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## **“SERIAL CIRCULATION: THE GERMAN-AMERICAN MYSTERY NOVEL AND THE BEGINNINGS OF TRANSATLANTIC MODERNITY (1850-1855)”**

This project examines the German-language mystery novels by August Gläser, Heinrich Börnstein, Emil Klauprecht, Rudolph Lexow and Ludwig von Reizenstein, which were first serialized in newspapers and later published as books in the USA between 1850 and 1855.

It locates these novels within the international “mysterymania” that followed the sensational success of Eugène Sue’s feuilleton novel *Les Mystères de Paris* (1842-43), which led to English-language bestsellers in the USA such as George Lippard’s *The Quaker City*; or *The Monks of Monk Hall* (1844-45) and George Thompson’s *City Crimes*; or, *Life in New York and Boston* (1849), as well as to German-language adaptations such as *Die Geheimnisse von St. Louis* (Börnstein, 1854-55) and *Die Geheimnisse von New Orleans* (von Reizenstein, 1854-55).

The project conducts the first comprehensive and systematic analysis of these German-language mystery novels as representatives of a popular serial literature that emerged in the USA around the middle of the 19th century. This literature was locally situated, transregionally connected and transnationally oriented, and it encouraged rapidly growing and increasingly heterogeneous German-language readerships in and beyond specific regions of the USA (Northeast, Midwest, South) to imagine themselves as part of a politically significant community of German-Americans. The project understands this nexus of serial circulation, immigration literature, and popular culture as an expression of a transatlantic modernity that emerged in the mid-19th century and to whose development the mystery novels made a hitherto underestimated contribution.

The project investigates the literary and cultural significance of these urban mystery novels through a comparative analysis of the texts, their paratexts and their publication contexts. Based on findings from Nineteenth-Century Studies and German American Studies and in conjunction with approaches from Book History and Periodical Studies, it develops the concept of serial circulation, differentiated into forms of narrative, periodical, and cultural circulation. It overcomes an earlier filiopietist interest in German heritage in the USA and expands established literary studies approaches to discern popular serial transatlantic encounters and new forms of cultural mobility between Germany and the USA around 1850.

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