and indeed, Rehberg had criticized them in his review.¹⁰⁵ Some toning down was felt to be required here to make the text more palatable

⁹⁴ *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, 197, 22 June 1797, p. 758.

⁹⁵ *Neue Allgemeine Deutsche Bibliothek*, p. 120.

⁹⁶ *Litterarische Denkwürdigkeiten*, II, Beylagen, p. 102.

⁹⁷ Paine, *Die Rechte des Menschen*. In *zeitgenössischer Übertragung von D. M. Forkel*. This forms part of the ‘Theorie’ series edited by Jürgen Habermas, Dieter Henrich, and Jacob Taubes. Stemmler’s edition reproduces the second (Copenhagen) edition of *Rechte des Menschen*, Parts One and Two (Forkel’s initials are reversed).

⁹⁸ Thomas Paine, *Rights of man: being an answer to Mr. Burke’s attack on the French Revolution* (4th edn, London: Jordan, 1791). According to *Allgemeines Verzeichniß der Bücher*, p. 251, Forkel translated from this edition. Shortly after Forster had received Paine’s book, he mentioned that four editions were already out of stock (*Forsters Werke*, XVI, p. 299: Forster to Voß, 4 June 1791).

⁹⁹ Paine, *Rights of man*, p. 27; *Die Rechte des Menschen*, p. 29.

¹⁰⁰ *Die Rechte des Menschen*, p. 85.

¹⁰¹ Paine, *Rights of man*, p. 63; compare *Die Rechte des Menschen* (1793), p. 70.

¹⁰² *Die Rechte des Menschen*, p. 71.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 55; compare Paine, *Rights of man*, p. 51.

¹⁰⁵ *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, 243, 8 Sept. 1791, p. 515.

in a German context. This already happens in the preface, which contains (in the words of a contemporary) 'praise of our German princes'.¹⁰⁶ Further, there is a note added to Paine's anecdote about Brunswick. The original passage may be worth recounting here:

Government with insolence, is despotism; but when contempt is added, it becomes worse; and to pay for contempt, is the excess of slavery. This species of Government comes from Germany; and reminds me of what one of the Brunswick soldiers told me, who was taken prisoner by the Americans in the late war: 'Ah!' said he, 'America is a fine free country, it is worth the people's fighting for; I know the difference by knowing my own: in my country, if the prince says, Eat straw, we eat straw.' God help that country, thought I, be it England or elsewhere, whose liberties are to be protected by German principles of government, and Princes of Brunswick!¹⁰⁷

Of course, this accusation called for mitigation. First of all, the German edition encloses in quotation marks Paine's last sentence rather than the anecdotal soldier's speech. Further, the note corrects that 'the subjects of the House of Brunswick are among the happiest in Germany' and suggests that Paine may have confused the name.¹⁰⁸ It generalizes in a light-hearted manner and appeals directly to the public: 'hand on heart, noble German reader! should no original to this painting be found on this side of the Rhine?'¹⁰⁹ This shows dexterous handling of a delicate issue, defusing the charge without repealing it. It is telling that this note was omitted from the second edition published in Copenhagen in 1793. Outside the German territories, there was no need for such mitigation and Paine's statement could be left standing without apology.¹¹⁰

While it eschewed the kind of toning down found in the Brunswick note, being printed in Denmark, the second edition intensified the cultural translation work. It contains some additional notes, for instance making explicit Paine's allusions to Shakespeare's *Comedy of errors* and Sterne's *Sentimental journey*,¹¹¹ or explaining who Robin Hood was.¹¹² It also justifies maintenance of the English term 'Budgets',¹¹³ and explains the meaning of a 'sinecure', *inter alia*.¹¹⁴ Besides, very minor language revision took place and misprints were corrected. We do not know who was responsible for these changes.

¹⁰⁶ Cramer, *Menschliches Leben*, p. 431n.

¹⁰⁷ Paine, *Rights of man*, pp. 131–2.

¹⁰⁸ *Die Rechte des Menschen*, p. 148.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

¹¹⁰ *Die Rechte des Menschen. Eine Antwort auf Herrn Burke's Angriff gegen die französische Revolution. Von Thomas Paine. Aus dem Englischen übersetzt. Nebst der von Ludwig XVI. angenommenen Konstitutions-Acte. Zweyte Auflage* (Copenhagen: Proft, Son and Comp., 1793), p. 146.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* (1793), p. 71.

¹¹² *Ibid.* (1793), p. 142.

¹¹³ *Ibid.* (1793), p. 107.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* (1793), p. 156.

In both editions, the final quarter of the book is occupied by a translation of the French Constitution of 3/14 September 1791. The preface mentions this as 'a small merit, which our edition retains even over the original one'; the latter had only contained the 1789 Declaration but not 'the entire French Constitution, France's *Magna Charta*'.¹¹⁵ From Forkel's correspondence with the publisher Voß we know that she penned this (last) part of the preface, where, listing several mistranslations, she also pokes fun at a rival translator who had shown a real 'talent for misunderstanding'.¹¹⁶ Her letters show that this was aimed at the 'shameful' translation found in several instalments of the *Hamburgischer unpartheyischer Correspondent* from August 1791.¹¹⁷ She also points out that the Hamburg translation was based on the *Projet de Constitution*,¹¹⁸ while she worked with the actual September Constitution as printed in the *Moniteur*. This, she argued, was 'substantially different and sanctioned by the king, thus permanent code of law for France that belongs in every politician's archive'.¹¹⁹ It seems only consequent to attach the actually adopted version of the French Constitution to which *Rights of man* refers all the time. But it meant more to Forkel.

Forkel clearly accorded the French Constitution world-historical significance and was convinced that '[i]t is not irrelevant how this document, about whose importance of course only future centuries will pass the valid judgment, is interpreted to the neighbours of France'.¹²⁰ Accordingly, Forster, Huber, and herself had weighed every expression carefully in the translation of this 'charter of human freedom'.¹²¹ (L. F. Huber was another collaborating translator born to a Francophile German father and French mother.¹²² He referred to Paine's *Rights of man* as his 'favourite view of the National Assembly' and 'a light-magazine'.¹²³) In contrast, contemporary reviewers did not pay the translated Constitution much heed, focusing their comments on Paine's ideas instead. One of them explicitly disagreed about its added value and suggested that, instead of the Constitution, which everybody knows already, excerpts from Burke's other opponents could have been attached.¹²⁴ Nonetheless, the German translation of the French Constitution – this 'document of humanity' – was seen as the book's

¹¹⁵ *Die Rechte des Menschen*, p. XVI.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. XVII. Compare *Forsters Werke*, XVI, p. 564: Forkel to Voß, 27 Sept. 1791.

¹¹⁷ *Forsters Werke*, XVI, p. 563: Forkel to Voß, 24 Sept. 1791; compare *ibid.*, p. 560: Forkel to Voß, 10 Sept. 1791. See *Staats- und Gelehrte Zeitung des Hamburgischen unpartheyischen Correspondenten*, 16–19 Aug. 1791.

¹¹⁸ *La Constitution Française, Projet présenté à l'Assemblée Nationale par les Comités de Constitution & de Révision* (Paris: L'Imprimerie Nationale, 1791).

¹¹⁹ *Forsters Werke*, XVI, p. 563: Forkel to Voß, 24 Sept. 1791.

¹²⁰ *Die Rechte des Menschen*, pp. XVI–XVII.

¹²¹ *Forsters Werke*, XVI, p. 564: Forkel to Voß, 24 Sept. 1791. Compare *ibid.*, p. 564: Forkel to Voß, 27 Sept. 1791.

¹²² [Therese Huber], *L. F. Huber's Sämtliche Werke seit dem Jahre 1802 nebst Seiner Biographie* (Tübingen: Cotta, 1806), pp. 5–7 and pp. 9–10.

¹²³ Ludwig Ferdinand Huber, *Sämtliche Werke*, p. 426 (Mainz, 16 Aug. 1791).

¹²⁴ *Neue allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek*, p. 119.

distinguishing feature by Forkel herself and her letters to Voß show that she was particularly proud of it.¹²⁵

Presumably, adding the Constitution was so important to Forkel because nothing comparable existed in the German states and she hoped it might serve as an inspiring blueprint. By the time constitutions were really introduced in Germany after Napoleon's defeat, the situation had changed significantly. The 1791 French Constitution celebrated by Forkel had been overtaken by several more. Hegel's library, for instance, with whom Forkel became acquainted several years later in Bamberg, contained consecutive versions from 1791, 1793, 1795, and 1797.¹²⁶ The emulation of America was out of the question and the French experience looked to German observers like something to be avoided. The French Revolution celebrated by 'the notorious *Thomas Paine*' had become a failure from which to draw sobering lessons.¹²⁷

IV

In Britain, there was a conscious and concerted effort to erase Paine's book after the appearance of Part Two. As William St Clair summarizes, 'Paine himself was hurriedly convicted of seditious libel in his absence, a number of booksellers went to prison for continuing to sell copies, and the book ceased to be available.'¹²⁸ That the situation was becoming delicate not only in Britain but in parts of the European continent too was no secret to Paine. In the preface to a new (1795) English edition, he wrote the following: 'The Chancellor at Berlin, or the Judges at Vienna shall not punish unfortunate individuals for publishing or reading what tyranny may be pleased to call *my libels* upon their different States.'¹²⁹ Paine continued to publish from France thereafter. In Germany, meanwhile, Forster asked Voß how he thought 'to get through with the 2nd part of *Paine*, which I hear M.^e Forkel is translating', even before Paine and his London publisher Jordan had been indicted.¹³⁰ The authorities in Saxony had just confiscated Forkel's translation of Volney's *Ruins*, which included a preface by Forster, from the Leipzig publisher Heinsius. It appeared in Prussia later that year, from the Berlin publisher Vieweg, but Voß did not go through with the German Part Two of *Rights of man*.¹³¹

¹²⁵ *Forsters Werke*, XVI, p. 564: Forkel to Voß, 27 Sept. 1791.

¹²⁶ *Verzeichniß der von dem Professor Herrn Dr. Hegel und dem Dr. Herrn Seebeck hinterlassenen Bücher-Sammlungen* (Berlin: Müller, 1832), p. 51.

¹²⁷ *Journal für Deutschland, historisch-politischen Inhalts*, XIII, ed. Friedrich Buchholz (Berlin: Enslin, 1819), p. 531.

¹²⁸ St Clair, *The reading nation*, p. 257.

¹²⁹ Thomas Paine, *The rights of man. For the use and benefit of all mankind* (London: Eaton, 1795), p. III. The preface is dated to 19 May 1794.

¹³⁰ *Forsters Werke*, XVII, p. 117: Forster to Voß, 15 May 1792. *Gothaische gelehrte Zeitungen*, 35, 21 May 1792, p. 328, announced that Voß would publish Part Two of Paine's *Rechte des Menschen* soon.

¹³¹ *Die Ruinen*. According to Jacques D'Hondt, *Verborgene Quellen des Hegelschen Denkens*, trans. Werner Bahner (2nd edn, Berlin, 1983), p. 95, it was forbidden in Berlin in 1794, along with the original.

Instead, Part Two of *Die Rechte des Menschen* appeared from the Copenhagen-based publisher 'Christian Gottlob Proft, Son and Company', in two editions in 1792 and 1793, without apparent changes between them.¹³² A reviewer for the *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* found it to be 'a well-done translation'.¹³³ Jeremias David Reuß, who knew Forkel, mentions her only as translator of the Berlin edition and thus Part One and not of the three-volume Copenhagen edition of *Rechte des Menschen* in his *Alphabetical register* of anglo-phone authors.¹³⁴ But he also misrepresents her first name as Marianna (instead of Margaretha). The fact that Forkel's brother Wedekind cited from Part Two of *Rechte des Menschen* in a speech to the Mainz republicans on 25 December 1792 increases the likelihood of it being her translation.¹³⁵

The Copenhagen publisher Proft, Son and Company (run by Christian Georg Proft and Johann August Storch after the death of Christian Gottlob Proft in 1793) clearly played a crucial role in making Paine's works available to readers of German. Next to the translations of both parts of *Rights of man*, they also published a Part Three that included translations of several later writings by Paine.¹³⁶ A contemporary reviewer remarked that 'this is just an idea of the translator or bookseller, at least he had never heard of a 3rd part of the English work before'.¹³⁷ Still, they found the connection between this and the other two volumes obvious. Interestingly, Mark Philp has recently referred to Paine's *Letter addressed to the addressers of the late proclamation* (1792), which featured in the German Part Three, as 'effectively a third part to *Rights of man*' too.¹³⁸ According to Hans Arnold, Cramer may have been the editor and

¹³² *Die Rechte des Menschen. Zweiter Theil. Worin Grundsatz und Ausübung verbunden sind.* Von Thomas Paine. Aus dem Englischen übersetzt (Copenhagen: Proft, Son and Comp., 1792); *Die Rechte des Menschen. Zweiter Theil. Worin Grundsatz und Ausübung verbunden sind.* Von Thomas Paine. Aus dem Englischen übersetzt. Zweyte Auflage (Copenhagen: Proft, Son and Comp., 1793).

¹³³ *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, 197, 22 June 1797, p. 759. The original was reviewed by Rehberg in *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, 274, 18 Oct. 1792.

¹³⁴ Jeremias David Reuss, *Alphabetical register of all the authors actually living in Great-Britain, Ireland and in the United Provinces of North-America. Supplement and continuation, Part II* (Berlin and Stettin: Nicolai, 1804), p. 159. In late 1791, Forster asked his friend and future brother-in-law Reuß, who was a librarian at Göttingen University, to facilitate Forkel's access to books and to alert her early on to new titles she might want to translate (*Forsters Werke*, XVI, p. 358: Forster to Reuß, 13 Oct. 1791). It seems that Reuß picked up on Forster's recommendation, whose subsequent letters reported Forkel's thankfulness and added his own (*ibid.*, p. 364: Forster to Reuß, 4 Nov. 1791 and p. 382: Forster to Reuß, 22 Nov. 1791).

¹³⁵ *Der Patriot*, 1–12 (Nendeln: Kraus Reprint, 1972), 3B, p. 10. Compare Paine, *Die Rechte des Menschen. Zweiter Theil. Zweyte Auflage*, p. 32. Wedekind also published a commentary on the Declaration of the rights of man and the citizen in 1793: *Die Rechte des Menschen und des Bürgers, wie sie die französische konstituierende Nationalversammlung 1791 proklamirte, mit Erläuterungen* von Georg Wedekind (Mainz, 1793). Stemmler, in his 1973 edition of *Die Rechte des Menschen*, has also treated Part Two as Forkel's translation.

¹³⁶ *Die Rechte des Menschen. Eine Antwort auf Herrn Burke's Angriff gegen die französische Revolution.* Von Thomas Paine. Aus dem Englischen übersetzt. Dritter Theil. Sendschreiben an die Unterzeichner der Adressen über die letzte Proclamation, nebst einigen Briefen an Dundas, Onslow und das französische Volk (Copenhagen: Proft, Son and Comp., 1793).

¹³⁷ *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, 197, 22 June 1797, p. 750.

¹³⁸ Philp, 'Paine', p. 407.

translator, who also translated the *Whole proceedings on the trial* for the same publisher, appearing in 1794.¹³⁹ Finally, Proft, Son and Company also published a 'collection of various writings on politics and legislation' by Paine and *Common sense* in German translation in 1794.¹⁴⁰

The fact that the Copenhagen publisher Proft, Son and Company published all these German translations of Paine's works suggests a safer environment in Denmark, even though it was outside, or at best peripheral to, the language area of its intended readers. Apparently, this way of proceeding was not unusual. 'During the 1780s and the French Revolution', notes Jonathan Israel, 'Denmark-Norway...became the main source of published German translations of radical literature, such as Tom Paine's *The rights of man*, that could not be published in Germany itself at that time. As a result, much of Europe celebrated Denmark as an invaluable and outstanding haven of "press freedom"'.¹⁴¹ Even if one may take issue with this romanticized image, Proft, Son and Company's role in the dissemination of Paine's works cannot be doubted.

It is difficult to make any statements about the circulation of *Rights of man* in German translation. But there is some local evidence, for instance in the case of a Rostock reading society. Hand-written lending lists in volumes one and two show that the second German edition of *Rights of man* circulated among thirty-five professors, privy councillors, doctors, and lieutenants between late July 1793 and May 1794.¹⁴² The important university library of Göttingen, in contrast, held two editions of Part One in the English original (the second and seventh edition from Jordan; Rehberg and Brandes may in fact have used the former as their review copy) and Dyk's *Kurzer Abriß*, but not Forkel's translation.¹⁴³ Although not featured in the catalogue, Part Two appears in Heyne's order list from 1792 and was apparently delivered in August.¹⁴⁴ Several further acquisitions relate to Paine's trial. English originals were available elsewhere too. For instance, Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi ordered

¹³⁹ Arnold, 'Die Aufnahme', p. 372. *Vollständige Acten des Processes der gerichtlichen Untersuchung ex officio durch des Königs General-Fiscal anhängig gemacht gegen Thomas Paine. Aus dem Englischen übersetzt von C. F. Cramer* (Copenhagen: Proft, Son and Comp., 1794).

¹⁴⁰ Thomas Paine, *Gesunder Menschenverstand* (Copenhagen: Proft, Son and Comp., 1794); Thomas Paine, *Sammlung verschiedener Schriften über Politik und Gesetzgebung* (Copenhagen: Proft, Son and Comp., 1794). Inter alia, this contains Paine's letter to the Abbé Raynal.

¹⁴¹ Jonathan Israel, 'Northern varieties: contrasting the Dano-Norwegian and the Swedish-Finnish Enlightenments', in Ellen Krefting, Aina Nøding, and Mona Ringvej, eds., *Eighteenth-century periodicals as agents of change: perspectives on northern enlightenment* (Leiden, 2015), pp. 15–45, at p. 43.

¹⁴² Special Collections of Rostock University Library, shelfmark J1a-3016(1–2). They may have been particularly interested in Paine's remark that 'the Duchy of Mecklenburgh...is under the same wretched state of arbitrary power, and the people in slavish vassalage' (Paine, *Rights of man*, p. 141; compare *Die Rechte des Menschen*, p. 159).

¹⁴³ *A catalogue of English books printed before 1801 held by the University Library at Göttingen*, compiled by Graham Jefcoate and Karen Kloth, edited for the library by Bernhard Fabian, Part 2: *Books printed between 1701 and 1800*, III (Hildesheim, Zürich, and New York, 1988), p. 1200.

¹⁴⁴ Göttingen State and University Library, Bibl.-Arch. A 10 a 1. Allg., 1789–, Bl. 54v. Its delivery is registered in *A catalogue of English books*, Part 4, II (2017), p. 479.

Rights of man (the fifth edition from Jordan) from England to his home in Pempelfort in spring 1791, together with a new edition of *Common sense*, which he 'had not yet read'.¹⁴⁵ (In his correspondence, Jacobi identifies with Burke's views, appreciates Rehberg's judgement of Paine, and confesses that he abandoned reading *Rights of man* after the first few pages.)

As this indicates, Paine's impact in Germany was not only dependent on translation, as his ideas spread through other languages as well. German intellectuals read Burke and Paine in the original or in French while reviews popularized their ideas or opposition to them. Forkel's translation no doubt facilitated more widespread access to Paine's work. But there was intense debate over Paine's *Rights of man* even before the publication of the German translation and thus independently of it. Unsurprisingly, that was especially the case in Hanover, which was closely connected to Britain due to the personal union. What seemed to be at stake to the Hanoverian officials Brandes and Rehberg was the defence not only of the king of Britain, but their own elector. Overall, it seems that Paine's work became very visible in Germany during the 1790s. A numerical answer to the question of its dissemination in different languages remains elusive but, in any case, availability does not prove readership. But there is evidence on the level of discourse that calls into question Thomas Munck's verdict that Paine 'had little impact in the German-speaking world' and *Rights of man* failed in this respect.¹⁴⁶

To begin with, Paine was an international celebrity and is repeatedly described as famous by German contemporaries, even critics. That Forster spoke of 'the famous Thomas Paine' may not be particularly informative.¹⁴⁷ The same may be said about Archenholz's *Minerva* of 1793 that carries Paine's likeness as its frontispiece and describes him as 'the famous author of the *Rights of man*', which is in turn referred to as 'his well-known work'.¹⁴⁸ Archenholz, who also reported on the trial 'of the famous *Thomas Paine*' in his 'annals of British history in the year 1792', was clearly sympathetic to the Revolution and to Paine.¹⁴⁹ Yet Paine was treated as well known by contemporary writers across the political spectrum. Ludwig Schubart, who translated parts of Thomas Erskine's trial speech in defence of Paine as well as biographies of both Paine and Burke in his *Englische Blätter* in 1793, reported that 'there is now so much talk of *Thomas Paine*, that rare mortal, in local

¹⁴⁵ Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Briefwechsel I*, 9, ed. Walter Jaeschke and Rebecca Paimann (Stuttgart, 2015), p. 128; Jacobi to Rehberg, 28 Nov. 1791. Jacobi owned the fifth edition of *Rights of man* by Jordan, bound together with a 1791 London edition of *Common sense*; the copy in Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Uu 2335 is identified as Jacobi's in Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Dokumente zu Leben und Werk*, I, Part I, ed. Konrad Wiedemann and Peter-Paul Schneider (Stuttgart, 1989), pp. 377–8.

¹⁴⁶ Munck, 'The troubled reception', p. 161.

¹⁴⁷ *Annalen der Brittischen Geschichte des Jahrs 1791*, p. 80.

¹⁴⁸ *Minerva. Ein Journal historischen und politischen Inhalts*, VII, ed. J. W. v. Archenholz (Hamburg, 1793), pp. 506, 518.

¹⁴⁹ *Annalen der Brittischen Geschichte des Jahrs 1792. Als eine Fortsetzung des Werks England und Italien von J. W. v. Archenholz*, IX (Hamburg: Hoffmann, 1794), pp. 201–8.

and foreign newspapers and journals'.¹⁵⁰ According to the 1791 review of *Rights of man* for the Brunswick-based *Annalen der Geographie und Statistik*, the author of *Common sense* was already known as 'a fierce democrat and bitter antiroyalist'.¹⁵¹ The reviewer provides a measured assessment, offering that both Burke and Paine are too vehement, and ends by calling Paine a 'famous author'.¹⁵² A biographical account of Paine (that seems to have been copied, at least in part, from Archenholz's *Minerva*) is also included in an 1804 'gallery of interesting persons' that wanted to acquaint its readership with 'the life and character of famous and notorious people'.¹⁵³ While it mentions the great number of copies sold of both parts of *Rights of man* (suggesting a total of about 300,000), Paine's later works are mentioned only briefly and disapprovingly.

The generally accepted view is that Paine's reputation soon became tarnished by *The age of reason*, which was also translated into German (by Heinrich Christoph Albrecht).¹⁵⁴ But worries about his influence evidently persisted amongst his opponents. In 'an apology of Christianity against Thomas Paine and his ilk in Germany' from 1802, for instance, Georg Friedrich Seiler wrote that *The age of reason* was much discussed, 'especially in Lower Saxony and the neighbouring countries', and causing much harm.¹⁵⁵ The phrase 'his ilk in Germany' and the mention of Paine's 'German disciples' five years earlier by the reviewer for *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung* (who considered Paine 'a raving republican') indicates the contemporary perception that Paine did have German followers, in both religious and political matters.¹⁵⁶

There is plenty of evidence to suggest that Paine's work deserves a more central place in future scholarship on the Revolution debate in Germany and its reception should be placed alongside Burke's. Much as in Britain, 'the names of Burke and Paine became inseparably connected in the public imagination' in contemporary Germany.¹⁵⁷ The Leipzig-based writer Christian August Wichmann, who discussed whether 'it is true that violent revolutions are promoted by writers', found both Burke and Paine to be

¹⁵⁰ *Englische Blätter*, I, ed. Ludwig Schubart (Erlangen: Walther, 1793), p. 113. Stemmler treats this as an indication for Paine's fame in Germany; Paine, *Die Rechte des Menschen* (1793), p. 24. The Paine bio (*Englische Blätter*, I, pp. 113–17) is translated from *Rights of man*, Part Two, and the Burke bio (*Englische Blätter*, III, ed. Ludwig Schubart (Erlangen: Walther, 1793), pp. 280–6) from *Town and Country Magazine* of May 1793.

¹⁵¹ *Annalen der Geographie und Statistik*, II, ed. E. A. W. Zimmermann (Brunswick, 1791), p. 545.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 554.

¹⁵³ Karl August Schiller, ed., *Gallerie interessanter Personen. Oder Schilderung des Lebens und Charakters berühmter und berühmter Menschen der ältern und neuern Zeit*, II (4th edn, Vienna: Doll, 1804). Compare p. 341 to *Minerva* (1793), p. 518.

¹⁵⁴ Thomas Paine, *Untersuchungen über wahre und fabelhafte Theologie. Aus dem Englischen übersetzt und mit Anmerkungen des Uebersetzers begleitet* ('Deutschland', 1794); Thomas Paine, *Das Zeitalter der Vernunft* (2 vols., Paris, 1796).

¹⁵⁵ *Das Zeitalter der Harmonie, der Vernunft und der biblischen Religion. Eine Apologie des Christenthums gegen Thomas Paine und seines Gleichen in Deutschland. Herausgegeben und mit einer Einleitung versehen von Georg Friedrich Seiler* (Leipzig: Crusius, 1802), p. 1.

¹⁵⁶ *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, 197, 22 June 1797, p. 763.

¹⁵⁷ David Duff, 'Burke and Paine: contrasts', in Pamela Clemit, ed., *The Cambridge companion to British literature of the French Revolution in the 1790s* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 47–70, at p. 47.

'zealots'.¹⁵⁸ Yet he considered 'Paine's reveries very harmless'.¹⁵⁹ Others clearly did not agree with this assessment. We have already seen the great significance attached to Paine's *Rights of man* by Burke's translator and editor Gentz, who wrote that it had been 'read and worshipped, among all classes of people', not only 'in every part of Great Britain' but 'in most countries of Europe'.¹⁶⁰ He attested to its 'tremendous success', when perhaps he would have had good reason to downplay its impact.¹⁶¹ Even more clearly, Brandes identified Paine's *Rights of man* as 'the only work that was received as the gospel of the new French constitution in Germany'.¹⁶²

The most overwhelming proof that Paine's opponents considered the dissemination of the ideas in *Rights of man* (especially that of popular sovereignty) a real danger and agitated against it is provided by the memoir that the Royal British Physician at Hanover, Johann Georg Zimmermann, sent to the Holy Roman Emperor Leopold II.¹⁶³ In a nutshell, he calls for measures against the threat to throne and altar provided by enlightenment and revolution. Inter alia, Zimmermann offers a digest of *Rights of man* and incriminates Paine, whom he repeatedly calls 'the Enlightener and the people's schoolmaster', with spreading 'murderous principles'.¹⁶⁴ According to the memoir, *Rights of man* was received 'as the book of books in Germany', while Burke was 'morally beaten to death'.¹⁶⁵ For instance, Zimmermann saw disciples of Paine in Hamburg and Brunswick, home to the influential newspaper *Hamburgischer unpartheyischer Correspondent* and 'the revolutionary councillor' Joachim Heinrich Campe, respectively.¹⁶⁶ While Zimmermann's memoir gives a strong impression of conspiracy theory, its author seems to have been genuinely concerned about the spread of revolutionary ideas by means of the written word and so-called enlighteners' influence on public opinion. In this respect, it is an impressive document.

¹⁵⁸ Christian August Wichmann, *Ist es wahr, daß gewaltsame Revolutionen durch Schriftsteller befördert werden?* (Leipzig: Gabler, 1793), p. 223.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

¹⁶⁰ *Betrachtungen über die französische Revolution*, II, p. 328.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² Ernst Brandes, *Ueber einige bisherige Folgen der Französischen Revolution, in Rücksicht auf Deutschland* (Hanover: Ritscher, 1792), p. 121.

¹⁶³ Johann Georg Zimmermann, *Memoire an Seine Kaiserkönigliche Majestät Leopold den Zweiten über den Wahnwitz unsers Zeitalters und die Mordbrenner, welche Deutschland und ganz Europa aufklären wollen*, ed. Christoph Weiß (St Ingbert, 1995). The memoir was written in late 1791 and reached the emperor in January 1792. Leopold thanked Zimmermann for it in a letter from 13 Feb. 1792 and died shortly after.

¹⁶⁴ Zimmermann, *Memoire*, pp. 13 and 14 ('Der Aufklärer und Volksschulmeister'), p. 11 ('mordbrennerischen Grundsätze').

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 27.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 78. At least Jonathan Israel has described Campe as 'the best-known German sympathizer with the Revolution at the time' and the *Braunschweigisches Journal* as 'the sole explicitly pro-Revolution journal in German'; J. Israel, *Revolutionary ideas: an intellectual history of the French Revolution from The rights of man to Robespierre* (Princeton, NJ, 2014), p. 223. On Jacobins at Hamburg, see Walter Grab, *Ein Volk muß seine Freiheit selbst erobern. Zur Geschichte der deutschen Jakobiner* (Frankfurt, 1984).

In contrast to Zimmermann's fear of conspiracy, this article has shown that, in the German-speaking parts of Europe, Paine's work was promoted by a rather disparate group of actors under conditions of great contingency. Its spread was dependent on personal initiative, like Forkel's, and unintentionally aided by the attention paid to it by critics. Still, Zimmermann had a point. After all, Paine's declared aim was to spread revolution. What is more, he described despotism as the German principle of government and, in his dedication of Part Two of *Rights of man*, explicitly expressed hope for the liberation of Germany. And Paine's writing proved popular and effective. About a year after Zimmermann had written his memoir, for instance, the Jacobins of Altona explicitly commended *Rights of man* in a pamphlet that called for revolution.¹⁶⁷

The emperor died shortly after receiving the memoir, but Zimmermann continued his agitation against Paine and his presumable German followers publicly. In a 1792 article for the *Wiener Zeitschrift*, he attacked Adolph Knigge for a satire that promoted revolutionary ideas.¹⁶⁸ Zimmermann seems almost paranoid about the omnipresence of 'German Jacobins'.¹⁶⁹ In exaggeration, he claims that 'all German *democrats*' nests are the echo of Knigge's principles, and Knigge is the echo of the American zealot Paine and the whole German Enlightenment propaganda'.¹⁷⁰ Elsewhere, Knigge explicitly recommended Paine's rebuttal to Burke, which he thought 'deserves to be read by friends and enemies of the Revolution'.¹⁷¹ Crucially, however, the work that Zimmermann saw as emblematic of Knigge's identity as a 'German preacher of the revolution and democrat' mentions neither Paine nor Burke.¹⁷² Their impact becomes untraceable as their ideas became integrated into the larger political discourse and, eventually, commonplace.

Competing interests. The author declares none.

¹⁶⁷ Grab, *Ein Volk muß seine Freiheit selbst erobern*, pp. 324–7, transcribes the pamphlet posted on 3 Dec. 1792. Located in Holstein, Altona was part of both the Holy Roman Empire and the Kingdom of Denmark–Norway.

¹⁶⁸ *Des seligen Herrn Etatsraths Samuel Conrad von Schaafskopf hinterlassene Papiere; von seinen Erben herausgegeben* (Breslau, 1792).

¹⁶⁹ *Wiener Zeitschrift*, II, no. 4 (Vienna: Hartli, 1792), p. 327.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 328.

¹⁷¹ Adolph Knigge, *Joseph von Wurmbrand, kaiserlich abyssinischen Ex-Ministers, jezzigen Notarii caesarii publici in der Reichsstadt Bopfingen, politisches Glaubensbekenntniß, mit Hinsicht auf die französische Revolution und deren Folgen* (Frankfurt und Leipzig, 1792), p. 43.

¹⁷² *Wiener Zeitschrift*, p. 317.