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Transforming an Ethnic Readership Through "Word and Image":  
William Randolph Hearst's *Deutsches Journal* and New York's  
German-Language Press, 1895–1918

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TRANSFORMING AN ETHNIC READERSHIP  
THROUGH “WORD AND IMAGE”:  
WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST’S  
*DEUTSCHES JOURNAL* AND NEW YORK’S  
GERMAN-LANGUAGE PRESS, 1895–1918

Peter Conolly-Smith

Scholarship on the United States’ German immigrant press, which in its late nineteenth-century heyday claimed close to eight hundred regular publications nationwide, has generally taken a bifurcated approach.<sup>1</sup> Traditional studies have focused on the dominant middle-class newspapers that commanded loyal readers among the German immigrant bourgeoisie: the *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, for example, and the *Illinois Staats-Zeitung* in Chicago.<sup>2</sup> Such newspapers promoted middle-class values and encouraged German ethnic loyalty among their readership. More recent scholarship has focused on the rival, left-leaning alternatives to these established newspapers, such as the *Chicagoer Arbeiter-Zeitung* and the *New Yorker Volkszeitung*: class-conscious socialist dailies that espoused an internationalist creed and working-class solidarity.<sup>3</sup> Hardly any scholarship, however, examines those newspapers that bridged the gap between bourgeois and socialist German publications and thereby pointed to a “third way.” Such newspapers transcended the narrow ethnocentric identity politics of the middle-class German press even while catering to German ethnic sensibilities. Simultaneously, they laid claim to a radical perspective, yet displayed none of the dogmatism characteristic of socialist dailies. One such newspaper, and the subject of the present essay, was the little-known New York-based *Deutsches Journal*, owned and published by William Randolph Hearst from 1895-1918 and a key player in New York’s thriving German-language press at the turn of the last century.

With the exception of one monograph, there exists virtually no scholarship on the *Deutsches Journal*, despite its widespread influ-

ence and its substantial daily circulation of around fifty thousand.<sup>4</sup> No known pre-1911 copies of the newspaper exist (all were destroyed in an office fire, a reader requesting back copies in 1915 was informed), but the surviving run, from 1911 through 1918, indicates clearly the paper's liminal function.<sup>5</sup> The *Journal* appealed to the German middle class by covering the events of elite German singing groups and bourgeois cultural and social associations. At the same time, it appealed to German-American workers by professing sympathy for the laboring masses, in keeping with its owner-publisher's self-styled image as the "foe of criminal wealth [and] friend of the working class."<sup>6</sup> In addition—and herein lay the *Journal*'s distinctive feature—the newspaper offered something found in neither middle-class nor socialist German papers: an "American" perspective on culture, society, and current events. At a time when the United States was undergoing a profound transformation, witnessing daily the struggle between the genteel Victorian culture of the nineteenth century and the emerging mass culture of the twentieth, with its attendant phenomena of new visual media, "New Women," and America's new politics as it rose to world power, Hearst's *Journal* offered enthusiastic coverage of, and itself embodied, what historian John Higham once called the turn-of-the-century "Re-Orientation of American Culture."<sup>7</sup>

Older German-language newspapers, such as, in New York, the bourgeois *Staats-Zeitung* (established in 1834) and the rival socialist *Volkszeitung* (established in 1878) regarded this re-orientation warily. The *Staats-Zeitung* viewed the ascendance of American mass culture as a threat to the earlier hegemony of German-dominated opera, classical music, and drama. Politically, the *Staats-Zeitung* opposed the rise of the New Woman and the women's suffrage movement. On the most contentious issue of the era, the newspaper viewed with trepidation the possibility of the United States joining World War I on the side of the Allies, which it saw as a threat to German victory. If for very different reasons, the rival *Volkszeitung* too decried the influence of American popular culture—which it felt eroded German workers' class-consciousness—and viewed with suspicion the challenge the New Woman posed to the traditionally male-dominated gender politics of the socialist movement. As for World War I, the newspaper considered the conflict a capitalistic competition waged at the expense of the working poor, and it therefore opposed American involvement on principle.

Only Hearst's *Journal* succeeded at the unlikely task of appealing to both ethnocentric middle-class and internationalist-oriented working-class German readers, even while simultaneously promoting such "American" phenomena as movies, comic strips, and the New Woman. And although no less adamantly pro-German than the *Staats-Zeitung* during the period of American neutrality—a function of Hearst's well-known Anglophobia—the *Journal* accommodated the United States'

entry into the war, when it came, with remarkable ease.<sup>8</sup> The following essay examines specifically these aspects of Hearst's German *Journal*—its visual character, its women's pages, and its changing perspective on World War I. On each of these counts, the essay contrasts the *Journal*'s position to those of its closest rivals—the *Staats-Zeitung* and the *Volkszeitung*—to show that the Hearst-owned newspaper was at once more “American” in stance than its counterparts and, importantly, willing to assume its positions even at the risk of losing readers to the English-language press. In so doing—in consciously positioning its readership to view society, culture, and politics from an Americanized, rather than from an ethnic perspective—this essay argues, the *Journal* anticipated and helped bring about its own demise as a German-language publication. After all, once its readers switched to reading an English-language newspaper, its reason for existence, as a foreign-language daily, was rendered moot. “There is no escape from this fate,” wrote Daniel Miller in a 1911 study of the German immigrant press. “The German parents pass away, and their children will not read German.”<sup>9</sup> Most immigrant newspapers sought to counteract this general trend; the *Journal*, on the other hand, consciously contributed to it.

It helped, of course, that the *Journal*'s association with the Hearst press offered a potential destination for its readers—its English-language sister publication, the famed *New York Journal*—which ensured that the desired switch from a German to an English-language publication could be achieved without any financial loss to the publisher or his press. For if, as this essay proposes, Hearst's German readers did in fact switch to his English-language *Journal*, he not only maintained his overall readership in sheer numbers, but additionally saved money by eventually suspending publication of the German *Journal*, which ceased publication in April of 1918. In this respect, the German version of the newspaper served the purpose of what Fredric Jameson, in a different context, has defined as that of a “vanishing mediator”—a crucial transitional link that, by virtue of the very transition it facilitates (in this case, the switch from a foreign- to an English-language daily) is predestined from the outset to disappear.<sup>10</sup> It is in this role of “vanishing mediator” that the remainder of this essay will examine Hearst's German *Journal* and contrast its contents and representational tactics to those of its rivals.

Hearst acquired the *Deutsches Journal* along with its more famous English-language sister publication in 1895 for a mere \$150,000. His eye set firmly on the English-language *Journal* (established in 1891), he did not realize until after the fact that he had acquired a German-language sister publication as part of the deal, upon which he is said to have uttered “one of the few wisecracks that ever fell from his lips,” according to newspaper historian Allen Churchill: “So I bought a frankfurter, too.”<sup>11</sup> Even before Hearst unwittingly purchased the

newspaper, the *Deutsches Journal* had, under its previous owner, “aroused the curiosity of the German element,” according to its own testimony, “for the *Journal* seemed to follow its own peculiar course from its very inception, it being the first German-language newspaper based on an American model.” The publication’s American-ness became all the more apparent, it recalled, after Hearst’s takeover in 1895, whereupon the *Journal* became “a link in Mr. Hearst’s chain.”<sup>12</sup> The newspaper quickly adjusted to its publisher’s philosophy and style as well as his populist politics, taking its cues from its sister publication and dutifully covering Hearst’s various causes and crusades. By the early nineteen teens, it routinely parroted the opinions expounded in the English-language *Journal* (by then called the *New York American*) and sometimes reprinted verbatim translations of editorials penned by Hearst lieutenant Arthur Brisbane and frequently by Hearst himself.

The close association between the German *Journal* and its controversial publisher was the source of much criticism within the ranks of New York’s German-language press. The socialist *Volkszeitung*, for example, denigrated the newspaper as a “Hearst-owned, German-language puddle of muck,” and Hearst himself as “yellow Willy”—a reference to the sensationalistic brand of yellow journalism he had helped pioneer. Such journalism constituted “superficial reportage whose main objective is not to bore the reader,” the *Volkszeitung* observed, mere “hocus pocus,” which, though entertaining, “does not serve to raise thinking individuals or future socialists.”<sup>13</sup> The *Staats-Zeitung* in turn called the *Journal* “a sensationalist rag of cheese cloth” and, in keeping with its own ethnocentrism, repeatedly accused Hearst of being anti-German.<sup>14</sup> Never at a loss for words, the *Journal* responded in kind, calling the *Staats-Zeitung*, “slow, boring, and long-winded” and the *Volkszeitung* an “incompetent rag of dirt.”<sup>15</sup> The association with Hearst that its rivals cited in order to tarnish its reputation, the *Journal* itself wore as a badge of honor: “More than any other German-American newspaper,” it observed in 1915, “the *Deutsches Journal* is capable of completely replacing an English-language publication”—an ironic claim, as it was itself ultimately replaced *by* an English-language publication—“for it has access, through its connection to the *New York American*, to all resources of a major American daily.” This connection, it wrote, allowed the *Journal* to “embody the American point of view” like no other German-language paper, and to offer its readers a “daily mirror of events *in word and image*”—the latter a recurring and telling refrain.<sup>16</sup>

This is not to suggest that the *Journal* was content to be a mere translation of an existing English-language newspaper. On the contrary, it is its hybrid nature—part American, part German-American—that makes the *Journal* such a fascinating publication. As much pride as the newspaper took in its American-ness, it took equal pride in its

claim to German ethnic authenticity. The newspaper listed and covered in detail the meetings, activities, and cultural events of Greater New York's German immigrant clubs and organizations. Photographs of the presidents and chairmen of German associations were frequently placed prominently within its pages alongside lavish illustrations promoting the offerings of New York's German immigrant stage. In addition, the *Journal* prided itself on "being known for the fact that it is written in good German"; considered itself "the first German daily in America to have introduced the standard spelling used in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland"; and boasted of "the best German literature" in its weekly literary supplement.<sup>17</sup>

The *Journal's* capacity to appeal simultaneously as an American- and a German-language publication is particularly evident in its cultural reportage, where its dual appeal was articulated in even such apparently mundane choices as its layout and juxtaposition of columns, articles, and illustrations on the printed page. On weekdays, for example, reviews of American theater and film appeared on page 4 alongside the *Journal's* coverage of the German stage, classical music, and opera, an indication of the newspaper's philosophy that participation in the city's specifically German-American public sphere did not necessarily preclude an active interest in the host society and its cultural offerings. Along similar lines, the lavish Sunday entertainment page featured theater and film listings accompanied by photographs of actors and actresses, each adorned with ornate, hand-drawn frames that merged and flowed into one another in what was known as a "composite illustration." Such meticulously penned outlines placed the collage of diverse images of the stars of American theater, film, and the German stage within a larger, unifying framework. This combination of hand-drawn illustrations, harking back to an earlier era, with photography (which, in the world of newspaper publishing, was specifically associated with the twentieth century) evoked symbolically and resolved visually the conflict between an older, nineteenth-century worldview and the popular culture industry of the present. This "syncretic amalgamation of disparate mimetic materials," as film historian Charles Musser describes Hearst's use of composites, must have held particular appeal to immigrants, who were themselves torn between conflicting cultural preferences and loyalties.<sup>18</sup> If the *Journal's* Sunday drama page managed, through its use of illustration, photograph, and text, to strike the precarious balance between old and new, between German and American cultural fare, then surely, such imagery implied, the immigrant reader could, too. Returning to the weekday edition, on page 5, a similar juxtaposition placed the newspaper's daily in-depth coverage of the social and cultural events of German-language clubs and associations alongside the daily translated comic strip, whose complex visual and lingual modes of address provided an ironic counterpoint to the German-centric events listed nearby.



Figure 1. Composite illustrations on the *Journal*'s Sunday drama page. *Deutsches Journal*, 1915. In author's possession.



Comic strips were unique to the *Journal* among New York's German immigrant newspapers. Its rivals did occasionally feature illustrations and, more rarely, photographs, although virtually never in promotion of the offerings of the American popular stage, which the elitist *Staats-Zeitung* dismissed as "nonsense," and which the *Volk-szeitung*, whose cultural coverage focused on politically-oriented entertainments, ignored.<sup>19</sup> Comics, however, appeared only in the *Journal* and offered evidence of the newspaper's hybrid and ultimately Americanizing impulse, as well its connection to the Hearst press. As a medium, comics were closely associated with Hearst. Although the immediate precursor to the comic strip, the weekly one panel "Yellow Kid" cartoon, was first drawn for Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* by artist R. F. Outcault (he switched to Hearst in 1895) the actual, multi-panel comic strip, showing sequential action among characters communicating via speech bubbles, was the brainchild of Hearst himself. Inspired by his love of the German picture book *Max and Moritz*, he assigned German-born staff artist Rudolf Dirks to turn it into a weekly, and later a daily, multi-panel strip called the *Katzenjammer Kids*. The first installment of the adventures of Hans und Fritz, the demonic *Katzenjammer Kids*, appeared (along with the pirated *Yellow Kid*) in the premier issue of Hearst's Sunday supplement of colored comics, the *American Humorist*, on December 12, 1897.<sup>20</sup> Later, Hearst was to commission, publish, and syndicate many more of America's most famous strips, including Frederick Opper's *Happy Hooligan* and George McManus's *Bringing Up Father*.

It is uncertain when exactly the *Journal* began carrying comic strips, but they figure prominently—their dialogue translated into German and printed in Gothic script—in its earliest surviving Sunday supplements of "*Lustige Blätter*" (literally, "funny pages") from 1911. By 1913, strips were a daily feature, with *Bringing Up Father*, the *Katzenjammer Kids*, and *Happy Hooligan* alternating for the remainder of the decade. Formidable expressions of American mass culture even in their original, English-language versions, comic strips took on new significance in the German-language translations in which they appeared in the pages of the *Journal*. Frederick Opper's *Happy Hooligan*, for example, a loveable and identifiably Irish tramp, became in translation "Hannes," a German-language vernacularism denoting a "person of German heritage." The fact that his daily run-ins with the law invariably ended with his arrest and incarceration made of this originally Irish, now German character's shenanigans an instructive and entertaining visual primer on which types of behavior were desirable, and which not, for Germans seeking acceptance in American society. The same might be argued of the antisocial pranks of Hans and Fritz, the *Katzenjammer Kids*, explicitly identified as German even in their original incarnation, and forever terrorizing their hapless, beer-bellied elders. For hundreds of strips during the early years of their run, the



Figure 2. Gracing the masthead of the *Journal's* funny pages ("Lustige Blätter"), members of the Katzenjammer family are shown in one of many unsuccessful efforts to escape their island. *Deutsches Journal*, 1917. © King Features Syndicate.

Kids and their family remain trapped on an oddly claustrophobic tropical island, along with pirates, cannibals, a Chinese cook, and an assortment of other exotic characters. Simultaneously holding the promise of abundance and the threat of eternal confinement, this island may well have been interpreted as an allegorical version of Ellis Island by immigrant readers. Most patrons of the *Journal* had passed through the island upon their initial arrival in America, and it was well known that those deemed unfit or politically undesirable by immigration officials often found themselves indefinitely detained there, much as the anarchic Kids remained trapped on their isle for most of the nineteen teens. Again, the comics taught German readers, by negative example, how (not) to act.

The fact that the *Katzenjammer Kids* relied heavily on German ethnic stereotypes—its rotund characters are hairy, play pinochle and drink beer—was hardly lost on the *Journal's* readers, nor on the newspaper's critics. The *Staats-Zeitung*, for example, found the *Katzenjammer Kids* to represent "a lapse of taste that is at once miserable [*jämmerlich*] and deplorable [*bejammernswert*]," and elsewhere criticized as a "ridiculous, impossible distortion," the strip's portrayal of the German as "a small, potbellied fellow with drooping mustache and dull eyes, ... beer glass and pretzel. Where has one ever seen a German of this type? He simply does not exist, yet American comics perpetuate the model because their readers laugh at him. ... We German-Americans," the *Staats-Zeitung* concluded, "do not."<sup>21</sup> Readers of the *Journal*, of course, may have disagreed. In fact, the newspaper's inclusion of the *Katzenjammer Kids* and other comics seems to have constituted one of its main draws. Readers often wrote to request back issues of the Sunday funnies, and the anonymous "mailbox man" who answered letters to the editor frequently advised those desirous of further comics strips on where such materials might be obtained.<sup>22</sup> The *Katzenjammer Kids* in particular held special instructive potential: they not only taught German immigrant readers how (not) to act, but also, by virtue of their visual stereotype, how (not) to dress, carry, and groom themselves. To readers eager to assimilate, the comic strip held up the warped mirror of American ethnic prejudice: this is what they looked like to American eyes; in this guise they were ridiculous to

members of the host society, perhaps even to themselves. By consuming and laughing at this stereotype, they distanced themselves from it and psychologically asserted their “American”-ness.

Another such “negative exemplar,” as Lawrence Mintz calls ethnic caricatures of this sort, was found in George McManus’s *Bringing Up Father*.<sup>23</sup> Here again was a popular American strip whose originally Irish character, the incorrigible bricklayer-turned-millionaire Jiggs, was transformed, in translation, into a German. In the pages of the *Journal*, *Bringing Up Father* became “*Die Gesellschaftliche Erziehung des Herrn Gradmichel*”—“The Societal Education of Mr. Gradmichel,” whose name, loosely translated, means “upstanding German.” Like Happy/Hannes, his ne’er-do-well Irish-turned-German comic cousin, Jiggs/Gradmichel was daily shown grappling with the problems inherent in the process of social climbing. Unlike Happy/Hannes, whose doomed efforts to find acceptance in American society are at least sincere, Mr. Gradmichel, much to the chagrin of his socially ambitious wife, his beautiful and thoroughly Americanized daughter, and his foppish son, takes a boorish pride in his gauche ethnic ways, regularly ending each strip by scandalizing the upper middle-class Americans whom the rest of his family wishes to impress. The comic frustration of his long-suffering wife and, especially, the ethnic embarrassment felt by his two children, made the strip’s family an interesting point of reference for immigrant readers caught up in a process of cultural adaptation. That it was in particular the women in the family who displayed the desire for acceptance within American society, and that they sought to achieve it through their participation in all the American fads and sometimes scandalous fashions of the day, was both telling and—for a strip noted for its “masterly depiction of the female anatomy, hairstyle, and clothing”—visually arresting.<sup>24</sup>

During an era when birth control and suffrage were denied to women by law, fashion may seem a trivial way to examine gender politics. At the time, however, the debate over women’s fashions, which were becoming increasingly revealing with each passing year, constituted a controversy that also shed light on more serious issues. Fashions of 1913, for example, included the “peekaboo” blouse, worn with the top buttons undone to reveal a glimpse of cleavage; the “X-Ray” dress, made of diaphanous material which, when lit from behind, revealed the outline of a woman’s legs; and the slit skirt, which exposed a woman’s ankles. In keeping with Mr. Gradmichel’s appreciation for these fashions—he prefers seeing them on the younger generation than on his wife, of course (see figure 3)—the *Journal* showed a pronounced tolerance for women’s revealing attire. While the *Staats-Zeitung* found such clothing to be “morally corrupting” and the *Volkszeitung* dismissed it as “unquestionably obscene,” Hearst’s *Journal* quipped that “women’s clothes have never been as pretty as they are now.”<sup>25</sup> In endless editorials and articles, often illustrated with



Figure 3. "Herr Gradmichel [= 'upstanding German'] and his friend Peter sample the newest women's fashions." *Deutsches Journal*, 1913. © King Features Syndicate.

photographs showing off the offending garments to their most revealing effect, the newspaper mocked those who sought to legislate or otherwise contain women's fashions.<sup>26</sup> In promoting the twin notions of woman as consumer (of fashion) and herself "consumed" (as sexualized object), the *Journal* hardly stood alone. American mass media during this period routinely viewed gender politics through the lens of "a leisure and consumer ethic that encouraged personal indulgence rather than self-denial and self-control," a practice for which the Hearst press was well known.<sup>27</sup>

Perhaps because he recognized women as an important bloc of potential readers, Hearst had catered to them from the outset of his career, with entire sections devoted to, and sometimes exploiting, their interests. His famous female columnists Winifred Black (Annie Laurie), Dorothy Dix, and Ella Wheeler Wilcox ("sob sisters," they were called in the industry) addressed women's issues ranging from matters of the heart to serious questions of politics and society. Their columns were nationally syndicated to all Hearst papers and can be found in the earliest surviving issues of the *Journal*, where, from the start, they promoted a progressive view of gender. That this was not mere filler lifted from Hearst's English-language press is evidenced by the increasingly conspicuous presence of articles and columns penned by German-born Rosa Sprunk. The *Journal's* very own German-language sob sister and the editor of its Sunday issue's women's section, Sprunk promoted women's fashions as enthusiastically as

women's rights. On the era's entire range of gender issues, "Frau Rosa" erred on the side of progress: she promoted women working outside the home (for pay equal to that of men); endorsed women's education; insisted on a woman's right to remain single; and championed sex education, divorce, and birth control.<sup>28</sup> These views are all the more astounding when one considers not only the general gender conservatism of the times, but, in particular, the sexism prevalent among Germans, an attitude many German women themselves had reportedly internalized; as American suffrage activist Carrie Chapman Catt complained, "the campaign was set back several years ... every time [we] got a boat load of German immigrants."<sup>29</sup>

This conservative attitude is evident in both the *Staats-Zeitung's* and the *Volkszeitung's* women's sections, the former presided over by the probably fictional "Frau Anna"; the latter, by the prominent socialist Julia Romm. Although these two columnists were forever feuding—Frau Anna was the *Staats-Zeitung's* "old aunty," Julia Romm sneered, and wrote "with all the compassion of one who knows [only] the woes and troubles of 'ladies'"—still, they had more in common with each other, in their conservative outlooks on gender, than they did with the *Journal*. The populist brand of feminism promoted by the likes of Rosa Sprunk at the *Journal*, wrote Romm, was but a "disturbing symptom of the de-generation of her [middle] class." Torn between her own feminist impulses and the gender conservatism dictated by the socialist movement at the time, Romm was ambivalent even on issues such as birth control, a cause she endorsed only insofar as it might alleviate a socialist woman's "triple burden [of being at once] a wage laborer, a housewife, and a mother."<sup>30</sup> This was a telling qualifier, indicative as it is of the *Volkszeitung's* longstanding effort to encourage among its readers a sense of identity determined by class affiliation, rather than (as in the *Staats-Zeitung*) German ethnicity.

Predictably, the bourgeois *Staats-Zeitung's* Frau Anna stood vehemently opposed to birth control on principle and regularly articulated an increasingly outmoded view of nineteenth-century domesticity. She charged her readers to find fulfillment in marriage and motherhood and to follow "the natural goodness of a woman's heart, which teaches [us] to suppress impatience, bear insult and injury ... and sacrifice all for peace within the home."<sup>31</sup> Both the *Staats-Zeitung* and the *Volkszeitung* explicitly rejected leisure and consumption-oriented phenomena—fashion, and women's desire for "greater public and private enjoyment of sensual pleasure"—issues on which the coverage in Hearst's *Journal* dovetailed with that of the New Woman's political causes.<sup>32</sup> In contrast to those of its rivals, the *Journal's* stance on women's issues testified to its "American" perspective, which cheerfully conflated issues social, cultural, and political, and packaged them in entertaining ways: in the funnies, in photographs, and on the women's page.



On the central women's issue of the era, suffrage, we find similar divisions between the *Journal* and its rivals. Hearst's own support for suffrage and his personal association with radical suffragists is well-documented, and pro-suffrage editorials appear in the earliest surviving issues of the *Journal*, dating back to January 1911.<sup>33</sup> Rosa Sprunk, editor of the women's page, wrote and campaigned energetically for the cause throughout the decade. She provided regular coverage of the meetings of suffrage groups and ran profiles of leading German-American women within the movement. Ignoring male readers' occasional complaints that her agitation "influenced women readers towards embracing radical notions of suffrage," she pronounced the vote as much a natural birthright as women's right to work and practice birth control. Displaying once again the *Journal's* willingness to transcend both ethnic and class barriers, she endorsed all efforts by German women to reach across the national divide and join forces with American suffragists (an approach the ethnocentric *Staats-Zeitung* viewed with suspicion) and in 1915 applauded the formation of the German-American Women's Committee of the American Women's Suffrage Party, a self-consciously middle-class organization that was, as such, held in disdain by the socialist *Volkszeitung*.<sup>34</sup>

Like virtually all of its reportage, the *Volkszeitung's* coverage of the women's suffrage movement was shaped by its class politics. The movement was seen as a bourgeois effort dominated by middle-class social reformers. Supporting it, therefore, was tantamount to class treason. Indeed, "any cooperation with the bourgeois women's movement was [deemed] a cardinal mistake," according to historian Ruth Seiffert, who notes that Julia Romm's immediate predecessor as the *Volkszeitung's* women's page editor, Meta Lillienthal Stern, was forced to resign from the newspaper under withering criticism in 1911, after having once called for an alliance between bourgeois and proletarian women. This misstep aside, the newspaper had for decades endorsed the Socialist Party's official view "that the woman question was a secondary problem that would be resolved by the victory of the working class."<sup>35</sup>

Even after the Socialist Party officially endorsed the cause of women's suffrage in 1913, class considerations remained paramount for the *Volkszeitung*. That year, Illinois granted women the vote, becoming the first state east of the Mississippi to do so and thereby putting the nation on notice that a constitutional amendment was just a question of time. On the women's page, Romm now pronounced suffrage "a new and mighty weapon ... in the battle for the liberation of labor, which is also our [i.e., women's] battle. ... Proletarian women are to stand by the side of their men, whose interests are also their own." Clearly, the newspaper was not insisting that working women be granted suffrage in order to vote for the party of their choice. Instead, female concerns were to remain subordinated to the more urgent need



for class solidarity, and women were exhorted to “join their [male] comrades in the fight for the liberation of workers” by voting Socialist. This remained the newspaper’s perspective throughout the decade.<sup>36</sup>

The *Staats-Zeitung*, meanwhile, did not endorse women’s suffrage until even later, in 1915. Prior to that time, the newspaper’s Frau Anna had been rigorously opposed, writing that suffragists were “decidedly fanatical and at times positively disgusting.” She instead supported the so-called anti-suffragists, a numerically insignificant but politically influential group of women opposed to the movement. In keeping with the newspaper’s ethnocentric perspective, a main argument against giving women the vote was the claim that voting women were likely to cast their ballot in favor of prohibition. Knowing that recreational drinking numbered among the German community’s most dearly-held leisure time pursuits, the *Staats Zeitung* helped promote this widespread (although never proven) belief in editorials and articles published throughout the first half of the decade.<sup>37</sup>

Interestingly, when the newspaper finally reversed its position on suffrage, it did so again for reasons determined largely by ethnic considerations. By 1915, the war in Europe had been raging for almost a year, with Germany making progress on both the Eastern and Western fronts, as the newspaper reported daily in jubilant front-page articles. Worried that the United States might enter the war on the side of the Allies, the *Staats-Zeitung* now saw in women’s suffrage a cause that might be instrumental in keeping America neutral. Women’s maternal and peace-loving dispositions, the logic went, would inspire them to actively oppose the United States’ entry into the war. The ethnic twist this reasoning added to the suffrage issue resulted in a far larger number of German-American women joining the movement by 1915, newly inspired by the related goals of helping women achieve political victory so that Germany’s military victory might be assured. Accordingly, the *Staats-Zeitung* lauded German-American women’s opposition to the export of American arms and ammunitions. It celebrated the efforts of German suffragists in the Bronx, whose call for simultaneous support of Germany and women’s suffrage proved a successful strategy within the community, and endorsed German-American suffragists’ petition that President Wilson stop favoring the Allies.<sup>38</sup>

World War I was without question the decade’s all-consuming concern, with war coverage impacting almost every aspect of all three newspapers’ reportage. The *Journal*, for example—itself belligerently pro-German until the United States’ entry into the war—found ways of insinuating issues of war even into its coverage of women’s fashions. “Zeppelins Coming to New York!” the newspaper proclaimed in an attention-grabbing spring 1916 headline promoting a brief craze for zeppelin-shaped hats that resembled the German dirigibles wreaking havoc on the coasts of England and France; “Their Target: The Female Sex.”<sup>39</sup> More seriously, women’s columnist Rosa Sprunk conflated

issues of war and suffrage in much the same way that Frau Anna did for the *Staats-Zeitung*. Sprunk emphasized that German suffragists were as willing to fight for the fatherland as for the vote, acknowledged the presence of well-known pro-German propagandists within the ranks of German suffrage organizations, and repeatedly and forcefully expressed her own fierce loyalty to Germany and its cause.<sup>40</sup>

It was surrounding the issue of war that the *Journal* marshaled all its most effective representational tactics. Daily banner headlines announced the German army's and navy's victories; intricate maps showed troop movements and battle sites; photographs and text lavished praise on Germany's political and military leaders; and editorial cartoons showed heroic, muscle-bound Teuton warriors putting terrified Allied soldiers to flight. The beauty of these visual stratagems, long established as the newspaper's most recognizable trademark, lay in their flexibility and the fact that they were not necessarily tied to a particular side. After the United States' April 1917 entry into the war on the side of the Allies, the *Journal's* strategies therefore remained unchanged, and the dramatis personae were simply re-cast in reverse: now it was Allied triumphs the *Journal's* maps and headlines charted; Allied leaders whom its photographs celebrated; and Allied soldiers whom its cartoons showed terrorizing bumbling German infantrymen. The jarring ideological about-face was at least partially smoothed over by the continuity of representational strategies through which it was expressed.

A striking example of this reversal is found in a November 1917 editorial cartoon that again conflated the issues of women's suffrage and the war, if to opposite effect than it had in the recent past. With congressional elections approaching and the United States now officially on the side of the Allies, the cartoon showed a stereotypical suffragist, "ribboned and bannered," as one historian has described the type, "infused with ... the spirit of pride and daring, and possessed [of] the vigor of youth."<sup>41</sup> Whereas, just months earlier, the *Journal* had argued that giving women the vote would help keep the United States out of the war, this cartoon showed its suffragist striding across a trench-lined European battlefield, bayoneted gun in hand. The graphic's connection—indeed, its analogy—between an Allied victory and women's fight for suffrage was rendered all the more apparent by its heading: "Crossing the trenches towards justice."

The *Staats-Zeitung*, which found itself in a similar situation of having to disavow its previous pro-Germanism, likewise attempted to communicate its conversion graphically—through the front-page display of illustrated ads for American Liberty Bonds, for example. But it did so awkwardly, in a manner that failed to ignite much enthusiasm among its readership. In fact, beginning with America's entry into the war, the newspaper's circulation began declining. The socialist *Volkszeitung*, meanwhile, opposed to war on principle, had by its own

Über die Schanze der Gerechtigkeit entgegen.



Figure 4. "Crossing the Trenches towards Justice." Editorial cartoon, *Deutsches Journal*, 1917. In author's possession.

admission already lost 5,000 pro-German readers in 1914, during the early months of the war, and in 1917 lost several thousand more for its refusal to take America's side. The newspaper remained consistently anti-war throughout the conflict and, for this, was subjected to repression under the Espionage and Sedition Acts of 1917 and 1918, causing its circulation to decline even further.<sup>42</sup>

Of course, the friction among the three newspapers had at bottom always been about which one was best positioned to hold on to its readers and, ideally, attract those of its rivals. This became particularly apparent when, on April 21, 1918, the *Journal* unexpectedly

placed an English-language notice on its front page, announcing that, “in its supreme sacrifice in behalf of American unity,” it was suspending publication with immediate effect.<sup>43</sup> That same day, the *Staats-Zeitung*, apparently having received advance notice of the *Journal*’s intent, consciously positioned itself to pick up its longtime rival’s readership. In a bilingual front-page notice of its own, the *Staats-Zeitung* appealed directly “To the Newsdealers. The *Deutsches Journal* having suspended publication, we would appreciate your recommendation of the *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung* to the former readers of the *Deutsches Journal*.” In the German-language version of this plea, the newspaper enjoined its own readers to persuade those of their “friends who once subscribed to the *Deutsches Journal* to subscribe to the *Staats-Zeitung* instead.”<sup>44</sup>

Circulation figures, however, indicate that the *Staats-Zeitung* not only failed to pick up the approximately 50,000 readers left homeless by the folding of the *Journal*, but that its own circulation continued to dwindle, as did that of the *Volkszeitung*. These same circulation figures, in fact, suggest that Hearst’s former German-language readers may have gone from patronizing the *Journal* to patronizing ... the *Journal*—Hearst’s English-language *Evening Journal*, that is, whose circulation swelled by tens of thousands from 1918–1920.<sup>45</sup> Although it is impossible to ascertain the identity of those included in these anonymous figures, it is probable—indeed, likely—that former readers of the German *Journal*, and possibly even readers lost by the *Staats-Zeitung* and the *Volkseitung*, numbered somewhere within their ranks. What more logical place to go, after loyally patronizing a Hearst-owned German-language newspaper, than to the English-language press of the publisher who for years had been a force in shaping their worldview and cultural inclination? By turning to either the *Staats-Zeitung* or the *Volkszeitung*, former readers of the *Journal* would have been taking a step back toward older worlds still determined by class and ethnic affiliations, worlds they had discarded by becoming patrons of the Hearst press in the first place. As sociologist Robert E. Park observed in 1925, “Hearst has been a great Americanizer. ... The most successful of [his] papers, the *New York Evening Journal*, gains a new body of subscribers every six years. Apparently it gets its readers mainly from immigrants. They graduate into Mr. Hearst’s press from the foreign-language press.” In the specific case of the German *Journal*, it appears that it was from this foreign-language Hearst publication that a significant number of his immigrant readers had graduated.<sup>46</sup>

“Since assimilation was an ultimate goal,” sociologist Morris Janowitz once noted, “the success of the immigrant press could in some part be measured by its ability to destroy itself.”<sup>47</sup> Judged by this measure, Hearst’s German *Journal* was certainly a success. Its self-destruction and disappearance, however, following on the heels of its

earlier pro-German stance, have led scholars to dismiss the *Journal* as either insignificant—Hearst “was hardly aware” of its existence, writes one—or, alternatively, as a failed pro-German propaganda tool: a “nest of secret agents and propagandists,” in the words of another.<sup>48</sup> This essay, however, argues that the facility with which the *Journal* shifted ideological perspectives, then disappeared, is in fact what merits our attention, for in this respect the German newspaper did indeed function as the sort of “vanishing mediator” Fredric Jameson once described. Upon accomplishing the transformation it had set out to achieve—that of making out of an ethnic community an *American* readership—the *Journal*, having fulfilled its purpose, simply ceased to exist.<sup>49</sup> Because it resembled an American publication in style and because it defied easy categorization—it was neither a bourgeois, nor working-class, nor even a classic “ethnic” publication—the *Journal* has been ignored by historians of the immigrant press; however, it is precisely its elusive character, the manner in which it bridged constituencies, and its hybrid style that make the newspaper worthy of closer study.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For figures, see Robert E. Park, *The Immigrant Press and Its Control* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1922), 318.

<sup>2</sup> Such a focus on middle-class publications is found, for example, in Carl Wittke, *The German-Language Press in America* (Louisville: University of Kentucky Press, 1957).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Elliott Shore, Ken Fones-Wolf, and James P. Danky, eds., *The German-American Radical Press* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992).

<sup>4</sup> For the lone scholarly assessment of Hearst's German-language *Journal*, see Peter Conolly-Smith, *Translating America: An Immigrant Press Visualizes American Popular Culture, 1895–1918* (Washington: Smithsonian Press, 2004), Chapter 3; for circulation figures, see N.W. Ayer's and Son's *Newspaper Annual and Directory* (Philadelphia: N.W. Ayer and Son), under “Foreign Publications,” for the years 1910–1918.

<sup>5</sup> On the fire that destroyed all pre-1911 copies, see *Deutsches Journal*, May 10, 1915, p. 8; the surviving 1911–1918 run of the newspaper is available on microfilm at the New York Public Library and in hard copy (from 1913–1917) at the Chicago Illinois Research Center.

<sup>6</sup> Edward T. O'Loughlin, ed., *Hearst and His Enemies* (New York, 1919), 8–9.

<sup>7</sup> John Higham, “The Reorientation of American Culture in the 1890s,” in Higham, *Writing American History: Essays on Modern Scholarship* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), 73–102.

<sup>8</sup> On Hearst's Anglophobia, see David Nasaw, *The Chief: The Life of William Randolph Hearst* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 245–47.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel Miller, *Early German-American Newspapers* (Lancaster: Pennsylvania German Society, 1911), 105–6.

<sup>10</sup> See Fredric Jameson, “The Vanishing Mediator; or, Max Weber as Storyteller,” in Jameson, *The Ideologies of Theory* (London: Routledge, 1988), 2: 3–34.

<sup>11</sup> Allen Churchill, *Park Row* (New York: Rinehart, 1958), 48; on Hearst's purchase of the *Journal*, see also Nasaw, *Chief*, 98–100; and W.A. Swanberg, *Citizen Hearst: A Biography of William Randolph Hearst* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), 75–6.



<sup>12</sup> "Machte das damalige Deutschtum stutzig, denn das *Deutsche Journal* bewegte sich gleich von Anfang an in eigenen, interessanten Bahnen; es war die erste nach amerikanischem Muster gehaltene Zeitung in deutscher Sprache. ... ein Glied in der Kette der Hearst'schen Zeitungsunternehmen." *Deutsches Journal*, January 30, 1916; this and all later translations are the author's.

<sup>13</sup> *New Yorker Volkszeitung*, October 12, 1913; September 1, 1916; February 5, 1913.

<sup>14</sup> *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, December 20, 1914; for accusations of Hearst's supposed anti-German views, see for example June 7, 1913.

<sup>15</sup> *Deutsches Journal*, September 25, 1913; October 3, 1913.

<sup>16</sup> *Deutsches Journal*, December 13, 1915; January 30, 1916; August 31, 1913 (emphasis mine).

<sup>17</sup> *Deutsches Journal*, December 13, 1915; January 30, 1916; June 1, 1913.

<sup>18</sup> Charles Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 167.

<sup>19</sup> *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, August 6, 1912. For similar blanket verdicts, see, for example, January 8, 1911; August 6, 1912; January 5, 1913; December 13, 1913; the list extends throughout the decade. For the *Volkszeitung's* listings of socialist plays produced by working-class organizations, see, for example August 9, 1914; September 25, 1914; October 3, 1914.

<sup>20</sup> On the *Yellow Kid*, see Kerry Soper, "From Rowdy, Urban Carnival to Contained Middle-Class Pastime: Reading Richard Outcault's *Yellow Kid* and Buster Brown," *Columbia Journal of American Studies* 4.1 (2000): 143–67; on the *Katzenjammer Kids's* first appearance in the *American Humorist*, see Nasaw, *Chief*, 108–109.

<sup>21</sup> Readers will not have failed to recognize the words "jämmerlich" and "bejammerenswert" as (not so) veiled references to the *Katzenjammer Kids* themselves. *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, August 1, 1913; September 19, 1913.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, *Deutsches Journal*, October 28, 1917; February 18, 1918.

<sup>23</sup> Lawrence Mintz, "Standup Comedy as Social and Cultural Mediation," in Arthur Power Dudden, ed., *American Humor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 89.

<sup>24</sup> John A. Lent, "Bringing Up Father," in Maurice Horn, ed., *100 Years of American Newspaper Comics* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1996), 66.

<sup>25</sup> *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, June 30, 1913; *New Yorker Volkszeitung*, August 31, 1913; *Deutsches Journal*, June 14, 1913.

<sup>26</sup> See for example *Deutsches Journal*, June 6, 1913; August 14, 1913.

<sup>27</sup> Lois Rudnick, "The New Woman," in Adele Heller and Lois Rudnick, eds., *1915: The Cultural Moment* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 71.

<sup>28</sup> See for example *Deutsches Journal*, May 24, 1913; November 29, 1914; September 21, 1914; November 9, 1913; March 26, 1916; August 29, 1913; January 31, 1915.

<sup>29</sup> Anne Wiltscher, *Most Dangerous Women: Feminist Peace Campaigners of the Great War* (London: Pandora, 1985), 14; on sexism within the German immigrant community, see Ruth Seiffert, "Women's Pages in the German-American Radical Press, 1900–1914" in Shore, Fones-Wolf and Danky, eds., *German-American Radical Press*, 127–28.

<sup>30</sup> *Vorwärts* (weekly edition of the *Volkszeitung*), February 3, 1917, p. 11; *New Yorker Volkszeitung*, August 31, 1913; May 4, 1913. On the prevailing sexism within the socialist movement, see Seiffert, "Women's Pages."

<sup>31</sup> *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, November 15, 1914. For Frau Anna on marriage and motherhood, see, for example, June 29, 1913; December 6, 1914; for her opposition to birth control, see November 18, 1916. For general background on the *Staats-Zeitung's* women's pages and "Frau Anna," see Martha Patterson, *The American New Woman Revisited: A Reader* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 151–54.

<sup>32</sup> Rudnick, "New Woman," 71.

<sup>33</sup> See *New Yorker Morgen Journal*, January 16, 1911; on Hearst's association with suffragists, see Nasaw, *Chief*, 270; see also *Deutsches Journal*, November 2, 1913.



<sup>34</sup> *Deutsches Journal*, May 2, 1915. For profiles of German-American suffragists, see May 22, 1915; June 6, 1915; June 22, 1915; for Rosa Sprunk's endorsement of the WSP, see April 22, 1915.

<sup>35</sup> Seiffert, "Women's Pages," 123, 137–39.

<sup>36</sup> *Sonntagsblatt der New Yorker Volkszeitung*, February 16, 1913; February 1, 1913.

<sup>37</sup> *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, November 11, 1912; for Frau Anna's support of the anti-suffragists, see February 9, 1913; on the claimed prohibition-suffrage connection, see, for example, April 4, 1915.

<sup>38</sup> See *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, December 12, 1914; March 28, 1915; April 14, 1915.

<sup>39</sup> *Deutsches Journal*, April 25, 1916.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, *Deutsches Journal*, July 4, 1915; September 29, 1915; October 11, 1914.

<sup>41</sup> Alice Sheppard, "Political and Social Consciousness in the Woman Suffrage Cartoons of Lou Rogers and Nina Allender," *Studies in American Humor* 4.1 (Spring/Summer 1983): 39–40.

<sup>42</sup> See *New Yorker Volkszeitung*, January 27, 1928; on the Espionage and Sedition Acts, see Geoffrey R. Stone, *Perilous Times: Free Speech in Wartime From the Sedition Act of 1798 to the War on Terrorism* (New York: Norton, 2005), 150–60, 84–88.

<sup>43</sup> *New Yorker deutsches Journal*, April 21, 1918.

<sup>44</sup> *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, April 21, 1918.

<sup>45</sup> See the circulation figures listed in *N.W. Ayer's and Son's Newspaper Annual* for the relevant years.

<sup>46</sup> Robert E. Park, "The Natural History of the Newspaper," in Park, E.W. Burgess, and R.D. McKenzie, eds., *The City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925), 81, 96.

<sup>47</sup> Morris Janowitz, *The Community Press in an Urban Setting: the Social Elements of Urbanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), 19.

<sup>48</sup> Swanberg, *Citizen Hearst*, 295; Ferdinand Lundberg, *Imperial Hearst*: See Jameson, "Vanishing Mediator," 3–34.

<sup>49</sup> See Jameson, "Vanishing Mediator," 3–34.