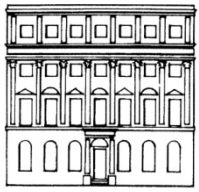
German Historical Institute
London



BULLETIN

ISSN 0269-8552

Johanna Gehmacher:
In/visible Transfers: Translation as a Crucial Practice in Transnational Women's Movements around 1900
German Historical Institute London Bulletin, Vol 41, No. 2
(November 2019), pp3-44

ARTICLES

IN/VISIBLE TRANSFERS: TRANSLATION AS A CRUCIAL PRACTICE IN TRANSNATIONAL WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS AROUND 1900

JOHANNA GEHMACHER

I. *Introduction*

Feminism as a Symptom

Since the nineteenth century, in one way or another, gender relations have been a contentious issue in societies across the globe. The various ways in which gender differences were established, transformed, and upheld, as well as their symbolic usages, became characteristic for modernizing societies and the national, multinational, and imperial identities they developed. As a result, in many countries women challenged gender hierarchies that were, to a large extent, to their disadvantage. However, they did so in different ways. Women envisaged diverse paths to, and different concepts of, what they saw as a just relationship between the sexes. In the same way that there are different modernities, modernizing societies were neither all based on the same gender regimes, nor did they all produce the same kind of women's movement. However, what many of them did have in common was that at some point their asymmetrical gender order was challenged by various forms of women's activism. In the course of the twentieth century the term 'feminism' has become a shortcut to describe these developments, although by no means all historical protagonists later associated with the term would have identified with it at the time.

Thanks to Tobias Becker, Angela Davies, Emily Richards, Elizabeth Harvey, and Michael Schaich for their critical reading and helpful comments pertaining to historical context as well as to language. I would also like to thank the German Historical Institute London, the London School of Economics and Political Science, and the Gerda Henkel Stiftung for the opportunity to research and write this article during a wonderful year as Gerda Henkel Visiting Professor in London.

Feminism takes place in different languages and idioms. Scholars analysing historical gender regimes and women's activisms in different countries, empires, and colonies have criticized notions of what is seen as avant-garde, and what is seen as belated, in Western and non-Western countries respectively. They have called for greater attention to be paid to the 'contemporary-ness'[1] of feminist discourses in many places. More specifically, Marilyn Booth has suggested that we 'think of feminism as . . . coevally produced across locales' and with 'a notion of contemporaneity that recognises difference but does not hierarchise it'.[2] The very term 'feminism' itself, as well as parallel expressions, moving through time, fields of agency, languages, and disciplines since the beginning of the twentieth century, can be analysed as a 'travelling concept' that has a sinuous career of changing meanings.[3] Historians, as well as scholars of translation studies, have addressed various uses, ideas, and ideologies that were linked to the word and the concept, and have argued both for and against a generalizing use of the term feminism in scholarly research.[4] They have done so in the context of a broader analysis of the gendered binaries, asymmetries, imbalances, and in/visibilities that are established and translated through languages.[5] That said, translation itself

[1] Kathryn Gleadle and Zoë Thomas, 'Global Feminisms, *c.*1870–1930: Vocabularies and Concepts. A Comparative Approach', *Women's History Review*, 27 (2017), 1209–24, at 1214.

[2] Marilyn Booth, 'Peripheral Visions: Translational Polemics and Feminist Arguments in Colonial Egypt', in Anna Ball and Karim Mattar (eds.), *The Edinburgh Companion to the Postcolonial Middle East* (Edinburgh, 2018), 183–212, at 185.

[3] Mieke Bal, *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities: A Rough Guide* (Toronto, 2002).

[4] Karen Offen, 'Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach', *Signs*, 14/1 (1988), 119–57, republished in Gisela Bock and Susan James (eds.), *Beyond Equality and Difference: Citizenship, Feminist Politics and Female Subjectivity* (London, 1992), 69–88, for a critical discussion see Nancy F. Cott, 'Comment on Karen Offen's "Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach"', *Signs*, 15/1 (1989), 203–5; Karen Offen, 'Reply to Cott', ibid. 206–9; in a broader sense, Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (London, 1994); June Hannam, *Feminism* (Harlow, 2006).

[5] Luise von Flotow, *Translation and Gender: Translating in the 'Era of Feminism'* (London, 1997, repub. 2016); Olga Castro and Emek Ergun (eds.), *Feminist Translation Studies: Local and Transnational Perspectives* (New York, 2017);

is a complex practice that creates and traverses transnational spaces. While it has to tackle different concepts of gender, identity, community, and the individual in different cultures, translation also takes place in hierarchical political and economic spaces. Accompanying global relations of political dominance and economic inequality, languages were given different value and offered, and still offer, unequal chances to make their speakers' ideas heard on a transnational level.

Moreover, historians of feminism are confronted with the fact that feminism is both a term used in historical sources in a variety of ways and an analytical concept in the context of feminist theory. Following Caroline Arni, this article argues that historians should bring a critically reflexive approach to anachronisms (embracing rather than rejecting them), and at the same time radically historicize both historical expressions and analytical concepts.[6] Substantial research has already been carried out in this field. In the course of a critical assessment of conceptual history, Gisela Bock has analysed the history of the German term 'emancipation' and its parallel concepts. Among the latter, she also looked into feminism, which made its first appearance in that language around 1900.[7] Reflecting a workshop held in Oxford in 2017, Kathryn Gleadle and Zoë Thomas differentiated various terms by which activism against gender injustice had been identified around the world and discussed the appropriateness of the analytical concept of feminism in these contexts.[8]

Building on these and similar studies, in this article I start from the assumption that the term feminism can neither be conceived as one single concept nor as one neatly defined historical movement.

Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Transmission* (London, 1996).

[6] Caroline Arni, 'Zeitlichkeit, Anachronismus und Anachronien: Gegenwart und Transformationen der Geschlechtergeschichte aus geschichtstheoretischer Perspektive', *L'Homme,* 18/2 (2007), 53–76, 65–68.

[7] Gisela Bock, 'Begriffsgeschichten: "Frauenemanzipation" im Kontext der Emanzipationsbewegungen des 19. Jahrhunderts', in ead., *Geschlechtergeschichten der Neuzeit: Ideen, Politik, Praxis* (Göttingen, 2014), 100–52, 126–8; see also Johanna Gehmacher, 'Frauenfrage—Frauenbewegung: Historisierung als politische Strategie', in Burcu Dogramaci and Guenther Sandner (eds.), *Rosa und Anna Schapire: Sozialwissenschaft, Kunstgeschichte und Feminismus um 1900* (Berlin, 2017), 82–101.

[8] Gleadle and Thomas, 'Global Feminisms', 1210–13.

Rather, I claim that its use or that of parallel expressions in a specific historical situation should be read as a symptom, a signpost to constellations and conflicts that need further inspection. The occurrence of such expressions should become a starting point for the analysis of concepts and contexts, networks and practices of very different forms of activism aimed at changing gender relations to women's advantage. In the context of this analysis, I will, for the sake of clarity, avoid using the term 'feminism' as an analytical concept. I do, however, use the attribute and the noun 'feminist', in a broad sense, to describe spaces, organizations, or personalities devoted to the improvement of the situation of women, to an expansion of their chances and rights.

In the following, I will consider some conceptual frameworks for this analysis. More specifically, I will discuss approaches to women's activism on a global scale as well as concepts of transnational history, translation history, practice theory, and biographical research. In the second step, I will introduce the case of Käthe Schirmacher, and the part she played in circulating feminist ideas between various European countries. I will conclude by discussing the relevance of practices of cultural transfer in creating and maintaining transnational spaces of European and transatlantic women's movements around 1900. More specifically, I will argue that translators had a crucial but often veiled part to play in the globalizing arena of women's movements before the First World War.

II. *Concepts*

Women's Activism in Different Places

The global scale of women's activism[9] does not mean that there was ever such a thing as one single women's movement. Historians of feminist and non-feminist women's movements, and of international and transnational women's networks and associations have shown the various, often conflicting, approaches of research into those his-

[9] For a plea for the broad term 'women's activism' to be used in German-language research see Susan Zimmermann, 'Auf dem Weg zu einer Geschichte der vielen Geschichten des Frauen-Aktivismus weltweit', in Johanna Gehmacher and Natascha Vittorelli (eds.), *Wie Frauenbewegung geschrieben wird: Historiographie, Dokumentation, Stellungnahmen, Bibliographien* (Innsbruck, 2009), 63–80.

tories. They have highlighted the power relations and global hierarchies among them, as well as the tensions entailed in these movements' attachment to various political issues.[10] Historians of women's movements have shown how liberal European feminists, willingly or unwillingly, legitimized and reinforced imperialist policies,[11] while scholars of colonial and postcolonial studies have elaborated on how Western gender images lead to the homogeneous concept of a 'Third World Difference'. In a seminal article, Chandra Talpade Mohanty criticized the notion of a 'stable, ahistorical something that apparently oppresses most if not all the women in these countries' through which Western feminisms appropriated 'the fundamental complexities and conflicts which characterize the lives of women of different classes, religions, cultures, races and castes' to support their cause.[12] Feminist historians have also analysed the ways in which various political movements included and, at the same time, often marginalized gender issues.[13] Studies of racism and nationalism have demonstrated that identities of nationality, ethnicity, and race were inextricably linked with ideas of femininity and masculinity.[14]

In the course of their critical reflection of earlier approaches, feminist scholars have developed transnational perspectives on women's activism on a global scale. These efforts can build on long-standing

[10] Francisca de Haan, Margaret Allen, June Purvis, and Krassimira Daskalova (eds.), *Women's Activism: Global Perspectives from the 1890s to the Present* (New York, 2013).

[11] Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865–1915* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1994); Sumita Mukherjee, *Indian Suffragettes: Female Identities and Transnational Networks* (Oxford, 2018).

[12] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', *Feminist Review*, 30/1 (1988), 61–88, republished in Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (eds.), *The Postcolonial Studies Reader* (London, 2001), 259–63, at 260; see also Sara Suleri, 'Woman Skin Deep: Feminism and the Postcolonial Condition', in Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (eds.), *The Postcolonial Studies Reader*, 273–80.

[13] E.g. Marilyn J. Boxer, 'Rethinking the Socialist Construction and International Career of the Concept "Bourgeois Feminism"', *American Historical Review*, 112/1 (2007), 131–58.

[14] Anne McClintock, '"No Longer in a Future Heaven": Gender, Race and Nationalism', in ead., Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat (eds.), *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation and Postcolonial Perspectives* (Minneapolis, 1998), 89–112.

commitments in women's and gender history to go beyond national frameworks.[15] However, although the call to provincialize Europe has spurred a variety of new perspectives on global and transnational history, this cannot entail a history 'on equal terms' without a reference point that defines equality.[16] Therefore, this article argues that a critical analysis of gender orders and gender inequality in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries should build on the concept of modernization as a driving force without stipulating one singular concept of modernity.[17]

Further to that, any transnational approach has to meet methodological challenges of command of languages and availability of sources. Archives more often than not impose the historical perspective of those who were in power. The spread of languages and the availability of translations also strongly reflect global relations. That said, a seemingly global perspective still can reproduce transnational hierarchies and blank out marginalized histories in global peripheries. Education systems that support a hierarchy of languages as well as long-standing archival practices have institutionalized hierarchies that inevitably lead to methodological nationalism that cannot be avoided just by the wish to do so. Therefore, I want to clarify that although protagonists in the networks discussed below claimed that they were speaking for the world as a whole, this article will not support their claim. Moreover, as it relies on sources from European contexts and upon knowledge of European languages only, the article can only develop a fragmentary perspective on transnational women's networks.

[15] Karen Offen, *European Feminisms 1700–1950: A Political History* (Stanford, Calif., 2000); Glenda Sluga, '"Spectacular Feminism": The International History of Women, World Citizenship and Human Rights', in de Haan, Allen, Purvis, and Daskalova (eds.), *Women's* Activism, 44–58.

[16] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, 2000); for a critical discussion of the concept of a history on equal terms see Carola Dietze, 'Toward a History on Equal Terms: A Discussion of Provincializing Europe', *History and Theory,* 47 (Feb. 2008), 69–84; Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'In Defense of Provincializing Europe: A Response to Carola Dietze', ibid. 85–96.

[17] Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, 'Multiple Modernities', *Daedalus,* 129/1 (2000), 1–29.

Transnational History

It has been claimed that transnational, entangled, and global histories no longer have to be defended. Rather, Angelika Epple holds that approaches based on methodological nationalism do not count as 'state of the art' any more in historical research. Those who do *not* use any kind of relational perspective (the notion she uses to include the various concepts) nowadays have to explain their narrow focus.[18] Although it might, therefore, appear to be obsolete to repeat all the valuable arguments that have been raised for a non-national perspective in history over the last decades, concepts such as global, transnational, or entangled history still have to be defended against the prevalence of national perspectives. This is complicated by the fact that they do not necessarily provide a stable theoretical and methodological basis for research. For one thing, this is due to conflicting and overlapping concepts of comparative, entangled, global, transnational, and relational histories that can be traced back to the contentious history of the historical discipline since the 1970s and the many turns this entailed.[19] Here I use the term transnational to emphasize this article's partial perspective. What is more, the reference to the concept of the national can also reflect that Western women's movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had a strong relationship to the nation-state.

In a frequently cited definition, Akira Iriye and Pierre-Ives Saunier delineated transnational approaches as dealing with the 'links and flows' of 'people, ideas, products, processes and patterns that operate over, across, through, beyond, above, under, or in-between polities and societies', a concept that has been criticized for its vagueness.[20] In a more recent text Saunier defined transnational history as being a way of historicizing 'contacts between communi-

[18] Angelika Epple, 'Relationale Geschichtsschreibung: Gegenstand, Erkenntnisinteresse und Methode globaler und weltregionaler Geschichtsschreibung', online at <www.hsozkult.de/debate/id/diskussionen-4291>, accessed 2 Feb. 2017.

[19] For a concise historiographical overview of how the term has been used since the 1970s see Patricia Clavin, 'Defining Transnationalism', *Contemporary European History,* 14/4 (Nov. 2005), 421–39.

[20] Akira Iriye and Pierre-Yves Saunier (eds.), *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History* (Basingstoke, 2009), p. xiviii; for a critical discussion see Kiran Klaus Patel, 'Transnational History', *EGO European History* Online, e-pub 3

ties, polities and societies', and as an analytical strategy to deconstruct the co-construction of the 'foreign' and the 'domestic', as well as the analysis of, often veiled, 'trends, patterns, organizations and individuals' that 'have been living in between and through these . . . entities'.[21] Given the multiplicity of possible subjects that this entails, such a thing as *one* methodology of transnational history while avoiding the establishment of sub-disciplines seems to be unattainable. Probably, it can most appositely be characterized as a special point of view, a 'transnational perspective'.[22]

This openness can also be an asset. It provides an avenue into what Epple has suggested as a further step of relational historiography which, in her view, should not only look into flows between various social entities but also analyse how such entities are created through their relations with each other.[23]

This questioning of pre-established entities connects transnational history and women's and gender history. Furthermore, women's and gender history and transnational history likewise take the development of the modern nation-state of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as an important context and question the limitation of analysis to a national arena. Historians of women's movements have looked into relations and networks beyond national boundaries for a long time and have engaged with transnational perspectives in many ways.[24] However, historians who were instrumental in developing

Dec. 2010, p. 1 <http://www.ieg-ego.eu/patelk-2010-en)>, accessed 25 July 2019.

[21] Pierre-Yves Saunier, *Transnational History: Introduction* (Basingstoke, 2014), 8.

[22] Ann Taylor Allen, 'Lost in Translation? Women's History in Transnational and Comparative Perspective', in Anne Cova (ed.), *Comparative Women's History: New Approaches* (New York, 2006), 87–115, at 89–90.

[23] Epple, 'Relationale Geschichtsschreibung'.

[24] E.g. Leila Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of an International Women's Movement* (Princeton, 1997); Mrinalini Sinha, Donna Guy, and Angela Woollacott (eds.), *Feminisms and Internationalism* (Oxford, 1999); Karen Offen, 'Understanding International Feminisms as "Transnational": An Anachronism? May Wright Sewall and the Creation of the International Council of Women, 1889–1904', in Oliver Janz and Daniel Schönpflug (eds.), *Gender History in a Transnational Perspective: Networks, Biographies, Gender Orders* (New York, 2014); Madeleine Herren, 'Sozialpolitik und die Historisierung des Transnationalen', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft,* 32/4 (Oct. 2006), 542–59; Clare

the field of transnational history sometimes failed to acknowledge the contribution of gender historians.[25]

In their introduction to an influential anthology on gender history from a transnational perspective, Oliver Janz and Daniel Schönpflug include questions of comparison when they define transnational history as an approach that looks at 'similarities of and differences between national spheres' while it is 'aware of the hierarchies and asymmetries' that characterize these spheres. For a gender analysis, their focus on 'effects of appropriation, refusal, reinterpretation and translation' is especially relevant.[26] They distinguish three perspectives in feminist research: different gender orders, transnational biographies, and transnational networks. The latter they characterize as 'transnational spaces [which] are also likely to . . . develop specific features that cannot be traced back to their national origins'.[27]

These 'spaces' evolving between national spaces turned out to be particularly interesting for historians of women's movements. The spread and diversification of civil societies that took place in many industrialized countries during the second half of the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century had an important transnational dynamic. That said, this development did not necessarily question the national concepts of identity and politics. Rather, as Dominik Geppert remarks, historians of globalization have argued that 'transnational interactions' have 'aided the formation and consolidation' of national boundaries.[28] Movements and networks that considered themselves as 'international' developed in dense interaction with national movements, connecting them, and sometimes also initiating them, providing them with concepts, models, and strategies. As information on initiatives in another region or country can motivate

Midgley, Alison Twells, and Julie Carlier (eds.), *Women in Transnational History: Connecting the Local and the Global* (London, 2016).

[25] For a recent example see Thomas Adam, 'Transnational History: A Program for Research, Publishing, and Teaching', *Yearbook of Transnational History,* 1 (2018), 1–10.

[26] Janz and Schönpflug (eds.), *Gender History in a Transnational Perspective*, 4.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Dominik Geppert, 'National Expectations and Transnational Infrastructure: The Media, Global News Coverage, and International Relations in the Age of High Imperialism', *German Historical Institute London Bulletin*, 39/2 (2017), 21–42, at 22.

similar activism at a distance, the relationship between different forms of activism is often complex.

Historians of women's movements have pointed to considerable tensions between the 'international' and the 'transnational'. Taking the example of the multinational Habsburg Monarchy, Susan Zimmermann has argued that as the participation in an international association like the International Council of Women required the formation of a 'national' league of women's associations on a state level, going international actually spurred national conflict and nationalism at home.[29] Julie Carlier and Corinna Oesch have both demonstrated that transnational women's organizations of the late nineteenth century which were not structured by the membership of national leagues indeed met with considerable difficulties and could not survive for very long.[30]

Practices

The extent to which transnational spaces have generated institutionalized frameworks varies widely. However, the instances above illustrate the precarious character of transnational spaces and point to the fact that they have to be constantly nurtured and upheld. I claim here that the various relations of exchange between social and political movements, regional and global, would not have worked without the help of a set of cultural practices such as travelling, hosting, and corresponding (to name only a few), which need to be investigated in more detail. To develop and persist, transnational spaces require that people engage in 'doing transnational' in some way, usually in the shape of various practices.

In recent years, the concept of practice, as developed by practice theory, has increasingly informed methodological approaches in sev-

[29] Susan Zimmermann, 'The Challenge of Multinational Empire for the International Women's Movement: The Habsburg Monarchy and the Development of Feminist Inter/National Politics', *Journal of Women's History,* 17/2 (2005), 87–117.

[30] Julie Carlier, 'Forgotten Transnational Connections and National Contexts: An "Entangled History" of the Political Transfers that Shaped Belgian Feminism, 1890–1914', *Women's History Review,* 19/4 (2010), 503–22; Corinna Oesch, 'Internationale Frauenbewegungen: Perspektiven einer Begriffsgeschichte und einer Transnationalen Geschichte', *Traverse: Zeitschrift für Geschichte,* 22/2 (2016), 25–37.

eral humanities disciplines. However, this needs to be adapted for research specifically about transnational women's networks and organizations. Early on, feminist theory related to the theory of symbolic interactionism. In a seminal article, Candace West and Don H. Zimmermann argued that gender differences are created in ongoing daily interactions.[31] Therefore, patterns of practices that accomplish and corroborate specific notions of (gender) difference in a society need to be analysed and deconstructed. More recently, Susanne Völker has set out the uses of practice theory and a praxeological approach for research on women and gender and has highlighted the long-standing ties between practice theory and gender research by pointing to the concepts of 'doing gender' and 'doing difference'.[32]

Likewise, research on international relations has embraced the concept of practices to explain the development of rules in the transnational field of military conflict and diplomatic exchange.[33] Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot have argued that the analysis of transnational exchanges of all sorts cannot solely rely on addressing the interplay between ideological perspectives and power structures but also has to take into account routines of communication, rituals, bureaucratic practices, and personal relationships. They define practices as 'socially meaningful patterns of action, which, in being performed more or less competently, simultaneously embody, act out, and possibly reify background knowledge and discourse in and on the material world'.[34] They point to the epistemic dimension of practices which unfold in the repetition and variation of patterns rooted in social structures. That said, this does not imply a simple reproduction of a given order but entails agency; actors can create alterations and thereby establish new meanings.[35]

[31] Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman, 'Doing Gender', *Gender and Society*, 1 (1987), 125–51; see also Candace West and Sarah Fenstermaker, 'Doing Difference', *Gender and Society*, 9 (1995), 8–37.

[32] Susanne Völker, 'Praxeologie und Praxistheorie: Resonanzen und Debatten in der Geschlechterforschung', in Beate Kortendiek, Birgit Riegraf, and Katja Sabisch (eds.), *Handbuch Interdisziplinäre Geschlechterforschung* (Wiesbaden 2019), 509–17.

[33] Emanuel Adler and Vincent Pouliot, 'International Practices', *International Theory,* 3/1 (2011), 1–36.

[34] Ibid. 4.

[35] Ibid. 20.

Adler and Pouilot particularly emphasize that a focus on practices can dissolve dichotomies as the former partake in continuity and change, link individual and structural aspects, and are both material and meaningful.[36] However, they completely fail to include a gender perspective, although the new diplomatic history, albeit slowly, has begun to recognize the relevance of gender aspects in its research.[37]

This article takes inspiration both from the concept of gender differences that are established in everyday practice, and from the new interest in practices that constitute and change rules of communication in international relations. It argues that a focus on practices will help us to understand a vital aspect of transnational and international relations, not only on the level of governments but also when considering non-governmental networks and transnational movements. Here, I want to argue that gender history could benefit from a perspective on practices that is not limited to the production of (gender) difference but includes a variety of patterns of communication in women's networks as well as in mixed spaces. Likewise, I argue that research on international relations and diplomacy could profit from the inclusion of gender on a practical as well as on a symbolic level of analysis.[38]

Translating

Among the practices that support governmental and non-governmental transnational networks, translation plays an important role. Translation studies have pointed to various aspects in which translation needs to be analysed as gendered.[39] These include the agency of those who translate, the variations of meanings of gender in different

[36] Ibid. 15–18.

[37] Karin Aggestam and Ann Towns, 'The Gender Turn in Diplomacy: A New Research Agenda', *International Feminist Journal of Politics,* 21/1 (2018), 9–28.

[38] For an exemplary perspective see Susanna Erlandsson, 'Off the Record: Margaret von Kleffens and the Gendered History of Dutch World War II Diplomacy', *International Feminist Journal of Politics,* (2018), 29–46; for a methodological perspective in global history see Angelika Epple, 'Calling for a Practice Turn in Global History: Practices as Drivers of Globalization', *History and Theory*, 57/3 (2018), 390–407.

[39] Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies* (London, 2014); Eleonora Federici and Vanessa Leonardi (eds.), *Bridging the Gap between Theory and Practice in Translation and Gender Studies* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2013); Cornelia Möser,

cultural contexts, and the analysis of gendered metaphors of translation. Luise von Flotow and Lawrence Venuti have both called into question the invisibility of the translator.[40] While Flotow particularly points to the hidden work of women translators, Venuti criticizes the ideal of 'transparent' translation that leaves the reader with the impression of reading the original and erases linguistic and cultural differences.[41] This ideal obfuscates the work and process of translation and veils slippages of meaning as well as decisions that have to be made during that process.[42] The same strategy also renders the person who does this work invisible. Taking into account that at least during the twentieth century the vast majority of translators were women, this effectively means that the work of women is blanked out from research on transnational and international relations.[43]

What renders translation specifically challenging are the many instances where, due to cultural differences, the literal and the metaphorical vary. The literal translation of a metaphor used for a joke or out of politeness can destroy the meaning of what was said. On the other hand, to find a comparable metaphor in the target language always entails a transformation of meaning as the translated metaphor alludes to different cultural practices and meanings. These precarious decisions are as unavoidable as they are, indeed, essential for the quality of a translation. Sherry Simon has pointed to the gendered metaphors through which they are discussed: fidelity of meaning and beauty of language.[44] The example demonstrates that gender is a powerful metaphor that pervades languages. However, it also has various meanings in different languages.

As a discursive construct, gender is built on the gender order in a specific society while also stabilizing this same order. Since the 1980s

Féminismes en traductions. Théories voyageuses et traductions culturelles (Paris, 2013); Flotow, *Translation and Gender*; Castro and Ergun, *Feminist Translation Studies*; see also Andrea Rizzi, Birgit Lang, and Anthony Pym, *What Is Translation History? A Trust-Based Approach* (forthcoming London, 2019).

40 Flotow, *Translation and Gender*; Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London, 2008).

41 Flotow, *Translation and Gender*, 30–1; Lawrence Venuti, *Translation Changes Everything: Theory and Practice* (London, 2013), 117.

42 Venuti, *Translator's Invisibility*, 17.

43 Simon, *Gender in Translation*, 1.

44 Ibid. 10–11.

feminist translation studies have pointed to the practical and ethical questions which this entails. While the variations in meaning of loaded concepts such as femininity or masculinity are difficult to translate, this is not only a practical question of translation. It also implicates political decisions that form part of the translator's agency. The way translators interpret gendered images or concepts of femininity, how they deal with the grammatical visibilities and invisibilities of gender has effects on what impact a translated text will have in another society.[45] When these questions are taken into account, translation can also become a feminist practice.[46] Feminist translation studies have also pointed to the considerable imbalances of the flows of translation that pertain to political hierarchies between societies, to the inequality of languages, as well as to the gender of translated authors. The spread of specific European concepts of gender in colonial and postcolonial societies is only one of the effects of these complex relations between societies and languages.[47]

Discussing the challenges of an interdisciplinary approach to cultural phenomena, Mieke Bal used the metaphor of travel to describe the circulation of scientific concepts. In doing this, she inserted time and place into a concept and thereby addressed the situatedness of knowledge.[48] Bal does not shun the insecurity this entails but rather embraces the possibilities that emerge through an analysis of what happens between the more stable moments of a concept for which we, of course, always strive. She, therefore, contends that 'concepts are not fixed. They travel—between disciplines, between individual scholars, between historical periods and between geographically dispersed academic communities.' Therefore, their 'meaning, reach, and operational value' differ between disciplines. In her methodology Bal

[45] Lawrence Venuti, 'Local Contingencies: Translation and National Identities', in id., *Translation Changes Everything,* 116–40.

[46] Maud Anne Bracke, Penelope Morris, and Emily Ryder, 'Introduction. Translating Feminism: Transfer, Transgression, Transformation (1950s–1980s)', *Gender and History,* 30/1 (2018), 214–25.

[47] Simon, *Gender in Translation*; Booth, 'Peripheral Visions'; see also Marilyn Booth (ed.), *Migrating Texts: Circulating Translations around the Ottoman Mediterranean* (Oxford, 2019).

[48] On the situatedness of knowledge see Donna Haraway, 'The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies*, 14/3 (1988), 575–99.

takes these differences seriously. She holds that 'processes of differing need to be assessed before, during and after each "trip"'.[49] Here, I want to broaden the use of Bal's approach and use the idea of concepts as travelling in a wider sense when I look into the term feminism as also moving between national and political spaces. Thereby I also follow the example of Ann Taylor Allen, who demonstrated the relevance of conceptual history for transnational history when she analysed various concepts of motherhood and their uses and circulation among women's movements in France, Germany, and the United Kingdom before the First World War.[50] Her work particularly emphasizes that an approach that actively addresses slippages of meaning instead of avoiding the semantic uncertainties that so often occur in the interstices between languages can open up new perspectives. It can thereby contribute to comparative historical analysis in a very productive way.

Biography

In spite of all the advantages of the concept, the openness of transnational history also involves difficulties. To provide and maintain a transnational perspective requires a subject that sustains a certain degree of consistency while it transgresses borders. It needs an entity or a defined context that can be linked to a delimitable body of sources. One way of meeting this challenge has been to focus on preconstructed subjects such as transnational organizations. Another way has been to analyse one particular type of policy. Reconstructing (hierarchical) relations of economic or cultural exchange between two or more societies by way of certain commodities or concepts has also proved to be rewarding. Quite a few historians, however, have examined various kinds of transnational biographies to explore diversity beyond national spaces.[51] These studies focus on various (chosen

[49] Mieke Bal, 'Working with Concepts', *European Journal of English Studies,* 13/1 (Apr. 2009), 13–23, at 20.

[50] Allen, 'Lost in Translation?', 99–100.

[51] Hannes Schweiger, 'Identitäten mit Bindestrich: Biographien von Migrantinnen', in Bernhard Fetz und Hannes Schweiger (eds.), *Spiegel und Maske: Konstruktionen biographischer Wahrheit* (Vienna, 2006), 175–88; Claudia Ulbrich, Hans Medick, and Angelika Schaser (eds.), *Selbstzeugnis und Person: Transkulturelle Perspektiven* (Cologne, 2012); Thomas Keller, 'Transkulturelle

as well as imposed) experiences and itineraries that can include singular migrations as well as continuous mobility. However, sometimes research on political movements that includes biographical material encounters a difficulty in gauging the ratio between structural and individual forces. The use of the term 'leader(s)' often reveals a very specific (hierarchical) conception of a political movement. There are, however, also more diverse biographical approaches to transnational women's movements. Some of them provide a large number of biographies from diverse countries;[52] others reflect the transnational lives of cosmopolitan personalities who in various ways established and maintained transnational relations.[53]

For several decades now, biographical research of all kinds has experienced severe methodological and theoretical debates that both denounced biography as an illusion and proclaimed its rebirth.[54] Feminist scholars, for their part, have strongly criticized the ideolog-

Biographik und Kulturgeschichte: Deutsch-Französische Lebensgeschichten', *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur,* 38/1 (2013), 121–71; Katharina Prager, 'Exemplary Lives? Thoughts on Exile, Gender and Life-Writing', in Charmian Brinson and Andrea Hammel (eds.), *Exile and Gender*, vol. i: *Literature and the Press* (Leiden, 2016), 5–18; Levke Harders, 'Migration und Biographie: Mobile Leben beschreiben', *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften,* 29/3 (2018), 17–36.

[52] Francisca de Haan, Krassimira Daskalova, and Anna Loutfi (eds.), *A Biographical Dictionary of Women's Movements and Feminisms: Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Budapest, 2006); Marilyn Booth, *Classes of Ladies of Cloistered Spaces: Writing Feminist History through Biography in fin de siècle Egypt* (Edinburgh, 2015).

[53] Karen Hunt, '"Whirl'd through the World": The Role of Travel in the Making of Dora Montefiore', *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften,* 22/1 (2011), 41–63; Françoise Thébaud, 'What is a Transnational Life? Some Thoughts About Marguerite Thibert's Career and Life (1886–1982)', in Janz and Schönpflug (eds.), *Gender History in a Transnational Perspective*, 162–83; Myriam Everard and Francisca De Haan (eds.), *Rosa Manus (1881–1942): The International Life and Legacy of a Jewish Dutch Feminist* (Leiden, 2017).

[54] Pierre Bourdieu, 'Die biographische Illusion', *Bios: Zeitschrift für Biographieforschung und Oral History,* 1/1990, 75–81; Ulrich Raulff, 'Das Leben—buchstäblich: Über neuere Biographik und Geschichtswissenschaft', in Christian Klein (ed.), *Grundlagen der Biographik: Theorie und Praxis des biographischen Schreibens* (Stuttgart, 2002), 55–68.

ical link between masculinity, individuality, and the idea of the political subject that has deprived women not only of political rights but also of a narrative of individual agency.[55] This article suggests constructing limited cases based on biographical material. While this approach can produce differentiated knowledge about a variety of cultural and political contexts, it avoids the illusion of a 'whole' biography.[56] However, as any biographical work is entangled with the autobiographical practices and desires of the individual under scrutiny, the critical deconstruction of these practices is a prerequisite for any biographical analysis.[57]

A biographical perspective on transnational spaces allows the political and cultural contexts of which the protagonist was part to be studied in a productive way. Likewise, it illustrates various practices that are or were specific to a transnational life, and provides insights into intangible transfers of concepts and ideologies. In the following, this article will use the case of the transnational life of Käthe Schirmacher to illustrate some benefits of this approach.

[55] Liz Stanley, *The Auto/Biographical I: The Theory and Practice of Feminist Autobiography* (Manchester, 1992); Anne-Kathrin Reulecke, '"Die Nase der Lady Hester": Überlegungen zum Verhältnis von Biographie und Geschlechterdifferenz' (1993), in Bernhard Fetz and Wilhelm Hemecker (eds.), *Theorie der Biographie: Grundlagentexte und Kommentar* (Berlin, 2011), 317–39; Bettina Dausien, 'Geschlecht und Biografie: Anmerkungen zu einem vielschichtigen theoretischen Zusammenhang', in Ingrid Miethe, Claudia Kajatin, and Jana Pohl (eds.), *Geschlechterkonstruktionen in Ost und West: Biografische Perspektiven* (Münster, 2004), 19–44; Esther Marian, 'Zum Zusammenhang von Biographie, Subjektivität und Geschlecht', in Bernhard Fetz and Hannes Schweiger (eds.), *Die Biographie: Zur Grundlegung ihrer Theorie* (Berlin, 2009), 169–97.

[56] Johanna Gehmacher, 'A Case for Female Individuality: Käthe Schirmacher—Self-Invention and Biography', in Joy Damousi, Birgit Lang, and Katie Sutton (eds.), *Case Studies and the Dissemination of Knowledge* (New York, 2015), 66–79.

[57] Johanna Gehmacher, 'Leben schreiben: Stichworte zur biografischen Thematisierung als historiografisches Format', in Lucile Dreidemy, Elisabeth Röhrlich, Richard Hufschmied, Agnes Meisinger, and Florian Wenninger (eds.), *Bananen, Cola, Zeitgeschichte: Oliver Rathkolb und das lange 20. Jahrhundert*, 2 vols. (Vienna, 2015), ii. 1013–26; Carl Pletsch, 'On the Autobiographical Life of Nietzsche', in George Moraitis (ed.), *Psychoanalytic Studies of Biography* (Madison, 1987), 405–34.

That said, considerable methodological problems arise when researching a transnational life. Sources on transnational lives are often stored in unexpected contexts; they may be held in multiple countries, or they may have been redefined in a new political context that reduces them to a national political perspective. In the case of Schirmacher, we do, however, have access to the extensive personal papers she left to the University Library of Rostock.[58] These papers are organized around her later nationalistic political views. The autobiographical desire expressed in Schirmacher's papers partly consists of the wish to produce a continuous narrative that shows her feminist activities as part of a patriotic commitment. Provided this frame is properly analysed and deconstructed, these papers represent an extremely valuable collection of sources relating to international women's movements at the turn of the twentieth century. They also record transnational cultural practices that played an essential role in the creation of internationally connected civil spaces that developed rapidly at that time.

III. *Case Study*

A Modern Woman

In an earlier project, together with my colleagues Elisa Heinrich and Corinna Oesch, I showed how Schirmacher deliberately constructed herself as a 'modern woman'.[59] Schirmacher, who came from an originally well-to-do German middle-class family, grew up in Danzig. There, languages met and collided: the upper and middle classes

[58] Universitätsbibliothek Rostock, Käthe Schirmacher Papers (hereafter cited as UBR: NL Sch).

[59] Johanna Gehmacher, Elisa Heinrich, and Corinna Oesch, *Käthe Schirmacher: Agitation und autobiografische Praxis zwischen radikaler Frauenbewegung und völkischer Politik* (Vienna, 2018), online at <https://schirmacherproject.univie. ac.at/buch-agitation-und-autobiografische-praxis/>, accessed 25 July 2019. This book is the product of several years of co-operation. Although the chapters are authored individually the findings are a joint enterprise. Therefore this article is also indebted to my co-authors. For reflections on Schirmacher as a mediator between countries and languages see ibid. 93–8, 125–32 (Gehmacher); 268–75 (Oesch); for concise biographical information on Käthe Schirmacher see ibid. 529–37.

generally spoke German, while the workers and the inhabitants of the surrounding countryside generally spoke Polish. Her father's involvement in international trade before the economic crisis of the 1870s as well as the multilingualism of her home town may both have contributed to her interest in languages. However, the Polish–German conflict in West Prussia was most likely also the background for her later nationalist stance. As a young middle-class girl in the early 1880s, Schirmacher was without a dowry because of the decline of the family business, and therefore had poor marriage prospects. However, as for many unmarried middle-class women, it was also difficult to find a way of earning her living, as barely any professions were open to women. Schirmacher's wish to study, expressed at an early age, was initially met with disapproval by her family. University studies were not held to be appropriate for women and, at that time, no German university would admit women.[60]

It was Hugo Münsterberg, later a pioneering psychologist at Harvard University, who set Schirmacher on the path to becoming a translator when he was only a student in his first semester. Schirmacher began to exchange letters with her sister's brother-in-law when she was 16 years old. She already had ambitions to become a student herself, but her correspondent advised strongly against that idea, giving her lurid impressions of how badly the male students treated their female fellow-students in Switzerland. Instead, he came up with a suggestion closely linked to his own needs: he was very interested in new developments in the humanities taking place in the English-speaking world. But as young, middle-class, German men at grammar school learned Greek and Latin instead of modern languages, he did not know English. Young, middle-class, German women, meant to be wives of educated men, however, often learned some French and English as part of their education. Münsterberg suggested to his young relative that she should study the English and French books he would send her. She should improve her language skills as much as possible and likewise keep pace with him in his own discipline. They would form a perfect working couple in the aca-

[60] Edith Glaser, '"Sind Frauen studierfähig?" Vorurteile gegen das Frauenstudium', in Claudia Opitz and Elke Kleinau (eds.), *Geschichte der Mädchen- und Frauenbildung*, vol ii: *Vom Vormärz bis zur Gegenwart* (Frankfurt am Main, 1996), 299–309.

demic field. By translating academic books, she could incrementally become an academic herself, first only giving explanations about her own translations, at a later stage also writing introductions to texts she had translated, and, finally, becoming respected as an academic in her own right.[61]

Learning modern languages, was, indeed, a more accepted path to refining a middle-class girl's education. Schirmacher's choice of discipline, therefore, can probably be seen as a way of reconciling her thirst for knowledge with social expectations.[62] Equally, the idea of an academic working couple as envisaged by the young Münsterberg eventually became a widespread model of the mostly invisible inclusion of the intellectual work of women in academic work.

However, Schirmacher's ambitions soon went beyond becoming the educated, supportive wife of a prominent male figure. From 1886 onwards she studied German and French in Paris to become probably the first German woman to earn a French university diploma. After that, she served as a teacher at Blackburne House School in Liverpool and studied at University College Liverpool during the same year. A few years later, she was among the very few German women to study at the University of Zurich at a time when Switzerland was virtually the only country on the Continent to accept female students. In 1895, again a pioneer, she received a Ph.D. in Romance Languages from the University of Zurich.[63]

Schirmacher's trajectory was exceptional in many respects, and her achievements soon won her a high public profile. However, she had to accept that her ambitious goal of becoming a professor (at a time when no European woman was admitted to this position) was unattainable. Instead, she embarked on a career as a lecturer, writer, and activist. Her language skills were essential for that career. For many years, translating was also a way of earning money for her. What is more, her multilingualism also paved her way into journalism and led her into the transnational space of women's activism.

Between 1895 and 1910 Schirmacher lived in Paris. She worked as a journalist and lecturer for several women's organizations as well as

[61] UBR: NL Sch 522/007, Hugo Münsterberg to Käthe Schirmacher, 6 Aug. 1882.
[62] Gehmacher, Heinrich, and Oesch, *Käthe Schirmacher,* 42–55 (Gehmacher).
[63] Ibid. 151–8 (Gehmacher).

Fig. 1: International Women's Congress, Berlin 1904, delegates. Käthe Schirmacher on the right, wearing a hat.

Source: UBR: NL Sch 754/013

for the International Abolitionist Federation.[64] Eventually she became a founding member of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (see Fig. 1). Between 1893 and 1913 she was also a regular delegate at many international women's congresses. As early as 1893, at the age of 28, she was an acclaimed speaker at the World's Congress of Representative Women in Chicago. Despite her young age, she had to give several talks, as she was the only German delegate to speak English well enough for spontaneous communication.[65]

In many of her lectures, Schirmacher discussed the difficulties she and other academic and professional women experienced. In some of these talks, she also outlined the concept of the 'modern woman'. In describing a large proportion of middle-class women as 'modern', Schirmacher highlighed a social group under considerable, often

[64] Ibid. 125–32 (Gehmacher).

[65] Johanna Gehmacher, 'Moderne Frauen, die Neue Welt und der alte Kontinent: Käthe Schirmacher reist im Netzwerk der Frauenbewegung', *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften,* 22/1 (2011), 16–40.

severe, economic stress. At the same time, she also designed the 'modern woman' as an idealized model, as somebody who not only had to be, but also *wished* to be self-reliant in every respect: 'She supports herself, and so does not want to marry in order that she may be provided for. She is fond of her work, absorbed by it, makes friends by it, is respected for it, and so need not marry in order to obtain the regard due to a useful member of society.'[66]

What needs to be emphasized here is the fact that Schirmacher could only present herself as the model of a modern woman through her transnational life of travelling and living abroad. Even to attain an academic education she had had to live far away from her home. Building on that experience, travelling became a life-long personal, economic, and political practice for her. Schirmacher was on the move for nearly half of every year, campaigning for her causes while earning her living through lecturing and writing about the countries she travelled in. What had first been a necessity soon became a lifestyle, a political agenda, and a business model. Later in her life, Schirmacher structured her travel carefully and well in advance, carrying out lecture tours during the winter months (when heating costs rose) from November until April, when she often used to visit family and friends.[67]

Schirmacher's life epitomized how individual travel can be a practice closely linked to political movements. At the end of the nineteenth century, many thousands of lecturers like her travelled along the lines of the fast-growing railway networks.[68] In return for their commit-

[66] Käthe Schirmacher, 'The Marriage Prospects of the Modern Woman: Rede gehalten auf dem Internationalen Frauen-Kongress in Chicago, am 17. Mai 1893' [Speech given at the World's Congress of Representative Women in Chicago, 17 May 1893], in Käthe Schirmacher, *Aus aller Herren Länder: Gesammelte Feuilletons* (Paris, 1897), 285–90. Original English by Käthe Schirmacher.

[67] Johanna Gehmacher, 'Reisende in Sachen Frauenbewegung: Käthe Schirmacher zwischen Internationalismus und nationaler Identifikation', *Ariadne,* 60 (2011), 58–65.

[68] Dietlind Hüchtker, 'Frauen und Männer reisen: Geschlechtsspezifische Perspektiven von Reformpolitik in Berichten über Galizien um 1900', in Arnd Bauerkämper, Hans Erich Bödeker, and Bernhard Struck (eds.), *Die Welt erfahren: Reisen als kulturelle Begegnung von 1780 bis heute* (Frankfurt am Main, 2004), 375–90; Johanna Gehmacher, 'Reisekostenabrechnung: Praktiken und Ökonomien des Unterwegsseins in Frauenbewegungen um 1900', *Feministische Studien*, 1 (2017), 76–91; Johanna Gehmacher and Elizabeth

ment to a number of causes, the organizations they were connected with supplied them with addresses, invitations, audiences, lodgings, and sometimes even fees. For Schirmacher, travelling was also a way to escape social surveillance, and it gave her the opportunity to publish her writings in German, Austrian, French, and British media. Her case shows that at a time when models of social identity seldom kept pace with technical and economic developments, transnational spaces, with the variety of expectations and opportunities they offered, could be both a refuge and a place of freedom.[69]

However, her cosmopolitan life did not keep Schirmacher from becoming a fervent nationalist. Rather, her life abroad enhanced her identification with her country of origin. Certainly, her German-nationalist stance brought her into growing conflict with some of her transnational networks. Parallel to her estrangement from the international and national organizations of the liberal women's movement, Schirmacher gradually began to participate in German-nationalist activism, most prominently in the context of the Deutscher Ostmarkenverein. During the First World War, she supported the war effort as a member of right-wing nationalist organizations.[70]

In 1919 Schirmacher won a seat in the national constituent assembly of the Weimar Republic for the Deutschnationale Volkspartei (German National People's Party), a far-right, openly antisemitic party also known for its anti-feminism and misogyny. But she lost her seat when her electoral district of Danzig was separated from Germany by the peace treaty. During the 1920s she became a venerated role model of the developing far-right women's associations. In her autobiography, written after the end of her parliamentary career, Schirmacher attempted to integrate her radical feminist and her right-wing nationalist commitments and contributed significantly to her fame in these circles.[71]

Harvey, 'Reisen als politische Praxis' (Editorial), *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften,* 22/1 (2011), 5–15.

[69] Elisa Heinrich and Corinna Oesch, 'Prekäre Strategien? Käthe Schirmachers Agieren in Frauenbewegungen vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg', *Ariadne: Forum für Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte*, 67/68 (2015), 100–8.

[70] Johanna Gehmacher, 'Der andere Ort der Welt: Käthe Schirmachers Auto/Biographie der Nation', in Sophia Kemlein (eds.), *Geschlecht und Nationalismus in Mittel- und Osteuropa 1848–1918* (Osnabrück, 2000), 99–124.

[71] Gehmacher, Heinrich, and Oesch, *Käthe Schirmacher,* 465–87 (Gehmacher).

Käthe Schirmacher died, only 65 years old, in Meran in southern Tyrol in 1930. The place of her death reflects her close connection with German nationalists there, but it is also typical of her highly mobile way of living.

Translating as an In/visible Practice

Among the various practices that make international and transnational relations possible, translating plays an important role. But although translators were indispensable in many situations, they often remained invisible. In a short memoir, Hungarian suffrage-activist Rosika Schwimmer recalled the language difficulties of early meetings of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance: 'I remember how we were sitting the whole day and disturbing each other by asking continually: "What did she say?" when the highly envied few linguists among us showed by signs of appreciation or opposition that they knew what was going on.' Schwimmer reminisced about a warm embrace from Susan B. Anthony, whose words she barely grasped, to epitomize the emotional atmosphere full of admiration and geniality that bridged the lack of understanding.[72]

However, professional translation became an important strategy of the Alliance. Its journal, *Jus Suffragii*, not only had an English and a French edition, but also provided funds for the translation of excerpts from its issues that were to be published in newspapers in other languages.[73] An editorial note highlighted the demand: 'Surely the generous contributors to the Translation Fund will rejoice to see mentioned in our organ how many nations wish to avail themselves of the proffered aid, and probably the zealous translators of the Lindsey-article will be no less eager to know in how great request their work is already.'[74] Various forms of translation are invoked here: interpreting at international meetings, editions of the same publication in different languages, and translated excerpts which may or may not have been published as a whole. In all these cases, the translators had an important role to play, but they remained anonymous. Already in these two short quotations, it is telling that the text only

[72] Rosika Schwimmer, 'Our Alliance as Teacher of Languages', *Jus Suffragii*, 1 May 1914.

[73] Sybil Oldfield, 'Introduction', in ead. (ed.), *International Woman Suffrage: Ius Suffragii 1913–1920*, 2 vols. (London, 2003), i: 1–28, at 2.

[74] Editorial note, *Jus Suffragii*, 15 Aug. 1911, 1–2.

mentioned what was (or was not) translated—Susan B. Anthony's words, the 'Lindsey-article'—but the 'zealous translators' who accomplished the transfer were not remembered by name.

For Schirmacher, translation became a major vocation and employment.[75] It came in various forms and was often connected with her political commitments. However, this connection rendered it less likely that she would remain invisible. She earned money by translating literature but also turned to texts more explicitly expressing her political views.[76] In 1893 she translated *Men, Women, and Progress* by Emma Hosken Woodward, a British novelist who had criticized women's inferior position in Victorian England quite harshly. Schirmacher wrote a preface for this book, thereby making herself known as the translator and also as somebody who wanted to promote a specific cultural transfer with her translation work: 'check everything and keep the best—in this sense the book should also be of interest in Germany' was how she summed up her introduction.[77] The fact that she signed the introduction with her name has to be noted; very often at that time, the translator remained nameless even when s/he commented on the text.[78]

Another aspect of Schirmacher's translation practices was interpreting. As a founder member and board member of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, she was also an official interpreter during the regular international meetings of the Alliance. An illustrated newspaper report of the opening of the Alliance's second congress in Copenhagen in 1906 pictured her as sitting at the right hand of the President, Carrie Chapman Catt (see Fig. 2). Schirmacher's prominent position and the fact that she was the only board member apart from the president to be mentioned by name underlined her importance for the meeting: 'Mrs. Chapman Catt opened the international congress for women's suffrage at 9 a.m. yesterday morning. On the right

[75] Gehmacher, Heinrich, and Oesch, *Käthe Schirmacher*, 268–75 (Oesch).

[76] E.g. Elinor Glyn, *Ambrosines Tagebuch*, trans. from the English by Käthe Schirmacher (Stuttgart, 1904); Marguerite Poradowska, *Eine romantische Heirat*, trans. from the French by Käthe Schirmacher (Stuttgart, 1906).

[77] Emma Hosken Woodward, *Männer, Frauen und Fortschritt*, trans. from the English by Käthe Schirmacher (Weimar, 1893).

[78] E.g. Translator's Note in Léonie Rouzade, *The Feminist Catechism: The Social Organization of To-Morrow,* from the French of Léonie Rouzade (London, 1911), 12–13.

Fig. 2: Conference of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, Copenhagen 1906, newspaper report.

8.8.06 256/001 256

POLITIK

Kjøbenhavn. Onsdagen den 8. August 1906.

Fra den kvindelige Stemmerets-Kongres' Aabningsmøde igaar Morges.

Et Blik ndover Koncertpalæets Riddersal.

Præcis Kl. 9 igaar Morges aabnede Mrs. *Chapman Catt* den internationale Kongres for kvindelig Stemmeret. Tilhøjre paa vort Billede ses den energiske Dames karakterfulde Skikkelse; hun har ved sin højre Haand Dr. phil. *Käthe Schirmacher.*

En nærmere Redegørelse for Dagens Række af Begivenheder findes S. 3.

Source: UBR: NL Sch 256/001

in the picture is the characterful figure of the energetic lady; she has Dr phil Käthe Schirmacher at her right hand.'[79]

At the same time, her role as interpreter for all the negotiations remained unmentioned. This might have been because of Schirmacher's double role as a leading activist and translator. However, no other board members were mentioned. Therefore, this picture epitomized how the significance of the translator was visible and veiled at the same time.

[79] Fra den kvindelige Stemmerets-Kongres' Aabningsmøde [From the Opening Meeting of the Women's Suffrage Congress], *Politik*, 8 Aug. 1906 (translation: Meike Lauggas).

Translating Feminism

Often the most intriguing questions of translation pertain to instances where words seem to be identical but do not always have the same meaning. It becomes important to look into processes of re-contextualization when expressions, and the notions linked to them, move back and forth between languages at different paces, thereby creating an ambivalent and heterochronous transnational space. One such word was the term feminism, which originated from the French but circulated between different languages from the late nineteenth century.[80] At the same time, parallel concepts began to show up in other languages and eventually became connected with the very word feminism.[81] Translation studies analyse how a concept that exists in various languages triggers varying associations, addresses disparate agencies, and slips semantically between the languages.[82] Historians, however, can add yet another level of analysis in exploring the contexts in which that circulation started.

Schirmacher was very much at the centre of this transfer too. She was the author of several widely read and translated histories of women's activism in her time. Indeed, the term feminism made a prominent early appearance in a French book on 'le féminisme' which she published in 1898 (see Fig. 3). It listed the countries it covered in the title (The United States, France, Great Britain, Sweden, and Russia), thereby explicitly applying the concept to movements outside of France. But although the author's exemplary approach avoided an openly universalistic perspective, her choice still established a hierarchy, as she presented these countries as paradigmatic examples of different political systems and cultural identities.[83] Drawing on her French text but expanding it geographically, Schirmacher brought out a German book called *Die moderne Frauenbewegung: Ein geschichtlicher Überblick* ('The modern women's movement: A historical survey') in 1905 (see Fig. 4).[84]

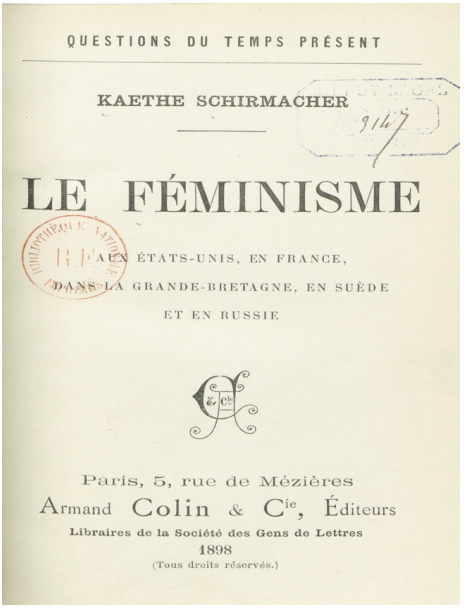
[80] Offen, 'Defining Feminism', 71–3; ead., *European Feminisms*, 20–3.

[81] Booth, 'Peripheral Visions', 184–6, 208.

[82] Bassnett, *Translation Studies;* Venuti, *Translation Changes Everything*.

[83] Käthe Schirmacher, *Le Féminisme: Aux Etats-Unis, en Angleterre, France, Suède, Russie* (Paris, 1898).

[84] Ead., *Die moderne Frauenbewegung: Ein geschichtlicher Überblick* (Leipzig, 1905).



QUESTIONS DU TEMPS PRÉSENT

KAETHE SCHIRMACHER

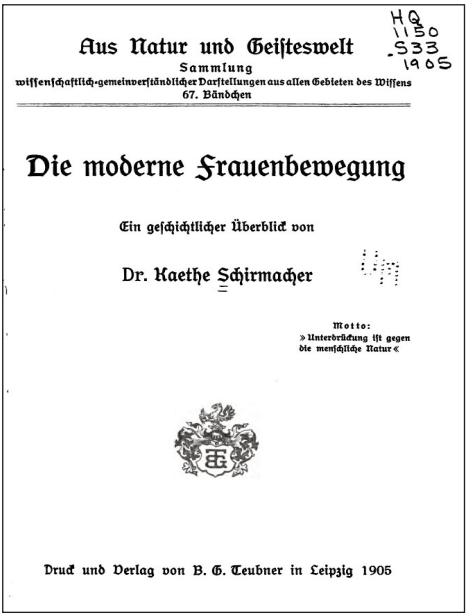
LE FÉMINISME

AUX ÉTATS-UNIS, EN FRANCE,
DANS LA GRANDE-BRETAGNE, EN SUÈDE
ET EN RUSSIE

Paris, 5, rue de Mézières
Armand Colin & Cie, Éditeurs
Libraires de la Société des Gens de Lettres
1898
(Tous droits réservés.)

Fig. 3: Käthe Schirmacher, *Le Féminisme aux États-Unis, en France, dans la Grande-Bretagne, en Suède et en Russie* (Paris, 1898), title page.

Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France.



Aus Natur und Geisteswelt
Sammlung
wissenschaftlich-gemeinverständlicher Darstellungen aus allen Gebieten des Wissens
67. Bändchen

Die moderne Frauenbewegung

Ein geschichtlicher Überblick von

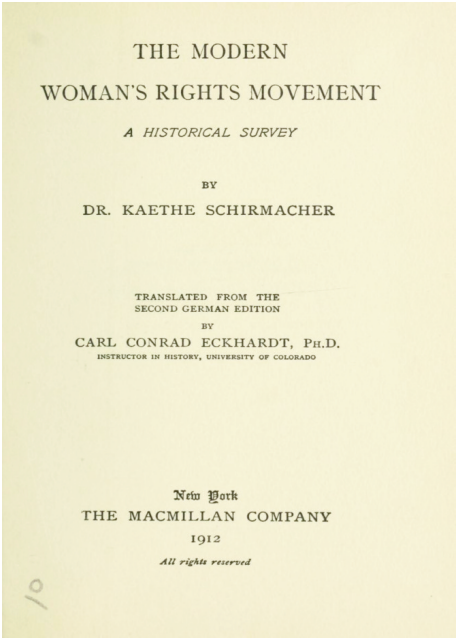
Dr. Kaethe Schirmacher

Motto:
»Unterdrückung ist gegen die menschliche Natur«

Druck und Verlag von B. G. Teubner in Leipzig 1905

Fig. 4: Käthe Schirmacher, *Die moderne Frauenbewegung: Ein geschichtlicher Überblick* (Leipzig, 1905), title page.

Source: University of Michigan Libraries.



THE MODERN
WOMAN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT

A HISTORICAL SURVEY

BY
DR. KAETHE SCHIRMACHER

TRANSLATED FROM THE
SECOND GERMAN EDITION
BY
CARL CONRAD ECKHARDT, PH.D.
INSTRUCTOR IN HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO

New York
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
1912
All rights reserved

Fig. 5: Käthe Schirmacher, *The Modern Woman's Rights Movement: A Historical Survey* (New York, 1912), title page.

Source: University of California Libraries.

Interestingly enough, the title of Schirmacher's German book referred to a historical instead of a geographical dimension, although the French and the German books both combined the two dimensions. The text now claimed to cover the whole world. Moreover, its content was structured in an ethnicizing hierarchy of modernization, depicting the 'Germanic' countries as those where women's movements were most advanced and successful, and Asia and Africa as continents where women barely had any rights.[85] Fairly successful, *Die moderne Frauenbewegung* was republished in 1909 and subsequently translated into English, not by Schirmacher herself but by another translator. While she had been able to draw upon her own French book rather freely as a resource for her new text, the translation by somebody else was expected to be precise; and it turned out that the German word 'Frauenbewegung', then suggesting an explicitly femi-

[85] Gehmacher, 'Reisende', 63; Gehmacher, Heinrich, and Oesch, *Käthe Schirmacher*, 280 (Oesch).

nist context in Germany, had to be made more specific in the English-speaking context. In 1912 the English translation was published under the title: *The Modern Woman's Rights Movement* (see Fig. 5).[86]

Both translations call for some explanation. Although the word feminism had been introduced into the German language in the years around 1900, it was obviously not yet identified with the women's movement at that time.[87] Schirmacher's numerous newspaper reports on the women's movement in France and Germany make that perfectly clear. When she wrote in French, she used the term 'féminisme' to address the French and the German movements equally, while when she wrote in German, she always used 'Frauenbewegung'.[88] A comprehensive review of the book *Le Féminisme* in the German feminist journal *Neue Bahnen* illustrates that the term had not yet arrived in Germany. It stated that the title was difficult to translate, as neither 'Frauenfrage' nor 'Frauenbewegung' were identical in their meaning. Attempting to resolve this problem, the anonymous author explained that 'féminisme' referred to a faction of the women's movement that judged all public developments in the light of women's rights but also with a general striving for women's liberation. For want of an alternative, the author then used the German neologism 'Feminismus' in her text.[89] However, apparently this did not result in a more general use of the term in the French sense. An article by Schirmacher on 'Frauenbewegung und Feminismus' six years later exemplifies the problem; in it she identifies 'Frauenbewegung' with

[86] Käthe Schirmacher, *The Modern Women's Rights Movement: A Historical Survey*, trans. from the 2nd German edn by Carl Conrad Eckhardt (New York, 1912).

[87] Bock, 'Begriffsgeschichten', 125–6; Johanna Gehmacher, 'Frauenfrage—Frauenbewegung: Historisierung als politische Strategie', in Dogramaci and Sandner (eds.), *Rosa und Anna Schapire*, 82–101.

[88] E.g. Käthe Schirmacher, 'Le féminisme allemand', *Revue germanique,* 1/3 (Mai–Juin 1905), 257–84; ead., 'Die Frauenbewegung in Frankreich', *Hillgers Illustriertes Frauen-Jahrbuch* (1904/5), 867–87; see also Karen Offen, 'Kaethe Schirmacher, Investigative Reporter and Activist Journalist: The Paris Writings, 1895–1910', *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History,* 39 (2011), 200–11.

[89] A.S. [Auguste Schmidt?], 'Le Féminisme . . .', book review in *Neue Bahnen: Organ des Allgemeinen Deutschen Frauenvereins*, 33/18 (15 Sept. 1898), 195. I would like to thank Elisa Heinrich for bringing this review to my attention.

the development of a woman to the level of self-realization, as a consciously individual personality ('Entwicklung der Frau zur bewußten Persönlichkeit') while 'Feminismus' in her view was built on unhealthy eroticism and liberation only of carnal desires ('ungesunde Erotik, einseitige Emanzipation des Fleisches').[90]

Another issue is the translation from German to English. It seems that at this time, 'women's movement' was already such a broad concept that it could not capture the political meaning of the German word 'Frauenbewegung'. It is interesting that the translator solved the problem by adding a clarifying attribute ('women's rights movement' rather than simply 'women's movement') instead of using the term 'feminism', which had already made its appearance in English by that time. However, its meaning was still rather ambivalent. In 1911 the translation of a French book was published as a *Feminist Catechism*.[91] Often linked with France, 'feminism' and 'feminist' were sometimes also used in either a very broad sense, applying them to far-distant historical periods or, in a very specific sense linking them to the most radical faction of the British movement.[92] Both the journal *Freewoman* and the London-based retailer, the International Suffrage Shop, claimed to support a 'feminist movement'.[93] Presumably, this latter reference to radicalization in the British context was the reason why Schirmacher's US translator did not find the term feminism suitable for the larger contexts her book addressed. Moreover, it turned out that the term 'feminism' was often used by anti-feminists in a pejorative sense in an English context too.[94]

[90] Käthe Schirmacher, 'Frauenbewegung und Feminismus', *Königsberger Hartungsche Zeitung*, 15 May 1904.

[91] Rouzade, *The Feminist Catechism*.

[92] Marie Alphonse René de Maulde-La-Clavière, *The Women of the Renaissance: A Study of Feminism* (London, 1900).

[93] Anon., 'Bondwomen', *Freewoman: A Weekly Feminist Review,* 1/1 (1911), 1–2; Rouzade, *The Feminist Catechism.* The book was published by the International Suffrage Shop which, in an advertisement inside the book, claimed that it served 'the dissemination and publication of literature dealing with every aspect of the Feminist Movement'. Cf. also John Mercer, 'Shopping for Suffrage: The Campaign Shops of the Women's Social and Political Union', *Women's History Review*, 18 (2009), 293–309.

[94] E.g. Ernest Belfort Bax, *The Fraud of Feminism* (London, 1913).

However, 'feminism' soon did gain a broader meaning. In 1913 socialist feminist Ethel Snowden published her book *The Feminist Movement*, in which she held that the object of feminism was 'to make female human beings as free as male human beings, and both as free as it is possible for the individual to be in a complex society like that of the present'.[95] Like Schirmacher, whom she also quoted, she claimed to be speaking for the entire world. And like Schirmacher again, Snowden compared countries in an orientalizing way. She declared: '[t]he Romance countries are far behind the Teutonic communities in their treatment of women, whilst the Slavic and Oriental races are still in the earlier stages of development in this particular.'[96] Obviously, it was exactly this imperialistic universalism that rendered the transfer of the term into colonial and postcolonial societies problematic. However, this did not mean that these societies did not develop their own concepts of women's liberation.

Interpretation Disrupted

The invisible presence, or visible absence of the translator, was suddenly interrupted three years later at a conference of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance held in London in 1909 (see Fig. 6). At the morning session on the fifth day, after the previous day's minutes had been approved, the proceedings stated:

> Before beginning discussions, Dr Schirmacher said that she wished the following entry made in the minutes: 'That though I have been appointed as interpreter for this Convention, I feel that I must not continue my office if called upon, unless it is explicitly stated and entered into the minutes that I have always asked [for] the suffrage for women on exactly the same terms as men have or may have it.'[97]

Her statement was indeed recorded, and so she continued to translate.

[95] Ethel Snowden, *The Feminist Movement* (London, 1913), 18.

[96] Ibid. 43.

[97] London School of Economics: Women's Library 2 IAW/1/c Box 4: The International Woman Suffrage Alliance: Report of Fifth Conference and First Quinquennial (London 1909), 48.

Fig. 6: Conference of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, London 1909, delegates. Käthe Schirmacher in the back row, third from the right.

Source: National Library of Norway.

Taking the example of that interruption, it might be inferred that the translator becomes visible in a moment of conflict. But which conflict? At first sight, it appears to be not about translation at all. Actually, Schirmacher was present not only as an interpreter but also as a board member who had wanted to be re-elected to a specific position, which she had failed to achieve the evening before. Obviously, she supposed that this was the case because of conflicts regarding the international organization's position concerning universal suffrage. In some countries that did not yet have male 'universal suffrage' (which is, of course, a contradiction in itself), activists argued that fighting for this ambitious goal would only delay female suffrage. Equality with the situation of men should be demanded first, while universal suffrage was to be the next step.[98] Representatives of the

[98] Ute Gerhard, 'Im Schnittpunkt von Recht und Gewalt: Zeitgenössische Diskurse über die Taktik der Suffragetten', in Sandra Maß and Xenia Tip-

radical wing of the German women's movement, however, rejected this as an elitist approach. Schirmacher, from a more nationalistic standpoint, feared that universal suffrage would weaken imperial Germany. With her reference to the formula the suffragettes used—'as men have or may have it'—she obviously wanted to demonstrate that she still took the same position as the most radical activists in the United Kingdom.[99]

It was only years later that Schirmacher came across a slander that seemed to illuminate the conflict from quite a different angle. As she explained in a letter to the president, Chapman Catt, she had found out that rumours had been spread anonymously accusing her for one thing of leading an 'immoral life', but second, and clearly more seriously for her, of having coloured her translations according to her German nationalist political interests by 'leaving out of it the strongest argument made by the speaker', if she disagreed with it:

> From 1909 you have been knowing that, as interpreter, I was charged with 'not translating correctly'; with . . . 'leaving out of it the strongest argument made by the speaker', if not in accord with my own views. This would come up to invalidating all the transactions, votes and resolutions of the Alliance from 1904 up to 1909.[100]

Schirmacher urged Chapman Catt to conduct an investigation into the second accusation as it not only touched upon her reputation but was also damaging to the whole organization[101]—a demand the president first refused, as, she said, her ignorance of French rendered her 'unfit to judge' the allegations. She wrote to Schirmacher:

pelskirch (eds.), *Faltenwürfe Der Geschichte: Entdecken, Entziffern, Erzählen* (Frankfurt am Main, 2014), 416–30, at 426, 430.

[99] For more detail on Schirmacher's stance on suffrage in a transnational context see Gehmacher, Heinrich, and Oesch, *Käthe Schirmacher*, 366–71 (Oesch).

[100] UBR: NL Sch 618/006, Käthe Schirmacher, 'Why I was defeated in London', manuscript, written in the context of her correspondence with Carrie Chapmann Catt, 1913. Original English by Schirmacher.

[101] UBR: NL Sch 005/003, Käthe Schirmacher to Carrie Chapmann Catt, draft letter, 1913.

> In my judgement, the only way to stop gossip is to *stop* . . . We are at work in a great cause, but these picayunish *personal* differences are making the big movement a very small one in Germany . . . Progress has come because we have forgiven and forgotten all we could and passed over what we couldn't.[102]

We might say that at this point different levels of transfer, and translation, collided. At a historical moment of rising nationalistic emotions in many European countries, it appeared to be of great importance to translate more than just words. Feelings and historical allusions also had to be interpreted—or left out. And, indeed, in her correspondence with Chapman Catt, Schirmacher did go to some lengths to explain the conflict-laden history of German–Polish relationships, which was at the centre of her own nationalistic concerns. But then she demanded that this conflict must not be carried into the international organization, as it would risk endangering further cooperation on their common cause—female suffrage.[103] This had already been the intention of a resolution she had proposed at the Copenhagen conference in 1906:

> That as the International Alliance for Woman Suffrage stands for union and not for division, all allusions in public speeches to recent political conflicts between nations, must for the sake of international peace and courtesy, be carefully avoided, unless such subjects are on the programme for discussion.[104]

One might therefore say that even though she defended her translation(s) at the London conference as impeccable, it eventually turned out that Schirmacher was convinced that only deliberate silence on certain issues would allow continuing communication on what was at the heart of the activists' common interest—suffrage. That could, of course, also mean that *not* to translate might become a prerequisite for the continuation of exchange. Chapman Catt, on the

[102] UBR: NL Sch 001/001, Carrie Chapmann Catt to Käthe Schirmacher, 28 Mar. 1914.
[103] UBR: NL Sch 618/006, Käthe Schirmacher, 'Why I was defeated in London', manuscript, 1913.
[104] London School of Economics: Women's Library 2 IAW/1/c Box 4, 34.

other hand, held that only if Schirmacher stopped her ongoing investigation into who had falsely accused her, could peaceful communications within the organization be maintained. In fact, therefore, the conflict between the president and her long-time translator was about *what* had to be kept quiet. In the course of the conflict, Schirmacher retired from the International Woman Suffrage Alliance and, indeed, from most of her transnational feminist networks. She remained in close contact, however, with representatives of the suffragettes until well into the First World War.[105]

'Tolle Weiber': Transfers between Countries and Times

For several decades, Schirmacher kept a working diary, taking short notes on her correspondences, her writings, lectures, travels, and talks. As always, she wrote her diary in French. However, on 12 March 1912, at a time when she was living in her partner Klara Schleker's house in Marlow in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, there was a sudden striking change of languages in this most personal of documents.[106] Right in the middle of the page, amongst the jottings on daily tasks, the newspapers she wrote for, and possible topics for her writings, we read the line: 'Écrit Tag. Mrs Pankhurst. "Tolle Weiber".'[107] 'Écrit Tag' referred to communication with a newspaper Schirmacher worked for regularly. The two German words, 'Tolle Weiber', however, call for further explanation.

First, the question of translation arises: what are the two German words supposed to mean? Is this a quotation, or are they the diarist's own words? In either case, it is an interesting choice. 'Toll' can mean 'formidable', 'awesome', but also 'crazy'. The German noun 'Weib' equally carries ambivalent connotations: to call a woman a 'Weib' is insulting, denying her attractiveness as well as rationality. But used with the attribute 'toll', it can be an expression of admiration. We should also consider the political context. The immediate context, 'Mrs Pankhurst', points to the English suffragettes. What happened in the first days of March 1912 in the United Kingdom to provoke this exclamation by the diarist? What were Schirmacher's sources of information on events there?

[105] Gehmacher, Heinrich, and Oesch, *Käthe Schirmacher*, 381 (Oesch).

[106] On Schirmacher's lifelong intimate relationships with women see Gehmacher, Heinrich, and Oesch, *Käthe Schirmacher*, 194–260 (Heinrich).

[107] UBR: NL Sch 922/018, Diary Käthe Schirmacher 1912.

With the expression 'tolle Weiber', used in March 1912, Schirmacher was probably referring to the arrest of several suffragettes after the beginning of the window-smashing campaign by the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) activists in London.[108] The fact that she used quotation marks around 'tolle Weiber' implies that this was probably not an expression of emotion but a quotation, either from a newspaper article she had read on the events, or from a piece she planned to write. For both, we have indications but no proof. Apparently the newspaper *Der Tag* she referred to published no article under her name, although the story of the suffragettes was covered.[109]

Some weeks later she wrote an article for Anita Augspurg's *Frauenstimmrecht*, thereby co-operating with the radical German feminists with whom she had argued in London in 1909. She harshly criticized the German media for their ignorance:

> I have not encountered any objective description of what happened, nor any accurate description of [the suffragettes'] motives, in any German paper. When it comes to the suffragettes, we only get the news that appeals to sensationalists. The suffragettes are never discussed in the reports of the political press, they have not achieved the right to be mentioned in the news section of the papers, and reporters and editors remain unfamiliar with their cause. I believe I can safely say that none of our leading editors reads *Votes for Women*; and clearly, neither do any of the reporters, for if they did, their reports would be very different.[110]

It remained unclear whether Schirmacher was accusing her male colleagues of not reading English papers or of ignoring female activists. However, as in her diary, she made female identities an issue, asking in the title 'Are these still ladies?' The suffragettes, she argued, were

[108] Jana Günther, 'Die politischen Bilder und radikalen Ausdrucksformen der Suffragetten', *Kunsttexte.de: E-journal on Visual and Art History* (Berlin, 2009).

[109] Anon., 'Schwere Suffragettenkrawalle in London', *Der Tag,* 2 Mar. 1909.

[110] Käthe Schirmacher, 'Sind Das Noch Damen?', *Frauenstimmrecht!,* Sonderabdruck (Apr./May 1912), 3–10 (translation: Emily Richards).

the antithesis of 'ladies', who were characterized by narrow class interests. But instead, she wrote: 'They are "human beings", human beings hungry and thirsty for justice. Christ blessed them, and Heinrich von Kleist says that God loves those who die for their freedom.'[111]

The article is only one example of a series of texts supportive of the suffragettes that Schirmacher wrote for a feminist German audience, the majority of which viewed the British militants very critically. And at the end of 1912 she published a book on the suffragette movement that presented yet another mode of translation, mixing journalistic reportage with lengthy translations of excerpts from the material she used, particularly from the journal *Votes for Women* to which she was a subscriber.[112] With this book, Schirmacher again took a radical position within the German women's movement but also intended to enlighten ignorant German reporters and newspaper directors, including in her article the address of the WSPU in London where they could get more material on the cause.

Schirmacher tried to translate militant activism as it took place in Britain into a German context and thereby push the boundaries of the hegemonic discourse again, but failed. Her book on the suffragettes, however, translated into Polish shortly after it had come out, was republished in Germany in the 1980s and remained the only book on the British suffragettes written in German for many decades. It was possible to translate the text into Polish (of all languages), and later it 'translated' into concepts of second-wave feminism of the late twentieth century, precisely because it focused on the cause of suffrage and mostly left out Schirmacher's other convictions.[113]

[111] Ibid.

[112] E.g. on the events of Mar. 1912 Schirmacher quoted from several issues of *Votes for Women*. See Käthe Schirmacher, *Die Suffragettes* (Weimar, 1912), 81.

[113] Käthe Schirmacher, *Sufrażetki*, trans. Melania Przeł. Bersonowa (Lwów [Lviv], 1913). Another book by Schirmacher (*Das Rätsel Weib*) was translated into Swedish: Käthe Schirmacher, *Gatan Kvinnan: En Uppgörelse. Bemynd. Öfvers. Från Tyskan Af E. T.* (Stockholm, 1912). There were also plans for a translation of the latter into English but this did not come about. UBR: NL Sch 567/029, Constance Maud to Käthe Schirmacher, 10 Jan. 1912.

IV. *Concluding Remarks*

Precarious Practices in Transnational Spaces

This article has called for the patterns of 'doing transnational' to be looked at more closely. It began by arguing that transnational spaces only exist if they are constantly nurtured and sustained. I have argued that not only ideologies and institutionalized networks constitute these spaces, but that practices also play an important role in their creation and continuation. Therefore, an analysis of practices based on practice theory can enhance the understanding of the daily dynamics of transnational spaces. In this analysis, practices are conceived as patterned forms of action based on specific competences and rooted in a social context. Although repetition plays an important role in their realization, they are based on individual agency through choice and variation.

Gauging the challenges of historical research on transnational spaces, I argued that a biographical case study focused on a set of relevant practices could help to tackle the heterogeneity and discontinuity that characterize transnational spaces. Focusing on transnational women's activism in Western countries before the First World War in this study, I examined the case of German-born Käthe Schirmacher, a multilingual writer and activist who played an important but also conflictual role in the creation of a transnational women's movement to provide some insights into the relevance and the limits of practices of transfer for the development of transnational spaces of civil society. Among her various practices of transfer, such as travelling and transnational journalism, which both enabled her transnational life and formed an important part of her contribution to the development of a transnational women's movement, I looked more specifically at her practices of translation.

Analysing some examples of Schirmacher's work as a translator in the context of transnational women's movements, I argued that translation was a crucial practice for the development of a transnational women's movement around 1900, and encouraged it to thrive. The International Woman Suffrage Alliance was aware of this, and invested work and money in the transfer of information. That said, those performing the work still often remained anonymous. However, Schirmacher's hybrid status as a leading activist, journalist, and

translator rendered her doings much more visible, especially when conflicts occurred. Her case, therefore, is particularly valuable for the analysis of practices of translation. It helps to bring attention to the kind of work that proved a viable path into academic professions for women. However, as the profession became feminized during the twentieth century the work of translation failed to receive the necessary recognition both in the history of knowledge and in the history of international relations.

Taking the example of different types of translation Schirmacher carried out, I contend that translation history could benefit from taking a broad perspective. Including various uses of translation such as self-translation, (oral) interpretations during transnational meetings reflected (but often not explicitly mentioned) in written reports of meetings, and also translated excerpts in newspaper reports as well as in books adds considerably to the analysis. It emphasizes the specific contexts of these transfers and opens up new questions. Further, it argues that a historical approach to translation in particular could profit from looking into moments of conflict when otherwise hidden patterns of transfer become visible. What represents a failure in terms of translation—the moment when interpretation is suspended—holds opportunities for the historian. When the routine practice of translating is interrupted, the translator's agency comes to light and otherwise invisible processes of transfer enabling transnational communication become evident. The very moment of silence, a disruption in itself, creates new insights into processes of transnational transfers. It also points to the sinuous itineraries of political ideas as they move between different contexts.

The agency of the translator was one focus of this article. It included not only moments of conflict but also questions involving choice, such as which texts to translate, how to address semantic differences between languages, how to deal with the audiences' attitudes, and when to remain silent. The second focus was on how concepts change when they travel. I took the example of the term and concept of feminism that began to move between languages around the turn of the century. While the term's varying meanings pointed to distinctions between movements in different countries, the circulation of the concept also could spur new perspectives in national contexts. Schirmacher was instrumental in the transfer of the very term and the concept between countries and languages and, therefore, her transla-

tions, and her specific use of the term feminism illustrate this point well.

To open up a perspective on 'doing transnational' in the research on women's movements around 1900 is the central intention of this article. I thereby hope to contribute to several fields of research, more specifically, to the transnational history of civil spaces, to the history of women's movements, and to translation history. Another aim is to call for more exchange between approaches that, from different disciplinary angles, take practices seriously. That said, this case study can only indicate some possible directions. An analysis of practices in women's transnational movements that revisits previous work on organizations and networks, on travel, correspondence, lecturing, and organizing conferences and meetings in the light of practices of transfer could be enormously rewarding. To establish more contextual knowledge on specific practices of translation, on the spread of multilingualism, the education of translators, and on the funding of their work would add considerably to the understanding of hierarchies, economies, and politics of transnational movements.

Another vein of research pertains to the changes translation spurs in 'receiving' as well as in 'sending' milieus, to speak in terms of communication theory. Although very valuable research has already been done, particularly in literary and translation studies, women's and gender history could also gain from this perspective. Analysing paths and effects of translations as well as the images of the communicating cultures they establish could help considerably in differentiating historical knowledge about transnational transfers, entanglements, and hierarchies.

This article has suggested that translation must be understood as part of a broader political, social context. It also claims that the volatile dynamic of transnational political spaces and the provisional character of any translation are intimately entangled with each other and therefore have to be analysed together. I argue that the ambivalences of interpretation and the choices it requires both form an essential basis for the agency of the translator and put the very person who translates into a dangerous liminal place in the context of transnational political transfer. Walter Benjamin, however, has reminded us that translations always have to include both: what is meant and the way of meaning it. Pointing to such ruptures he has

also made clear that all translation can only be 'a provisional way of coming to terms with the foreignness of languages'.[114]

[114] Walter Benjamin, 'The Task of the Translator', in id., Selected Writings, vol. i: *1913–1926*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, Mass., 1996), 253–63 (translation: Harry Zohn).

JOHANNA GEHMACHER is Professor of Contemporary History at the University of Vienna and Gerda Henkel Visiting Professor for 2018/19. She has spent a year researching and teaching at the German Historical Institute London and the London School of Economics and Political Science. With Elisa Heinrich and Corinna Oesch, she has recently published a comprehensive biography of the radical feminist and later German nationalist activist Käthe Schirmacher (1865–1930), *Käthe Schirmacher: Agitation und autobiografische Praxis zwischen radikaler Frauenbewegung und völkischer Politik* (Vienna, 2018).