

Isabelle Stauffer (Eichstätt): Opening the archive and changing the literary canon: Digitization as a booster for gallantry research

For most of German literary history, gallant literature did not belong to the German literary canon. When in the 1960s Herbert Singers groundbreaking studies of the gallant novel appeared, he described his research as “an expedition into a *terra incognita*”.¹ He was exploring “a white spot on the map of the German literary history.”² This white spot was at least “a yawning gap”³ of seven and a half decades. The novels he wanted to investigate had been considered lost for two centuries. He hoped to find “an unknown masterpiece” or – like Richard Alewyn before him – “a forgotten poet of importance”.⁴ He did not hide his disappointment, when he declared: “[B]ut the novels of that time are historically without consequences and aesthetically irrelevant.”⁵ Fortunately, it has happened a lot in the research about gallant literature since Singer, and his prejudices are now revised.⁶ German gallant authors, like August Bohse, Christian Friedrich Hunold, Johann Leonhard Rost, Christian Thomasius and Aurora von Königsmarck, are well-known and being investigated. And in their texts, we can find a completely different literary canon than the one we know from German literary history books.

There are several reasons why these prejudices formulated by Singer had endured so long – like the nationalist orientation of German literary history, anachronistic concepts of authorship, a narrow idea of art as well as the enormous volume of the gallant novels, conduct books and journals. Research in this field was very time-consuming in just searching for the material in “the big depots of the past”⁷ – the various libraries in Europe, let alone reading the sheer quantity of pages.

¹ Herbert Singer: *Der galante Roman*. Stuttgart 1961, p. 7. Translation of all German quotations by Isabelle Stauffer.

² *Ibid.*

³ Singer, *Galanter Roman*, p. 8.

⁴ Herbert Singer: *Der deutsche Roman zwischen Barock und Rokoko*. Köln, Graz 1963, p. 2.

⁵ Singer, *Galanter Roman*, p. 11.

⁶ Just to mention some of the important recent studies: Dirk Niefanger: *Galanterie. Grundzüge eines ästhetischen Konzepts um 1700*, in: Hartmut Laufhütte u. a. (Ed.): *Künste und Natur in Diskursen der Frühen Neuzeit*, Bd. 1 (Wolfenbütteler Arbeiten zur Barockforschung 35), Wiesbaden 2000, p. 459-472; Thomas Borgstedt and Andreas Solbach (Ed.): *Der galante Diskurs. Kommunikationsideal und Epochenschwelle (Arbeiten zur Neueren deutschen Literatur 6)*, Dresden 2001; Olaf Simons: *Marteaus Europa oder Der Roman, bevor er Literatur wurde. Eine Untersuchung des deutschen und englischen Buchangebots der Jahre 1710 bis 1720 (Internationale Forschungen zur Allgemeinen und Vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft 52)*, Amsterdam – Atlanta 2001; Florian Gelzer: *Konversation, Galanterie und Abenteuer. Romaneskes Erzählen zwischen Thomasius und Wieland (Frühe Neuzeit 125)*, Tübingen 2007; Jörn Steigerwald: *Galanterie. Die Fabrikation einer natürlichen Ethik der Gesellschaft (1650–1710) (Neues Forum für allgemeine und vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft 41)*, Heidelberg 2011; Ruth Florack and Rüdiger Singer (Ed.): *Die Kunst der Galanterie. Facetten eines Verhaltensmodells in der Literatur der Frühen Neuzeit (Frühe Neuzeit 171)*, Berlin/Boston 2012 and Isabelle Stauffer: *Verführung zur Galanterie. Benehmen, Körperlichkeit und Gefühlsinszenierungen im literarischen Kulturtransfer 1664-1772*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2018 (Wolfenbütteler Forschungen 152).

⁷ Singer, *Galanter Roman*, p. 10.

My argument in this paper is that the digitization of gallant texts, the setting up of databases and tools for distant reading could function as a booster for researching gallantry and help further revise old prejudices. Since the first digitizations of gallant literature, libraries improved their digitization methods, established databases and increased their offer constantly. This offer allows – even during the Corona-Pandemic when one cannot travel – to read and analyze gallant manuscripts and early prints. Their mere availability, visibility, and readability are changing the literary canon.

If one defines gallantry as a discourse like Thomas Borgstedt and Andreas Solbach⁸, discourse analysis is much more feasible with distant reading tools. Therefore, distant reading could be a very interesting method for researching gallant literature, because there is a very large body of sources.⁹ In my paper I will present the development from one of the first digitization of August Bohses *Secretarial art of the gallant lady* (1692) in 2010 to actual digitizations like August Bohses journal *French Helicons monthly fruits* (1696) or Christian Friedrich Hunolds novel *The lovable Adalie* (1702) on *Deutsches Textarchiv* and *TextGrid*. From Bohses journal and Hunolds novel, I will give a distant reading through *Voyant Tools* to explore the function of rank, countries, and crucial gallant concepts like love and knowledge in these texts. Furthermore, I would like to discuss, if *Named Entity Recognition* could help to identify the gallant literary canon.¹⁰

⁸ Cf. Borgstedt/Solbach, *Der galante Diskurs*, p. 9.

⁹ Many of the gallant text are part of “the great unread”, Franco Moretti: *Distant Reading*. London, New York 2013, p. 63-70.

¹⁰ Cf. Mareike Schumacher: “Named Entity Recognition (NER)”, in: *forTEXT. Literatur digital erforschen*, <https://fortext.net/routinen/methoden/named-entity-recognition-ner> [Access: 16.02.2021].