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Survival and Succession: Immigrant Autobiography as Cultural Legacy

> Now I am seventy-nine years old . . . the last remaining member of my family. I can no longer read what I write, but my inner thoughts have become all the clearer. Ottilie Fuchs Goeth

The German literature of nineteenth-century Texas constitutes an important part of the whole body of utopian thought about the American West, though much of it has long been inaccessible because it was untranslated or out of print. Despairing of gradual social evolution at home and called to order by Fichte's admonition to practical and productive idealism, the generation of German intellectuals who wrote this literature became acquainted with Texas through a variety of travel books as a "transatlantic Germany" where they would be free to realize their ethical and socioeconomic, if not political, ideals.[1] One of the earliest of these books was a novel about Texas published in 1841 by Charles Sealsfield (Karl Postl), whose works may be studied both as American and as German novels. Sealsfield's *Kajütenbuch* (1841; *The Cabin Book,* 1844) proclaimed Texas a "vestibule of the Lord's temple," a land "where love affairs are got up overnight and become marriages in the morning." The kind of America that stood "for the progress of all civilization," Texas was a promised land to be won, if at all, through the marriage of the right men to the right land.[2] In its recurrence to this metaphor, which Annette Kolodny traces throughout Western American literature,[3] this novel foreshadows *Was Großmutter erzählt,* a significant woman's narrative first published seventy-four years later in 1915 and translated for publication in English as *The Memoirs of a Texas Pioneer Grandmother.*[4] Like Sealsfield's panoramic *Kajütenbuch,* this autobiography from the time of the German colonization of Texas is a part of two literatures.

Ottilie Fuchs Goeth's narrative is one of the principal landmarks that explain the mid-nineteenth-century German colonization in central Texas from the point of view of women. This narrative, like many of the

others by women, shows the author's willingness to meet the demands of a new situation: to see or perceive practically rather than ideologically, to insure survival and then succession, to start with the things at hand and to cook or sweeten them to tastes cultivated in a more refined world, to trade momentarily quality for quantity, and then—in this largely unmediated, except as translated and republished, retrospective—to act on the past and the future through words; and through stories of marriage, gardening, cooking, and clothing to engage in myth-making every bit as aggressive as Sealsfield's. Goeth's autobiography shows that women and men saw themselves as "new people"—uprooted in a positive way and happy to assume roles and do things for which their heritage had only partly prepared them. Yet the writing also shows that youthful radicalism can, perhaps usually does, turn into reactionary old age.

Ottilie Fuchs Goeth (1836–1926) began writing these memoirs in 1908 at the age of seventy-two. When she finished after seven years, her narrative spanned over a century and reflected, in and through her life, the ebb and flow of German culture in Texas. An indispensable document, prefaced by a poem in which a son entreats her to write, the memoirs open with a vignette showing Goeth as a work-worn "old Texan without training."[5] She reverts then to Mecklenburg—like other colonists she did not become a *German* until the unification in 1871, by which time she was, of course, long since an American—where she remembers a "childhood of such happiness that even today [she recalls] it only with deep joy" (1). Migration, she continues, "marked the beginning of life's seriousness" (1). What she missed most after coming to Texas in 1845 was the "beautiful garden with its spacious playground surrounded by apple trees, with a large and small arbor containing tables and benches, lovely flower beds marked off by dainty boxwood hedges, to say nothing of the numerous kinds of berries" (1–2). Her first Christmas in the New World "seemed a little meager in comparison" (2) with the "paradise" she had imagined Texas to be. Parents, she suspected, "did not take the sorrows and disappointments of those first years in what was still wild country too seriously, because they hoped and trusted that gradually everything would be easier and better" (2). Children could not see past the present into the future. But they could remember and regain. The memoirs are punctuated by Goeth's recovery of the youthful garden and her exultation in every strawberry, cherry, apple, plum, and pear harvested in Texas.

Apart from the aside about the garden, Goeth cannot talk about her childhood and migration until after she paints a picture of her grandparents' generation—in Mecklenburg—tracing first the maternal, then paternal lines of her mother's merchant family from Rostock, then following her father's clergyman father from education through marriages to prominence in the church. Successions and transmissions of character, values, talents, and books were more important in her childhood memories than the actual legacies of jewelry, properties, and fortunes largely lost or left behind. Grapes from Spain, the fellowship of meals, resentment of the tyranny of Napoleon, memories of the Greek

Revolution for which one grandfather outfitted two soldiers, and stories from Lessing, Goethe, Schiller, and Cooper either were important to Goeth at the time or grew, during her years in Texas, to the significance accorded them in her memoirs. Goeth never clearly addresses this parallax, though she admits that she is writing of the Mecklenburg she left in 1845 partly in light of the Germany she and her husband returned to visit in 1892.

Her analysis of her parents and their heritage of the Enlightenment and Romanticism carries over to the New World: not only in the way she came later to remember them as immigrants, but also in her understanding of cultural, economic, and political relationships. With Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and James Fenimore Cooper as preceptors, she seems to have cultivated understandings, particularly those relating to the social fabric, that one could see entire persons through the parts of their lives, and likewise that the individual life was a continuum that does not snap together in its final meaning even at death but continues to mean and to change as long as it is remembered. Her husband's later political career, for instance, receives summary attention in comparison with his innovations in agriculture or his approach to life and law enforcement, not just, as one could quickly assume, because she was not in the state capitol to see him. She often incorporates into her story events, issues, and places where she was absent by embedding a family member's eyewitness account, usually a letter or a photograph, much as she collects the heritage of the past through the lives and readings of her ancestors.

Primarily from her father, who was like his father a minister, Goeth claimed the heirlooms of German literature, music, and thought. In basing his concept of America on Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans,* even going so far as to call himself Hawkeye, and in publishing a thinly veiled autobiographical novel in 1842 as a program for correcting the social ills he saw in the church, her father offered the family a purposeful but precarious transition into the world of commerce and politics. The mother's family had experienced rising and falling fortunes, and the mother is the parent Goeth depicts as provider and steward. Both families were an admixture of cultural patriotism and social justice, half descended from the Old Testament Abraham and half from Dr. Faustus (21, 26, 40, 158, 198, 208, 213). The father brought beauty, direction, and meaning to the migration (21). The mother helped make it possible (22). And Goeth described herself as "a kind of Christmas fairy" who attracted good luck to the move (13).

While Goeth's Mecklenburg afforded a harmonious way of life, bounded by the sacraments, the community, and the seasons, her parents sensed an increasing lack of "freedom and life" in the present and equity in the future (21). Her parents' decision to migrate made, Goeth describes the family's incremental leave-taking, preparations for dealing with deficiencies they expected in Texas, and psychological uprooting. August Hoffmann von Fallersleben dedicated a song entitled "Star of Texas" to commemorate the family's departure from the "curse of ancient tradition, | And of obsolete blind faith" (33). While the poet

foresaw "the day of reconciliation and exaltation" (33–34) on the faraway fields of Texas, Goeth confessed herself to have been of two minds:

> Well do I remember my apprehension as we boarded [the] fearsome crate which was to carry us into The New World. . . . Our former home and happy childhood lay behind us, soon to be followed by more serious times. Yet we were cheerful. There was no lack of singing, everyone attempting to encourage the other, with many a secret tear falling into the waves. We hurried toward the setting sun, the magic West beckoning, as we wondered what the future held in store. (37)

Going to a new frontier in 1845 was, Goeth alleged, no easier than the migration of the first Europeans to America had been centuries earlier. Though she later alludes twice to the Germanic *Völkerwanderung* (63, 131), her outlook in 1845 apparently derived from the study of English language and American colonial history to which the father subjected them before departure. This sense of history, recalled in old age but attributed to a ten-year-old, is consistent with the views of other migrants, men and women, who viewed Texas from afar as a golden free land and themselves as participants in a great drama.[6] The "reality," she states simply, "was a bit different" (1). Of the Texas coast, she says, "they had imagined it otherwise" (38). Galveston particularly disappointed them. How disappointing is revealed in a statement reflecting views years later, when—after saying "my good parents made the right decision, and I believe all of the Texas descendants will agree with me in this"—she adds, pausing perhaps longer than the typesetter's regular spacing between sentences suggests: "Possibly a few may have wished for something else" (21, cf. 69–70).[7]

Like most of the immigrant tales, Goeth's account of the weeks and months after arrival is filled with description and narration, while little space is devoted to reflection and interpretation. After the newness had worn off and perhaps the shock been dulled and after familiarity with the new setting permitted evaluation, Goeth resumes the balance that her writings before and after the migration reveal. That the sea voyage, landing, and trek inland differ stylistically from the preceding and subsequent passages, when, after all, they were written about the same time, attests either to Goeth's narrative craft, which she says she had not, or to the fidelity of her memory, both of which—fidelity and memory—she never openly questions, seemingly confident of the essential oneness of self, story, and design.

Gradually Goeth's mental handwriting—the backside of the embroidered text—starts to reveal itself. Upon arrival in Texas, the family encountered an American phrenologist who undertook a scientific examination of young Goeth's head. She later wrote:

> I do not recall how the examination turned out, but one thing I do remember is that he presented me with a whole pound of candy, which I joyously divided amongst the children. Candy was a rarity in Texas at

> the time, so perhaps I may regard the doctor's present as a favorable prognosis that the head of a little German girl would enable her to adapt herself to Texas conditions. (39)

Or at least, she says, that was the omen she eventually found in the story, imagination being better than reality (40). But good luck and an active, working imagination are not the only threads in Goeth's needlecraft. Life in the Mecklenburg parsonage, she had written earlier, had been characterized by funerals, and indeed Goeth had written so profoundly of funerals that at one point she apologized and changed the subject to baptisms (19–20). Within the first year after their arrival in Texas, Goeth recurred, albeit briefly, to the theme of funerals when she described the death of her oldest sister Lulu, the young wife of Wilhelm von Roeder from the neighboring farm. "This was to be the first grave of a dearly beloved one in Texas. So soon then, we were bound to this country in such a way that, as Wilhelm von Humboldt put it, we associated home with two worlds" (50). Thus ends the symbolic journey and approximately the first fourth of Goeth's memoirs in which she had mentally and spiritually crisscrossed the Atlantic several times in a manner no doubt reminiscent of the original literal tearing away. And thus she reveals the backside of her story: good fortune, death, and the hope of having more of the one than of the other. Goeth claims at several points that she never learned or had the time to play cards. But she seems to have had little doubt about the gamble and stakes of life. That she never once speaks such words directly, even when death strikes arbitrarily and whimsically around her, shows a courage and fortitude matched only by her intelligence and will. And thus too her writings reveal one of the central themes of Texas literature: the kind of go-for-broke playing off of loss and gain that runs through Texas fiction all the way to *Lonesome Dove.*

Goeth's first years in Texas were seasoned by pleasant and unfettered conversation, fortunate weather, and the abundance of the vast prairies: "all . . . free, the soil virtually begging for a hand to cultivate it" (40). But Texas was exotic, strange, and curiously blessed. Things that had been overlaid by centuries of tradition in Germany were laid bare in Texas—whether furniture, houses, clothing, manners, or hospitality. Some of that immediately struck her as good. There was, she recalled, not yet any racial prejudice between blacks and whites, Germans and Anglos. But manners were often amusing, even to a young German girl. Goeth's first Fourth of July—the first after statehood—left a colorful impression, particularly of the speaker's wife, a woman "of considerable stature," who wore "a muslin dress with large flowers printed on it and fanned herself with an enormous fan made from the tail feathers from a turkey" (49).

Goeth's father, when he was not writing letters or seeding the Texas breezes with thoughts to be carried to Mecklenburg, was learning to follow a furrow, teaching music, tuning pianos, leading a quartet, observing the Texas scene, and eventually professing at Baylor in Independence (41–51). When the family could entertain the prospect of

securing a piano and could break away from more established areas, and when, largely through the father's fluency in English, they obtained title to some bounty land on the Colorado River in the hill country, the clan moved west as the front-runners of a cluster migration of families associated since their arrival in Texas and now intermarried. As in Germany, Goeth's mother took charge of home life—to include supervision of home building, which was, to be sure, executed by the sons who were, Goeth wrote, "now grown to young manhood and exuberantly made the most of nature's bounties which the surroundings offered in lavish spendor."

> The springs never ran dry, and the lack of grass for grazing sheep and cattle was unknown. On the contrary, one had to struggle to prevent the great carpet of flowers from rolling down the surrounding hills to completely smother the vegetables. Our kitchen was well supplied . . . from our garden virtually the year round. . . .
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> My brothers built boats to go fishing in the river, teeming with trout, so-called catfish, and dozens of other creatures inhabiting the watery depths. On Sundays it was a favorite pastime to go boating on the river lake. It was normally very calm, but in the springtime was occasionally transformed into a foaming icy sea by the water rushing down from the upper Colorado. Mighty oaks growing along the banks were uprooted and carried along by the raging red flood, a grand display of the water's force. We stood on the banks watching the spectacle in utter fascination as we had never imagined anything like it in our old homeland. As we had lived in the flat land of Mecklenburg, we knew neither hills nor high places. Thus the near hills with the Shovel Mountain and the Packsaddle looked like real mountains to us, and to this very day are still referred to as such. How interesting all this was for us, the pecan trees, the clear creeks, the many beautiful springs. The magic of Texas was beginning to unfold before us. (55)

Goeth, the good-luck fairy, as idealistic as both her parents and with her father's foresight and mother's practicality, regretted that there were not means to store, save, and transport the abundant power and rich produce of nature. For always the thought of the unpredictability of good luck was with her, as when in the succeeding pages she narrated the story of a brother who, with his dogs, took on one of two mountain lions. His powder having gotten wet in the pursuit, the boy finally doubly charged his last shot, stunned the animal, and thus survived (57–58).

The harmony of this little hunting story with Goeth's account of her marriage cannot be ignored. Goeth's husband, she wrote, was not a perfect Don Carlos but was at least named Carl, read Schiller, and sang a part and played instruments needed in family ensembles. They married on Goeth's father's birthday in 1859, and with the outbreak of the Civil War, two years later moved into a small log cabin behind Goeth's family home where, her husband performing alternative service, the Unionist family evaded white "fire-eaters" and—through sheer good luck—

avoided contact with Indians. All about them people died. Goeth's depiction of the atrocities to which German families were subjected by secessionists and then confederates reveals how many of the German women dealt with the war, the absence of men and threat of hostility, and economic exigencies. Fence-building and transport slowed precariously at just the time when German dispersal into the higher hill country was leading to combined farming-ranching adapted to regional weather and terrain. And her account shows that the war reinforced for Goeth and her husband a relationship similar to what Goeth later attributed to her parents at a time as early as their life in Mecklenburg. Goeth's sphere reached far beyond the house and yard depicted in German literature and lore; she assumed for her parents the role of the absent sons. Security, management of resources, and continuation of life in the small community on the frontier fell to the women. And not only survival, but also succession. Goeth herself said the war years gave her "the opportunity to become better acquainted with the intellectuality of [her] father, and also with his views on religion and his striving for religious freedom and enlightenment."

> This was a great inspiration to me, particularly as so little informative material was available. The harbors were blocked; nothing was coming in, not even *newspapers*. One could only surmise what was going on at the battle sites, and no one knew whether reports were based on facts or rumors. One turned again to the classics, Goethe, Lessing, Schiller, Shakespeare, as well as Jean Paul. People borrowed literature from one another. The German families traded books. What one did not have, the other probably had. It was impossible for me to read Schiller during this war period, having read him so avidly as a young girl, and not wishing to destroy those impressions. (77–78, italics added)

Paper had to be hoarded, ink made, and news gleaned from all available sources. Not only was contact broken with Germany and the educated world, but money dropped as taxation rose, and women "turned again to spinning and weaving in order not to go about in rags" (78). But the important thing is that, along with the resumption of these folkloric domestic skills, women functioned in roles of successorship, early the pattern on this frontier and perhaps not surprising in comparison to westering Americans but innovative in comparison with the social and political background of these Germans.

Cut off from her newspapers, five meals a day, and coffee, Goeth may seem to suffer superficial hardships. And there may be some of that. But the atrocities, martial law, and terror were real and are widely documented. There seems more to Goeth's account of the war. Anglos, whose ignorance caused this war and these hardships, experienced only the physical dangers. The Germans endured those too, as well as cultural deprivation. Yet the culture was not only a way to contrast her family from the Anglo-Americans—whom a century later the Germans still derogatorily called "biscuits," "drifters," or "whites." And it was not only a way to talk about matters not expressed openly. It was an

operating legacy to the Goeth progeny: to know that life was complicated and difficult, and that culture fostered connectedness, as well as identity and values.

After all, the same Goeth, who had just written that the wilderness was the perfect sounding board for the finest creative works of a cultured people (69), wrote, ten pages later, that "the destruction of the splendors of the South" was "horrible and yet exciting" (78).

After the war, while Southerners got tit for tat, Goeth and her husband prospered in sheep raising, extended their landholdings, diversified, and built a large limestone house that was a landmark of the region. Goeth excused all the work and hardship of these years—Reconstruction and the closing of the frontier—by saying that, thereafter, they "lived very comfortably" and "could make things pleasant for . . . beloved guests" (101). Her parents celebrated their golden wedding anniversary. The first of several dance halls was built. Song and shooting festivals took place with regularity. Tutors fresh from Europe (one had acted before Louis Philippe) were engaged for the schools. Mills thrived, bringing money and attracting commerce to the community. A store and post office were established. Law enforcement and legislation by Goeth's husband were enlightened. The young generation enjoyed writing poetry and music, an anthology of incidental pieces revealing the extent to which they communicated through song. And scientific agriculture, a German *Selbstverständlichkeit*, reached its height in bringing forth prosperity from the hill country just before a new drought cycle started.

By their neighbors the Goeths would not have been viewed as particularly successful, though possibly they were considered unusually happy. Goeth herself, writing with grandchildren and great-grandchildren in mind, described a typical day:

> You children who grew up in the city tend to imagine life on a ranch as either more romantic or more monotonous than it actually is. In any case one needs an abundance of humor in order to remain well balanced. Each day brings its new tasks and additional responsibilities, so that one is never really finished. One had to get up early in order to prepare breakfast, for this was not the simple affair that it was in Germany. Bacon had to be fried, eggs boiled, coffee prepared, and then the assembled family served at the table, while one was constantly running back to the kitchen for more food to satisfy healthy appetites. When the men had finished eating, lunches had quickly to be packed into little buckets, for some of the men did not come home for lunch. There was scarcely time to have a bite oneself. Now all the dishes had to be washed, the churning had to be done, the laundry could not wait, and all too often the boys came running with torn trousers and a skinned knee which Mother should quickly heal with kisses, she being only too glad that it was not a snakebite. The baby in the cradle awakens. . . .
>
> All too fast, the morning was gone. Perhaps the midday meal was ready, but because it had been wash day it was on the simple side. But clomp, clomp, we hear horses. A company of Rangers on the trail of

> Indians has arrived. Everyone jumped to action. The riders unsaddled, washed and took care of the horses. Quickly Carl had a mutton ready for roasting. There were vegetables and fruits and with it all a glass or two of the fiery Texas wine; instead of the simple meal, we had a small banquet. All tasks were abandoned for the day.
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> On another occasion one Sunday, cousin Heinrich Fuchs came for a visit. He was wearing a stiff-front shirt, all shiny and elegant behind his long full beard. Then it happened. The beard fell into the soup, and either it or the shirt had to be sacrificed. "The scissors!" demanded cousin Heinrich, and the beard was sacrificed for the sake of his vanity. (91–92)

"Fortunately," Goeth added, her own brood "wore simple clothing. Shoes and socks were worn only on the coldest days of winter. . . . Many things had to be overlooked in those days when there was so little to be had, and one had almost no help" (92).

After the death of Goeth's sister Lulu in 1847, Goeth's narrative had stayed mostly in Texas, with only occasional comparisons and contrasts with Germany. Her thoughts returned to her former home, however, during the Franco-Prussian War and the unification which followed it in 1871. The "renewal of the German Reich at Versailles" was "difficult to fathom, and one feared to be imagining it."

> Still it was true and probably the reality of it was more meaningful than the papers related. Germany was an empire as large and as grand as in the days of the Hohenstaufen. Young dreams had been fulfilled. Old people were glad to have survived long enough to have experienced it, even those living in Texas, where so many had fled from their fatherland, because the geopolitical timepiece of Germania had run too slowly. (94–95)

She then added: "There were various interesting developments for us when Germany became a large and powerful nation. One could now be called a 'German' rather than as formerly a Mecklenburger, a Bavarian, a Hessian, or otherwise" (95). Observing then that the number of Germans coming to Texas had increased greatly after the Civil War and that everywhere in the 1870s was evidence to "German industriousness and culture" (95), she reflected at length on the birth of their sixth child (in all there were eight, of whom six survived), born right after the unification:

> "During this important era . . . our son Edward William was born. He was given the name of the great reformer, Edward Baltzer, whom we so greatly admired, as well as the name of the emperor of the newly established Reich. My unforgettable father, who seemed to have regained impetus through the stirring events, always called our big handsome boy the 'Little Emperor.' He was always the largest and strongest of our five sons. To our joy he decided to remain on the ranch and soon became his father's right hand. Apparently he also inherited his father's great sense of humor. (95–96)

And with a thin but possibly portentous transition, she moved forward five years to discuss her husband's trip to the centennial celebration in Philadelphia and his continuation to New York. The fruits of this trip, which had cost a hundred sheep, were a portrait photograph of her husband, a set of encyclopedias, and a globe. Then she embedded into her 1909 text a page she had written on 4 July 1876:

> "Even as I wonder today in which way our descendants may celebrate the 200th anniversary of this great republic, some grandchild, one hundred years hence, may wonder how his grandparents and great-grandparents might have celebrated this day one hundred years before. In order to gratify any such interest, I shall as best I can give a brief picture of how things look today.
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> "I would not be spending the day in such quiet contemplation were it not that my husband, Carl Goeth, has gone to . . . Philadelphia. Our two oldest children . . . have gone . . . to attend a simple 4th of July celebration held at a beautiful grove on the Double Horn Creek. Gaily they drove away in a large farm wagon, all loaded with children and big water melons. . . .
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> "In the South, unfortunately, the Centennial is not generally observed. It is mainly the Germans who mark the occasion with festivity and ceremony. . . .
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> "I anticipate, that is we anticipate, having many descendants so that our struggles and ambitions for an independent and meaningful life will continue to bear fruit. After one hundred years have gone by, you dear ones will scarcely understand what it meant for your ancestors to emigrate to Texas at a time when there were virtually no intellectual, or even physical refinements available there, giving up in Germany a relatively comfortable life in order to insure that the future generations might have a life free of worries, such as would have been impossible over there without private means. Mother and Father Fuchs both grew up in genteel homes where servants were employed, but they remained indefatigable, as only the well-bred can be, in face of all such difficulties that settling in Texas brought with it. Although they might have enjoyed an easier life in Germany, they never regretted their emigration to Texas." (96–99)

Depth and length of commentary clearly show which side of the Atlantic was, and had long been, home for Goeth. And the only other time her narrative returns to the Old World for more than passing observation was during the trip she and her husband made to Germany in 1892. Though filled with details—estates, cousins, graves, operas, urban design, agriculture, sheep raising, her husband's home in Wetzlar, and Wilhelmian culture—these several pages (113–18) are singularly superficial, and what they describe can hardly be called a journey in comparison with the one of 1845–46.

Ottilie Fuchs Goeth's *Memoirs of a Texas Pioneer Grandmother* is a remarkable autobiography, not alone in the fact that it spans over a century without even covering the last eleven years of the writer's life!

And the book's obvious purpose to serve as a guide into the future adds years to the already ambitious sum that Goeth claims alone in her title. Her work reminds one that her world and culture were supposedly patriarchal. Goeth expatiates on the subjects of fathers and mothers and generations, finally closing her book with the father whose dreams paved a precarious road to Texas. Wives and mothers cast long shadows, as do husbands and fathers. But those cast by grandfathers are even longer. And when you are a German grandmother, an *Oma*, "the last remaining member of [the] family" (213), yours is finally the longest of all, for there is much that now only you can tell about the "complete harmony and consideration" (214) in the perfect marriage that assures survival and succession; and you know—from experience—that "even a Schiller transplanted into the wilderness would be unable to establish strong roots" unless able to satisfy practical as well as idealistic aspects of life. From this vantage of authority, an *Oma* affirms, as Goeth the matriarch affirms, that "an understanding of [such] practical aspects of life must be implanted and fostered at an early age. Only then does life become meaningful and young people can become useful members of society" (192). Becoming a useful citizen of the world, living meaningfully, and establishing strong roots seem to be the rhetorical compass of this very old woman schooled in her Goethe and Cooper. Her life a nearly perfect model for Susanna Egan's *Patterns of Experience in Autobiography*—"inevitability of purpose, innocence to experience, heroic journey, maturity, and confession"—and a refutation of the negative myths cited in Carol Fairbank's *Prairie Women,*[8] she is the cult figure of her clan. In that garden, "Papa said" walks behind "Oma wants."

Rhetorical analysis of Goeth's very socially grounded memoirs suggests that interpretation of a folk group whose family leaders wrote such literature differs only in some respects from literary biography which Leon Edel describes as a search for "the figure under the carpet, the evidence in the reverse of the tapestry, the life-myth of a given mask" through which every author reveals personal codes.[9] If we believe that at least a portion of the group emotions that produced this writing may be recovered and may be found to have relevance, then we must approach this immigrant literature just as we would material culture, trusting that reconstruction may be generally accurate even while erring in some details.

Analysis of the content, structure, cadence, and style of these domestic writings intimates much about not only the authors but also the so-called "inside song" about the culture they address.[10] The party line of the women's texts is survival, succession, and moral authority.[11] Because the women were, for varying reasons, the last of the immigrants to write, they gave the plot, aesthetic, beauty, and validity to a history once told by others but now told by the women about themselves. Their *fiction*—and we do well to remember that that word is associated etymologically with *dough*—is the culture. In "Tales of the Grandmothers," Ingeborg McCoy asserts that women were the true purveyors of this culture.[12] But far more important is the alliance these women affected with culture, much like the alliance between women

and the church that Ann Douglas traces in *The Feminization of American Culture,* in order to revise the past and chart the future. In that regard, Sealsfield may have written the bestseller; women published the critical edition.

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Notes

[1] See Glen E. Lich, "Goethe on the Guadalupe," in *German Culture in Texas: A Free Earth,* ed. Glen E. Lich and Dona B. Reeves (Boston: Twayne, 1980), 29–71. The early nineteenth-century German view of the New World progressed through three historical stages dominated, in turn, by writers, artists, scientists, philosophers, and politicians. Dreams of building a model homeland in the New World, of making a corporate fresh start, led to colonization efforts by, principally, the *Gießener Gesellschaft* (1830) to St. Louis and the *Adelsverein* (1842), a league of nobles founded with strong German and British and Belgian (Coburg family) support to establish a "new Germany" in what was then a fledgling Republic of Texas. See Johann Heinrich Siegfried Schultz, *Die deutsche Ansiedlung in Texas: Besonderer Abdruck einer Reihe das Unternehmen des Vereins zum Schutze deutscher Einwanderer in Texas besprechender Artikel aus dem Rheinischen Beobachter* (Bonn: Encke, 1845), 6–10, 16–19, 21, 39, 53, 55–56, and 60 for a definition of this "new Germany." See also Glen E. Lich, "Rural Hill Country: Man, Nature, and the Ecological Perspective," in *Eagle in the New World: German Immigration to Texas and America,* ed. Theodore Gish and Richard Spuler (College Station: Texas A&M University Press for the Texas Committee for the Humanities, 1986), 26–46.

Writing of this paper was supported in part by Schreiner College and a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

[2] Charles Sealsfield, *Das Kajütenbuch* (1841; reprint, Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam, 1982, with an introduction by Alexander Ritter) had numerous printings and editions in German and English. The citations come from Charles Sealsfield, *The Cabin Book,* trans. Sarah Powell (New York: St. John and Coffin, 1871; reprint, with foreword by Glen E. Lich and afterword by Alexander Ritter, Austin, Texas: Eakin, 1985), 13, 14, 15, 18–23, 31, 72–73, 238. Defining Texas as *the* New World under the "Regency" of God, Sealsfield warns too that it is a "wide field" and "no favor" will be given. See also A. Leslie Willson, "Another Planet: Texas in German Literature," in *Texas and Germany: Crosscurrents,* ed. Joseph B. Wilson, Rice University Studies, vol. 63.3 (1977), 102. See also Walter Grünzweig, *Charles Sealsfield,* Western Writers Series, vol. 71 (Boise State University, 1985), 26; and Wulf Koepke, "Charles Sealsfield's Place in Literary History," *South Central Review* 1 (1984): 54–66.

[3] See Annette Kolodny, *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975) and *The Land Before Her: Fantasy and Experience of the American Frontiers, 1630–1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

[4] *Was Großmutter erzählt* was first published in San Antonio in 1915. A translation was published in limited edition by Irma Goeth Guenther in 1969.

[5] Ottilie Fuchs Goeth, *Memoirs of a Texas Pioneer Grandmother,* ed. and trans. Irma Goeth Guenther (Burnet, Texas: Eakin, 1982), 1. All subsequent citations from this translation will be given parenthetically in the text. Ottilie Fuchs was born 27 February 1836 in Koelzow, Mecklenburg, daughter of Pastor Adolf Fuchs and Louise Fuchs, née Ruemker. Her parents migrated under the auspieces of the *Adelsverein* in 1845–46. After her marriage to Carl Goeth, originally from Wetzlar, Ottilie Fuchs Goeth rose to a position of leadership in a large extended family that included farmers, ranchers, teachers, physicians, politicians, lawmen, linguists, writers, and an inordinately large number of musicians. By no means among the wealthiest landowners, the Goeth and Fuchs families were and today still are culturally prominent in the German-Texas hill country. The translator, Irma Goeth

Guenther served as a translator and interpreter during World War II and from then until her retirement as a professional violinist and violist with the San Antonio Symphony and other orchestras and ensembles. She and her husband reside in Austin, Texas.

[6] This image is associated with the writings of Emma Murck Altgelt (1834–1922) who came to Texas in 1854 from Düsseldorf (see excerpts from Guido Ernst Ransleben's translation of Altgelt's *Beobachtungen und Erinnerungen,* in Crystal Sasse Ragsdale, *The Golden Free Land: The Reminiscences and Letters of Women on an American Fronter* [Austin, Texas: Landmark, 1976], 132–55). This citation that Ragsdale also incorporates into the title of her anthology is from "Schilderungen aus texanischem Leben" (p. 134).

[7] In a discussion in September 1983, Minetta Altgelt Goyne of the University of Texas at Arlington mentioned that, while editing the Civil War letters of the von Coreth family in Texas, she was struck by formulaic expressions and stories in the writings of the Coreth men. "Did the stories of beautiful girls left behind in order to migrate to Texas mask assessments of life in Texas, of spouses one may have had to 'settle for' in Texas, and of what one might have otherwise become?" Goyne asked. Goyne's ancestor, Emma Murck Altgelt, had written that many young nobles, scientists, and intellectuals in Texas "often married daughters of farmers or laborers" (Ragsdale, 142) in order to insure thrift, practical acumen, and even survival. Altgelt herself and several other German women writers had fled (they report) from Germany in order to avoid stifling but proper marriages. While men later pined, women declared themselves happy, though there is an element in their writings of Jane O'Reilly's thesis in *The Girl I Left Behind: The Housewife's Moment of Truth and Other Feminist Ravings* (New York: Macmillan, 1980). Goeth's sentence may reflect these ambivalences.

[8] Cf. Susanna Egan, *Patterns of Experience in Autobiography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984); and Carol Fairbanks, *Prairie Women: Images in American and Canadian Fiction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 5–9.

[9] Leon Edel, "The Figure Under The Carpet," in *Telling Lives: The Biographer's Art,* ed. Marc Pachter (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1918), 24–25.

[10] This is what one critic has called the "inside song." Compare Cornelia Meigs, et al., *A Critical History of Children's Literature* (New York: Macmillan, 1953), 4–5: Mabel Major and T. M. Pearce. *Southwest Heritage: A Literary History with Bibliographies,* 3d ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1972), 15–16; and Alice Walker, "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens": "And so our mothers and grandmothers have, more often than not anonymously, handed on the creative spark, the seed of the flower they themselves never hoped to see: or like a sealed letter they could not plainly read."

[11] See Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Frontier Women: The Trans-Mississippi West, 1840–1880* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1979), 20–21. Cf. Elizabeth Hampsten, *Read This Only to Yourself: The Private Writings of Midwestern Women, 1880–1910* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982).

[12] Gish and Spuler, 209–20.