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***Geld and Geist in the Writings of Gottfried Duden,  
Nikolaus Lenau, and Charles Sealsfield:  
A Study of Competing America-Paradigms***

The German conception of America is rooted in crisis. This is clearly documented in Gottfried Duden's *Bericht über eine Reise nach den westlichen Staaten Nordamerikas und einen mehrjährigen Aufenthalt am Missouri (in den Jahren 1824, 25, 26, und 1827) in Bezug auf Auswanderung und Übervölkerung* (1829), which is generally regarded as the most influential tract on immigration to America published in Germany in the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Already in the preface we encounter the crisis of Europe:

Übervölkerung, Armut, Druck, Finanzsysteme, Leibeigenschaft für die gemeinen Volksklassen der gewerblichen Staaten, welche die eigentliche gesetzliche Sklaverei unläugbar in Vielem überbietet.<sup>2</sup>

Duden does not stop here, however. Not only does he present a Malthusian interpretation of history in which overpopulation is the primary evil from which all other evils stem. He also narrates the familiar version of *Kulturpessimismus* which was widely propagated in the Vormärz: "Die Sonne Europas habe ihren Mittagkreis längst überschritten, und dessen Geschichte, dessen Völker—ihre Rolle ausgespielt" (D, iii).<sup>3</sup>

Yet when we examine this work more closely we realize that more is at stake here. In the first place Duden's book is no mere *Auswanderungskompendium*, a form of popular literature published *en masse* in Germany in the nineteenth century. Curiously enough it is a work that is intellectually challenging and even pretentious, assuming on the part of its readership a competence in reading skills and knowledge that not many people presumably possessed during this period.<sup>4</sup> Secondly Duden's *Bericht* is invested with an authoritativeness that few such works had at this time before the mass migrations to America. Duden had

actually been to America, to the valleys of Missouri, and lived to write about it in a way that obviously captivated the imagination of his compatriots.

Duden's accomplishment in fact is based on his effective recasting of the America-paradigm. Out of crisis comes the paradigm, Thomas S. Kuhn tells us. But the paradigm is not only employed by the scientific community in order to explain and interpret natural phenomena.<sup>5</sup> The paradigm is also a response on the part of a society or a nation to provide a conceptual framework for understanding and interpreting profound changes at home and abroad. Germany in the first half of the nineteenth century—most notably during the period preceding the first signs of industrialism—was crisis-ridden.<sup>6</sup> Devoid of nationhood, enormously overpopulated, stultifying under antiquated political institutions, Germany soon experienced one wave of emigration after another. Emigration, in other words, became regarded in some circles as one possible solution to the crisis of German society, reaching its highpoint to America after the German nation had been established.<sup>7</sup>

But America was more than escape from adversity. On a symbolic and ideational level it became a means of defining Germany's place in the world, describing her own state of affairs at home and assigning value to her institutions and cultural production. The America-paradigm created a whole set of values and definitions for such categories as the *Staat*, *Gesellschaft*, *Kultur*, *Volk*, *Nation*, *Gemeinschaft*, *Politik* and even *Kunst*. In many cases it seems that this paradigm worked on a binary set of oppositions. For example, at least according to Duden, if Europe is wallowing in decadence, America takes on the familiar role assigned by the myth of Europe's salvation: "so beginnt in Amerika seit einem halben Jahrhundert eine neue Weltgeschichte" (D, iii).

What gives Duden's *Bericht* its popularity is that it presents itself not as a propagator of myth, but as an impartial and objective source of truth about America.<sup>8</sup> This still does not prevent it from reiterating in glowing terms a familiar topos that has been an integral part of the America-paradigm: "Millionen finden in den herrlichen Ebenen und Thälern der Missouri und Mississippi Raum vollauf, und eine Natur, die längst des Bewohners, des Bearbeiters harret" (D, iv). Germany, conceived itself, as the century progressed, as the "Volk ohne Raum," representing as its antipode America, which became *Nature's Nation* (which also became a metaphor of American self-definition), offering to the needy of Europe an opportunity of regeneration and escape from the misery of overpopulation and landlessness.<sup>9</sup>

The Duden-esque America-paradigm owes its ultimate appeal to its vision of pastoral wholeness—a vision that became increasingly more urgent as the forces of industrial culture made themselves felt. In terms redolent of Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782), Duden

tells his audience that wide-ranging equality reigns in America, where everyone has equal access to the land. As a result there are no beggars, no petty crimes (D, 118). There is also "wenig Pöbel in Amerika" (D, 119)—a phenomenon that at this time already began to preoccupy many of Duden's readers.<sup>10</sup> Contrary to Tocqueville's vision of America as a society, inherently modern and dynamic, founded on revolution, the Duden-esque paradigm is a return to a pre-industrial society free from the divisive, unsettling influences of modernity. For example, in Duden's America there is "kein Unterschied zwischen Städtern und Landvolk," and "alle Gewerbe haben den gleichen Rang" (D, 116). In brief, as Duden himself writes, "Die Einheit von Geist und Natur" is achieved "wenn der Mensch seinen eigenen Acker anbaut" (D, 117).

All of these motifs have an element of familiarity about them, since they are couched in mythic imagery and traditional modes of conceiving America that date back to antiquity.<sup>11</sup> In addition, they reflect the longings of not only Germans in the nineteenth century in their promise of redemption from the constraints of industrialism and poverty. But there are also very surprising, unexpected elements in the Duden-esque paradigm. For example, America is nowhere described as a nation devoid of culture. Contrary to frequent German accounts of America in the nineteenth century, depicting the cultural privation an educated German must suffer when he emigrates to America, quite a temperate view emerges in Duden's account: "Die Bürger der Vereinigten Staaten sind Europäer in Amerika, und mehr wird aus ihnen nicht werden, als auch der heutige Europäer in Amerika überhaupt werden kann" (D, 118-19).<sup>12</sup> Quite surprisingly then, Americans have nothing in common with the noble savage or the ignoble savage or Crèvecoeur's "new man;" instead Duden suggests that Americans are on an equal footing with Europeans regarding cultural development. The reason for this is also provided: "Das Wesentliche der englischen Kultur ist nach Amerika verpflanzt [worden]" (D, 109).<sup>13</sup>

The charges of *Kulturlosigkeit* are refuted in the Duden-esque paradigm. In fact, Duden tells the German reader that Germans in America are regarded as far less cultured than the English or the French (D, 107). But *Kultur* is only one category in which Duden molds his own interpretation of the America-paradigm. Another essential category—often referred to in nineteenth-century accounts and travel books on America—was the moral condition of the new nation. As a nation with a republican polity and an alleged absence of established institutions, a society, according to this view, could only with great difficulty achieve a civilized standard of morality. This is not Duden's contention, however:

Ohne den sittlichen Werth der Amerikaner zu überschätzen,  
sehe ich keinen Grund, ihnen irgend ein Volk in Europa

vorzuziehen. Ich habe keinen Flecken bemerkt, welcher auch nicht in Europa zu finden wäre einschließlich der Gewinnsucht. (D, 120)

The frequent attacks on America for its moral depravity that were to become harsher in Germany as the century progressed are nowhere present in Duden's *Bericht*. Even the familiar critique of American materialism, of rapaciousness, acquisitiveness, and dishonest business practices, which appear as a topos in German popular fiction, is missing.<sup>14</sup> Instead, as Duden writes in formulaic fashion, "Der Anstand herrscht in Amerika wegen der Gleichheit und der Natur" (D, 121).

The Duden-esque paradigm reveals perhaps its essential intention in its treatment of slavery—a theme that was especially discussed by German commentators on America.<sup>15</sup> Touching on the question of comparing "white slavery" in Europe with that of chattel slavery in America, Duden finds the institution in America to be less pernicious than its European counterpart: "Der geistige Zustand der freien Neger in Nordamerika ist nirgendwo dem des Gesindes in Europa überlegen, und die unfreien sind leiblich weit besser daran, als das europäische Gesinde (D, 135)." This is explained by the widely pervasive belief in the nineteenth century (which Duden shares), despite the Enlightenment, that there was an intrinsic inequality in the nature of the human species: ". . . eine große Abstufung in dem Werthe des irdischen Lebens der verschiedenen Menschen" (D, 129). As a result of this state of inequality between the races, Duden postulates the principle of stewardship, a principle that was an integral part of the ideology of the antebellum South: "In den V.St. ist der Herr verbunden, für den Unterhalt der Sklaven zu sorgen, sie mögen zur Arbeit fähig sein oder nicht, und Freilassung ändert an dieser Pflicht gar nichts" (D, 131).

A political and social utopia is hence delineated here. Slavery is "natural" because it is based on the inequality of the races. Slavery is also moral because it is based on the self-interest and inherent virtue of the master. Finally slavery is humane because it is "Familienherrschaft": an entire group of unequal individuals are fused into a thriving and cohesive social unit (D, 128). Even more important for German cultural categories, slavery is sanctified by its patriarchal aura and benevolence: "Die väterliche Herrschaft hat eine zivilisierende Wirkung auf die Neger" (D, 136).

Patriarchy, pastoral wholeness, rustic equality among members of the same identifiable group and inequality among distinct racial groups, the apotheosis of land and space, the unity of spirit and nature, moral virtue, the sanctity of agriculture, cultural vitality—all these categories lend themselves quite easily to an ideal vision of Germany commonly found in German literature. Thus America, simply stated, becomes a kind of

ideal Germany in the Duden-esque paradigm. Soon, however, this paradigm would be under attack, and a competing paradigm would arise to which Duden himself—with his official recantation—would later contribute, a paradigm in which America as the ideal Germany would be metamorphosed into the monstrous antipode of everything to which Germany must remain immune.<sup>16</sup>

### I. "Todt für alles geistige Leben, mausetodt"

In his famous letter to his brother-in-law Anton Schurz (1832), Lenau bemoans the lack of nightingales in North America. The absence of this bird leads the young poet to a general diatribe against the cultural life of the new world:

Der Amerikaner hat keinen Wein, keine Nachtigall! mag er bei einem Glase Cider seine Spottdrossel behorchen, mit seinen Dollars in der Tasche, ich setze mich lieber zum Deutschen und höre bei seinem Wein die liebe Nachtigall, wenn auch die Tasche ärmer ist. Bruder, diese Amerikaner sind himmelanstinkende Krämerseelen. Todt für alles geistige Leben, mausetodt.<sup>17</sup>

In this passage a motif is revealed which was to mold the *Amerikabild* in German culture up to the present and which could most conspicuously be detected in the popular *Amerikaroman*, a form widely practiced by seriously regarded authors as well as *Kolportage* writers. Simply stated, this motif can be defined in the following way: an aristocrat, an artist, an intellectual, a literary gentleman, or a figure comprising all four identities travels to America, to the cities of the seaboard coast, or to the frontier, or as in several novels, to a grand tour of both the settled areas as well as the frontier, only to find a society dominated by material values and overtly hostile to the values of the mind and the spirit. Some of these protagonists find on the frontier an antidote to the perceived crassness of American culture, which is in some way even more distasteful than the much reviled European decadence.<sup>18</sup> Others look in vain to the preconceived visions of the pastoral for what they believed to be the real vision of America, only to find on the frontier a society even more steeped in the values of unfettered materialism.<sup>19</sup> The result of this quest is often the creation of a society or community on the frontier which is immune to the values of materialism or, on the other hand, at least in one celebrated novel, the hero's profound disappointment with America and the return to the Old World amid the symbolic destruction of what might have been the roots of an ideal community.<sup>20</sup>

Lenau's lament about the absence of nightingales and songbirds in general in America was not merely the bilious outburst of a disgruntled poet or even a dishonest one, but part of an ongoing debate about the meaning of America and its significance for Europe since America's discovery.<sup>21</sup> Lenau's arguments, his use of familiar and well-defined motifs, belong to an established tradition in German culture that had its roots long before Romanticism, but which then became revitalized during this period.<sup>22</sup> The America-paradigm, as revealed in Lenau's work and in the practitioners of the *Amerikaroman*, not only illustrates the process of resurrecting old myths in modern garb, but more importantly marks an attempt by German culture amid the throes of modernization to interpret profound socio-economic, political, and technological change and hence redefine its place in a revolutionary world.<sup>23</sup> Thus America became a crucial construct and symbol for German nationhood and its subsequent development—as significant as many other, more familiar symbols that were to haunt German inventions of nationality.<sup>24</sup>

In Lenau's letters from America an intricate cultural system is enunciated which reveals as much about America as it does about Germany. When Lenau complains that a "poetischer Fluch" (L, 207) lies over the American landscape, he implies that in Germany, by contrast, poetry is capable of thriving. Assuming the *persona* of John the Baptist in his letters (L, 211), Lenau invokes the image of America as a desert—an intellectual, spiritual, and even physical desert, where animals and plants, redolent of Buffon, become denatured and corrupt—suggesting again that all of these positive values can be found in Germany (L, 210-11).

But before Lenau can contribute to revising the America-paradigm, he must formally break with a myth, perhaps the most potent myth to sweep over both the *Morgenland* and the *Abendland*, a myth which has its roots in antiquity and which was one of the guiding impulses behind European exploration. Contrary to Berkeley, to Goethe, to all those who accepted the belief inherited from Augustine and the Church Fathers that the utopian influence would always lie westward on the next frontier in space, Lenau is declaring the very antithesis: the true horror is that the westward impulse only wreaks horror and ruin.<sup>25</sup> "Amerika ist das wahre Land des Unterganges. Der Westen der Menschheit. Das atlantische Meer aber ist der isolierende Gürtel für den Geist und alles höhere Leben" (L, 213).

Part of this decay lies not only in the natural landscape, in its lack of vigor and light ("Mattheit"), and in the deleterious effect it has on its inhabitants, but also in the spirit and in the intellect of the New World. In other words, Lenau recasts this standard version of the *Amerikabild* passed down by Buffon and de Pauw, adding to it characteristic, nineteenth-century German motifs. The result is that it not only becomes

a vast critique of New World culture, but also a scathing assault on modernity:

Die Bildung der Amerikaner ist bloß eine merkantile, eine technische. Hier entfaltet sich der praktische Mensch in seiner furchtbaren Nüchternheit. Doch ist selbst diese Kultur keine von innen organisch hervorgegangene, sondern eine von außen gewaltsam und rapid herbeigezogene, bodenlose und darum gleichsam mühselig in der Luft schwebend erhaltene. (L, 219)<sup>26</sup>

Obviously influenced by Romanticism, Lenau carefully defines the essential elements of the America-paradigm, all of which happen to be traditional responses to the onrush of industrial society and modernization found, of course, not only in Germany.<sup>27</sup> In the first place, the education of Americans revolves around technical skills and money-making in contrast to the German penchant for art. Secondly the American character is suffused with a sobriety rooted in practical, mundane reality in contrast to the German love of the imagination. Finally, and most familiar to the development of the America-paradigm, American culture is not "organically rooted," is not tied to the land (*Natur*), to history, to the spirit, to any elevating idea. On the contrary it is "bodenlos," without roots, without tradition, without substance. For example, American farming is "bodenlos" according to Lenau. So is American business and industry, and here we notice another essential element of the German America-paradigm: the American economy is based on "forciertem Kredite" (L, 216). It is in short subject to all kinds of dishonest speculation—a belief widely accepted in Germany from the nineteenth century onwards.<sup>28</sup>

But Lenau contributes an additional profound element to the America-paradigm—something very crucial to Germany's own needs—the concept of the state.

Mit dem Ausdrücke 'Bodenlosigkeit' glaube ich überhaupt den Charakter aller amerikanischen Institute bezeichnen zu können, auch den politischen. Man meine ja nicht, der Amerikaner liebe sein Vaterland oder er habe ein Vaterland. Jeder einzelne lebt und wirkt in dem republikanischen Verbands, weil dadurch und *solange* dadurch sein Privatbesitz gesichert ist. Was wir Vaterland nennen, ist hier bloß eine *Vermögensssekuranz*. Der Amerikaner kennt nichts, er sucht nichts als Geld; er hat keine Idee; folglich ist der Staat kein *geistiges* und sittliches Institut [Vaterland], sondern nur eine materielle Konvention. (L, 216)

Of course, the concept of "Bodenlosigkeit"—a topos frequently employed by later writers with regard to America—can be interpreted as a state or society lacking in substance or foundation. Lenau looks at the concept of the liberal-capitalist state already present in its nascent form in Jacksonian America and slowly evolving into a possibility in Germany and experiences it not only as inimical to art, but also as harboring huge areas of unmeaning, which ultimately lead to anomie.<sup>29</sup> The modern state is for Lenau as well as for the so-called "classic" authors of the *Amerikaroman* devoid of roots or ties; in other words, it is not organic.<sup>30</sup> The single element that creates any cohesion at all is *Geld*—individual self-interest or aggrandizement. The highly praised tenet in the philosophy of liberalism of enlightened self-interest guaranteeing that those with a stake in society will perpetuate their well-being and democratic commitment is likened by Lenau to a *Vermögensassekuranz*—an entity at once spiritless and without tangible material form (i.e., real property).

A further element is then added to the paradigm: *Vaterland* vs. *Vermögensassekuranz*. The German state possesses a moral and spiritual authority (*Rechtsstaat* and *Kulturstaat*) while its American counterpart is a "material convention" devoid of any higher force. Of course, this did not prevent Lenau himself from buying a farm in Ohio and then leasing it to a certain Ludwig Häberle. The dream of the artist not only being an alienated victim of the market place, but also an *Eigentümer*, perhaps even a *Rentier* is further evidence of Lenau's ambivalence towards modernity and America in particular.<sup>31</sup>

## II. "Der trolpiserende [sic], marryatisirende [sic] Dutchman"

Among the first novels to illustrate Lenau's paradigm was Charles Sealsfield's *George Howard's Esq. Brautfahrt* (1834). Sealsfield was already quite concerned with American materialism before he wrote *George Howard*. In his first travel book—*The United States of North America as they are* (1827), he notes, "The ruling passion of the Americans is the love of money," and explains this craving for wealth in a Tocquevillian manner "as the only measure of social status in the absence of other distinctions."<sup>32</sup> This general dislike, which was to approximate an obsession in his later works, was part of Sealsfield's vision of a virtuous republic, free from the corruption of the *Geldaristokratie*—an ideal which had its sources in the political philosophy of the Italian humanists.<sup>33</sup> In *George Howard's Esq. Brautfahrt* the hero is a *Zerrissener*, influenced partly by the *Jungdeutschen*, whom Sealsfield with qualifications admired, who loses his quest for a bride in New York because of his inability to provide an adequate fortune. This provokes the following reaction, which is not questioned or relativised by the implied narrator or any of the other characters in the



novel and which becomes a recurring motif in Sealsfield's work and in German-American fiction in general:

Ekelhafte Menschen! konnte ich mich nicht enthalten auszurufen,—so ekelhaft selbstsüchtig, daß sie sich selbst nicht zu Worte kommen lassen. Die stupideste Unverschämtheit, die je in Schneiderseelen gewohnt, die für nichts Sinn haben als für ihr eigenes saft- und markloses, schwammiges, verdorbenes Ich! Selbst ihre Kinder sind ihnen bloß-Sachen—Und diese Menschen gehören jetzt zum haut-ton.<sup>34</sup>

Sealsfield's indictment of New York society is couched in imagery similar to Lenau. "Schneiderseelen" and "Krämerseelen" are metaphors that appear quite frequently in German literature. They are usually defined by an outsider who has a different value system from the existing debased world of materialism. In Lenau's world America's "Krämerseelen" are lacking in *Phantasie*, in an aesthetic vision of life. In *George Howard's Esq. Brautfahrt*, on the other hand, materialism has brought about the dissipation of political culture, the weakening of the body politic, the decay of republican values. "Egotism"—a term which also occurs quite frequently in German-American literature—has replaced virtue, a basic element in the well-being of any republic. The result of Howard's disaffection with a money-dominated New York is to flee the city and try to find on the frontier the seeds of a virtuous republicanism.

In *Morton oder die große Tour* (1835) the theme of materialism and the corruption of the republican commonwealth assumes the symbolism of nightmare. It is not only New York which is steeped in material values, but the entire world is now controlled by a group of ten demonlike creatures, whose power can lead to the rise and fall of kingdoms and states and whose center may lie in Philadelphia or London or Paris.

The paradigm of the virtuous artist resisting and assailing the values of a mercantile-ridden society does not have a chance to unfold in *Morton*, since the values of *Geld* are too powerful. The hero Morton, whose grandfather significantly enough belongs to the famous coterie of honored revolutionary war heroes and therefore partakes of other values besides the material, flees to a symbolic *Gartenlandschaft*, where he meets another mentor figure—Colonel Isling—a German-American Revolutionary War hero who temporarily frees young Morton from his servitude to the values of *Geld*. The values of *Geld* are symbolically rendered in the rampant materialism of Philadelphia, a Hades-like world characterized by perpetual night, haunted by the rootless mob on the one hand and the insatiable appetite of the famous American plutocrat Stephen Girard, or, as Sealsfield calls him, "der alte Stephy" on the other, who makes a

mockery of the republican heritage in America by repeating the refrain "We live in a free country."

The alternative to the corrupt money-ridden world of Philadelphia and later, as the second book of *Morton* shows, London is Colonel Isling's estate, which is couched in a peculiarly pre-modern idyll so popular among German novelists in the nineteenth century.<sup>35</sup> Morton is in some way for a short time healed by recognizing a past and roots and even a moral and spiritual tradition. But the values of *Geld* invariably prove to be too strong. As soon as Morton leaves Isling, he again becomes involved in the designs of "dem alten Stephy" who then sends him off to London, where he becomes even more enmeshed in the world plutocracy.

The motif of the artist or the *littérateur* in a materialist, mercantile society appears explicitly for the first time in Sealsfield's fiction in *Die deutsch-amerikanischen Wahlverwandtschaften* (1839-40)—a work with few exceptions sadly neglected by Germanist criticism.<sup>36</sup> In fact, *Die deutsch-amerikanischen Wahlverwandtschaften* is a meditation on national character and the role of literature in the development of the modern nation-state. More important it is Sealsfield's attempt to define the paradigm of German nationhood with respect to America and other nations. In the opening chapter the confrontation between Germany and America is quickly defined. Rambledon, a so-called "fashionable" from Broadway, which of course gives him a special point of view, upon noticing a German family in his vicinity, exclaims: "Deutsche mit ihrer Familiarität und Tabakspfeifen und Flachshaaren und neblichen Metaphysik, und Aberglauben und religiösen Skeptik, und Sauerkraut und absurden Romantik, . . ." <sup>37</sup>

The point of view, however, changes throughout the novel with regard to definitions of Germanness and Americanness. When the German family von Schochstein begin to assess their own nation in relation to other nations, crucial arguments about German nationhood soon appear: "Und haben wir Deutsche nicht seit unserem hochgelobten westfälischen [sic] Frieden das größte Privilegium, alle Nationen nachzumachen, . . . , nachzuäffen" (DAW, 1:43). As so often in Sealsfield's work, a debate unfolds with a didactic intent. Comparisons are made between various nations and theses are presented, until a scale of values slowly emerges:

'England ist unstreitig die größte und reichste, so wie die aufgeklärteste Nation der neueren Zeit.'  
'Die aufgeklärteste?' wiederholt der Schwiegersonn zweifelhaft.  
'Nicht die am meisten wissende, belesenste; die sind wir', versetzte Wilhelm; 'aber über ihre wahren Interessen aufgeklärteste, der Frankreich, trotz seiner viel gerühmten Civilization, nur in weiter Entfernung, wir Deutsche, mit all

unserer Belesenheit und vielseitigen Bildung, in noch weiterer nachhinken.'

'Aber Wilhelm, wie Du so reden kannst? 'entgegnete der sanitäre Schwager, 'Unsere viel-, ja allseitige Bildung albern zu nennen.' (DAW, 1:45-46)

It soon becomes obvious that this debate is in fact not concerned with "enlightened nations" and Shakespeare, but with the definition of the modern nation-state and the role of *Bildung* and literature in enabling the nation-state to achieve a position of prominence. When Wilhelm exclaims "wo die ganze zivilisierte Welt zu einem praktischen Leben erwacht," (DAW, 1:46) he begins to question the meaning of what Schiller calls "der ästhetische Staat" vs. the "dynamischen Staat" based on *Realpolitik* and industrial and mechanical technique. In brief, *Phantasiestaat* vs. *Machtstaat* is Sealsfield's central preoccupation in this debate. Hence the *Shakespearestreit* is not about who interprets Shakespeare more accurately—the Germans or the English—but the value or significance of interpreting *Belletristik* in general, especially in the case of German nationhood, foreign *Belletristik*:

Wenn ich etwas auf deutschen Boden verpflanzen könnte, würden es ganz andere Dinge sein: die praktische Richtung der Engländer, die großen Probleme der Mechanik, die sie gelöst, ihre Handelsprinzipien, das sind die Dinge, die uns Noth thun. (DAW, 1:50)

The debate over the definition and direction of German nationhood assumes a distinct urgency in this discussion. If Germany is to achieve a place among the great powers, a radical transformation in German identity is required. The values of *Geist* must give way to the values of *Technik* and *Handel*. As young Schochstein says,

Gott sei Dank! unsere Regierung hat angefangen. Die sieht weiter als alle unsere schönen Geister, die uns immer und ewig mit ihren Lappalien unterhalten, ja wenn es auf sie ankäme, uns in die guten alten Zeiten von Ramler, Uz und Gleim zurückführen würden. (DAW, I, 50)

In the emerging world of *Realpolitik*, literature and literati in Wilhelm's opinion have little to contribute—they are, in fact, the symptom of Germany's weakness—her inability to adapt to the imperatives of modernity. A vast transformation in values then, Wilhelm philosophizes, must occur in German culture with the nature of literature and the role of *Geist* in general assuming an entirely different form:

–eine solche Übergangsperiode wird auch unser gemüthlich geistiges Stubengelehrtenleben und Seelenleben, und inneres Leben, und wie sie alle heißen, und die alle zusammen Faulleben heißen sollten, in wirkliches Leben umwandeln–. (DAW, 1:53)

The important dichotomies of *Stubengelehrten* and *Seelenleben*—all of which have traditionally been given a positive value in German culture, especially in opposition to *wirkliches Leben* are now reversed and the intellectual or scholar is defined as an active member of society who is familiar with mechanics, technique, and commerce, the mastery of which is necessary to transform Germany into a modern, dynamic nation-state.

The theme of literature and its relation to the state and the role of the *Dichter* is developed further, when instead of the debate, Sealsfield employs the burlesque scene to discuss the role of the poet in America. *Dichter* Mooney (note the pun), pale, curly-haired, with a high voice, conforms to the familiar parody of the poet in both German and American literature. His patron, Miss Trombone, a caricature of Mrs. Trollope, listens to the young poet recite his verses on the sea voyage to America and while the verses are abominably bad, the subsequent question about the poet's failure to have them published is a two-edged sword:

Es ist schön in Eurem Land der natürlichen Freiheit, in der Frische der Natur und ungekünstelten Gleichheit! . . . Aber wo bleiben die Denkmäler der Kunst? Die Gaben der Grazien? der Musen? O Warhofs! Euer Land hat Vieles zu verantworten, wenn solche Genies, wie unser Mooney, in entfernten Zonen ihre Mäcenaten suchen müssen. (DAW, 1:252)

Of course the parody of the European lady's—in this case one of America's most vehement critics in the Age of Jackson—myopic view of American life and culture is apparent here. But despite the burlesque of this scene and the obvious discrediting of the people who espouse such views, the question of the position and role of art and literature in America, in what was regarded in Germany in the first half of the nineteenth century at least as a radical, republican commonwealth, becomes a leitmotif as the novel unfolds and one that profoundly affected Sealsfield's own fate when, after the publication of *The Indian Chief or Tokeah and the White Rose* (1829), he left America, according to some critics, because of his failure to achieve literary distinction.<sup>38</sup>

But the parody of *Geist* in the New World is juxtaposed with another theme in *Wahlverwandschaften*, equally familiar to observers of America and integrally related to that of mind and spirit. As the boat finally

approaches the shores of the New World, the utopian expectations that prompted such a journey are called into question when the first objective correlative of the passengers' visions of life in America is a "Zeitungsboot" evoking the ubiquitous question: "How is business?" (DAW, 2:102). What follows then is a barrage of questions about the commodities market with the following observation: "Das reichste Agriculurreich der Erde führt sein Getreide aus dem überfüllten Europa ein" (DAW, 2:103). Something is amiss in the New World, the narrator notes, the signs of which can already be seen in the metamorphosis which occurs among the American passengers:

Die Vorläufer sind bereits hineingebrochen, die Furchen graben, die Brauen verdüstern sich; die Leidenschaften ziehen wieder ein, und nehmen Besitz von ihren zeitweilig verlassenen Gemächern. Der Egoismus tritt in seiner Proteusgestalt vor. –Jetzt könnt ihr den Yankee calculierend sehen, mit geknitterten Lippen, mit zusammengedrückten Augen, sinnend und sinnend. –Alle könnt ihr sehen. (DAW, 2:106)

The symbol of the Yankee is invoked, a symbol which recurs throughout German literature in the nineteenth century, embodying a wide range of values antithetical to German culture, epitomizing not only the decline of the utopian vision in America, but also the ambivalence to the West, to the Enlightenment, to the liberal-capitalist state—in short, to all those forces threatening to transform German life.<sup>39</sup>

An important shift in meaning assigned to the original motif occurs in *Wahlverwandtschaften*. What began as a critical discussion of German *Geist* and the indictment of literature as both a symptom and a cause of German backwardness and the German people's subsequent failure to become a modern nation-state, akin to England and America, suddenly changes at the end of the second part of the first book to a reaffirmation of German *Geist* amid a world permeated by Mammon and egotism. Young Baron von Schochstein, originally the most avid critic of the traditional paradigm of German *Bildung* and *Geist* vs. the mechanized, materialistic modern world, returns to a standard topos: "Sind bei meiner Seele seltsame Menschen, diese Amerikaner! unpoetische, unphilosophische, prosaische Menschen" (DAW, 2:127). At the end of the second part of the first book of *Wahlverwandtschaften* the familiar motif reappears: Baron von Schochstein assumes the epithet (even if it is presented in a mock-heroic form) of "der philosophische, poetische Deutsche" (DAW, 2:128) ready to explore the mysteries of the New World.

"Der philosophische, poetische Deutsche" assessing the significance of the New World is part of a larger narrative strategy of reexamining the meaning of America. Referring to himself as "wir," the narrator identifies

himself with America or Americans or more accurately with a certain group of Americans who are trying to come to terms with recent developments in American life—above all, with the changes in American political culture. Two indispensable pillars of American culture which endowed it with utopian promise for Sealsfield—the American gentleman and the ideal of the virtuous republic—have become for the most part devoid of meaning: "Schön wäre es, wenn diese Vorbilder [the gentry-republic ideal of Washington or Jay] noch etwas über uns vermöchten! Aber nein, wir sind in unserer Aufklärung so weit fortgeschritten! Seht sie nur an, diese unsere fashionablen Landsmänner und Landsmänninnen!" (DAW, 1:235-36). Sealsfield's republican ideal, embodying *Geist* and *Kultur*, has become plagued by the endemic ills that beset all republics—decadence and the love of Mammon.<sup>40</sup>

But Sealsfield again returns to the motif of the literary gentleman and his role in society—a motif that illuminates the decline of *Geist* and the republican tradition. James Fenimore Cooper, for whom Sealsfield had a grudging respect, even if he regarded him as lacking in "wissenschaftliche Ausbildung" for the writer's craft, serves again in this near-burlesque of a *Damenprozeß* of the *Fall James Fenimore Cooper* as a foil for contrasting the values of *Geld* and *Geist*.<sup>41</sup> Cooper is accused of unfavorably comparing the American landscape with that of Europe. He is also charged with expressing unpatriotic sentiments in his work against his homeland. This time the debate centers on "der philosophische, poetische Amerikaner" who finds fault with many new changes in American life, most notably the rampant materialism and the rising power of the less privileged classes in society.<sup>42</sup> That this debate does not only concern Cooper's fate becomes apparent when Cooper's defender argues, "Die europäischen Damen scheinen mir denn mehr Poesie, wir mehr Verstand, Geschäftsernst zu besitzen—Charakterwürde" (DAW, 3:260). *Poesie* and *Geschäftsernst* are treated here as equally valid properties, each requiring the other in order to become fully human. Nevertheless this *Geschäftsernst* is threatening to become *Geschäftsschwindel*, so that the *Fall Cooper* (which could easily be the *Fall Sealsfield*) receives its most eloquent explanation:

er [Cooper] fühlt als Amerikaner, als Patriot tief und schmerzlich die bösen Einflüsse, die jetzt von Europa und besonders England aus auf unser Land rückzuwirken anfangen, unseren republikanischen Körper in seinem Marke und innersten Fibern vergiften. Wir sind, es ist kein Zweifel, während der letzten sieben Jahre in bürgerlicher Gesittung, Ordnung, statt vorwärts, zurückgeschritten. (DAW, 3:363)

The American republic, according to Sealsfield's original vision, prosaic and sober, at least possessed virtue and moral integrity which was lacking

in Europe. In *Wahlverwandtschaften*, when virtue is replaced by Mammon and moral integrity by fashion, the prosaicness and sobriety lose their charm and the oft-venerated "Römervolk," as the narrator refers to Americans, becomes the much vilified *Krämervolk*.

The narrator, however, returns to his figure of the German nobleman to complete the story of the decline of the American republic and the unfolding of the paradigm of *Geld* and *Geist*. Invited to a caucus meeting to understand more clearly the workings of American republicanism and democracy, von Schochstein finds everything else but a virtuous republican ambience:

halb auf einem Sessel, halb auf der Tafel saß und lag eine Gestalt, in deren Gesicht Mord und Todtschlag recht leserlich ihre Griffel eingegraben zu haben schienen.—Die Gestalt war lang und hager, aber muskulös; die halben Schenkel und ganzen Füße lagen auf der Tafel, in einer Attitude, die er in seinem Leben nicht so ungenirt gesehen. Die staubigen Schuhe, die nichts weniger als reinlichen Strümpfe, befanden sich in unmittelbarer Nachbarschaft einer stark gerötheten Nase, die einem kleinen shylokisch aussehenden Manne mit einem Paar Rattenaugen angehörte, der, obwohl äußerst fein und modisch gekleidet, und offenbar von gutem Tone, die sonderbare Nachbarschaft gar nicht übel zu nehmen schien, und eifrig mit dem Ungenirten, wieder den Messieurs Berks, Thompsons und Johnsons sprach. Diese, noch vor einer Minute so ganz Zuvorkommen [sic], schienen ihn jetzt kaum noch zu erkennen, sie schauten ihn jetzt so fremd, so gedankenvoll an—nach ihren Blicken schienen sie sich die Lösung irgend eines arithmetischen Problems so eben zur Aufgabe gemacht zu haben. Wie leblos lehnten, und saßen sie Alle so hölzern, so steif, so finster, ohne die stechenden Augen in den bronzenen Gesichtern würden sie erzene Statuen haben vorstellen können—Es war etwas so Unheimliches in ihren Zügen. (DAW, 2:261-62)

The narrator's point of view merges with that of the German aristocrat. All of the typical motifs of the German *Amerikabild*, widely popularized in nineteenth-century German culture, are present, from the criminal plutocrat with plebeian manners to the Shylock-looking man who pays careful attention to fashion without disguising his rapaciousness and lower-class origins. The caucus is in fact a cabal. The democratic openness becomes conspiratorial. For the German observer—von Schochstein—these figures, who allegedly represent the highest form of political culture in the New World, become demonized into Gothic creations. Even the fact that the members of the caucus regard von

Schochstein as if they are solving an "arithmetical problem" adds to the paradigm of *Geld* and *Geist*, *Prosa* and *Poesie*, *Zivilisation* and *Kultur*.

Amid this coven of plutocrats Sealsfield allows his philosophy of *Geld* to be defined. As we find so often in Sealsfield, the narrator permits the speaker to present his philosophy which then has the antithetical effect of undermining his very arguments. Money, according to the plutocrat, is divided into two kinds: "klingende Münze" and "circulierende Münze." "Klingende Münze" is characteristic of a despotic regime or monarchy, where

'das Eigenthum stets in die Hände Weniger übergeht, in die Hände solcher, deren Capital in klingender Münze besteht; das heißt, der von ihren Renten Lebenden, träg Vegetirenden . . . , daß, mit Einem Worte, alles Eigenthum in die Hände oberwähnter träger, zäher Capitalisten und Rentiers gelangen müßte, die so in den Stand gesetzt würden, auf allgemeine Armuth und Noth fußend, eine Geldkasterherrschaft zu begründen.' (DAW, 2:274-75)<sup>43</sup>

But this is exactly what has happened in America, as the narrator repeatedly laments: America has become a "Geldkasterherrschaft," where speculation runs rampant, where economic crises are invented to fill the pockets of the so-called *Geldmänner*. A wonderful example of Sealsfieldian irony appears when one of the plutocrats declaims, "er [credit] ist die Grundbedingung, das Leben der Freiheit, vernünftiger, reeller Freiheit, wie sie in keinem Lande existiert" (DAW, 2:276). In view of the setting in which the novel takes place—the Panic of 1837—the irony could hardly be more complete. The response of Baron von Schochstein to this political caucus is hardly surprising, since it further defines the shift in values that the German aristocrat has undergone in the course of the novel:

'Das also ein Caucus, ihre Freiheit? –Weiß Gott, der ganze Caucus beläuft sich auf eine finanzielle Abhandlung, die man bei uns in jeder Buchhandlung, jedem Casino besser finden und hören kann. Aber die zweitausend Morde, und fünfzehnhundert Ehebrüche, und tausend Atrocitäten, und achthundert Felonien, und sechshundert Cholera morbus!—Das ihre Freiheit.' (DAW, 2:282)

The Lenauian motif is invoked: American republicanism is akin to a "financial transaction," a *Versicherungssassekuranz*, devoid of great ideals or convictions. Further the American body politic is not only lacking in principles, but is also morally tainted, the seat of criminal activity and



corruption—a theme alluded to in other examples of German-American fiction.

The German aristocrat not only becomes acquainted with the secret world of American elites, but also with what he experiences as the new, radical world of mass politics. Here the narrator's point of view and that of Baron von Schochstein appear to merge. When the Baron finds himself on an "omnibus" with a raging mob of drunken "workies," the initiation of the German aristocrat into American politics seems to be complete. Even amid a scene replete with unbearable parody, when von Schochstein is rebuked by his American love, the familiar topos is again conjured up:

'nichts als Dollars, Dollars! –Dollars' rief er in ächt deutscher Entrüstung. 'Dollars'! rief er abermals mit unsäglicher Verachtung, 'die Götter dieser Amerikaner, dieser schrecklichen Amerikaner, die die Hoffnungen der Welt so schmähdlich getäuscht, die Göttin der Freiheit zur schändlichen Met– ah! ich will ihnen aber zeigen, ja zeigen will ich ihnen, wie ein Deutscher, ein Deutscher,' setzte er im höchsten Pathos hinzu, 'Mensch zu sein nicht verlernt hat.' (DAW, 4:171)

The Gothic mode, previously confined, for example, in Sealsfield's fiction to the world plutocracy in *Morton*, is now used to represent the American mobocracy. The plight of the German Baron virtually imprisoned on a bus with what the narrator and the Baron both regard ironically as "Ganz eigene Gesellen, wie sie nur wieder in unserm glücklichen Lande der Freiheit zu finden [sind]" (DAW, 4:168)—in other words, as the narrator later describes—this time without irony—as "diese proletarische Hölle" (DAW, 4:205)—assumes an obvious symbolic character. The response of the Baron to the democratic convocation again invokes the paradigm:

Was er gehört, . . . , war hinlänglich, um ihn republikanische Sympathieen für alle Tage seines Lebens zu verleiden, sein liebes Deutschland theurer denn je zu machen. O, wie pries er jetzt dieß sein liebes Deutschland überhaupt, und sein Rheinpreußen insbesondere! wie ganz anders erschienen ihm jetzt seine heimathlichen Zustände, wie verklärt poetisch der religiöse Aufschwung seiner plebejischen, der über das mercenäre Treiben dieser Welt erhabene, seiner hochadligen Landsmänner! (DAW, 4:204-5)

The narrator and the Baron both come to adopt the point of view that the new American democracy has become something monstrous without form or logic, a world curiously wallowing in anarchy and violation.

However in this topsy-turvy world the narrator's response is not only couched in horror towards the emergence of a new political culture. What unfolds in this narrative is a carefully wrought critique of mass politics that places Sealsfield in the tradition of Tocqueville and anticipates Ortega y Gasset. Tommy's *Rede* provides the Baron (and the reader) with enough insights to begin to assess the new political culture. The ever-looming threat of violence, the presence of an incipient form of Orwellian New Speak ("Gehen wir nicht mit Riesenschritten einer besseren Ordnung der Dinge entgegen?" (DAW, 4:181)), the utopian frame ("und eine neue Welt für euch gründeten" (DAW, 4:191)), the charismatic leader, the willingness of the masses to *Aktionismus* ("zur wildesten Frolic bereit" (DAW, 4:199)—all these belong to some of the unsettling characteristics of the new age.

But there are other even more terrifying elements in Sealsfield's narrative of Jacksonian America. Tommy's party representing the Whigs—traditionally portrayed as the party of the banks and the gentry and hostile to the new burgeoning rise of the so-called common man—is indistinguishable from the Locofocos, referred to by Sealsfield as the "Ultrademokraten." In fact, what we discover is the complete interchangeability of political labels and allegiances. The Locofocos and the Whigs conduct their *Saalschlacht*, yet the outcome does not seem to matter, since there are no serious ideas or convictions at stake—only a seemingly irresistible, anarchic energy craving for power without morality. The narrative becomes prophetic of the twentieth century when Tommy exclaims,

Sind wir nicht ein glorioses, mächtig, transzendentes unbesiegbares Corps, wenn vereinigt und in einem Geiste handelnd, ein Corps, . . . das uns zu Herren, zu Schiedsrichtern der Whigs und Tories, und des souveränen Volkes dazu, macht, wenn wir nur die Hacke beim Stiel angreifen, den Stier beim rechten Horne fassen. (DAW, 4:192-93)

The "transzendentes unbesiegbares Corps," as the cornerstone of the new political constellation, also demands its victims, which returns us to the motif of the literary gentleman and his place in the American commonwealth. Instead of being the promoter of modernity and the nation-state, as presented by Baron von Schochstein at the beginning of the novel, the literary gentleman becomes its scapegoat:

'Zweifeln aber wir daran, by Tarnel! zweifeln wir daran; gellte giftiger Tomy. Zweifeln, und haben Ursache zu zweifeln, wenn wir einen v-ten Dutchman in unsere Lager hereinhorchen, spioniren sehen, weißwegen sonst, als um zu trolopsisiren [sic],

zu marryatisiren [sic], uns aller Welt zu verlästern. . . .'  
'Schreibt ihr ein Buch? Wollt ihr ein Buch schreiben?' brüllt ihn  
Splice an. 'Habe nicht das Glück ein Günstling der Musen-'  
stockte er [the Baron]. (DAW, 4:214-15)<sup>44</sup>

In Sealsfield's America the literary gentleman has become expendable only to be replaced by the literature of the new politics—the party newspaper, the purpose of which is to distort the news and to manipulate the masses.

In *Wahlverwandtschaften* the literary gentleman and the newly awakened nation-state are initially presented from the point of view of a liberal or "radical" Central European at a safe distance of course from America in a utopian framework. The actual confrontation with America changes this. The original utopian element becomes transformed into a negative utopia. Instead of the European, as in so many of Sealsfield's other works, experiencing an "Ideenrevolution" that transforms him into an American—a change that is seen as a positive development—the metamorphosis in *Wahlverwandtschaften* is regarded as a loss of moorings, a recoil from and return to one's initial European identity. As the Baron notices a neatly uniformed militia marching up the street to protect the meeting hall, the narrator explains,

Unsern Preußen perturbirte er, er wußte nicht, was davon zu halten, in seinem ganzen ein- oder zweiundzwanzigjährigen Leben war ihm derlei nicht vorgekommen. Wohl hatte er von unserem furchtbaren Selbstregimente gehört und gelesen, aber das überstieg doch auch die wildesten Phantasieen, warf alle Begriffe von gesellschaftlicher Ordnung geradezu über den Haufen! –Er fühlte [sic] ordentlich verwirrt in dieser unserer neuen Welt—unserer Gegenfüßlerwelt; auch einiges Mitleiden, Erbarmen über unsere heillose Ordnung fühlte er, dann kitzelte ihn denn doch auch wieder eine heimliche Schadenfreude, ächt deutsche, sich durch fremde über eigenes politisches Misere tröstende, Schadenfreude! (DAW, 4:252-53)<sup>45</sup>

The initiation of the German literary gentleman *cum* aristocrat into American life proves to be abortive in Lenau and Sealsfield. Lenau's *persona*, John the Baptist, returns from the New World desert to continue his calling as a *Dichter* in a society which promotes *Geist* and culture. In *Wahlverwandtschaften* the novel remains a fragment possibly because there are in fact ultimately no genuine *Wahlverwandtschaften* between Germans and Americans—at least not in the money-dominated urban landscapes of America. Sealsfield's twenty-one years of literary silence after the publication of *Süden und Norden* (1842-43) can be interpreted, analogous

to Duden's final work, as his own implicit recantation of his belief in America triumphing over the pitfalls and temptations of *Geld*.

The dichotomy between prose and poesy, *Geld* and *Geist*, civilization and culture as well as other familiar dualities reveals its paradigmatic structure in other notable works in German-American literature. In Ferdinand Kürnberger's *Der Amerikamüde* (1855), Reinhold Solger's *Anton in Amerika* (1862), Otto Rupp's *Geld und Geist* (1860) and his *Pedlar* novels (1857-59), the paradigm is clearly visible. But also in Gerstäcker, in Balduin Möllhausen, in Armand, this paradigm can also be detected. The *Amerikaroman* in brief provides important insights into German nation-building and its confrontation with modernity and industrial civilization. The paradigm is perhaps most clearly revealed when the philosopher-hero in *Anton in Amerika*—significantly the son of Anton Wohlfahrt in Gustav Freytag's *Soll und Haben* (1855)—after having failed on all accounts as an intellectual in America (not in Germany, however) plans to leave America to pursue his scholarly studies on "eine Expedition ins Innere von Asien."<sup>46</sup> The duality between *Geld* and *Geist* is thus temporarily resolved, and the German hero can begin his journey into the world of pure *Geist* far from the conflicts of the modern world. In Freytag's narrative Anton Wohlfahrt finds a unity of *Geld* and *Geist* in the German *Comptoir*. In Solger's sequel to Freytag's novel Antonio Wohlfahrt fails to find this unity in America and is compelled to share the familiar fate and enact the frequently used topos of the poet in Germany—emigration and exile.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> A brief summary of Duden's activities in Missouri as well as an assessment of the volume's influence on immigration and the image of America is contained in Marcus Lee Hansen, *The Atlantic Migration, 1607-1860* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), 149.

<sup>2</sup> Gottfried Duden, *Bericht über eine Reise nach den westlichen Staaten Nordamerikas und einen mehrjährigen Aufenthalt am Missouri (in den Jahren 1824, 25, 26, und 1827) in Bezug auf Auswanderung und Übervölkerung oder das Leben im Innern der Vereinigten Staaten* (St. Gallen: In Kommission im Bureau des Freimütigen, 1832), iii. All succeeding references will be taken from this edition and will be included in the text as follows: (D + page number).

<sup>3</sup> There are many works that illustrate the *Europamüdigkeit* and general mood of pessimism pervading the *Vormärz*. One novel in particular, widely read at the time it was written, that painstakingly illustrates the mood of resignation and despair prevalent in Germany in the 1830s, is largely forgotten today—Ernst Adolf Willkomm, *Die Europamüden: Modernes Lebensbild* (Leipzig: Julius Wunders Verlag, 1838).

<sup>4</sup> On the literacy level and reading habits and tastes in Germany in the nineteenth century, see Juliane Mikoletzky, *Die deutsche Amerika-Auswanderung des 19. Jahrhunderts in der*

zeitgenössischen fiktionalen Literatur: Studien und Texte zur Sozialgeschichte der Literatur (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1988).

<sup>5</sup> See Thomas S. Kuhn's well known classic, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962). Kuhn writes "... the emergence of new theories is preceded by a period of pronounced professional insecurity. As one might expect, that insecurity is generated by the persistent failure of the puzzles of normal science to come out as they should. Failure of existing rules is the prelude to a search for new ones" (67-68).

<sup>6</sup> The mood of crisis, of living in a "transition period" was a peculiar characteristic of the *Vormärz*. This mood was reinforced by the rise in crime rates and the phenomenon of "pauperization" which affected large areas of Germany in the period from 1830-48. See Reinhard Rürup, *Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert, 1815-1871* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 147-70.

<sup>7</sup> Emigration varied markedly from region to region. In southwest Germany emigration was more pronounced than in other areas, especially in the period before 1848. In the period from 1845 to 1849, emigration from southwest Germany encompassed 29 percent of the total amount of emigration in Germany. From 1841 until the *Reichsgründung*, the total number of Germans who emigrated to America was fixed at 2.3 million. See Rürup, *Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert*, 30-31. Duden himself, when asked why he did not decide to stay in America after proclaiming its marvellous features, answered his critics by saying, "daß der Wunsch, die Deutschen zum Colonisten zu bewegen, mich schon allein in Europa halten könne." This passage is found in Duden's second book, *Europa und Deutschland von Nordamerika aus betrachtet, oder Die Europäische Entwicklung im 19. Jh. im Bezug auf die Lage der Deutschen, nach einer Prüfung im innern Nordamerika* (Bonn: Eduard Weber, 1833-35), 468.

<sup>8</sup> In the preface to Duden's *Bericht*, the author dismisses the ideal of America as the promised land, yet still asserts that in America there is "hohe Freiheit und Sicherung leiblichen Wohlstandes in einem Grade von dem Europa keine Ahnung hatte" (iv).

<sup>9</sup> Again it is important here to distinguish between the various time periods in which this mood was paramount. Europe, in general, from the beginning of the eighteenth century on experienced what was felt to be a sudden population explosion. Germany of course was also affected by a sharp rise in population, although this also varied regionally. For example, Saxony and Prussia experienced noticeable rises in population. Other regions, such as Bavaria, Baden, and Württemberg showed slower increases in population. Still the mood of the time supported the belief that Germany was hopelessly overpopulated. This mood, according to Rürup, was significant until the 1850s when industrialization and improved agrarian techniques made it possible to provide for larger numbers of people (p. 23). Still the concept of "Volk ohne Raum," made famous by Hans Grimm's novel (1926) captivated the popular imagination well into the twentieth century. See Detlev J. K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (1987), trans. Richard Deveson (London: Allen Lane, 1991), 7-8.

<sup>10</sup> Werner Conze, "Vom Pöbel zum Proletariat," in Hans Ulrich Wehler, ed., *Moderne Deutsche Sozialgeschichte* (Köln: Kiepenheuer u. Witsch, 1966), 112-33.

<sup>11</sup> See Harold Jantz, "The Myths About America: Origins and Extensions," *Jahrbuch für Amerikastudien* 7 (1962): 6-18.

<sup>12</sup> In a letter dated 1857 a certain Otto Dieffenbach could write to his sister the following words: "Fürchte auch nicht, dass ich das Leben dort [Germany] zu eng u. zu klein finden werde, dort wo Kunst und Wissenschaft blüht, dort wo der Geist Nahrung und das Herz Befriedigung findet, nachdem ich so lange in dem Geist- und herzlosen Amerika geschmachtet, wo man Nichts ehrt als Geld, nichts denkt als an Geld, wo alle bessere Gefühle untergehen im alleinigen Streben nach Geld. Wo denn können die Verhältnisse kleiner enger, prosaischer sein als wo Alles u. Alles sich um's Geld geht?" "*Amerika ist ein freies Land*" . . . : *Auswanderer schreiben nach Deutschland*, ed. Wolfgang Helbig (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1985), 215. Directly descended from Lenau and contemporaneous with Kürnberger, given its

formulaic language, this utterance probably reflects a representative cultural attitude in Germany in the nineteenth century towards America.

<sup>13</sup> In Duden's second book *Europa und Deutschland von Nordamerika aus betrachtet*, he is even more explicit about the cultural parity of the New World: "Übrigens wird in keinem Lande der Erde mehr auf Erziehung und Unterricht gehalten, als in den V.St." (1:447). Or in another place Duden writes that, "... die Mittelklasse sich hier nothwendig in einem gesunderen Gedeihen zeige als in Europa; daß hingegen die höchste Klasse, die Klasse der eigentlichen Culturträger, sich von dem Europäischen Culturträger wenig unterscheidet" (1:441).

<sup>14</sup> An interesting example of this can be found in the enormously popular novel by Gustav Freytag, *Soll und Haben* (1855), in which American financial speculation is contrasted with the noble business practices of the *Comptoir*—a motif continuously invoked in nineteenth-century German fiction. By contrast in Duden's second book, *Europa und Deutschland von Nordamerika aus betrachtet*, he writes, "Indes ist es in den V.St. so gewöhnlich auf eine Überschätzung ihrer politischen Entwicklung zu treffen als in Europa auf die geringschätzigen Sprüche, 'die Amerikaner haben keine Geschichte; es geht dort alles nach Geld, u.s.w.' Dem Einen wie dem Anderen liegt eine jämmerliche Unkunde von dem, was überhaupt menschliche Entwicklung und Kultur ist, zum Grunde" (451).

<sup>15</sup> All the significant representatives of the *Amerikaroman*—Sealsfield, Gerstäcker, Rupprius, Kürnberger, Möllhausen, Strubberg—devote chapters in their works to American slavery.

<sup>16</sup> In his second book, *Europa und Deutschland von Nordamerika aus betrachtet*, Duden continues to praise the virtues of the American republic, but by the time he published his final work, which contained a self-proclaimed recantation, it became clear that Duden had come to embrace the competing America-paradigm. See *Die nordamerikanische Demokratie und das v. Tocqueville'sche Werk darüber, als Zeichen des Zustandes der theoretischen Politik. Nebst einer Äußerung über Chevalier's nordamerikanische Briefe . . .*—Duden's *Selbst-Anklage wegen seines amerikanischen Reiseberichtes, zur Warnung vor fernem leichtsinnigen Auswandern* (Bonn: Eduard Weber, 1837).

<sup>17</sup> Nikolaus Lenau, *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, ed., Eduard Castle (Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1970), 2:207. Other citations will be taken from the same edition.

<sup>18</sup> In Charles Sealsfield's *Lebensbilder aus der westlichen Hemisphäre* (1834-37), the Eastern greenhorn qua European gentleman finds an alternative to European decadence and what Sealsfield believed was the Europeanization of American culture on the southwestern frontier of Louisiana and Texas.

<sup>19</sup> In Otto Rupprius's fiction (1819-64) again and again in almost formulaic fashion, the Germanic protagonist flees from the corrupt plutocracy of the East Coast only to find—usually in the plantation world of Alabama—a society even more hostile to the values of the mind and the spirit.

<sup>20</sup> An example of the former is Fontane's novel *Quitt* (1890), in which the hero, having left the Prussian *Obrigkeitsstaat* to emigrate to America, ends up in a Mennonite community with characteristically Prussian features. An example of the latter is Ferdinand Kürnberger's *Der Amerikamüde* (1855), in which the poet-hero returns to Europe following nativist riots amid the destruction of the meeting place for German craftsmen aptly called *Kleindeutschland*.

<sup>21</sup> The most ambitious and comprehensive study of this debate can be found in Antonello Gerbi's volume, *The Dispute of the New World: The History of a Polemic, 1750-1900* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973). Gerbi dates the history of this debate in the following way: "... only from Buffon onwards does the thesis of the inferiority of the Americas have an uninterrupted history, a precise trajectory passing through de Pauv, touching its vertex with Hegel and then proceeding on a long decline into the mutual recriminations and childish boasts, the brusque condemnations and confused panegyrics so common still in our own times" (xv).

<sup>22</sup> Egon Menz shows that the *topoi* *Handel* and *Handelsgeist* already had an important function in German thought during the Enlightenment when the *Amerikabild* was undergoing a significant change as a result of American independence. See Egon Menz, "Amerika in der deutschen Literatur des ausgehenden 18. Jahrhunderts," in Sigrid Bauschinger, ed., *Amerika in der deutschen Literatur* (Stuttgart: Philip Reclam, 1975), 56-58. Ernst Fränkel argues that the German *Amerikabild* was formed during Romanticism and that furthermore the immediate reception of the Revolutionary War and the Constitution was surprisingly sparse in Ernst Fränkel, ed., *Amerika im Spiegel des deutschen politischen Denkens* (Köln und Opladen: Westdeutscher-Verlag, 1959), 20.

<sup>23</sup> Previous scholarly treatment of Lenau and the *Amerikaroman* has attributed its sometimes anti-American bias either to the uncritical adaptation of traditional myths of America or to the eccentric, bilious outbursts of individual writers. For an example of the former, see the above-cited article by Harold Jantz, "The Myths about America: Origins and Extensions," 6-18. The latter approach can be found in Jeffrey L. Sammons, "Land of Limited Possibilities: America in the Nineteenth-Century German Novel," *Yale Review* 68 (1978/79), 35-52. See also for a treatment of anti-Americanism in German fiction, Peter Michelson, "Americanism and Anti-Americanism in German Novels of the Nineteenth Century," *Arcadia* 2 (1976): 272-87 and Guy T. Hollyday, *Anti-Americanism in the German Novel, 1841-1862* (Bern, New York: Peter Lang, 1977).

<sup>24</sup> For an analysis of the development of German national symbolism, see among others George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars to the Third Reich* (New York: H. Fertig, 1975).

<sup>25</sup> In his talks with Eckermann, Goethe already anticipates the westward movement and the *Empiregedanke* in 1827 when he predicts America's push to the Pacific and eventually the importance of trade with China in Johann Peter Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens* (Wiesbaden: F. A. Brockhaus, 1959), 454. Of obvious importance for understanding Goethe's *Amerikabild* is his poem, "Den Vereinigten Staaten" (1827) and *Wilhelm Meister's Wanderjahre* (1821). For a more recent study of Goethe's preoccupation with America, see Victor Lange, "Goethes *Amerikabild*: Wirklichkeit und Vision," in Sigrid Bauschinger, ed., *Amerika in der deutschen Literatur*, 63-74. See also Harold Jantz, "America and the Younger Goethe," *Modern Language Notes* 97 (1982): 515-45.

<sup>26</sup> Gerbi dismisses Lenau, writing, "A man [Lenau] of essentially uncritical temperament, he contributes the most extreme poles of the polemic in one person. He contributes no new opinions or elements to the debate, indeed relies exclusively on the motifs already present in the eighteenth century." See *The Dispute of the New World*, 373. I argue the contrary that Lenau employs many of the traditional motifs of the *Amerikabild*, but by emphasizing certain of these motifs—*Staat, Kultur, Kunst, Bildung, Technik*—contributes something distinctly novel to the nineteenth-century German confrontation with America.

<sup>27</sup> Perhaps the most perceptive treatment of this theme can be found in Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780-1950* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961). The comparison of the cultural debate over the significance of industrialism and modernity in Britain and Germany remains to be explored.

<sup>28</sup> One of the principal elements in the German *Amerikabild* was the belief that speculation and illicit moneymaking were rampant. This theme can be found in the recognized classics of German fiction, such as Freytag's *Soll und Haben* as well as in the fiction of Otto Rupprius and in Reinhold Solger's *Anton in Amerika* (1862).

<sup>29</sup> On the question of the response of the German novelist to American political culture, above all, the state, see Jeffrey L. Sammons in the previously cited essay, "Land of Limited Possibilities," 50, 52.

<sup>30</sup> The author is adopting the term employed by Juliane Mikoletzky in the above-cited study, *Die deutsche Amerika-Auswanderung des 19. Jahrhunderts in der zeitgenössischen Literatur*. Mikoletzky refers to the so-called "classic" writers of the *Amerikaroman*—Sealsfield, Gerstäcker, Rupprius, Möllhausen, and Strubberg—as those writers who enjoyed the greatest sales and

popularity in the nineteenth century and yet were still afforded at best only a marginal place in the canon.

<sup>31</sup> On the question of Lenau's duplicitous motives and the disparity between his literary utterances and actual behavior, see the essay by Manfred Durzak, "Nach Amerika: Gerstäckers Widerlegung der Lenau-Legende," in *Amerika in der deutschen Literatur*, 135-37. For another interpretation of Lenau's experience in America, see an earlier essay by Karl J. R. Arndt, in which Arndt argues that Lenau experienced a religious awakening in America with the Harmonists and Father Rapp that revitalized his creativity, producing some of his most famous poems. This is perhaps further evidence of Lenau's ambivalence. See Karl J. R. Arndt, "The Effect of America on Lenau's Life and Work," *The Germanic Review*, 33.1 (Feb. 1958): 125-42.

<sup>32</sup> Charles Sealsfield, *The United States of North America as they are* (Hildesheim: Olms Presse, 1972), 233-34.

<sup>33</sup> For an initial treatment of this theme, see Jerry Schuchalter, "Charles Sealsfield's 'Fable of the Republic,'" *Yearbook of German-American Studies* 24 (1989): 11-25.

<sup>34</sup> Charles Sealsfield, *George Howard's Esq. Brautfahrt* (Hildesheim: Olms Presse, 1976), 20-21.

<sup>35</sup> On the ambivalent response to modernity in German literature, see as an introduction from the standpoint of a writer of intellectual history, George L. Mosse, "Literature and Society in Germany," and "What Germans Really Read," *Masses and Man: Nationalist and Fascist Perceptions of Reality* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), 21-68.

<sup>36</sup> A notable exception to this is the illuminating study by Jeffrey L. Sammons, "Charles Sealsfield's *Die deutsch-amerikanischen Wahlverwandtschaften*: Ein Versuch," in *Exotische Welt in populären Lektüren*, ed. Anselm Maler (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1990), 49-62. Although Sammons and I agree on the significance of Wilhelm von Schochstein's disillusionment with America, I reach opposite conclusions on the importance of art and literature for the modern nation-state. The explanatory use of the paradigm helps us to understand some of the contradictory elements in Sealsfield's thought.

<sup>37</sup> Charles Sealsfield, *Die deutsch-amerikanischen Wahlverwandtschaften* (Hildesheim, New York: Olms Presse, 1982), 5. All subsequent citations will be taken from this edition and designated with DAW, plus the volume or part and page number.

<sup>38</sup> Karl J. R. Arndt has discussed this question in detail in two notable essays: "Charles Sealsfield: 'The Greatest American Author,'" *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* (October 1964), 249-59 and "Sealsfield's Early Reception in England and America," *The Germanic Review*, 18 (1943): 176-95.

<sup>39</sup> The figure of the Yankee appears in the works of all of the "classic" writers of the *Amerikaroman*, achieving perhaps its most famous rendition in Karl May's *Der Schatz im Silbersee* (1890).

<sup>40</sup> The literature on the supposed decline of Sealsfield's utopian vision has become considerable. For the most recent treatments, see Günter Schnitzler, *Erfahrung und Bild: Die dichterische Wirklichkeit des Charles Sealsfield (Karl Postl)*, esp. 297-361 and the already-cited essay, Jeffrey L. Sammons, "Charles Sealsfield's *Die deutsch-amerikanischen Wahlverwandtschaften*: Ein Versuch," 49-62. See also Franz Schüppen's "'Der Amerikaner lebt in und durch Stürme': Zur moralisch-didaktischen Dimension von Sealsfield's Bild des Nordamerikaners," in *Schriftenreihe der Charles Sealsfield-Gesellschaft*, no. 4 (Freiburg: Charles Sealsfield-Gesellschaft, 1989), 71-126, in which Sealsfield is presented as an unquestioning believer in the American ideology.

<sup>41</sup> Sealsfield's pronouncements on Cooper and other contemporaries can be found in the preface to his novel *Morton oder die große Tour* (Hildesheim: Olms Presse, 1975).

<sup>42</sup> The literature on Cooper's quarrel with America is bountiful. See the more recent study by Daniel Marder, *Exiles at Home: A Story of Literature in Nineteenth-Century America* (Lanham, New York: University Press of America, 1984), esp. chapter 2: "Cooper: America



is No Place for a Gentleman." The parallels between Sealsfield and Cooper are striking, especially with regard to *topoi*, ideology, and political vision. For an important treatment of Sealsfield and the American canon, see Walter Grünzweig, *Das demokratische Kanaan: Charles Sealsfields Amerika im Kontext amerikanischer Literatur und Ideologie* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1987). See a recent, perceptive treatment of Sealsfield and the American canon in Jeffrey L. Sammons, "Charles Sealsfield: Innovation or Intertextuality?" in *Traditions of Experiment from the Enlightenment to the Present: Essays in Honor of Peter Demetz* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 17-46.

<sup>43</sup> The question of influences and intertextuality can be raised once again in the disquisition on money in *Wahlverwandtschaften*. In Cooper's *The American Democrat* (1838), the author also has a chapter on money entitled "On the Circulating Medium." See *The American Democrat or Hints on the Social and Civic Relations of The United States of America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1956), 169-71.

<sup>44</sup> The references are to Mrs. Frances Trollope's *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832) and Frederick Marryat's *A Diary in America, with Remarks on Its Institutions* (1839)—works which caused a remarkable stir in America because of what was thought to be their unjustly critical treatment of the still young nation.

<sup>45</sup> It is important to add here that Sealsfield's other Europeans experienced their "Ideenrevolution" on the frontier far away from what Sealsfield already noted in his early works as the threatening signs of decadence and mercantile vice of the Eastern port cities. In other words, the Baron's views on the decline of American republican values does not illustrate the loss of Sealsfield's utopian vision, but are simply more elaborate fictional treatments of ideas already expressed in his previous works. Sealsfield, from the very beginning of his literary career, had a dual vision of America.

<sup>46</sup> Reinhold Solger, *Anton in Amerika: Novelle aus dem deutsch-amerikanischen Leben* (New York: Emil Steiger, 1872), 2:174; originally published as *Anton in Amerika: Seitenstück zu Freytags "Soll und Haben": Aus dem deutsch-amerikanischen Leben* (Bromberg: C. M. Roskowski, 1862).

