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Immigration in German-American Literature, 1850-1900

Between 1850 and 1900 the process of immigration and acculturation was one of the most important topics in novels and tales written by American immigrant authors from Germany. This topic served as a focal point which also permits insight into related issues. The authors described time-specific economic, social and psychological difficulties the immigrants incurred during the process of their adjustment and they also referred to the complex issue of their ethnic group's self-definition within the new cultural context.

The time frame for this investigation was chosen on the basis of historical and literary considerations. With the emergence of large immigration waves in the 1850s, the topic of immigration started to appear in a variety of literary genres. Concomitant with the decline in immigration numbers, it was increasingly being replaced by other subject matters by the first decade of the twentieth century.

German-American prose fiction is regarded here as ethnic American literature. Its analysis contributes new insights into the development of a culturally and ethnically diverse American literature and society. This approach is based both on recent scholarship focusing on immigrant acculturation and on research emphasizing the diversity of American literature where regional and ethnic aspects such as Southern and Western, Jewish, Hispano-American and Chinese-American literature have already been investigated. Furthermore, this approach is supported by the observation that almost all authors analyzed here explicitly identified with America and wrote for a German-speaking or English-speaking audience in the United States, accepting their adopted country's standards of evaluation for their literature.

The group of authors selected is restricted to those who can be called ethnic American writers. German-American authors are defined as immigrants from Germany writing prose literature in English and German in the United States. However, returnees who had written and lived in the United States only temporarily are included if external

circumstances such as health or economic reasons rather than problems of alienation carried them back to the Old World. Heinrich Börnstein and Emil Klauprecht who had worked successfully as publishers and writers in the United States prior to their return to Europe may serve as examples. Their literature reveals traits typical of German-American literature such as the discussion of German-American and American subject matters and an explicit identification with their adopted homeland.

This definition differs from those developed by anthologists and researchers in the nineteenth century. Restricting their research efforts to poetry, which was almost exclusively written in German, they took German literature as their point of reference.¹ While very few authors regarded themselves as Germans, two major groups of writers can be identified in terms of their ethnic self-definition, one considering themselves German-American and one American. These two self-definitions reflect antagonistic positions, which may be epitomized in two ideal types, preservationists and assimilationists. The first adopted an attitude of cultural superiority and endeavored to maintain their dual cultural heritage refusing to be *Kulturdünger*.² The latter advocated cultural adjustment to the United States based on a new definition of America as a multi-cultural nation in the process of constituting itself through the contributions of different ethnic groups.

Research on German-American literature started with Heinrich Rattermann's *Biographikon* and articles and reviews written in numerous nineteenth-century German-American magazines. Until the turn of the century, the main purpose of this research, which was often explicitly stated, lay in the presentation of German-American contributions to America's culture. However, while poetry attracted the attention of anthologists and researchers, prose was neglected. This was also true for research conducted in the Third Reich which brought a new wave of interest in German-Americana. The perspective of research of that time reflected the purpose of identifying German culture abroad as the products of *Auslandsdeutsche* which led to the emphasis of the German "mother-culture" as a point of reference.

The appearance of Robert E. Ward's *German-American Studies* in the 1960s revealed a renewed interest in German-American culture. Today, research on German-American prose is still in the pioneer stage.³ Only recently, Don Heinrich Tolzmann's first "introductory history of German-American literature"⁴ and Robert E. Ward's helpful bio-bibliography of German-American writers appeared.⁵ Due to this lack of research with regard to prose, findings in German-American poetry were assumed to be valid for German-American literature as a whole. Criticism pertaining to poetry such as the low level of literary quality; sentimentalism; pathological homesickness; intellectual backward orientation to Hermann, leader of the Cherusci; the Rhine and *Blaublümlein* stigmatized the comprehensive body of German-American literature.⁶

It must be emphasized that German-American prose and poetry served completely distinct purposes. Poetry was employed as an apt vehicle for the expression of emotions referring to the German fa-

therland and to ideal realms distant in time and space. It was almost exclusively written in German, with its authors drawing on German literary traditions. Poetry was often produced for festive occasions to create the idealized atmosphere desired. In contrast, prose was used as a form adequate for the expression of the more prosaic reality of the adopted homeland. Its complex time-specific functions will be analyzed here for the first time. Immigrant authors developed a unique perspective of America presenting an unprecedented subject matter—the experience of immigration. Lacking literary predecessors in this field, they increasingly developed new literary forms accepting models from both countries including Cooper, Sealsfield, Gerstäcker, and later Irving, Joaquin Miller, Bret Harte and American realists.

The experience of immigration served as a writing incentive not only for traditional writing professions. A broad social spectrum of perspectives is represented in nineteenth-century German-American prose with amateur authors coming from fields including journalism (Börnstein and Stürenburg), teaching (Douai), engineering (Asmus), business (Puchner), medicine (Mayer), and construction work (Bertsch). As a consequence, the works' literary quality ranges from popular and trivial literature transforming experienced reality in a naive and unreflected manner to literature on a high level of formal and technical sophistication. The method applied for this variety of literary sources has to consider both historical developments and literary traditions of specific genres, time-contingent subject matters and topoi. In addition, the works' diverse functions have to be taken into account. While authors of less self-referential works directed their readers' attention toward their historical context, there are also writers focusing on the development of literary techniques reflecting historical circumstances only to a limited extent.

German-American prose literature can be divided into two main groups with different functions and audiences. Authors writing in English addressed the general American public including Anglo-American and German-American readers.⁷ They endeavored to attract attention to the fate of German immigrants and to their specific moral, cultural and social contributions to America. In contrast, authors addressing a German-speaking readership used their literature as vehicles for a variety of time-contingent ethno-cultural and political purposes. The development of an ethnic consciousness was one of these goals, which was also reflected in the attempts of German-American magazines to stimulate the creation of German-American literature through prize contests after 1850. The spectrum of works selected by the juries included the mystery novel, the social utopia, and the historical novel. The functions of these forms range from manifesting the existence of a rapidly increasing ethnic group to being literary vehicles designed to encourage ethnic self-confidence and political and social activity.

Before the 1850s, isolated beginnings of German-American prose focusing on German immigration can be found. Hermann Bokum, a professor, pastor and author of numerous immigrant books, gives a

short autobiographical account in his *Aufruf an die Deutschen in den Vereinigten Staaten*:

Ich kam in dieses Land vor 35 Jahren im Alter von 21 Jahren. Während der ersten 10 Jahre war ich an der Universität von Pennsylvanien, in Yale, und in Harvard als deutscher Lehrer angestellt. Während dieser Zeit erfreute ich mich der Bekanntschaft von Männern, die in politischer und socialer Hinsicht, sowie in der Sphäre der Literatur und Wissenschaft bedeutende Stellen einnahmen. Alsdann studierte ich Theologie in einem Seminar in der Stadt New York, wurde ordiniert und wirkte als Prediger in Pennsylvanien. Nachdem ich späterhin 7 Jahre in Cincinnati, Ohio, gewohnt . . . zog ich vor 7 1/2 Jahren mit meiner Familie nach Ost-Tennessee.⁸

Bokum published two prose works, *The Stranger's Gift: A Christmas and New Year's Present*,⁹ and *Never Despair: A Tale of the Emigrants: Founded on Fact*.¹⁰ Both books are written in English with the purpose of creating a deeper understanding among the native-born Americans for the problems, customs and contributions of German immigrants to the United States, as stated in *Never Despair*:

In the following pages the author has endeavored to present in imaginative dress some of the many interesting facts with which he has become acquainted during his intercourse with the German population in this country. They will suggest, he hopes, some useful principles of action to the Americans who may be brought in contact with them and to that portion of the German population who can be reached through the medium of books (7).

Bokum presents the fate of an upper-class Prussian who had immigrated with his family in order to achieve "an independence which he could not hope to attain in Europe." The family's experiences are shown to be paradigmatic, "for most of the German immigrants are met with similar difficulties when they first come to this country" (11). In fact, the author depicts situations which become *topoi* in German-American prose.

The protagonists are shown to lose their property becoming "the dupes of those whose only occupation consists in imposing on the immigrants while they are on their journey" (12). This initiation to the New World is continued with a gradual replacement of German social values and patterns of interaction. While the heroes' initial endeavors to attain employment as music teachers in the Northeast prove fruitless, their new start in the West with means and skills acquired in the United States brings about their economic and social success. This advocacy of demographic mobility and complete acculturation is expressed in the character of an assimilated German-American:

. . . there are principally two errors which occasion the ruin of many immigrants. They linger in the large cities and become a burden to themselves and others instead of going to the far west where they are

wanted and appear unwilling to acquire the English language and to assimilate themselves to some extent with the Americans (30).

Throughout the novel, the author argues that "the only safe course for the immigrants is to mingle as much as possible with the American population" (35). The protagonists serve as models of successful assimilation demonstrating the difficulties and rewards of this process. From the perspective of their final social and economic success which grants them "access to several of the aristocratic circles" their initial struggles and humble beginnings gain new meaning: "It now seems to me we were bowed down only that we might learn to make proper use of the means of success which were soon afterwards placed within our reach" (94).

In contrast to later authors who fight for immigrants' political rights, Bokum takes an apolitical stance arguing that the political ignorance and the divided sympathies of immigrants are destructive for American democracy (46). His major purpose is to eliminate cultural and social sources of misunderstanding between native-born Americans and immigrants and to transform ethnic interaction into enlightening experiences:

By coming to this country we have within our reach all the noble traits of heart and mind which distinguish the Americans and bring them in return all that is of good report in our own people. It is the noblest commerce we can think of, and blest be the day when every vessel with emigrants which comes to *our* shores will be engaged in it (98; emphasis added).

Bokum is apparently the first German-American writer who focused on the subject of immigration and assimilation. His work has hitherto been neglected and it is not clear to what extent he may have served as a model for later German immigrant authors. This role has to be attributed largely to Charles Sealsfield (1797-1864), James Fenimore Cooper (1789-1851) and Friedrich Gerstäcker (1816-72).

In addition, Eugène Sue's *Les Mystères de Paris* (1842) served as a model for a number of German-American writers. The first German-American imitation of this mystery novel which was employed as a vehicle for the topic of immigration was published anonymously under the title *Die Geheimnisse von Philadelphia: Eine Tendenznovelle und zugleich ein Beitrag zur Sitten- und Cultur-Geschichte des Amerikanischen Volkes*.¹¹ The omniscient narrator directly addresses German-American readers:

Die meisten unserer Leser schieden ja vor kürzerer oder längerer Zeit vom alten deutschen Vaterlande und vertrauten sich den schäumenden Wogen des Meeres an . . . Ja, auch diese Nächte der Angst und Noth und Gefahr sind überstanden, glücklich ist der ersehnte Boden der Freiheit betreten, glücklich ist eine neue Heimath gefunden (18-19).

The narrator identifies with America when outlining the topic of the novel which focuses on the depiction of Philadelphia's social underworld, introducing the vicious protagonist "Dutch Jimmy" to be a German:

Ja, leider müssen wir es im Voraus bekennen, daß einige der Hauptcharaktere, die wir im Laufe unserer Erzählung in diesen Höhlen des Lasters eine Rolle werden spielen sehen, Deutsche sind, und daß gerade dadurch der deutsche Name eine Zeitlang Gefahr lief, auf eine entehrende Weise in den Mund des verworfensten Theils *unserer* Bevölkerung zu kommen (emphasis added).

While the immigration process does not yet play a dominating role, this work deserves attention as the first German-American mystery novel and one of few works presenting a German as a vicious protagonist. Over a fifty-year period, the standard German-American hero covers a spectrum from the representative of Germanic virtues fighting against the perils of the new environment to an assimilated hero combining the virtues of his native and adopted country. The negative counterpart, however, is mostly found in Yankees, Irishmen, other non-German groups or Jesuits.

Dutch Jimmy, an immigrant from Württemberg had spent ten years in Philadelphia's underworld. Despite his good German education he cooperates with a greedy Irish companion,¹² rapes an innocent beauty and shows himself to be a specialist in forgery, bribery and underworld leadership. Apart from entertainment, the novel provides explanations of various facets of American life and introduces newly arrived immigrants to aspects such as the temperance movement or the different status of women.

Heinrich Börnstein's¹³ *Geheimnisse von St. Louis*,¹⁴ a mystery novel that appeared one year later, also reveals the purpose of informing the readers about their new country. In addition, Börnstein provides models of successful social and cultural patterns of behavior for immigrants. Against the background of a historical St. Louis setting, he develops the fate of an immigrant family. As the postscript shows, the audience addressed is again German-American,¹⁵ and both narrator and immigrant protagonists are shown to identify with America. This becomes evident in a comment on the St. Louis fire of 1849:

Die herrliche, thatkräftige Elasticität unseres amerikanischen Charakters, das rasche, unverdrossene *Go ahead* Treiben unseres Landes zeigten sich . . . in ihrem schönsten Lichte. Nach einer solchen verheerenden Katastrophe . . . wären in Deutschland, wo das Volk in beständiger Unmündigkeit gehalten wird, . . . die Leute vielleicht noch sechs Monate nach dem Feuer händeringend um die Brandstätte gestanden . . . (I,2:1).

Throughout the novel, Börnstein creates an atmosphere of patriotism for America. Like many of his followers, he presents his protagonists as native Americans of German descent rather than as immigrants, thus implying a long history of German presence in the Midwest. His heroes, the Böttcher family, had been driven back to Europe due to Jesuit intrigue. Returning to St. Louis, they plan to dig out a treasure the Jesuits had buried when killing one of their relatives.

Hence, materialistic hopes are shown to be a prime reason for coming to America. This "search for the golden Grail" introducing America as the "Land of Promise" becomes a recurrent motif of hope and disillusionment also in later German-American novels dealing with immigration. Börnstein invalidates this objective showing that the Böttchers achieve more than just prosperity by leaving the mysterious treasure to the Jesuits and working hard on their farm instead:

... die ganze Familie freute sich jenes stillen und arbeitsamen, aber Gesundheit und Zufriedenheit gebenden Lebens, das den Landmann in Amerika in seiner unabhängigen sorgenfreien Lage so glücklich macht (I,2:158).

Using the mystery novel as a popular framework, the author focuses on the immigrants' fate and their experiences of various aspects of American life. The Böttcher family is portrayed as a paradigm of German integrity and innocence in a world of political corruption and materialism. This contrast is already documented in telling names: the children Maria and Josef almost fall prey to Smartborn,¹⁶ the personification of American materialism cooperating with the Irish-American underworld.

Scenes of conflict and resolution established in Börnstein's novel became topoi for the depiction of immigrant fates in German-American prose fiction as long as this topic prevailed. As in Bokum's novels, German immigrants are subjected to the dangers and evil forces of the new country losing goods they had brought from the Old World and adapting to American social patterns of behavior. This painful process of initiation enables them to succeed in their new environment.

Four years later, Emil Klauprecht (1815-96)¹⁷ again used the frame of the popular mystery novel in *Cincinnati oder Geheimnisse des Westens*¹⁸ for a depiction of immigrant life in America, albeit reluctantly, as he states in the preface:

Wieder ein Beitrag zur Geheimnis-Literatur! Wieder der abgedroschene, marktschreierische Titel, die 'secondhanded speculation' auf die hohle Neugierde So lautet wohl der strenge Ausspruch manches Zeitgenossen ... (iv).

While Klauprecht refers to literary predecessors such as Cooper, Sealsfield and Gerstäcker,¹⁹ his intention is to reveal America's city life that writers had hitherto ignored: "... wo der schachernde Yankee athemlos nach dem allmächtigen Dollar und der europäische Proletarier schweißtriefend um eine neue Heimat rang ..." (iv).

Klauprecht presents German immigrant life from several perspectives and time levels within the intricate framework of a mystery plot involving Yankee and Jesuit underworld organizations. Again, German immigrants are shown to be part of American society. Karl Steigerwald, an Americanized businessman with a Virginian wife, and his brother Wilhelm, an artist of the Düsseldorf School who treasures and preserves his German heritage, personify the antagonist positions of preserva-

tionists and assimilationists. They are joined by their father and sister arriving from Schleswig-Holstein still under the impact of the events of 1848.

Klauprecht develops the history of German presence in America further than Börnstein. His protagonist Washington Filson is a perfect hybrid of German and American culture. While he had studied in Germany and fought with distinction in Schleswig-Holstein, he is presented to be the only grandson of the famous American writer John Filson (1741-88) whose descriptions of Daniel Boone had shaped American ideals of pioneer life.

Klauprecht filled his novel with such insinuations of connections between American and German culture and history establishing numerous relationships between prominent Anglo-American and German-American figures who were of importance in the respective cultural groups' history and process of ethnic self-definition. Presenting John Filson as a Herrnhuter (2:95) and showing cooperation between Aaron Burr and Justus Erich Bollman, the author implies the common goals and values of the two ethnic groups despite the ethnic frictions that predominate the contemporary scene. Klauprecht also uses John Filson's popularity to lend an air of authenticity and authority to the German-American view of Ohio's history which he develops in the novel. John Filson is shown to assert that Germans were the first settlers in Ohio²⁰ and contrasts Puritan cruelties toward Indians with the peaceful actions of Herrnhuters.

Throughout the novel, an omniscient narrator refers to the extra-textual contemporary situation, and a comic sub-plot depicting the quarrel between two German-American journalists gives a comic insight into current political schemes. In his concluding remarks the author harmonizes extra-textual and fictional reality appealing to his German-American readers to vote for the Whigs and to fight the evil influence of Jesuits and Catholics such as the Irish who cooperate with the Democratic Party.

Using the form of the mystery novel to reach a wide audience and to influence its political behavior, Klauprecht accomplishes two tasks. While discussing historical, cultural and political aspects of German-American life, he also depicts the contemporary situation of immigrants and challenges his readers to actively participate in the shaping of American society and politics.

This use of the novel as a vehicle for the expression of political goals becomes more prominent in the works of the forty-eighters Adolph Douai and Georg Willrich.²¹ The latter, while still employing elements of the mystery novel, developed a social utopia describing the impact of forty-eighters on American society in his novel *Erinnerungen aus Texas: Wahrheit und Dichtung*.²² Contrasting the political repression prevalent in Germany in 1848 with the freedom and opportunities of America, he presented his protagonists as model immigrants undermining the institution of slavery through a Negro colony in Texas.

Like his predecessors, Willrich portrays his immigrants as returnees. Hermann von Nordberg had come to the United States in 1841 returning

to Germany in order to marry Bertha von Osten. Unjustly charged with revolutionary activities, he came back to America with Bertha after his release from prison, settling in Texas. Educating slaves and enabling them to become independent, the protagonists are models of German political and social impact in America. They strive for the establishment of a reasonable state and contribute to the furthering of the principles guaranteed in America's constitution, namely, the freedom and equality of all her citizens irrespective of their national or ethnic background. Within the framework of his social utopia, Willrich presents a model of German political and social impact in the New World outlining characters who actively shape and improve American society.

Another author who projected reformist ideals onto America showing new models for immigrants' political and social behavior is Adolph Douai (1819-88).²³ In *Fata Morgana: Deutsch-Amerikanische Preisnovelle*,²⁴ he envisions an exemplary enlightened colony in a remote area of the New World. Again, elements of the mystery novel are employed.²⁵

The plot with numerous Jesuit intrigues is subordinated to discussions of a reasonable state that Germans were to build in Mexico or America, and on political, social and cultural aspects of the United States. While these discussions can be traced back to the period of enlightenment in Germany, their immediate historical background is the plan to found a German state in the American West:²⁶

Man sprach von der Gründung eines vernünftigen Staates im Westen. Die Sache scheint noch nicht aufgegeben zu sein, obschon sie nicht auf den erwarteten Erfolg stieß. Das alles kommt um wenigstens 100 Jahre zu früh. . . . Aber wir erleben's nicht mehr—wir irren herum in der Menschenwüste, wie ewige Juden, und folgen einer Fata Morgana, einer umgestülpten Wirklichkeit, einem Luftschlosse (12).

More than his predecessors, Douai employs the realm of fiction as a means of political instruction for his ethnic group. In numerous comments on the contemporary extra-textual political situation he shows the impact of American politics on German immigrant life. He challenges his readers to participate in the political process and to actively shape American politics and society rather than to tolerate slavery and to suffer from nativism. Douai recommends supporting the Republican Party both for emphasizing the strategic value of supporting the Republicans and for enhancing the political influence of his ethnic group:

Seitdem die Mehrheit der Deutschen, besonders im Westen sich für die Republikanische Partei erklärt hat, seitdem haben diese Deutschen, die vordem nur als 'stimmendes Vieh' betrachtet wurden, bei allen Parteien sich viel mehr Achtung erworben (235).

The colonists fight for abolition, a free Missouri, for Governor Rollins, and for the Republican Party: "Der Sieg der Republikanischen Partei in der nächsten Präsidentenwahl ist gesichert, wenn wir alle oder doch die allermeisten Deutschen zu dieser Partei bekehren können" (245).

Hence, factual elements and utopian structures anticipating the success of German-American political endeavors are intermingled. German political influence is shown to lead to cultural and social influence in the United States. Douai exalts this influence showing that ethnic conflicts are overcome with Americans adjusting to German customs: ". . . jetzt lernen sie ganz verzweifelt geschwind die deutsche Sprache um an unsern Sonntagsunterhaltungen teilzunehmen" (263).

Germans are shown to change the country, its people and its customs. Douai thus develops a fictional model in which German-Americans successfully cope with the hostilities, political and social problems his readers encountered in contemporary reality. Douai did not merely comment on the contemporary situation of Germans in the United States. He presented models of ethno-political action on the basis of problems encountered in contemporary life and tried to encourage ethno-political activity in his readers both through factual documentation and fictional means.

With the Civil War a major shift in subject matter can be observed. Rather than focusing on inter-ethnic conflicts, writers paid attention to homogeneous German-American settlements and "Little Germanies" on the one hand, and to the complex process of acculturation on the other hand.

Douai's work is paradigmatic for this change at the time of the Civil War. He had claimed German moral and intellectual superiority in *Fata Morgana* presenting colonists who were highly critical of American institutions. In contrast, his story "Des Herzens Zug ist des Schicksals Stimme,"²⁷ published in 1864, shows Germans to be impressed with American researchers. They identify with America and advocate immigration:

Deutschland erzeugt täglich neue Goethe und Schiller, nur daß sie in den engen Blumentöpfen kleinbürgerlicher Verhältnisse drüben verkümmern; auf unsern freien Boden verpflanzt, kommen sie zu besserer Entwicklung (445; emphasis added).

In German *Salons*, intellectuals and persons of public and social standing from both nations freely exchange views. All national gaps²⁸ are successfully overcome. The German forty-eighter protagonist demonstrates his American patriotism being prepared to sacrifice his life for the Union in the Civil War. Eventually, an intermarriage, which was commonly used as a symbol of successful assimilation in German-American literature, documents the completion of this process.

One of the first German-American novels focusing on a German-American community is Willibald Winckler's *Die deutschen Kleinstädter in Amerika*.²⁹ In this satirical account of a homogeneous German town in the Midwest during the Civil War, Winckler reveals intra-ethnic disharmony, and the total lack of German culture in the majority of the German-American population that had been praised by many German-American authors. His characters represent a wide spectrum of German-Americans including the Latin farmer, the redemptioner, the

political journalist, the German-American poet and the nouveau riche with their respective Americanized value systems. From the perspective of an already settled community, emigration is portrayed as advantageous:

Weit über das Terrain verbreitet wohnen reiche Farmer, von denen jeder mehr schuldenfreies Grundeigenthum sein nennt, als mancher wohlhabende Rittergutsbesitzer Deutschlands. Zu diesen reichen Bauern gehörte auch Steinbrenner . . . , den man in der Gegend allgemein den 'lateinischen Bauern' nannte, weil er in Deutschland studiert hatte (22).

Even the German redemptioner Höfke, whose wife had not survived their initial years in America finally attains his own farm with the help of the protagonist Vischer, editor and journalist for a Republican newspaper. As in the majority of German-American novels, the author's sympathies are with the abolitionist cause while the Democrats are renounced as advocates of slavery. Like Klauprecht and Douai, Winckler comments on extra-textual events. Of special interest is his reference to the forty-eighter Sigel in the Civil War and to the beginning tendency to exclude Jews from some clubs:³⁰ ". . . hat der Turnverein in Baltimore nicht schriftliche Klagen seiner Mitglieder entgegengenommen, worin man gegen das dominierende Auftreten der 'jüdischen Race' im Verein protestirte?" (13).

In addition, Winckler frequently alludes to literary figures that influence the German-American mind. The German influence is ironically rendered in a portrait of Anastasius Grün as a poor German-American poet and critic for the *Fackel* which is, in turn an allusion to Samuel Ludvigh. Gerstäcker's *Die Regulatoren von Arkansas* receives critical comment, and throughout the novel, references to James Fenimore Cooper and Harriet Beecher Stowe are used to show the strong impact of American literature on the German immigrant's mind.

A decade later, German-American community life is described in urban novels focusing on "Kleindeutschland" using the techniques of realism prevalent at the time. Caspar Stürenburg's collection of articles entitled *Kleindeutschland: Bilder aus dem New Yorker Alltagsleben*³¹ may serve as an example. Originally published in the *New Yorker Staatszeitung*, the stories reflect the grim reality of lower-class German immigrant life in the fashion of American realism:

Besonders sind es aber die charakteristischen Eigenthümlichkeiten, Verhältnisse und Gestalten des deutschamerikanischen Lebens, die Revue passieren sollen. Da führt der Weg nicht durch die Salons der Reichen, sondern durch das bunte, laute, gemüthvolle 'Kleindeutschland' der gewaltigen Metropole . . . (2).

Different aspects of German-American everyday life of the lower classes, such as the tenement house with its wide spectrum of impoverished characters are described and the peculiar mixture of English and German characteristic of this environment: "Unten, der Bierwirth, der eine lease hat und der dieses Umstands viel lieber Erwähnung thut,

als er sich an die mortgage seines Brauers auf die saloon-fixtures erinnern läßt . . ." (6).

An important aspect of ethnic life in the metropolis are ethnic conflicts and sufferings from xenophobic groups: "'Dutchie!—old fool' brüllt die Menge draußen auf der Straße, und von einem Steinwurfe getroffen, sinkt der Ärmste blutend zu Boden" (23). Despite these hardships, the author promotes immigration to America describing poverty and mishap as an initial difficulty which can be successfully overcome. In the story "Hans im Glück" he shows an exemplary process of assimilation with a successful husband who welcomes his German wife and child in Castle Garden:

"Was mir die alte Heimath neidisch versagt, hier hab ich's gefunden: Verdienst, Zufriedenheit, Familienglück und die beste Aussicht, daß es noch besser werde in der Zukunft. Gesegnet sei Dein Kommen in unser schönes, großes freies Land Amerika!"

Unten auf der Straße spielen die deutschen Musikanten, die jeden Abend durch unsere Straße ziehen, die begeisterte Weise des "Star Spangled Banner" . . . (188).

Apart from America's economic opportunities, Stürenburg emphasizes its political and social freedom portraying America as a country where the American dream can be a reality even for immigrants starting their new life in a poor ethnic environment.

Other authors like Nathan Mayer, Hugo Fürst and Kathinka Sutro-Schücking focus on upper-class German-American life. Nathan Mayer, a Jewish German-American author (1838-1912)³² portrays the life and manners of Jewish German-American families in his work *Differences: A Novel*.³³ The hero, the forty-eighter Louis Welland meets families of high education and social rank when accepting a position as a surveyor in Tennessee. Apart from families whose endeavor to enter the first social circles had taken them west, where "society had no crystallization" (32), he meets the rich and famous of New York.

There are the Goldmans who "were of Hebrew descent and firmly attached to a rational interpretation of their religion" (34), and rich German-Americans like the Reichenaus, Wertheims and Boeckheimers who "live on Fifth Avenue and have made mints of dollars" (110) and meet in Saratoga's fashionable world. Nathan Mayer's characters reveal more patriotism for German culture and class-consciousness than those of gentile authors. They strictly guard social distinctions—e.g., "I would not associate with the ignorant or ill-bred. I was too much of a German for that" (291)—and contrast German idealism and American materialism to the latter's disadvantage. Furthermore, they do not experience the problem of a dual ethnic heritage. While admiring and cultivating German culture, philosophy and music, they clearly identify with their new American environment.

Another example of a Jewish German-American author is Hugo Fürst. In his *Iphigenia: A Modern Woman of Progress*³⁴ he also focuses on German-Jewish upper-class life and thought in America and on the

intellectual discussions among this group. As in Mayer's novel, the characters admire German culture—"we are near the dawn of a period in which the Germanic element will lead in civilization" (52)—yet they identify with America: "Educated in Germany, his preferences were of that country and his prejudices were thinner and fewer than . . . of these whose opinions have crystallized in *our* eastern colleges" (54; emphasis added).

Kathinka Sutro-Schücking³⁵ (1831-93) also focuses on German immigrants who had successfully completed their process of adjustment and realized the "American dream" of economic success. Her numerous novels reveal a striking structural similarity: German protagonists with an exceptional sense of honor, ethnic pride and morality are subjected to the hardships of assimilation which they successfully master. In *Dr. Zernowitz*,³⁶ she portrays a Polish medical doctor who had been subjected to menial work in order to survive until an American physician accepted him as partner and left him the practice after his death.

In *Eine liebelese Ehe*,³⁷ she adopts the same structure. Despite the title, the novel focuses on the fate of two poor aristocratic immigrants who try to survive as artists in New York's Bowery and a nouveau riche German-American family. The immigrant artists' miserable circumstances change when Mathilde Mertens, daughter of a German-American parvenu and millionaire falls in love with one of them, and makes him a fashionable artist of Fifth Avenue circles.

In Mathilde's parents, the author shows two diametrically opposed effects of Americanization. Her father, a simple, warm-hearted person proud of his ethnic background feels uncomfortable in the pretentious social life his parvenu wife tries to establish. Telling the story of his American dream-career from his humble beginnings, he is a contrast to his wife who displays all the weaknesses of German-American parvenus attempting to hide her humble German background and emulating the life of Fifth Avenue circles, thus losing her personality:

"Also schämt er sich nicht, wie so viele Renegaten, seines Vaterlandes?"
 "Gott bewahre! Dafür ist er ein viel zu kluger und edeler Mensch—er prahlt sogar bei jeder Gelegenheit damit, was . . . meine Mutter jedesmal außer sich bringt, denn—leider! möchte sie die Welt gerne glauben machen, daß sie Amerikanerin sei—trotz ihres scheußlichen Englisch und ihrer durchaus deutschen Erscheinung!" (3)

As in other German-American novels, adjustment to America appears as a painful process of initiation. Significantly, moral growth and an increase in social status in America are described as concomitant developments. Yet a prerequisite is the departure from German attitudes and systems of value. This conflict can be observed especially in Max von Werner for whom financial incentives and social artistic ambitions seem to undermine his artistic qualities (18). Despite the hardships it describes, the novel supports immigration emphasizing the inner growth achieved through this process.³⁸

Novels focusing on the process of assimilation appear up to the 1890s, parallel to socialist and anti-socialist novels. Johann G. Woerner's *The Rebel's Daughter: A Story of Love, Politics and War*³⁹ is an example. Describing the life and political success of Victor Waldhorst in an antebellum Southern community, the author shows the injustice of nativism contrasting it with the protagonist's intelligence, moral and political integrity. Ethnic conflicts are shown to be part of the hardships of assimilation including personal insults which the protagonist experiences such as "it is a disgrace to our class to have at its head a miserable Dutch abolitionist and scare-crow" (94) and overall ethnic prejudice. In addition, clashing value systems as epitomized in beer gardens versus Sabbatarianism are sources of ethnic and political antagonism between Anglo-American and German-Americans: "Ah these beer gardens! That desecration of the Holy Sabbath by music from brass and stringed instruments! What a flagrant violation of the land!" (253).

The German protagonist succeeds due to his moral standards and his loyalty to the Union. He is the epitome of German-American success being elected governor, fighting in the Union army and finally winning the hand of the daughter of one of the first families of Virginia. Again, intermarriage is a symbol for successful assimilation on the basis of moral integrity.

In the 1880s and early 1890s the discussion of social issues started to dominate German-American literature. While reacting to subject matters and forms developed in Anglo-American literature, immigrant authors still presented the issue of German immigration. Two types of social novels can be identified. One continued the tradition of their predecessors of the 1850s focusing on German-American ethnic issues. The other, written in English, addressed the general American population and contributed to contemporary discussions on social issues in American life and literature, especially to Edward Bellamy's controversial novel *Looking Backward*.

Max Arlberg's *Josef Freifeld: Ein Sozialroman*⁴⁰ belongs to the first group. While the author discusses German-American issues, he focuses on the promotion of socialism and anarchism in the United States sharply criticizing American political and social structures.

In contrast, Rudolf Leonhart decidedly defends America's political institutions against the background of an immigrant colony in Mexico in his novel *The Treasures of Montezuma*.⁴¹ This author emphasizes in his preface:

. . . the present product of my pen differs widely from those I have hitherto given to the public. While I have endeavoured to entertain, I have no less endeavoured to instruct and of such magnitude . . . that I deem an explanation of my reasons for embodying it in a story not only justifiable but necessary. . . . I presume it is generally conceded that at no time has there existed such . . . dissatisfaction with the condition of social affairs as now (3).

The novel can be regarded as a continuation of Douai's *Fata Morgana* where the settlement of a Mexican colony had been planned but not realized. In *Montezuma*, Leonhart presents the forty-eighter Herbert Grau who had escaped his death sentence by fleeing to Mexico. Indians showed him the treasures of Cortez with which he established the independent commonwealth colony Friedrichsruhe gaining the consent of the Mexican government. Most important, however, is the novel's function of presenting a model for a multi-cultural America, which is presented at the end: "You are composed of many nationalities. Do not cling then, to one particular race or land, but placing yourselves on the broad platform of cosmopolitanism, work at and for the emancipation of all" (278).

Apart from these social works novels reacting to developments in contemporary American literature appeared, such as Richard Michaelis' novel *Looking Further Forward: An Answer to Looking Backward by Edward Bellamy*.⁴² The book strongly supports the present American principle of competition and renounces Bellamy's dream of a communistic society comparing him to German-American radicals.

Of course, Mr. Bellamy holds more moderate views than those Spies and Parsons proclaimed, but he has this much in common with the Anarchists and Communists of Chicago . . . he really believes his socialistic aircastles [*sic*] must spring into existence very soon . . . (iv).

Here it becomes evident that ideology rather than ethnicity determines friend or foe at the turn of the century. Again, the author uses the most popular fictional framework of the time, the social novel, to present the issue of immigration, which is already of marginal importance in the novel. Like his predecessors, the author refers to the contemporary extra-textual situation, and even to his own political role as editor of the *Freie Presse* when outlining the social success of German immigrants in America:

I can show you in the college library a copy of the German paper the "Freie Presse" published in the city of Chicago, anno 1888, where the editor, in contradicting similar statements of the communists of those days, points to the fact that in 1888 there were 12,000 German house owners, manufacturers and well-to-do or rich businessmen in Chicago, who all had come to the city poor. When these Germans came to Chicago only a very few of them spoke English, still they were able to accumulate fortunes (35).

Economic reasons still rank first in Michaelis' account of reasons for immigration. America compares favorably with Europe in economic terms when one character explains that the average income of Americans was "about twice the average amount earned by the people of Germany or France" (81). Immigration is discussed with numerous attacks on German-American radicals and socialists who are blamed for inter-ethnic problems in a dialogue between two characters. One of them maintains that the "objection against further immigration was

largely due to the action of the German and Irish dynamiters'' getting the reply:

I can imagine . . . that some of the customs and notions of the numerous immigrants of your time were objectionable to the native Americans and that the crimes of the anarchists, their crazy revolt against the laws of a country that had offered them hospitality, must naturally have created a deep emotion among the Anglo-Americans. But I think they had, nevertheless, many reasons for encouraging immigration . . . (112).

German immigrants are described to be an asset to the newly developing American industry:

The very fact that hundreds of thousands of ablebodied people, whose rearing and education had cost the European countries millions of dollars, landed on American shores was a great gain to the United States. The very presence of these men and women increased the value of the lands or city lots where they settled, thus enriching the property owners (113).

Hence, Michaelis, demonstrating his support for the American system shows the positive impact of immigration at a time when it was interrelated with radicalist efforts to undermine or change the American system. Thus, he tries to amend the political understanding between the different ethnic and cultural groups by showing the American reader the positive aspects of immigration.

We still find individual German-American authors who continued to write on the subjects of immigration and German-American life in the last decade of the nineteenth century and after. Yet these belong to the group of preservationists. Writing in German and addressing a German-speaking readership, their major goal was the maintenance of the German language and the preservation of German cultural values in America.

However, the topic of immigration had lost importance in the mainstream of German-American literature. Another German-American reply to Edward Bellamy, which appeared one year later, Ludwig A. Geissler's *Looking Beyond: A Sequel to "Looking Backward" by Edward Bellamy and an Answer to "Looking Further Forward" by Richard Michaelis*⁴³ did not even touch upon the issue of immigration. Thus, German-American authors reveal an increasing adjustment to their American literary and historical context. While still representing ethnic issues and fictional structure in the 1890s, they shifted their attention to American political and social subjects, increasingly dropping immigration and German-American life into the background.

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Notes

¹ Zimmermann's definition may serve as an example: "We mean by German-American a German who has chosen the United States of America as his second home, that is, one who does not merely live temporarily within its territory; and by German-American literature, accordingly, the total of the literary products in the German language by Germans permanently settled in the United States" (*Deutsch in Amerika: Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutsch-amerikanischen Literatur* [Chicago, 1892], xvi).

² This term was used by Franz Löher, *Geschichte und Zustände der Deutschen in Amerika* (Cincinnati and Leipzig, 1847), 235.

³ Hitherto, only one monograph has focused on the analysis of prose: George Condoyannis, "The German American Prose Narrative" (Ph.D. diss., University of Columbia, 1954).

⁴ *German-American Literature* (Metuchen: Scarecrow Press, 1977), iii.

⁵ *A Bio-Bibliography of German-American Writers, 1670-1970* (White Plains, NY: Kraus Intl. Publ., 1985).

⁶ Wilhelm Schneider, *Die auslandsdeutsche Dichtung unserer Zeit* (Berlin, Weidmann'sche Buchhandlung, 1936), 253.

⁷ This expression was used by German-American authors in the nineteenth century.

⁸ (Philadelphia: Walther & Goette, 1862), 1.

⁹ (Boston: Light and Horton, 1836). It focuses on the fate of immigrants in a set of short stories.

¹⁰ (New York: Scotfield & Voorhieb, Boston: Whipple & Damrell, 1837). This book is dedicated to the members of the Emigrants' Friend Society in Cincinnati.

¹¹ (Philadelphia: Druckerei des Volksvertreters, 1850). Only the first volume could be found. It is not certain whether subsequent installments ever appeared (see Condoyannis, 42).

¹² This is one of the very few German-Irish cooperations in German-American literature apart from Reinhold Solger, *Anton in Amerika: Novelle aus dem deutsch-amerikanischen Leben* (New York: Steiger, 1889), and Hugo Bertsch, *Bob der Sonderling* (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1905).

¹³ The founder and editor of *Vorwärts* at Paris had been associated with noted Communists. After initial settlement in Highland, Illinois, he arrived in St. Louis in 1849, where he edited the *Anzeiger des Westens*. As the novel shows, his radical views became more moderate in the New World, where he actively supported the German theatre and translated and adapted many plays. Returning to Europe, he wrote for American papers, while working at the Burgtheater in Vienna, where he died in 1892.

¹⁴ Two vols. (Cassel: Hotop, 1851; 2d ed. Altona: Verlags-Bureau, 1868). Hitherto, only volume one was believed to exist.

¹⁵ This postscript also states the novel's popularity with its German-American readers: "... in mehr als 4000 Exemplaren durch den 'Anzeiger des Westens' verbreitet, wurden die ersten Extra-Ausgaben von 1500 Exemplaren, ... noch während des Erscheinens vergriffen."

¹⁶ This name ridicules an American term of pride and is an ironic retaliation for the expression "dumb" or "damned Dutch" applied to German immigrants.

¹⁷ The editor and publisher came to America at the age of seventeen with a relative. After working as a farmer, he opened a lithography business in Cincinnati (1837) where he published the first illustrated newspaper in the Midwest from 1846-47. After editing *Der deutsche Republikaner* (1849-51 and 1852-56) and *Westliche Blätter* (1851-52) and co-editing *Tägliches Cincinnati Volksblatt* (1856-64), he was named American consul in Stuttgart by Lincoln. When President Grant severed this appointment, Klauprecht stayed in Stuttgart and later moved to Vienna.

¹⁸ (Cincinnati: F. Schmidt & Co., 1854).

¹⁹ "Die wenigen deutschen Novellisten, welche den Westen Amerika's zum Schauplatz ihrer Dichtungen machten, folgten bekanntlich den Spuren Cooper's, Sealfeld's und anderer Pioniers einer neuen Literatur nach der frischen Atmosphäre des Urwalds" (iii).

²⁰ "Schönbrunn, die deutsche Stadt, wurde dort am 3. May 1772 ausgelegt. Kein Fort, kein einzelnes Blockhaus unterbrach damals noch die westliche Wildnis ..." (2:78).

Rudolf Glanz, *Jews in Relation to the Cultural Milieu of the Germans in America up to the 1880s* (New York: Ktav Publishers, 1947) emphasizes the importance of pioneer life for German immigrants: "It must be said in defense of the German that his exclusion from the pioneer organizations clashed with the whole conception of America. . . . Over here, the German often heard himself called a non-pioneer which particularly incensed him" (23).

²¹ Georg Willrich (1805?-61) had been traveling in America before returning to Germany where he was imprisoned for participating in revolutionary activities. After his release from prison, he emigrated to Texas where he worked as a rancher. Later, he taught at Texas Military Institute, Ruterville, as professor of modern languages and at Bayard College, Independence, Texas, until 1861. See also Selma Metzenthin-Raunick, *Deutsche Schriften in Texas* (San Antonio: Freie Presse für Texas, 1935), 35.

²² (Leipzig: Chr. E. Kollmann, 1854). The novel is subtitled "Aufgezeichnet während der Untersuchungshaft zu Hannover" and dedicated to the President of the United States and to the German-American consul of the United States, Samuel Bromberg.

²³ The descendant of a French refugee family, Douai was born in Altenburg, where he founded a *Realschule*. After studying in Leipzig (1838-41), he spent six years as tutor in Russia. Arrested during the Revolution of 1848, he was acquitted and emigrated to Neu Braunfels, Texas, in 1852. Apart from teaching, he edited the abolitionist *San Antonio Zeitung* (1853-56) until he was forced to flee because of his radical views. The founder of a German-American school in Boston, he is also reputed to be the founder of the first kindergarten in America. Fighting for the teaching of German in America, he wrote numerous articles on political, social and cultural topics. A bibliography of his works can be found in Eitel W. Dobert, *Deutsche Demokraten: Die Achtundvierziger und ihre Schriften* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958).

²⁴ (St. Louis: *Anzeiger des Westens*, 1858).

²⁵ Friedrich Münch, a member of the jury, regards it as a mystery novel: "Das Werk ist eine jener Tendenz-Novellen, wie wir größere von Eugen Sue haben und kleinere auch von hiesigen Deutschen geliefert wurden, d.h. die Erzählung . . . bildet den Faden, an welchem Betrachtungen über die ernstesten Fragen des Lebens und unserer Zeit angereicht werden . . ." (iii).

²⁶ Franz Löher, *Geschichte und Zustände der Deutschen in Amerika*, describes the search for a German state: "Gleichwohl wollten sie einen neuen Staat gründen. Die einen wollten Texas, die andern Oregon; wo das Land noch keine Leute habe, da könne der deutsche Staat unabhängig und durch die nachkommenden Landleute stark genug werden Man bildete Zweigvereine . . . und der Pittsburger 'Adler des Westens' fing an, Pläne über den zu gründenden Staat zu veröffentlichen" (252).

²⁷ *Deutsch-Amerikanische Monatshefte* (May 1864): 444-59.

²⁸ "Wäre sie eine Deutsche, so wäre sie längst mein. . . . Aber sie ist eine stolze Yankeein, und ich bin stolz den Amerikanern gegenüber. Du kennst meine Überzeugung: ehe wir Deutschen nicht stolz sein lernen, werden wir drüben keine Nation . . ." (453).

²⁹ (Leipzig/New York: Schmidt, 1871).

³⁰ Rudolf Glanz, *Jews in Relation* . . . , mentions that Jewish participation was particularly conspicuous in Glee Clubs and that antisemitic practice started in the Arion Glee Club of New York, which inserted an Aryan clause in its by-laws.

³¹ Third ed. (New York: Steiger, 1889).

³² The author, a physicist, was born in Bavaria and came to Cincinnati with his parents in 1849. After graduating from Ohio Medical College, he studied in Paris, returning to the United States in 1861. During the Civil War he worked as a surgeon for the 14th Connecticut Volunteers. Thereafter he practiced in Hartford, CT. Other novels found by this author such as *The Fatal Secret* (Cincinnati, 1858) and *A Point of Honor* (Hartford, 1884) deal only marginally with German-American life.

³³ (Cincinnati: Bloch & Co., 1867).

³⁴ (Philadelphia: Peterson, 1886).

³⁵ Coming to America as a visitor in 1856 at 21, she married Emil Sutro in 1861 and settled permanently in America.

³⁶ (Chicago: Laird & Lee, 1894).

³⁷ Paul Sutro, comp. and ed. (n.p., n.d.).

³⁸ The acculturation of individual emigrants is also the main theme of Eduard Leyh, *Der Tannhäuser* (Leipzig: Julius Günther, 1874). While its first part is written in the form of

a novel of letters, the second part shifts to the direct account of a first person narrator's experience showing the metamorphosis of a German adjusting to the American environment and value system.

³⁹ (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1899).

⁴⁰ (Milwaukee: Friedenker Publ. Co., 1887).

⁴¹ (Canton, 1888).

⁴² (Chicago and New York: Rand McNally, 1890).

⁴³ (London/Covington, LA, 1891).

