



JENNIFER DRAKE ASKEY

# GOOD GIRLS, GOOD GERMANS

  
Girls' Education and Emotional  
Nationalism in Wilhelminian Germany

# Good Girls, Good Germans

## Girls' Education and Emotional Nationalism in Wilhelminian Germany

Jennifer Drake Askey



CAMDEN HOUSE

Rochester, New York

Copyright © 2013 Jennifer Drake Askey

*All Rights Reserved.* Except as permitted under current legislation, no part of this work may be photocopied, stored in a retrieval system, published, performed in public, adapted, broadcast, transmitted, recorded, or reproduced in any form or by any means, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

First published 2013  
by Camden House

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

ISBN-13: 978-1-57113-562-9  
ISBN-10: 1-57113-562-6

### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Askey, Jennifer Drake, 1970–

Good girls, good Germans : girls' education and emotional nationalism in  
Wilhelminian Germany / Jennifer Drake Askey.

p. cm. — (Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-57113-562-9 (hardcover : acid-free paper)

ISBN 1-57113-562-6 (hardcover : acid-free paper)

1. German literature—19th century—History and criticism. 2. Girls—  
Germany—Social conditions. 3. National characteristics, German, in literature.  
4. Women and literature—Germany—History—19th century. 5. Women—  
Books and reading—Germany—History—19th century. 6. Sex role—  
Germany—History—19th century. I. Title.

PT167.A84 2013

830.9'928709034—dc23

2013005600

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

*Good Girls, Good Germans*

*Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture*

*This book is dedicated to Greta and Ingrid,  
with permission to read whatever the heck they want.*

## Acknowledgments

THIS BOOK OWES its existence to my frustration with Agathe Heidling's fate in Gabriele Reuter's *Aus guter Familie*. Following her myriad attempts at self-betterment through reading and their systematic thwarting by her family and social circle, I wondered aloud "what was she supposed to read?" This book attempts to answer that question for me and for other researchers of nineteenth-century German literature, history, and culture.

I was buoyed repeatedly by Dr. Lynne Tatlock's encouragement throughout the writing process. I owe her great thanks for repeatedly returning me to the girl reader and her book as the centerpiece of my inquiry. She, too, wanted to know what Agathe would be allowed to read, and suggested I might look at Brigitte Augusti's historical fiction. This book would not have been written without her interest and support and has benefited greatly from her careful reading and insight at various stages. I would also like to thank Jim Walker, at Camden House, for expressing interest in my project early on and then exercising unflagging patience in waiting for me to actually get it to him. He and the staff at Camden House have been such a pleasure to work with, it almost makes me want to write another book.

The library of the former Museum für Volkskunde in Berlin-Dahlem, now the Museum Europäischer Kulturen, as well as the Bibliothek für Bildungsgeschichtliche Forschung in Berlin-Friedrichshagen provided voluminous primary source material and quiet places to map out my project in its early phases. I would like to extend special thanks to Dr. Konrad Vanja at the Museum Europäischer Kulturen for showing me the gems of their schoolbook and pedagogical literature collection when I first walked through the door. The Georg-Eckert-Institut für Internationale Schulbuchforschung in Braunschweig and their exceptional reference staff gave an excellent overview of the realm of schoolbook publishing in the nineteenth century.

The completion of this book would not been possible without the material support of the Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst, Kansas State University, and Wilfrid Laurier University. Amy Hubbell, Maria Teresa DePaoli, and Tanya Gonzalez were an interested and critical audience for early drafts of various chapters. My colleagues in the Coalition of Women in German, and in the Women Writers of the 18th and 19th Centuries working group, in particular Michelle James, Marjanne Goozé,

Lisabeth Hock, and Denise Della-Rossa created a community of scholars dedicated to sharing important eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature by women, and I appreciate their interest in my work on children's literature in these eras. Hester Baer provided a valuable perspective on women's writing and affirmative culture that helped strengthen my resolve to write about conservative literature for girls. Her friendship and professional support are two of my dearest possessions. My heartfelt thanks to all of these scholars for their encouragement, their careful readings, and their willingness to listen, discuss, and share ideas.

Finally, I would like to thank my husband, Dale Askey, who has viewed the incubation of this tome from a safe distance, swooping in periodically to introduce me to bibliographic software, explain the ins and outs of antiquarian book purchasing, and to build bookshelves. Every scholar should be married to her favorite librarian.



# Contents

Acknowledgments	ix
Introduction: Emotional Nationalism and Germany's Daughters	1
1: Nationalist Education and Prussia's <i>höhere Töchter</i>	29
2: Father's Library: German Classics in Girls' Schools and the Ownership of German Culture	59
3: <i>Mädchenliteratur</i> I— <i>Backfischbücher</i> and Historical Novels	103
4: <i>Mädchenliteratur</i> II—Queen Luise	143
Conclusion	183
Bibliography	189
Index	199

## Introduction: Emotional Nationalism and Germany's Daughters

THE PROTAGONIST OF Gabriele Reuter's 1895 novel *Aus guter Familie* (*From a Good Family*, 1999), Agathe Heidling, receives two books for her religious confirmation, and the reactions of Agathe's family and that of her pastor to these gifts reveal much about the landscape of gender and nationalism in which Agathe, a typical upper-middle-class girl, lived and was educated.<sup>1</sup> Her cousin Martin gives her Georg Herwegh's *Gedichte eines Lebendigen* (*Poems of one who is alive*)<sup>2</sup> and her friend Eugenie presents her with Friedrich Rückert's *Liebesfrühling* (*Springtime of love*).<sup>3</sup> Her pastor and her father are visibly dismayed at the revolutionary political nature of Herwegh's poems and take the volume away from her, to replace it later with a volume on pressing flowers (12). Pastor Kandler summarizes the men's opinions of the book and Agathe's relationship to it and others of its kind by saying: "There are so many lovely poems that are more appropriate for a young girl and that you'll like better" (23). Without explaining the significance of her transgression or Martin's, her male authority figures shame and punish her into disavowing the appeal that this literature had for her and turn her attention instead to more appropriate texts, such as Gerok's *Palmenblätter* (*Palm leaves*), and a volume titled *Das Weib als Jungfrau, Gattin und Mutter* (*The woman as maiden, wife, and mother*).<sup>4</sup> These works, also confirmation gifts, place Agathe solidly within her culture's dominant discourse on femininity, where her position in society and her sense of self is determined by her relationships—romantic and otherwise—to her father and her unknown, future husband. Agathe's mother and the pastor's wife have their turn at consternation when Agathe opens up Eugenie's gift of love poems (8). They discuss whether Eugenie's gift was inappropriate, or just given to Agathe at too young an age. All of the adults present agree, however, on the symbolic and actual importance of literature for Agathe's education. Their attention to Agathe's reading material and the possible messages it conveyed about Agathe's commitment to the nationalist and gendered ideology of her class and era reflect their belief in the significance of literature and reading in the lives of middle-class girls during this period.

Books given as gifts on special occasions—elegantly bound *Prachtausgaben* primarily marketed to middle-class readers—signaled the status of both giver and recipient and filled a representative function that

exceeded its role as educational or entertaining tome. Thus, the readerly joy Agathe would have experienced with the volume of Herwegh is deemed inappropriate because of its political content and is replaced with a book meant for show—in both appearance and content. The less severe fate of Eugenie's gift—a book focused on the adult role of women as mothers and wives, containing within an acknowledgment of female sexuality, however veiled—signals the difficulty of integrating public and familial discussions of girlhood, womanhood, and sexuality.

As Russell Berman argues in *The Rise of the Modern German Novel*, “Literary life is here a bourgeois idyll, characterized by commodity display and the exchange of meaning, as well as by family life and contact with strangers.”<sup>5</sup> Books given as gifts or displayed on shelves functioned as symbols of the cultural and social capital in circulation within a family and its social circles, and girls as readers were participants in this economy as well. The very public role of reading and its connection to the representation of class and gender in a girl's life would necessitate, perhaps, that Agathe not receive Eugenie's gift, or that she receive it later in her adolescence, or that she receive it in a less public venue than her confirmation celebration. However, the primacy of reading as a middle-class girl's avenue to self-improvement and the attainment of cultural knowledge points to the important function of these books about social behavior in helping girls negotiate the private and public sides of their representative role in the middle-class family. In an environment that placed a premium on respectability and public decorum, reading and books fulfilled crucial functions in relating political, sexual, and emotional information to a young, female population not easily granted access to the world of mature adult discourse.

Representing a generation of middle-class girls in late nineteenth-century Germany, Agathe struggles to fulfill her traditional domestic obligations within her conservative family, while at the same time achieving a modicum of intellectual independence through self-improvement and reading. Her ultimate failure in this struggle, which leaves her mentally and physically scarred, signals the stakes of nineteenth-century discussions about girls' education and girls' literature. (Gabriele Reuter herself struggled with access to respect and literary success, thus explaining her recognition of these stakes as they pertained to a girl's ability to read and receive the education she desired.) Agathe struggles to gain access to literature she wants to read, in opposition to the literature her father wishes her to read and to the literature she was expected to display as a marker of her class and education. Herwegh's poems are not the only books off limits. Her mother reads, but hides, romance and popular novels; Agathe and her friends do the same with novels by Eugène Sue at boarding school; her father locks his reading shelves after he discovers that Agathe has read Häckel's *Natürliche Schöpfungsgeschichte* (*The History of*

*Creation*).<sup>6</sup> As with the Herwegh poems so many years earlier, her father exchanges her Christmas list of wished-for science books for a book on the art of drying flowers. Agathe's father rejects her intellectual curiosity and power, as well as her sense of pride in learning and understanding through reading, by restricting her access to scientific, political, and legal texts. Reuter's casting of Agathe's father as Privy Councillor Heidling, a bureaucrat in Prussian service, makes it abundantly clear that his views on girls and their leisure reading habits reflect the social interests of the patriarchal state and its apparatus. Reuter's text suggests that Agathe's enthusiastic response to Hackel's work did not serve the cultural purposes of a well-respected, middle-class family such as the Heidlings: "How it shook her out of her intellectual torpor, out of discontented semiconsciousness, so that she rubbed her eyes, planted her feet firmly on the ground and looked around her inquisitively" (166).

Years after the Herwegh incident, Cousin Martin gives Agathe socialist pamphlets she must hide from her family and the authorities in order to protect him (98). She overcomes her reflexive obedience to her father's injunctions against Martin and his politics, and reads Martin's words. This reading experience brings her an intellectual and emotional pleasure that signals the personal and physical freedom from her confining, middle-class life that Agathe craves. As she finished reading:

A short sob. The girl threw herself down full length upon the little sofa, her arms spread wide in helpless desire for something that she could embrace, in the desire to be impregnated with strength, to receive the fructifying breath of spirit and intellect that streams over the earth in a spring storm. (102)

Agathe is hungry for knowledge and yearns for a sense of significance in her community and her world. The familial and class restrictions on her reading and education appear in this passage analogous to sexual taboos that limit the girl's awareness of herself and her own powers. Agathe's plight illustrates Reuter's conviction that girls and women came to literature looking to satisfy needs: a search for knowledge and a sense of significance.

The books Agathe read, and the books she was supposed to read, provide the contemporary reader with a valuable lesson on the public value of private feminine behavior, as well as on how in the nineteenth-century, nationalism—along with its middle-class ideology of respectability and self-sacrifice—was narrated into the lives of girls via literature. Through a close reading of the leisure-time literature targeted at the young female reader and a careful examination of the gendered pedagogical and social context that informed the young readers' lives, this book explores the utility of *Madchenliteratur* for nurturing and reproducing nationally productive fantasies in readers' lives. Addressing the type of literature that Agathe Heidling would have been allowed and encouraged to read can

deepen our understanding of the myriad ways the German national myth captivated the hearts and imaginations of generations of young German women and encouraged them to bring their hearts' desires into emotional accord with the perceived cultural needs of the new nation-state. Focusing attention on late nineteenth-century *Mädchenliteratur* and its appeal to the desires of girls and young women opens our eyes to an emotional and domestic facet of nineteenth-century nationalism.

## Emotional Nationalism

The second half of the nineteenth century in Prussian Germany witnessed the explosion of both public and private educational institutions for girls as well as the rapid expansion of the publishing market for girls' literature. These two movements were products of industrialization and the rise of Germany's bourgeoisie to political and cultural power. Nationalism, which also accompanied the rise of the middle-class, fueled educational reform at both the primary (*Volksschule*) and secondary school levels. Educational opportunities for German girls outside of the home expanded, increasing the relative importance of extra-familial authorities and influences in the lives of girls and their families. Ever-expanding literacy, together with a self-confidently nationalist educational paradigm, proved fertile soil for an expanding array of pedagogical treatises, schoolbooks, and popular literature for children of both sexes. Literature about educating girls, as well as literature written for girls, became big business, with authors, publishers, and pedagogues all concerned with the task of educating Germany's female youth for their place in German society and Germany's place in the world.

As Benedict Anderson demonstrated in *Imagined Communities*, the expansion of access to the printed word in the nineteenth century provided the ideal tool to instill a notion of shared national belonging, and with that, shared national responsibility and fate.<sup>7</sup> Literature can hold pride of place in nationalist movements, Anderson suggested, by serving as proof of the existence of a community of people—in this case readers—united by common language, common geography, and a common trajectory through history.<sup>8</sup> In the act of reading, as well as in the substance of the material read, citizens, pupils, and leaders all participate in the recreation of the myth of national formation and belonging. Schools and universities serve not only to instruct in national language—as opposed to regional dialect or minority language—and in literature and history, but they also provide the interpretive context to read and confront the texts of the nation.

Girls' school curricula and pedagogical treatises on girls' education address very forthrightly the role of educating girls in German literature and German history for the benefit of the new nation-state and its cultural mission. Additionally, trade literature published for girls during

this period by popular schoolbook publishers, such as Ferdinand Hirt & Sohn in Leipzig and Velhagen und Klasing in Bielefeld, attempted to model the ideal German woman for the imperial era. “Jede Nation, jede Zeit,” declared Dr. S. Waeztoldt at the opening ceremony of the Victoria Lyceum in Berlin in 1895, “hegt ein Idealbild der Frau, zu dem sie die Mädchen erziehen will. Dies Bild wandelt sich, aber es trägt doch bleibende nationale Züge. Dichter zeichnen es, und in den Schriften über Frauenbildung spiegelt es sich wieder.”<sup>9</sup> To this end pedagogical resources and popular literature for girls and young women narrated female lives according to the dictates of a term I will describe as “emotional nationalism.” This emotional nationalism, crafted out of the stuff of Protestant religion, Prusso-German history, and German literary classics, saw reader identification as the primary pedagogical reading tool and sought to draw young female readers into involvement in the national community via their traditional domestic and emotional roles in the family. Literature that received approbation from educators, middle-class parents, and clergy, whether classical Weimar era texts or contemporary narratives, was praised for its ability to create and nurture individual fantasies that were also nationally productive. Women in Prussia at this time were denied real political engagement and they were not represented significantly in the workforce or in institutions of higher learning. In the face of martial and patriarchal national ideology, emotional nationalism encouraged girls and women to see their domestic activities and their emotional lives (their loves, their family commitments, etc.) as significant within the broad context of national cohesion and the advancement of the bourgeois German cultural mission. Thus, romances and coming-of-age stories for girls in the late nineteenth century feature settings, characters, and plot developments that signal to the female reader that the heroine with whom she identifies is not merely developing as a young woman, but that she is also developing the sensibilities, skills, and character traits of a young German woman. It is to this ideal that the female reader should aspire.

A large body of historical and literary scholarship exists that demonstrates the cultural and aesthetic foundations of patriarchy in German culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The significant odds against which women who struggled for emancipation had to fight have been enumerated and evaluated. The focus on struggle—the struggle for the female artist’s self-realization, the struggle for the middle-class woman to find respect and authority inside the home and out, the struggle for lesbian women to be visible in society at all—has enriched our understanding of Germany and its cultural production in the modern era. Specifically, Silvia Bovenschen’s *Imaginierte Weiblichkeit* (1979), Ute Frevert’s *Mann und Weib und Weib und Mann* (1995), and Ruth-Ellen Boetcher Joeres’s *Respectability and Deviance* (1998) have revealed both the inherent misogyny in the German literary canon and the social,

economic, and rhetorical challenges facing women who wanted to write in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, girls remain invisible in most of this scholarly work. Girls—future women—were the objects of significant pedagogical, civic, and commercial interest, and their appropriation of cultural constructs designed to regulate their bodies, minds, and hearts was a necessity.

Whether in religion, German history, or literature, the written text was paramount; pedagogues asserted that exposure to the proper sort of literature both inside and outside of school was critical in preparing girls for the *Kulturarbeit* (cultural contributions) of adult women in the German national community. Aesthetic appreciation, pious sensitivity, and an awareness of the historic and future greatness of the Germanic peoples and their new nation-state were primary goals of girls' schools and *Mädchenliteratur*, as these qualities appeared to best serve the civic and domestic cultural needs of the new German empire. As a result of a relatively homogeneous literary palette both inside and outside schools, middle-class girls experienced a plethora of literary heroines, fictional and historical, romantic and tragic, who modeled for them the conservative social values and limiting domestic role held as the feminine ideal by the nationalist patriarchal elites.

In this study, I look specifically at popular literature in the nineteenth century written for girls and young women that treats the relationship between femininity and Germanness. Literature for girls in this era relied on emotional identification with a model protagonist and indulged in the limited possibilities of emotional adventure condoned in girls' reading material both to produce and satisfy romantic and civic desire. The production of national desire for female readers, a desire that encouraged identification of national progress and harmony with personal emotional fulfillment, proved a popular and successful strategy in girls' literature of the nineteenth century, representing commercial and ideological conservatism in the face of growing calls to change women's political, academic, and employment prospects. There is no shortage of literature for girls in the nineteenth century that supports this line of reasoning: *Backfischbücher*, historical novels, popular biographies, and all manner of love stories written in the nationalist era in Germany participated in the broader discourse of national character, national mission, and gender roles that also informed girls' education and the cult of female domesticity.

## Schooling

Writing about the role of the *Lesebuch* in girls' school curricula, Heinrich Saure remarks, "So wird der Unterricht in der Muttersprache für das Mädchen die Centralsonne," and continues:

Alles Lehren und Lernen in der Mädchenschule gehört zum Unterrichte in der deutschen Sprache, dieser heimst auch die auf anderen Gebieten reifenden Früchte ein und empfängt dadurch wiederum frische, befruchtende Kraft, ja auch das innere Gemüts- und Geistesleben der Schülerin, wie es sich durch die außerhalb der Schule liegenden Einwirkungen entwickelt, führt dem deutschen Unterricht einen unberechenbaren Bildungsstoff zu, verleiht ihm seine hervorragende erziehlische Bedeutung und macht ihn so zum Mittelpunkt der gesamten Lehr- und Lernthätigkeit unserer Mädchenschule.<sup>10</sup>

The importance Saure attributes to the *Lesebuch* he published reflects the importance that educators in general set for German instruction in girls' schools. This combined an introduction to the classical treasures of German literature—works that would speak to the heart and temperament of young women specifically—alongside information about German cultural, religious, and literary history. The didactic value of the “right sort” of literature was uncontested. Through identification and example, characters in literature provided an emotional avenue for achieving pedagogic goals. Instruction in national literature introduced the pupils to a canon of values and aesthetics understood as German, and thus formed an integral part of the program to enhance the patriotic influence of secondary school education.

The interconnectedness of national and aesthetic sensibilities was an implicit, if not explicit, goal of German instruction in the higher grades of the girls' school (the *Oberstufe*). Pastor Schäfer hints at this when he states that the goal of the *höhere Töchterschule* is “den Mädchen eine Bildung zu geben, die es ihnen ermöglicht, neben ihren künftigen Pflichten, die ihnen die Sorge für das Hauswesen auferlegt, doch auch den Sinn für das Schöne und Edle zu pflegen und deutsche Sitte und Zucht zu vertreten und zu wahren.”<sup>11</sup> Cultivating a sense of appreciation for the beautiful and the noble and representing and guarding German manners and customs go hand-in-hand. Female pupils learn, implicitly, that their interest in things of aesthetic value—literature, art, and music—is not merely an extracurricular activity to pass the time, but rather, if appreciative of the proper things, comprises part of their role as middle-class German women.

Educators and publishers agreed that reading the right sort of literature would encourage girls and young women to modify their behavior, or persist in docile habits, by encouraging reader identification with an exemplary protagonist or, conversely, by deterring them from repeating the behavior of antiheroines. Otto Richter explained: “Wie dankenswert ist es, z.B. die Johanna Schiller's mit ihren Schwestern, sowie mit der Sorell; die Minna von Barnhelm mit ihrem Kammermädchen, die Leonore von Este mit der Leonore von Sanvitale zu vergleichen; wie dankenswerth



selbst, die hochherzige Dorothea der würdigen Mutter ihres Hermann gegenüberzustellen!"<sup>12</sup> Additionally, Richter explains, teachers could refer back to the Germanic sagas, to "die Gestalten einer Chriemhild und Gudrun," in order to complete a catalog of "ideale Gestalten" for girls to bear in mind.<sup>13</sup> The ideal German woman, as presented to the female pupil in secondary school in Germany in the late nineteenth century, is a poetic and mythical ideal. Biographies of female historical figures—Queen Luise, Empress Maria Theresia of Austria, Queen Elizabeth of England, Queen Kristina of Sweden—varied only slightly from their fictitious counterparts in tone and their quality as object lessons. The Mary-like cult around Queen Luise in the early years of the nineteenth century and the nationalist literature it inspired in the last decades of that same century serve as a prime example of this phenomenon.<sup>14</sup> Regardless of the biographical or mythical subject material, however, it was the manner in which girl readers absorbed these stories—their ability to identify with exemplary protagonists and use the example provided by these women to help shape their own lives and values—that was the most significant aspect of histories for girls.

Literature enjoyed special focus in *höhere Töchterschulen* for yet another reason. Since most pupils were preparing for a future as wives and mothers, reading and an appreciation for literature was the one thing that they could almost assuredly take with them when they left school around the age of sixteen. Given their increasingly representative function in middle- and upper-middle-class households in Germany in the last decades of the nineteenth century, women had larger increments of free time on their hands than in previous generations and constituted, due in part to this, one of the largest markets for books in Germany in this period. Secondary schools for girls sought to cultivate an appreciation for a type and a manner of reading in their pupils that would, in turn, have a positive pedagogical effect not only on the pupils themselves, but also on future generations of German children. Educators consequently understood that if the young women in their classrooms were to bear the fruit of good instruction even years after they were done with formal schooling, they had to be encouraged to read once they were done with school and to read the proper sort of literature. "Bleibt ja doch die Lektüre auch für die Frau im späteren Leben das wichtigste Bildungsmittel. Hat darum die Schule gut vorgearbeitet, so erntete das Haus, die Familie die schönsten Früchte."<sup>15</sup> Thus, in addition to nurturing domestic virtues, another goal of girls' secondary education was to foster an enthusiasm about German literature and German history that would carry into adulthood and influence their reading behavior.

The pedagogical and societal focus on women in the private sphere belies, however, the representative and nationalist function of women and girls in the late nineteenth century, and especially during the *Kaiserreich*.