

Red River Revisions: (Re)Imagining Revolutionary Texas for a Younger Audience in Adaptations of Charles Sealsfield's North American Novels

One of the first and most influential authors to write Texas into the Germanophone popular imaginary was Charles Sealsfield. Born Karl Magnus Postl, the Austrian Sealsfield lived and traveled throughout North America from 1823-1831 and penned many successful travel narratives based on his experiences. His most enduring stories, in particular *The Cabin Book* (1841), highlight the history, geography, and socio-political character of revolutionary Texas. Like so many "adventure stories," they initially appeared for a general, adult audience, with a series of subsequent editions and adaptations marking a gradual transition to *intentional* children's literature.

Much like youth adaptations of James Fenimore Cooper, Friedrich Gerstäcker, or Frederick Marryat, the specific, historical and political contexts of Sealsfield's stories recede in favor of succinct, standalone adventure episodes cast against the growing mythos of Texas and the American West. However, *unlike* the works of his contemporaries, Sealsfield's novels were *not* simultaneously adapted or adopted as children's literature. Rather, this common progression within the adventure genre—from vehicle for defining adult fantasies of far-flung places to age-appropriate reading material set against those established backdrops and intended for the aesthetic edification and literary praxis of youthful readers—was delayed until the next wave of adventure mania gripped Germanophone Europe in the 1880s.

Perhaps due to the more popular acclaim of Karl May and other successors, both Sealsfield's long-term reception and scholarly treatment as a children's book author remain modest. The following paper addresses this gap and seeks to re-position the children's-literary "tributaries" of his early work relative to their peers. By exploring the development of Sealsfield's youth adaptations through the historical interplay of two shifting constructs: the concept of age-appropriateness (*Kindertümlichkeit*) in children's literature and the mythos of the American West in Germanophone Europe, it also aims to provide broader insights on the politics and processes informing children's book adaptations.