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Original Scientific Article

Anne Birgitte Rønning
University of Oslo, Norway

With mother on a desert island. Gender and genre at stake in Madame de Montolieu's *Le Robinson suisse*[1]

The article presents the Swiss author Isabelle de Montolieu's reworking of Johann David Wyss' *Der schweizerische Robinson* (1812/1813). The reworking consists of a translation to French in 1814, and a sequel to the work in 1824, both highly popular in the nineteenth century in France, and translated to English in both Britain and the United States. The article examines Montolieu's negotiation of gender into the robinsonade genre, usually conceptualized as male, as well as the reception of her work. While Wyss' work in the last decades has witnessed renewed scholarly interest, Montolieu is met with misunderstanding, reluctance, and negligence. The article discusses how gender is at stake in attempts to (re-)canonize both Wyss' book and the robinsonade genre at the detriment of Montolieu, and how this is related to questions of aesthetics and popularity.

Keywords: Robinsonade, gender, book history, *Le Robinson suisse*/*The Swiss Family Robinson*, Isabelle de Montolieu (1751–1832), Johann David Wyss (1743–1818)/Johann Rudolph Wyss (1782–1830)

[1] Parts of this article were presented as a paper at the conference "Voices in Dialogue: Ideational production and reception of Women's Writing in Europe", organised by COST-action IS0901 "Women Writers in History", Chawton House Library, UK, November 2011, and an earlier version of it was published in Norwegian as a chapter in Anne Birgitte Rønning and Geir Uvsløkk, eds., *Kjønnsforhandlinger. Studier i kunst, film og litteratur* (Oslo: Pax forlag 2013).

In 1824 the Swiss author Isabelle de Montolieu published a sequel to a book she had translated into French ten years previously. The book was *Der schweizerische Robinson*, which had appeared in German in two volumes in 1812 and 1813.[2] The story had been written down by the Swiss pastor Johann David Wyss in the 1790s for use in the family circle. It was later edited and published by his son Johann Rudolph Wyss, at the time a professor of philosophy at the University of Bern. The book tells the fictional story of a pastor's family with four sons who are stranded on a desert island in the Pacific. After two years of hard work, not just to survive but also to build a good home and exploit the island's resources, they are found by an English ship returning to Europe. The father manages to hand over his diary from their stay on the island to the captain, but when a new gale blows, the ship drifts long off course, leaving the family alone on the island again. The book became a bestseller, appearing in innumerable editions in France, Britain, and the United States, but less so in Switzerland and Germany. Undoubtedly, it is Isabelle de Montolieu's first translation into French in 1814 which must be ascribed much of the honour for the popularity outside the German-Swiss circle of readers, because also the first English editions were based on it.

Montolieu's sequel from 1824 also appeared in several editions in French and English in the nineteenth century. In the preface the author shows herself to be both humble in relation to Wyss and professionally self-confident. It is the many letters from French readers that have induced her to write the sequel to the story, she says, and then she reveals what she has added:

> As the work originally had been composed for boys only, it was part of my plan to also make it pleasing and instructional for young girls. It is for this reason I have introduced the episode of a lady and her two daughters who have been shipwrecked with her, and left without any help.[3]

Thereafter, she quite honestly states that she does not believe that this sequel bears much resemblance to the one she knows Johann David Wyss had written, but which was not yet published.

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[2] The first two volumes originally spelled the adjective *schweizersche* (with *-rsche* rather than *-rische*) on the title page. All the later editions spell it *schweizerische*, which will be the spelling used here.

[3] Isabelle de Montolieu, *Le Robinson suisse, ou le Journal d'un père de famille naufragé avec ses enfans; continué par Madame Isabelle, Baronne de Montolieu*, vol. I (Paris: Arthus Bertrand, 1824), iv (my translation). Montolieu's sequel appeared in 1824 in three volumes, and at least two editions were published the same year: a five-volume edition, where the first two volumes include Montolieu's translation of Wyss' work, and the sequel is found in the final three volumes; and a three-volume edition which only contained the sequel. Later French editions of the sequel are generally without the preface.

Isabelle de Montolieu (1751–1832) lived in a period of transition, marked politically by the French Revolution and the Revolutionary Wars, ideologically and intellectually by Enlightenment and Romanticism, culturally also by a rapidly expanding book market. Montolieu's cultural background was an aristocratic Enlightenment milieu in Lausanne, committed to conversation, reading, visits, and amateur theatre performances.[4] Twice widowed, and a mother, she took up the pen to make a living, as writing at this time had become a recognized way for women from a certain social class to earn money.[5] She became an important, celebrated literary figure in Lausanne, and also gained fame in French literary public. Her debut novel, *Caroline de Lichtfield, ou Mémoires d'une famille prussienne* from 1786, was one of the contemporary bestsellers, appearing in countless editions and being translated into English, German, Dutch, Spanish, Russian, Swedish, and Danish.[6] In her study of Parisian lending libraries, Françoise Parent-Lardeur refers to Isabelle de Montolieu as one of the most frequently mentioned authors in the catalogues of the 1820s, after Madame de Genlis and Walter Scott.[7] All in all, her production amounts to more than 105 volumes, particularly novels and other stories, but only around ten titles were hers from the start – the rest being more or less free translations, or adaptations. Her translations were nevertheless included in her authorship, both because of the unregulated book market of the period and because her name in itself came to be recognized as a saleable brand name.[8] However, along

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[4] Montolieu's father was a friend of Voltaire and contributor to the French *Encyclopédie*, and at the age of eleven she herself met Rousseau in person. Among her friendships are the French author Madame de Genlis, the English historian Edward Gibbon, and the Irish-English pedagogue and author Maria Edgeworth. A short notice on Isabelle de Montolieu is given by Earl Jeffrey Richards, "Elisabeth-Jeanne-Pauline Polier de Bottens (dite Isabelle), baronne de Montolieu", in *An Encyclopedia of Continental Women Writers*, ed. Katharina M. Wilson, vol. 2 (New York: Garland, 1991), 862–63. For a wider introduction to her life and literary career, see Valérie Cossy, "Isabelle de Montolieu", ch. 4 in *Jane Austen in Switzerland: A Study of the Early French Translations* (Geneva: Slatkine, 2006), 181–204; and Sylvie Le Moël, "Zwischen Belletristik und Buchmarkt: Die Übersetzungstätigkeit von Isabelle de Montolieu (1751–1832)", in *Übersetzungskultur im 18. Jahrhundert: Übersetzerinnen in Deutschland, Frankreich und der Schweiz*, ed. Brunhilde Wehinger and Hilary Brown (Saarbrücken: Wehrhahn Verlag, 2008), 121–39.

[5] See for instance Virginia Woolf's famous observation: "By degrees writing became not merely a sign of folly and a distracted mind, but was of practical importance. … The extreme activity of mind which showed itself in the later eighteenth century among women – the talking, and the meeting, the writing of essays on Shakespeare, the translating of classics – was founded on the solid fact that women could make money by writing. Money dignifies what is frivolous when unpaid for." Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, [1928] 1974), 65.

[6] See the European Women Writers database (http://neww.huygens.knaw.nl/ for translations.

[7] Françoise Parent-Lardeur, *Les cabinets de lecture: La lecture publique à Paris sous la Restauration* (Paris: Payot, 1982), 28. Seventeen of Montolieu's titles are listed in one of the catalogues.

[8] A series with "Œuvres de Mme la Baronne Isabelle de Montolieu" published by Arthus-Bertrand in fifty-four volumes in the years 1820–34 thus includes, for example, her own novel *Caroline de Lichtfield* as well as *Raison et sensibilité, ou Les deux manières d'aimer*, her 1815 translation of Jane

with many other popular novelists from that period, Isabelle de Montolieu fell in oblivion in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Her books belong to the large group of sentimental novels analysed and classified by Margaret Cohen as *hors d'usage* – "not really lost" but "fallen out of circulation" – and as a challenge to modern readers because their contemporary aesthetic context is lost.[9]

Le Robinson suisse is probably Montolieu's most read translation and its afterlife slightly different from the rest of her work. As will be shown in this article, however, her intervention in the robinsonade genre (both translating and continuing Wyss' work) was not problem-free.[10] I will elucidate how Montolieu negotiated gender into the genre, demanding more space for the mother figure on a desert island, and how her rewriting of the male script, both by translating and continuing Wyss' novel, was received. After immediate and immense popularity, her *Le Robinson suisse* has been treated with disparagement or ignored, while Wyss' work, particularly in the last decades, has witnessed renewed scholarly interest. Towards the end of the article, I will therefore discuss the mechanisms at work in a selection of presumably authoritative studies, where recent literary historians wishing to (re-)canonize both Wyss' book and the robinsonade genre more or less actively write Isabelle de Montolieu's part of the work out of the history.

The robinsonade genre: narratives of adventures, survival, and (boys') education

A robinsonade is a story, inspired by and often with direct reference to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* from 1719, of one or more castaways struggling to survive on a desert island.[11] Defoe's novel tells the story of Robinson, who defies his father's will and goes to sea. On one of his voyages he is shipwrecked off South America and spends twenty-eight years on a desert island, the first twenty-five years entirely alone, thereafter in the company of a native he calls Friday. Defoe's novel depicts how Robinson in his loneliness manages to gain control of the island, himself, and his relationship to God, as well as how he performs all

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Austen's *Sense and Sensibility,* presented with no other author ascription than "freely translated from English [*traduit librement de l'anglais*] by Mme La Baronne Isabelle de Montolieu".

[9] "What are a work's distinctive poetics, what are these poetics' aesthetic logic and ideological force? Without understanding that forgotten works are shaped by a coherent, if now lost aesthetic, one simply dismisses them as uninteresting or inferior in terms of the aesthetics that have won out." Margaret Cohen, *The Sentimental Education of the Novel* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 21.

[10] To grasp Montolieu's double reworking of Wyss – both translation and continuation – I will refer to it as "Montolieu's *Le Robinson suisse*", as in the title of this article.

[11] Reference is given in paratexts, such as titles, dedications, and prefaces; it may also be found within the narrative, as when the castaways recollect what Robinson Crusoe would have done in similarly perilous situations, find traces of him on the island, or even read Defoe's novel itself.

the chores one must do to survive: hunting and fishing, building a house, making pottery and clothes, farming, and baking bread. In the course of the eighteenth century, numerous robinsonades appeared, with a fixed set of elements of intrigue connected to shipwreck, distress, and survival, but which varied in terms of style and themes. The genre includes everything from picaresque stories of sea travels to sentimental, even erotic, love dramas, and the desert island offers the opportunity to cast culturally critical views back on the country of origin as well as utopian or colonialist narratives of new societies being formed. The common denominator in the plethora of texts is the modern European's encounter with the unknown, dangerous, or primitive.

With *Robinson der Jüngere* (1779–80), the German writer Joachim Heinrich Campe's revision of Defoe's novel, the robinsonade also became a genre of juvenile fiction. Even before that, Jean-Jacques Rousseau had declared in *Émile, ou De l'éducation* (1762) that the only book his young Emile would be allowed to read was *Robinson Crusoe*:

> Robinson Crusoe on his island, alone, deprived of the assistance of his kind and the instruments of all the arts, providing nevertheless for his subsistence, for his preservation, and even procuring for himself a kind of well-being – this is an object interesting for every age and one which can be made agreeable to children in countless ways. …This novel, disencumbered of all its rigmarole, beginning with Robinson's shipwreck near his island and ending with the arrival of the ship which comes to take him from it, will be both Emile's entertainment and instruction throughout the period which is dealt with here.[12]

This declaration gave a new boost to Defoe's novel, and was the direct impulse to Campe's adaptation for children.

The robinsonade genre is usually understood in highly gendered masculine terms: this is the story of a male hero's fight for survival in a nature which at first sight seems hostile, but which can be mastered. The robinsonade scholar Martin Green makes this an explicit part of the genre story. According to Green, even though both Defoe and Rousseau were good portrayers of women, in survival adventure "they either omitted women or allotted them subordinate roles". And to Green, this gender bias is inherent in Enlightenment ideology:

> In the Enlightenment as a whole, the liberation of men entailed the limitation of women. …This new masculinism was not a result of indifference to women. Nor was it calculated exploitation. It seems to be simply the dark or shadow side of a gender myth – the founding myth of both adventure and the Enlightenment, which summoned

[12] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile, or on Education*, trans. Alan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, [1762] 1979), 184–85.

> men to stand together against all their enemies – feudal tyrants, false priests, tax farmers – and spoke of lordship over women and children as their natural reward. Men were to be the sturdy yeoman class of the human race, each with his little kingdom of home behind him, including his consort and his subjects. [13]

However, the robinsonade is not that exclusively masculine: women have at all times read, written, and been protagonists in castaway stories, although in a modest number of works. Jeannine Blackwell, in a seminal article from 1985, counted twenty-six "female robinsonades" in German, Dutch, English, French, and American literature until the beginning of the nineteenth century.[14] Inspired by Blackwell, I have searched for more texts, and so far I have documented ninety-two robinsonades with female author and/or female protagonists from the period 1719 to 1900.[15] These works include another continuation written by a female author to a male author's work, prior to Montolieu's sequel to Wyss, and several stories of female castaways in which Rousseau's *Emile* functions as pedagogical intertext.[16] Isabelle de Montolieu seems to be the only one to elaborate the presence of the mother figure on a desert island, and most female castaways are girls and young women, often motherless.[17]

The Swiss pastor's family robinsonade

Johann David Wyss extended the scope of the educational robinsonade when he let a whole family, emigrating for Australia, become shipwrecked on a Pacific island. The narrator of the story is the pastor himself, and the narrative focuses on the experiences of his four boys in a foreign setting, with all the chores required to ensure the family's survival on the island. In all aspects of life – hunting, construction, botany, and religion – the father is a mentor to his sons (and readers), and the narrative is heavily marked by this paternally pedagogical discourse. There is also a "virtuous mother", who provides care and deals with housekeeping on the

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[13] Martin Green, *The Robinson Crusoe Story* (University Park: Pennsylvanian State University Press, 1990), 35.

[14] Jeannine Blackwell, "An Island of Her Own: Heroines of the German Robinsonades from 1720 to 1800", *German Quarterly* 58, no.1 (1985): 5.

[15] See Anne Birgitte Rønning, "Female robinsonades. A bibliography" (online bibliography, University of Oslo, 2011), accessed April 15, 2014, https://www2.hf.uio.no/tjenester/bibliografi/Robinsonades.

[16] In 1821, the German writer Luise Hölder published a sequel to Campe's work, *Rückreise Robinsons des Jüngern nach seinem Eilande in Begleitung seiner Kinder*. For a discussion of Rousseauian intertext in works such as Catherine Woillez' *Emma ou le Robinson des demoiselles* (1834), see my article "Stratégies et positionnements discursifs dans les robinsonnades au féminin", in *Au-delà des œuvres: Les voies de l'analyse du discours littéraire*, ed. Dominique Maingueneau and Inger Østenstad (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2010), 173–95.

[17] There is also a mother in Sarah Harriet Burney's *The Shipwreck* (1816). She is shipwrecked with her young daughter, who survives the island stay while the mother dies there.

island – furnishings, food, and clothes. In Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, as well as in many later robinsonades, life on the island is depicted as materially miserable and mentally intolerable; in the Wyss novel, however, the desert island really implies the positive opportunity for a new start. The narrative teaches how to benefit from nature, create a new world, and build a home, and at the core of these efforts is the patriarchal family.

In the first volume, published in 1812, the story of the shipwrecked family, presented as the father's diary notes, was accompanied both by an afterword by a fictive publisher and a preface by the actual editor, Johann David's son Johann Rudolph. The fictive publisher relates how the manuscript was brought to Europe by an English ship, while the actual editor looks beyond the fiction and explains the origin of the novel and its purpose. He explains that the book was written for all "children and friends of children", but that it has remained close to the original family context of the narrative: "[The author's] purpose was to use entertainment to teach and raise the four sons that a worthy spouse had given him. All the four boys were to be portrayed as lifelike and true to their characteristics of the time".[18] Likewise, reality, education, and idealization account for the depiction of the mother figure:

> The portrayal of [her] was shaped with love first because it was important to describe the family circle in its entirety, second because it was possible to deduce much of importance from the relationship to her and her influence on the boys, and finally because she could serve as a paragon for female activities alongside the male, and it did not appear unsuitable to highlight this.[19]

Moreover, the story was a means to teach natural history to his sons, natural history being one of Johann David's great interests in addition to pedagogy. There is, however, general agreement that the pastor may not have been entirely up to scratch on contemporary knowledge, not to speak of the knowledge we have today, when it comes to geography and fauna, with for example the story featuring animals whose natural habitat is not the Pacific islands.

Gender negotiations through the invocation of readers

When Isabelle de Montolieu published her translation of Wyss' first two volumes, she translated both the fictive "publisher's postscript" and Johann Rudolph Wyss' preface (except the last paragraph). Moreover, she inserted a new separate introduction (*avant-propos*) and a

[18] Johann David Wyss, *Der schweizerische Robinson, oder der schiffbrüchige Schweizer-Prediger und seine Familie*, ed. Johann Rudolf Wyss, vol. I (Zürich: Drell Füssli, 1812), v (my translation).
[19] Ibid., vi.

preface, where she dedicated her translation "[t]o my dear grandsons Henri, Emile, and Fédor, and to my dear grand-nephews Adrien and Roger".[20] Montolieu must have translated and published the first volume before she had read Wyss' second volume; her *avant-propos* contains an explanation of how the manuscript was brought to Europe which is incongruent with the information given in the "publisher's postscript" in volume two.[21]

Perhaps it is the direct address to her grandsons and grand-nephews which made Isabelle de Montolieu emphasize the boy reader also in her translation of the "publisher's postscript": "I have just presented to the readers, and particularly the young boys, the part of the shipwrecked Swiss pastor's diary which has reached Europe".[22] The same reference to boys is also found in the first English editions, which had been translated from the French one, but it was not in the German-language original, where it only says: "So far does the diary of the shipwrecked Swiss pastor and his family go, insofar as it has now reached Europe".[23] When the publisher in the German-language original further on addressed the readers, it was without any indication of gender, or, more correctly, with a non-problematized male gender: he wrote "young readers" and might thus mean only boys, or both girls and boys (but he did not write "young male and female readers"). On the other hand, Isabelle de Montolieu draws explicit attention to the absence of girls within the story. While Wyss simply hoped that the

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[20] Isabelle de Montolieu, "A mes chers petits-fils…", in J. D. Wyss, *Le Robinson suisse ou Journal d'un père de famille naufragé avec ses enfans*, vol. I (Paris: Arthus Bertrand, 1814), v–viii (my translation).

[21] The former information is drawn from an early extract of the novel published by Wyss, "Die glückliche Landung: Fragment einer schweizerischen Robinsonade", in *Alpenrosen, ein Schweizer-Almanach auf das Jahr 1811* (Bern: J. J. Burgdorfer, 1811), 1–24. The publication is mentioned in the last paragraph of Wyss' preface to the first volume, which is omitted from Montolieu's translation. The inconsistency between Montolieu's *avant-propos* and the fictive "publisher's postscript" is useful for book historical research on *The Swiss Family Robinson*, the *avant-propos* being a sign that one has to do with a version based on the Montolieu translation. It is found in the first English translations, titled *Family Robinson Crusoe, or, Journal of a Father Shipwrecked, with His Wife and Children, on an Uninhabited Island*: in 1814, the first volume of this work (corresponding to the French edition of Wyss' first volume) was published by M. J. Godwin as both a single volume and as two half-volumes; then in 1816, the first volume was reprinted, while the second volume (corresponding to the French edition of Wyss' second volume) was published for the first time. In 1818 a new edition was published, this time with the title *The Swiss Family Robinson, or Adventures of a Father and Mother and Four Sons on a Desert Island*. Even if the title was changed, it is the same publisher and the same translation, based on the French text (including Montolieu's *avant-propos*). The third edition, from 1820, was also published by Godwin, but even if a new preface assures the reader that the book has not been abridged, the number of pages is lower (hence making the book cheaper, the publishing house advertises). I have so far been unable to establish whether this means a thoroughly new translation, or whether it is a revised version of the first translation.

[22] Johann David Wyss, *Le Robinson suisse ou Journal d'un père de famille naufragé avec ses enfans*, vol. IV (Paris: Arthus Bertrand, 1814), 202 (my translation).

[23] Johann David Wyss, *Der schweizerische Robinson*, vol. II (Zürich: Drell Füssli, 1813), 400 (my translation).

depiction of the "virtuous mother in the book in some way or other may be useful for both women and girls",[24] Montolieu in her translation of Wyss' preface points to the island as solely a boy's world: "Various motives prevented [the author] from placing girls on his island. The first was that he had no girls himself, and that he wished to paint his own children: other motives may be easily conceived."[25] She thus leaves it open to the reader to speculate which motives this might have been. The obvious one relates to decency: How could a serious author writing for children have let young girls ramble around freely with the young Wyss boys? But realism and probability may also play a part: How could one envision that young girls might cope with the primitive conditions? Or, is it so that there is no room for girls in a robinsonade because the desert island is a boys' fantasy? Regardless the motives that might come to mind, Montolieu's addition significantly raises the question of gender in the robinsonade.

Montolieu's translation of Wyss' novel is, like most translations at her time, not an exact *mot à mot* rendition, but still quite close to the source text. Most notably, the differences concern chapter divisions; there are more chapters in the French translations, but only a few episodes are added. In addition, dialogues, descriptions, and situations within the family are often expanded, allowing Montolieu to give slightly more space to the mother figure. Just as Wyss' narrative position clearly is the father, both in real life and within the story, it is possible to argue that the position from which Montolieu mediates Wyss' narrative is the one she expresses in her preface: that of the grandmother *vis à vis* her grandchildren – in solidarity with the father figure, but at the same time with a certain distance from him and discretely adjusting his version.[26]

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[24] Wyss, *Der schweizerische Robinson*, vol. I, vi (my translation).

[25] Wyss, *Le Robinson suisse* (1814), xiii (my translation): "Différens motifs l'avaient empêché de placer dans son île des jeunes filles: dont le premier est qu'il n'en avait point, et qu'il ne vouloit peindre que ses propres enfans; ses autres motifs se comprendront facilement." The original reads: "Jetzt hoffentlich kann das geschilderte Walten und Wirken der achtbaren Mutter dieses Buch hie [sic] und da sowohl Frauen, als Mädchen auf irgend eine Weise nützlich machen, und es wird nicht allzu einseitig nur Knaben oder Vätern oder Männern von Brauchbarkeit seyn". Wyss, *Der schweizersche Robinson*, vol. I, vi. The 1814 English translation from the French makes a virtual introduction of girls somewhat of a threat to the order of things: "Various motives prevented him from introducing girls in his uninhabited island. The first was, that he had himself no girls, and that introducing them would have spoiled the integrity of his painting: several other motives may be easily conceived" (Johann David Wyss, *The Family Robinson Crusoe; or, Journal of a Father Shipwrecked with His Wife and Children, on an Uninhabited Island. Translated from the German of M. Wiss* [London: M. J. Godwin, 1814], xi).

[26] It is interesting to see how, in the prefaces, Montolieu uses her role as grandmother and educator to claim authority as author. This role is also shown by frontispiece, which depicts a family setting with a lady reading for five small children. See the 1814 edition at Swiss library platform *e-rara.ch*, http://www.e-rara.ch/sikjm/content/pageview/4066195. In this respect Montolieu was far from unique:

When in her sequel in 1824 Madame de Montolieu introduced more women, it was overtly with female readers in mind, which she explained in the preface. This 1824 preface is dedicated to Johann Rudolph Wyss, the editor of the original, and Madame de Montolieu reminds him that she has repeatedly called for the sequel to his father's diary and that she also has asked and been permitted to write the sequel herself. Even so, she admits that she is not certain that his father would applaud the literary product. Finally, she assures him that she has not introduced inappropriate elements with the new female castaways: "By introducing the unhappy mother and her children on the island of our Robinsons, I wished to reassure the reader's ideas about their future although I avoided anything that might arouse passions."[27]

Rousseau-inspired female community

It is only toward the end of Montolieu's 1824 sequel that we are introduced to the story of the young mother, the German Madame Hirtel, who with her daughters, Sophie and Mathilde, has survived four years in a cave on the neighbouring island. Madame Hirtel relates that they survived the first month in the wilderness, but then after taking care of a baby that had strayed from its mother, they became acquainted with the natives and an English missionary. In general, however, Montolieu's sequel also gives more room to the mother of the four boys. In Wyss' story she primarily played the role of the caregiver, but in Montolieu's sequel she becomes the victim of injury and sickness, and the story dwells on her longing for the community of other women.[28] Together with her youngest son she is surprised by the natives and taken prisoner on the neighbouring island, where she makes friends with Madame Hirtel. Thus, when the family is finally reunited, both women have stories to tell, which Montolieu allocates space for within the pastor's first-person narrative. A new life in the colony is briefly displayed in the conclusion and a postscript: a peaceful coexistence between the natives and the shipwrecked families, technological progress in the form of a mill and a sawmill, and contact with Europe via ship. Notification is also given of wedding celebrations between three of the sons and Madame Hirtel and her daughters, and the fourth son is expecting a baby with his Swiss cousin whom he has brought back to the island as his wife.

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in the course of the 1700s, women in England and on the Continent, including Catherine Macaulay, Madame de Beaumont, Madame d'Épinay, Sarah Fielding, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Maria Edgeworth, wrote about upbringing and education in letters, essays, and novels for adults and for children. On education and motherly authorial authority, see Rebecca Davies, *Written Maternal Authority and Eighteenth-Century Education in Britain* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

[27] Montolieu, *Le Robinson suisse continué par Madame de Montolieu*, vol. I, iv.

[28] She even gets a name of her own: Elisabeth.

Thus Isabelle de Montolieu changed both the structure and dynamic of the story of the shipwrecked family. While Wyss' original structure is episodic – each chapter features a new discovery, an encounter with a new animal, or a task to be handled within a stable framework of family life on the island – Montolieu created more drama and an overriding plot structure. This makes the narrative more novelistic, as noticed by one of the early French robinsonade scholars, William-Edward Mann.[29] The Swiss literature researcher Claire de Ribaupierre comments that the novelistic turn is due, in fact, to the shift of a female character from being an extra to becoming the central point of the story.[30] De Ribaupierre's reading is inspired by psychoanalysis. She reads the mother character as an object of oedipal desire and emphasizes the family's isolated situation on the island as untenable: it will lead to either incest or annihilation. Hence, the mother with the two daughters is a necessary move both for technical and cultural aspects of the novel. In my opinion, yet another cultural dimension is added to the work by Montolieu's insertion of more women: through the mothers' narratives and the families' union and expansion, Montolieu not only placed women in a boys' universe, but transcended the patriarchal pedagogical project, which was focused on the core family, towards (an idyllic) social utopia.[31]

In this connection it is worth noticing that the title pages of Montolieu's sequel offer as its motto a quotation from Rousseau's *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761): "I have lived on a wonderful and desert island, a beautiful and touching picture of nature's previously mentioned beauty, which appeared to have been removed to the end of the world to serve as a refuge for persecuted innocence."[32] Whereas Rousseau's *Emile* clearly was the source of inspiration for the boys educational project of father and son Wyss (both the father telling the story in the family and the son's publishing of it), Isabelle de Montolieu highlights *Julie* as her Rousseauian inspiration. Rousseau's epistolary novel *Julie* was highly influential in its time, helping to usher in the sentimental novel in both France and French-speaking

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[29] William-Edward Mann, *Robinson Crusoe en France: Étude sur l'influence de cette œuvre dans la littérature française* (Paris: Université de Paris, 1916), 172.

[30] Claire de Ribaupierre, "Pour que naisse le roman: l'affirmation du désir chez Madame de Montolieu", *Modernité et nostalgie: La nature utopique dans la littérature enfantine suisse* [Catalogue de l'exposition réalisée par l'Institut suisse de littérature pour la jeunesse] (Zurich: L'Institut suisse de littérature pour la jeunesse, 1992), 21–26.

[31] In her studies on the sentimental novel in Swiss romande literature, Claire Jaquier highlights the tendency of secluded spaces and idyllic closures compared to French sensibility culture. See Claire Jaquier, "L'idylle sensible", *Annales Benjamin Constant* 18–19 (1996), 107–15 ; and Claire Jaquier, *L'Erreur des désirs: Romans sensibles au XVIIIe siècle* (Lausanne: Editions Payot, 1998).

[32] My translation of the motto on the title page of *Le Robinson suisse*, 1824. The French original reads: "J'ai séjourné dans une île déserte et délicieuse, image de l'antique beauté de la nature, et qui semble être confinée au bout du monde, pour servir d'asile à l'innocence."

Switzerland and raise the status of the novel, which until then had been in low regard as a "female genre". The depiction of the sensitive, expressive, and wisely reasoning Julie made Rousseau a favourite author for women readers both in and outside the French-speaking world in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[33] In Rousseau's novel it is the tutor and lover Saint-Preux who expresses his recollection of the wonderful and deserted island, precisely in the letter to Julie's close friend and confidante, her cousin Claire, which leads to his being reintroduced into Julie's family circle. Montolieu's motto thus connects to discourses of travelling into the world as well as to the epistolary and conversational culture, which gave voice to subjectivity, sensibility, motherhood, and female fellowship.[34] But *Julie* also invokes female (motherly) self-sacrifice and self-denial as a requirement for patriarchal community and harmony. The Rousseauian intertext in Montolieu's sequel resounds equivocally on this point: while the featureless and nameless mother portrayed by Wyss as "die Mutter" is certainly close to self-sacrifice, Montolieu's mother figures are nevertheless given the right to experience and connect to others.[35]

Rivalling sequels and scholarly confusion

It appears that Isabelle de Montolieu was right in her suspicion that her new ending did not fit into Wyss' original plans; at any rate it speeded up Johann Rudolph's work to publish the rest of his father's story. A third volume of *Der schweizerische Robinson* thus appeared in 1826, followed by a "fourth and final volume" in 1827. In the prefaces to these volumes, Johann Rudolph Wyss demonstrates that he was familiar with "the spiritual" Madame de Montolieu. He acknowledges that her translation had in many ways enriched the text and adapted it for French readers and that her sequel contains "much of excellence".[36] Nevertheless, he assures

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[33] See, e.g., Brigitte Louichon, *Romancières sentimentales (1789–1825)* (Saint-Denis: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 2009).

[34] However, *Julie*'s main discourse – that of love – is excluded from the quote rendered by Montolieu's motto, as is a critique of the colonizing European from Rousseau's original, as well as a time closure. Rousseau's full sentence reads: "J'ai séjourné *trois mois* dans une île déserte et délicieuse, douce et touchante image de l'antique beauté de la nature, et qui semble être confinée au bout du monde pour y servir d'asile à l'innocence *et à l'amour persécutés; mais l'avide Européen suit son humeur farouche en empêchant l'Indien paisible de l'habiter, et se rend justice en ne l'habitant pas lui-même.*" Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Julie, ou La nouvelle Héloïse: Lettres de deux amants habitants d'une petite ville au pied des Alpes*, ed. René Pomeau (Paris: Garnier, [1761] 1960), 394–95 (my italics).

[35] In the autobiographical anecdote "Le serin de Jean-Jacques Rousseau" (1815), Madame de Montolieu tells of an ambivalent relationship to Rousseau, from great enthusiasm in childhood to some disappointment later on.

[36] Wyss, *Der schweizerische Robinson*, vol. III (Zurich: Drell Füssli, 1826), iv; and Wyss, *Der schweizerische Robinson*, vol. IV (Zurich: Drell Füssli, 1827), v.

the reading public that the sequel he himself presents follows "my father's original script".[37] Surprisingly enough, a shipwrecked girl also appears in the narrative by the father and son Wyss, as the oldest son, exploring the island towards the end of the fourth volume, finds a certain "Miss Jenny", who has dressed as a boy to manage the situation; a love affair is subsequently hinted at. Furthermore, in the end, a ship comes to the rescue of the shipwrecked family, where there is an English family with two daughters ready to be married. Jenny and the oldest and youngest of the boys take the opportunity to travel back to Europe, while the English couple and one of the daughters choose to remain on the island. The ending was just a sketch in the "original script" by Johann David, but both the Jenny character and one of the marriageable daughters were already included there.[38] Filling in his father's story, Johann Rudolph also allowed this sequel to end as a social utopia – a utopia about "New Switzerland". The story of Jenny dressed as a boy and the introduction of a new family does not, however, significantly change the impression that we are dealing with a thoroughly patriarchal structure.

The original manuscript of father Wyss long remained in private ownership and was little known among scholars. This has caused much misunderstanding when it comes to the relationship between Montolieu's and Wyss' sequels. Mann, for example, implies there is an important influence from Montolieu on Wyss' sequel, even suggesting that Wyss should have borrowed more from her: "More than the other loans there is one idea Wyss owes to Madame de Montolieu, and that is the understanding of the role the feminine element should play in the social life of the little community – but he has not included it in full."[39] Also Claire de Ribaupierre seems unaware of the existence of the Jenny character in the original manuscript, and takes it as given that Jenny is inspired by Madame Hirtel and her daughters.[40] Some scholars, such as Philip Holden and John Seelye, take the sequel with Miss Jenny to be written by Isabelle de Montolieu, while others seem to mix up translations and sequels.[41]

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[37] Wyss, *Der schweizerische Robinson*, vol. IV, vi.
[38] For an elucidation of Johann David's original manuscript (three sections entitled "Charackteristick meiner Kinder in einer Robinsonade"), see Hannelore Kortenbruck-Hoeijmans, *Johann David Wyss' "Schweizerischer Robinson": Dokument pädagogisch-literarischen Zeitgeistes an der Schwelle zum 19. Jahrhundert* (Baltmannsweiler: Schneider Verlag Hohengehren, 1999).
[39] Mann, *Robinson Crusoe en France*, 170 (my translation).
[40] When it comes to publishers, however, one may point out many influences from Montolieu's work to the one by Wyss, when so many American editions let the shipwrecked girl dressed as a boy have the name Emily, not Jenny. In Montolieu's sequel, Emilie is Madame Hirtel's given name.
[41] Philip Holden, "A Textual History of J. R. Wyss's *The Swiss Family Robinson*" (master's thesis, University of Florida, 1986), accessed June 2, 2014, http://ufdcimages.uflib.ufl.edu/AA/00/00/89/22/00001/AA00008922.pdf; and John Seelye, "Introduction", in Johann Wyss, *The Swiss Family Robinson* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2007),

Like the first volumes, Wyss' sequel was translated into French and English, and it has survived with many variations up until Walt Disney's film version from 1960 (directed by Ken Annakin). After the 1820s, several new translations of the first two volumes were published, as well as editions of the complete story by Wyss. But also Montolieu's sequel has lived on, both in French and as the basis for translations into English. Later on, even new sequels were made by other writers.[42] *Der schweizerische Robinson* thus has an uncommonly long and complex publishing history, with the strangest mixes of translations and sequels, most often in abridged editions, and often without any clear credit to author or translator.[43] It has almost become a chapbook ("an anonymous *Volksbuch*"), as the English children's book researcher David Blamires points out.[44] Nevertheless, this confusion does not imply that editions and sequels exist tranquilly side by side. On the contrary, the 200 years of reception history are marked by rivalling versions and value judgements in which gender seems to be a crucial point.

"The charm of imagination" – nineteenth century reception of Montolieu

Isabelle de Montolieu's relatively free translation practice was commented upon already by her contemporaries. Louis Jullian in *Galérie historique des contemporains* (1822) praises her taste, "the ease of manner and the freedom of her style [which] make [her translations] pass as

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vii–xxi. Joseph Hillis Miller, *On Literature* (London: Routledge, 2002), 130, seems to mix translations and sequels in his description of the immediate afterlife of Wyss' work: "A French translation by one Mme la Baronne Isabelle de Montolieu, with a new ending, was published in 1814. Another French translation, by Elise Volart [sic], with yet new material, followed. The first English translation, *The Family Robinson Crusoe*, was made by Mary Jane Godwin, with more new material". The confusion is possibly due to the varying number of chapters and volumes (formats) but also that scholars uncritically pass on and freely combine bits of information on Montolieu's sequel without further examination.

[42] For example, Adrien Paul's *Willis le Pilote* from 1855 and Jules Verne's *La seconde patrie* from 1900. In the preface, Verne also refers to Montolieu's sequel.

[43] See my bibliography for identified editions of Montolieu's sequel. There are, for example, editions with Montolieu's sequel without naming her (for example Philadelphia, 1868), while in others she is mentioned and credited (for example in the prefaces of New York, 1859, and Philadelphia, 1871).

[44] David Blamires, *Telling Tales: The Impact of Germany on English Children's Books 1780–1918* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2009), 88. See also Miller's statement that "*The Swiss Family Robinson* does not have a single author"; Joseph Hillis Miller, "Introduction", in J.D. Wyss, *The Swiss Family Robinson* (New York: Signet, 2004), 2. Blamires elucidates the differences between Wyss' original and Montolieu's translation and gives evidence for how the first English editions are based on the French edition (81–87). Even this scholar makes mistakes in his assumptions on Montolieu's reworking of Wyss' text, though. The last decade's massive digitization is of great help to textual scholarship on the Wyss-Montolieu case, as this makes it easier to assemble and collate editions. A full overview of translations and versions is still in the future, though – if possible at all.

original works"[45], while Joseph-Marie Quérard in *La France littéraire, ou Dictionnaire bibliographique* (1834) states that even if Montolieu was considered less than a master in both English, German and French, her works remained in publication "because the lack of reliability in her translations is offset by the charm of her imagination and the richness of emotions".[46] In the preface to some of the English translations of *Le Robinson suisse*, however, Isabelle de Montolieu is praised as "one of the most accomplished and elegant writers of her day".[47] These are editions which combine abridged versions of Wyss' first two volumes with Montolieu's 1824 sequel, and the sequel is equally praised because it provides the complete ending which Wyss' story lacked. The preface states that the sequel has been "sanctioned and approved by the son of the lamented author", and that the "entire work was published in France, and has for many years held a distinguished rank in the juvenile libraries there."[48] As this is printed in the preface of the book, it is more a selling point than a mere assessment of the book, nor is it entirely reliable in its presentation of facts, but the statement is nevertheless interesting because it ascribes Isabelle de Montolieu as much honour for the value of the work as Johann David Wyss. In a French context Montolieu occasionally was even more valued than Wyss himself, and her translations of his first two volumes were often published without his name on it, but with the name of Madame de Montolieu on the title page.[49]

For Isabelle de Montolieu and her contemporaries, there was no absolute distinction between translation, adaptation, and original authorship; composing by copying was not only accepted, but appreciated. That a story was well-formed and well-presented was more important than originality until we move into the nineteenth century, and it is only in our time that we expect a translation to be as faithful as possible to the source text. Even Montolieu's

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[45] Louis Jullian, *Galerie historique des contemporains, ou nouvelle biographie*, vol. 7, second edition, (Brussels: Aug. Wahlen et. comp, 1822), 147 (my translation).
[46] Joseph-Marie Quérard, *La France littéraire, ou Dictionnaire bibliographique*, vol. 6 (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1834), 270. This follows how Fortunée Briquet describes Montolieu in her reference dictionary of female authors from 1804: "She unites the full richness of emotions with the charm of imagination". Briquet, *Dictionnaire historique, littéraire et bibliographique*…. (Paris: INDIGO et Côté-femmes éditions, [1804] 1997), 243 (my translations). Joan Hinde Stewart in "Sensibility with Irony: Mme de Montolieu at the End of an Era", *Kentucky Romance Quarterly* 25 (1978): 482–83 refers to critics who comment upon a lack of style and eloquence, attributed to Isabelle de Montolieu's Swiss background.
[47] For instance Johann David Wyss and Madame de Montolieu, *The Swiss Family Robinson: or, Adventures in a Desert Island* (New York: Derby and Jackson, 1859), iv. The edition dated Philadelphia 1871 (publisher: J.B. Lippincott) has an identical preface.
[48] Ibid.
[49] See Mann, *Robinson Crusoe en France*, 173.

own novel *Caroline de Lichtfield* had an original source text in a small story by another author. Maria Edgeworth, in her enthusiastic report of a visit to Isabelle de Montolieu, quotes her as saying, "I never...could invent an original story – but give me the first hint and I *can go on* and supply all the details and characters and feelings."[50]

Montolieu's style and popularity was also met with scepticism, though. Valérie Cossy refers to how, for example, the Swiss-Dutch author Isabelle de Charrière commented critically on her colleague's lack of authenticity and authorial integrity.[51] Charrière and Montolieu belonged to the same Swiss literary milieu, marked by the pre-revolutionary culture of sensitivity, but they adapted differently to the changes in taste and book market at the turn of the eighteenth century. When the cultural practice of *l'ancien regime* dissolved, a new high culture emerged, in which the literary work was understood in terms of an individual's original expression, whereas the idea of social communication is a common feature of pre-revolutionary and in nineteenth-century popular culture.[52] It is probably the very continuation of the aesthetics of the old regime in popular culture that may explain Montolieu's success with *Le Robinson suisse* and her adaptability at the new literary market.[53] Or, as Sylvie Le Moël comments, "what distinguished Isabelle de Montolieu was her fine feeling for the demands of her time."[54]

By the mid-nineteenth century, however, Montolieu as well as other women writers of her time had fallen into literary disrepute, because the sentimental code fell out of fashion. Margaret Cohen sees this shift in French literature as the result of the advent of realism, made possible by the abolition of censorship after the July Revolution of 1830 and not least by the active position-taking by male realist authors (Balzac and Stendhal).[55] In this context it is

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[50] Maria Edgeworth, *Maria Edgeworth in France and Switzerland: Selections from the Edgeworth Family Letters*, ed. Christina Colvin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 239 (italics in the original). See also Stewart, "Sensibility with Irony", 481–82, on how Montolieu felt the need to refute the criticism that she only translated and did not create.

[51] Cossy, *Jane Austen in Switzerland*, 185.

[52] Ibid., 186.

[53] Montolieu's translations of Jane Austen were also very successful; at the time Jane Austen's novels were more popular in France than in England. They were very different from the original works, though, and Valérie Cossy comments that Montolieu's background and aesthetic ideology in fact made her rather unfit for translating the subtle and stylistically elaborate novels of Jane Austen. Ibid., 188.

[54] Le Moël, "Zwischen Belletristik und Buchmarkt", 139 (my translation). As Richards, "Baronne de Montolieu", 862–63, also notes, her own original compositions "struck a chord in a wide audience, and, as such, attest to shifting literary tastes at the turn of the eighteenth century. The choice of works she translated bears attest to her insights into the literary developments of her day."

[55] Cohen, *Sentimental Education*. Several factors work together in this development. Joan DeJean ties the de-canonization of female authors to a development throughout the eighteenth century that was due to changes in publishing practice: while female authors dominated the many literary anthologies intended for adult readers in a newly expanded book market, French school anthologies from the latter

revealing that the motto of Montolieu's sequel, the quote from Rousseau's *Julie*, disappeared from the title page in subsequent editions.

Literature for children also changed its nature in the nineteenth century, through the gradual toning down of its didactic character. In the robinsonades, adventure came to be much more important than education – a trend which appears to be independent of whether the books featured boy or girl heroes and whether they had been written by male or female authors.[56] Under these circumstances one should expect also the didactic and moralizing tale of the Swiss Robinsons to fall *hors d'usage*, but it continued to live on, not least as a "chapbook" in new and abbreviated editions in English.

Unsullied by female hands? Modern scholars in search for an English original

When the history of the robinsonade genre is written, it is most often as a uniquely male tradition, with a line of affiliation drawn from Defoe via Campe, Wyss, and Verne to William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954), Michel Tournier's *Vendredi ou les Limbes du Pacifique* (1967), and J. F. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986). Possibly inspired by the latter post-colonial and civilization-critical works, recent decades have witnessed renewed scholarly interest in the robinsonade genre. A striking feature of this revival is a re-canonization of Wyss' work, linked to industrious attempts to detach it from Madame de Montolieu's name.

In Anglo-American research this is expressed in a search for an "original English translation", not linked to "one Mme la Baronne Isabelle de Montolieu",[57] presumably found in "Godwin's reliable translation of Wyss' novel, which had been read in English by two

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part of the eighteenth century and onwards would only be using texts by men as moral and literary examples. See Joan DeJean, "Classical Reeducation: Decanonizing the Feminine", in *Displacements. Women, Tradition, Literatures in French*, ed. Joan DeJean and Nancy K. Miller (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 22–36. But the decline is also to be found in the very notions of sensibility, sensitivity, and sentimentality. As Michael Bell shows in his study *Sentimentalism, Ethics and the Culture of Feeling* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2000), the value that is put into the term "sentimental", as in "the sentimental novel", changes: it has a positive connotation in the 1700s, but when the culture it belongs to falls into disrepute in the 1800s, the term also takes on the slightly negative aura that we know today, where sentimentality refers to less genuine and superficial states of mind. Dena Goodman has analysed the devaluation of sentimentality in gendered terms. Sensitivity was not placed in opposition to rationality in the aesthetics of the eighteenth century or the Enlightenment culture, rather it was perceived as an obvious part of reason. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, a conflict arose between reason and emotion, where the gender dichotomy contributed to ranking masculine reason as superior. See Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994).

[56] Adventure dominates in particular in Jules Verne's books with boy heroes, but also for instance in *Une petite fille de Robinson* written by the male author Des Essarts in 1861, as well as in *Four on an Island* (1892), written by the female author L. T. Meade.

[57] Miller, *On Literature*, 130. Seelye, "Introduction", refers to her consistently as "the Baroness".

generations of children before the Montolieu material was added".[58] This search for a credible original source text, and the faith that it has been found in the first English translation, appears in a slightly parodic light, since the "Godwin translation" – that is, the original editions from 1814/1816 and the new edition from 1818 – are quite accurate translations from Montolieu's French version from 1814. John Seelye, professor of American literature and chief editor of the Penguin American Library, comments upon the translations in the preface of a Penguin edition of the novel from 2007, but he seems to have lost his way in the tricky publishing history. Following Philip Holden, he ascribes the sequel with Miss Jenny to Madame de Montolieu (as discussed above, it is from Wyss' fourth volume from 1827) and lets that serve as the reason why the sequel has not been included in the Penguin edition. Joseph Hillis Miller, the renowned American poststructuralist, has written about his own experience of reading *The Swiss Family Robinson* as a child, but admits, basically, that he is uncertain which version of the book he actually read.[59] Both Seelye's and Miller's discussions are interesting, not so much because of the mistakes about the complex publishing history, but rather because of their manoeuvres when it comes to authority and value ascription of the different editions. Both nobility and nationality play a part in Seelye's rejection of what he mistakenly takes to be Montolieu's sequel. He asserts that colonization is a rare topic in Swiss literature, and supposes the imperialism associated with New Switzerland to be "due to the translator's national identity [as French]".[60] Also gendered assumptions related to ideology and intellectual movements are put forth, when he contends that the edition without "the many additions by the Baroness" is closer to Rousseau and the Swiss pedagogue Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, both names that he links up to Wyss' intellectual position.[61] The same association is made by Miller when he presents Mary Godwin in a line of female translators, only to end up with Mary's husband to assure the authority of her work: "[Mary Jane Godwin] was the wife of the political philosopher, author and educator William Godwin. The book was part of William Godwin's children's books project, 'the young people's library.'" And a few pages later: "It was no coincidence that it was William Godwin's wife who made the first translation. … He was deeply influenced by Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Émile*, even if he

[58] Seelye, "Introduction", xix.
[59] In *On Literature* Hillis Miller describes *The Swiss Family Robinson* as his first great reading experience. After *On Literature* Miller wrote about Wyss in an article in a children's book anthology and in the introduction to a new edition in the Signet Classics series (both published in 2004).
[60] Seelye, "Introduction", xviii. This is deeply ironic since the edition he refers to is by "the Baroness", and the one he rejects comprises Wyss' sequel.
[61] Ibid., xix.

disagreed with Rousseau on some points."[62] A step further in this way of assigning cultural authority by "male bonding" is Martin Green's assertion that the first English translation (of 1814) "was made by William Godwin, and perhaps with the help of his son-in-law, Shelley".[63]

The scholars differ in their attitudes to the diversity of versions, however. To Green, "*The Swiss Family Robinson* always existed in a number of versions"[64], and the text to which he himself refers is one of the most popular American abridged versions. Seelye is more of a purist, and for him it seems to be a problem, for which he holds Montolieu responsible, that it became permissible for anybody to do what they wanted with the story.[65] Miller, on the other hand, makes it a positive trait of the story that the reader becomes so engrossed in it that he or she wants to continue imagining.[66] But also for Miller it is important to maintain something of "the original Godwin version", in close relation to Rousseau.[67]

Divergent valuations

Many critical objections have also been raised against Wyss' original ever since its first publication. Critics and researchers have pointed to the laborious, paternalist, and didactic tone as well as the lack of realism in flora and fauna, and most modern scholars have noted the male-dominated universe. When it comes to value judgements and the relation to Montolieu's work, however, these observations seem of little consequence. David Blamires admits the gender imbalance to be a weakness in Wyss' work and credits Montolieu for her work in making the book known and popular. But even he strangely overlooks the core of Montolieu's sequel: the way she included descriptions of the mother's experiences,

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[62] Miller, *On Literature*, 130 and 140. As far as I am aware, it cannot be stated with certainty who was responsible for the first translation – Mary Godwin or William Godwin. It appeared in 1814, 1816, and 1818, at the publishing house which bore the name of Mary Jane Godwin. Both Seelye and Miller in *On Literature* believe it was Mary Godwin herself, and without any further remarks they also suggest that she might have had Montolieu's translation at hand. In the introduction to the Signet Classics edition, however, Miller states that the translations were "probably by Godwin himself". Miller, Introduction", 3.

[63] Green, *The Robinson Crusoe Story*, 77. Green (76 n. 9) presumes the 1814 edition, entitled *The Family Robinson Crusoe*, to be directly translated from German, prior to the Montolieu based versions entitled *The Swiss Family Robinson*.

[64] Ibid., 70.

[65] Seelye, "Introduction", xxi.

[66] Miller, *On Literature*, 131, and "Introduction", 3–4.

[67] This is toned down in the Signet edition preface. The basis for the Signet edition is thus typical: In "A Note on the Translation" (unnumbered), it is stated that "the text is taken from an undated original by 'George H. Doran'. … The translation is basically the same as that of the edition dated 1853 and published by Willis P. Hazard in Philadelphia, though numerous cuts in the later part of the book have been made."

introduced new female shipwrecked individuals, and attached importance to the female community on the island. On the other hand, Martin Green, who focuses on the patriarchal and pedagogical discourse in Wyss' book, pays attention to the otherwise ignored changes in the robinsonade universe that are part of Montolieu's sequel – he comments on both the motto from Rousseau's *Julie* and the introduction of the women. Montolieu makes the robinsonade into "a vehicle of sensibility", he writes, but claims that the mother does not become more active or adventurous.[68] As he regards the robinsonade as an *adventure* genre, Montolieu's sequel implies no improvement to him. Green also dismisses her importance in the history of the genre, when he mistakenly asserts that "Madame de Montolieu's volumes got reprinted only once, in 1829".[69]

The efforts to canonize Wyss' work, whether by reediting the book in classics series or writing genre history, are motivated by several factors: innovation, fascination, and popularity. The originality of the work is highlighted among others by Green,[70] and both Seelye and Miller account for a fascination associated to their own experiences of camper life in childhood and the "nest-making instinct".[71] The popularity argument is interesting, because it varies according to different national perspectives. Blamires explains the book's success in Britain by pride in British explorations of the world, and Green associates the popularity in the United States in the twentieth century to the "great value placed on family feeling".[72]

The only critic in recent research clearly appreciating Madame de Montolieu's 1824 sequel is Claire de Ribaupierre, who highlights "the feminine element".[73] She attaches importance to the central position of the mother character and to the fact that the introduction of the feminine aspect by Montolieu is connected to an appeal for identification and empathy with female readers. In her view Montolieu is bold and aesthetically clear-sighted in her use of "the male voice as the mask for a feminine language" and in staging psychological oedipal

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[68] Green, *The Robinson Crusoe Story*, 75.
[69] Ibid., 76.
[70] Wyss' originality relates both to juvenile fiction (adventures and pedagogy) and the robinsonade genre (shipwrecked family). However, the expansion from one to many shipwrecked appeared already in utopian robinsonades in the eighteenth century, such as Schnabel's *Die Insel Felsenburg*.
[71] Miller, *On Literature*, 127.
[72] Green, *The Robinson Crusoe Story*, 77; Blamires, *Telling Tales*, 79.
[73] Robinsonade researchers writing in French also from the early 1900s are positive to Madame de Montolieu's work with the genre. Montolieu has depictions which are "far more touching than Miss Jenny's story", Mann states, and therefore her version is also more successful as a novel (Mann, *Robinson Crusoe en France*, 172). In his doctoral dissertation on Defoe, from 1924, Paul Dottin comments quite briefly on Montolieu's work. He too, writes in positive terms about both the translation and the sequel, and he ascribes Madame de Montolieu the honour for Wyss' book at all becoming popular reading (Paul Dottin, "Daniel de Foe et ses romans" [doctoral dissertation, University of Paris, 1924], 420–23).

relationships and the culture's "incest ghost".[74] Appreciated in this manner, also Montolieu's *Le Robinson suisse* appears as an important innovation of the robinsonade genre.[75]

Male canonization to the detriment of women

The divergences when it comes to modern valuations of Wyss' and Montolieu's works are interesting in many ways. Just as Montolieu's narrative and paratexts negotiated gender into the genre, modern scholars demonstrate that gender is still at stake, although seldom subject to overt confrontation. No one explicitly argues that a "real robinsonade" should tell a man's tale of survival and not include women. And although it is easy to imagine this as a perversion of a boy's dream of a desert island, no one refutes the idea of a boy being accompanied by his mother. Still, there are reasons to be suspicious of the tendency to overlook Montolieu's work and of the various arguments – class, nationality, (philosophical) incompetence, lack of importance and influence, disorder – used to keep her *Le Robinson suisse* out of the good company of robinsonades. Why this reluctance towards Montolieu's work, and the passing on of unverified assumptions about it? Why is a modern (re-)canonization of Wyss only possible at the expense of Madame de Montolieu?

A complex set of gender and aesthetic valuation seems to be at play. First of all, there are tensions within the robinsonade genre, between old and new, and high and low. On the one hand, the genre will characteristically repeat the same pattern, and it is the expectations of the familiar elements that ensure sales success. On the other hand, the relevancy of the genre is connected to the continuous creation of new works. Moreover, after a century with a large register of discourses as adult literature, the scope of the robinsonade narrowed when it turned into juvenile fiction. Normally, a conversion to children's books means devaluation, but in this case, Wyss' educational book for children is ascribed innovation value by posterity, while Montolieu, who makes the work more like a novel, is stripped of value.

The symbolic capital, in Bourdieu's terminology, of Montolieu and Wyss may explain this paradox. Despite her upper-class position, Montolieu was a popular author, in the double sense of the word. As expressed in her paratexts, she had a writer's authority and self-

[74] De Ribeaupierre, "Pour que naisse le roman", 26.

[75] It is a pity that Ribeaupierre's study is little known, and that so few have noticed the innovative character of Montolieu's work. In C. M. Owen's recent study on female Crusoe characters, it could have made a good point. Owen treats Wyss' work in the chapter "Mothers and Daughters of the New World", in a series with among others Madame Daubenton's *Zélie dans le desert* (1787) and Burney's *The Shipwreck*, but in fact she has nothing to say about Wyss' book in the context of a "mother-daughter castaway narrative". C. M. Owen, *The Female Crusoe: Hybridity, Trade and the Eighteenth-Century Individual* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), 192–93.

consciousness as a (motherly) female writer, and her work generated enthusiasm and secured her income. Johann Rudolph Wyss was quite differently situated in relation to the market, and the same applies to his father, who originally had told the story in the family circle. Johann David Wyss was a pastor, and his son was a university professor and librarian, and we must assume that work with the family robinsonade must have been driven more by interest than by sales. To modern scholars, the fact that Johann Rudolph collected and published Swiss folklore and also authored the Swiss national anthem helps strengthen his authority and cultural capital, both in the larger cultural field that the children's book could be a part of, as well as in the literary field where the robinsonade and the novel belong. It thus appears to be the contrast between the internationally popular female author, with relatively low value, and a male national authority that comes into play when the canonization of Wyss's work requires the rejection of Montolieu's translation.

Furthermore, there are over time changes in aesthetic norms. Isabelle de Montolieu belonged to a sensibility culture, and it was the aesthetics of sensibility which made the imagination of a desert island interesting for her as a woman. This aesthetics was already on its way out in her lifetime – and associated with women and low culture. We have seen that the motto from Rousseau's *Julie* intimates the aesthetic value set according to which she wanted it to be read. However, over time the foundation for the motto disappeared, making it unrecognizable and invisible, which meant that Montolieu's work was looked upon as helpless and lacking in aesthetic competence.

Wyss' work is different from Montolieu's in style and intention, but not less old-fashioned aesthetically. For modern male researchers who want to highlight Wyss and his book as a classic, the link to Montolieu might therefore be a threat. Instead they cling to the pedagogical philosophy from the Enlightenment period, which in the form of a male-gendered authorization line from Rousseau, the author of *Emile*, to William Godwin, can ensure the high status of the book – and the researchers' investment in the genre. By an irony of fate, their endeavours most often still have their base in Isabelle de Montolieu's translation.

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