
Wanderungen in Lydia Maria Child's Autumnal Leaves and Other Writings

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Abstract

In this paper I will trace German migrations in Lydia Maria Child's work. While no attention has been paid to this German connection in Child's writing,[i] German migrations play a significant role in Child's writing-both in terms of migrations of people and texts. Of course, Child's work falls within a period of massive German immigration to the United States-a theme that occurs both in her story about a German immigrant boy "The Emigrant Boy" in *Autumnal Leaves*[ii] and in her journalistic depiction of German immigrants in her *Letters from New York*. But Child also writes in a period of textual migration of German influences into American literature, and her writing reflects this migration in significant ways as well. The 1857 edition of *Autumnal Leaves* contains in the back an advertisement by the publisher for Frederick Hedge's edition of *Prose Writers of Germany*. This is no accident; Frederick Hedge, as well as Margaret Fuller, were dominant forces in bringing German literature to American Renaissance writing.[iii] Child's discussions with Fuller as well as her reading of and frequent reference to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and other German writers such as Lessing, Herder, and Richter attest to her being steeped in German literature, and her story "Rosemarian and the Flower Fairies" claims to be a translation of a German legend (I say 'claims' since, despite significant efforts, I have not yet been able to locate a German source. This sets up intriguing possibilities). Finally, Child's texts also migrated back to Germany; for example, her *Mother's Book* was translated into German as *Das Buch der Mutter*, as was her *American Frugal Housewife*. My paper will illuminate these *Wanderungen* to begin a reassessment of Child's work through a German lens.

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