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## Prairie Promises, Lone Star Limits

Depictions of Texas in German Travelogues from 1830-1860<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Introduction

Hin nach Texas! hin nach Texas!  
Wo der Stern im blauen Felde  
Eine neue Welt verkündet,  
Jedes Herz für Recht und Freiheit  
Und für Wahrheit froh entzündet –  
Dahin sehnt mein Herz sich ganz.<sup>2</sup>

In dem Tal der Guadalupe  
wohnt kein Fürst, kein Edelmann  
kennt man keine Fronarbeiten,  
Zehnten, Ungerechtigkeiten,  
kein Regal und keinen Bann.<sup>3</sup>

Written as a valediction for a friend bound to emigrate to Texas, August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben's poems *Der Stern von Texas* and *Ein Guadelupelied*, both published in the 1846 collection *Texanische Lieder*, poignantly express the popular sentiment of enthusiasm for migration to Texas that had spread widely across German-speaking lands in the mid-1840s. The two songs further capture the two major factors that inspired at least 20,000 Germans to exchange the familiarity of their homes for an unknown future in what was then a remote region in the North American West during the

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1 This essay emerged out of the author's research project "Narrative Constructions of Texas in U.S. American, Mexican, and German Travelogues from Mexican Independence to the U.S. American Civil War (1821-1861)", funded by a grant from the German Research Foundation (reference no. HA 6246/1-1).

2 August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben: *Der Stern von Texas*. In: August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben: *Gesammelte Werke*. Ed. Heinrich Gerstenberg. Vol. 5: *Zeit-Gedichte*, Berlin: Fontane 1891, p. 3.

3 August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben: *Ein Guadelupelied*. In: Fallersleben: *Gesammelte Werke* (see n. 2), p. 5.

*Vor-* and *Nachmärz* eras<sup>4</sup>: the dream of economic opportunities enabling emigrants to escape from poverty and the highly stratified German society, on the one hand, and the desire for civil liberties and political agency that could not be attained in the repressive political climate in their native lands, on the other.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the two songs exemplify the large body of written texts from the period that articulated the German vision of Texas as a specific version of the North American experience.<sup>6</sup>

While Hoffmann von Fallersleben (1798-1874) never set foot on Texan soil, many texts from this corpus of writing were travelogues based on their writers' actual journeys to and through Texas. In the following, I will analyze three such accounts by German visitors and settlers from the *Vor-* and *Nachmärz* periods. As I have elsewhere discussed the most common type of this genre, the emigrant guides that focused on either promoting German settlement in Texas or on warning against such endeavors<sup>7</sup>, the present essay will study texts that either foreground their narrators' personal travel or migration experiences or claim a scientific perspective: Eduard Ludacus's *Reise durch die mexikanischen Provinzen* (1837), Ferdinand Roemer's *Texas* (1849), and Christiane Haun's *Mit dem Paketsegler 1853 nach Texas* (1854). Addressing German sojourns during different phases of the era in distinct regions and social contexts in Texas as well as voicing diverse narrative agendas, the three case studies provide an insight into both the diversity and the

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4 Cf. Randolph B. Campbell: *Gone to Texas. A History of the Lone Star State*, New York: Oxford University Press 2003, p. 159, 207-208.

5 Cf. Eric Dorn Brose: *German History, 1789-1871. From the Holy Roman Empire to the Bismarckian Reich*, Providence, RI: Berghahn Books 1997, p. 80-124, 155-224, 245-293; Walter Struve: *Germans and Texans. Commerce, Migration, and Culture in the Days of the Lone Star Republic*, Austin: University of Texas Press 1996, p. 13-16, 27-30.

6 Cf. Mischa Honeck: *We Are the Revolutionists. German-Speaking Immigrants and American Abolitionists after 1848*, Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press 2011, p. 38-70; Ute Ritzenhofen: *Amerikas Italien. Deutsche Texasbilder des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Frankfurt a. M./Bern/Brüssel u. a.: Peter Lang 1997.

7 Cf. Astrid Haas: *From Göttingen to Galveston. Travel Writing and German Migration to Texas, 1830-1848*. In: Marcus Hartner/Marion Schulte (Eds.): *Migration in Context: Literature, Culture and Language*, Bielefeld: Aisthesis 2016, p. 135-151.

continuity of experiences, perceptions, and representations that characterize this body of writing.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. German *Amerikaliteratur* and Migration to Texas, 1830-1860

Although Texas during the *Vor-* and *Nachmärz* was a remote and largely unsettled region in the contested border area between Mexico and the United States, Germans regarded the region not only as an integral part of North America but also as a singular embodiment of the promises and perils of pioneer life in the rural New World. A Mexican province since the country's de-facto independence from Spain in 1821, Texas became an independent nation state in 1836 and was annexed to the United States in 1845. When Mexico opened Texas for foreign settlement in the 1820s, it quickly attracted growing numbers of Anglo Americans and Europeans looking for inexpensive land, professional opportunities, and civil liberties.<sup>9</sup> Unsurprisingly, the region was soon addressed within the era's German-authored *Amerikaliteratur*, a growing body of factual and fictional texts about the United States and adjacent North American territories for German readers. Ranging from emigrant diaries and letters, travel accounts, political tracts, and works of journalism to poems, songs, and novels, these works both responded and contributed to the massive German migration to North America during the nineteenth century. Given this context of migration, it is no surprise that travelogues and emigrant writings made up a large segment of the German *Amerikaliteratur* of the time. In line with the travel genre's ability to convey ideas and knowledge about alien territories and cultures for designated target audiences<sup>10</sup>, the German-authored journey accounts served the growing demand among their target readers for information on the New World and its prospects for German emigrants. Most works of this text corpus accordingly provide factual data about the region, practical advice for immigrants,

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8 For a more detailed discussion of the travel genre as well as case studies of these and other travelogues of Texas from the era cf. Astrid Haas: *Lone Star Vistas. Constructions of Texas in U.S. American, Mexican, and German Travel Narratives, 1821-1861*. Habilitationsschrift, Universität Bielefeld 2016.

9 Cf. Campbell: *Gone to Texas* (see n. 4), p. 100-108.

10 Mary Louise Pratt: *Imperial Eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2. Aufl., London: Routledge 2007.

and the promise that migration to the New World, although not suitable for everybody, was worth the effort for many.<sup>11</sup>

German texts about Texas largely fall in line with the political, economic, social, and cultural assessments made about the New World and its resident population groups in the period's *Amerikaliteratur* at large. While Mexican Texas caught comparatively little attention among German-speaking writers, the region's independence in 1836 inspired a growing enthusiasm about this new republic and a spirit of adventure to become part of it. Although Texas would lack the key signifiers of North American modernity, urbanization and industrialization, until late in the nineteenth century, German writing from the *Vor-* and *Nachmärz* eras prominently discussed the region either as a suitable site for German emigrant colonies or as a model for political change. It reached a peak during the 1840s, entangled with the rising wave of German migration to Texas triggered by both rising poverty rates and a growing political repression of liberal thought and thinkers in German lands. Especially the voluminous body of settlement-promoting literature, spread the myth of the Lone Star State—an epithet derived from the single five-pointed star on the state's flag—as a land of liberty and paradise of plenty for the healthy, skilled, and diligent.<sup>12</sup>

### 3. Eduard Ludecus's *Reise durch die mexikanischen Provinzen*

Driven by wanderlust and inspired by Gottfried Duden's influential German travelogue *Bericht über eine Reise nach den westlichen Staaten Nordamerikas* (1829), the Braunschweig-based clerk Eduard Ludecus (1807-1879) decided to move to the United States to become a farmer in the Missouri

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11 Cf. Peter J. Brenner: *Reisen in die "Neue Welt". Die Erfahrung Nordamerikas in deutschen Reise- und Auswandererberichten des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Tübingen: Niemeyer 1991; Stephan W. Görisch: *Information zwischen Werbung und Warnung. Die Rolle der Amerikaliteratur in der Auswanderung des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts*, Darmstadt: Hessische Historische Kommission 1991; Wolfgang Helbich: *Land der unbegrenzten Möglichkeiten? Das Amerika-Bild der deutschen Auswanderer im 19. Jahrhundert*. In: Jürgen Elvert (Ed.): *Deutschland und der Westen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Vol. I: Transatlantische Beziehungen*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner 1993, p. 295-321.

12 Cf. Ritzenhofen: *Amerikas Italien* (see n. 6), p. 28, 60, 109-151, 269-274; Struve: *Germans and Texans* (see n. 5), p. 43-45, 102-103.

Valley. When he arrived in New York City in October 1833, he met the colonization agent Charles Beales, who convinced him instead to join his own designated colony in Texas, at the time part of the Mexican state of Coahuila y Texas. Beales's group of sixty colonists reached their destination in the Lower Rio Grande Valley in March 1834. The settlement they established, La Villa de Dolores, was short-lived, though, due to the unsuitability of the territory for farming, the constant threat of Amerindian raids, and Beales's poor organization. When the colonists left Dolores in July of the same year, Ludecus returned to the United States, where he would settle for good.<sup>13</sup>

From his departure in Bremen in August 1833 through his stay in New Orleans after his Texas experience in November 1834, Ludecus wrote a series of nineteen letters to friends and family in Germany, which he sent home in a single package after his return to the United States. They were published in 1837 as *Reise durch die mexikanischen Provinzen Tumulipas [sic], Cohahuila [sic] und Texas im Jahre 1834: In Briefen an seine Freunde*.<sup>14</sup> The correspondence moves from merely recording the traveler's personal experiences to more general observations seeking to advise Germans considering emigration about conditions in the North Mexican regions of Texas, Coahuila, and Tamaulipas.<sup>15</sup> In a highly ironic manner, the travelogue unmasks the illusionary promises Beales had made to attract colonists by comparing a dirt road in Dolores to the most elegant shopping street of Berlin. Soon after the colonists founded the town, Ludecus remarks:

Schnell wurden verschiedene Punkte ausgemessen, um die ersten Strassen und Plätze zu bezeichnen, die ihre Namen von denen der Officiere erhielten; noch habe ich aber *Ludecus street* nicht besucht, und ich thue Diess erst, wenn diese

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13 Cf. Louis E. Brister: Eduard Ludecus's Journey to the Texas Frontier. A Critical Account of Beales's Rio Grande Colony. In: *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 108.3 (Jan. 2005), p. 369-385, p. 371-383.

14 Cf. Eduard Ludecus: *Reise durch die mexikanischen Provinzen Tumulipas [sic], Cohahuila [sic] und Texas im Jahre 1834. In Briefen an seine Freunde [1837]*, Charleston, NC: Nabu Press 2012. For an English translation see Eduard Ludecus: John Charles Beales's Rio Grande Colony. Letters by Eduard Ludecus, a German Colonist, to Friends in Germany in 1833-1834, Recounting His Journey, Trials, and Observations in Early Texas. Ed. and translated by Louis E. Brister, Austin: Texas State Historical Association 2008.

15 Cf. Brister: Ludecus's Journey (see n. 13), p. 384.

Strasse, mit schönen Palästen geziert, die Länge der Friedrichsstrasse in Berlin erreicht hat.<sup>16</sup>

Elsewhere, his journey account draws on the Biblical exodus of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage to convey the settlers' disappointment with their condition: "[Es] sprach ein Jeder davon, die leeren Fleischtöpfe Ägyptens zu verlassen und das gesegnete gelobte Land [...] aufzusuchen."<sup>17</sup> The ironic invocation of the empty flesh pots of Egypt to characterize the Dolores settlement once again scrutinizes the unfulfilled promise of the colonization project and the deprivations its brought forth in reality.

The subjects of freedom and material welfare addressed here run as a leit-motif through Luducus's text. One of the letters contains a telling anecdote about one of Beales's often authoritarian-acting representatives in Dolores:

Eine Schaar Wespen, vielleicht verwandelte französische Liberale, auf der Seelenwanderung begriffen, [...] applicirten [...] viele rothe und blaue Flecken in das leichenblasse Gesicht [Mr. Egertons], dass er sicher, hätte er sich damit in Deutschland gezeigt, als ein Erzdemagog nach Mainz gebracht worden wäre.<sup>18</sup>

Invoking the wasps as French political activists who literally turn Mr. Egerton's face into the tricolored French flag that would secure him persecution for demagoguery in Germany, the narrator critiques the lack of political freedom in his homeland and voices his own support of the liberal goals of the French July Revolution of 1830. In an earlier letter, he mocks the aggravated political restrictions in Germany since the Congress of Vienna in 1814/15 by assuring that the freedom of the Holy Alliance should not suffer from his preaching the 'religion' of freedom in Dolores.<sup>19</sup> As he confirms elsewhere:

Zwölf Monate sind es her, dass ich noch ruhig in Deutschland sass [...], Alles im Überfluss hatte und unzufrieden war; jetzt bin ich im Innern Mexiko's [...],

16 Luducus: *Reise* (see n. 14), p. 180, original emphasis and spelling.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 234, original spelling.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 236, original spelling. The passage alludes to the Mainz-based Central Investigative Commission installed by the Carlsbad Decrees of 1819 to identify and persecute revolutionary activities in Germany [cf. Brose: *German History* (see n. 5), p. 91].

19 Cf. Luducus: *Reise* (see n. 14), p. 196.

ohne einen Pfening Geld [...] und bin gezwungen, [...] im heißen Sommer durch eine wasserleere Wüste, unsicher vor wilden Indianern und räuberischen Mexikanern, auf unzulänglichen Wegen [...] mich durchzuschlagen und doch – zufrieden.<sup>20</sup>

In line with his personal objective as well as typical of European and U.S. American travelogues focusing on migration, Ludacus pays particular attention to the economic and political potential of his destination for settlement, yet without that text corpus's typical downplaying of the region's insufficiencies. The text especially frames the wild nature of Texas and Tamaulipas as a simultaneous source of danger, adventure, and survival, as the text recounts numerous hunting expeditions and struggles with ferocious animals the narrator engaged in.<sup>21</sup> This ties in with European Romanticist discourse, in which the nature of the Americas appears as an original, wild, and untamable force. Its perceived utter contrast to European civilization rendered the hemisphere an ideal projection plane for exotic fantasies Europe could not provide. In this line of thought, the privileged position of the Europeans manifested itself in their access to both European culture, upon which they based their claims to appropriate the New World, and to the wilderness of the Americas.<sup>22</sup> Ludacus's *Reise* often looks at nature through the Romanticist lens of seeking both physical and spiritual experiences. This becomes most obvious in the text's calling nature the most beautiful church in the world.<sup>23</sup> In another passage, the narrator describes a harmonious interaction of humans and nature: "Die Scene war äußerst romantisch: rings um uns dichter Wald von theilweise hohen majestätischen Bäumen, durch welche der ruhige Fluss hinschlich [...], auf beiden Seiten Wagen und Karren mit langen Zügen Ochsen."<sup>24</sup>

This rhetorical connection of beauty and abundance—or, elsewhere, their opposites, ugliness and scarcity—also characterizes the text's assessment of the economic suitability of the different parts of Texas for German settlement. For instance, the narrator notes about the lower Rio Grande

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20 Ibid., p. 244, original spelling.

21 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 354.

22 Cf. Johanna Birk: *Mexiko in Berichten deutscher Reisender. Die kulturelle Wahrnehmung um 1830*, Halle/Saale: GILCAL 2008, p. 21-22, 25 and 44.

23 Cf. Ludacus: *Reise* (see n. 14), p. 179.

24 Ibid., p. 152, original spelling.

River: "Alles ist öde und todt in seiner Nähe."<sup>25</sup> In contrast, the land near the Nueces River "glich einem Garten, eine üppige Vegetation bewies eine grosse Fruchtbarkeit."<sup>26</sup> The garden image blends the aesthetic discourse of tamed nature, which tones down readers' anxieties about an alien land, with the utilitarian rhetoric used to justify U.S. American or European colonization as putting a fertile land to proper use by cultivation. Ludacus's travelogue further invokes a specifically German view of (kitchen) gardens as indicators of a society's education and cultural refinement. The text asserts: "Der Mexikaner [ist] zu faul, mehr zu pflanzen als er selbst braucht, und vom Gartenbau versteht er durchaus gar Nichts. [...] Nur einige wenige der Amerikaner besitzen Gärten."<sup>27</sup> Read as a both marker and consequence of Mexican and Anglo idleness and ignorance, the absence of gardens thus signifies the region's lack of civilization which, in the logic of European colonial discourse, legitimized further settlement by supposedly superior populaces such as the Germans.

Ludacus's prejudices against the different resident population groups of Texas resonate in many passages of his *Reise*. The volume exemplifies the tendency of German *Amerikaliteratur* to look at Anglo U.S. Americans with a particular regard to how their political traditions, economic practices, social values, and customs, would impact the lives of German immigrants in their midst. Ludacus's travelogue praises the Anglos' republicanism, pragmatism, and perseverance, yet complains about their lack of manners and discipline, bias against foreigners, and constant striving for economic advantage: "Religion ist ein gutes Geschäft in Amerika und sehr einträglich", the text states.<sup>28</sup> In a similar vein, the volume characterizes the Tejanos (Mexican Texans) either as loyal, helpful, and courageous servants of the Anglo and German colonists or as idlers, cowards, or criminals, who were unable or -willing to truly advance their country. Many Mexican mayors accepted bribes, Ludacus argues, and he depicts Mexican Catholic priests as being lax about celibacy.<sup>29</sup> These views are clearly based on the racial-cultural belief that non-Anglo-Saxon societies, assumedly being on a lower stage of civilizational

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25 Ibid., p. 160, original spelling.

26 Ibid., p. 156, original spelling.

27 Ibid., p. 333, original spelling.

28 Ibid., p. 196; for further examples see *ibid.*, p. 273, 332, 336.

29 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 341, 306; for further examples see *ibid.*, p. 168, 175-176, 232, 277.



development, ‘naturally’ inclined toward a life in crime, want, or servitude and hence required European or United States guidance and colonization.<sup>30</sup>

The same line of reasoning also characterizes Ludecus’s portrayal of indigenous populations. His *Reise* tellingly calls Mexico a country, “wo man gegen die Ureingebornen in einem Verteidigungskampf begriffen ist”<sup>31</sup>. The German travelogue largely frames the Texas Natives according to the popular stereotypes of the ‘noble savage’, on the one hand, and the ‘savage threat’, on the other—a strategy common to most German as well as Anglo American travel and settlement accounts. While the former image caters to the colonial fantasy of the indigenous ally willingly submitting to white rule, the latter serves to legitimize the colonizers’ violent subjugation of indigenous peoples. Ludecus’s narrative particularly argues that the frequent indigenous raids of white settlements hampered the economic and cultural advancement of Texas.<sup>32</sup> To underline this image of indigenous barbarity, the narrator depicts the Texas Natives as an integral part of wild nature, for instance, by invoking the specter of cannibalism to underline the dangers they posed to the group of German and Anglo colonists: “Dachte ich daran, wie ich [...] meinen Wasserdurst im Lager stillen würde, [...] so fiel mir ein, dass es doch noch wahrscheinlicher sei, ein Wilder werde an mir seinen Blutdurst stillen.”<sup>33</sup>

#### 4. Ferdinand Roemer’s *Texas*

A remote corner of Mexico at the time of Ludecus’s journey, Texas presented itself as the latest addition to the territory of the United States when, more than ten years later, the young geologist Karl Ferdinand von Roemer (1818-1891) visited the region, being one of the first European scientists to study it. In April 1845 he sailed to the United States with funds from the Berlin Academy of Sciences and the Society for the Protection of German Emigrants to Texas, the major German emigration society operating in the area, to explore North America’s geological formations and to assess the state of the German settlements in Texas. After a tour of New England, Quebec, and

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30 Cf. Birk: Mexiko (see n. 22), p. 32-35, 37, 44; Ritzenhofen: Amerikas Italien (see n. 6), p. 190, 192-195.

31 Ludecus: Reise (see n. 14), p. 154.

32 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 101, 112, 222.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 145.

the U.S. Midwest, he journeyed extensively through Texas between December 1845 and May 1847 before returning to Germany.<sup>34</sup>

During his lengthy academic career, Roemer would publish widely on the geology of North America and, owing to his pertinent contributions to the subject, has been acknowledged as the “father of the geology of Texas.”<sup>35</sup> Probably inspired by the Berlin Academy of Sciences, to whom he reported about his journey, he also penned a travelogue-cum-scientific study for both scholars and general audiences, entitled *Texas: Mit besonderer Rücksicht auf deutsche Auswanderung und die physischen Verhältnisse des Landes nach eigener Betrachtung geschildert* (1849).<sup>36</sup> Following the tradition of the scientific journey account, the book is divided into three sections: a general introduction to the geography and settlement history of Texas, followed by a chronological report of the writer’s journey, and finally a systematic appendix presenting the results of his scientific studies, including the first geological map of the region. Roemer’s use of scientific terminology to describe geological phenomena, plants, and animals and his citing numerous references from other travelogues or scientific studies to support his observations underline the scholarly character of his book. In a critical discussion of these sources, he clearly distinguishes his more scholarly and presumably also more objective work from the many emigrant guides that were flourishing at the time of his publication. However, such claims to objectivity and denigrations of rival

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34 Cf. Volker W. Göbel/Helga Stein: Ferdinand Roemers Reise nach Nordamerika 1845-1847. In: Rudolf W. Keck (Ed.): *Gesammelte Welten. Das Erbe der Brüder Roemer und die Museumskultur in Hildesheim, 1844-1994. Festschrift zum 150jährigen Bestehen des Hildesheimer Museumsvereins*, Hildesheim: Gerstenberg 1998, p. 337-392, p. 337-374; Rolf Schroeder/Helga Stein: *Als Geologe bei deutschen Auswanderern in Texas. Zum 100. Todestag von Ferdinand Roemer (1818-1891)*. In: *Natur und Museum* 121.12 (Dec. 1991), p. 387-400.

35 Göbel/Stein: *Roemers Reise* (see n. 34), p. 368.

36 Cf. Ferdinand Roemer: *Texas: Mit besonderer Rücksicht auf deutsche Auswanderung und die physischen Verhältnisse des Landes nach eigener Betrachtung geschildert* [1849], London: British Library 2010. For an English translation see Ferdinand Roemer: *Roemer’s Texas. With Particular Reference to German Immigration and the Physical Appearance of the Country*. Translated by Oswald Mueller, San Marcos, TX: German-Texan Heritage Society/Department of Modern Languages, Southwest Texas State University 1983.

texts were a common gesture in many works of travel writing, especially texts also assessing a region's potential for migration and settlement.<sup>37</sup>

Indeed, the way Roemer's volume looks at Texas and its populations clearly indicates the writer's intertwined concerns with both natural phenomena and German settlement opportunities. The book crosses the threshold from merely assessing the suitability of the territory for colonization to actively promoting the latter not only by presenting the region as "das schöne Wiesenland, dem wohl noch eine große Zukunft bevorsteht", but also by emphasizing that its fertile terrain and mineral riches required little effort to make settlements thrive. "Mögen seine weiten grünen Prairien die Wohnsitze einer großen und glücklichen Bevölkerung werden", the text concludes.<sup>38</sup> Akin to Ludacus, Roemer identifies those barren parts of the region he considers unsuitable for settlement, yet, like other narratives promoting migration, his *Texas* employs images of nature implying human intervention and mastery. "Niemals erschien mir die Prairie so sehr als ein reizender natürlicher Garten oder Park im größten Maßstabe", the narrator remarks about the vicinity of San Antonio.<sup>39</sup> Representing a space of "cultivated naturalness" that was large, but not boundless, unpeopled though not hostile<sup>40</sup>, the image of the park symbolically tames the potentially threatening wilderness of Texas to make it appeal to the book's German target readers and present it as a destination not only suitable but also desirable for settlement.

In contrast to the garden-like qualities of unsettled nature, Roemer remarks, once again echoing Ludacus's travelogue, that human-tended (kitchen) gardens were "eine seltene Erscheinung in Texas", and he calls the Mexican population "eine träge und sorglose Race" for not cultivating large tracts of land.<sup>41</sup> In addition to implying the superiority of German settlers, who gained a reputation in Texas for their diligence in horticulture and home-making, the comment's focus on the Mexicans also ties in with the U.S. American colonial discourses that presented Texas as a garden in order to legitimize Anglo land-taking with their purported greater efforts and

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37 Cf. Roemer: Texas (see n. 36), p. 41-45; Ritzenhofen: Amerikas Italien (see n. 6), p. 51.

38 Roemer: Texas (see n. 36), p. 362; cf. also *ibid.*, p. vi, 13, 263.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 192.

40 Nicola Trott: "The Picturesque, the Beautiful and the Sublime". A Companion to Romanticism. Ed. Duncan Wu, Malden, MA: Blackwell 1999, p. 72-90, p. 74.

41 Roemer: Texas (see n. 36), p. 228, 150, original spelling.

ability to attend to it. The image of Mexican idleness further complements the general depiction of the Tejanos in Roemer's *Texas* as exotic and defective: Picturesquely dressed and 'primitive' in their workmanship, they appear to embody an earlier stage of human development, whereas their notorious gambling, theft, cowardice, and violence signifies cultural degeneration at the same time.<sup>42</sup> Both ways of othering the Tejanos contribute to the European and Anglo American colonial discourses that declared Mexican civilization inferior in order to justify Anglo-Saxon claims to territory and power in Texas.<sup>43</sup>

Given the German geologist's entanglement with Eurocentric colonial ideas, it is no surprise that Roemer's travelogue depicts the Texas Natives as even more deficient than the Tejanos. The volume asserts, on the one hand, their qualities as 'noble savages': The Caddo Indians, the narrator claims, "leben [...] stets in bestem Einvernehmen unter sich und Zank und Hader sind unter ihnen unbekannt".<sup>44</sup> Even the Comanches, widely feared for their resistance to white settlement, are praised for their bravery, mastery of the horse, hospitality, and inventive mind.<sup>45</sup> Roemer's narrator further scrutinizes the United States government policy of Indian removals:

Daß über den Indianerstämmen von Texas [...] das Verhängnis allmählicher Zurückdrängung aus ihren Wohnsitzen durch die Weißen und endlicher Vernichtung schwebt, unterliegt wohl keinem Zweifel. Die schönsten Landstriche sind ihnen bereits entrissen und rastlos vorwärts schreitend streckt der weiße unersättliche Eroberer nach immer neuen Jagdgründen des rothen Mannes seine Hand aus.<sup>46</sup>

Yet, rather than blaming the white settlers for this genocide, the book, once again in line with Ludewig's and other German or U.S. American travelogues, fully endorses the European and U.S. American discourses and practices of colonization. It seeks to legitimize them by depicting the Amerindian population of Texas as truly 'savage threat'—not only lazy and thievish but animal-like creatures. Roving bands of Natives marauding in the wilderness, the line of reasoning goes, prevented white settlements in parts of the region and

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42 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 15, 150-155, 167, 205.

43 Cf. Ritzenhofen: *Amerikas Italien* (see n. 6), p. 204-205.

44 Roemer: *Texas* (see n. 36), p. 245.

45 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 295.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 19, original grammar and spelling.

therefore had to be subjugated alongside the wilderness they inhabited in order to 'civilize' Texas.<sup>47</sup>

In contrast to Ludacus, Roemer expresses a certain appreciation of Anglo U.S. Americans in his *Texas*. The text values their work ethic and practical skills as well as the determination, courage, and perseverance with which this population faced dangers, endured hardships, and removed obstacles to settle the West. However, the volume simultaneously presents their presumed want of mores, manners, cultural sophistication, and class distinctions in a way that places the Anglo Texans only a step above their Tejano neighbors.<sup>48</sup> Most repulsive to the German visitor was their constant striving for material gain. As he puts it: "Ein Texaner ist in jedem Augenblicke [...] bereit, alles, was er an und um sich hat [...], zu verkaufen oder zu []tauschen, wenn er einen vorteilhaften Handel machen zu können glaubt."<sup>49</sup> Although it explicitly approves of their annexation of Texas and is indebted to a Eurocentric hierarchy of civilizations, Roemer's *Texas* deviates from the specifically U.S. American colonial discourse that claimed Anglo political, economic, and cultural superiority over other populations of European descent.

The book's portrayal of Anglo Texan culture is further tied to the institution of black slavery in their midst. What is striking, if not cynical, here is the narrator's assessment of this system. Despite his assumption that many German emigrants rejected slavery<sup>50</sup>, he joins the U.S. American pro-slavery discourse: references to ancient Rome suggest that slavery was compatible with an esteemed civilization, while images of Blacks as child-like members of their owner's extended families naturalized their status.<sup>51</sup> His only critique of slavery concerns its socio-economic impact on Texas. He doubts its general profitability and considers it a particular obstacle for German settlers, whose lack of financial resources and experience with slave-holding placed them at a disadvantage in their economic and social standing vis-à-vis their Anglo neighbors.<sup>52</sup>

The geologist's worries about the fate of Germans in Texas were directly connected to his mission of assessing the situation of the budding German

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47 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 4, 6-7, 186, 189.

48 *Ibid.*, p. 84-85, 103, 353.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 113; for further examples see, p. 25, 87, 150-152.

50 *Ibid.*, p.31.

51 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 40, 79, 92.

52 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 40, 48, 201.

colonies in the Lone Star State and the region's potential for more settlements. His narrative clearly argues in favor of further German emigration to Texas, as it emphasizes the large stretches of fertile lands and the promising state of some of the existing German communities. However, even though the major German emigration society active in Texas had sponsored his stay in the Lone Star State, Roemer does not blindly propagate their particular colonization endeavor in his travelogue but scrutinizes the association's mismanagement that caused many of its German colonists to struggle with diseases, desperation, and death.<sup>53</sup> The volume also blames the exaggerated expectations of many German emigrants and their lack of needed practical skills for their misery. In a move common in migration-promoting texts seeking to truly serve their target audience, the narrator warns:

Möchten doch alle, welche nicht den festen Entschluß und die nöthige Befähigung besitzen, um sich als Ackerbauer dort niederzulassen, nicht dorthin gehen, wo sie statt des geträumten Glückes nur Enttäuschungen und ein trauriges Ende finden werden.<sup>54</sup>

Strikingly, a somewhat sad tone also runs through Roemer's depiction of those German immigrants who successfully established themselves in Texas. His travelogue argues that educated German immigrants would rather hold on to the language, customs, and class distinction of the old country, whereas peasants and skilled workers more readily embraced their new environment, as it offered them professional opportunities and economic prosperity not available to them in their homelands. Placing great importance on social stratification and cultural refinement as markers of civilization, the geologist presents the successful immigrants as indicators of German cultural superiority. At the same time, however, he bemoans the price of this success: the gradual loss of the immigrants' original German culture, as they negotiated a new, hybrid identity in the course of their integration process.<sup>55</sup>

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53 Cf. Roemer: *Texas* (see n. 36), p. 23, 31-36, 203; Göbel/Stein. *Roemers Reise* (see n. 34), p. 363, 367-368.

54 Roemer: *Texas* (see n. 36), p. 128, original spelling; cf. also *ibid.*, p. 259.

55 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 107-109, 122, 281-282.

5. Christiane Haun's *Mit dem Paketsegler 1853 nach Texas*

The Germans who heeded Roemer's and other travelers' call to come to Texas from the 1830s through the 1850s included a large number of women, as many emigrants relocated with their entire families. While a number of them would write memoirs about their lives in Texas toward the end of their lives in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, only a single journey account by a female German traveler to Texas is known from the time period: Christiane Haun's (1832-1873) travel journal-cum-emigrant letter *Mit dem Paketsegler 1853 nach Texas: Reisebericht der Christiane Haun*, published posthumously in 1971.<sup>56</sup> Born and raised in Thuringia, Haun became engaged to the Lutheran pastor and farmer Otto Haun, who was on visit from his German emigrant congregation in Round Top, Texas, in 1852. In the following year, she joined him in his new homeland, leaving Bremerhaven in October, reaching the Texas coast seven weeks later and Haun's farm in mid-December. The couple and their Texas-born children would live in Round Top until the outbreak of the U.S. American Civil War in 1861, when they returned to Germany for good.<sup>57</sup>

Haun kept a travel diary, which takes the form of a personal letter to the loved ones she left behind. The small book was mailed to Germany in spring 1854, where it was circulated among her family and friends and kept in the possession of her descendants. Begun aboard the ship that brought her to Texas and completed a few months after her arrival in Round Top, the journal records the writer's trip and her first weeks in the Lone Star State.<sup>58</sup> It opens with a few introductory sentences, in which the diarist justifies her writing with her promise to inform her family about her journey.<sup>59</sup> As much as an honest response to her relatives' desire for news from the recent emigrant, these lines also represent a gesture of feminine modesty. In line with the prevalent middle-class gender ideology of separate spheres, which defined and prescribed the private realm of domesticity as the proper field of feminine

56 Cf. Christiane Haun: *Mit dem Paketsegler 1853 nach Texas*. *Reisebericht der Christiane Haun*. Ed. Rosemarie Pohl-Weber, Bremen: Focke-Museum/Zertani 1971; Ritzenhofen: *Amerikas Italien* (see n. 6), p. 59-60.

57 Cf. Haun: *Paketsegler* (see n. 56), p. 7, 18-24; Rosemarie Pohl-Weber: *Einführung*. In: Haun: *Paketsegler* (see n. 56), p. 4-5.

58 Cf. Haun: *Paketsegler* (see n. 56), p. 6, 24; Pohl-Weber: *Einführung* (see n. 57), p. 5.

59 Cf. Haun: *Paketsegler* (see n. 56), p. 6.

activity, women had to justify both their traveling and their addressing an audience in writing about it, as this dual public self-exposure transgressed the boundaries of feminine propriety.<sup>60</sup>

Almost the first three quarters of *Mit dem Paketsegler* depict the transatlantic voyage. In addition to providing lively descriptions of life on board an emigrant ship, the narrative articulates Haun's own and many other passengers' ambivalent feelings about their journey: the struggle between hope for a better future, the fear of failure due to poverty, illness, or shipwreck, and the feelings of homesickness for places and people left behind.<sup>61</sup> In addressing the experience of transatlantic relocation, Haun's journey account further provides crucial insights into the social class stratification among the emigrants. As a cabin passenger, the author was clearly a privileged traveler, and her diary reveals how she enjoyed the amenities her status entailed, such as free meals, well-equipped common rooms, and the captain's attention. Yet, possibly informed by her journeying together with a poorer male cousin who had a berth in steerage, the narrator voices not only her awareness of her privileges but also her empathy with those who lacked them: She notes that the cabins were occupied by members of the upper and middle classes, whereas steerage passengers were mostly skilled workers and their families. Possibly because of her cousin, she apparently also mingled occasionally with steerage passengers and voices respect for their professions in her journal.<sup>62</sup>

Once on Texas soil, the social distinctions among the German emigrants matter even less in Haun's travelogue, whereas the shared German ethno-cultural identity gains relevance. Time and again, the text comments on other Germans who had already settled in the Lone Star State and reports on the narrator relishing German food and celebrating German holidays in Texas. Probably informed by the life of her own brother-in-law, the narrator pays respect to those German emigrants who returned to Germany in disappointment, as their dreams of a better life in Texas had failed to materialize, despite all efforts. Her own relocation to the Lone Star State, however, seemed to have been a success story, and she acknowledges with gratitude

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60 Brigitte Georgi-Findlay: *The Frontiers of Women's Writing. Women's Narratives and the Rhetoric of Westward Expansion*, Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press 1996, p. 13, 16-17, 21-25, 51, 69-71.

61 Cf. Haun: *Paketsegler* (see n. 56), p. 7-21; Pohl-Weber: *Einführung* (see n. 57), p. 5; Werner Kloos: *Vorwort*. In: Haun: *Paketsegler* (see n. 56), p. 3.

62 Cf. Haun: *Paketsegler* (see n. 56), p. 8-10.



that she arrived safely, was spared from hunger of severe illness, and happily reunited with her fiancé. Her joining an acculturated husband and a supportive immigrant community surely facilitated her integration into her new Anglophone environment.<sup>63</sup> Consequentially, she could credibly praise the United States, respectively Texas, in her journal as “neue[s] Vaterland” and “neue[] Heimat”.<sup>64</sup>

Haun’s positive view of the region particularly manifests itself in her esteem of Texan culture in the dual agricultural and social meaning of the term. Visiting the market hall of Galveston, she observes in *Mit dem Paketsegler*:

Die Waren waren schönstens aufgeputzt und aufgehäuft [...]. Aber da sah man weder das europäische Feilschen noch das Weibergedränge der dortigen Märkte. Fast ausschließlich Herren in den feinsten schwarzen Fracks, jedoch öfters mit großen Löchern in den Ärmeln oder in den Stiefeln [...], gingen mit großen Handkörben oder Eimern umher und kauften ein, oder aber es verriethen dies dienstbare Negerinnen, die meist in den feinsten Kleidern [...] einherstolzten, was sich zu ihren häßlichen schwarzen Gesichtern putzig genug ausnahm.<sup>65</sup>

Where other travelers tend to acclaim the fertility of the Texan soil yet deplore the deficiencies of its various resident population groups, Haun voices her admiration both for the abundance of the region’s products and for its society. Even their worn-out clothing cannot mar her praise for Anglo Texan manners, which she contrasts favorably to the pushing and shoving typical of European markets. In a similar vein, the narrator points out the splendid gardens in the port town of Galveston. Here,

die herrlichsten Rosen in allen Farben, ganze Laubgänge von Myrthen und Orangen, große Kaktus und Aloes, Bananen, Zypressen und andere ergötzen unsere Augen. [...] Die Gärten und Häuser zeugten von großer Akkuratesse, während die Straßen ziemlich schlecht gehalten sind.<sup>66</sup>

Deviating from both Anglo and other German observers like Ludecus and Roemer, to whom the widespread Anglo Texan disregard for horticulture signified their lack of diligence and cultural refinement, Haun’s travelogue

63 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 18-24.

64 *Ibid.*, p. 18, 20.

65 *Ibid.*, p. 19, original terminology and spelling.

66 *Ibid.*, p. 19, original grammar.

presents the gardens of Galveston as a symbol of Anglo care for their homes, on the one hand, and of the beauty and fertility of Texas, accentuated by a reference to the barrenness of autumnal Germany, on the other. Elsewhere, her journal even recommends the Texas Anglos as models for German immigrant farmers because of their sense of practicality and modest needs<sup>67</sup>, a unique perception of this population group in a German-authored travelogue of Texas from the *Vor-* and *Nachmärz* periods.

Haun never addresses any encounters with Natives or Mexicans in her narrative but, in addition to Anglo U. S. Americans, repeatedly mentions Blacks. Their exotic otherness in the eyes of the German newcomer, as shown in the market scene just cited, manifests itself in the narrator's perception of their physiognomy as ugly, which strikingly contrasts with their fine clothing and confident attitude. In contrast to many other German travelogues, *Mit dem Paketsegler* never explicitly elaborates on the situation of Blacks in Texas for its German target readers. Hence it is only from references in Haun's text to black people's activities or employment situation—Rhodes's "Neger 'Tom'" or "Surmanns Negerin Sara"—that one can deduce their status as servants, probably even as slaves.<sup>68</sup> As these two and several other Blacks were in the service of German immigrants living in Central Texas, the text most likely testifies to the practice of black slavery among German immigrants, a fact that contradicts the widespread myth that the Texas Germans almost unanimously opposed the peculiar institution.<sup>69</sup>

## 6. Conclusion

"Most people's knowledge of most places comes through media of various sorts, so that for most people the representation comes before the 'reality'", Mike Crang observes. As "literature [...] plays a central role in shaping people's geographical imaginations", the spaces and places depicted, among others, in travel writing are almost always already mediated "literary landscapes".<sup>70</sup> They convey popular notions of a given region as much as factual knowledge

67 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 24.

68 *Ibid.*, p. 22, original terminology; see also *ibid.*, p. 21, 24.

69 Cf. Ritzenhofen: *Amerikas Italien* (see n. 6), p. 215-216, 271; Struve: *Germanen and Texans* (see n. 5), p. 74-77.

70 Mike Crang: *Cultural Geography*, London: Routledge 1998, p. 44, 47.

and thereby shape subsequent practices of travel and views of places and cultures encountered. German travelogues like Eduard Luducus's *Reise durch die mexikanischen Provinzen*, Ferdinand Roemer's *Texas*, and Christiane Haun's *Mit dem Paketsegler 1853 nach Texas* exemplify both widespread German imaginaries of North America during of the *Vor-* and *Nachmärz* eras and particular modifications of these, owing to the specific history of Texas at the time. They largely follow established patterns of viewing the region, as laid down in other German as well as U.S. American journey accounts: They blend utilitarian and aesthetic discourses in order to depict the territory's economic potential and emotional appeal, and they establish a hierarchical order of the different ethnic groups living in Texas according to their perceived closeness to, or otherness from, German culture.

Connected in one way or another to the German emigration wave to Texas during the period, the three journey narratives studied here further address the concerns, expectations, and experiences of Germans coming to settle in the region. Traveling through Mexican Texas, Luducus views the province in his account as a potential destination for German emigrants, the more as it offered civil liberties unavailable in their homelands. Roemer, whose stay in Texas coincided with its annexation to the United States, emphasizes the potential an Anglo-dominated U.S. state entailed for German colonists and bolsters this with his scientific findings concerning soil quality, climate, and infrastructure. The two men's accounts also scrutinize the role poorly organized colonization schemes and ill-prepared migrants played in the failure of some German settlement endeavors. Haun's journal exemplifies a German immigrant success story from the antebellum U.S. state of Texas. Both her and Roemer's volumes, however, show a striking lack of concern for the institution of slavery. Where the geologist scrutinizes this practice solely for economic reasons, the pastor's wife glosses over the lot of the slaves, as her casual references to them avoid the word "slave" altogether.

As these examples demonstrate, German travelogues to Texas from the *Vor-* and *Nachmärz* eras testify to the significance of the region in the German collective imaginary of North America at the time as much as they informed the massive migration of Germans to Texas that has profoundly shaped the history and culture of the region to this day. Comparing the three travelogues studied here simultaneously reveals the diversity of experiences and vantage points as well as the impact of specific historical contexts and individual positions for the shaping of these imaginaries.