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Foreword to the Database

The online edition *18th Century German Literature Online* provides access to the full texts of many first editions and historical complete editions of 642 German-language authors. Uniquely the 2,675 works in 4,494 volumes constitute a representative cross-section of the texts emerging during the whole German-language literary Enlightenment. Considerably more than a million book pages have been digitized for this edition.

The 18th century is without doubt one of the most interesting epochs of German intellectual history. With an unbelievable variety of literary and non-literary phenomena, it exerts a subliminal but decidedly powerful influence right up to the present day. It is mainly for this reason that many works from this century evade all academic chronological categorization; hence the subtitle "From the Early to Late Enlightenment" is to be understood as an orientation guide rather than the designation of an exact literary historical epoch. Furthermore, it was not the objective of the editor and the publishers to include the most significant authors of literary Classic and Early Romantic literature in this online edition.

The main body of the canon of authors and works, upon which *18th Century German Literature Online* is based, derives from the microfiche edition *Bibliothek der Deutschen Literatur*. Together with the editor Paul Raabe, this canon has been critically revised and enlarged with the addition of numerous authors and works. *18th Century German Literature Online* is thus not simply a digitized version of the existing microfiche edition, but rather its supplement and extension on a broader bibliographical foundation. Hence, besides editions by some 560 authors from the *Bibliothek der Deutschen Literatur*, the works of about 80 authors, such as Adam Bernd, Johann Anastasius Freylinghausen, Friederike Lohmann, Magdalena Sibylle Rieger and Gerhard Tersteegen, have been included for the first time. In addition, the ever-improving search possibilities offered by online catalogues facilitated the completion of several previously incomplete works such as Johann Martin Miller's *Predigten für das Landvolk*, or Marcus Herz's *Briefe an Aerzte*.

In the year 1988, the Kulturstiftung der Länder (Cultural Foundation of the Federal States) created the *Bibliothek der Deutschen Literatur* on the bibliographical basis of the so-called "Taschengoedeke". At the time its main task was to preserve the relevant holdings of German literary heritage and make them universally accessible. Now, the database *18th Century German Literature Online* primarily takes the rapidly changing living and working conditions in the information society into account, and provides the individual with direct access to the full texts through their digitization, whilst conceptually accounting for changing research interests. This is the main reason why, besides the works of early representatives of the literary Enlightenment, numerous 'minor poets' have also been included, upon whose works research in the humanities is focu-

sing again today, even though they are mostly attributed only regional or even local significance.

Although the "Taschengoedeke" has long since ceased to be an unequivocal bibliographical authority, containing unsolvable gaps and a wealth of obvious mistakes and contradictions, this bibliography still remains one of the most important and most familiar aids forscholars of German Studies, book traders, antiquarian book sellers and bibliophiles. Hence, it was a pragmatic and carefully considered decision taken at the end of the 1980s by the literary committee of the Kulturstiftung der Länder and its chairman, Jan Philipp Reemtsma, to use the "Taschengoedeke", published in the year 1924, as an index of works for the *Bibliothek der Deutschen Literatur*. Compiled by the physician and cultural historian Leopold Hirschberg, the "Taschengoedeke" adhered to a decidedly broad concept of literature. Besides poetical works, texts from practically all disciplines have been included here. "German literature from about 1650 onwards, …, philosophy from Plato to Nietzsche, …, musical studies from Bach to Robert Franz, countless material from related disciplines (cultural history, European ethnology, theology etc.) – all this can be found in the *Taschengoedeke* in a clear and immediately intelligible classification …", thus Hirschberg described the tenor of his bibliographical compendium. Its special uniqueness however, is not based solely on the variety of the contents as described above, but also precisely because it is not purely a bibliography of first editions. This may be regarded as a thoroughly enriching aspect, since the much later, and in some cases revised, editions or texts included here are of interest for the history of the editions.

Of course, time and again the bibliographical work using the "Taschengoedeke" presented the editors, who had now been working on the *Bibliothek der Deutschen Literatur* for more than 15 years, with unusual surprises. Besides the often discussed and noted problems with citations, which Leopold Hirschberg freely admits, it is above all establishing the authors of some works that can prove to be extremely problematic. For example, the anonymous collection, *Zeugnisse treuer Liebe nach dem Tode Tugendhafter Frauen in gebundener deutscher Rede abgestattet von ihren Ehemännern* edited by Anton Paul Ludwig Carstens in the year 1743, was attributed without comment to Paul Gottlieb Werlhof. Attributing the writing of two particular works to Eulogius Schneider is no less peculiar. Published in the year 1792, the biography *Eulogius Schneiders Leben und Schiksale im Vaterlande* was actually written by Andreas Sebastian Stumpf, and Christoph Friedrich Cotta is the real author of the work *Eulogius Schneider's* [sic!] … *Schicksale in Frankreich*, published in 1797. These and many other cases often necessitated very laborious bibliographical research to establish the genuine author or editor and integrate them into the list of works.

In the online database all works are presented as digital facsimiles. It is a matter of utmost editorial concern, that the user can both search and absorb the full texts. For this purpose a special software was developed and an excellent Gothic type character recognition was used, often delivering astonishing results. Nevertheless, it must be noted

that in some individual cases the critical state of the original material made faultless character recognition impossible.

Systematic access is provided to all texts. Where lists of contents existed in the original works themselves, they have been reproduced. However, this was not the case for most of the works, necessitating the creation of contents lists and lists of chapters by the editors, in order to make the body of text structurally accessible to the user. For this purpose thousands of volumes were leafed through virtually in the few months available, in order to mark and systematically record the beginnings of poems and chapters, the titles of treatises, scripts, and essays, as well as the beginnings of the acts of all plays. Only thus was it possible to offer the user accurate search possibilities, allowing quick orientation even within individual works.

The digital full text displays now allow thorough editorial autopsies. Gaps and missing pages are noted and independent text contributions hidden in the appendixes can also be ascertained and verified. In addition, wherever possible, references to hidden bibliographies or notes on literary contexts such as "Werther-Literatur" or "Fragmentestreit (Anti-Goeze)" are included.

Use of the database is enhanced significantly through the attempt to specify genre terms for each work and/or an edition form (journal, almanac, paperback etc.). The volumes included are thus accessible through a classification of genres. However, as the academic controversies show, the terms are not consistent. In the process of editing, it quickly became apparent that here too the exceptionally broad concept of literature applied by Hirschberg played a strongly influential role. Anyone familiar with the sheer overflowing production and reception of literature in the second half of the 18th century knows of the difficulties confronting a scholar of literary studies concerned with classification and categorization. Thus texts, which according to current terminology could well be classified as "psychological" or "sociological", cannot be classed as such in the light of the historical contents. In the numerous editions of poetry too, individual genres could often not all be specified. To say nothing of the numerous texts for finer entertainment as distributed in weekly periodicals or almanacs. The only way to describe these was sometimes the obviously contestable term "popular philosophical reflection". The frequency with which we resorted to the term, emphasizes that our approach in this vast field could often only be of a descriptive nature.

Finally, a short biographical article is available for each author, either from a relevant encyclopedia of literature or written specifically for the database. Variations of names and pseudonyms of significance for bibliographical research are stated as a rule.

I should like to take this opportunity to express my warmest thanks for the cooperation of the libraries, almost all of which assisted the *Bibliothek der Deutschen Literatur*, in some cases since 1989, through providing generous lending conditions. And once again the editorial work on *18th Century German Literature Online* also demanded a great deal of cooperation, uncomplicated support and a certain amount of generosity. Considering the ever more difficult daily routines with which our libraries have to cope,

this is certainly not to be taken for granted and undoubtedly deserves special mention. Each lending library is stated in the bibliographical description.

With *18th Century German Literature Online* a valuable research database has been created, offering unique possibilities for research and reception not only to those studying literature and languages, but also other humanities disciplines, and of course for all students and everyone interested in literature. Thus, one of the most extensive digital libraries to date is now available, which, although it does not offer the "utopian whole" of the 18th century's literary heritage, "still manages nothing less than an considerably large whole in a special form" (Hans Wollschläger in a speech introducing the *Bibliothek der Deutschen Literatur*).

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