

LONE STAR GERMAN

by *Winfred Lehmann*

Linguists who have studied languages of the new settlers in this country generally have dealt with the spoken tradition. They have gone to the settlements and collected material from speakers who learned the immigrant languages from their parents, companions, and social organizations. Such linguistic collections have been made for Texas German, which is charted in a handsome dialect atlas produced by Professor Glenn Gilbert.¹ But the German settlers who came to Texas did not limit their use of the language to everyday concerns. Relationships of some of the early settlers with the German literary traditions were strong. It is interesting then to examine the German language used in the writings as well as the spoken language in Texas. Before dealing with this literary German I will note briefly its antecedents.

Texas's revolution fascinated German intellectuals in the early days of the republic. An early account, Hermann Ehrenberg's *Texas und seine Revolution*, went through several editions after its first appearance in 1843.² Ehrenberg fought at Goliad, was captured with Fannin there, but with two other Germans was spared. In 1842 he returned to Germany, to teach English at the University of Halle. His book, which was widely read in Germany, contained on its title page a quotation from one of the two great German classical writers: (Friedrich Schiller, *Wilhelm Tell* Act 4.2, ll. 2425-2426)

*Das Alte stürzt, es ändert sich die Zeit,
Und neues Leben blüht aus den Ruinen.*
Past things crumble, the times change,
And new life springs up out of the ruins.

While Ehrenberg purposefully invoked Schiller's drama commending rebellion against tyranny, Texas's relations with Germany's other great classical writer, Goethe, were less direct. Among the early German settlements was one of those Utopian communities that were established by intellectuals at the time, by Ralph Waldo Emerson and his friends as well as by European visionaries. This settlement was known as the Bettina Colony. It was founded in

Winfred Lehmann is Professor of German at the University of Texas at Austin.

1847, at Elm Creek and the Llano River. While the proposed colony of the English intellectuals with Samuel Taylor Coleridge remained a dream, the Bettina Colony became an actuality, if only for a brief period.

The colony was named after Bettina von Arnim (1785-1859), the wife of one of the prominent German poets and intellectuals of the day, Ludwig Achim von Arnim (1781-1831). In her younger days Bettina had been in close touch with Goethe, publishing in 1835 after his death a romantic work entitled *Goethes Briefwechsel mit einem Kinde*. She was a part of the German intellectual group centered in Berlin that included a name prominent in early Texas history, Baron Ottfried Hans von Meusebach. In keeping with the democratic spirit of the day he called himself simply John O. Meusebach after he came to Texas.

The leading German literary figure directly connected with the Germans in Texas was August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben (1798-1874). Hoffmann von Fallersleben was a vigorous revolutionary as well as a recognized poet. His best known poem today is the subsequently notorious *Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles*, which seems an odd work to have come from a revolutionary figure, but which can be understood in the context of his time. Five years after writing this poem he published his Texas poems—*Texanische Lieder*—of 1846.³ These were inspired by a meeting in 1843 with Gustav Dresel, who had returned from Texas, and by Ehrenberg's *Texas und seine Revolution*; Hoffmann von Fallersleben also met Meusebach when he returned to Germany to visit his brother. The *Texanische Lieder* include the poem from which the title for this paper has been derived, *Der Stern von Texas*. I cite one stanza of this poem and two from other poems in the collection to give an idea of the style and sentiment. The last is a paraphrase of an old German folksong, *Es, es, und es . . .*, also commemorating departure. My translations attempt to catch the feeling and style of the German, rather than to be a word-for-word gloss.

1. DER STERN VON TEXAS

*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.*

1. THE STAR OF TEXAS

On to Texas! On to Texas!
Where the star in the blue field
A new world indicates,
Every heart for right and freedom
And for truth it animates—
There my spirit yearns to go.

5. *EIN GUADALUPELIED*

3. In dem Tal der Guadalupe
 Fragt mich nie ein Polizist
 Was ich denke, was ich schreibe
 Ob ich dies, ob jenes treibe
 Ob ich bin ein guter Christ.

5. A SONG OF THE GUADALUPE

In the Guadalupe valley
 There a cop would never search
 What my thoughts or what my jotting
 Whether good or bad I'm plotting,
 Or even if I go to church.

20. *ADE DEUTSCHLAND*

(Aus dem Munde eines Handwerksburschen in Galveston)
 'Raus, 'raus, 'raus und 'raus,
 Aus Deutschland muß ich 'raus
 Ich schlag mir Deutschland aus dem Sinn
 und wandre jetzt nach Texas hin.
 Mein Glück will ich probieren
 marschieren.

20. FAREWELL GERMANY

(From the mouth of a journeyman in Galveston)

Out, out, out and out,
 From Germany I'll get out;
 I'll banish Germany from my soul
 And turn to Texas as my goal.
 I'll get a better thing,
 by traveling.

These poems, prompted in part by the political activities in Texas, in part by its romantic aura, and in part by experiences of lack of freedom in Germany, illustrate the literary heritage of the early German settlers. Such intellectual interests were also maintained by those who took the advice of Prince Carl of Solms-Braunfels that they include among their baggage an eight-volume set of Shakespeare's plays.⁴ The German language and literature of Texas had and maintained close ties with German culture, through continued personal and literary contacts. These may be clearest in the collections of letters and other papers maintained by various libraries, such as the DRT Library at the Alamo, San Antonio.

In dealing with the German writings produced in Texas we must examine them in their social setting. This setting led writers to maintain the standard language, whether in letters, in the minutes and records of clubs, or in literary works proper. I will illustrate some characteristics of the German by citing

from one such work, a novel by Pater Alto Hörmann published in 1866 with the title: *Die Tochter Tehuans: oder Texas im vorigen Jahrhundert*.⁵

Pater Hörmann was born in Altdorf near Landshut, Bavaria, in 1829, came to this country in 1852, and became a Benedictine. On July 1, 1859, he was sent by his order to Texas to establish a Benedictine monastery at the San Jose mission near San Antonio. This plan was disrupted by the Civil War and never carried out; Hörmann returned north in 1864, and died in 1867.

His novel tells the story of Jesús, the son of the commandant of the San Jose mission in 1750, and that of Rosa, a daughter of a Frenchwoman and the leading Indian among the Christian Indians in the mission. Overwhelmed by Comanches, all members of the mission colony but Jesús and Rosa were killed. Rosa was carried off by the Comanches, but rescued by Jesús. After a hairbreadth escape they were married and settled down in Texas.

The first sentence of the novel illustrates one characteristic of the language in Texas, the adoption of new words for the new scene. This first sentence of the first chapter, entitled *Leben auf der Prärie*, could however be a respectable opener of any German novel in this vein, if only because of its length: "Es war um das Jahr 1750, im Spätsommer, als ein junger Spanier, Don Hesu Novarro, über die texanische Prärie ritt, auf dem Wege—wenn man eine durch wenige Spuren erkennbare Fährte einen Weg nennen kann—von Monterey nach San Jose." 'It was around 1750, in late summer, that a young Spaniard, Don Jesús Novarro, was riding over the Texan prairie, on the road—if one can call a trail barely recognizable through a few traces a road—from Monterey to San Jose.' When we examine the language, we note that the grammatical rules of German are observed; verbs in dependent clauses are correctly placed at the end of the clause rather than given the English order found in much of spoken Texas German. As far as the essential grammar is concerned, the novel might have been written and published in Germany. I have noted only one unusual, but not un-German grammatical construction: 46.1 "und hereintrat Don Novarro, heil und rüstig, wie immer" 'and in trod Don Novarro, healthy and energetic as usual.'

Yet these passages also illustrate the effect of the new location for German, especially on stylistic and rhythmic patterns and on word forms. I give only a few additional examples of these. Later these become more prominent, as documented by scholars like Wilson,⁶ especially in the spoken language. If German had been maintained in the state as it was in Pennsylvania, a characteristic new variety might have developed in Texas too. These early writings indicate the beginnings of such a development which include modifications we can label Anglicisms, some of which are illustrated here.

One stylistic feature based on English is the use of the present participle in a periphrastic construction, for example

132.1 Wußte Don Hesu, da Sie allein noch lebend waren?

Did Don Jesús know that you alone were still living?

English words have also had their influence, such as the verb 'know' (*wissen* used instead of the more appropriate *kennen*):

9.2 Sie wußten eine bessere Furt.

They knew a better ford.

The most striking influences, as might be expected, are found in the words and idioms based on English:

22.2 Verhehle mir nichts, wenn dir etwas fehlt.

Don't conceal anything from me, if you need something.

34.1 wir haben ein Auge auf ihn

we have an eye on him

65.1 ich bezahle sie wieder

I'll pay them back.

67.1 Sieh hierher, Hesu!

Now look here, Jesús.

Some of the Anglicisms are awkward, verging on ungrammatical patterns, such as the use of *mehr* 'more' with an adjective to make a comparative:

28.2 Alasan war mehr kompakt als vor fünf Jahren.

Alasan was more solid than five years earlier.

Other such patterns consist of prepositions with a relative pronoun:

101.1 auf der Anhöhe, unter der der Zug . . . vorbeikommen mußte

on the heights under which the troop had to come by

104.1 Das war nicht, nach was sie spähten

That wasn't what they were looking for.

Although a German purist may object to some of these patterns, they illustrate that Pater Hörmann was not hesitant to be creative with his language. He invented new forms to meet his needs, such as 80.1 *wadbar* 'capable of being waded.' And he used Spanish words when these were appropriate:

14.1 Die Cavalleros hatten eine schlechte Zeit.

The riders had a hard time.

Moreover, he even introduced pidgin German for the speech of the Indians:

14.1 Kind unseres Häuptlings—Comanche will seinen Skalp haben, aber Kind hat gut Roß und gut Herz—Die Diebe Skalp nicht bekommen.

Child of our captain—Comanches want to have his scalp, but child has good horse and good heart—The thieves not get scalp.

In the well-known pattern of our western stories, such pidgin language is also used by an American in speaking to an Indian:

98.1 Wo Tochter Tehuan?

Where daughter of Tehuan?

These few excerpts may illustrate that the German in the novel was a living language, developing a different flavor from the German language of Europe. Pater Hörmann was apparently as much under the spell of the changed social patterns as under that of the new location, which I illustrate by a further quotation:

119.2 Ovids Klagen im Exil sind leicht erklärlich, wenn der italienische Himmel so prachtvoll ist wie dieser. Er ist es nicht.

Ovid's complaints in his exile are easily explainable if the Italian sky is as splendid as this one (of Texas). It is not.

These excerpts may illustrate that Texas German in the hands of Pater Hörmann deserves respect for its liveliness and receptivity to new patterns.

A few longer excerpts may give some evidence of his capabilities as a novelist. The first illustrates a sentimentality not unknown among his contemporary novelists in Germany.

14.2 Die Mutter? Wer beschreibt den stillen Jubel des Mutterherzens beim Wiedersehen ihres einzigen Sohnes, eines Sohnes, der ihr Stolz war, und ihre Stütze sein sollte. Sie hielt ihn umschlungen, als wollte sie ihn nie mehr aus ihren Armen lassen.

"Wie du doch gewachsen bist!" sagte sie endlich, indem sie ihn von Kopf bis zu Fuss betrachtete.

Lassen wir sie allein.

The mother? Who could describe the quiet jubilation in his mother's heart on seeing again her only son, a son who was her pride and was to be her support. She embraced him as though she wouldn't let him out of her arms again.

"How you have grown!" she said finally while she examined him from head to foot.

Let us leave them alone.

A further passage illustrates his enthusiasm for the Texas landscape and his capacity for describing it.

30.2 Zur Zeit des Nordwindes ist der Anblick der Quellen des San Antonio majestätisch. Dichter Nebel hebt sich über dieselbe; über der Hauptquelle erhebt sich eine hohe Nebelsäule, wie ein Dom über eine Stadt; der Lauf des Flusses bis zur Medina ist durch dieselben Wolken bezeichnet, die wie weisser Rauch aus einem Feuerstrom aufsteigen, und, auf dem Kamme von dem Sturme zerrissen, einer lebhaften Phantasie die abenteuerlichsten Gestalten in raschen Szenen vorstellen.

At the time of the north-wind the view of the sources of the San Antonio river is majestic. Thick mist enshrouds the entire ravine and rises above it; over the chief source a high column of fog rises like a cathedral over a city; the course of the river to Medina is marked by means of the same clouds, which rise like white smoke from a conflagration, and torn on the crest of the storm depict to a lively imagination the most remarkable figures in rapidly changing scenes.

A last excerpt may illustrate Hörmann's use of conversation.

131.2 "Haben Sie Indianer in der Nähe gesehen?"

"Sie verfolgten uns bis an den Rio San Miguel, wo wir sie aus dem Gesichte verloren."

- "Wann war das?"
 "Gestern Abend bei Sonnenuntergang, als der Sturm anfang."
- "Wie viele waren ihrer?"
 "Wir zählten elf."
 "Von welchem Stamm?"
 "Es waren Comanches."
 "Wie weit waren sie verfolgt?"
 "Vom Zauberberge an."
 "Ist der Stamm der Comanches dort? Ich dachte doch, sie wären in San Jose."
 "Have you seen Indians in the neighborhood?"
 "They followed us up to Rio San Miguel, where we lost sight of them."
 "When was that?"
 "Last night at sundown, when the storm began."
 "How many were there of them?"
 "We counted eleven."
 "Of what tribe?"
 "They were Comanches."
 "How far were you followed?"
 "From the Magic Mountain on."
 "Is the Comanche tribe there? I thought they were in San Jose."

These passages may give a fuller idea of Hörmann's prose and of his capabilities as a story teller.

Like the prose, the German of poetry written here is grammatical. It may charm more for its homely sentiments than by its brilliance, whether stylistic or literary. As illustrations of early Texas German poetry I cite two stanzas from poems by Fritz Goldbeck. Goldbeck came to Texas in 1844. In 1895 he published his collection of poems, or as he called it "prose in verses": *Seit fünfzig Jahren* 'For fifty years.'

The following stanza is the first of a poem to the farmer.

48. DER FARMER

*Schaut euch nur unsern Farmer an,
 Wie der zufrieden leben kann.
 Es kümmert ihn die Welt nicht viel,
 Ein sorglos Leben ist sein Ziel.*

THE FARMER

Look at our farmer tenderly
 How he can live contentedly.
 The world rarely grips his soul,
 A carefree life his only goal.

The second example gives Goldbeck's views on his literary skills:

3. *DER URSPRUNG DES LIEDES* (2. Theil. 1896)
Ich bin kein Studiosus,
Kein Mann der Wissenschaft.
Was thut's? Natur, die Mutter,
Gab mir Empfindungskraft.
3. THE ORIGIN OF SONG
 I'm not an intellectual
 Of technical proclivity.
 So what! From mother nature
 I've got sensitivity.

These two stanzas may illustrate that the German used in poetry, like Hörmann's prose German, was correct and grammatical, even innovative.

With their roots in the writings of the German Romantics and the successors of these like Hoffmann von Fallersleben, the Texas writers of German favored straightforward presentation, like that of the folksongs and tales beloved by the Romantics. Plain and simple in rhythm, the language of these writers deserves to be studied more extensively for its own patterns, and for its relations to the English of the time as well as to the German of the homeland.

NOTES

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1. Glenn G. Gilbert, *Deutscher Sprachatlas. Regionale Sprachatlanten #5*. Linguistic Atlas of Texan German (Austin: University of Texas, 1974); and by the same author, *Texas Studies in Bilingualism* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1970).

2. Hermann Ehrenberg, *Texas und seine Revolution* (Leipzig: Wigand, 1843). The reprint in 1844 by the same publisher has the title: *Der freiheitskampf in Texas im jahre 1836*. That of 1845 has the title: *Fahrten und schicksale eines deutschen in Texas*.

3. August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben, *Texanische Lieder*, ed. by Julius Goebel (Sonderabdruck der Deutsch-Amerikanischen Geschichtsblätter. Jahrbuch der Deutsch-Amerikanischen Gesellschaft von Illinois. Jahrgang 1918-19).

4. Carl, Prinz zu Solms-Braunfels, *Texas. Ein Handbuch für Auswanderer nach Texas* (Frankfurt a.M.: Sauerländer, 1846).

5. Pater Alto Hörmann, O.S.B., *Die Tochter Tehuans: oder Texas im vorigen Jahrhundert* (Cincinnati: Benziger, 1866). The English version is *The Daughter of Tehuan: or Texas of the Past Century*, trans. from the German by Alois Braun (San Antonio: Standard, 1932). It includes a biographical sketch of the author.

The quotations from Pater Alto Hörmann's *Die Tochter Tehuans* are taken from the edition by the Fredericksburg Publishing Company, 1917; references are to the first or second column of a page for readier location. I have examined earlier editions in the Barker Texas History Center, as well as other materials not listed in the brief bibliography.

6. Wilson, Joseph B., "The Texas German of Lee and Fayette Counties," *Rice University Studies* 47 (1960): 83-98.

7. Fritz Goldbeck, *Seit fünfzig Jahren. Prosa in Versen*. (Selbstverlag des Verfassers, San Antonio: Schott, 1895).