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Transformations of the German Novel

Monique Rinere

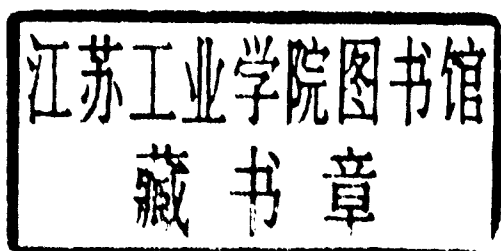
Simplicissimus in Eighteenth-Century Adaptations

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Monique Rinere



PETER LANG

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Figure 1: 1668/9 Frontispiece

Der Abenteuerliche
SIMPLICISSIMUS
Deutsch /

Das ist :

**Die Beschreibung des Lebens eines
seltsamen Vaganten / genant Melchior
Sternfels von Fuchsbaim / wo und welcher
gestalt Er nemlich in diese Welt kommen / was
er darinn gesehen / gelernet / erfahren und auß-
gestanden / auch warumb er solche wieder
freywillig quittirt.**

**Überauß lustig / und männiglich
nützlich zu lesen.**

An Tag geben

Von

GERMAN SCHLEIFHEIM
von Sulsfort.



Montpelgar /
Gedruckt bey Johann Fillion /
Im Jahr M DC LXIX.

Der
Wechsel
des
Glücks und Unglücks
im Krieg,
oder
Wunderbare
Begebenheiten
Herrn
Melchior Sternfels
von Fuchsheim,
Eines gebornen Edelmanns:

Welcher in einem einsamen Wald
anfangs von einem Bauren, nachgehends
von einem Einsiedler, der, wiewohl unbekannter
Weise, sein eigener Vater gewesen, ist erzogen
worden, sich durchgehends im Krieg durch seine
tapfere Thaten besonders hervorgethan und viel
Unglücksfälle überstanden, endlich aber
als ein Einsiedler sein Leben
beschlossen hat.

Frankfurt und Leipzig. 1756.

Figure 3: 1756 Title Page

Aus dem Grab der Vergessenheit wieder erstandenen
SIMPLICISSIMI

Abentheuerlicher,
und mit allerhand seltsamen Begebenheiten angefüllter
Lebens-Mandel,

Auf eine ungemeine/ und jetzt ganz neue viel vermehrte anmuthige

Schreib- und Lehr-Art /
vermittelst

Scharffsinnigen Lehren, nützlichen Anmerkungen und wohl-klingen-
den Poëtischen Versen, auch nebst recht lebhaften Kupfer-
Bildnissen;

Lust-liebenden und curiösen Gemüthern auf das annehmlichste/

In dreien Theilen
auf- und vorgestellt,

von
Germann Schleiffheim von Sulzfort.

Dem es wollen so behagen,
Lachend, was wahr ist, zu sagen.

Münsterberg, gedruckt und verlegt bey Adam Jonathan Heisecker, Anno 1713.

Figure 4: 1713 Title Page

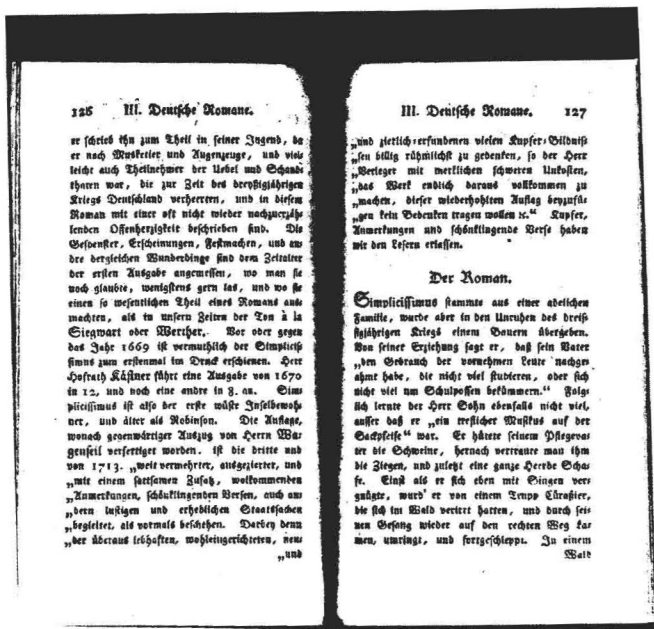
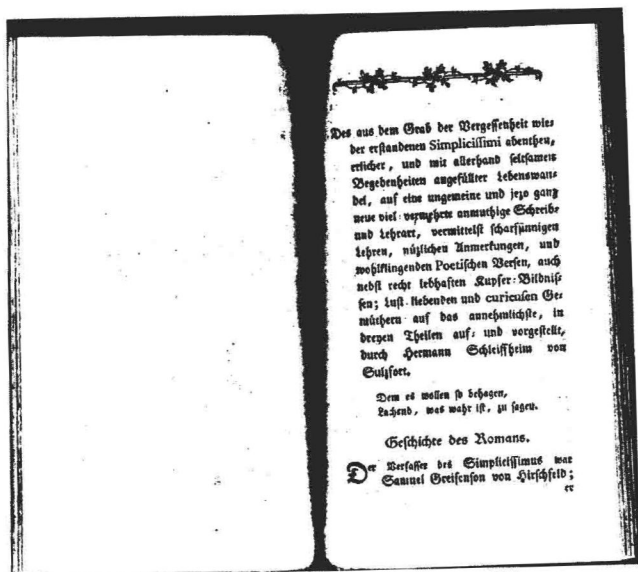


Figure 5: 1779 Title Page and Introduction



Schubert del

Knäner sculp 12

Nehme dich der Altnächtigen in seinen Schutz mein Sohn!

Figure 6: 1785 Frontispiece

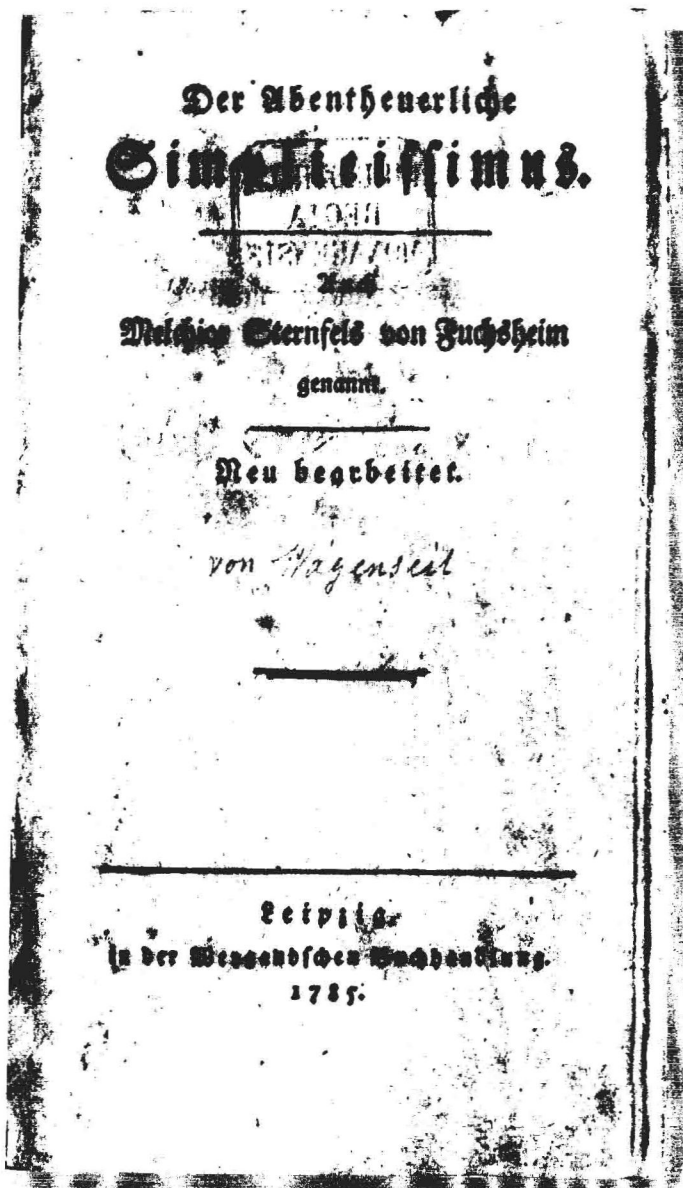


Figure 7: 1785 Title Page

Figure 8: 1790 Title Page

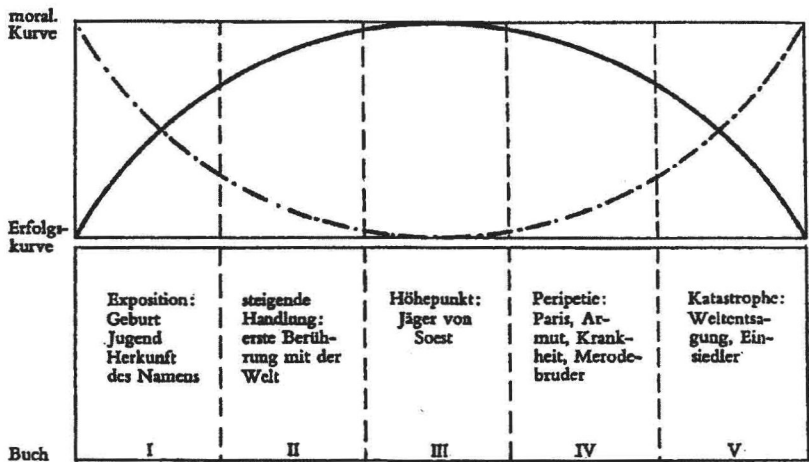
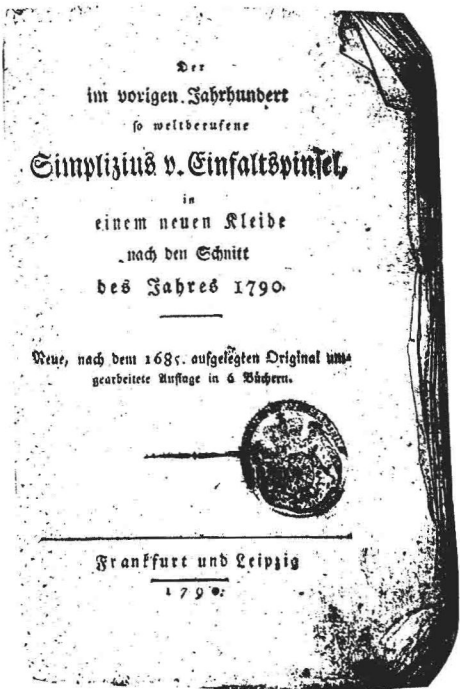


Figure 9: Günther Weydt's representation of the relationship between Simplicissimus's moral standing and success (Günther Weydt, *Nachahmung und Schöpfung im Barock* (Bern: Francke, 1968) p. 16).

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Introduction

With the publication in 1668/69 of *Der abentheurliche Simplicissimus: Teutsch*,¹ Hans Jacob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen introduced a figure whose life, tale, and times would be the subject of countless reincarnations, transformations, and reiterations. Simplicissimus, his hermit father, the deranged poet Jupiter, the allegorical *Ständebaum* and the nightingale's song, among other figures, events, and themes that appear in *Simplicissimus*, have appeared in operas, plays, poems, and novels in many of the thirty-three decades since the initial publication.² When one investigates Simplicissimus's transformations over time, two broad questions arise time and time again. How were Grimmelshausen's hero and tale changed, and why? In other words, how did the original figure and his story resonate for authors and composers of later periods? What did they choose to retain, highlight, embellish, or omit? What do the hero and his tale lose and gain in the transformation? Secondly, why were these decisions made? Were they made in accordance with contemporary literary concepts, public taste or political impulses? Were the new renderings offered as a response to isolated or broad literary, social, and historical events or movements? Grimmelshausen's original text has not only inspired volumes of secondary literature on, for example, the nature of its historical realism, its narrative structures, the autobiographical

1 Hans Jacob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen, *Der abentheurliche Simplicissimus Teutsch*, ed. Dieter Breuer (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1989) Vol. I.1. of *Hans Jacob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen: Werke I.1.*, ed. Breuer, 4 vols. Vol. 16/I of *Bibliothek der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Wolfgang Harms, Conrad Wiedemann and Franz-Josef Worstbrock, 24 vols. (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1989–). All citations from *Simplicissimus* refer to this edition. See Figures 1 and 2 for the frontispiece and title page.

2 See the bibliography of primary literature.

authenticity, and speculations on sources of the content, but also complete transformations of the work itself.

This investigation fills a gap in the study of Grimmelshausen reception by answering the questions of how and why writers adapted the original in one particular period, namely the second half of the eighteenth century. For at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the German literary establishment considered the novel the contemptible entertainment of the uneducated. By the end of the century, the novel had eclipsed the epic poem as the most appropriate genre for depicting humankind and its social preoccupations. The story of how and why the novel emerged as a respected and productive artistic genre is intimately bound to the eighteenth-century vicissitudes of Grimmelshausen's original text.

Between 1756 and 1785, *Simplicissimus* quietly found its way to bookshops three times in radically different forms, in adaptations that were not, as critics have assumed, arbitrary, but quite purposeful. This investigation shows that various adapters reworked this canonical German text in ways that reflected the thinking of leading – and warring – Enlightenment aestheticians about the proper form and content of novels. At the genre war's end, the novel emerged triumphant, and *Simplicissimus* adaptations had played an instrumental role in the victory. Thus, the analysis brought to bear in *Transformations of the German Novel* does not merely treat *Simplicissimus* adaptations in the eighteenth century, but also traces the novel's transformation from a disdained genre to the most highly esteemed literary form of the coming age.

The anonymous writer who prepared the century's first *Simplicissimus* adaptation (1756) painstakingly recast the bawdy and unsophisticated eponymous hero and his topsy-turvy world as an unflinchingly pious protagonist negotiating predictable terrain. Why? This study shows that this is not merely a capricious exercise, but a concerted effort to support, in the staunchest and most practical of ways, aesthetician Johann Christoph Gottsched (1700–66), the century's most influential literary dictator of the time. This, however, was not the last time that *Simplicissimus* reflected changing theories of what a novel should be. In 1779 and again in 1785, a struggling writer named Christian Jakob Wagenseil (1756–1839) reworked *Simplicissimus* in response to the writings of an amateur aesthetician,

Friedrich von Blanckenburg (1744–96), who was himself inspired by the novels of a controversial author, Christoph Martin Wieland (1733–1813). Wagenseil's adaptations not only attempted to redeem the original text and ingratiate the adapter with Wieland, but also changed the course of the novel as a genre in Germany.

My investigation shows the ways in which the multi-faceted *Simplicissimus* serves as a vehicle for reifying theoretical positions in the conflicts concerning German literature and the genre of the novel. For, as the social and aesthetic climate shifted radically, Grimmelshausen's work not only survived, but also took on new life in one of the most important literary campaigns of the century.

Before we proceed, an overview of Grimmelshausen reception will contextualize this investigation. There are, roughly speaking, six discrete periods. In the first, from the date of publication through the mid-eighteenth century, the original work was simply republished, with minor editorial changes, six times before and three times shortly after the author's death in 1676.³ In the second period, which took place concurrently and following those publications, imitations appeared up to the mid-eighteenth century,⁴ the best-known among them by Johann Beer.⁵ Beer and others imitated and borrowed from Grimmelshausen liberally

3 See Dieter Breuer, 'Kommentar', *Grimmelshausen: Simplicissimus Teutsch* (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1989) 725–30 for a concise explanation of the editions, known as E¹–E⁶ (1669–71) and C¹–C³ (1683–1713).

4 See Jakob Koeman, *Die Grimmelshausen-Rezeption in der fiktionalen Literatur der deutschen Romantik* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993) 58; Volker Meid, *Grimmelshausen: Epoche-Werk-Wirkung* (Munich: Beck, 1984) 196–97; Manfred Koschlig, *Das Ingenium Grimmelshausens und das >Kollektiv<: Studien zur Entstehungs- und Wirkungsgeschichte des Werkes* (Munich: Beck, 1977) 297–534.

5 See Richard Alewyn, *Johann Beer: Studien zum Roman des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Palaestra 181 (Leipzig: Mayer and Müller, 1932) 156–61; and Koschlig. Beer's oeuvre includes: *Der simplicianische Weltkucker* (1677–79), *Der abenteuerliche, wunderbare und unerhörte Ritter Hopfensack von der Speckseiten* (1677), *Des Abentheurlichen Jan Rebhu Artlicher Pokazi* (1679), *Jucundi Jucundissimi wunderliche Lebensbeschreibung* (1680), *Das Narren=Spital* (1681), and *Teutsche Winter Nächte* (1682). Koschlig suggests that Beer was the editor of the three *Simplicissimus* editions published after the original but before Grimmelshausen's death in 1676. See Koschlig's chapter

in the first half of the eighteenth century to emulate his literary accomplishments and to ride on the coattails of *Simplicissimus*'s popularity as an adventuresome, bawdy, and comical literary figure.

The third period of Grimmelshausen reception encompasses the entire second half of the eighteenth century. It did not involve republications of the original as the first had, or even imitations or borrowings like the second, but rather texts which radically diverge, in form and content, from *Simplicissimus*. From 1756 to 1785, *Simplicissimus* is thoroughly reconditioned and transformed, and *Simplicissimus* and his adventures are presented in a brand new light. Three texts appeared in this period; these are the subject of this study. They have been discussed to varying degrees of depth in studies by four literary historians,⁶ but none of these studies provides adequate insight into the literary theoretical background against which Grimmelshausen's work found new life in this pivotal period of aesthetic debate. Hence, they do not show the ways in which these three works serve as a prism through which we can observe and examine the evolution of the German novel during this pivotal period.

After the publication of the 1790 *Simplicissimus* edition, which almost completely restored *Simplicissimus* to its pre-eighteenth century form, fiction writers of the Romantic period showed a strong interest in episodes, figures, and motifs from *Simplicissimus*. This, the fourth period of Grimmelshausen reception, is the subject of a thorough and comprehensive 624-page study by Jakob Koeman, in which he states: 'Innerhalb der kreativen Rezeption [der Romantiker] von Barocktexten nimmt die Aufnahme und Bearbeitung von Elementen aus dem *Simplicissimus* und

entitled 'Die "Simplicianische Arbeit" des Johann Christoph Beer' in *Ingenium* 297–506.

6 Namely Volker Meid, *Grimmelshausen: Epoche-Werk-Wirkung* (Munich: Beck, 1984); Lieselotte Kurth-Voigt, 'Grimmelshausens *Simplicissimus* in Aufklärung und Vorklassik', *Simpliciana* VIII (1986): 19–50; Peter Heßelmann, *Simplicissimus Redivivus: Eine kommentierte Dokumentation der Rezeptionsgeschichte Grimmelshausens im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert (1667–1800)* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1992); and Jakob Koeman, *Die Grimmelshausen-Rezeption in der fiktionalen Literatur der deutschen Romantik* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1993).