

**THE SERIAL NOVEL
IN THE GERMAN-AMERICAN PRESS
OF THE 19TH CENTURY***

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In this paper I wish to amplify on two points: the importance of newspaper research for the study of German-American belletristic prose and the relevance of current research on the serialized novel to German-American studies. In addressing the first question, let me begin by drawing attention to a significant but often overlooked fact, namely that a large proportion of the German-American novels produced in the nineteenth century were written by persons who were newspaper editors. Heinrich Börnstein, Samuel Ludwigh, Rudolph Lexow, Friedrich Hassaurek, Willibald Winckler, Otto Rupprius, and Mathilde Franziska Anneke are all examples of this now all but extinct species, the editor-novelist. For the editor-novelist, the arrangement was a convenient one. The taste of the newspaper public for novels in serialized form made the newspaper a ready vehicle for publication, and the newspaper presses could even be used for the publication of novels in book form. In many instances, newspaper publication appears to have preceded publication in book form, as was the case, for example, with Rudolph Lexow's novel *Amerikanische Criminal-Mysterien*, published as a book in 1854 but previously issued serially in his *Belletristisches Journal*. The same was also true of Otto Rupprius' *Das Vermächtnis des Pedlars*, which appeared in Lexow's *Belletristisches Journal* in 1858, but was not published as a book until the following year. In other cases, however, it is quite possible that novels may have appeared in newspapers without ever being subsequently reprinted as books.

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Of course, not all nineteenth-century German-American novels were written by newspaper editors. But even when this was not the case, it is surprising how often the newspapers encouraged, in one way or another, the publication of novels with German-American content. For example, the newspapers sometimes offered prizes for novels dealing with German-American life. This was the case with Ernst Solger's famous *Anton in Amerika*, originally written for a competition sponsored by the *Belletristisches Journal*. Likewise, Adolph Douai's *Fata Morgana* was the prizewinner in a competition sponsored by the *Anzeiger des Westens* in 1858.

The fact that the newspapers were so deeply involved in the promotion and publication of German-American belletristic prose has, I think, certain significant implications for the student of German-American bibliography. There are quite a few problems in German-American literary research that may someday be clarified through close attention to the literary contents of newspapers. As a first example, let me take the case of two works reportedly written by Udo Brachvogel.¹ Two novels, *Der Trödler* and *König Korn* have been attributed to Brachvogel, but neither is known to have been published as a book. Brachvogel, who came to the United States in 1866, was a co-editor of the *Belletristisches Journal* in 1876 and had previously been associated with several other New York newspapers. Likewise, at some time between 1866 and 1876, he had served for a time as co-editor of the *Westliche Post* in St. Louis. Consequently, one can easily form a tentative idea of at least some of the newspaper files that might be searched in order to check for a possible newspaper serialization of Brachvogel's novels. If even one of these novels could be retrieved from oblivion, it could be a significant contribution to our knowledge not only of this writer but of German-American prose fiction in general.

The case of Udo Brachvogel's missing novels is by no means unique. George Condoyannis, in his 1953 dissertation on German-American prose fiction, lists the titles of more than fifty works which, although alleged to exist, could not be located in book form. Since Condoyannis did not extend his investigation

to a search for newspaper serialization, there is a good chance that at least some of the works he was unable to find may yet come to light through newspaper research.

Even in cases where no specific novel title has been reported, there exists the possibility that new examples of nineteenth-century fiction will someday be made available for study as a result of newspaper research. For example, Franz Brümmer's *Lexikon der deutschen Dichter und Prosaisten* (1913) states that several novels by Samuel Ludwig were published in his newspaper, *Die Fackel*.² Although Ludwig is known for several prose works, including an autobiography and a short story, no novels by this author have been found in book form. Again, this is an instance in which a check of available newspaper files may eventually provide a solution to the problem.

As a final example of the kind of bibliographic enigma which newspaper research may serve to clarify, let me cite the case of Heinrich Börnstein's well-known novel, *Die Geheimnisse von St. Louis*. Condoyannis, whose analysis of this work is based on a book edition of 1859, states that he was able to find only one volume of this novel and was not able to ascertain whether any further volumes were ever published. There is, however, some possibility that this particular novel appeared as a newspaper serial before being published as a book. For one thing, William Frederic Kamman's 1917 study of socialism in German-American literature reports that Börnstein's novel appeared as early as 1851.³ Since this antedates the earliest known book edition by several years, one is led to surmise that the date given by Kamman may, if correct, refer to a newspaper serialization. If *Die Geheimnisse von St. Louis* was, in fact, serialized in a newspaper, the newspaper in question might well have been the *Anzeiger des Westens*, which Börnstein edited. If a newspaper version of the novel could be brought to light and compared with the book version, this might settle the question of the novel's full length and might even reveal new, hitherto unstudied parts of the work.

In my remarks up to this point I have tried to underscore the relevance of newspaper research to the investigation of the

history and bibliography of the nineteenth-century German-American novel. I would now like to address the second question raised at the outset of this paper and direct attention to some recent research which may be of interest to students of *Germanica Americana*.

Two years ago it came to my attention that a group of several scholars, most of them connected with the Technische Universität in West Berlin, had launched a collaborative research effort for the investigation of the German newspaper novel. This group of investigators, including particularly Friedrich Knilli, Norbert Miller, and Karl Riha, have approached the serialized novel from the perspective of literary sociology. Their studies have been particularly concerned with the comparative analysis of socialist and nonsocialist newspapers in Germany and their specific attention has been focused on newspapers published in Germany and Austria between 1890 and 1930. In their general approach to the analysis of prose fiction in the newspapers, they have sought to identify general trends, such as changes in the fashionability of specific types of subject matter. In seeking to lay a foundation for such socio-literary content studies, the Berlin group has recognized the importance of systematically cataloging the serialized novels and other literary contributions which have appeared in selected newspapers. They have accordingly undertaken to produce a number of such inventories, a good example being Ernst K. Herlitzka's catalog of the literary works which appeared in the Vienna *Arbeiterzeitung* between 1895 and 1934.

Stimulated by the work of the "Projekt Zeitungsroman" in West Berlin, I began some time ago to make a systematic inventory of all literary prose contributions printed in the Milwaukee *Banner und Volksfreund* and in its successor, the *Freie Presse*. At the present time, the inventory has been completed for the period between 1879 and 1885, during which time a total of 694 literary pieces appeared in these newspapers. Of these, 63 were serialized works, though only twelve were novels, the remaining serialized pieces being *Novellen*, long short stories, serialized travel sketches, and the

like. The twelve novels all turned out to be works by writers such as Friedrich Spielhagen, writers living in Germany who wrote primarily for European publication. The only novel with any American association is Henriette Perl's *Heirat aus Verzweiflung*, which is subtitled "Roman aus dem Amerikanischen." Presumably this is a free adaptation of an American source which, in line with a commonly observed custom of the time, was not disclosed.⁴

The absence of any distinctly German-American works among these twelve novels serves to underscore the fact that novels by German-American writers were, after all, something rather exceptional. In fact, the German-language press in America did, to a considerable extent, simply print the same belletristic reading matter as was appearing in the German-language press in Europe at the time. This fact has no doubt discouraged many researchers in the field of German-American studies from taking a greater interest in the literary content of newspapers. Carl Wittke's study of the German-language press in America, for example, is notable for the fact that it attempts no detailed appraisal of the literary content of the newspapers he studied. And yet, on the whole, the literary prose contained in the German-American press was more than an unaltered reprint of what was appearing in Europe. This becomes immediately apparent when we take stock of the many shorter prose contributions which were not novels. In the survey of the *Banner und Volksfreund* and *Freie Presse*, for example, it was found that at least seven of the works which appeared were original contributions by well-known German-American writers. There were, first of all, four of Sara Hutzler's sketches of German-American life as well as two pieces by Otto Soubron, *Herberts Frau* and *Geheime Ehescheidungen*, the latter subtitled "Chicagoer Skizze". I would be interested to know whether either of these pieces by Soubron are known to have been published elsewhere or have previously come to the attention of researchers who have taken an interest in Soubron's work. In addition to the contributions by Hutzler and Soubron, the *Banner und Volksfreund* also ran an autobiographical reminiscence by Caspar Alexander Hon-

thumb, who is perhaps best known for his German translation of Friedrich Hassaurek's English-language novel, *The Secret of the Andes*.

Besides the works by German-American writers, eight short pieces were found which had an obviously American setting but which may or may not have been written by authors with first-hand experience of the United States. One such author is Jakob Otzen Hansen (1842-1905), who generally used the pseudonym "Felix Lilla" but sometimes published under his own name. Hansen was a prolific writer of tales with an American setting, one of his contributions in this vein to the *Freie Presse* being *Durch eigene Schuld—Lebensbild aus Wisconsin*. Other obscure contributors who wrote stories with an American locale are Friedrich Zimmermann, author of *Old Jimmys Brautwerbung — Amerikanische Skizze*; Emil Jasper, author of *Der chronische Korrespondent — New Yorker Skizze*; and J. J. Messner, author of *Die mutigen Seifensiederinnen — Eine amerikanische Erzählung*.

If, however, there is any one peculiarity which gives a unique character to the German-language press in America, it is the frequency with which one finds German translations of works by American writers. I found no less than twenty-four such pieces. The most frequently translated American authors were Bret Harte, Mark Twain, and Josh Billings, while other well-known American writers whose works were translated include Edgar Allen Poe, Frank R. Stockton, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, and John Habberton. However, some of the translated authors appearing in these newspapers are quiet obscure or are not even identified by name. Thus, one finds such curiously identified pieces as *Eine Spukgeschichte — Nach dem Amerikanischen* by J. Seehof or *Der verrückte Anatom — Aus dem Amerikanischen* by Robby Jones. Where well-known American writers are translated, the translator's identity is seldom given. However, Udo Brachvogel was identified as the translator of one of the pieces by Mark Twain.

In conclusion, let me briefly summarize the ways in which I think newspaper research can make a contribution to the study of German-American prose fiction. To begin with, a study of

literary contributions to the German-American press may bring to light lost or even unsuspected works by well-known German-American writers. Secondly, a study of the more obscure literary contributors may lead us to conclude that for some, at least, obscurity was not entirely deserved. Finally, by cataloging the literary contributions to selected newspapers, it will eventually become possible to investigate a number of questions within the realm of literary sociology. For future research, it might be worth looking into some of the problems which are now engaging the attention of European researchers, notably the question of how the ideological orientation of certain newspapers exercised an effect on their preferences as to literary content. On the other hand, students of Germanica Americana will no doubt be particularly interested in seeking to define the extent to which the German-language press in America was different from the press in Europe. Judging from what has so far been found in the Milwaukee newspapers which I have studied, I am inclined to suspect that the literary content of the German-American press was in general more adapted to its American environment than has generally been recognized.

NOTES

1. For a discussion of this problem, see Condoyannis (1953), p. 102.
2. Brümmer (1913), vol. 4, p. 322.
3. Kamman (1917), p. 118.
4. Other contributors to the **Freie Presse** who specialized in the free adaption of vaguely specified American sources were Caspar A. Honthumb, J. von Böttcher, and Alfred Mürenberg.

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