# From Göttingen to Galveston: Travel Writing and German Migration to Texas, 1830–1848[1]

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## 1. Introduction

Three years after he had traveled through Texas to report on the region for the *New York Times*, the U.S. American journalist Frederick Law Olmsted confessed in 1857: "On entering Texas we had been so ignorant as not to know that there were larger settlements of Germans there than in any other Southern State" (2004: 132). This observation hints not only at the particular relevance of German immigration to the region but also at the limits of knowledge provided by geographic distance and this educated Northerner's regional bias toward the Southwestern periphery of his country. The context of Olmsted's remark, the journalist's published account of his Texas journey, further points to the importance of written narrative texts in general, and works of travel writing in particular, in shaping people's perceptions and representations of their encounters with other lands and cultures than their own. German travel writing about Texas from the mid-nineteenth century provides a telling case in point, as Germans not only visited and migrated to the area in large numbers but also penned a large body of narrative texts, above all works of travel writing in which they testified to their experiences as well as informed their fellow citizens in Germany[2] about the perils and promises of the region to inspire or discourage further migration. These texts offer a unique insight into the push and pull factors[3] that drove so many Germans from their native lands to Texas as well as the impact of travel texts on their movement. In the following, I will analyze the ways three major German travel accounts of Texas from the 1830s and '40s construct Texas with particular regard to their role in shaping German emigration to the area and the strategies they employed to make their case and spread the word.

In my essay I address 'migration' in the sense of a person's or group of people's "permanent or semi-permanent change of residence, usually across some type of administrative boundary," a process which, as Faist reminds us, a person or group can undergo "many times, for varied durations, and across numerous territorial divisions" (2004: 18; see also Harzig/Hoerder 2009: 68–69). Although the term also encompasses the forced or impelled migrations of slaves, servants, refugees, or contracted labor migrants,

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[2] Although Germany did not exist as a single state until 1871, for practical reasons I use the term "Germany" as an umbrella term pertaining to the states joined in the German Confederation of 1815.

[3] Push factors refer to those reasons that move people to leave their place of residence; pull factors denote those elements that attract people to a specific destination rather than some other (Faist 2004: 11–12). For other factors shaping migration see Harzig/Hoerder 2009: 62–64, 72–85.

among others (Faist 2004: 22–25; Harzig/Hoerder 2009: 66–68), it is used in the context of this essay primarily to refer to voluntary German settler and labor migration to Texas during the second quarter of the nineteenth century.

## 2. Travel Writing and Migration to Nineteenth-Century North America

The present essay provides an analysis of three major works of German travel writing about Texas, composed and published during the 1830s and '40s and depicting a journey which the – in all cases male – narrator undertook in person within the years previous to his writing. My interpretation of the accounts is embedded in an understanding of narrative texts as forms of social practice that actively participate in the shaping of reality by contributing to larger societal discourses through acts of representation. Hall reminds us that representation is not a synonym for mimetic reflection but "implies the active work of selecting and presenting, of structuring and shaping: not merely the transmitting of an already-existing meaning, but the more active labour of *making things mean* [something]" (1982: 64, original emphasis). In fact, as Crang points out,

> most people's knowledge of most places comes through media of various sorts, so that for most people the representation comes before the 'reality' [... and] literature [...] plays a central role in shaping people's geographical imaginations (1998: 44; see also 189–90).

This applies in particular to areas and cultures located too far away for many people to have encountered in person. As a narrative genre that commonly results from the narrator's having undertaken such a journey and which discursively represents and mediates his/her experiences, travel writing has been particularly influential in the shaping of public opinion about distant lands and cultures and has helped shape patterns of migration (Pratt 2007).

Nineteenth-century North America witnessed the proliferation of texts written by U.S. Americans and Europeans about factual or fictional journeys for the purpose of either promoting or discouraging emigration from the writers' own homelands to the sparsely inhabited regions of the North American West.[4] These texts were reactions and, in turn, contributions to the massive migration to and within North America and the growing demand for information and orientation on the part of prospective settlers. Like all travel narratives, these works framed their style, choice of subject matter, and results according to the backgrounds and opinions of their authors, sponsors, and target audiences (Sibley 1967: 5–6, 8, 155–56). In addition to the letters emigrants wrote home and the diaries they kept, travel texts focusing on migration include the retrospectively composed accounts of temporary visitors or returned settlers. These took on the form of either chronological travelogues, of thematically structured emigrant guides, or a mixture of both. In contrast to the letters and diaries, which settlers often wrote to recount personal experiences and give advice to families and friends in their former home regions and which were intended for private circulation, travelogues and emigrant guides were written for publication and aimed at a broad readership (Brenner 1991: 15, 65–68; Doughty 1987: 51, 54).

[4] I use the term 'North American West' to denote those regions belonging today to the United States and which lay beyond the, albeit always vaguely-defined and constantly westward-shifting, U.S. line of settlement. In 1800 this constituted any territory west of the Appalachian Mountains and by the mid-nineteenth century all areas west of the Mississippi River.

Texts promoting migration to Texas were often motivated by their writers' personal vested interests in the region, as many authors of such accounts either held land titles in the area or reported to institutions, such as emigration societies, involved in organizing migration (Sibley 1967: 154). Writers from the United States tended to write in support of the ideological paradigms of the Monroe Doctrine and Manifest Destiny, which proclaimed their country's right to cultural hegemony in the Americas and political possession of the North American West on the grounds of her "superior" Anglo-Protestant civilization (McDougall 1997: 57–98). All migration-promoting travelogues served to familiarize their readership with the alien land: They described the geographical characteristics of the region with a particular eye to which areas were socio-politically and economically suited for settlement. They compared their target regions favorably to other landscapes known to their readers and often engaged in a utopian discourse that presented the North American West as a promise for a better future (Doughty 1987: 37–38, 64, 69). The texts provided information on available routes and means of transportation as well as on the populations residing in the target areas thus facilitating emigrants' journeys and adaptation to their new life (Sibley 1967: 22–170). And even though they emphasized opportunities and downplayed the hardships of settler life, many of these writings cautioned that only the young, healthy, and practically trained would profit from relocating to the New World (Brenner 1991: 78–82, 101–02, 311).

In contrast, travelogues seeking to discourage migration were generally written by return-migrants who had failed to 'make it' in the New World. They commonly offered cautionary depictions of the dangers and disappointments possibly awaiting the migrant. This body of writing emphasized the hardships of farming on low-quality soil, the poor infrastructure, the threat of disease, and the constant danger posed by hostile Natives. German-authored works additionally voiced fears of a 'cultureless' capitalist Anglo-American society (Ritzenhofen 1997: 186, 239–40, 255; Sibley 1967: 155–56).

## 3. Texas and German Migration, 1830–1848

When Mexico gained her independence from Spain in 1821, the government sought to develop the sparsely-populated northern frontier province of Texas economically by admitting foreign settlement and land ownership in the region, a call to which especially Anglo-Americans responded (Campbell 2003: 100–08). Both Mexicans and Americans engaged in a discourse of *colonizing* Texas. This framed the province as a resourceful wilderness requiring settlement by populations of European descent in order to subjugate her indigenous populations, cultivate the land, and thus integrate it into the fold of 'civilization', that is, the collectivity of the Western nation states. In so doing, they justified their seizing of indigenous (and subsequently also Mexican) territories (Benson 1987; DeLay 2007: 49–50). Indeed, it did not take long for conflicts to emerge between the Mexican and Anglo-American populations of Texas. In addition to outnumbering the Mexicans and wielding ever-growing economic power, many of the Anglo settlers were Southerners who established a slave-based plantation system in Texas and refused to integrate themselves into Catholic Mexican society. In 1830 the Mexican government passed a stricter colonization law whose anti-American regulations sought to curtail U.S. influence in the region but, among other things, only led to the Anglo-led insurgence of the 'Texas Revolution' of 1835 and the political independence of the province in

the following year. While the new government of independent Texas immediately applied for statehood in the United States, the controversial subject of admitting a slaveholding state to the Union postponed the annexation until 1845. When the U.S. won the ensuing war with Mexico over Texas in 1848, the possession of the region by the United States was cemented (Campbell 2003: 108–89).

Although German settlement in Texas can be traced back to the 1820s, the first meaningful wave of German immigrants reached the region during the time of the Texas Republic, followed by a second, even larger wave during the antebellum period. While 218 Germans were recorded in Texas in 1836, by 1844 their number had grown to between 7,000 and 10,000, and on the eve of the American Civil War the region counted at least 20,000 Germans (Campbell 2003: 159, 207–08; Lich 1981: 22, 45–46; Struve 1996: 43–50). Throughout the nineteenth century, the German-speaking countries suffered from a rigid system of social stratification that provided few opportunities for social rise and little prospect of political change. Collective and individual strivings for a more liberal political agenda met with an oppressive state apparatus keen to preserve the status quo, especially in response to the liberal movements of the 1830s and the ill-fated Revolution of 1848. Moreover, the countries were struggling with overpopulation and widespread poverty. News about the availability of cheap and fertile land and other economic opportunities as well as the promise of greater social equality and political liberties in Texas lured rising numbers of Germans to this region. The presence of a thriving German community in Texas increasingly added to its attraction for settlers (Lich 1981: 8–9, 11–12, 16–18, 33; Struve 1996: 5, 13–16). A majority of the German immigrants settled as yeoman farmers or skilled laborers in small settlements within the so-called "German Belt" stretching across South-Central Texas from Galveston and Houston through the valleys of the Brazos and Colorado Rivers. In the course of time their settlements became more regionally diverse, as colonists no longer came mainly from North Germany and as they established new communities, especially in the Texas Hill Country as well as in Austin and San Antonio (Campbell 2003: 208; Lich 1981: 22, 45–49, 53, 61, 63–68; Struve 1996: 3–5, 50–51). As most Germans were rather poor and settled in regions whose economy did not rely on slave labor, they tended to not own any slaves. However, among the Germans settling in the cotton-growing regions of Texas, German slave-ownership and support of slavery were more widespread (Ritzenhofen 1997: 215–16, 271; Struve 1996: 75–77).

## 4. German Travel Writing Encouraging or Discouraging Migration to Texas

Since the 1820s, publications in German-speaking countries had depicted Texas as a potential destination for German emigration (Ritzenhofen 1997: 28, 60, 269). Yet it was the independence of the province from Mexico in 1836 which truly "caught the fancy of a host of German and American adventurers, and the young republic was pictured as a new utopia in popular German travel literature" (Lich 1981: 16). This body of writing prominently discussed the region as either a worthwhile site for German emigrant colonies or a model of political change (Ritzenhofen 1997: 109–51, 270, 273). Incorporating German perceptions of other parts of the North American West (Brenner 1991), German texts about Texas spread the myth of the region as a land of liberty and

a paradise of plenty, which offered emigrants inexpensive land for farming, professional opportunities for skilled workers, and the promises and perils of a young, democratic, republican state (Lich 1981: 7, 11, 20; Struve 1996: 45–46, 102–03).

### 4.1 Detlef Dunt's *Reise nach Texas* (1834)

The earliest non-fictional travel text informing the German public about Texas was the widely-copied and publicized letter which the settler Friedrich Ernst sent from his home in Central Texas to friends in Oldenburg in 1832. Despite his own struggles with the hardships of frontier life which he had in no way been prepared for, Ernst paints an idyllic picture of his new homeland, emphasizing the beautiful landscape, fertile soil, and mild climate as well as the republican government and civil liberties unknown in German-speaking countries (Lich 1981: 38, 44–45). The letter received even wider publicity when it was reprinted in Detlef Dunt's 1834 travelogue *Reise nach Texas, nebst Nachrichten von diesem Lande für Deutsche, welche nach Amerika zu gehen beabsichtigen*[5] (Dunt 1834: 4–16). Enticed by the emigrant letter to move to Texas, the Oldenburg-based merchant Detlef Dunt had left Germany for North America in November 1832. After extended stays in New York and New Orleans he reached Galveston in April 1833, from where he proceeded to the Ernst family farm in Central Texas. He returned to Oldenburg in the fall of 1834 but would settle for good in Texas soon afterwards (Struve 1996: 44–45; 2005: 285–87). His travelogue clearly sought to capitalize on the "emigration fever" ("Auswanderungsfieber") (Dunt 1834: 16) which Ernst's letter had helped trigger in the Oldenburg area in a dual way: on the one hand, the book provided potential German emigrants with information on a worthwhile destination, and, on the other hand, the emigrant merchant Dunt himself stood to profit from greater German migration to the region he had chosen for his own business. A casual reference (83) to Gottfried Duden, who had authored the popular 1829 German travelogue of the U.S. American Midwest, *Report on a Journey to the Western States of North America* (*Bericht über eine Reise nach den westlichen Staaten Nordamerikas*), further underlines the topicality of the subject and Dunt's intention to jump on the band wagon of German migration-promoting literature with his Texas book.

Like a series of earlier Anglo-American and Mexican travelogues on Texas written since the late 1820s with the intention of attracting either Mexican or U.S. colonists to the region, Dunt's description of Texas largely retraces his own itinerary to and through the province but also interweaves his observations on the geography, climate, agriculture, settlements, and population groups of the region. His account confirms the Edenic picture of Texas which Ernst's letter had drawn and in particular reiterates the claim of the earlier text that the fertile land of the region, paired with the benevolent attitude of the Mexican government toward European immigrants, offered plentiful economic opportunities to industrious German emigrants (Dunt 1834: 75, 81–85, 88, 91–93, 96–100). Like the letter, *Reise nach Texas* further blends this utilitarian discourse with an aesthetic one. By emphasizing the beauty of nature in Texas and by comparing it favorably to German or Swiss landscapes, the writer renders an alien and distant land more familiar and hence less frightening to his German readers (74, 87–88, 93–95, 118).

[5] "Journey to Texas, with news about this land for Germans planning to go to America" (Dunt 1834: 4–16). The English translation of this and all following excerpts from Dunt's text are mine (A.H.).

Dunt's travelogue is considered "the first influential German book focused on Texas as an attractive land for German immigrants" (Struve 1996: 44). The text not only "reflects the growing German interest in Texas as a possible destination for emigrants even before the founding of the Republic of Texas in 1836" (Struve 2005: 285), but also crucially augmented this interest and, in so doing, contributed to the nineteenth-century German colonial discourse. Although no German state would become a formal colonial power until the 1880s, the nineteenth century witnessed a lively public discourse about a German colonial engagement overseas, which flourished in particular during the 1830s and '40s among liberal, bourgeois intellectual circles. Driven by the popular desire for stronger national unity, greater political weight of the German people, and domestic economic relief, this discourse advocated establishing German settler colonies in sparsely populated and cultivated areas in the Americas or Asia in order to open up new markets for German businesses and financial investments, as well as to reduce the threat of poverty-induced political unrest in the German states by enabling the poor to emigrate (Fenske 1991). *Reise nach Texas* explicitly targets Germans considering migration to the region, and it provides them with practical advice for carrying out trans-Atlantic relocation (Dunt 1834: 25–31, 54–59, 68–72, 97, 101–53). To underline its sincerity and its claim to authority, the book points out the hardships and uncertainties awaiting settlers in Texas and, accordingly, advises readers to carefully consider whether they are able and willing to live under frontier conditions (Dunt 1834: 80, 128–31, 157–58):

> Many an [emigrant] would rather want to pay higher taxes in free America, were he to have in return the nice roads, the good police, etc. he enjoys in Germany [...]. Secondly, every emigrant carefully should examine his physical strength to determine whether he can sufficiently brave the exertions, privations, and labors expecting him. (1–2)[6]

Responding to the widespread German fear of political instability, an oppressive state, and material loss, based both on experiences at home and on prejudices about Mexico, *Reise nach Texas* exaggerates the rule of law and the freedoms settlers enjoyed in Texas (101–18, 121–23). The book predicts that "soon a little Germany will emerge in this state and every immigrant will feel so much happier there"[7] (158). This claim not only serves to reassure readers fearful of an isolated life in a distant land and unfamiliar culture, but also ties in with the conviction, characteristic of the German colonial discourse of the time, that German emigrants should settle abroad in larger groups rather than as individuals in order to better maintain their native culture and hence strengthen the German element in the world (Fenske 1991: 94–95). What the argument does not address, however, is the paradox that, in doing the latter, the emigrants may incidentally support the very countries that pushed them away in the first place. In line with this argumentation, *Reise nach Texas* characterizes the United States as a country "where thousands have already found asylum and a government that recognizes the true and fair rights of humankind –

[6] "Wie mancher würde hier im freien Amerika gerne einige Abgaben mehr bezahlen, wenn er die schönen Wege, wenn er die gute Polizei ec. hätte, welcher er sich in Deutschland [...] erfreut [...]. Zweitens sollte ein jeder Auswanderer seine physischen Kräfte wohl prüfen, ob er auch den ihn erwartenden Strapazen, Entbehrungen und Arbeiten so trotzen könne, wie es nöthig sein dürfte." (Dunt 1834: 1–2, original spelling)

[7] "[S]o wird bald ein kleines Germanien in diesem Staate entstehen und sich jeder Einwanderer dort um so glücklicher fühlen" (Dunt 1834: 158).

where a peaceful people live who are just as untroubled by a wild yearning to conquer as by misleading sovereigns and who favor reasonable, secure freedom just as they do a wise and prudent government"[8] (Dunt 1834: 117–18). This view reveals less a first-hand observation of United States reality than the image of American society as an almost utopian model that sets the political deficiencies of Europe into strong contrast without criticizing them explicitly. The memory of the Napoleonic era, with its gruesome wars but also socio-political and economic reform efforts, and of the subsequent period of political restoration, marked by the German governments' severe curtailment of civil liberties, surely resonated strongly with Dunt's German readers.

It was in this situation that, paired with continuing economic problems, *Reise nach Texas* sought not only to inspire (further) German emigration to the North American West, but also to capitalize on the period's public debate in German-speaking lands about the advantages and possibilities of German colonial engagement overseas. Dunt's book both contributed to and profited from this discourse. As the text outlined the utopian qualities of the United States and the opportunities Texas provided to German immigrants without calling for political or economic change in Germany that might render further emigration unnecessary, Dunt's *Reise nach Texas* specifically helped to consolidate the status quo at home.

Dunt's praise of the United States strikingly deviates from the way he characterizes the Anglo-Americans in his text. Deeply entrenched in the period's discursive construction of national characters and their rootedness in their environment (Hannaford 1996: 198–99, 256–59), *Reise nach Texas* argues:

> Born in their majority in a country more resembling a desert than the lovely Texas meadows, [the American] grew accustomed to a toughening way of life since early youth and familiar with all the requirements of the first cultivation of a land whose woods the axe and whose soil the plough had never touched [...]. He patiently and bravely faces all hardships and dangers, he does not let anything take him off course; with or without a compass, he travels across the wilderness that no man's foot had ever touched, following his own direction, endowed with a kind of instinct, like the Indian.[9] (124)

The passage squarely follows both the U.S. American and German colonial discourses in endorsing the colonization of a seemingly unsettled and uncultivated North American West by people of Anglo-Saxon stock. In contrast to Anglo-American justifications of westward expansion (McDougall 1997: 57–98), however, Dunt's text does not explain

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[8] "[...] in dem längst Tausende ein Asyl fanden und eine Regierung, anerkennend die wahren, billigen Rechte der Menschheit – worin ein friedliches Volk wohnt, gleich fern von wilder Eroberungssucht als von misleitenden Herrscherlingen, welches gleichermaßen für eine vernünftige nicht schwindelnde Freiheit eingenommen, als sein weises, kluges Gouvernement" (Dunt 1834: 117–18, original spelling and punctuation).

[9] "Größtentheils selbst geboren in einem Lande, welches mehr einer Wüste glich, wie die reizenden Texas'schen Fluren, wurde [der Amerikaner] früh in der Jugend an eine abhärtende Lebensart gewöhnt, mit allen Erfordernissen der ersten Cultur eines Landes bekannt, dessen Wälder nie die Axt, dessen Scholle nie der Pflug berührt [...]. Er steht geduldig und muthig allen Beschwerlichkeiten und Gefahren entgegen, er läßt sich durch nichts irre machen; er reist mit oder ohne Compass durch Wildnisse, welche nie eines Menschen Fuß betrat, bloß seiner Richtung folgend, begabt mit einer Art Instinkt, dem Indianer gleich." (Dunt 1834: 124, original spelling and punctuation)

the Anglo appropriation of western territories with their cultural superiority to other nations. Instead, the book aligns itself with many works of contemporary German writing about the United States which considered the Anglo frontier settlers as somehow 'savage' owing to their history of interaction with native populations. The passage just cited suggests that their lower degree of civilization – manifest in the instincts and adjustment to the wilderness usually attributed to indigenous people – particularly qualified the Anglo-Americans for colonization efforts (Ritzenhofen 1997: 229). This ties in with the way the text frames the cultural differences between U.S. Americans and Germans as a lack of cultural refinement and education among the former. While Dunt pays respect to the hard work, courage, vigor, and love of freedom (Dunt 1834: 54, 122) of the "in all regard enterprising and speculative American"[10] (110), he simultaneously accuses this population – drawing on the most widely exploited stereotype of Anglos in European and Latin American cultural discourses – of crude materialism: "It generally seems as if the American only loves that which earns him money"[11] (92), his text states. To nonetheless encourage Germans to seek a new home among their lot, the book emphasizes that some "highly respectable and respected people"[12] (100) – that is, educated middle-class Anglos – reside in Texas.

Intertwined notions of civilization and social class also inform Dunt's depiction of Mexicans in his book. The first known German-authored text on the region to deal with this population group (Ritzenhofen 1997: 188), *Reise nach Texas* depicts the *Tejanos* (Mexican Texans) as uncultured, filthy thieves with little interest in the hard work of land cultivation (Dunt 1834: 86–87, 120). His account captures the notion of Mexican cultural difference most strikingly in an image of racial ambiguity. Describing a chance encounter with *Tejanos*, the traveler admits: "I believed I had ended up among Indians [...], as one of the Spaniards I met here had a rather brownish-yellow appearance. One can occasionally witness this in these areas, as many Spaniards are said to have interbred with Indians in earlier days"[13] (86). The same scene further reveals the source and extent of the narrator's preconceptions: "My concern that I might be robbed here [...] was based on the large number of not very favorable accounts I had heard from Americans about the local Spaniards according to which they are said to be very prone to stealing"[14] (86). Although Dunt's thoroughly positive experiences among these Mexicans reveals the inaccuracy of his prejudices, the traveler immediately qualifies his new insight on the basis of his own social class bias: *Reise nach Texas* revalidates the previously falsified stereotypes about the Mexicans by pointing out that they do apply, but "only to the very lowest class of that nation"[15] (86).

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[10] "[...] dem in jeder Beziehung so unternehmenden und speculativen Amerikaner" (Dunt 1834: 110, original spelling).

[11] "Es scheint überhaupt, als wenn der Amerikaner nur allein das liebt, was Geld einbringt" (Dunt 1834: 92).

[12] "[...] sehr respectable, achtungswerthe Personen [...]" (Dunt 1834: 100, original spelling).

[13] "Ich glaubte, unter Indianer gerathen zu sein [...], da der eine Spanier, welchen ich hier fand, ein ziemlich braungelbes Ansehen hatte. Man findet dieß mitunter in diesen Gegenden, da viele Spanier sich hier früher mit Indianern vermischt haben sollen" (Dunt 1834: 86, original spelling).

[14] "Meine Besorgniß hier möglicher Weise ausgeplündert zu warden, [...] beruhete auf d[en] vielen eben nicht vortheilhaften Schilderungen, welche ich von Amerikanern über die hiesigen Spanier vernommen hatte, nach welchen sie sehr zum Diebstahl geneigt sein sollen" (Dunt 1834: 86, original spelling).

[15] "[...] nur auf die allerniedrigste Classe dieser Nation" (86, original spelling).

### 4.2 Prince Solms' Texas Emigration Guide

Social class would continue to play a key role in German assessments of and activities pertaining to Texas. In 1842 some twenty German noblemen met in Bieberich near Mainz to found the Society for the Protection of German Emigrants to Texas (*Verein zum Schutz deutscher Auswanderer nach Texas*), popularly also known under their German nicknames *Adelsverein* (Society of Nobles) or *Mainzer Verein* (Mainz Society). The goal of the organization was to foster German settlement in Texas in order to reduce the threat of poverty-induced political unrest in Germany, on the one hand, and to establish a German trading base that would reap them further profits, on the other. In 1843 they purchased land in central Texas to establish a German emigrant colony. Struggling with financial miscalculations, diplomatic difficulties, as well as organizational and logistical problems, the society was bankrupt by 1847 and became defunct three years later. In numerical terms, however, their colonization endeavor was a success and most of the settlements which the German protégés of the organization had founded in Texas were thriving after several difficult years (Gish 2000: 1–2; Lich 1981: 22, 47–49, 53–54, 57). In April 1844, the society appointed Carl of Solms-Braunfels, a Hessian prince and captain of the cavalry in the Austrian Imperial Army, as its commissioner general to Texas. He set off for North America only one month later, reaching Texas in July 1844. Here, his duties, which included managing the property and finances of the Emigration Society, negotiating with government officials and settlers, and organizing the arrival of the first German settlers from the Society, led him through much of South and Central Texas. He returned to Germany in June 1845 (Gish 2000: 2–3, 195–202; Lich 1981: 24, 46–47).

The 1840s saw a massive increase in German-authored texts about Texas (Ritzenhofen 1997: 30, 60, 269; Struve 1996: 45) among which "numerous books and articles subsidized by the Adelsverein presented an enticing image of Texas" (Struve 1996: 48). The only one among that body of works written by one of the aristocratic stockholders in the Society, Prince Carl's 1846 travelogue-cum-emigrant guide *Texas 1844–45 (Texas, geschildert in Beziehung auf seine geographischen, socialen und übrigen Verhältnisse mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die deutsche Colonization: Ein Handbuch für Auswanderer nach Texas*) met with broad interest and controversial discussion in the German press (Ritzenhofen 1997: 40–42, 238). As the German title indicates and the preface of the text confirms, Solms' book responded to growing popular interest in Germany in emigration to Texas (Ritzenhofen 1997: 251, 255–58) and thus contributed to wider public discourse on German colonization endeavors in the New World. The text describes and evaluates the geography and society of the region as well as providing practical information for potential emigrants and promoting the work of Solms' sponsor, the Emigration Society. Typical of accounts encouraging emigration to Texas, Solms' narrative emphasizes the economic benefits large parts of Texas might entail for an industrious (German) settler: a healthy climate, fertile soil, and mineral wealth; plenty of game animals, water, and timber; and an infrastructure of settlements, roads, and navigable rivers. Like Dunt's *Reise nach Texas*, the text blends this utilitarian discourse with a language of aesthetic appeal, creating an image of beauty and abundance – albeit on the condition that the game be hunted and the land be properly cultivated (Solms 1936: 14–40, 114–15, 119–20; Solms 2007: 2–29, 98–99, 104). By stressing the labor required to enjoy the natural bounty of Texas, Solms' *Texas* seeks to entice only those segments of German society to emigrate who had the required vocational

skills, physical abilities, and financial means to make a living under frontier conditions and hence provide profits for the Emigration Society as well as serve the larger project of a German settler colony in Texas (Solms 1936: 115–19; Solms 2007: 100–03).

Although their projected settlements were located in areas with a sizable indigenous population, the Emigration Society downplayed the native presence there and portrayed the region as particularly suitable for the large-scale German settlement that was so crucial to German colonial discourse in general and the organization's project in particular. In addressing Amerindian life, Solms' *Texas* adopts the popular European and North American distinction between 'hostile' and 'friendly' indigenous peoples, according to their respective ways of life and relationships with the white settlers (Velasco Ávila 2000). In contrast to other white observers, the prince's book, however, does not automatically link hostility to a nomadic and friendliness to a sedentary way of life. For instance, the Wacos appear here at once as settled and warlike, manifest in their "very primitive" ("im rohesten, primitivsten Zustande") agriculture and practice of "fight[ing] on horseback" ("fechten zu Pferde") (Solms 1936: 41; Solms 2007: 30, original spelling). Moreover, the text describes all Amerindian nations in a language of perpetual mobility, speaking of tribes who "roam" ("treiben sich [...] umher") or "wander" ("umherziehen") (Solms 1936: 40–41; Solms 2007: 29–30). By linking the Natives to nomadism, Solms' text denies them the status of 'civilized' people associated in Western discourse with permanent settlement and land cultivation and thereby justifies the white appropriation of indigenous lands which colonization by the Emigration Society represents. To further promote this project, the book presents the resident Amerindian nations as a manageable threat that does not impede German settlement in Texas: even though it warns against native cunning, fraudulence, and an inclination to drinking and robbery (Solms 1936: 40–46; Solms 2007: 29–35), Solms' *Texas* assures its readers about the Amerindians and remarks that, "when one [shows them trust and frankness and] treats them justly and honestly, they can be trusted and one can rely on their promises"[16] (Solms 1936: 43).

The character traits *Texas* attributes to the Mexican population similarly reiterate the U.S. American and European colonial discourses that established a hierarchy of civilizations based on race/ethnicity, culture, and social class (Ritzenhofen 1997: 202, 271–72). For instance, the volume remarks that the Mexicans displayed "all mixtures of blood, from the European-looking *hidalgo*, who can trace his ancestors to a real Spanish family, to the uncivilized, wild shepherd, whose color can hardly be distinguished from that of the Indians"[17] (Solms 1936: 46, original italics). Akin to the Natives, Solms claims that the Mexicans were "very seldom [...] brave, but usually deceitful, cunning, and a slave to all vices"[18] (Solms 1936: 47). This depiction facilitates downplaying the military abilities of the Mexicans to assure his German readers that Texas would never be returned to Mexico and the German settlements in the region, especially those run by the Emigration Society, were not in danger.

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[16] "Wenn man ihnen Vertrauen und Offenheit zeigt, sie mit Gerechtigkeit und ohne Hinterlist behandelt, so ist auch ihnen zu trauen, und man kann sich auf ihre Versprechungen verlassen" (Solms 2007: 32).
[17] "[...] alle Mischungen des Blutes vom europäisch-aussehenden *Hidalgo*, der seine Abkunft von einer ächt-spanischen Familie ableitet, bis zu dem wild aussehenden Pferd- oder Viehhüter, dessen Farbe von der des Indianers nicht zu unterscheiden ist" (Solms 2007: 35, original emphasis and spelling).
[18] "[...] selten tapfer, stets falsch, hinterlistig und allen Lastern [...] ergeben" (Solms 2007: 36).

His praise of the independence of Texas notwithstanding, the prince responded to the subsequent annexation of the Republic by the United States with mixed feelings. Although he acknowledged the settlement opportunities Texas as a state in the Union would provide for German emigrants (Solms 1936: 135–39; Solms 2007: 120–24), his view toward the United States was deeply informed by prejudices against the ethnic and social composition of the nation:

> If we look back to the formation of the American race, we find the conglomeration of all nationalities, from Norway and Sweden to Sicily, and from Russia to Portugal and Spain [...]. Those various immigrants left their homes to enter the new promised land either for the sake of gain or for other pressing causes, in which case they may not have belonged to the better classes of their nation. Hence, as one finds the types of all European peoples among the Americans so does he also find among them the vices of all nations, but the good qualities thereof were not transplanted.[19] (Solms 1936: 47)

The logical consequence of Solms' essentialist line of argumentation is that the all-determining impetus of U.S. American life as depicted in his *Texas* was ruthless striving for money and other material gain. As the text claims, "no action is too vile for an American to perform, provided he thinks that he will profit thereby"[20] (Solms 1936: 48). This apparently unique concern with money manifests itself to Prince Carl, as it did earlier to Detlef Dunt, in the U.S. Americans' greater individual independence and weaker ties to place and people as well as their appreciation of adventurous, speculating, and cunning minds. At the same time that his narrative expresses admiration for the bravery, persistence, and enterprising spirit of the Anglo settlers on the Texas frontier, it scrutinizes their presumed unhealthy habits, weak physical constitution, dislike of physical labor, and disregard for the comforts of home (Solms 1936: 8, 25, 33, 38–40, 47–50, 75, 94–95; Solms 2007: vi, 13, 22, 27–29, 36–39, 64, 79–80). The prince's line of argument thus reiterates the German societal discourse of the period that symbolically restricted the rising political and economic power of the United States *vis-à-vis* the Old World by arguing that the former was culturally inferior to the latter. The degree of anti-Americanism in *Texas* is somewhat reminiscent of the complaint in nineteenth century British travel writing about the imperfect civilization in its former colony, which was marked by America's lack of the social order, manners, and cultural history of Great Britain (Ritzenhofen 1997: 234).

Probably the most visible sign of the hypocrisy and degradation Solms saw at work in U.S. American society was the practice of slavery. His *Texas* harshly scrutinizes the slaves' chattel status, which put them completely at the mercy of their masters and over-

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[19] "Gehen wir auf die Entstehung dieser sogenannten amerikanischen Nation zurück, so finden wir, daß eine Mischung alter europäischer Völker, von Schweden und Norwegen bis nach Sicilien, und von Rußland bis nach Spanien und Portugal, ihr das Dasein gab. Diese verschiedenen Einwanderer verließen ihre Heimath, um in das neue gelobte Land zu ziehen, entweder des Gewinnes halber, oder auch wohl aus anderen dringenden Ursachen, und gehörten in diesem Falle nicht zu dem besseren Theile ihrer Nation. Wie man in der amerikanischen Nation also den Typus aller europäischen wieder findet, so finden sich auch die Laster aller dieser Nationen bei derselben wieder, ohne daß die guten Eigenschaften sich mitfortgepflanzt hätten." (Solms 2007: 36–37, original spelling)

[20] "[E]s ist keine Schlechtigkeit so groß, die der Amerikaner nicht beginge, wenn er seinen Vortheil dabei zu finden glaubt" (Solms 2007: 37, original spelling).

seers (Solms 1936: 50–52; Solms 2007: 39–42). Above all, his narrative targets the double standard of a people "whose country is the freest on the globe, and whose laws and institutions are the most liberal in the world"[21] (Solms 1936: 50), and which places high value on upward social mobility through hard work and self-improvement, on the one hand, but does everything to keep the same from their enslaved black population, on the other (Solms 1936: 52–53; Solms 2007: 42). He continues by countering the popular argument of U.S. American pro-slavery discourse that blacks lacked the intelligence and capacity for feeling to qualify as humans, as he points out: "Among the darkies who were not so oppressed in their early age as to be irrational, I have found [a greater] honesty, faithfulness, attachment, and gratitude[,] and [...] by all means a far nobler disposition than [among] many Americans or Americanized Europeans"[22] (Solms 1936: 53). Nonetheless, he not only focuses exclusively on articulations of subservience among his list of black emotions but also reiterates the equally popular climate theory, according to which blacks were more suitable for heavy physical labor in hot climates than whites (Solms 1936: 25, 53; Solms 2007: 14, 42) and thus justifies the subordinate social status and exploitation of black labor despite his rejection of the excesses of slavery.

As in Dunt's travel account, Solms' negative picture of Anglo-Texan society serves as the contrary of an idealized portrait of the Germans (Ritzenhofen 1997: 213–14). These appear in his *Texas* as the model nation according to a feudal ideal, possessing everything the republican, more egalitarian Americans supposedly lacked: diligence and discipline, but also generosity, loyalty, and trust, physical robustness and mental strength drawn from a strong attachment to place, family, and culture – hence morally superior to other nations but also vulnerable to exploitation by cunning, materialist minds (Solms 1936: 25, 40, 47–48, 56; Solms 2007: 13–14, 29, 37, 45). Accordingly, the prince's text urges German emigrants to preserve their native culture in Texas rather than assimilating to Anglo society (Solms 1936: 49, 98, 100; Solms 2007: 38–39, 82–84). This narrative voices the widespread uneasiness among German conservatives toward the social and geographic mobility that was challenging the established social order of their societies (Brenner 1991: 38–41): All the while it promotes German trans-Atlantic mobility, Solms' *Texas* sets the unidirectional movement of the German emigrants, driven by their quest for a new, permanent home, against and above the greed-driven movement of Anglo Americans. Even though it was the American mobility and capitalist economy that was triggering the economic development of Texas, the prince's text assured its German readers of their cultural superiority to U.S. society, even when forced by economic conditions to emigrate to America.

### 4.3 Jakob Thran's *Meine Auswanderung nach Texas*

One of the Germans who emigrated to Texas under the auspices of the Society during the mid-1840s was the schoolteacher and trader Jakob Thran. A handbook promoting the organization's German settlement project had enticed this farmer's son from Schleswig to try his luck across the Atlantic. Departing from Bremerhaven in August 1846, Thran

[21] "[...] dessen Land das freieste der Welt ist, dessen Gesetze und Institutionen die freisinnigsten der Welt sind" (Solms 2007: 40).

[22] "Unter denjenigen Farbigen aber, bei welchen man nicht von früh auf das Denken überhaupt ganz unterdrücken konnte, fand ich mehr Redlichkeit, mehr Treue, mehr Anhänglichkeit, mehr Dankbarkeit, überhaupt edlere Gesinnungen als bei manchem Amerikaner oder amerikanischen Europäer" (Solms 2007: 42).

and his family reached Galveston in October. While his wife and children remained there, Jakob set out with a group of fellow immigrants to assess the conditions of the Emigration Society's settlement of New Braunfels in the Texas Hill Country. Thoroughly disillusioned with the situation of the German emigrants there, he returned to Galveston to collect his family and go back to Germany for good. In 1848 he published an account of his journey, *Meine Auswanderung nach Texas unter dem Schutz des Mainzer Vereins: Ein Warnungs-Beispiel für Auswanderungslustige*[23]. As the subtitle of the text indicates, the book presents the writer's personal journey as a warning to German readers against moving to Texas as a protégé of the Emigration Society. Like other travelogues focusing on settlement in the area, Thran's narrative blends a utilitarian discourse on the potential of the region for agriculture and trade with picturesque descriptions of nature which appeal to readers' emotions. Its line of argumentation, diametrically opposed to emigration-promoting texts like Detlef Dunt's or Carl of Solms-Braunfels's writings, it establishes a set of topoi that was to become typical of returned German emigrant narratives: *Meine Auswanderung nach Texas* argues that the climate of the region was insalubrious and the soil unsuitable for many European crops; wild animals posed a danger to settlers, and the absence of transportation routes isolated their towns from one another (Thran 2012: 41, 46, 60, 63–68, 71–78, 80–82, 85). Much of the landscape appears accordingly as either barren space or as over-abundant wilderness that could not be tamed and cultivated (49–55, 58, 67, 74–76).

The inhabitants of the region fared little better than its nature. Thran's *Auswanderung* completely ignores the Mexican presence and frames the indigenous peoples as an integral part of 'untamable' Texan nature, which threatened the spread of civilization in the region (56, 58, 62, 78–79, 90). The narrative singles out the Comanches as a particular challenge, as they not only represented "the strongest tribe" ("der stärkste Stamm") who were "hostile to all other residents of Texas" ("allen anderen Bewohnern von Texas feindlich gegenüber", 80) but also stood in the way of the German colonization of this 'unsettled' land, as the territory of the Emigration Society was located on Comanche hunting grounds (27, 37, 59, 62–64, 75, 80). Typical of a returned emigrant's text warning against migration to the United States, the book finds many faults with U.S. American culture. Once more, Anglo-Americans appear here as a society of selfish individuals driven by a desire for personal profit, whose scheming manner the text partially blames for the misery many German immigrants struggled with (36, 46–47, 49, 73, 87, 94–109, 115–16). As the book states: "The American is never more willing to accommodate a German than when the latter is ill and provided with good clothes and a certain wealth; he rarely errs in his intrigues to gain possession of these things"[24] (115). In contrast to Solms' similarly harsh critique, however, Thran's *Auswanderung* does not scrutinize Anglo-Americans for their practice of slavery in the region but exclusively targets the peculiar institution as an economic factor: Based on the climate theory also put forth in Solms' *Texas*, Thran's book presents slave ownership as an essential prerequisite for successfully operating a sugar or cotton plantation in Texas. As their purchase, upkeep, and management was

[23] "My Emigration to Texas under the Protection of the Mainz Society: A Warning to Those Inclined to Emigrate" The English translation of this and all following excerpts from Thran's text are mine (A.H.).
[24] "Nie ist der Amerikaner bereitwilliger einen Deutschen aufzunehmen, als wenn er krank, mit guten Kleidern und einigem Vermögen versehen ist; selten täuscht er sich in seiner Berechnung, sich in den Besitz dieser Dinge setzen zu können" (Thran 2012: 115).

beyond the means and knowledge of most German immigrants, the text argues, slavery excluded the Germans from a significant sector of the Texan economy (68).

*Meine Auswanderung nach Texas* is the only known book-length report by a returned emigrant who had attempted to settle in Texas with the Emigration Society (Ritzenhofen 1997: 48). Although factually correct in criticizing their exaggerated promises, organizational incompetence, and ignorance of conditions in Texas that brought misery upon many of its charges, the highly fraught language of the book relentlessly denounces the Society (Thran 2012: 26–30, 37–38, 46, 59–64, 76–90). Thran's account abounds with images of German emigrant misery, loss, and disorientation: widows and orphans straying about or waiting in vain for provisions; persons losing their possessions to scheming Anglos or thievish Natives, and others succumbing to the infectious diseases which thrive in the humid climate (26–28, 37, 46–47, 60–63, 66, 68, 71–72, 74, 78, 81–86, 88–89). Taken together, they paint a picture of German triple victimhood: to the land, its resident populations, and the German organization that failed to protect them:

> To date, nobody has seen, not to mention received, a single crumb, yet several thousand people have been deceived and thus lost one or several years of their lives, their work, their fortunes; thousands have died as victims of the ignorance and carelessness of the Emigration Society; many parents have lost their children, many children their parents – in a distant, alien, raw, and desolate land.[25] (64)

In sum, for Thran Texas had turned into "the great grave of German emigrants" ("zum großen Grabe deutscher Auswanderer") (34).

However, Thran's *Auswanderung* scrutinizes not only Texas but the German emigration wave to the United States in general. The text depicts conditions in North America as a danger to the well-being of the German immigrants, on the one hand, and emigration as a loss to the German nation, on the other. In line with the anti-American strain of Solms' *Texas*, the book argues that, rather than gaining freedom of speech and economic opportunities, most German emigrants encountered loss in the New World. Their lack of English skills, money, and entrepreneurial knowledge placed them at the bottom of an unbridled capitalist economy (39–41, 57, 92–93, 97, 107, 110–11, 116–18), and where they 'made it' by assimilating to Anglo culture, they subsequently either estranged themselves from or took advantage of their less fortunate compatriots (33, 36, 41–43, 90–91, 93, 109–10). As Ritzenhofen observes, such a vision, common in literature denouncing emigration, of German trans-Atlantic mobility as leading either to economic or moral failure "serves to justify [the authors'] own behavior, as it allows them to reinterpret their return to their home country from an escape or their personal defeat as a success" (1997: 253, my translation). Rather than undermining his credibility, Thran's personal struggles as a failed emigrant actually endow him with the necessary discursive authority to speak on the subject. Yet, ironically, while his text refutes German emigration in general and the Texas settlement project of the Emigration Society in particular, Thran, in

[25] "Bis jetzt hat [...] noch niemand eine Krume gesehen, geschweige erhalten, wohl aber sind mehrere tausend Menschen um ein und mehrere Jahre ihres Lebens, ihre[r] Arbeit, ihre[s] Vermögens betrogen, Tausende als Opfer der Unkenntniß und Nachlässigkeit des Vereins gestorben, viele Eltern kinderlos, viele Kinder elternlos geworden—in einem fernen, fremden, noch rohen, wüsten Lande." (64; original spelling).

thus positioning himself with his book, not only actively contributed to the German colonial discourse of his time but also profited from the public debate as well as from the very wave of emigration from Germany to North America which he blames for his misery in Texas.

## 5. Conclusion

Detlef Dunt's *Reise nach Texas*, Carl of Solms-Braunfels's *Texas 1844–45*, and Jakob Thran's *Meine Auswanderung nach Texas* can be considered representational of the hopes and anxieties which an intended permanent move to a distant country and foreign culture generated in many Germans who were considering emigration to North America in the nineteenth century. The three texts draw upon established conventions of earlier U.S. American travel accounts of Texas, such as the characterization of the Mexican or indigenous populations of the region as inferior civilizations lacking the diligence and abilities of Anglo-Saxons to properly cultivate the land or the blend of utilitarian and aesthetic discourses which depicted the territory as economically and emotionally either appealing or appalling. In so doing, the German travelogues established their own authority to speak on the subject from the vantage point of a presumed superior civilization, whose migration to Texas would benefit not only the migrants themselves but their destination, as well. This is all the more important as German travelogues of Texas from the 1830s and '40s target an audience – Germans considering emigration – whose position in the region would often be precarious, because many German settlers in Texas would soon be sure to be struggling with poverty and the hardships of frontier life in a culture often enough not welcoming to them.

My analysis of German travelogues of Texas from 1830 through 1848 is situated at the intersection of transnational American Studies and a Literary Studies approach to the study of colonialism, specifically the scholarship of nineteenth-century German narrative representations of the United States and the German experience there (Brenner 1991; Ritzenhofen 1997), on the one hand, and the analysis of how narrative texts have contributed to colonial discourses and practices (Said 1994; Rowe 2000), on the other. Long before they became official colonial powers at the end of the nineteenth century, the European nations and the United States debated, and especially in the U.S. American case also realized, the extension of their territories or the establishment of settler colonies abroad. In addition to illuminating the German views of and migration to nineteenth-century Texas in the context of the ongoing Anglo-American colonization of the region, Dunt's, Solms', and Thran's travelogues also provide a springboard for a critical reflection on the experiences of migration in general, a subject that is all the more relevant with regard to the current public debate in Germany. Here, discussions of the topic tend to focus on little wanted groups of newcomers – mainly poor labor migrants and refugees from developing countries –, who are commonly framed as a 'problem', not only when they are struggling to integrate themselves into German society but also when their presence inspires nativist fears of cheap labor competition and cultural *Überfremdung* (alienation through a massive influx of strangers). Dunt's, Solms', and Thran's narratives poignantly remind us that, some 170 years ago in Texas, it was German immigrants who triggered the same anxieties among the region's dominant society.

A comparison of the depictions of Anglo-Americans, Mexicans, and indigenous nations in the German travelogues of nineteenth-century Texas with the views of the respective populations circulating in contemporary political discourses and media representations in Germany or the United States further reveals the striking longevity and stability of stereotypes about alien population groups, especially those considered inferior due to their ethno-racial, religious, or cultural differences. The Texas travelogues of Dunt, Solms, and Thran can thus teach us the need for a differentiated treatment of one's own culture as well as that of others as we strive to understand the way they interact with the causes, processes, and effects of migration.

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