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The Reception of British and Irish Authors in Europe

Series Editor: Elinor Shaffer
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The Reception of Charles Dickens in Europe Volume I

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Chapter 1 "Dickens in Germany: The Nineteenth Century"

(pp. 19-34)

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1 Dickens in Germany: The Nineteenth Century

Antje Anderson

Dickens was among the most popular of British authors in Germany in the nineteenth century. Between 1837, when early instalments of *Pickwick* appeared, and 1849–50, when *David Copperfield* was translated, Dickens was more widely read than any other British novelist, and perhaps more admired than any *German* novelist. After *Pickwick*, each of his novels was translated, usually quickly, and many appeared in multiple translations. They were also available in English in Tauchnitz editions (Todd and Bowden 1988). Literary magazines reviewed them regularly until the 1850s. Critics suggested them as a model for German novelists. Reviews were less frequent and enthusiastic after 1850, but the general readership still loved Dickens, while the fledging academic discipline of English Studies in Germany began to examine his work as early as the 1870s.

The earliest reception studies appeared in the early 1900s. These now amount to a large corpus to which I am deeply indebted.[1] What follows addresses the fraught question: What socio-cultural and socio-political factors shaped German readers' response to Dickens?[2] The overall pattern of his

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[1] Cf. Price (1919, 1950), Gummer (1937), Reinhold (MS ca. 1979; 1990) and McInnes (1991) for Dickens reception, and Norbert Bachleitner (1989, 1990, 1993, 1997, 2000) for an immense body of work on the reception of British fiction in general in nineteenth-century Germany. The following account is for the most part based on published scholarship and reprinted sources, where many of the cited reviews (and others) are to be found in the original German in various anthologies concerned with the emergence of Realism in the German novel, and even with the specific reception of British fiction (cf. Steinecke 1975–76 and 1984, Ruckhäberle and Widhammer 1977, and most notably Bachleitner 1990, 281–366). Unfortunately, the British and international anthologies of criticism like Ford and Lauriat (1961), Collins (1971) and Hollington (1995) have no German equivalent, either in German or in the original language.

[2] For the sake of brevity, I will sidestep the historical problem of how to define 'Germany' in the nineteenth century – for the purposes of this chapter, 'Germany' will mean the linguistic community of people who spoke German

German reception closely resembles the British reception, and the reaction to Dickens in Germany relates to the changing German relationship with Britain and with British fiction between 1800 and 1900. Mid-century, a perceived (if occasionally contested) need for British literary models gives way to a (sometimes stridently expressed) pride in German literary accomplishments. This change affected the German response to Dickens.

Dickens's popularity in Germany was not exceptional. Dickens was but one of many British authors whom Germans read with enthusiasm in the nineteenth century. The demand for translations of foreign novels (mostly British and French) in German-speaking countries was astonishingly high and often remarked upon. Other popular authors were Scott, Marryat, Bulwer-Lytton, Thackeray and the sensation novelists. Norbert Bachleitner points out that literary translation was virtually an industry: critics and translators complained about the mechanical and poorly paid work in so-called 'translation factories' (Bachleitner 1989).[3]

Bachleitner claims that in 1845 almost half of the 540 novels published in Germany were novels in translation, 105 of them (20 per cent) from English (1989, 4–5; 1990, 2). Roughly 10 per cent of novels published in 1820 were English; in 1865, it was still 8 per cent. Alberto Martino shows that up to 30 per cent of the stock in some circulating libraries was made up of translated English and French works (1990, 677).

Literary magazines often reviewed translations more frequently and enthusiastically than they did German novels. The *Magazin für die Literatur des Auslandes* and *Europa* were devoted to reviewing and excerpting foreign books. The *Grenzboten*, edited by Julian Schmidt, put forward British novels, particularly Dickens's, as a model for German Realist fiction in the 1840s and 1850s. *Pickwick*, which first appeared in a translation by H. Roberts in 1837–38 (Bick et al. 1989, 68), spawned German-language imitations such as the *Deutsche Pickwickier* and the *Berliner Pickwickier* (cf. Gummer 1937, 10–11). To judge from the number of editions and translations that appeared between 1837 and 1900, *Pickwick* was the most popular Dickens novel in Germany in the nineteenth century – Wolfgang Bick and his co-authors (1989) list a total of 14 different editions of four separate translations before 1898. *David Copperfield* had 13 editions, *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby* 12.

The press was correspondingly enthusiastic about *Pickwick*, *Twist*, and *Nickleby*. After a hiatus in the 1840s, *David Copperfield* was hailed as Dickens's best novel since *Nickleby*, and later as his best novel bar none.[4] Each subsequent novel was translated immediately upon publication; no finished novel went through fewer than five separate editions in the nineteenth century.[5] The number of reviews dropped after *David Copperfield* but remained frequent. *Hard Times*, for example, was reviewed in 1854 in the *Grenzboten*, in the *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung* and in *Europa* (cf. Bachleitner 1990, 281–364). And, the *Grenzboten* reviewed all novels as they appeared (sometimes the original and the translation) up to *A Tale of Two Cities*.[6]

The German reception followed trends in Dickens's British reception in his lifetime: 'Bozmania' after *Pickwick*; relative disappointment with *American Notes* and novels of the mid-1840s; new enthusiasm after *David Copperfield*, and eventually increasingly critical response to Dickens's more grotesque humour, political agenda and his 'dreary' plots post-1850.[7] Thus the harsh treatment of *Hard Times* (Bachleitner 1993, 235–45). Like their British counterparts, many German reviewers disliked the grittier late fiction and what they called (in *Hard Times*) 'Tendenz', which Collins (1971, 13) would call 'social "purpose"'.

Dickens grew less popular in the nineteenth century after his death, as he did in Britain. Reinhold (1990) has shown the effect on his German and

and self-identified as living in Germany or the German states – if readers read the novels in German and reviewed them in German literary magazines, they will, as a rule, be considered part of the German reception. The one Austrian writer I discuss below, Eduard von Bauernfeld, is a special case but clearly also addresses a larger 'German' audience (cf. Bachleitner 2000).

3 The German term is 'Übersetzungsfabriken' – originally Wilhelm Hauff's coinage, dating back to 1827 (see Bachleitner 1989, 1). Karl Gutzkow (1839) uses the phrase as well, sharply criticizing in his article especially the eagerness of publishers to translate Dickens's 'disgusting and grotesquely grimacing' *Sketches by Boz* ('seine … eckelhaften und frazzigen Sittengemälde') (Bachleitner 1990, 13).

4 The only other work by Dickens that can compete with these four novels in popularity in nineteenth-century Germany is the 1843 *Christmas Carol*, which appeared in 26 editions before 1900 alone, in at least nine different translations. Reinhold (ca. 1979, 70–73) discusses the translations of the novella at some length, but my figures are based on an unpublished bibliography commissioned from Eva Burkhardt (1977) by Reinhold and Ada Nisbet. I have not had access to the editions listed by Burkhardt to verify whether all nine translations are indeed independent, or indeed redactions of older translations – a useful distinction made by Bick et al. (1989).

5 This is especially worth noting because, as other contributions to this volume point out, some of the later novels, in particular *Our Mutual Friend*, remain without translation into several European languages in the nineteenth century, in some cases until today. Incidentally, even the incomplete *Edwin Drood* goes through three editions before the end of the century (although in each case as part of a 'collected works' edition).

6 Cf. the list of reviews and articles in the *Grenzboten* consulted by Price 1915, 113–16. It is worth noting that English-language versions were widely available in Europe in editions published by Tauchnitz in Leipzig, the publishing house that famously earned the respect of Dickens and other writers by offering them monetary compensation for the right to reprint their works for sale on the continent at a time when there was no international copyright. With its *Collection of British Authors* series, Baron von Tauchnitz began publishing hundreds of British novels in the original in the 1840s, and Dickens's *Pickwick Club* is, in 1842, the second volume of the series after Bulwer-Lytton's popular silver-fork novel *Pelham* (cf. Todd and Bowden 1988, 3–46, esp. 9). All of Dickens's novels were subsequently published by Tauchnitz for sale on the continent, typically right as the book edition appeared in England.

7 Obviously, the complexities of the British reception are beyond the scope of this essay. For a brief overview, cf. Roberts (2000, 502–06). The standard anthologies are Collins (1971) and Hollington (1996).

British (and French and American) reputation of the emergence of Naturalism and Symbolism. In Germany, moreover, there was a growing interest in German Realists such as Gustav Freytag, Gottfried Keller, Wilhelm Raabe, Theodor Fontane and Friedrich Spielhagen.

Yet German readers continued to enjoy Dickens (cf. Collins 1971, 15), as a slow but steady stream of new editions post-1870 suggests (cf. Bick and others 1989). Dickens's shorter works were used in textbooks (cf. Reinhold 1979, 88–90). Martino (1990) shows that Dickens was eleventh out of the hundred most borrowed authors in German lending libraries between the years 1849 and 1888; between 1889 and 1914, he was still seventeenth.[8] Reviewers defended him. The *Magazin für die Literatur des Auslandes* responded to a highly critical review of *Hard Times* in *Europa* in 1855 by saying that the review was 'unmistakably an expression of German resentment against the widely-read English author'. The reviewer concluded that no German novelist matched Dickens.[9] Dickens also became an object of academic study, earlier than in Britain.

A closer look at the contemporary reviews may reveal what is specifically German about the German response to Dickens.[10] From the eighteenth

[8] Cf. Martino 1990, 404f. and 410f. Before 1848, Dickens already reached rank 29; but the time period for which this is calculated encompasses the entire 33-year stretch from 1815 to 1848, and the most popular author of the time is unsurprisingly Sir Walter Scott (Martino 1990, 280f.). Other statistics imply similar trends: Dickens was among the 20 most popular *foreign* authors throughout the nineteenth century in translation: twelfth-most for 1815–48, eighth-most for 1848–88, and fifth-most in 1889–1914. If one looks at lending library inventory of the English originals, Dickens comes in eighth-most popular in 1815–48, but is the most popular author in the years 1848–88, and still seventh-most popular in 1889–1914 (cf. Martino 1990, 732–47).

[9] The original reads: 'unverkennbar eine Aeußerung deutscher Mißgunst gegen den vielgelesenen englischen Schriftsteller', 'die deutsche Lesewelt' ('Kühnes Europa' 1855, 108).

[10] There are certain limitations to my emphasis on reviews, of course. Thus, I have not taken into account personal letters, diaries and other unpublished reader's reports, or traced the presence of Dickens in the German fiction of the day in the manner of the old 'influence studies' (cf. Gummer 1940 and Price 1915 for key examples). The study of Dickens translations as a way to track his reception also lies beyond the scope of this essay. I can only refer the reader to the excellent analyses of nineteenth-century German translations of Dickens by Bick (1990, 1992), Czennia on dialect translation (1992a, 1992b) and Poltermann (1990) on the concept of Realism in Seybt's translation of *David Copperfield*. Based on late twentieth-century translation theory, these authors point out that translations can alternatively preserve or reduce the alterity, or foreignness, of Dickens's novels for a German audience – for example, reducing it by translating Cockney into a specific German dialect, or by altering or even omitting detailed descriptions of London which the translator, implicitly, judges to be irrelevant to German readers. Like other nineteenth-century translations (which in general tended to reduce alterity), the translations of his novels by H. Roberts or Julius Seybt (to mention only the two most active early translators) thus may have contributed powerfully to a somewhat illusory sense of familiarity when Germans read Dickens. For further discussion of Dickens translations, see also Bachleitner (2000), Sadrin (2000) and Wolpers (1987).

century until the 1840s, Germans saw Britain as a model for a nation that lagged economically, politically and culturally (although, as we shall see, there remained national pride in an alleged intellectual superiority). Dickens's declining popularity in the 1850s was triggered by historical and cultural change: the 1848 revolution, with its aftermath of political repression and cultural conservatism; and the rapid economic growth of the 1850s and 1860s, which increased self-confidence – a shift that was more marked in the years after the Kaiserreich was founded in 1871.

In the contemporary reviews, we can trace of Dickens the changes in literary attitudes that these developments wrought. Of course the picture is complex: Dickens had detractors even when he was most popular; and there were advocates even as his popularity declined. No one review offers a complete picture: thousands of literary magazines existed in nineteenth-century Germany, most of which remain unindexed (cf. Obenaus 1986, Estermann 1978–81 and 1988–89, and Dietzel 1988).

The reviews and essays discussed here come from a handful of fairly well documented magazines with a certain prominence and longevity. These magazines changed their editorship, their editorial policy, or their stance on British fiction at around 1850 in such a way as to indicate that not only Dickens but foreign literature in general held less interest (as Martino's borrowing statistics suggest).

The *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*, a well-known middle-of-the road literary journal that ran from 1818 to 1898, is representative of this shift. Until the early 1850s, the *Blätter* featured many excerpts and reviews of British literature, especially fiction, and reviewed Dickens regularly. It published two intriguing discussions of *Hard Times* ('Dickens and Materialism' and 'The Principle of Realism in the Novel') as late as the mid-1850s.[11] But according to Bachleitner (1997, 103) the editors that took over after 1854 (Hermann Marggraff, followed by Rudolf Gottschall) were neither particularly interested in British literature nor in Dickens, and the number of articles in either category decreased drastically. Bachleitner's (1997) index of *Blätter* articles related to British fiction shows that the magazine featured no article specifically on Dickens after 1855, having published 27 reviews and essays between 1838 and 1855. Overall, the number of articles on British literature in general dropped after the mid-1850s, from up to 30 articles a year to an average of

[11] 'Dickens und der Materialismus', 1854, 900–01 (repr. in Bachleitner 1990, 359–61), and 'Das realistische Princip im Roman', 1855, 573–74. Both were authored by the then editor, Hermann Marggraff, who had actually praised Dickens's Realism and emotional appeal in comparison to the overly intellectual German novels in the 1840s (cf. Marggraff 1844, 103, quoted in Steinecke 1975,196). But the articles from the mid-1850s were the last articles specifically on Dickens in the *Blätter*, excepting a partial review of *Little Dorrit* in a report 'Aus London', also 1855, 833.

less than ten articles, many of which concentrate not on individual titles but clusters of new novels or poetry anthologies.[12]

From *Pickwick* to *Copperfield*, many German intellectuals viewed Britain with enthusiasm. However questionable the basis of the sense that Germany lagged behind its neighbours (Blackbourn 2003, 31–32), Germans *felt* that Germany was backward, especially in the years between the French Revolution in 1789 and the European uprisings in 1848. Of course, not all German intellectuals saw England as a model nation. Reviewers were often proud of Germany's fame as the land of poets and philosophers ('das Land der Dichter und Denker'). Political radicals tended to be pro-French rather than pro-English, preferring radical democracy to English-style constitutional monarchy. But by the 1830s mainstream moderate liberals ('Nationalliberale') had turned against the radicals who supported the tenets of the French Revolution. These moderates saw England as sophisticated, urban, industrialized, free-trade-oriented and politically liberal. Proponents of a constitutional monarchy viewed its balance of power between Crown and Parliament as exemplary. British-style trade and industry seemed to point the way to the future. (The moderates tended to ignore British radicalism and the fledgling working-class movement, and rarely criticized laissez-faire economics or the problems of industrialization.)

This politically moderate mainstream, with its large base in the educated middle classes and with a stronghold in many literary magazines and newspapers with literary supplements, thus held up Britain as the example to be emulated in German politics and economics – and in German literary production. German literary Anglophilia began much earlier, in the eighteenth century with a taste for adventure fiction and epistolary novels (*Robinson Crusoe* and *Clarissa*). It was cemented in the early nineteenth century with the enthusiasm for Scott (and Bulwer-Lytton and Marryat).

Scott was seen as a model well into the 1830s. He was seen to have introduced Romantic nationalism into the novel, tracing the historical roots of what it means to be part of a 'real' nation after 1837, and critics called for a German Scott. But after *Pickwick* it was Dickens who came to the fore as the writer who best represented 'Britishness'. Reviews that praised *Pickwick* make clear that the admiration for Dickens was the same thing as admiration for England. The Austrian writer Eduard von Bauernfeld observed in the preface to his translation:

[12] What is true for the *Blätter* seems to be even more apparent in the two journals mentioned above as specifically dedicated to foreign literature. The magazine *Europa*, which ran from 1835 to 1885 and was initially positively enamoured of British culture, shifted away from its praise of England, and became, under a new editor in the 1840s, both increasingly bland and less invested in discussing European culture (cf. Bourke 1994; Obenaus 1986, 20ff.). And even the magazine most actively invested in promoting foreign literature, the *Magazin für die Literatur des Auslandes* (published from 1832 to 1915), shifts from discussions of individual authors to cluster reviews in the 1840s, and ultimately de-emphasizes literary criticism altogether (cf. Schmid 2000).

> It is easy for an Englishman to write. In the streets of London, on the banks of the Thames, in the taverns, in the clubs, at the races, in court, in public meetings – in short, everywhere he sees what the German in Wunsiedel or Düsseldorf never sees anywhere – real life, a real world, which on top of it all is as well-known to his reader as it is to himself … The feeling 'I am an Englishman; I belong to a great nation' reverberates in each of his novels.[13]

The novelist Gustav Freytag, who recalled *Pickwick* in his 1870 obituary of Dickens ('The book gave happy hours of uplifting sensations to hundreds of thousands of people'),[14] also conflated Dickens and England:

> He [Dickens] brought his London so close to us that – although we may never have been there – we sometimes know it better than a German from the South knows Berlin, or than someone from the Rhineland knows Vienna … in his best novels, the light shines so brightly and powerfully above the shadows, that the sum of the impressions he gives us will make us move emotionally closer to his people and his country. Every Englishman that came as a guest to our families was welcomed like an old acquaintance; he was to us a nephew of Mr. Pickwick, dear old Pinch, one of the Cheeryble brothers, or (if he had unruly hair) the faithful Traddles.[15]

Freytag belonged to the moderate mainstream that promoted Britain as a literary and social model. For these critics, to praise the English was to reject the influence of French culture in the first half of the nineteenth century – and, in turn, to reject the pro-French radicals 'das Junge Deutschland', or 'Vormärz', who paved the way for the German uprisings of 1848. It was no surprise that Freytag described German culture prior to Dickens as a wasteland tainted by the *Vormärz* and bad French novels. Dickens's 'energetic impact', said Freytag,

> … helped us Germans particularly in those years when our own creative energies were weak, when our national life was sickly, and when the influx of the literature

[13] From the preface to his 1844 translation of *Pickwick* (Bachleitner 1990, 325): '[Es fällt auf,] dass ein Engländer leicht schreiben hat. Auf den Straßen London's, an den Ufern der Themse, in den Tavernen, in den Clubs, bei Wettrennen, bei Gerichts-Verhandlungen, bei öffentlichen Meetings, kurz, allenthalben sieht er, was der Deutsche in Wunsiedel oder Düsseldorf nie und nirgends sieht – wirkliches Leben, wirkliche Welt, die obend'rein seinem Leser so gut bekannt ist wie ihm selbst … Das Gefühl: ich bin ein Engländer, ich gehöre einer großen Nation an, zieht sich durch jedes seiner Werke.'

[14] 'Hunderttausenden gab das Buch frohe Stunden, gehobene Stimmung' (Freitag 1870, repr. n.d., 657).

[15] 'Sein London hat er uns so nahe gelegt, daß wir zuweilen besser darin Bescheid wissen, auch wenn wir nie dort waren, als der Süddeutsche in Berlin, der Rheinländer in Wien … das Licht ist in den besten seiner Romane so hell und kräftig über die Schatten gesetzt, daß die Summa der Eindrücke, die er uns gibt, doch starke gemüthliche Annäherung an sein Volk und Land hervorbringt. Jedem Engländer, der als Gast in unsere Familien trat, wurde ein Willkommen wie einem guten Bekannten, er war uns ein Neffe des Herrn Pickwick, der liebe arme Pinch, einer von den Gebrüdern Wohlgemuth, oder gar bei struppigem Haar der treue Traddles' (Freitag 1870, repr. n.d., 658).

> of the French opposition, of socialist ideas and rude, bold stories about mistresses threatened to overpower us.[16]

Robert Prutz, another influential critic of the 1840s, directly linked the superiority of English novels to the culture from which they emerged:

> Even the worst English novel, the most shoddy creation of Mr. Marryat, Cooper, or Dickens, contains more shape and more healthy life than all German novels taken together ... because the Englishman, from early on, sees himself surrounded by the greatest practical activities, because all around him he has, unveiled before his eyes, the life of his nation freely and publicly ... Because they are the most powerful people in the world ... their writers have this remarkable certainty of description.[17]

The most vocal demand that German writers should imitate Dickens came from Julian Schmidt, Freytag's friend and the long-time editor of the *Grenzboten*. Schmidt's many essays on Dickens, some of them book-length, written over a period of over 30 years, are framed by his literary politics, which, in the 1840s and into the 1850s, turned on urging German writers to become more English. Using the *Grenzboten* as his main platform, he claimed that readers turned away from German writers because they were too removed from everyday life. His 1851 essay 'English Novelists: I. Charles Dickens' ('Englische Novellisten: I. Charles Dickens') argued:

> Our fiction writers are dissatisfied with their German audience because it prefers goods from abroad; they would like to introduce a protective customs tax against the import of foreign literature, in order to put their own poor stuff on the market. Once a German writer of fiction has created something that can be compared with even the weakest products of Dickens or Walter Scott, then we can talk more about this.[18]

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16 'die kräftige Einwirkung des englischen Dichters uns Deutschen [halt] gerade in den Jahren ... wo die eigene schöpferische Kraft schwach, das nationale Leben krank, das Einströmen der französischen Oppositionsliteratur, socialistischer Ideen und frecher Hetärengeschichten übermächtig zu werden drohte' (Freitag 1870, repr. 657–58).

17 'der schlechteste englische Roman, das leichtfertigste Machwerk der Herren Marryat oder Cooper oder Dickens, enthält mehr Plastik und mehr gesundes Leben, als alle deutschen Romane zusammen ... weil der Engländer sich von früh auf von der großartigsten praktischen Thätigkeit umgeben sieht, weil ringsum das Leben seiner Nation in freier Öffentlichkeit ihm unverhüllt vor Augen liegt ... Darum, weil sie das mächtigste Volk der Erde sind ... haben ihre Schriftsteller diese wundersame Sicherheit der Zeichnung' (Prutz 1845, 108).

18 'Unsere Belletristen sind ungehalten über das deutsche Publicum, daß es nach fremder Waare greift; sie möchten gern durch Schutzzölle gegen die Einführung fremder Poesie gesichert sein, um ihre eigene Armuth auf den Markt zu bringen. – Wenn ein deutscher Novellist etwas geschaffen haben wird, das sich auch nur mit den schwächsten Producten von Dickens oder Walter Scott in Vergleich stellen läßt, so wollen wir weiter davon reden' (Schmidt, 1851, 169–70).

Schmidt's 1852 pamphlet, which introduced a collected edition published by Lorck in Leipzig, stressed that Dickens in particular helped German readers rediscover that which is natural, healthy, humorous and humane in life, and claimed, hyperbolically, that we find in Dickens

> ... a literary value ... that goes far beyond everything that our poetically inclined countrymen have achieved in the last few years ... He is more German than our entire Romantic literature from Tieck and Schlegel on until Hebbel and Gutzkow.[19]

Such a scathing rejection not only of his contemporaries but also of their Romantic forebears in favour of Dickens only becomes understandable if one keeps in mind that the Romantics generally accepted and promoted the leftist, revolutionary political ideals Schmidt rejected. His declared opponent was Karl Gutzkow, one of the Young Germans' leading novelists and journalists, whose monumental novels the *Grenzboten* repeatedly and sometimes viciously attacked.

Gutzkow, who before 1848 edited several radical magazines and newspapers often prohibited in Prussia and elsewhere, fought back. He attacked not only the German moderates who despised him and called for the imitation of Dickens by German writers, but also the British literary tradition in general and Dickens in particular – a marginal point of view in the 1830s and 1840s, but one that became more widespread, especially after the 1850s. He lambasted 'The Lack of Ideas in English Literature', as one essay title put it, and often criticized English prudery and materialism in his magazine *Unterhaltungen am häuslichen Herd* – ironically named, because its title refers rather directly to *Household Words*, founded three years prior to the *Unterhaltungen*, and to Dickens's overall concept of the family magazine.[20] Gutzkow despised Dickens,

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19 'Unter diesen Umständen werden wir es begreifen, daß im Laufe des ganzen gegenwärtigen Jahrhunderts von W. Scott und Byron an bis auf Dickens und E. Sue, die ausländischen Schriftsteller bei uns populärer wurden, als die eigene Kunst' (Schmidt 1852, 9). '[Wir finden] in Dickens einen dichterischen Werth ... der weit über Alles hinausgeht, was unsere poetischen Landsleute in der letzten Zeit geleistet haben. Aber es war nötig, namentlich den Umstand hervorzuheben, daß er auch viel deutscher ist, als unsere gesammte romantische Literatur von Tieck und Schlegel herunter bis auf Hebbel und Gutzkow' (Schmidt 1852, 11).

20 Dickens's *Household Words* ran from 1850 to 1859; *Unterhaltungen am häuslichen Herd* from 1853 to 1864, although without Gutzkow as editor in 1863; he was not the sole writer but had tight editorial control and often added editorial comments to articles he published. Gutzkow used the domestic-sounding title (*Conversations at the Homely Hearth*) to deny or camouflage his continuing political agenda (cf. 'What we offer' ['Was wir bringen'] Gutzkow 1853, 1). Although the magazine generally does not feature reviews of specific literary works, essays on English manners and ideas appear with some regularity, and there are several short pieces devoted to Dickens – e.g. Part IV of 'Englands berühmte Namen' (1853, 333–34) and Hieronymus Lorm's 'Charles Dickens' (1854, 268–70). These comment on the materialism of Dickens's publication method but not on the content of his novels. The short essay 'Die Ideenlosigkeit der englischen Literatur' mentioned above appeared in the *Unterhaltungen* (1860, 636ff.), but does not refer to Dickens.

and in an editorial note on an 1839 essay by his friend Levin Schücking on Dickens he harshly attacked the 'ugliness' of his descriptions, which 'can't be excused because of their truth to nature':

> The English of today can handle such large portions of ugly truth to nature; we Germans, however, should protest against the nonsense of German publishers who, by way of their translation factories, bring us all manner of dirt and cheaply wrapped foreign literature, and spoil the purified taste of our nation through such monstrous shapes as these Boziana are. A smell of brandy wafts through these pseudo-humorist novels, a smelly, ordinary vulgarity, a total lack of all ideal coloration. It is a good thing when a poet is listening in on nature, but heaven preserve us from this oily, greasy, coal-fume-infested English nature![21]

Gutzkow, who consistently condemned the German book trade's focus on translated literature, also repeatedly complained (and published his staff writers' complaints) about Dickens's materialism and the 'selling out' that he sees in serialized fiction, especially if it also contains advertising.

Schmidt's and Gutzkow's attitudes towards Dickens are polar opposites between which a debate about the status of Realism and Idealism took place (Steinecke 1984, 11–42). Edward McInnes (1991) has traced the role of Dickens in this German debate on 'programmatic realism'. German critics associated Idealism with German Romantic novels and Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*. British fiction, in particular Dickens, was seen as representative of Realism, good or bad.

Steinecke (1984, 20–29) notes a reorientation in the second half of the nineteenth century towards more idealistic, often apolitical novels by German authors. Part of this trend was the decline of Dickens's German reputation, which has to do with the change in emphasis and tone of his novels post-*Copperfield* (1849), and with the change of social and cultural climate in Germany.

The 1848 revolution in Germany and its aftermath led to great change in German society which in turn powerfully influenced what was read by whom and why. As David Blackbourn (2003) says, the 1848 revolution is itself a complex, not necessarily coordinated, and multivalent series of mini-revolts with very different results in the various German states. The general failure

[21] 'Indessen stoßen auch wir in allen Arbeiten dieses Boz auf eine Häßlichkeit, die sich durch Naturtreue nicht entschuldigen läßt' and 'Die Engländer von heute können starke Portionen häßlicher Naturwahrheit vertragen; wir Deutsche aber sollten Protest gegen den Unfug der deutschen Buchhändler einlegen, die uns durch ihre Übersetzungsfabriken allerhand Schmutz und packleinene Literatur aus dem Auslande bringen und durch solche Fratzengebilde wie diese Boziana sind, nur den geläuterten Geschmack der Nation verderben. Es weht ein Branntweingeruch durch diese pseudo-humoristischen Romane; eine stinkige, ordinäre Unfläterei; ein totaler Mangel an aller idealischen Färbung. Es ist gut, wenn der Dichter die Natur belauscht; aber vor dieser öligen, schmierigen, steinkohlenqualmigen englischen Natur möge uns der Himmel bewahren!' (Gutzkow's note on Schücking 1839, quoted in Bachleitner 1990, 303).

of the newly created National Assembly, which met in Frankfurt, to institute most of the changes they had envisioned, triggered a conservative backlash in the 1850s, especially in Prussia and Austria, that had a far-ranging cultural impact. Very roughly speaking, various retaliatory and reactionary policies triggered a turn away from political activism – and thereby from explicitly political journalism. Many magazines folded at this time, whereas others underwent major editorial changes that, among other things, depoliticized the literary debate about the Realist novel and its function as social commentary (cf. Steinecke 1984, 25). Generally speaking, the disappointed middle classes withdrew into a safe private sphere, but at the same time apparently also put much energy into economic rather than political endeavours. This was of twofold importance for the attitude of Germans towards Britain and Dickens. First of all, the famous turn 'inward' in the 1850s and the emergence of Biedermeier culture led to a decreasing interest in British social fiction and a yearning for idyllic, idealizing literature just at the time when Dickens was beginning to produce darker, distinctly less idyllic works. And the increased focus on business contributed to the tremendous economic upswing in the 1850s and 1860s (Blackbourn 2003, 135–57), which played a major role in changing the attitude towards Britain in general, as Germany caught up and began to compete with the British economy rather than lagging far behind.

Both of these factors contributed to the already noted decline in a readership for translated fiction, visible in publication figures and lending library statistics alike, as well as in the changes in magazine culture and the decreasing number and critical tone of reviews of British literature. *Europa*, a magazine that was initially explicitly pro-English and had sung the praises of the British constitutional monarchy under its first editor, August Lewald, had already shifted its point of view rather dramatically after 1846 under its new editor, Gustav Kühne (Burke 1994, 34) and was quite critical of England and its literature in the 1850s. A review of *Hard Times* in *Europa* in 1855 said that Dickens lacks 'a poet's point of view that would afford him freedom and lucidity, the humor of a good heart, the imagination of illusions' and that he merely copies British reality. 'It is time that the German reader shake off the nightmare of adoration for English novel-writing', the review went on, attacking all readers outside of England as 'pious servants in other countries [who] admire the gloomy dryness of his heavy-handed copies of reality.'[22] And while the critic's polemic is perhaps a measure of the remaining popularity of translated fiction in the

[22] 'Dickens und die "harten Zeiten" des englischen Romans' (1855, 53–54; repr. Bachleitner 1990, 364–66). The original says that Dickens writes 'als Copist seiner nationalen Zustände, über die ihm ... der poetrische Standpunkt freier Übersichtlichkeit, der Humor des guten Herzens, die Phantasie der Illusionen fehlt. Es ist Zeit, daß der deutsche Leser den Alp der Anbetung dieser englischen Novellistik von sich schüttelt ... Wir pietätsvollen Bedienten des Auslandes bewundern freilich die düstre Trockenheit seiner schwerfälligen Copien der Wirklichkeit' (Bachleitner 1990, 365). The immediate defence of Dickens in *Magazin für die Literatur des Auslandes* ('Kühnes Europa' 1855) was already quoted above.

1850s, the decline of British literature in Germany was by the 1870s seen as an established fact. Bachleitner (1997) quotes an 1871 review essay on new English novels in the *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*:

> Go for English! This was the battle cry for the German readership from Walter Scott to Dickens as they stormed the lending libraries … the conversation topic over a cup of coffee, the pleasure of the publishers and the torture of the human translation machines that worked by the sweat of their brows. But since … Dickens is dead, since Bulwer lay down his quill … it has become quiet in the realm of the solid British novel.[23]

Even Julian Schmidt shifted away from British-style 'realism'. As early as 1854, he said of *Bleak House*:

> The repulsive monsters that rub shoulders here are much worse than the *Mysteries* of Eugène Sue, and they offend all the more because they are carried out with such indescribable talent. [The scenes in *Bleak House*] are of disgusting, realistic truth, but how little does it become an artist to recreate the writhings of the flesh with such pleasure as Dickens did here … God save our better poets from being overcome by this mania for making ordinary physicality into a subject for poetic treatment.[24]

Schmidt used the very arguments, right down to the emphasis on 'ugliness' ('Häßlichkeit'), that were initially launched by Karl Gutzkow in his defence of German Idealism against a Realist-Materialist style associated with Dickens.

Around the same time, in the mid-1850s, Schmidt stopped attacking German novels as inadequate. When his friend Gustav Freytag published his bestseller *Debit and Credit* (*Soll und Haben*) in 1855, it became, for

[23] 'Nach dem Englischen! Das war für die deutsche Lesewelt von Walter Scott bis Dickens die Parole zur Erstürmung der Leihbibliotheken... das Gesprächsthema in den Kaffeekränzchen, das Behagen der Verleger und die Qual der im Schweiße ihres Angesichts arbeitenden Uebersetzungsmaschinen. Aber... seit Dickens todt sind, seit Bulwer seine Feder beseitegelegt hat ... ist es still geworden im Reiche des gediegenen englischen Romans' (quoted Bachleitner 1997, 102–03).

[24] From Schmidt's review of *Bleak House* (*Grenzboten* 1854, 186; quoted McInnes, 125–26):
'Die ekelhaften Ungeheuer, die sich hart aneinander drängen, sind viel ärger, als die Mysterien von Eugen Sue, und sie beleidigen um so mehr, weil sie mit einem so unnennbaren Talent ausgeführt sind … Jene Scenen sind von einer gräßlichen realistischen Warhheit [*sic*], aber wie unwürdig ist es eines Künstlers, die gemeinen physischen Zuckungen des Fleisches, mit jener Wollust nachzuempfinden, wie es hier Dickens gethan … Gott behüte es, daß sich diese Manie, die gemeine Physik zum Gegenstand der Poesie zu machen, auch der besseren Dichter bemächtige.'
Schmidt repeats some of the same phrases in his 1871 retrospective (114–16), again stressing the ugliness and repulsiveness of the late Dickens, including *Hard Times, Little Dorrit, Great Expectations* and *Our Mutual Friend* as well as *Bleak House* in this global dismissal.

Schmidt and others, the German answer to British fiction.[25] Other German novels followed, such as Gottfried Keller, Adalbert Spitzer, Wilhelm Raabe, Friedrich Spielhagen and Theodor Fontane. These authors, who combined a tradition of 'bourgeois realism' with an apolitical Biedermeier thrust, grew more popular than Dickens and other foreign authors. Some of them weighed in on the debate on Britain, British literature and the 'new' German novel.[26] Fontane (1819–98), for example, spent extensive time in London (even living on Tavistock Square as Dickens's neighbour in 1852 without ever calling on him) and reviewed and translated English literature regularly before he began publishing novels in the 1870s. Fontane's *A Summer in London* (*Ein Sommer in London*, 1854) made clear that England still held much fascination for Germans, but his praise was qualified. He criticized English materialism and lack of taste in art and architecture (Fontane 1995, 94 et passim, 85, 104), and in 1857 he criticized Dickens (not one of his favourite British authors) as a 'reformer and politician who democratizes in the form of novels and treats of things he does not know anything about'.[27]

By the 1870s, even Julian Schmidt did not believe anymore that Dickens was superior to German writers. Although his long 1871 tribute said that Dickens's works would remain 'a treasure of the English nation', and that no one would have Dickens's power 'to impress London life so powerfully not only upon one sense, but on all our senses', Schmidt also claimed that the novelist no longer enthralled the wider European reading public.[28] He also accused Dickens of neglecting to broaden his horizons after his initial success, and to acquire a broader education ('Bildung') beyond his own profession (Schmidt 1871, 114) – an accusation of intellectual shallowness that one finds throughout

[25] On *Debit and Credit* and its interesting history as a German novel that consciously orients itself on British models (Scott, Bulwer-Lytton and Dickens), see Anderson 2005. The novel was quite widely reviewed in England, and Freytag typically pigeonholed as an inferior German Dickens; cf. most famously George Henry Lewes's review in the *Westminster Review* (Lewes 1858).

[26] One particularly fascinating set of commentaries is falling through the cracks here. Otto Ludwig (1813–65) is an interesting independent voice on Dickens. Ludwig's novellas, especially *Between Heaven and Earth* (*Zwischen Himmel und Erde*) were often compared to Dickens's works in the 1850s, and he himself wrote extensively in his notebooks about Dickens between 1850 and his death. However, his notes on the *Pickwick Papers, Hard Times, Little Dorrit, Barnaby Rudge, A Tale of Two Cities* and the rarely reviewed *Great Expectations* are contained in a reading journal not intended for publication; they were only published posthumously and in incomplete form in 1874 as *Romanstudien* (Ludwig 1977, 695n).

[27] The original article (*Kreuz-Zeitung* 22 July 1857) describes Dickens as 'Reformer und Politiker, der in Novellenform demokratisiert und Dinge behandelt, von denen er nichts versteht' (Reuter 1979, 295). On the overall role of England for Fontane, see Reuter (1979) and Raykowski (Fontane 1995).

[28] Schmidt (1871): 'seine Werke werden immer ein Schatz der englischen Nation bleiben' (116), 'wo hätte einer von ihnen [i.e. another novelist] die Macht, das Londoner Leben nicht einem Sinn, sondern allen Sinnen gleichzeitig so stark aufzudrängen, wie es Dickens kann!' (117), 'Dickens' Herrschaft über das europäische Publicum hat aufgehört' (116).

the reviews of the time, but which also anticipated the harsher criticism of the writer and critic Karl Bleibtreu. Bleibtreu, whose books on English literature from 1888 and from the early twentieth century Reinhardt quotes extensively (1990, 39 et passim; 1979, 10–15) as the *locus classicus* of a widespread German naturalist critique, criticized Dickens's lack of education, grotesque humour, sentimentality, prudery and lack of complexity. Bleibtreu's work exemplifies the more strident critique of British fiction that was partly motivated by the jingoism of the German Empire that emerged between 1871 and 1914.

Dickens did not simply vanish from German bookshelves and minds. Bachleitner (1990, xv) quotes an 1889 survey in which 35 prominent writers listed the best books of all time. Fifteen chose Dickens novels, which made him the British author most mentioned (14 chose Scott). Friedrich Spielhagen (1883), popular novelist and theorist of the novel, used *David Copperfield* (the 'best first-person novel I know') as his main example in a discussion of the autographical novel.[29]

In addition, in the last decades of the century, as Dickens's popularity among the new generation of writers was on the wane, he was discovered as a subject of academic study. The research of Wilhelm Dilthey and Wilhelm Dibelius anticipated two separate traditions. Dilthey, with his wide-ranging writings on the humanities or human sciences ('Geisteswissenschaften'), is undoubtedly the more famous of the scholars; he wrote his essay on Dickens in the tradition of rhapsodic literary appreciation that points forward to the psychologically astute but impressionistic approaches by Edmund Wilson and later Dickens biographers. By contrast, Dibelius, one of Germany's earliest experts on British literature and a co-founder of English Studies as a discipline in the German academy, is of great importance because his work was part of an emerging discourse of systematic scholarship, which sought to place Dickens into a broader literary and historical context.

What is most surprising about Dilthey's essay on Dickens, 'Charles Dickens and the Genius of the Narrative Writer' ('Charles Dickens und das Genie des erzählenden Dichters') is that it was written only seven years after Dickens's death. Dilthey (1833–1911) combines cross-cultural psychology and comparative literary analysis, offering a Romantic assessment of Dickens as a novelist in whom 'the genius of the narrative writer is at work with such wonderful spontaneity' (tr. Hollington 496; cf. Dilthey 1877, 255). The essay, later revised,[30] looks forward to Chesterton's 1906 study and Zweig's 'Three

[29] 'den besten Ich-Roman, den ich kenne' (Spielhagen 1883, 226). Spielhagen (1829–1911) was a best-selling novelist and an important theorist of the novel in late nineteenth-century Germany. He also translated British fiction, and British novels feature frequently in his theoretical essays on the novel.

[30] The essay was first published in *Westermanns Monatshefte* (February and March 1877). According to the editors of *Die grosse Phantasiedichtung* (1954, 323), the posthumous collection of Dilthey's essays on comparative literary history, Dilthey later revised his Dickens essay slightly in 1906 and added a new conclusion for his collection *Erlebnis und Dichtung* (*Lived Experience and Poetry*), but it was not included in the volume published during his lifetime. The fact that the editors put

Masters' ('Drei Meister') essay on Dickens, Balzac and Dostoevsky (1919). Poltermann (1995, 75) contrasts Dilthey's emphasis on psychology with the content-related 'ethically motivated critique' formulated by Schmidt, Freytag and Otto Ludwig. But Dilthey's essay also harks back to that older tradition's emphasis on the biographical sketch and novel-by-novel commentary. The mix of the nineteenth-century literary *feuilleton* tradition and theoretical reflection results in a bewildering piece, in which the 'genius of the narrative writer' is one of multiple focal points.[31] The result is that Dilthey's essay is more interesting when it speculates on psychology than when it comments conventionally on Dickens.

Less impressionistic and more scholarly – at times painfully pedestrian and pedantic – responses to Dickens also emerge at the end of the century. Several 'influence studies' were published by German scholars as early as the 1880s. Ellis Gummer (1940) notes that they were written primarily by students of Alois Brandl, one of the earliest professors to teach English literature at German universities, from 1884 onwards. Brandl's methodology was inspired by the *milieu*-oriented sociological analysis of literature *à la* Hippolyte Taine, but also placed great emphasis on the literary prehistory of a given writer. Brandl, a Shakespeare scholar, inspired a number of young scholars to pursue 'influence studies' in the 1890s, such as the dissertation entitled *Studien über die Anfänge von Dickens* (Benignus 1895). Ellis Gummer discusses several from among this 'long series of detailed books, theses, and essays which attempted to trace Dickens' literary predecessors' and calls Wilhelm Dibelius's 500-page monograph, published in 1916, the culmination of studies of this type (Gummer 1940, 146). Ada Nisbet called it 'the first truly scholarly work on Dickens' (1964, 132–33). Dibelius was Brandl's most famous student and later took over his position as chair of English literature at the Humboldt-Universität Berlin in 1925. Born in 1876, after Dickens's death, Dibelius was presumably introduced to Dickens as a student in Berlin; he began to work on the Dickens monograph as early as 1903, only to find that he first had to write *Englische Romankunst* (1910), a two-volume history of the British novel from Defoe to Dickens's immediate predecessors to reference the literary and cultural influences that, to his mind, were necessary to understanding Dickens's own writings (Gummer 1940, 153–57; Borinski 1957, 633). Although Dibelius properly belongs in the early twentieth century, his scholarly interest in Dickens thus arose directly out of the burgeoning late nineteenth-century Dickens scholarship.

the 1954 version of the essay, the only one to which I have had access, together from excerpts from the manuscript leaves unclear how many liberties they took.

[31] It is thus not surprising that Steinecke (1984) selects only shorter, more coherent portions of the essay from the posthumous 1954 collection *Die grosse Phantasiedichtung*. Hollington (1995) translated Steinecke's excerpts in *Charles Dickens: Critical Assessments* (1, 496–99). The three selected passages come from the introduction (Dilthey 1954, 255–56) and from section VIII, i.e. his conclusion (Dilthey 1954, 310–11, 314, 315–17).

This early scholarly interest, which entailed not only the canonization of Dickens as a writers of 'classic novels' but also the establishment of scholarly interest in Dickens as a legitimate academic endeavour in Germany, also paved the way for the study of the German reception of Dickens. The fact that multiple monographs and essays on Dickens's impact on German readers and writers were published so early in the century[32] indicates not only how central Dickens was becoming to the development of English Studies in German academia, but also how seriously Germans took their own response to Dickens. The intense emphasis in these early studies on what German novelists and literary critics, like Freytag or Schmidt, Spielhagen or Raabe, thought of Dickens and took from Dickens implies a certain self-importance that is often tinged by the overweening nationalist pride that emerged with the Kaiserreich. It is often inspired by the attempt to describe or define further the specifically German approach to Realist fiction (a sort of literary 'Sonderweg'). While some of the ideological underpinnings of these early reception studies are indeed problematic, in the long run, this early scholarly interest in the German reception of Dickens and of the British novel has led to the more theoretically sophisticated analyses of the early literary criticism that emerges from the nineteenth-century discourse on Dickens, as well as to quantitative approaches to reception history and to translation studies, all of which I have drawn on in my attempt to answer the question as to why and how German readers in the nineteenth century read Dickens. I hope to have shown that these German readers were at times not dissimilar to their British counterparts in the things they saw in Dickens's writing, but that their cultural background and their specific attitude toward the British and British literature – as it changed over time – triggered significant, culturally specific ways of reading Dickens, undoubtedly one of the most widely read and loved novelists of the century for German contemporaries.

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[32] Cf. Price (1915) and Sigmann (1918) as well as several author-specific "influence studies" from the 1910s listed in Gummer's bibliography (1937, 194–97).