Transatlantic Regionalism: African American and German (American) Contact in Nineteenth-Century Print and Performance

By

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For my family

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Abstract

This project considers nineteenth-century regionally specific cultural production in a transatlantic frame. Scholarly emphasis on nineteenth-century literary regionalism as a peripheral response to the metropole, I argue, falls short of explaining the complex interactions of race, nation, mobility, and racialized representation inherent in the process of regional formation. As scholars have pointed out in recent years, local communities are not isolated from the influence of nations, empires, and transnational economic flows. I emphasize the reverse; texts and performers with deeply local concerns also move through the world, interacting across oceans and languages. By tracing interactions between African American, German, and German-American performers, audiences, writers, and readers, this project recovers an archive of articulations of belonging as well as fraught interaction.

The first chapter explores texts by German-American women writers in the latter half of the nineteenth century. It traces the ways these writers employ regionalist techniques to examine the customs of the United States while presenting immigrant life on its way to inclusion in white Anglo-American culture. Chapter two centers on the tragedian Ira Aldridge and the Fisk Jubilee Singers, who performed extensively in German-speaking countries. The chapter theorizes the role of traveling performance in the wake of slavery and the emergence of the German nation. The third chapter's chief example is that of the German-born playwright Reinhold Solger, whose two farces, one in English and one in German, exemplify the possibilities and pitfalls of translating across dialect and genre. The final chapter maps the 1879 midwestern tour of Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins's play "The Underground Railroad." It looks deep into newspaper accounts of the performances and demonstrates that archival erasures distort narratives of regional formation in favor of established rather than emergent cultures.

In short, the dissertation argues that regional identity formation can only be understood in relation to multifaceted geographical imaginaries and ideologies. It offers a comparative intervention into settled notions of region and contributes to conversations in transnational and multilingual approaches to the study of U.S. literatures.

Introduction

Transatlantic Regionalism: Mapping a Contradiction

i. Du Bois in Germany

Late in his long life, African American sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois (1868-1963) wrote his third and final autobiography. The book reflects upon the political developments from the late nineteenth century to the early 1960s. It is both the story of Du Bois's life and the story of the effects of nationalism, racism, socialism, and the many ideological struggles of the previous hundred years. Du Bois begins the book by revisiting some of the locations he had toured as a student, now offering the perspective of advanced age:

> East Germany, known as the German Democratic Republic, was led by the heirs of social democracy and manned by socialist workers. It is developing the faith of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg and becoming a socialist state, after the pattern of the Soviet Union. This was the Germany where I attended the University in 1892, and here I went in 1959. It looked familiar. It had dropped its old name "Friedrich Wilhelm" and was now the Humboldt University of Berlin, named after the great scholar. I walked down Unter den Linden to the Brandenburger Thor. There I stopped. I could not visit again my old lodging on the Schöneberger Ufer. That lay in "West" Berlin, and if I had entered, American soldiers might arrest me on any pretext they invented. I turned back and traversed a city with new buildings and enterprises, along with ghosts of war and destruction. In the great hall of the University, with women students now common but in 1892 never admitted, I sat in the office where in my day Rudolph Virchow had presided as Rector Magnificus. A group played the soft music of Sebastian Bach, and the faculty of economics bestowed on me the honorary degree of Doctor of Economics. I had coveted this degree 65 years before, but then the University of Berlin would not recognize my graduate study at Harvard, and I was not allowed to take the examination.[1]

Du Bois's description of his time in East Berlin in 1959 shows the way one's personal story and the story of nations, ideas, empires, political philosophies, and elements of culture inscribe themselves onto landscapes both literal and figurative. What appear to be the nostalgic reminiscences of a ninety-year-old man retracing the steps of his youth, in fact, amount to an

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[1] W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois: A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century* (New York: International Publishers, 1968), 23.

example of ekphrasis. For Du Bois, the campus of Humboldt University of Berlin is a mix of visual art and literature, a still legible palimpsest. The name of "Friedrich Wilhelm" has been scratched off and replaced; the history of two World Wars remains etched in the cityscape, creating a jarring mixture of old and new. And a group playing Bach supplies the soundtrack to this scene in cold war East Berlin. The past, present, and future of the global powers of the twentieth century sit like coiled springs in this place.

Later in the autobiography, Du Bois returns to his reminiscences of his time in Germany from 1892-94, and when he does, he offers a similar sense of ideas, landscapes, history, and culture all interacting in the context of his personal narrative. In the following scene, Du Bois describes a trip he took to the central-German city of Eisenach:

> […] I spent a happy holiday in a home where university training and German home-making left no room for American color prejudice. From this unhampered social intermingling with Europeans of education and manners, I emerged from the extremes of my racial provincialism. I became more human; […] I ceased to hate or suspect people simply because they belonged to one race or color; and above all I began to understand the real meaning of scientific research and the dim outline of methods of employing its technique and its results in the new social sciences for the settlement of the Negro problems in America.
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> In the Marbach home which took only properly introduced 'paying guests' were two grown daughters, and two young women who were relatives; two young Frenchmen, an English youth and myself. *Herr Oberpfarrer* [the Rector], Doctor Marbach, and his efficient and correct wife presided. At first my German was halting and I was shy. But soon the courtesy of the elders and the ebullient spirits of the young folks evoked my good nature and keen sense of camaraderie. The very mistakes of those of us who were foreigners–mistakes in grammar and usage and etiquette–became a source of merriment and sympathy. We became a happy group closely bound to each other. We went together to church services and to concerts. We took long excursions through field and forest to places of interest, lunching in homely inns or in the open.
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> I remember once the contest in poetry we had in a forest glen looking out on a great mountain range; I recited in English and one of the Frenchmen in his tongue. Then Madame Marbach (who always chaperoned us) recited *Du bist wie eine Blume* […]. We wept openly at its beauty and I looked at Dora with her blue eyes and black hair and the lovely coloring of her skin. Dora always paired with me, first to correct my German and then by preference. […]
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> I was very fond of Dora Marbach and as I well knew, so was she of me. Our fellows joked about us and when I sang the folk song of *Die Lora am Thore* [Lora at the Gate], little Bertha invariably changed the name to "Dora." We confessed our love for each other and Dora said she would marry me *"gleich!"* [at once]. But I knew this would be unfair to her and fatal for my work at home, where I had neither property nor social standing for this blue-eyed stranger. She could not quite understand. Naturally I received much advice as to marriage plans. One lady told me very seriously '*Sie sollen heiraten eine hell-blonde!*' [you should marry a blonde]. But I knew better, although there may have been some echo in my mind of the proverb:

Es war'[sic] so schön gewesen
Es hät' nicht sollen sein!
It was so lovely
That it could not be![2]"

The above scene is romantic in multiple senses. Du Bois's story of young love thwarted by circumstance contains joyous folk songs and tearful poetry read in open air in the German countryside. But this is a cosmopolitan romanticism – Du Bois and his associates read poems in three languages and eschew the exclusionary, nationalistic elements of the romantic tradition. And yet Du Bois knows that in another context, that of the United States, none of this would be possible. This reminiscence is simultaneously enchanting and disenchanting. Du Bois experiences these fleeting relationships as genuinely-felt and exuberant human connections, but he never loses sight of the fragmented world he inhabits elsewhere.

Du Bois's experience is reminiscent of Theodor Adorno's argument in his short essay "Heine the Wound." [Die Wunde Heine]. In his dialectical fashion, Adorno points out that Heinrich Heine's depictions of Romantic German folk life and mythology appear to be marked by "enchanting…immediacy," but "this immediacy [is] thoroughly mediated.[3] As a Jewish person whose mother was not fluent in German, Heine was never completely at home either in the language or mythologized space of German romantic poetic tropes. Heine manipulates the language "like an instrument" as "only someone who is not actually inside language" can do.[4] Using Heine's "Der Heimkehr" as an example, Adorno argues that this "intentionally false folksong" with its "stereotypical theme, unrequited love, is an image for homelessness."[5] Adorno

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[2] Du Bois, *Autobiography,* 160-61. [German translations appear in the original]

[3] Theodor Adorno, "Heine the Wound," in *Notes to Literature, Volume I,* ed. Rolf Tiedemann (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 83.

[4] Adorno, "Heine the Wound," 82-3.

[5] Adorno, "Heine the Wound," 85.

continues by equating Heine's expression of homelessness with the broad homelessness of modernity: "Now that the destiny which Heine sensed has been fulfilled literally […] the homelessness has also become everyone's homelessness; all human beings have been as badly injured in their beings and their language as Heine the outcast was."[6] As with Heine, Du Bois's experience of this romantic German idyll is so sharp in its depiction because he too comes from the position of the outsider; he is able to "play [the romantic tropes] like an instrument," but never completely yields to their false allure.

Du Bois's depiction of his youthful idyll stands in contrast to his particular experience of wounded modernity, grounded in the context of American racism and the legacy of racial slavery. The material Du Bois uses in his autobiographical reminiscence, romantic poetry and unfulfilled love, resembles Heine's, but in a different aesthetic register. Adorno concludes his argument with the claim that Heine's wound–modern, homeless subjectivity–will only heal "in a society that has achieved reconciliation," where "no one would be cast out any more."[7] Perhaps Du Bois's fond memories of this moment in his life are so strongly felt because it was a glimpse, however momentary, of what such a reconciliation might look like. Du Bois experienced "home" across the Atlantic from the place of his birth, and he chose to mediate it through the language of locally-oriented romantic imagery.

Du Bois's example provides a case study in the kind of work this dissertation does. By analyzing examples of contact between Germans or German-Americans and African Americans in the nineteenth-century transatlantic world, this project explores the ways in which cultural contact in the form of literature, music, and performance serves as a site for multi-directional

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[6] Adorno, "Heine the Wound," 85.

[7] Adorno, "Heine the Wound," 85.

understandings and misunderstandings between these groups. The confluence of physical mobility of bodies along with ideas about place, nation, and affiliation creates a counterintuitive scenario in which the local and the communal are defined and redefined through motion. This dissertation proposes that by considering "transatlantic regionalism," that is, writing, music, and performance that transfer features from the discourse of regionalism across space, we can begin to understand how modern conceptions of place operate; modern spaces, I argue, can only be understood in relation to their multi-scale positionalities. A locality is not just geographical: it is defined by temporality, narrative, and interaction with other places, both far and near. And by offering a particular view of African American-German connections, this project seeks to push at the boundaries between academic fields of study, especially transatlantic studies, the study of literary regionalism, German-American studies, and African American studies, all of which have offered much to this dissertation, but which also have something to gain from the examples this dissertation offers.

ii. From Transnationalism to Literary Regionalism and Back

The various conversations that lie adjacent to this dissertation all have one thing in common: they challenge the nation state as the chief orienting framework for identity and belonging.[8] One way to challenge the primacy of the nation as a dominant category is to universalize, to find that which extends beyond national and linguistic specificity. Another way is to localize, to demonstrate that the nation itself is not a whole, and thus its parts can be broken

[8] Though the list of conversations and sub-fields that follows is lengthy, there are necessarily other related fields that this dissertation cannot address or contribute to significantly. I limit my use of theories of transnationalism and approaches to transatlantic studies primarily to the realm of literature and culture. The field of history, for example, has dealt with these notions in different manners, and though this dissertation is written in a largely historicist mode, it lacks many characteristics of a historical study.

down for analysis, causing injury to its perceived unity. This dissertation does not fit completely into any one academic discussion, yet it is in conversation with several fields, both established and emergent, especially transatlantic studies, transnational literary studies, German-American studies, the study of new scales of regionalism, and Black German Studies, and African American Studies. Given its connection to a large cross-section of fields of study, this project has some inevitable limitations. While its engagement with such a wide variety of fields might preclude any attempt at comprehensive treatments, the productive potential of interdisciplinarity, I suggest, outweighs such losses.

First, this dissertation enters into the highly varied category of transatlantic literary studies. In a 2014 review essay, Joseph Rezek breaks down three general types of transatlantic study that he calls 1. Atlantic Modernity, 2. Literature in English, and 3. The Atlantic as Conduit and Context.[9] The first of these subsections is best exemplified by Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic.*[10] Gilroy's study of Atlantic modernity in the multi-temporal context of the Atlantic Slave Trade, along with the many books Gilroy influenced, exhibits a provocative approach that "eschews a normative historicism in favor of transhistorical genealogies."[11] That is, Gilroy disrupts not only spatial but also temporal fixity as he draws and redraws connections that form through trade, diasporic affiliation, popular culture, folk culture, and previously unexplored contact zones.

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[9] Joseph Rezek. "What We Need from Transatlantic Studies," *American Literary History* 26, no. 4, (Winter 2014): 792-794.

[10] Paul Gilroy. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

[11] Rezek. "What We Need," 793.

The second approach Rezek describes, "literature in English," stays primarily within the English-language canon by pointing out the ways both British and American writers operate in a transnational framework that was not limited by nation, but from which national categories could be articulated. Within this category of transatlantic study, one finds debates about the dynamics of influence between the United States and England. Some argue that U.S. writers tried to contrast their writing with that of England, while others claim just the opposite: that U.S. writers viewed their literary tradition to be a part of the English tradition. Studies of the history of the book and the publishing industry paint a more complicated picture in which a "culture of reprinting," the practice of book piracy and mass market book and periodical production, blurred many lines separating the national provenance of individual pieces of literary production, but ultimately set the stage for the emergence of a national literature in the United States.[12]

The third and final category Rezek presents is called "The Atlantic as Conduit and Context." This mode "retains a fundamental investment in the particularity of local culture while placing renewed emphasis on its receptivity to influences for which the Atlantic Ocean was literally a conduit."[13] This third mode considers political and cultural connections between the two sides of the Atlantic, such as transnational abolitionist networks, as well as British interest in narratives found primarily in the United States such as slave narratives and stories featuring Native Americans. This mode employs local specificity as a proxy for national categories, thus complicating narratives of national unity. On the other hand, it risks replacing homogenizing narratives of the nation with metonymic or symbolic types. In other words, if a specific type

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[12] See Meredith L. McGill, *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834-1853* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

[13] Rezek, "What we Need," 794.

becomes a stand-in for a nation: a cowboy, a Midwestern farmer, a Prussian Junker, etc., then one form of national homogeneity simply replaces the previous.

Each of these categories of transatlantic study comes from a particular context within the academy, and each is dependent on the needs and goals of academic departments. The first category, Atlantic modernity, works well in interdisciplinary contexts, as it often brings together scholars of English and US Literature with historians and scholars of African American Studies, given its focus on the transatlantic slave trade. Category two, literature in English, works wonderfully within the context of an English department, since English departments house both Americanists and scholars of British literature. And as Rezek points out, category three, the Atlantic as conduit and context, has been extremely productive in American Studies, as its turn toward archival research has fueled many book projects. The present study fits largely into category three, with elements of category one, but which adds significant attention to literature and archival texts in German in addition to English. Linguistic diversity is often lacking in transatlantic literary studies.

The transnational, a broader category that encompasses the transatlantic among others, is endowed with various affordances but, as Donald Pease admits, it "lacks thematic unity."[14] Transnational scholarship can seek to challenge national frameworks both in the political realm and in the aesthetic imaginaries spawned by historical consciousness, yet it is just as likely to reproduce the national frameworks that it seeks to challenge. "As an adjective qualifier," Pease argues, "the transnational can describe everything from neutral representations of imperial

[14] Donald Pease, "Introduction: Remapping the Transnational Turn," in *Re-Framing the Transnational Turn in American Studies,* eds. Winfried Fluck, Donald E. Pease, and John Carlos Rowe (Hanover, New Hampshire: Dartmouth College Press, 2011), 4.

exchanges to their diasporic critiques."[15] There has long been a transnationalism of the political, cultural, and economic elite, as well as a transnationalism of the desperate and dispossessed. The category thus contains multitudes and contradictions.

Pease defines one affordance of transnational scholarship as follows: "In raising basic questions about the meaning of national belonging and cultural identification for dispersed populations with different historical trajectories, the transnational can also call forth different representations of the past."[16] This statement summarizes both the rationale for and the goal of this project. One might question the particularity of isolating German and African American cultural production in the Atlantic world to the exclusion of others, but "questions about the meaning of national belonging" are perhaps even more acute among populations whose "historical trajectories" have often been written out of narratives framed by national boundaries and long unquestioned images of who belongs. While admitting to the problems accompanying the specificity of what gets included and what gets excluded from this study, I suggest that adding an alternative set of coordinates to the "transatlantic," namely the points of contact between African American and German (-American) artists and audiences, will go some length toward "call[ing] forth different representations of the past."[17]

The foundation of transnational literary studies is established by the various sub-fields that compose it. Similarly, this study is indebted to the history of scholarly research in the field of German-American studies, especially the attempts in recent decades to systematize and collect the most important exemplars of German-Language literature in the United States. Here I include

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[15] Pease, "Introduction," 4.

[16] Pease, "Introduction," 4-5.

[17] Pease, "Introduction," 4-5.

the work of Cora Lee Kluge, Winfried Fluck, and Werner Sollors, to name just a few who have operated in a collecting and anthologizing mode.[18] The field's many linguists and historians have also provided invaluable context for the German-American works this dissertation considers. By necessity, the field of German-American studies has a tendency to extract German-American literature from the English-language literature in the United States, or on occasion, to include it among many other literatures in languages other than English.[19] A part of my method, and my privilege and duty as a comparatist, is to move beyond such constraints. The coming chapters are not entirely dedicated to German-American literature, though German-American literature is relevant to the exploration of the transatlantic world that I wish to present.

The German-American texts in this dissertation have often been recovered by the aforementioned scholars, but because I seek to understand German and German-American consumers as well as producers of culture, I also rely on newspaper accounts by Germans and German-Americans, some of which have not previously been cited or located. The advent of digitized and searchable newspaper archives has transformed the way scholars read and research historical newspapers, including German-American newspapers. But the development of these technologies is met with uneven rates at which newspapers are digitized, if they are digitized at all. As is the case for researchers in African American studies, German-American studies

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[18] See Cora Lee Kluge, *Other Witnesses: An Anthology of Literature of the German Americans, 1850-1914* (Madison, WI: Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies, 2007).; See Winfried Fluck and Werner Sollors, *German? American? Literature?: New Directions in German-American Studies* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002). I limit this list to those who have created anthologies, but other scholars have been just as crucial to the investigations of German-American culture: Leroy Hopkins, Lynne Tatlock, Matt Erlin, Lorie Vanchena, William D. Keel, to name a few.

[19] See Marc Shell and Werner Sollors, eds., *The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature: A Reader of Original Texts With English Translations* (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

researchers cannot assume that what is available online reflects the totality of what exists. As chapter four will demonstrate, the availability of German-American newspapers in digital form varies widely and unpredictably, as it requires libraries, archives, and historical societies to execute the expensive and demanding processes of digitization. Moreover, nineteenth-century German-language newspapers use a gothic script called *Fraktur,* which can further complicate search features developed for other type-faces. Search features are also frequently disrupted by imperfect scan quality. In short, the widening, but not yet wide, availability of German-language newspapers in the United States provides an opportunity with a few caveats: digitized papers may not be functionally searchable, uneven digitization creates a false appearance of an archive's totality, and microfilm and secondary research into the existence of newspapers remain necessary resources.

Regionalism as a genre, process, and concept helps to organize and limit the texts in this project. In 2018, Cécile Roudeau assembled a special issue of the journal *Romantisme* called "new scales of regionalist writing."[20] The issue brings together several articles, including one of my own, that attempt to apply alternative geographical scales to regionalist writing in order to rethink its dependence on spatial fixity. To attach regional writing to mobility appears to erase the very characteristic that makes it regional, but I focus on examples of cultural production in which elements of regionalism, normally confined by definition to a certain geographical location, make their way across nations and cultures. Regionalism has long been defined as a discourse; it is also a literary genre in which elements of local specificity play a role in the thematic scope and cultural work of a text. Such elements include linguistic differences like

[20] Cécile Roudeau, "Écritures régionalistes (1800-1914): nouvelles échelles, nouveaux enjeux critiques," *Romantisme* 181, no. 3 (2018): 5-15.

dialect and accent, particularities of landscape, and local knowledges regarding flora, and fauna, and nostalgia for lost signifiers of identity. Regionalist literature tends to emerge in contexts where local ways of being are in jeopardy due to colonialism, advancing metropolitanism, the rise of capitalism, and increased personal mobility – in other words, the broad and uneven processes of modernization. Many scholars have read regionalism through a Foucauldian lens; Josephine Donovan, for example, views many examples of "European local color" as literature disqualified from grand narratives of cultural and national formation which ought to be saved from obscurity by the critic.[21]

Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse similarly orient the task of the critic toward the recovery of silenced voices in literary history, especially as they focus on the female voices prominent in the genre.[22] Fetterley and Pryse took works previously called "local color," a subset of realism, and renamed them "regionalism" in order to remove them from the subordinate position implied by the prior term.[23] In short, they established regionalism as a clearly defined field, contained largely within the latter half of the nineteenth century, and also as a discourse, a constructed epistemology of emplacement, as opposed to a belief in the notion of a place-in-itself or *genius loci*. Fetterley and Pyrse's regionalist writers speak from the periphery, and as such they offer a valuable check to the most disruptive forces of modernity and its multiple forms of displacement. The downside of creating a canon of literary regionalism is that lines must be

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[21] Donovan uses the term "Local color" despite the fact that this term has traditionally signified a second-rate status. Donovan intends no such denigration but finds it to be the more accurate umbrella term for the European context, as Irish and Scottish "national tales" are not, strictly speaking, merely regional. See Josephine Donovan, *European Local-Color Literature: National Tales, Dorfgeschichten, Romans Champêtres* (New York: Continuum, 2010), ix.

[22] Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse, *Writing Out of Place: Regionalism, Women, and American Literary Culture* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 4-7.

[23] Fetterley and Pryse, "Writing Out of Place," 1-9.

drawn somewhere, and often, I would claim, they are drawn too narrowly around white rural writers in the late nineteenth century. Liberating the elements of regional writing from clearly defined times and places allows for a more inclusive notion of region in terms of race, temporality, language, and locality.

Regionalism and particularity contrast with the search for universality and representativeness typically denied to women and minority writers. As a result, "revisionists have worked to redeem regional writing from its pejorative status," but as Eve Dunbar points out, "while such redemption is important and valid, it does not necessarily account for the sense of burden that US minority or female writers often experienced when associated with the genre. The burden of the particular has long been associated with African American writers."[24] This burden incentivizes the desire for universalism, but, Dunbar continues, "the quest for universalism at the expense of African American particularism does very little to deconstruct the literary racial hierarchy; it merely condemns those black texts that are perceived as aligning themselves with local articulations of blackness."[25] The examples of African American texts, performances, and songs in this dissertation often contend with the catch-22 Dunbar describes here, but what I have found is that many of the examples in this dissertation manage to operate on a level of affiliation that cannot be limited to either "local" or "universal." Instead, they exist within multilevel networks that remain in ideological, temporal, and spatial flux. When regional writing exists in a multinational and transatlantic frame, the local/universal binary becomes inoperable.

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[24] Eve Dunbar, "Black is a Region: Segregation and American Literary Regionalism in Richard Wright's 'The Color Curtain,'" *African American Review*, 42 no. 1 (Spring, 2008), 112.

[25] Dunbar, "Black is a Region," 113.

Juliet Shields, in *Nation and Migration*, seeks to complicate the notion of the British Atlantic and of the regionalist canon by including the Scottish and Irish literary sketch, which offers the possibility of solidarity and intersectionality in an anti-imperialist project. By including the literary sketch, Shields broadens the scope of regionalism to include the first half of the nineteenth century. Shields's inclusion of the literary sketch demonstrates convincingly that regionalism's origins are not found merely in the latter part of the nineteenth century, and indeed, it is too confining to view regionalist discourse in the specific time and places in which it has been traditionally defined in American studies.[26]

Hsuan Hsu similarly expands the reach of regionalism by analyzing regionalist elements in writing normally considered to be realist or naturalist, typically understood as reactions to regionalism in the American context.[27] Hsu's project demonstrates that increased mobility and advancing forms of global capitalism actually produce a feeling of regional distinctness and disconnection from the metropolis, even as regions fuel the process of their own exclusion through the exchange of material goods. The region is both produced by increased mobility and it produces the conditions for that mobility. Like Shields and Hsu, I view regionalism as a process in addition to a discourse and genre. As Shields puts it, "early nineteenth-century collections of tales and sketches participated in transforming the peripheries or provinces into

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[26] Fetterley and Pryse along with Donovan and others have helped to create what might be called a canon of American Regionalism. Writers in this canon include Sarah Orne Jewett, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Hamlin Garland, Alice Cary, Kate Chopin, Alice Dunbar-Nelson, Charles Chesnutt, and others, though there has been much debate about the parameters of the genre and inclusion in the canon.

[27] Hsu, Hsuan. *Geography and the Production of Space in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 164-95.

regions."[28] The periphery or the province achieves the heightened designation of "region" only through assigning positive attributes to such a place. A forgotten no-place becomes a positively defined some-place. Hsu's and Shields's work begins to ask what it means for regionalism to itself participate in the very process of increased mobility and acceleration of textual circulation that creates the regionalist impulse.

Though regionalism is sometimes understood as a rejection of earlier sentimental modes, and American naturalism is understood as a rejection of the feminine regionalist mode, we can see from Shields and Hsu that the elements of regionalism exist in both of these cases. And this is why I make a slight distinction between regionalism and regional writing. The former exists within a literary historiographical paradigm and has its uses as a tool of categorization. Indeed it can be useful to view the regionalism of Jewett and others as distinct from sentimentalism, as it offers an alternative representation of women's voices. It is also useful to distinguish regionalism from naturalism, given the latter's overtly masculine traits and alternative conception of land and nature. But if we liberate the discourse of regionalism from this narrowly defined field, we can see its workings more clearly. In short, I propose to keep regionalism as a field and a mini-canon and to add "regional writing" as a way of talking about a discursive mode. Transatlantic regionalism, then, is cultural production in which both regional identity and mobility are at issue.

There is a danger in this line of thinking. One might expand the notion of regionalism to the point that it becomes useless as a concept. What text does not contain some markers of region in its language or setting? Some experimental modernist and postmodernist writing more or less eschews any notion of localities, but these are exceptions. To avoid the problem of over-applying

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[28] Juliet Shields. *Nation and Migration: The Making of British Atlantic Literature, 1765-1835* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 119.

the concept of regionalism, it is crucial to come to a clear understanding of what elements make up regionalist discourse, and what political, gender, national, and racial dynamics are in play in the impulse toward regionalist writing. Regional writing prominently employs the elements of regionalism, but is not limited to the classic texts of the genre. In short, regional writing is writing for which region or the local scale is itself at issue. Regional and local identity are not merely backdrops, but key components in the work the text is doing.

Regional writing exhibits certain generic features that Wittgenstein might call "family resemblances," a concept that has influenced genre theory.[29] No one feature defines regional writing, or any other genre; rather, an overlapping web of resemblances and inflection points in content and form establish a genre. One such characteristic is the orthographic representation of dialect. Josephine Donovan points out that the European regional writers she encounters "used dialect sparingly or indicated it by modifying the standard language to reflect the regional accent."[30] Though there are literatures written entirely in dialects unintelligible to readers of the standard language, most regional writers mediate between regional distinctions and the standard language of a larger area or a nation. This suggests that attempts to capture local ways of speaking function as more than unreflective representations of people's "real" speech. These attempts are necessarily interpretive and conscious placements of characters into a constellation of deviation from standard norms of written dialogue. Class, group identity, and race are at issue in the written representation of dialect or accent. Characters' language exists on a continuum between earnest attempts at mimesis and grotesque parody. Determining where a particular example of "dialect" falls along that continuum requires hermeneutic exploration. Accent and

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[29] See Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1982).

[30] Donovan, *European Local-Color*, vii.

dialect can even function as elements of diversification among characters within the same group. A character's intelligence, "authenticity," class position, and social standing are all to some extent represented in the way he or she speaks, but by no means in predictable or consistent ways. Regional writers know this and engage in complex games with the reader as they toy with expectations.

Dialect associated with African American characters presents a more complex and fraught situation. As Eric Lott points out:

> The chances for white involvement in [black culture] were routine, if rather variable and occasional. The vast quantity of black dialect, habit, and mannerism regularly reported in almanacs and newspapers evinces the variety and frequency of interracial contact, and no doubt provided a readily imitable outline of white fantasies about black behavior; its material extension was indeed the massive output of dime minstrel songbooks that buttressed the theatrical popularity of minstrelsy.[31]

Lott's above description testifies to the ubiquity of representations of African American speech in various forms. It also describes the way caricatures were constructed by white fantasies about African Americans, and in turn (re)constructed those fantasies. "Black dialect," is thus a broader and more significant cultural element than dialectal representation in regionalist writing. More than a mere stylistic choice, "black dialect" presents a battleground for how African Americans are understood by white people in the culture. And that battleground operates two ways: it is both a site of racist ideology creation, but as we shall see, it is also a site of resistance in which African American writers and performers take the opportunity to mock, speak back to, complicate, and contradict white fantasies. Writing of the reception of Paul Laurence Dunbar's dialect poetry, Shirley Moody-Turner writes, "Dunbar's faithful renderings of dialect suggests that his representations were deemed faithful only to the extent that they confirmed the popular

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[31] Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 41-2.

stereotypes issuing forth from the minstrel and Plantation Traditions."[32] This illustrates further the layers of complexity attending the use of dialect – "authenticity" is determined using a fraudulent yardstick.

On the minstrel stage, later on the Vaudeville stage, and in countless newspapers, contact between English and foreign languages has proven to be an endless source of a kind of humorous performance, both within and between communities. When describing this process in music as well as language, Wesley Morris suggests that "blackface minstrelsy tethered black people and black life to white musical structures, like the polka, which was having a moment in 1848. The mixing was already well underway: Europe plus slavery plus the circus, times harmony, comedy and drama, equals Americana."[33] But dialect humor is not limited to the depiction of African American characters. Outside of the context of the minstrel stage, Mark L. Louden has pointed out in the context of Germanic languages, that newspapers have long published orthographic representations of stereotypical speech. From Yiddish to Pennsylvania German, to Scandinavian languages, and beyond, language contact in the United States has produced a space for play, mockery, and linguistic innovation.[34] Though I cannot offer anything approaching a complete compendium of dialect humor in the United States, this dissertation highlights many examples of

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[32] Shirley Moody-Turner, *Black Folklore and the Politics of Racial Representation* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013), 107.

[33] Wesley Morris, "Why is Everyone Always Stealing Black Music?" *New York Times Magazine*, August 14, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/music-black-culture-appropriation.html.

[34] Mark L. Louden, "How Gemixt Are the Pickles? Germanic Dialect Humor in America" (Public Lecture, Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies, Madison, WI, October 26, 2017). Louden's lecture focused on many examples of written and performed dialect humor from communities within the United States who speak Germanic languages including German, Yiddish, and Scandinavian languages, of which there is a large and understudied archive. This dissertation shows only the tip of the iceberg of dialect humor.

the complex negotiations authors and performers make when employing dialectal representation. As I will point out, dialect can work as a marker of group affiliation and, conversely, as a method of exclusion. Dialect is thus *dialectical* in the sense of a productive opposition, if you'll pardon the use of such similar words. Simultaneously creating in and out group distinctions, written dialect stands as a meeting ground for complex negotiations of belonging.

Dialect humor, as above, can develop from the context of language contact, but the translation of dialect humor itself presents yet another interesting phenomenon that this dissertation will consider. Translators of dialect-speaking characters must make choices in how to represent deviation from standard language in the target language, if at all. For example, translators of *Asterix le Gaulois*, the French comic, must deal with the fact that much of the humor comes from untranslatable puns and regional caricatures. This occasionally leads to new possibilities for humor. Similarly, the German translation of the American television show, *The Simpsons*, has to contend with the occasional presence of a German foreign exchange student with the improbable name Üter Zörker. In order to make this ostensibly German character foreign in the German version, he has been given a thick Swiss-German accent. Such examples abound. As chapter three will point out, the process of translating dialect is not merely a practical or aesthetic choice; it also gets to the heart of representations of class and race.

Germany, as well as the United States, has a long tradition of dialect writing that extends to today. Swiss authors sometimes write in true dialect and produce Standard German translations of Swiss German texts. In addition, authors throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries relied on written accent in many of the ways familiar to those who study American regionalism, often in the context of north and south divides or more pronouncedly in the latter half of the twentieth century, east and west divides. Though examples abound, one might

consider Fritz Reuter's novel *Ut mine Stromtid* (1862-64) whose title already suggests its pronounced use of Plattdeutsch, a northern German dialect.[35] The title is variously translated into English as *During My Apprenticeship* or *An Old Story of My Farming Days.* A translation appeared in the 1870s. In English, the novel lacks a distinct dialect or even regional flavor. It employs "Herr" rather than "Mr." to mark it as German, but it lacks the regional language characteristic of the original. The elements of regional writing are not limited to the United States, and they can be difficult to understand outside of their context, particularly in translation. This dissertation provides a few examples of that complexity, especially in chapters one and three.

Landscape as well as flora and fauna also serve as major markers of regional writing. Each contributes to the notion that a region contains a kind of innate specificity, a physical history embodied in the interaction between people and their immediate environment. The trope of herbalist healers, for example, combines ideas of locally specific plant life and local knowledge developed over generations. A certain amount of artifice is involved with such a notion, and some examples from the regionalist canon already explore the limitations of a belief in local sources of knowledge as a counter to more "scientific" knowledge. Hsuan Hsu, for example, points out that in Sarah Orne Jewett's "The Foreigner," "the herbalist's expertise, far from being the autochthonous regional practice it seems, derives in part from foreign sources."[36] Hsu continues, "The foreign origin of Mrs. Todd's herbal remedies revises one of local color's

[35] Fritz Reuter, *Ut mine Stromtid* [1862-64] (Berlin: G. Grote'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1907); Fritz Reuter, *An Old Story of My Farming Days* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1878).

[36] Hsu, *Production of Space*, 170.

most characteristic metaphors for 'rootedness' in a specific place."[37] Already within the canon of regionalism there exists an implicit critique of rootedness as a natural phenomenon.

By using examples of writers who themselves moved through the world, who might be considered "transatlantic subjects," I explore the way the discourse of regionalism is itself mobile. The regionalist impulse arises from the difficulty of negotiating the various geographical scales in which people live: local, regional, national, international, and global. It follows then, that this process of negotiation in the nineteenth century in the United States and continental Europe cannot help but reflect on and relate to the key national struggles of the time: abolition and anti-absolutism, as well as the various economic forces that drove large numbers of people across the Atlantic.[38] Likewise, these two struggles created many mobile subjects, whose mobility was often fraught with danger, especially for formerly enslaved people. Frederick Douglass, James C. Pennington, and David F. Dorr, for example, fled to Europe, carrying with them the burden of representing their places of origin, and European "48ers" fled to the United States, likewise bringing along their ideas of what could and should constitute a modern democratic nation. Neither of these groups is monolithic, and this study does not pretend to provide an exhaustive exegesis of either group's history or literary production, but it provides examples of meaningful points of contact.

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[37] Hsu, 170.

[38] This brings me to a limitation in this dissertation's approach. The vast majority of German immigrants to the United States in the nineteenth century were not refugees of revolution on the run from the leaders of the state. They were people who left Germany for economic rather than ideological reasons. This study admittedly dedicates an outsized number of its pages to these more privileged, formally educated, and well connected "transatlantic subjects." In the same vein, I often refer to the German-American that I discuss as "transatlantic subjects" rather than as immigrants as a way to signal this difference in status, sometimes wealth, and ability to be mobile.

Another sub-field in the category of transnational studies, sometimes called Black German Studies, has emerged in recent decades. Black German Studies integrates aspects of Critical Race Theory and Black Studies into the areas of the African Diaspora that intersect with German-speaking countries.[39] A number of important scholarly works have emerged in recent years to begin to define this field.[40] A few examples include a 2003 special issue of *Callaloo* entitled "Reading the Black German Experience," which considers the experiences of Black Germans primarily through their literary production. Historians have also taken up the topic of Germany and the African diaspora.[41] Most recently, Tiffany Florvil and Vanessa Plumly have assembled a collection of essays offering a range of approaches and topics entitled *Rethinking Black German Studies: Approaches, Interventions and Histories*, published in 2018.[42] The essays span a broad spatial and temporal range as they trace the disparate examples of Black German culture, history, encounter, and interaction. Stemming from a seminar at the 2014 German Studies Association Conference in Kansas City, Missouri, as well as subsequent meetings of the GSA, the essay collection has the feel of a necessary and timely theoretical intervention. Florvil and Plumly's introduction puts to paper some of the main themes of the "kitchen table

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[39] See the edited collection *Crosscurrents: African Americans, Africa, and Germany in the Modern World,* edited by David McBride, Leroy Hopkins, and C. Aisha Blackshire-Belay. (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1998).

[40] See Fatima El-Tayeb, *Schwarze Deutsche: Der Diskurs um "Rasse" und nationale Identität 1890-1933* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2001).; See Sara Lennox, *Remapping Black Germany: New Perspectives on Afro-German History, Politics, and Culture* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016).

[41] See Mischa Honeck, Martin Klimke, and Anne Kuhlmann, eds., *Germany and the Black Diaspora: Points of Contact, 1250-1914* (New York: Berghahn, 2013).

[42] Tiffany N. Florvil and Vanessa D. Plumly, "Introduction: Rethinking Black German Studies," in *Rethinking Black German Studies: Approaches, Interventions, and Histories,* eds. Tiffany N. Florvil and Vanessa D. Plumly (Oxford, U. K., Peter Lang, 2018), 1-35.

conversations" and seminar discussions that have helped to shape this field for decades.[43] As a necessarily interdisciplinary field, Black German Studies seeks to "transform both German and Black/African Diaspora Studies, but also other disciplines."[44] Florvil and Plumly offer an important reminder to "be attentive to and acknowledge the white hegemonic center that often dominates German Studies, particularly when undertaking work in the field of Black German Studies."[45] I aim to heed that warning both in tone and methodology. I turn a critical eye toward the primary sources that remain to tell the stories of interactions between African Americans and Germans on both sides of the Atlantic and attempt to attend to my own internal biases and blind spots wherever they emerge.

Black German Studies also intersects, at times, with mobility studies, which has emerged along with the spatial turn in multiple disciplines: sociology, history, cultural studies, and literature. Mobility studies seeks to understand the meanings generated by the motion of people and objects through the world. "Mobility," so argue Alexandra Ganser, Heike Paul, and Katharina Gerund, "becomes a conceptual category in the critical debates on numerous issues such as travel and embodiment, race, gender, (post-)colonialism, and state theory."[46] Mobility and power relate in complex webs. It is not sufficient to say that the more mobile position or the more rooted position is the more privileged one; each exists in a network of contingencies. Mobility studies seeks to map such networks. In the realm of literature, this means analyzing the

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[43] Florvil and Plumly, "Introduction," 12.

[44] Florvil and Plumly, "Introduction," 20.

[45] Florvil and Plumly, "Introduction," 10.

[46] Paul, Heike, Alexandra Ganser, Katharina Gerund, eds., *Pirates, Drifters, Fugitives: Figures of Mobility in the US and Beyond* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2012), 16.

way race, social class, and regional and national affiliation are at stake in a text or in a text's production and dissemination.

Mobility in the nineteenth century context often connects to racial and class-oriented questions. Reasons for mobility, including travel, exile, and enslavement play key roles in the analysis of travel networks. Elizabeth Stordeur Pryor's 2016 book *Mobility and the Fight for Citizenship before the Civil War* explores the extent to which social and legal constraints on the travel of African Americans served to circumscribe access to full citizenship. "Through a combination of social customs, racial codes, and popular culture," Stordeur Pryor argues that "whites worked vigorously to construct a system that surveilled, curtailed, and discouraged black mobility [...]. It was a practice, as [Frederick] Douglass noted, that was born out of slavery, but it was also one decidedly separate from it."[47] It follows, then, that race and mobility remain important areas of exploration in nineteenth-century literary study. Exceptional as well as quotidian examples of mobility and immobility can offer insights into the texture of racial, regional, and national discourses.

Finally, this dissertation strives to add a relevant archive to African American studies. African American studies has been in the business of recovery for a long time, and that work continues. From the earliest African American librarians and collectors such as Daniel Alexander Payne Murray, Arturo Alfonso Schomburg and Nella Larson, to contemporary scholars too numerous to name here, finding, organizing, and protecting the archive of African American cultural production has been a chief concern and high goal. In nineteenth-century literary studies, theoretical claims rely on an extant and well-understood archive. This dissertation aims to set a

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[47] Elizabeth Stordeur Pryor, *Colored Travelers: Mobility and the Fight for Citizenship before the Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016,) 1.

piece of that groundwork, especially the piece that engagement with German-language texts can promote, while remaining engaged with methodological and theoretical advancements within African American studies and Nineteenth-Century American studies more broadly. As for theoretical and methodological questions as well as secondary responses to the texts in question, Koritha Mitchell, Lois Brown, Marvin McAllister, Fatima El-Tayeb, Elizabeth Stordeur Pryor, Eric Lott, Kira Thurman, Paul Gilroy, Benjamin Fagan, Brigitte Fielder, Christina Sharpe, and Michelle Wright have been my guides.

iii. Transatlantic Spacetime and The Wake

This study attempts to fill three gaps in the literature. First, transatlantic literary studies have a tendency to leave out continental Europe, especially Germany. Excellent scholarship exists on German immigration and German-American literature, but when scholars speak of the Atlantic world or of transatlantic culture, they rarely mention German literature.[48] By including examples of movement both to and from Germany, this study offers examples that have been either previously understudied or that were studied in isolation from one another, and it attempts to make transatlantic literary studies a little less monolingual.[49] Secondly, this study functions

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[48] For some examples of recent historical work on German-American immigration and cultural transfer in the nineteenth century, see Thomas Adam and Ruth Gross, eds. *Traveling Between Worlds: German-American Encounters: German-American Encounters* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2006).; Michaela Bank, *Women of Two Countries: German-American Women, Women's Rights, and Nativism, 1848-1890* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012).; Daniel Nagel, *Von republikanischen Deutschen zu deutsch-amerikanischen Republikanern. Ein Beitrag zum Identitätswandel der deutschen Achtundvierziger in den Vereinigten Staaten 1850-1861* (St. Ingbert: Röhrig Universitätsverlag, 2012).; Alison Clark Efford, *German Immigrants, Race, and Citizenship in the Civil War Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[49] The claim that transatlantic study is monolingual is not true in the field of history, which has long studied German-America in great detail. I focus here on transatlantic literary studies housed primarily in English departments, which have and understandable focus on literature in English,

bidirectionally and offers a countercurrent across the Atlantic, eastward rather than westward, specifically by African Americans. By exploring African American performance in nineteenth-century Germany, my work attempts to paint in a few pieces of that mosaic that scholars of Black German Studies have begun.[50] The third gap is more conceptual than material. By combining conceptions of regional writing with mobility studies, this study problematizes the idea of regionalism as an anti-modern phenomenon. While many regionalist texts are resolutely anti-modern, "transatlantic regionalism" shows regionalist discourse itself to be surprisingly adaptable across spaces. While regionalism typically circles the wagons around a locality, "transatlantic regionalism" works to redefine landscapes, places, and cultures in an alternative mode.

This study concerns itself with the time period from the middle of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. It does not define its parameters based on historical events; nor does it define itself in reference to the publications of particular influential texts. Rather, it occupies a more diffuse "spacetime" defined on the one hand by rising national consciousness in Germany and Germany's imperial ambitions, and on the other hand by the emancipation and increased mobility of African Americans, the personal and political gains made by African Americans after the Civil War, and the subsequent racist backlash to those prior developments.[51] I borrow the term "spacetime" from Michelle M. Wright, who, in turn, has borrowed it from

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though this has changed to some extent, if not in so much in transatlantic literary study, then in relation do Spanish and French language literature in hemispheric American approaches.

[50] Kira Thurman's writing and research has been useful and inspirational as a starting point. See "Singing the Civilizing Mission in the Land of Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms: The Fisk Jubilee Singers in Nineteenth-Century Germany," *Journal of World History* 27, no. 3 (September 2016): 443-471.

[51] Michelle M. Wright, *The Physics of Blackness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 4.

quantum physics. Altering a narrative frame around either "space" or "time" produces alternative visions of history and reality. "Wilhelmine Germany" or "the postbellum United States" are typically defined along a linear historical progression, but these terms offer little in creating totalizing visions of either society. By blending transatlantic spaces by way of culture contact, I hope to complicate linear spacetimes, just as regional writing seeks to complicate geographical and cultural centers defined by the nation. In short, the parameters are defined by an era of flux that brought more African Americans in contact with Germans and German-American immigrants than was heretofore the case. The movement of people is set against the backdrop of cultural production concerned with locality and regional specificity, which became widespread across many artforms in this era. Thus the apparently contradictory notion of "transatlantic regionalism" comes into view when placed in the aforementioned spacetime.

Christina Sharpe's work also provides a complication of linear time and fixed space in the context of diasporic blackness and in the lives of black people. Sharpe's conception of the "wake," a multi-part term including "the keeping watch of the dead, the path of the ship, a consequence of something, in the line of flight and/or sight, awakening, and consciousness," describes the temporalities of black life after slavery assigned non-human status to black people.[52] Sharpe's project articulates

> a method of encountering a past that is not past. A method along the lines of a sitting with, a gathering, and a tracking of phenomena that disproportionately and devastatingly affect Black peoples any and everywhere we are…I am interested in plotting, mapping, and collecting the archives of the everyday of Black immanent and imminent death, and in tracking the ways we resist, rupture, and disrupt that immanence and imminence aesthetically and materially.[53]

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[52] Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016)*,*17-18, 13.

[53] Sharpe, *In the Wake,* 13-14.

This mode of attentiveness to the consciousness of being in the wake provides an urgent theoretical intervention into the study of black performance, among other things. Chapters two and four of this dissertation consider black performers in largely white spaces and look at the nascent formations of various scales of belonging in the audiences. Applying Sharpe's notion of the wake alerts us to the different temporalities present for the performers and the audiences. Understanding musical and dramatic performance as "wake work" complicates the possibility of reading such performances as reciprocal, communal events.

iv. Description of Chapters

This dissertation centers on the following question: in what way does the transfer of local characteristics through and within regional writing speak to the positive and negative possibilities of cultural contact in the nineteenth century transatlantic world? The texts I analyze in the four chapters of this dissertation come from different cultural origins and hold different statuses in literary studies. Some, like the works of William Wells Brown, have received a good deal of attention in recent years. The same is true, to a lesser extent of Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins. But the dissertation also focuses on figures who remain almost unknown outside of specific sub-fields. Similarly, I examine little known cultural documents such as the Fisk Jubilee Singers' songbook in its German translation and accounts of performances by tragedian Ira Aldridge during his tours of the European continent. By mixing the known and novel, I offer an altered perspective on transatlantic studies based as much on genre and affiliation as on geography and history.

The first chapter of this dissertation discusses a group of writers whose work resembles many of the most known and studied practitioners of American literary regionalism, but unlike Mary Eleanor Wilkins Freeman, Sarah Orne Jewett, Charles Chestnut, or Willa Cather, the

works I consider are written in German and often seek transatlantic German-speaking reading publics. The three major examples of writers of German-American regionalism are Mathilde Franziska Anneke, Fernande Richter (writing as Edna Fern), and Lotte Leser. These three represent a small but active group of writers whose work employs many regionalist elements in form and content, but do so in the context of immigrant life or analysis of American life from a European perspective. Anneke writes stories about enslaved people in the style of earlier abolitionist writers, but includes German-American enslavers operating in Texas. Edna Fern writes austere sketches of life in the western prairie as well as humorous "local color" pieces in the style of Mark Twain. Finally, Lotta Leser offers a glimpse of urban life from the perspective of a young immigrant. Though there are exceptions, the chapter argues that these writers define specific regions, and their own position within those regions, in relation to African American presences and ultimately view the United States through what might be termed a black and white lens. By engaging with the United States through a racialized lens, these writers do two significant, if contrasting things: first, they disrupt the dominant white, Anglo-American centered view of the United States, and second, they situate German-Americans into the context of American "whiteness."[54]

The second chapter follows its subjects eastward across the Atlantic. It centers on the dramatic performances of dramatist Ira Aldridge (1807-1867) in mid-nineteenth-century

[54] There is another limiting principle to this dissertation that should be clarified here. Readers familiar with German-American studies might ask why I would exclude the writing of Charles Sealsfield, Friedrich Gerstäcker, Ferdinand Kürnberger, Balduin Möllhausen, and others. This is a valid question, and another project would do well to address these writers. The reason they are left out here is that their works fall into a category that differs in important ways from regionalism or regional writing. Travelogue, realism, and various forms of genre fiction describe their works more accurately. As such, they fall squarely in the category of "transatlantic," but not so clearly into the category of regionalism.

Germany and the musical performances of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, a group of African American musical performers. The chapter analyzes the scales of affiliation from local to global that come into play in the context of performance and employs Christina Sharpe's theorization of the wake to understand the relationships between performers and audiences. New York City native Ira Aldridge is among the most prominent African American dramatic performers of the nineteenth century. His performances in German-speaking Europe offer a rare glimpse of the ways local, regional, national and global affiliations intersect in a "performative commons."[55] Likewise, the Fisk Jubilee Singers' performances and the subsequent translation of their songbook into German provide another view of discourses of race, nation, and empire. The chapter argues that as African American performances in nineteenth-century German-speaking countries were made into commodities and material objects, they underwent a process of domestication and commodification that belied some of the productive interactions present in the performances.

Chapter three focuses on a single writer: the German-American playwright, novelist, and political thinker Reinhold Solger. Solger transfers the *Lokalposse* or "local farce" from his native Germany to the United States, where he spent the latter part of his life. The chapter focuses on his two plays, one written in German and the other in English. The first play, *Der Reichstagsprofessor,* is set in a Berlin household in the aftermath of the revolutions of 1848. Solger then translates, expands, and adapts the play for a new political context in antebellum Virginia. Through the use of dialect, local stock figures, and other regionally specific elements, Solger reconfigures the German *Lokalposse* for its new context. Solger's works exemplify the

[55] Elizabeth Maddock Dillon uses this term as a replacement for the notion of a public sphere as described by Jürgen Habermas. See Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, *New World Drama: The Performative Commons in the Atlantic World, 1649-1849* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

ways in which a locally-oriented genre is itself transferable, but with certain constraints and pitfalls. I argue that Solger's two plays show the limitations of cultural mobility and genres in motion. Solger's first play features a "working-class hero" in the figure of Hanne the maid, but his attempt to translate this character into the person of an enslaved woman falls into a kind of trap. The conventions of the *Lokalposse,* with its dialect humor and local patriotism, serve the political goals Solger set out for it, but the American version, given its proximity to blackface minstrelsy, undermines its goal.

The fourth and final chapter considers the midwestern tour of Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins's play *Peculiar Sam; or, The Underground Railroad*, performed by an all-black cast. The play portrays the geographic and social mobility of an African American family from enslavement in the south to freedom in Canada and the Northern United States. The drama unfolds over a long time period, so it reflects on both the Antebellum and Reconstruction eras. *Peculiar Sam,* as it is generally called today, was performed in dozens of cities across the Midwest in the spring and summer of 1879, which is a pivotal time in the history of US race relations. Many of the cities on the tour had large immigrant populations and growing African American populations. In addition, German-language newspapers were present in many, if not most, of the cities on the tour.

Scholars have assumed that the audience in Milwaukee in particular, where the play was performed four times in three days, would likely have been composed of socially progressive German immigrants, among others. If so, these performances would provide a mirror image of the material presented in Chapter 2 of this dissertation – a German-speaking audience attending an African American performance, this time on the other side of the Atlantic. A close look at the available newspaper archive suggests something different. While many German-language

newspapers wrote about the mobility of African American people in the days surrounding the performances of *Peculiar Sam*, they did so without mentioning the play. Instead, these accounts considered the political questions surrounding the first large wave of migration of African Americans to the North and Midwest after Reconstruction, sometimes with a sympathetic and welcoming perspective, and sometimes not. Conversely, the English-language presses operated by white Midwesterners ran dozens of reviews of the play, but many viewed it from perspectives tainted by their familiarity with the minstrel show tradition; they thus tended to miss the play's thoughtful depiction of African American family life. I have found only one African American newspaper that was in a position to review the play, and it did so with an eye to the play's more subtle messaging. This chapter argues that Hopkins's midwestern tour illustrates an important archival gap. German-American newspapers ignored the play in favor of German-language cultural events, the African American press had yet to get its footing in the Midwest in 1879, and the white, Anglo-American papers demonstrate a mixture of culture-industry humbuggery and misreadings of the play's content. The tour could have been a multifaceted and multi-lingual public discussion of black performance and a demonstration of post-Bellum advancement of African Americans. But instead, the incomplete archive of the tour attests to its inability to escape the trappings of minstrelsy, at least in the eyes of some audiences.

Together these examples demonstrate the fluidity with which regional discourse and regional rhetoric flowed in a transatlantic, transnational, and multilingual context. Many scholars have viewed regional writing as a site of resistance, despite its definitional tendency toward insulation and exclusion. Likewise, many scholars have viewed mobility of people as a key constituent of modern subjectivity, despite the uneven and disruptive possibilities mobility

entails: colonization, slavery, and imperialism. This thesis asks what forms of liberation or domination stem from transatlantic regionalism.

v. Conclusion

Many scholars have wondered how W. E. B. Du Bois could have found the Germany of the 1890s to be so hospitable. Some critique his blindness to the racism and antisemitism that was ramping up in Germany at the time and blame his interest in race science on his time in Germany. Kenneth Barkin provides two hypotheses that could explain Du Bois's counterintuitive affinity for Wilhelmine Germany. Barkin first points out that distinctions between antisemitism and anti-black racism must be teased out, broken down, and understood as distinct phenomena. It is possible that a rise in anti-semitism would not correlate with a rise in other forms of prejudice. Barkin's second hypothesis is more inventive, and in my view, more compelling. Barkin claims "Du Bois's obsession with dress, his daily presentation of himself in public, may be an explanation for the absence of more than one racial incident in two years during which he regularly came into contact with significant social groups in German society."[56] The "one racial incident" to which Barkin refers was when a cab driver overcharged Du Bois for a journey to the university.[57] Du Bois eventually decided that this infraction was likely the result of his status as a student, rather than his blackness. It seems plausible that the impeccably-dressed Du Bois would earn high esteem from the members of the middle and upper-class milieu at the university, while receiving occasional scorn from those who serve that population.

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[56] Kenneth Barkin, "W. E. B. Du Bois' Love Affair with Imperial Germany," *German Studies Review* 28, no. 2 (May, 2005): 293-94.

[57] Barkin, "Imperial Germany," 286.

Barkin's sartorial hypothesis is compelling, but it doesn't explain everything. It doesn't relate to the example cited at the beginning of this introduction in which Du Bois found himself "at home" as a part of a social group and family in Eisenach. It doesn't explain the poignancy of the romantic idyll scene in Du Bois's memory. Though Du Bois may have adopted some of the style of 1890s Berlin, what he was still writing about sixty-five years after his university days was an experience of participation in a locally-inflected culture that was not his own, but which became his for a time. The coming chapters will examine the many different ways locally and regionally inflected cultural production takes on new, often surprising meaning when it moves across space and between cultures.

Chapter 1. German-American Literature and the New Regionalism

i. Introduction

Regionalist literature is rarely associated with immigrant authorship. The genre typically comes from authors who draw on generations of deep knowledge about the place they describe. But this is not universally true. Indeed, many writers associated with the "literature of place" write about regions where they are themselves outsiders in one way or another. Nevertheless, immigrant literature from the 19th century rarely gets classified as "regionalism" proper. This chapter aims to provide a few compelling counterexamples to this tendency by analyzing German-American, German-language writers who employ and at times reinvent some of the techniques that their contemporaries mastered in English.

Nearly three decades ago Dorothea Stuecher asserted that "without a literary historical framework, scholars [of German-American literature] must constantly reinvent the wheel, relying on often misleading sources and perpetually questionable information."[58] This is particularly true for scholars studying German women writers who are, as Stuecher's book title declares, "twice removed" from the U.S. mainstream, as non-Anglo and non-male. Though the field of German-American studies remains difficult to pin down, it has become more coherent and accessible by way of the digitization of some relevant periodicals as well as by the appearance of systematic studies of the field, Stuecher's among them. The intervening decades have produced many individual author studies, as well as an important anthology of German-American works. It is still necessary to seek out new and little-read examples, but there is now a starting point for the reader of this sub-canon, namely Cora Lee Kluge's *Other Witnesses: An Anthology of Literature of the German Americans, 1850-1914.*

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[58] See Dorothea Stuecher, *Twice Removed: The Experience of German-American Women Writers in the Nineteenth Century.* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990), xv.

This chapter relies on the philological work of earlier scholars which has made many of these texts accessible; furthermore, it finds connections among the varied exemplars that have become, to some extent, established in the field. Stuecher's lament about the disconnected nature of German-American studies might reasonably be dispensed with at this point. Given certain parameters, it is now possible to make statements about sub-groups within the larger field of German-American literature. Despite the existence of this hard-won firm foundation, it is crucial to recognize certain limitations facing a thematic survey of German-American literature. This chapter does not claim to offer completeness, nor does it pretend that those who wrote and published present a neutral cross-section of German-American experience. Indeed, the authors defining German-American experience represent a privileged minority, at least in terms of education level, if not always in socioeconomic status. As this chapter will show, these authors contrast with the way German immigrants were often depicted in English language literature in the United States. As such, the chapter requires a defined framework that systematizes the aforementioned limitations into a clear analytic. The parameters are as follow: 1) the texts at issue concern themselves with region or local specificity and 2) the texts entered into transatlantic networks and/or concerned transatlantic themes. Following these parameters, it becomes evident that three writers are of most interest: Mathilde Franziska Anneke, Edna Fern [the pen name of Fernande Richter], and Lotta Leser.[59] All three writers, in very different ways, engage in transatlantic regional writing. Their works are simultaneously hyper-local and transnational in scope. In addition to addressing transatlantic themes such as immigration,

[59] There are other writers whom I could have included such as Therese Robinson and Kathinka Sutro-Schuecking. I opted to leave these writers out because their texts tend to follow the conventions of neo-romantic or neo-gothic literature and lack detailed engagement with place or local themes. Robinson's 1852 novel *Die Auswanderer* [*The Exiles]* is a notable exception.

international abolitionist networks, and various modes of colonial imagination from a German perspective, the texts often bear material traces of their status as transatlantic texts. Many were published in Germany, despite sometimes concerning issues far removed from the lived experience of Germans in Germany. The transatlantic nature of these texts, in short, stems from their thematic concerns or their material circulation.

The texts in this chapter fit generally into the category of literary regionalism in that they are attentive to local cultures, landscapes, and folkways. The "new regionalism," as Eric Gardner points out, "has long, multiple, and conflicted histories."[60] At their core, practitioners of new regionalism seek to complicate fixed notions of region by rereading, rediscovering, narrowing, or broadening what people generally consider to be part and parcel of a region. This work can take many forms. It can be take the form of recovery scholarship such as Judith Fetterley's and Marjorie Pryse's work on women regionalist writers in the 1990s and early 2000s, or Eric Gardner's work on African American Western texts.[61] Or it could be transnational, as in Juliet Shields's work on Scottish literature, or Josephine Donovan's work on European local color.[62] New regionalism can also take a geographic perspective and consider the way writers map and remap the United States as in the work of Edward Watts, Keri Holt, and John Funchion.[63] My

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[60] Eric Gardner, "Nineteenth-Century African American Literature and the 'New Regionalism,'" *Literature Compass* 7, no. 10 (2010): 936.

[61] See Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse, *Writing out of Place: Regionalism, Women, and American Literary Culture* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003). See also Eric Gardner *Unexpected Places: Relocating Nineteenth-Century African American Literature* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009).

[62] See Juliet Shields, *Nation and Migration: The Making of British Atlantic Literature, 1765-1835* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). See also Josephine Donovan, *European Local-Color Literature: National Tales, Dorfgeschichten, Romans Champêtres* (New York: Continuum, 2010).

[63] Edward Watts, Keri Holt, and John Funchion, *Mapping Region in Early American Writing* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 2015).

attempt in this chapter is to draw from each of these modes of analysis as I pose the following question: how do German-American writers reimagine and remap regions and their attendant social relations in the United States as they attempt to come to terms with life in their new country?

The South, the Northeast, the Midwest, and even the West have all been inscribed with meaning through locally-oriented stories, primarily in English, yet these same regions have been imagined, translated, and described in other languages. I will evaluate one layer of the American regional palimpsest: the one written in German by several generations of writers from the middle of the nineteenth century through the beginning of the twentieth. Their writing in some ways mirrors Anglo-American regionalist writers' work from the same era. Writers like Willa Cather, Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins, and Harriet Beecher Stowe all imagined and described regions in opposition to the national center and frequently in opposition to dominant structures. Something similar can be found in the works of Anneke, Leser, and Fern. In addition to standing outside of the main American literary centers, these writers operate outside of the nation's dominant language, and often keep one foot in Europe. Their works were filtered through a transnational network of German-language press and readership. Far from relying on the book as the main vessel for their work, they wrote for and founded newspapers and journals, in the United States as well as in Europe.[64] In short, the patterns of textual dissemination as well as the critical, politically-engaged content associated with regionalist writers in the United States happen

[64] To give a few relevant examples, Edna Fern, whose work I will address later in this chapter, was among the chief contributors to Robert Reitzel's Detroit Anarachist Newspaper, *Der Arme Teufel.* (Mathilde Franziska Anneke, to name another of this chapter's chief examples, was editor and publisher of the *Deutsche Frauen-Zeitung,* and assisted in publishing the *Newarker Zeitung* in Newark, New Jersey. Both women also published their works in Germany and Switzerland. They thus maintained connections across the Atlantic through publication of their works.

concurrently, but from a different perspective in the German language. The addition of a German-American perspective, given its alternative population centers, causes the American cognitive map to shift once again. Alternative geography is inherently linked to alternative imagination, yet the later, in recent scholarship on regionalism, has taken over as the primary concern. Stuart Burrows asks "what if regionalism were regarded as a form *of* knowledge rather than a form for it?"[65] Indeed regional writing has long been both bounded and boundless, challenging the way in which its constituent parts, hyper-locality and geographical specificity, have historically served to section the genre off from realism, and thus from consideration as great literature.

German-American regional writing is more explicitly transnational than many regionalist works. The more challenging argument to make is that it functions as regional writing at all, rather than, say, travel writing. Defining the works as regionalism proper is not the greatest concern of this chapter. Much more important are the ways this mode of writing operates in identity formation, especially on the levels of nationality, race, and gender. Though German-American regional writers often espouse an ethos of equality, feminism, and democratic inclusion, taken either first-hand or second-hand from the ideologies of the revolutions of 1848, they nevertheless participate in ethnic and racial exclusion or paternalism as well as imperial fantasy. This chapter will demonstrate that though German-American regional writers mirrored much of the regionalist and local color writing from Anglo-America, their most aesthetically and ethically admirable work is produced when they leave the established forms behind and create something which reflects the messy processes by which Germans transitioned to the United

[65] Stuart Burrows, "Rethinking Regionalism: Sarah Orne Jewett's Mental Landscapes," *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 5 no.2 (2017): 344.

States. That messy process, this chapter will show, includes racialized imaginaries, claims to status associated with "whiteness," imperial fantasy, and above all, multi-scale notions of identity and belonging.

ii. Mathilde Franziska Anneke's Abolitionist Fiction

Mathilde Franziska Anneke is remembered first and foremost as a first-wave feminist and political writer. After the failed revolutions of 1848, Anneke fled to the United States, and like several other prominent Forty-Eighters, she transferred her fight for republicanism in Europe to the fight against slavery and for women's emancipation in the United States. During this period, she wrote three stories concerning slavery in the United States: "Die gebrochenen Ketten" [Broken Chains] (1864), "Die Sclaven-Auction" [The Slave Auction] (1862) and the short novel *Uhland in Texas* (1866). The title refers to the novel's setting in Uhland, Texas, which was named after the poet Ludwig Uhland.[66] Though she is remembered as a non-fiction writer, Anneke put great stock in the capability of literature to inspire meaningful change through self-reflection, sympathy, and the imagination of new possibilities. Anneke merged political activism with imaginative fiction in her three abolitionist stories.

First, Die gebrochenen Ketten: Ein Bild aus dem Süden der amerikanischen Union" [Broken Chains: A Portrait from the South of the American Union] takes place at a residence called the Villa Magnolia in southern Washington D.C. in April of 1862. The story begins in the luxurious room of Lady Kingsbury, the matriarch of the estate, as she lies on her deathbed. Lelia, an enslaved sixteen-year-old, serves as Kingsbury's attendant. As a result of Lady Kingsbury's death, the family's estate must be liquidated and divided up between the son, Mr. Allen

[66] Ludwig Uhland (1787-1862) was a politically active poet often associated with romanticism who served as a member of the Frankfurt Parliament in the 1848 revolution.

Kingsbury, and the daughter, Madame Randall. Lelia fears further exploitation from the heirs of Lady Kingsbury, who each vie to become her enslaver after the matriarch's death. Though Lelia's immediate preoccupation is with the potentially more horrific life she faces if she becomes enslaved by Allen and Madame Randall, the story's real problem is with the practice of slavery as such. The story's plot suggests that even in the most "favorable" of circumstances, enslaved people's lives are governed by whim and contingency, and ultimately by violence. The plot comes to a *Deus ex Machina* conclusion when Abraham Lincoln signs the District of Columbia Compensated Emancipation Act, thus freeing the enslaved people of Washington D.C.

The story's dénouement sharpens its focus on Lelia and turns the spotlight toward an enslaved woman named Nancy. While Lelia mourns the loss of Lady Kingsbury, even after the revelation of her freedom, and "[calls] upon the spirit of her dear departed, and it seemed to her as if her soft voice could be heard in the morning breezes. Consoled and strengthened she rose to her feet."[67] Nancy, we discover, has killed her young baby to save her from the horrors of a life under enslavement. Anneke thus alludes to Margaret Garner's killing of her daughter to spare her a life of slavery.[68] The ending is two-pronged: it presents Lelia in mourning and adrift, her life turned upside down by the death of her enslaver, while Nancy's plot ends in a state of tragic recognition, having killed her child just as freedom became possible.

Anneke seeks to stir the reader into sympathy, but that pathos feels misplaced at times, as in the glowing depiction of the "benevolent" enslaver, Mrs. Kingsbury. This aspect of the story

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[67] Mathilde Franziska Anneke, "Broken Chains," in *Mathilde Franziska Anneke (1817-1884): The Works and Life of a German-American Activist,* trans. Susan L. Piepke (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2006), 103.

[68] Margaret Garner (1834-1858) was an enslaved woman who killed her two-year-old daughter during an attempt at self-emancipation in order to spare her as an enslaved person. The story was well-known then as today. Toni Morrison thematizes Garner's story *Beloved* and other works.

has the effect of heightening the contrast between Lelia's position at the beginning, in which "her slave's chains were a silken cord, woven with flowers, a knot which had never wounded her very sensible feelings," and her potential fate with a new enslaver. Anneke uses the image of chains to attempt to unite sufferers from exploitation through marriage with those exploited by slavery. The gendered image of silken chains, "woven with flowers" echoes a common trope in Anneke's feminist writings, equating marriage with enslavement or imprisonment. The narrative's plot and imagery imply an intersectional fight against both slavery and patriarchy.

One might compare Anneke's story to Lydia Maria Child's "Slavery's Pleasant Homes: A Faithful Sketch." Child's story likewise presents a close relationship between a female enslaver and an enslaved woman. Marion, the white enslaver, and Rosa, a young enslaved woman, have a relationship that is described in the language of kinship; they are called "foster-sisters," as Rosa's mother served as Marion's foster mother while they grew up together.[69] Despite the quasi-familial relationship between Rosa and Marion, which might suggest some genuine "pleasantness" in the home, the story's title is ironic. The "Pleasant Home" is marked by violence, murder, and rape, the brunt of which is suffered by Rosa, especially at the hand of Marion's husband, Frederic Dalcho, but even Marion strikes Rosa in one instance. The scenes of rape and murder remain cloaked in Victorian decorum. As Carolyn Karcher has argued, Child "wrestled […] with the difficulties of introducing a hostile public to […] the grim facts of slavery," and used antislavery literature as a vehicle to depict the horrors of slavery in a way an essay or speech could not, albeit with certain limitations on what could be represented

[69] Lydia Maria Child, "Slavery's Pleasant Homes. A Faithful Sketch," *The Liberty Bell*, 1843, 153.

explicitly.[70] Antislavery stories had to appeal to those not already on the side of abolition, and they had to be printable in an era of public niceties. To talk about the horrors of slavery while keeping access to an audience, Child implies Rosa's rape and sets much of the violence off stage. But the results appear: Rosa becomes pregnant and ultimately dies, Frederic is found with a knife in his heart, and his killer, and enslaved man named George, has news of his extralegal execution filtered through the proslavery press of the south as well as the north, rather than described in detail on the page. Child's ironic title anticipates the argument that slavery can be "pleasant" for the enslaved and, indeed, even for female enslavers whose rapist husbands place them in humiliating positions. But even the white enslaver Marion, who suffers from her husband's behavior, is a perpetrator in her relationship with Rosa. Child's story rejects the notion of "pleasant" relationships between enslavers and enslaved more forcefully and explicitly that Anneke's story does. But for Anneke, it seems that if ever a "pleasant" relationship were to materialize, as in the case of Lelia and Lady Kingsbury, it would be a temporary one; Lelia's fate would always be tied up in a system outside of her or Lady Kingsbury's control. Child's story suggests that even such a temporarily "pleasant" relationship would be forever marked by the violence, sexual and otherwise, inherent in the system of slavery.

Anneke's second abolitionist story, *Die Sclaven-Auction: Ein Bild aus dem amerikanischen Leben* [The Slave Auction: A Portrait of American Life] also takes place in Washington, DC, also depicts the killing of a child, and in the manner of a historical novel, includes historical figures and events along with fictional characters. The plot centers on a young enslaved man who is about to purchase his emancipation, but his beloved Isabella is to remain

[70] Carolyn L. Karcher, "Rape, Murder and Revenge in 'Slavery's Pleasant Homes': Lydia Maria Child's Antislavery Fiction and the Limits of Genre," *Women's Studies International Forum* 9, no. 4 (1986): 324.

enslaved. The protagonist, Alfons, convinces Congressman Gerrit Smith to help him buy Isabella's freedom and has his own freedom secured by a Dutch immigrant named Mr. Renssellar. Anneke's short novella has a happy ending in which Alfons and Isabella move to a farm, and Alfons begins to study medicine.

The story takes place at the time of the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska act, which divided the nation, causing a "sectional maelstrom."[71] The act allowed Kansas and Nebraska to decide for themselves, through popular sovereignty, whether to allow slavery. This nullified the 1820 Missouri Compromise which had set a northern border to the practice of slavery, with the exception of Missouri. The personal story of Alfons and Isabella travels a parallel path to this political development, but with a contrasting outcome. Even while the antislavery cause suffers a major defeat with the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska act, the story's protagonists manage to emancipate themselves – the individual cases escape the collective fate. The message, here, is that even though individual acts of generosity and courage on the part of white allies and the emancipation efforts of enslaved people themselves can have meaningful results, the actions of those in Washington have more significant power over the whole. *The Slave Auction* thus provides a mirror image of "Broken Chains." In *The Slave Auction*, the actions of the congress further entrench the interests of enslavers, while in "Broken Chains," Lincoln's proclamation, rather than the generosity of individuals, sets the characters free. Broad political action, for Anneke, appears to be a distinct phenomenon from the actions of individuals, yet the two are brought together in the form of sentimental fiction, the purpose of which is to urge collective action through narrow sympathy.

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[71] Joanne Freeman, *The Field of Blood: Violence in Congress and the Road to Civil War* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018), 182.

Anneke's writings borrow formal features and rhetorical strategies from sentimental and regionalist writing. Her first two stories, both published in Europe, could be mistaken for translations of Anglo-American abolitionist literature.[72] *Uhland in Texas,* differs from her other abolitionist stories in that the protagonists are Texas Germans who are also enslavers. This short novel, published serially in the spring of 1866 in the *Illinois Staatszeitung* offers a clearer view of a particularly German-American version of abolitionist writing. While the text still closely resembles earlier anti-slavery literature and repeats many of the themes from the first two abolitionist stories, its inclusion of two German-American families, the more established Gilmores and the idealistic, newly arrived Wallensteins, makes it a rather uncommon portrayal of slavery. Both families ultimately conclude that slavery is an evil, though they consider themselves to be compelled by economic realities to participate in it until the system can be abolished.

As in "Die gebrochenen Ketten," *Uhland in Texas* draws distinctions between both "good" and bad enslavers, while the enslaved people themselves are depicted as virtuous. The story's plot is driven by the violence at the beginning of the U.S. Civil War, and ends with the defeat of proslavery southerners who attempt to attack the titular quasi-utopian German-American community where the story is centered. A group of Native Americans, whose friendship was courted by an enslaved polyglot named Marzell save the German-Americans from the siege.[73] The Germans emancipate the people they had been enslaving, and the settlement at

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[72] "Die gebrochenen Ketten was published in *Der Bund* in Bern, Switzerland November 17-November 23. 1864. Die Sclaven-Auction was published in Frankfurt's *Didaskalia* in 1862. See Maria Wagner, *Die gebrochenen Ketten: Erzälungen, Reportagen und Reden (1861-1873)* (Stuttgart: Hans-Dieter Heinz Akademischer Verlag Stuttgart, 1983).

[73] For a more thorough treatment of the plot, see Denise M. Della Rossa, "Mathilde Franziska Anneke's Anti-Slavery Novella," in *Sophie Discovers Amerika,* ed. Rob McFarland and Michelle Stott James (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2014), 81-91.

Uhland extends its influence far and wide. Anneke thus mildly implicates German immigrants in the history of slavery, but also sees them as redeemable, and indeed as important members of a coalition fighting against inequality of all kinds. The spirit of 1848, long since extinguished by the counterrevolution in Germany, finds a new articulation across the Atlantic. This third abolitionist story, given its serial publication in Illinois in 1866, might be an attempt to keep the ideals of 1848 alive while celebrating the end of slavery in the United States.

In sum, Anneke's three stories present a tendency that is fairly common to the writers whose work this chapter considers; namely, transatlantic print culture plays a role in determining the nature of the content. The first two stories, aimed at German readerships, are more derivative of other abolitionist writing from Lydia Maria Child to Harriet Jacobs to Harriet Beecher Stowe. On the other hand, her depiction of immigrants in Texas, published for a German-American audience, presents a unique version of the history of slavery in America, one that is rooted in the local particularities of German-American life.

iii. Edna Fern: The Climates of Regionalism

Fernande Richter, who wrote under the pen name Edna Fern, is a very difficult figure to evaluate both aesthetically and politically. Martin Drescher pays Fern the following compliment: "Edna Fern ... is first of all a lyric poet. Lyric tones also pervade her prose writings, which are rich in mood painting and descriptions of nature."[74] More effusively, Drescher writes "In Germany Edna Fern would long ago have become well known in wide circles. Here, however, in the land of the dollar and of humbug only a relatively modest congregation listens to her

[74] Quoted in George Condoyannis, "German American Prose Fiction from 1850 to 1914" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1954), 106.

revelations."[75] This praise of Fern is seconded by A. E. Zucker a few decades later, "Edna Fern has given us the best short stories written by a German in this country."[76] But in what remains the most thorough treatment of Fern's oeuvre, George Condoyannis, in his 1954 dissertation, offers only muted praise; he calls Fern's characters "real and lifelike," but points out that she also "succumbs miserably to the temptation to be trite and melodramatic."[77] Most cuttingly, Condoyannis responds to Drescher's praise of Fern's work as follows: "Such praise from a truly talented writer for a relatively mediocre one is somewhat disconcerting, yet it is typical of the German-American literary field, where critical appraisals are always colored by adventitious factors."[78] He thus blames Drescher's fellow-feeling with Fern as another German-American for his critical oversights. In the end, Condoyannis agrees with Wilhelm Schneider's assessment: her work is "sweetish dilettantism."[79]

Fern's contemporary German critics also didn't know quite how to evaluate or characterize her writing. Karl Berger, a reviewer for the *Literarisches Centralblatt für Deutschland* calls her works a mix of "romanticism and sobriety, sentimentalism, and free-spiritedness, satire and naiveté, nature and pseudointellectualism, phantasm and boredom."[80] Berger continues:

> Sometimes I believed myself to be back among the old romantics, but then I would find myself once again in enlightened America, and often enough I thought I noticed the influence of Mark

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[75] Quoted in Condoyannis, "German American Prose Fiction," 107.

[76] Adolf Eduard Zucker, "Robert Reitzel" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1917), 7. It is possible that Zucker's effusive praise of Fern's stories relates to her generous offering of her private library for his research on Robert Reitzel.

[77] Condoyannis, "German American Prose," 415, 420.

[78] Condoyannis, 425.

[79] Original: "Süsslicher Dilettantismus." Condoyannis, 397.

[80] Karl Berger, "Erzählende Frauenliteratur," *Literarisches Centralblatt für Deutschland*, November 2, 1901, 341. My translation.

> Twain. This form of literature may be right for the wild West, but here in Germany it is, at best, of interest as an oddity and curiosity.[81]

Fern never published the story collection in the United States, and it appeared particularly for a German-speaking European audience.[82] It is thus possible that the text was meant to be understood as a curiosity, a report from the interior of a strange land. Moreover, Berger is correct to point out the self-contradictory nature of Fern's texts, especially in *Gentleman Gordon und das Kind*, [Gentleman Gordon and the Kid]. In fact, the text makes explicit its goal of describing the United States' internal contradictions. The story's view of the country, as articulated by "The Kid," the human companion of the canine Gentleman Gordon, takes the form of a landscape conceit. He describes the Mississippi River as "A real American body of water…industrial, practical, profligate, without character, venal, thoughtless, and infinitesimally boring."[83] What Berger takes for a flaw in Fern's writing, its inconsistency, might in fact be an intended feature of it. America, like the Mississippi River, is somehow both "practical" and "profligate."

Gentleman Gordon und das Kind is an episodic, novella-length story of a German "Kid," actually a grown man, and his anthropomorphic dog, Gentleman Gordon, who sometimes takes over for the narrator with long soliloquies. The story moves along with the seasons, focuses on weather, landscape, and the actions of the people living near the Mississippi River, and it

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[81] Berger, "Erzählende Frauenliteratur," 341. "Manchmal glaubte ich mich unter die alten Romantiker versetzt, merkte aber bald wieder, daß ich in dem aufgeklärten Amerika war, und oft genug meinte ich, die Einflüsse Mark Twains zu verspüren. For the wild West mag diese Art von Literatur recht sein, hier in Deutschland hat sie höchstens das Interesse des Seltsamen und Sonderbaren." My translation above.

[82] See Edna Fern, *Gesammelte Schriften von Edna Fern, 4 Bde.* (Zürich and Leipzig: Verlag von Th. Schröter, 1901).

[83] Original: "Ein echt amerikanisches Gewässer…Industriell, praktisch verschwenderisch, charakterarm, käuflich, gedankenlos, infinitesimal langweilig." Translation mine. Edna Fern, "Gentleman Gordon und das Kind," in *Gesammelte Schriften von Edna Fern, 4 Bde.* (Zürich and Leipzig: Verlag von Th. Schröter, 1901). 10.

vacillates between musings about philosophy and aesthetics and humorous run-ins with the locals. For example, during one such run-in, an African American child is startled by Gentleman Gordon's bark, and in a minstrel-like scene, he runs away only to crash into a burr bush. It differs, however, in certain ways from standard minstrel tropes. The child's injury is followed not only by the onlookers' laughter, but by his tears as well. As Gentleman Gordon and the Kid drive away happily in their horse-drawn cart, they, too, crash and fall into a burr bush where they cry at their ironic misfortune. The scene ultimately reads as a joke on Gentleman Gordon and the Kid, though it is important to recognize the history, both in reality and in minstrel tropes, of violent treatment of young African American children that Fern evokes.

As this scene and the aforementioned description suggest, Fern's story resembles Mark Twain's works in some ways: it takes place along the Mississippi River, it features episodic sketches, some of which are humorous and others poignant. But the clearer connection is to E.T.A. Hoffmann's Lebensansichten des Katers Murr [*The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr.*] Like Hoffmann's story, Fern's features an animal protagonist who speaks and reasons like a well-educated human. Fern explicitly connects her dog-led story to Hoffman's feline equivalent. After an extra-narrative citation of Hoffmann's text in which Tomcat Murr questions the dominance of two-legged beings, Gentleman Gordon asserts "What should I think, dear Kid, if a simple cat can say something like that?"[84] This nod to Hoffmann's interspecies narrative reveals its influence on Fern, and also exemplifies her experimental collage-like approach. Each section of the story begins with a relevant citation from a canonical author: Goethe, Shakespeare, Shelley, and so on. The humorous, and at times melancholy sketches play out or comment on the

[84] Original: "Wenn das schon ein einfaches, simples Käterchen sagt, liebes Kind, was soll ich darüber denken?" Fern, "Gentleman Gordon," 20. My translation.

citation which begins them. Like Anneke's first two abolitionist stories, "Gentleman Gordon" could be a translation of an American story, in this case a local-color sketch collection. It doesn't engage in a particularly German-American experience, though it does, through literary allusion, aim at a German readership.

Fern's "Ein Farm-Idyll in Süd-Missouri" (A Farm Idyll in Southern Missouri), on the other hand, offers a realistic depiction of German-American community creation on the edge of the U.S. West. It makes clear in its first sentence that life on a German estate is very different from life on a farm situated in the arid, windblown prairie of Southwest Missouri. The story is narrated by a young woman who bares many biographical similarities to Edna Fern herself. Though the text avoids pontification, it is possible to find in it a subtle critique of westward expansion, environmental degradation, cowboy masculinity, and even the notion of property rights. Above all, however, Fern's story offers comparisons and contrasts between and among German immigrants, more settled German-Americans, and Anglo-Americans using manners to explore complex social interactions in a small prairie town.

Like her story's protagonist and narrator, Fern spent several years living and working on a farm in Southwest Missouri before moving to St. Louis where she worked as a member of the welfare board.[85] A prolific writer, Fern contributed more than any other author to the Detroit Anarchist newspaper *Der arme Teufel* (The Poor Devil), including twenty-one novellas, fairy tales, and stories, as well as forty-seven poems.[86] She also traveled within the United States to deliver lectures on social questions including women's emancipation.[87] Born in the kingdom of

[85] Kluge, *Other Witnesses,* 345.

[86] Kluge, *Other Witnesses,* 347.

[87] Kluge, *Other Witnesses,* 347.

Hanover and educated at a cloister in Aachen, Fern immigrated to the United States with her family in 1881 due to financial hardship. Though it is dubious to say that anyone's description of the U.S. West is "authentic," Fern's firsthand access to the story's time and place differentiates her from many who wrote about the American West, broadly defined, especially among German writers.

The story's narrator relates the details of daily life in a community near the Missouri/Kansas/Oklahoma border, and in some ways, it is a story about the permeability of borders. Even the residence that the narrator's family buys from a crooked land agent does not protect against outside forces: "By day the sun shone through the cabin's cracks, by night the moon, and the south wind wafted through the entire house."[88] This micro border, the permeable, shabby cabin, finds its large-scale counterpart in the spatial and climatic description of US historical events and their influence on the movement of people. The neighbor, Mrs. Yeager, when recounting her migration story, describes the U.S. Civil War, (which she calls the war for liberation) as a storm driving people westward. Wind permeates the boundaries of the subjective positions of the characters of the story. In addition, extreme wind results from the process of deforestation engendered by the production of arable farmland. To combat the harsh weather associated with deforestation, the Yeagers plant trees to serve as support posts to keep their house from blowing away in the event of a tornado. Fern's straightforward description contains

[88] Original "Am Tage schien die liebe Sonne durch die Ritzen, bei Nacht der Mond, und der Südwind säuselte ungehindert durch das ganze Haus." Translation mine. Edna Fern, "Ein Farm-Idyll in Süd-Missouri," in *Other Witnesses: An Anthology of Literature of the German Americans, 1850-1914* (Madison: Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies, 2007), 349.

no obvious critique, yet the story's design suggests that taming and transforming the western landscape produces inhospitable conditions rather than alleviating them.

The characters' fates are ultimately tied not merely to the whims of climate, but also to the flow of capital. The narrative spans several years, and eventually a poor growing season, bad market conditions, and a chinch bug and potato bug infestation force the town's inhabitants to live extremely meager lives. The cattle nearly starve, and there is little of the harvest to sell. But the primary disruption in the lives of the narrator's family comes when they get word that an unnamed widow from the East Coast actually owns the property they purchased from the land agent, and she wants payment for it. Not having the money, they are forced off the property and plan to travel further west to a coal-mining town where the men can get jobs. The family thus finds itself extracted from the land by moneyed Eastern interests, forced to move further west. This, too, lacks an explicit message, but it is hard not to see it as a critique of the unjust results of property ownership.

Fern's treatment of the farmer characters in the story is gentle, despite their idiosyncratic behavior and beliefs. The narrator describes with slight amusement the men who use the cracks in the cabin floor as spittoons, a neighbor whose three-day Methodist prayer meetings end with the congregation reeling from hangovers, and the presence of the so-called "Swamp Angel," a mythical cattle-thief who lives "Twenty miles west of civilisation, where no one may follow." The Swamp Angel is never described physically, and is thus not placed in a racialized category, though the fact that this figure comes from west of "civilization" suggest association with Native Americans. Not only is the Swamp Angel never given physical attribution, there is no description of any swamp from which it could take its name. In much nineteenth-century American literature, the swamp suggests "an epistemology based on the body, sexuality, and irrationality,"

but an ungendered "angel" from an undescribed swamp, is pointedly un-corporeal, though perhaps still a figure of irrationality, randomness, and liminality.[89]

Billy McLaughlin, a local blacksmith who is in love with the narrator, and whom the narrator presents with a straight face, so to speak, though the reader cannot help but see his idiocy, attempts to solve the problem of the Swamp Angel. To prepare to capture the Swamp Angel along with the other vigilantes, Billy arrives "on a well-groomed mule, so round that [Billy's] long legs stick out on both sides; he wore a leather belt around his belly stocked with revolvers, bowie knives, and other instruments of battle like cowboys carry for protection."[90] The description continues, mentioning his gray felt hat and handkerchief. Billy, in this scene, is playing the role of a cowboy, but he is fooling nobody. This subtle undercutting of Billy is, in a broader sense, a jab at the popular mythology of ritualized masculinity in the U.S. West. Even before this image was endlessly played out in books, films, and television shows, Fern is able to create a humorous image by contrasting the image of the rugged individualist man with a reality that falls far short of the ideal. Billy's "acting the part" of the cowboy speaks to one point that the writers featured in this chapter reiterate in various forms; without clear social and class divisions, America is a land where you fake it until you make it.

The manners of Americans have long been of interest to European observers. The country's lack of clear class divisions and societal markers result in an incoherent and chaotic

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[89] Cecily Parks, "The Swamps of Emily Dickinson," *The Emily Dickenson Journal* 22, no. 1 (2013): 2.

[90] "auf einem runden, wohlgepflegten Maultier, so rund, dass seine langen Beine nach beiden Seiten hin abstanden; er trug einen Ledergurt um den Leib geschnallt, voll von Revolvern, Bowiemessern und andern Kampfutensilien, wie ihn die Cowboys zu tragen pflegen." Fern, "Farm Idyll," 357. Translation mine.

national character.[91] The narrator's bemused observations of the crass behavior on the part of the Anglo-American characters and more assimilated German-American characters subtly exhibit her European sense of propriety. But crassness exists in a context of hidden, dynamic social structures; thus, what appears crass to one might be taken as friendly and appropriate by another. What Susan Goodman says in relation to Willa Cather, another prairie writer, that the existence of location-specific manners "presupposes that places can generate certain legacies of thought," applies equally to Edna Fern.[92] Fern describes a community with complex, if vulgar, mores. Knowing how to spit properly through the crack in a neighbor's floor replaces "knowing which fork to use" in a genteel novel of manners. Fern recognizes and dramatizes this interplay of customs throughout the story, playing it for laughs at times, but always as an observer rather than a lampooner of the customs of the western prairie.

Bad manners depend on the existence of a mannerly structure to violate, and such a structure always exists, though it might not always be understood. The aforementioned Billy, whose cowboy antics and general inability to perform the social graces of the town, exemplifies bad manners–not the men engaged in an unspoken tobacco-spitting contest. Language use functions in much the same way in the text. The immigrants' speech is frequently subject to two-sided ridicule; it is not quite the former language, and not quite the latter. A German speaker from Germany might not understand the Anglicisms, and even German-Americans from other regions, who might have access to the Anglicisms, would likely be tripped up by some elements

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[91] Susan Goodman attributes this type of analysis to Francis Trollope, Matthew Arnold, and Alexis de Tocqueville. Goodman paraphrases de Toqueville as follows: "A hereditary ruling class aids the transmission of a coherent national literature." (9). See Susan Goodman, *Civil Wars: American Novelists and Manners, 1880-1940*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 9.

[92] Susan Goodman, *Civil Wars*, 85.

of the dialectal features still present in Fern's characters' speech. In short, a process of hyper-local identity formation takes place within the language constituting the text: sometimes for comic effect, and sometimes, as in Anglo-American regional writing, to build a signature of place into dialogues between characters.

Eventually published in Germany and Switzerland in Fern's four volume collected works, the story takes pains to translate the developing German-American dialect for the benefit of German readers. "Fenz," for example is "German-American" for fence, rather than the standard German "Zaun." Such examples abound. The language spoken by the characters of various generations reflects a confluence not merely of nations but of regions. One character speaks Plattdeutsch (a Northern German dialect), and another speaks Badisch (a Southwestern German dialect), and both pepper their language with English loan words. The narrator's precise, educated German places her in an elevated social position vis-à-vis the other German-American characters. She nevertheless remains distinguished from the "Yankee" characters who refer to her language as Dutch. The region described in the story is one that remains pointedly under construction, a dynamic amalgamation of nations and regions assembled from across the Atlantic, but one which has a clear endpoint – the Anglicization of these various origins and monolingualization of the region.

The community in Fern's narrative exhibits a snapshot in the process of the erasure of foreignness among "white ethnics." The narrator's own family speaks little English, and maintains their otherness, but the Yeager family next door (previously spelled Jäger) is partially assimilated to Anglo-American culture. The McLaughlin family, the wealthiest in town, appears to be in the last stage of the process, having completely shed their "foreign" identity. They claim no German heritage, though their Anglophone name is rumored to have been derived from the

German "Löchlin." The characters in the story are able, and in some cases, eager to become "Stockamerikaner," meaning white, "old stock" Americans. Race plays a subdued but important role in the story. In recounting her family's settlement in Southwest Missouri, Mrs. Yeager describes Civil War mercenaries and bandits committing violent acts, and she discusses the violence against African Americans that she witnessed in the aftermath of the war. In addition, the line "twenty miles west of civilisation," which appears both in German and in English, refers primarily to territory inhabited by Native Americans. "Civilisation," then figures as a moving border separating those who have claimed whiteness from those who cannot. This might seem a rather conservative perspective, but the text leads us to view this (and all) separations and borders as necessarily permeable. The story's pattern of symbols, beginning with the porous architecture of the cabin, moving out to the shoddy fence, and expending to the unknown frontier, presents the reader with concentric rings, each one vulnerable to (or perhaps welcoming) that which lies beyond.

Regionalist writing often appears to provide a settled, stable counterpart to the dynamic metropolis, a place of "nostalgia and a privileged site of geographical feeling."[93] But as Hsuan Hsu argues, the "relationship between literature and regional production involves not only the production of literature about regions but also the ways in which literary works produce, reimagine, and actively restructure regional identities [...] in relation to larger-scale phenomena such as migrant flows."[94] A sense of region is thus always in the process of being created, and thus can be recreated and reread. Edna Fern provides two very different types of regional writing. On the one hand, her humorous sketch collections like "Gentleman Gordon und das

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[93] Hsuan L. Hsu, "Literature and Regional Production," *American Literary History* 17, no. 1, (2005): 36.

[94] Hsu, "Regional Production," 36-37.

Kind" fall closer to what might be considered "local color" than regionalism, and they do not deal in a very complex way with German immigration, though "The Kid" is ostensibly a German-American. Her tale of South Missouri, on the other hand, offers the kind of deeply local, subtle, and empathetically wrought treatment of place and community associated with the best regionalist writers.

iv. Lotta Leser's Urban Landscapes

Lotta L. Leser, a little-known writer who was born in Berlin in 1864 and immigrated to Philadelphia in 1882, provides a very different example of the role of manners and social norms across cultures in her 1907 humorous short story "Wie Peter Meffert 'nein' sagen lernte" ["How Peter Meffert Learned to Say 'No'"]. Sadly the story's end has been lost to history. It was meant to be published in two parts in a Philadelphia weekly called *Die Glocke*, but publication of that paper ceased between the first and second parts. Cora Lee Kluge made attempts to track down the second part of the story by seeking papers and manuscripts belonging to the long defunct journal and by looking for posthumous papers left by Leser herself, but the story's ending did not turn up.[95] Though Leser's story is incomplete, it offers a useful window into the contrasting mores of a financially comfortable German family, in contrast to the ways of being in what is depicted as a gritty, fast-paced Philadelphia. Leser's sketch is a humorous coming of age story– its protagonist bears the nickname Peter Meffert, which apparently suggests that he is good-natured but utterly ineffectual.[96] He helps students with their homework but neglects his own. He

[95] Kluge, *Other Witnesses,* 330.

[96] "Peter Meffert" is always presented in quotation marks in the story, as it is not the character's real name. For the sake of the reader, I have opted not to do the same.

enters a lopsided agreement with a schoolmate in order to get food for his beloved dog. Peter Meffert is a nice guy who does everything he can to finish last.

His father, in order to focus on his more ambitious children, sends him to work for a supposedly rich relative in Philadelphia when Peter is sixteen years old. This relative owns a seedy bar and puts Peter to work night and day doing menial tasks as a kind of indentured servant. To make matters worse, Miss Rosie, his supervisor, treats him terribly, until one night she asks him to go on a date. When he tries to refuse, she attacks him physically. After Peter's relative sides with Rosie in the conflict, he runs away, falls asleep on a bench, and is taken in by a park officer who rouses him from sleep. The kindly park officer then offers him a place to stay, despite the protests of the relative, and he gets Peter Meffert a job in a chemical plant that pays enough for him to maintain a simple living. There the story trails off, promising an ending that would never arrive.

Much could be said about Lotta Leser's extant body of work, especially regarding *Das zerrissene Bild und andere Novellen* [The Tattered Portrait and Other Novellas] her 1904 collection of stories set in the Rhineland and published in Dresden, but for the purposes of this chapter what is most important is the ways she contrasts mores, manners, and customs as a way of explaining the social landscape of Philadelphia. The first aspects of the United States Peter notices are its people's "künstliche Jovialität" [artificial joviality], his cousin's "rücksichtslosen Manieren" [inconsiderate manners], and the "ziemlich rüder Umgebung" [rather rude surroundings] in which he finds himself.[97] Peter is surprised to find that his own relative and countryman follows the same customs as the English-speaking populace of the city. Moreover,

[97] Lotta Leser, "Wie Peter Meffert 'nein' sagen Lernte," in *Other Witnesses: An Anthology of Literature of the German Americans, 1850-1914* (Madison: Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies, 2007), 339.

his cousin's defense of Miss Rosie's brutal behavior highlights a division in how each character defines the dignity of individuals. Peter considers his elevated social position sufficient to place him above his ostensive boss, and when propositioned by Rosie for a date, he retorts "No, I'd never think of going out with a maidservant."[98] Peter's relative uses altogether different criteria to assign value to individuals. When explaining his decision not to fire Miss Rosie for her violent transgression against Peter, he calls her a "jewel" and a "pearl," declaring that she is capable of making lunch for two-hundred people. While Peter assumed that blood ties, class privilege, and elevated social bearing will aid in his quest to get redress for Rosie's acts, he finds instead that one's ability to produce surplus value for an employer outweighs these other elements. America, the reader comes to understand, is "classless" in a double sense of the word. It eschews both social rank and social graces in favor of economic efficiency.

Without the end, it is difficult to know precisely what the story's position is regarding the distinction between the two cultures. At certain points, the reader has good reason to scorn Peter for his ineffectuality, yet in his "learning to say no," we see him grow as a character, but not necessarily in a purely positive direction. Miss Rosie is mean and violent, yet there is some pathos in her crude attempt to take Peter out for a date. She gets dressed up and puts on "ordinär[es] Parfum" [vulgar perfume] only to be laughed at and scorned for her profession. Perhaps Peter's evolution as a character leads him to get rid of some of his unearned pretension, while maintaining some of the more positive aspects of his gentility. Even without access to the story's ending, it seems clear that this "humoresque" gets much of its comedic energy and dramatic force from teasing out the contrasts between rather stringent social mores in Germany

[98] Original: "Nein, ich denke gar nicht daran mit einer Dienstmagd auszugehen!" Translation mine. Leser, "Peter Meffert," 342.

and a lack thereof in the United States. Given the story's German-American readership, Leser must have assumed that her audience had taken note of this contrast, and that her readers would find the humor in mocking both sides of this cultural divide. Like much of Edna Fern's fiction, Leser relies on a certain level of familiarity of both German and American social codes, which time would erode very quickly for German-Americans. Like Fern's, Leser's fiction captures its time as well as its space, chronicling a fairly temporary moment of cultural contact. What Benjamin Fagan writes of stories in fragment, prevalent in nineteenth-century African American periodical literature*,* might apply to some extent to this German-American fragment as well: "As a form with missing pieces, surrounded by edges rather than fixed borders, the fragment signifies a connection to a greater whole, as well as a temporal and spatial fluidity."[99] The sense (and reality) that something is missing creates a feeling of an inaccessible whole in which the gaps in Peter Meffert's world fill in and become legible.

v. Regionalism and German-American Identity

It is worth considering, at least briefly, the role of German-American characters in the English-language regional writing of the time, if only to draw attention to the contrast in social positions between well-educated and to some extent well-connected writers like Anneke, Fern, and Leser, all of whom published on both sides of the Atlantic. A good example comes from the Midwestern regionalist Hamlin Garland. His 1891 short story "Up the Coolly: A Story of Wisconsin" is about not being able to come home again. The protagonist, an actor named Howard McLane, returns to his native western Wisconsin from New York to find the place of his youth changed, almost unrecognizable. As Howard travels through his home town and meets up

[99] Benjamin Fagan, "The Fragments of Black Reconstruction" *American Literary History* 30, no. 3 (Fall 2018): 455.

with his uncle, William McTurg, the two discuss the ballfield where they had played years earlier and the trout stream where they used to fish. Each time Howard mentions one of these memories, he is met with a response making it clear that these elements of the past are, in fact, irretrievable. "What fun that field calls up! The games of ball we used to have! Do you play yet?" Howard asks his uncle.[100] "Can't stoop as well as I used to […] too much fat," is William's reply.[101] Regarding the trout brook, Howard asks "Any trout left?" […] "Not many. Little fellers," William replies tersely. At this point in the narrative, Howard locates the distinctions between the reality and memory of his hometown in the connection between place and activity: baseball in the field, fishing in the brook. He finds that none of the places he remembers has continued to support the activities of his past.

As the narrative progresses Howard's coordinates of home become all the more distorted. When he points out his childhood house, intent on surprising his family, William informs him that they no longer live there. "What! They don't!" Who does?" "Dutchman" is his uncle's reply.[102] Howard then inquires further: "Who lives on the Dunlap place?" "'Nother Dutchman."[103] In this instance, Dutchman is a common misnomer, as it refers not to someone from the Netherlands, but to someone from German-speaking Central Europe. Howard's arrival at home is more disappointing than these little disturbances. He fights with his brother, who resents his wealth and glitzy profession. Howard flaunts his new lifestyle in retaliation. After a fight, Howard walks to the location of his birth and most precious childhood memories; there he

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[100] Hamlin Garland "Up the Coolly." In *Main-Travelled Roads,* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 48

[101] Garland, "Up the Coolly," 48.

[102] Garland, "Up the Coolly," 50.

[103] Garland, "Up the Coolly," 50.

finds a woman picking berries. When he greets her with a cheerful "good morning," she replies in German. Howard caries on a short conversation with the woman in her native language, and he considers the possibility of buying back the farm for his family, leveraging his wealth to try to recreate the home he had left. In the end, this proves impossible. The story ends with the two brothers reconciled to some extent, but with Howard as he began, a well-dressed success, and with Grant defeated. At the age of thirty, Grant considers his life an unsalvageable failure.

The story, aside from a few details, could take place at any time of economic anxiety and urbanization. It speaks to the unfairness of life in a society marked by extreme income inequality, where one brother makes good and leaves the farm, while the other gets squeezed harder and harder by an economy run by land prospectors and fueled by ever cheaper labor. The newly arrived immigrant is saddled with blame. Germans and Norwegians, from the perspectives of the Scottish-American farmers, play a role in the decreasing returns of farming. The cosmopolitan Howard courteously speaks German with the woman now living in his boyhood home, while his uncle misidentifies her family as "Dutch" rather than German. The economically comfortable Howard holds no apparent resentment for German immigrants, while his cousin, a self-declared "old maid" at the age of twenty-five, despairs of her marital prospects: "You don't mean to tell me that no young fellow comes prowling around–" "Oh, a young Dutchman or Norwegian once in a while. Nobody that counts."[104] Prejudice against newly arrived immigrants appears symptomatic of the reduced conditions of the Scottish-American farmers, while those, like Howard, who make their living in multicultural cities, remain free from such prejudice and even attempt to accommodate the newcomers.

[104] Garland, "Up the Coolly," 72.

The Scottish-American characters in Garland's story, despite their earlier arrival in western Wisconsin, exemplify a certain point in the process of claiming whiteness, as theorized by David Roediger. Grant makes an explicit comparison between the farm labor situation and that of either enslaved or poor African Americans:

> 'A man can't get out of it during his lifetime, and *I* don't know that he'll have any chance in the next–the speculator'll be there ahead of us. […] Ten years ago, Wes here, could have got land in Dakota pretty easy, but now it's about all a feller's life's worth to try it.' […] 'Plenty o' land to rent,' suggested some one. 'Yes, in terms that skin a man alive. More than that, farmin' ain't so free a life as it used to be. This cattle-raisin' and butter-makin' makes a nigger of a man. […] I'd like to know what a man's life is worth who lives as we do? How much higher is it than the lives the niggers used to live?'[105]

Grant's vision of freedom depends on land ownership and profitability. Rent, coupled with low earning potential, for Grant, is akin to enslavement, and thus challenges his self-conception as white. Roediger claims that "though direct comparisons between bondage and wage labor were tried out ('white slavery'), the rallying cry of 'Free labor' understandably proved more durable and popular for antebellum white workers, especially in the North."[106] In other words, the clear separation between wage labor and slavery was, during slavery, a way to sharpen racial distinctions, just as it had created them. Grant takes the opposite tack as he blurs the lines between the conditions of white farmers in the north and the enslaved African Americans of a few decades earlier. Assuming the racial distinction that had been created in the emergence of the white working class, Grant thinks not of becoming white, but of the prospect of losing his whiteness. This, in turn, explains the subtle jabs at the newly arrived German and Norwegian immigrants who have managed to become landowners. It is perhaps due to this dynamic, as it played out in many locales, that many German-American writers, like other "white ethnics"

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[105] Garland, "Up the Coolly," 84.

[106] David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class. Revised Edition.* (New York: Verso, 2007), 13-14.

attempt to claim whiteness over and against groups who lack the chance to do so, especially African Americans and Native Americans.

vi. Region and Imperial Fantasy

Some German and German-American writers imagined themselves in the position of colonizers in the U.S. West, a place that has long played a significant role in the imagination of German writers and thinkers. Even before Karl May's best-selling stories of cowboys and Native Americans helped to spread the region's image across the Atlantic, a number of German-language writers wrote either from first-hand experience or from distant speculation about life west of the Mississippi. Images of the West tend to lend themselves to flights of fancy. An Austrian-Jewish writer named Sidonie Grünwald-Zerkowitz, for example, uses Mormon culture, especially its association with polygamy, as a backdrop for her poem cycle *Die Lieder der Mormonin* [Songs of the Mormon Woman]. These poems, banned in Austria for indecency, employ the blank space of the U.S. West and the mysterious and often derided Mormon people to explore the topic of sexual awakening.[107] Sarah Reed argues that Grünwald-Zerkowitz both employs and complicates "Orientalist" notions of Mormons and replaces the gothic castle with the American West to provide "a place to explore sexuality at a safe distance."[108] Grünwald-Zerkowitz uses the West for its exotic backdrop, but the story her poem cycle tells is not one of colonial domination.[109] To complicate matters, it is worth noting that Mormons were often

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[107] See Sarah C. Reed "Ich bin ein Pioneer" Sidonie Grünwald-Zerkowitz's *Die Lieder der Mormonin* (1887) and the Erotic Exploration of Exotic America," in *Sophie Discovers Amerika: German Speaking Women Write the New World,* eds. Rob McFarland and Michelle Stott James (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2014), (92).

[108] Reed, "Ich bin ein Pioneer," 96.

[109] Peter Coviello traces the transformation of Mormons from a group portrayed as "heretical and seditious" to "dutiful U.S. citizens," over the course of the nineteenth century. See Peter

figured as non-white in the popular imagination, "rather, Mormons were more frequently described as "Indians" by their most committed *enemies*," or more broadly as "unassimilable Others […] especially in the vibrant pseudo-pornographic genre of anti-Mormon novels, but not only there."[110] Grünwald-Zerkowitz's poetry does not explicitly enter the territory of Mormon racialization; instead, it remains fixed on the emotional dimension of multiple marriage.[111]

Sophie Wörishöffer, on the other hand, wrote of the US West, California in particular, in the register of colonial rather than erotic fantasy. Nicole Grewling argues that Wörishöffer's works "are part of a German national and colonial discourse, the sometimes chauvinistic tendencies which have their roots in Germany's particular political situation in the nineteenth century," that is, Germany's colonial fantasies served to compensate for the country's belatedness in becoming a nation-state and relative ineffectiveness as a colonial power.[112] Writing primarily in the 1870s, Wörishoffer imagines California as a location in which the ethnic, national, and religious divisions of Europe play out anew. Grewling argues that *Im Goldland Kalifornien* [In California – Land of Gold] depicts "the makeup of Californian society

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Coviello, "Plural: Mormon Polygamy and the Biopolitics of Secularism," *History of the Present* 7, no. 2 (Fall 2017), 220.

[110] Peter Coviello, *Make Yourselves Gods: Mormons and the Unfinished Business of American Secularism* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2019), 163-64.

[111] Other sources of knowledge about the history of the Mormon people written in German come from the novels of Balduin Möllhausen, sometimes called the German James Fennimore Cooper. Möllhausen's *Das Mormonenmädchen, eine Erzählung aus der Zeit des Kriegszuges der Vereinigten Staaten gegen die „Heiligen der letzten Tage" im Jahre 1857-1858* presents one important example. This novel presents a narrative created from the context of Möllhausen's personal interactions in the United States as well as from reportage. Alongside Native American peoples of the U.S. West, Mormons were also figures of fascination for German readers.

[112] Nicole Grewling, "Inventing America: German Racism and Colonial Dreams in Sophie Wörishöffer's *Im Goldlande Kalifornien* (1891)," in *Sophie Discovers Amerika: German Speaking Women Write the New World,* eds. Rob McFarland and Michelle Stott James (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2014), 112.

[that] consists of racial hierarchy influenced by [the] colonial and racist thinking of the time."[113] Characters other than Germans, especially Irish, Spanish, Polish, and Jewish people range from stupid and disorganized to downright villainous. Only the German characters exhibit courage, diligence, foresight, and a sense of justice.[114] A colonizer fantasy also needs the colonized; Wörishöffer provides it in the form of Native Americans who correspond with Rousseau's notion of the "noble savage." The portrayal of Germans as model colonizers results in racial condescension and self-aggrandizement. The U.S. West, for Wörishöffer (who never visited it herself), is a space of second chances, of German superiority justly rewarded, and of model colonization winning out over the brutality of the Spanish, English, and Dutch.

Immigration lends itself perhaps more easily to the travelogue genre than to regionalism proper. In fact, it can be difficult to separate the two. At what point does an immigrant writer attain a level of localness to speak for and about an adopted region as opposed to performing the reportage-like task of the travel writer? Mathilde Franziska Anneke's "Erinnerungen vom Michigan-See" [Memories of Lake Michigan] provides one such difficult case. Anneke wrote the text while living in Switzerland during the U.S. Civil War, but she had already spent a good deal of time in Milwaukee, where the story begins, and would live out the rest of her life in that city after the war's end. The article, which appeared in the *Elberfelder Zeitung*, begins with a glowing description of the city of Milwaukee. Anneke praises the city's beauty and offers an explanation of the origin of its name and its history, referring both to European explorers and to the Native Americans who inhabit the region. The occasion for the text is the narrator's farewell to a friend who is about to be imprisoned for "his humane deed of rescuing a slave from the

[113] Grewling, "Inventing America," 117.

[114] Grewling, "Inventing America," 115.

hands of his persecutor," presumably as a result of the Fugitive Slave Law.[115] Anneke then contrasts imprisonment and freedom: "From the window of the United States prison-fortress, the prisoner could look out over the wide blue lake," as well as brutality in a supposedly civilized land: "he languished and suffered, a victim of savagery and barbarism in the land of freedom and independence."[116] The narrator even calls the prison a "*Marmorbastille*" [Marble Bastille], thus connecting the U.S. government to the pre-revolutionary leadership of France, and the antislavery cause to the principles of liberty, fraternity, and equality.

Anneke's focus turns from imprisonment and slavery to the condition of Native American relations in Wisconsin. Anneke addresses the condition of Sioux, Chippewa, and Winnebega [sic] tribal nations. The piece reaches it emotional climax when a Chippewa woman named Owaissa addresses the travelers and tells the community's story. After relating the many problems the tribe has faced in recent years (hunger, sickness, poverty, addiction), Owaissa claims "We fall on the ground before the skill of the white man; we are weak, you are strong. We are only simple Indians–you have knowledge and wisdom in your head; we need your help and protection."[117] The text does not provide much historical or political context for Owaissa's speech. The Chippewa [also Ojibwe] people were in the midst of a decades-long fight for survival which included land cessions under duress, negotiations with Washington, and an

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[115] Maria Franziska Anneke, "Memories of Lake Michigan," in *Mathilde Franziska Anneke (1817-1884): The Works and Life of a German-American Activist.* Trans. Susan L. Piepke. (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 57.

[116] Anneke, "Memories of Lake Michigan," 58.

[117] Anneke, 68.

"episode of ethnic cleansing."[118] Margaret Huettl describes the fallout from an 1850 removal order as follows:

> The Ojibwe from Lac Courte Oreilles held councils where they agreed that [a] removal order violated their treaties. They sent messengers to Lac du Flambeau and La Pointe and the other communities, all of which remained united in their opposition. When they refused to abandon their understanding of the treaties as more than written documents, federal and territorial Settler governments colluded to force removal. They consolidated annuity payments at Sandy Lake, intending to trap them there for the winter–long enough for federal troops to arrive and contain them on the reservation. […] When they and more than three thousand additional Ojibweg arrived at Sandy Lake, however, there were no supplies and no payments, and winter had frozen the waterways home. One hundred seventy men, women, and children, died of hunger and disease in this attempt to wrest them from their homelands.[119]

Anneke depicts Owaissa as a member of a self-consciously premodern nation, dependent on the kindness and generosity of white settlers. As Huettl's dissertation makes clear, the Ojibwe, in this moment of crisis, "acted in ways that reflected the continued strength of their peoplehood. […] For three weeks, they fed themselves by hunting and gathering, as they had done on trips to collect annuities at La Pointe for twenty years."[120] Anneke's characters do not exhibit this kind of self-sufficiency and direct defiance of unfair legal treatment. Instead, they appear in need of mercy rather than sovereignty.

Anneke employs a trope found also in her novella *Uhland in Texas,* that of the linguistic go-between. In both texts, a non-native person has learned a native language, and serves to connect the two sides both linguistically and culturally. In "Erinnerungen vom Michigan-See," this is a man of European background, but who was raised in a native community, and in *Uhland in Texas,* the go-between character is African American, and his ability to communicate with

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[118] Margaret Huettl, "Nindanishinaabewimin: Ojibwe Peoplehood in the North American West, 1854-1954. (PhD diss., University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 2016), 82 https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/thesesdissertations/2782.

[119] Huettl, "Nindanishinaabewimin," 82.

[120] Huettl, "Nindanishinaabewimin," 82.

native Americans plays a key role in the plot. These liminal figures move between cultures to serve roles within their texts. They prove necessary to the plots by making legible the thoughts and actions of Native Americans to Europeans, and ultimately to Anneke's European readers. As Susan Piepke claims, "[t]he noblest of Anneke's "noble savages" seems to be the individual living in both cultures."[121] Anneke's works aim at the prospect of knowing more than mere images of native people, but to a large extent, this desire is thwarted by clichéd and paternalistic representations of Native Americans.

Anneke's reflections on the conditions of Native Americans in Wisconsin operates on two levels. First and foremost, it offers an apparently first-hand account of Native Americans to a German-speaking readership in Europe, not merely a translation of an English-language text, nor a speculative work by someone who has never crossed the Atlantic. Secondly, it places Anneke and her generation of German-American writers, the "Forty-Eighter" generation, in the position of being against the unjust practice of slavery and the shameful treatment of Native Americans, while maintaining a distance from both groups. Anneke's depiction of "noble savages" who admit their inferiority as well as her depiction of white, northern anti-slavery freedom fighters who are in jail for their beliefs shows both the good intentions and Anneke's unfortunate oversights. Anneke, in a manner quite different from Hamlin Garland's characters in "Up the Coolly," assumes her racial and social position without reflection. Despite their status as exiles, the Forty-Eighter generation is afforded distinct privileges by way of their advanced education and transatlantic connectedness. Their social status typically more closely mirrors Garland's Howard McLane than his farm-bound family, much less the "Dutchmen" neighbors.

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[121] Anneke, 69.

vii. Conclusion

One notable tendency in German-American regional writing is that its intended audience determines, to a large degree, its form and content. Texts by German-American writers published in Europe, for example Anneke's first two stories of slavery and her travelogue reflecting on her voyage on Lake Michigan, as well as Edna Fern's humorous sketches, tend to be derivative of Anglo-American writing. These texts resemble authors like Harriet Beecher Stowe and Mark Twain, both popular in Germany, or they deal in hackneyed portrayals of Native Americans. On the other hand, stories published in the United States, such as Anneke's *Uhland in Texas* and Leser's "*Wie Peter Meffert 'nein' sagen lernte*," exhibit much subtler treatments of the realities of immigration.

Edna Fern's "Ein Farm-Idyll in Süd-Missouri," published in Europe, would seem to be a significant counter-example to this trend, and perhaps it is. Fern's story certainly offers the most nuanced depiction of German-American communities and their interactions with other people living in the United States of any of the texts analyzed in this chapter. Not much is known about Fern's writing practices, but I speculate that the story was not written for the explicit goal of publication in a volume of collected works, as was its destiny, but rather as a stand-alone story for a German-American readership. This would explain the rather awkward inclusion of explanations of German-American words within the text; these glosses seem tacked on, and would likely not have been necessary for publication in the United States. Moreover, Fern's story bears little resemblance to the other texts in her collected works. Whether my speculation about the original intentions are correct or not, Fern's story strongly contrasts with the more derivative stories which Anneke, and Fern herself, published in Europe. Fern's story of the Southwest Missouri prairie, Anneke's grappling with German-Americans as enslavers in Texas, and Leser's

depiction of German-American life in Philadelphia each fulfill the promise of regional writing by uniting the particularities of lives outside of cultural and economic centers with the demands of a world in flux. They critically explore both the causes and effects of the movements of people, of economic exploitation, and of racialized enslavement as they come to terms with life in the United States, albeit in very different tonal registers. These examples demonstrate the way regional writing by German-Americans helped to grapple with these complexities, largely within a German-American community that would, in time, cede its identity to the homogenizing pressures of the United States and ultimately take advantage of the privileges of whiteness in America. The most vital and creative aspects of culture in transition can be lost due to inward and outward pressures and incentives to adapt to the predominant culture and language of the United States.

Chapter 2. Un/imaginable Lives: African American Performers, Nineteenth Century Germany, and the Scales of Identification

> UNCLE TOM IN GERMANY. - The correspondent of the Boston *Congregationalist,* Geo. P. Fisher, Esq., writing from Germany, says: -
> "Uncle Tom's Cabin" is exciting great attention in Germany. […] Indeed their interest seemed to be about equally divided between Negroes, Indians, and Mormons. On hardly any subject have I been more questioned than concerning the Mormon, a people with whom I have very little acquaintance. If I had a live one to exhibit I could make a small fortune among these speculative, philosophic, meditative *Deutschen*.
>
> Frederick Douglass Paper, February 18, 1853

> "A black woman said of the song, 'It can't be sung without a full heart and a troubled sperrit.' The same voice sings here that sings in the German folk-song: 'Jetz Geh [sic.] i' an's brunele, trink' aber net.'"
>
> W.E.B Du Bois, from *The Souls of Black Folk*

i. Introduction

Christina Sharpe's 2016 book *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* theorizes the alternative temporalities churned up in the interminable aftermath of the transatlantic slave trade.[122] The multifaceted metaphor of the "wake" includes "the keeping watch of the dead, the path of the ship, a consequence of something, in the line of flight and/or sight, awakening, and consciousness."[123] The attempt to live through these manifold notions of wake, each a state of continued violence and mourning in which the "past [is] not yet past" is what Sharpe calls "wake work." Sharpe defines wake work thus: "we might continue to imagine new ways to live in the wake of slavery, in slavery's afterlives, to survive (and more) the afterlife of property. In

[122] Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

[123] Sharpe, *In the Wake,*17-18, 13.

short, I mean wake work to be a mode of inhabiting *and* rupturing this episteme with our known lived and un/imaginable lives."[124] This chapter puts together some archival pieces left churned up by the African American performers' "wake work," as they cross the Atlantic in an approximate reversal of the middle passage, west to east. The spatiotemporal nature of the wake of slavery, in its aforementioned manifold meaning, weighs heavily on the subjects of this chapter. Ira Aldridge, and later, the Fisk Jubilee Singers perform a kind of wake work. At stake in wake work "is not recognizing antiblackness as total climate. At stake, too, is not recognizing an insistent Black visualsonic resistance to that imposition of non/being."[125] Sharpe asks "[h]ow might we stay in the wake with and as those whom the state positions to die ungrievable deaths and live lives meant to be unlivable?"[126] Finally, "[a]t stake, then is to stay in this wake time toward inhabiting a blackened consciousness that would rupture the structural silences produced and facilitated by, and that produce and facilitate, Black social and physical death."[127] The performers discussed in this chapter embody the simultaneous work of mourning and troubling of an interminable mourning, contending with the "weather" of anti-blackness.[128] Though the orientation of this chapter is largely spatial or geographical, it cannot ignore the temporal, especially the temporality of the wake.

This chapter presents the collision between emergent geographical and ideological affiliations in German-speaking Europe and the temporally and geographically diffuse "wake" in which African American performers dwell. When considering the several possible scales of

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[124] Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 18.

[125] Sharpe, *In the Wake,* 21.

[126] Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 22.

[127] Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 22.

[128] Sharpe, *In the Wake,* 106.

identification: the domestic, the local, the regional, the national, and the imperial, it is tempting to separate them from one another in an attempt to find clarity in isolation. But what if one considers these elements as constitutive of a larger web, something akin to Raymond Williams's "structures of feeling" applied to the spatial and temporal notions of belonging?[129] Williams's famous concept describes competing ways of thinking vying for dominance at a given time and place. In the second half of the nineteenth-century in Germany, to use a time and place relevant to this chapter, a confluence of structures constructed the variously tinged ideologies experienced by subjects. All at roughly the same time, feelings of local, regional, national, and even imperial self-understanding contended for dominance and/or accommodated one another in the every-day ideology of Germans. Let's start with a brief analysis of regional affiliation in this era, as it contrasts with and connects to national affiliation.

Theories of the development of national consciousness often focus on national media or invented mythology.[130] Though these approaches have been very fruitful, they often ignore the ways the dialectical relationship between region and nation interact. A notable exception to this tendency is found in Celia Applegate's *A Nation of Provincials*, which illustrates this process painstakingly and convincingly. When discussing *Heimat,* a German term meaning roughly "homeland," Applegate claims that "the survival and transformation of *Heimat* reveals to us the struggle to create a national identity out of diverse materials of a provincially rooted society." This suggests that national belonging is not merely a product of the rise of print media, nor is the

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[129] See Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 129-212.

[130] See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, (New York: Verso, 2006). See Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

region always a counterbalance to the primacy of the nation.[131] Ironically, it is the most provincial aspects of civic life that come to define the nation in Applegate's analysis. The history of *Heimat* as a concept goes through a number of shifts from the nineteenth century to today, but its importance and various uses come into clearest relief in times of national upheaval or great change: the revolutions of 1848, the formal unification of the German nation state in 1871, World War I, the rise of National Socialism, World War II, and the postwar era all forced new negotiations between nation and region. At times, as Applegate's study reveals, regions could underscore and support the centrality of the nation. The citizen who is most thoroughly a Pfälzer, Bavarian, or Badener is correspondingly the most German. At other times regional identity serves as an impediment to nationalist approaches, especially those of the National Socialists, who managed to co-opt notions of *Heimat* only partially.[132] The years immediately following the revolutions of 1848 and the years immediately following German unification are most relevant for this chapter. In both eras, multiple geographical scales – domestic, local, regional, national, imperial, and transnational – were in play and existed in a complex web of identity formation. The tricky aspect of the analyses of national consciousness such as Applegate's idea of a "nation of provincials," or Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities" is that they are themselves rooted in both local and national historical frameworks.[133] This chapter will consider a time and place not far from Applegate's own subject matter, nineteenth-century Germany, but it will theorize local, transnational, and imperial scales in addition to those of the region and nation.

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[131] Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 19.

[132] Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials,* 18.

[133] Anderson, *Imagined Communities.* Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* (New York: Verso, 2006). Originally published in 1983.

In recent years a number of scholars have dedicated themselves to discovering what political and cultural relationships existed between African Americans and the people of the German-speaking lands prior to the twentieth century. Some historians and scholars of literature have taken a look at the connections between Forty-Eighters and African Americans in the United States.[134] Others have looked to the other side of the Atlantic to analyze the presence of African Americans in Germany.[135] A third type of analysis focuses on cultural mobility; that is, the movement and transformation of cultural artifacts or performances from one locale to another.[136] The present chapter will focus on African American presences in Germany as well as cultural mobility as it will analyze African American performers in nineteenth-century Germany and the movement of certain cultural artifacts. While this chapter cannot offer a complete compendium of African American performance in nineteenth-century Germany, as that history is in fact quite large and complex, it offers a deep dive into two significant examples, the actor Ira Aldridge's tours of Europe, and The Fisk Jubilee Singers' continental tour.

This chapter's first major example is the story of Ira Aldridge's performances in Europe. Using textual remnants of Aldridge's reception found in various newspapers and journals as evidence, I argue that Aldridge's unique performances exemplify both the localizing and

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[134] See Alison Clark Efford, *German Immigrants, Race, and Citizenship in the Civil War Era,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2013).

[135] See Mischa Honeck, "Liberating Sojourns? African American Travelers in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Germany," in *German and the Black Diaspora: Points of Contact, 1250-1914,* eds. Mischa Honeck, Martin Klimke, and Anne Kuhlmann (New York: Berghahn, 2013): 153-168.

[136] See Heike Paul, "Cultural Mobility Between Boston and Berlin: How Germans have Read and Reread Narratives of American Slavery," in *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto,* ed. Stephen Greenblatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 122-171; See also Kira Thurman, "Singing the Civilizing Mission in the Land of Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms: The Fisk Jubilee Singers in Nineteenth-Century Germany," *Journal of World History* 27, no. 3 (September 2016): 443-471.

universalizing potentialities of art, and that his legacy is one of successfully fighting against racist notions popular in the middle of the nineteenth century. Secondly, I will explore in detail the legacy of the Fisk Jubilee Singers in Germany, which historian Kira Thurman has recently brought to light. In addition to analyzing the reception of the Jubilee Singers' performances, I will offer a close reading of the chief cultural artifact their European tour left behind, the German translation of their songbook.

Representing one's region creates a struggle for authenticity. How, we might ask, is it possible for a text, song, or performance, to achieve the status of "representative" or "authentic?" Of course, such a thing as "authenticity" is impossible from the start, as representations of place must necessarily include some aspects and people to the exclusion of others. Who gets to be local, we might ask? And who gets to decide whether a depiction is authentic? Finally, who determines whether a group or locality deserves to be discursively interpolated as a region or a locality in the first place? Such questions become all the more complicated when, as is the case regarding African Americans in nineteenth-century Germany, linguistic, cultural, national, and imperial borders further confuse the issue and impact forms of cultural production. Nevertheless, what I will argue in this chapter is that German consumers of African American culture tended to demand authenticity rather than parody, at least in comparison to audiences in the United States and the United Kingdom. African American performers in nineteenth century Germany from Ira Aldridge to the Fisk Jubilee Singers were met with curiosity, and occasionally with a proto-imperial gaze, but ultimately also with appreciation for their art and a belief in their ability to carry forth the burden of "authentic" representation.[137] I will conclude with an an application of

[137] It is impossible to do justice to a topic as large and varied as that of blackness and authenticity here. For more, see E. Patrick Johnson, *Appropriating Blackness: Performance and the Politics of Authenticity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003).

Sharpe's concept of the wake in order to try to understand not only the German audiences, but the African American performers' experiences of those performances.

ii. African American Voices in Germany: Performing in the Wake

Heike Paul argues convincingly that the nineteenth-century image of African Americans and of enslaved people in the United States stems largely from sources other than enslaved people or African Americans themselves.[138] One major source of this image comes from the wildly popular sentimental novel Uncle Tom's Cabin, first translated as *Onkel Tom's Hütte: Eine Negergeschichte.* The novel went through dozens of printings in nineteenth-century Germany, and it remains very well-known in Germany to this day. The great irony of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is that its original intention, to critique slavery and to galvanize potential abolitionists, has at times been turned on its head. Though the novel could be critiqued for its ending's emigrationist politics, its substantive critique of slavery has often been obscured by the book's varied afterlife. Paul points out the way in which the novel spurred on a romanticization of southern plantation life for German readers. "The notion of American slavery" Paul points out, "can easily be traced in German popular culture. It is fueled by the large-scale commodification of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the United States and in Europe following the novel's enormous success."[139] Stowe's novel in

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[138] Paul, "German Reception," 116, 128. According to Paul's research, there were four texts by African Americans or individuals formerly enslaved in the United States that circulated in German translation in the nineteenth century: Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano's, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself,* Frederick Douglass's *My Bondage and My Freedom*, Frank Webb's novel *The Garies and Their Friends,* and Josiah Henson's *Truth Stranger than Fiction: Father Henson's Story of His Own Life.* The essay makes clear that these texts were overshadowed by Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin.* It is important to acknowledge that Germans might certainly have read the works of African American writers in English or other languages in addition to the translated texts.

[139] Paul, "Cultural Mobility," 135.

Germany, along with its cultural resonance in marketing strategies and cultural practices crowded out the voices of those who actually experienced slavery.

Perhaps the most famous such voice, that of Frederick Douglass, did have some exposure to German readership. Douglass's second autobiography *My Bondage and My Freedom,* was translated by his close friend, the German-American journalist Ottilie Assing.[140] Paul points out in multiple essays that Assing's translation reached its readership after their interest in American slave narratives had waned, and thus did not sell particularly well. In addition, the scholarship long held the mistaken belief that the book was in fact written by Assing, and not by Douglass.[141] The book's legacy as an African American voice in Germany has thus long been compromised. Paul has found only three other books written by African Americans that were translated into German in the nineteenth century.

It is plausible that nineteenth-century African American writers did not enjoy a particularly wide influence, but the status of African American performers such as musicians and actors is more difficult to tease out. A magazine called *Der Artist* "reported that in 1896 there were over 100 black entertainers living in Germany,"[142] but Kira Thurman was unable to substantiate this claim in her exhaustive research.[143] This could mean that the claim was exaggerated, or it could simply confirm that some forms of entertainment such as dramatic and musical performance leave behind little textual evidence, and thus tend to disappear from the record. In either case, it is difficult to make assertions about the role of African American

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[140] Paul, "German Reception," 128.

[141] Paul, 123.

[142] Kira Thurman, "A History of Black Musicians in Germany and Austria, 1870-1961: Race, Performance, and Reception" (PhD diss., University of Rochester, 2013), 18

[143] Thurman, "Black Musicians," 18.

performance in nineteenth-century Germany based on this largely absent record. Instead, it is possible to rely on the more complete textual records provided by what might be termed exceptional cases – performers who caused a stir and inspired a good deal of writing about their performances in the local presses. The examples of Ira Aldridge and the Fisk Jubilee Singers provide the best way to approach the question organizing this chapter: how did African American performers in Germany contribute to, experience, or disrupt the various narratives of identity in flux in the latter half of the nineteenth century? At a time when scales of identification intermingled to create many competing binaries: European vs. non-European, German vs. non-German, provincial vs. cosmopolitan, and so on, what was the role of performance by black people who nevertheless represented the United States as well as particular localities within the United States?

iii. A Particular Universalism: Ira Aldridge in Central Europe

Ira Aldridge was born in New York City in 1807. In his early life he acted with the African Company of the African Grove Theatre, a group of black actors founded in 1821 by William Alexander Brown.[144] Facing hostility from white audiences, Aldridge moved on to England, where he continued his theatrical career, performing many different roles, from characters in melodramas and comedies to the protagonists of Shakespeare's tragedies like *Macbeth*, *King Lear, Richard III, The Merchant of Venice*, and most famously, as *Othello*.[145] His

[144] Herbert Marshall and Mildred Stock, *Ira Aldridge: The Negro Tragedian* (London: Rockliff, 1958) 28-47.

[145] Aldridge played many other roles while in England, far more than he would in Continental Europe. Perhaps linguistic and cultural knowledge of his audiences caused him to limit his repertoire in this way. In England his repertoire included not only many plays by Shakespeare, but also a number of eighteenth century plays with "certain echoes of Enlightenment values: the dignity of man, the worth of freedom, the necessity of restraint." See Hazel Waters, *Racism and*

time in England was marked by a great deal of success, but also by examples of racism. He often faced racist attacks from his reviewers in newspapers and journals.[146] Despite all of this, he became famous and well respected; by the time of his departure to the European continent in 1852, his English critics no longer used racist language in their reviews, as they had done when he first arrived.[147]

In August of 1852, after a decade and a half on the English stage, he crossed the English Channel to the European mainland, and began performing in Belgian and then German theatres. After several favorable newspaper reviews, Aldridge and his small troupe became sought-after performers. He travelled from west to east, crossing the Rhine and performing in dozens of German cities; he pushed further east, performing in Hungary, Poland, and Russia, then made his way back west, through German-speaking central Europe again as well as the Netherlands and Belgium. He returned to England after spending thirty-three months in continental Europe, then went back and forth from the continent to the British Isles throughout the late 1850s and well into the 1860s.[148] Shortly before he was due to return to the United States for the first time in many years, Aldridge fell ill and died suddenly in Łodź, Poland in 1867 at the age of fifty-nine or sixty.[149]

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the Victorian Stage: Representation of Slavery and the Black Character (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 63.

[146] Hazel Waters, "Ira Aldridge's Fight for Equality," in *The African Roscius,* ed. Bernth Lindfors, (Rochester, University of Rochester Press), 99.

[147] Bernth Lindfors, "Ira Aldridge in Germany," *Wasafiri* 23, no. 4 (2007): 8.

[148] Lindfors, "Ira Aldridge in Germany," 10-11.

[149] Bernth Lindfors, *Ira Aldridge: Performing Shakespeare in Europe, 1852-1855* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2013), 251.

Ira Aldridge's theatrical tour of continental Europe in the early 1850s created a large and turbulent wake, but absent a clear view of the man at the tiller, we end up learning as much about the conditions of the sea as the characteristics of the ship.[150] Aldridge's reviewers varied widely in their assessment of his performance, but they generally had two things in common. First, they found his performances memorable, intense, or even shocking. One reviewer claimed "it is definitely worth the trouble to see Herr Aldridge once; hardly anyone will do so twice."[151] And second, the reviewers often revealed their own misguided conception of who Aldridge was and what he represented; his blackness was frequently at issue, and it just as frequently overshadowed his personal biography, that of a free black man from New York. This section analyzes the way Aldridge's performances in German-speaking countries complicated and confounded extant notions of race, even while those notions remained present in the ideologies of his reviewers. Race, place, nation, and region all enter a masquerade in which Aldridge's performances are taken by many as authentic representations of "Africanness." Aldridge's inhabiting multiple distinct notions of blackness and Africanness provides one example of his "wake work." Voluntarily or involuntarily, Aldridge performed, embodied and dwelled within the stateless realm attendant to "being Black in diaspora."[152]

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[150] Aldridge may well have played a role in the various factual inaccuracies that surrounded his life for many years. An anonymous memoir of Aldridge's life, possibly written by Aldridge himself, was published in 1849. It claims that he was been born a royal member of the Fulah tribe in Senegal, though all documentary evidence suggests that Aldridge and at least his parents were born in the United States. Aldridge, or at least those involved with the promotion of his career, appears to have been aware of the potential benefits of marketing himself as "exotic." See *Memoir and Theatrical Career of Ira Aldridge, The African Roscius* (London: Onwhyn, 1849.) 8.

[151] *Die Grenzboten: Zeitschrift für Politik und Literatur* 2, no. 2-3 (1852). Quoted from Lindfors, *Ira Aldridge,* 60. Bernth Lindfors's three volume work on Ira Aldridge has made most of the relevant reviews accessible.

[152] Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 19.

Aldridge's performances as Othello, given that its protagonist suffers the effects of racist exclusion in complicated ways, often elicited discussion of race among his reviewers, sometimes as an asset, and sometimes as a liability. A reviewer in the *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung* writes of Aldridge's performance of Othello, "I do not believe that Shakespeare's intentions regarding the character of Othello have ever found a better interpreter, nor that they ever will."[153] Even more glowingly, a reviewer in Coburg writes:

> Every word he speaks seems to emerge from the soul of the hero of the role, borne and supported by unsurpassed, classical facial expressions, unsurpassed because every nerve, every muscle fiber of the actor is electrified and saturated by the spirit, by the thoughts, feelings and passions of the hero whom he portrays.[154]

The Coburg reviewer praises Aldridge's ability to inhabit the role of Othello fully. Referring to the facial expressions as "classical" suggests that Aldridge's ability is derived from his training as an actor, even while the rest of the language in the review focuses on Aldridge's "spirit" or embodiment; his words emerge from the "soul of the hero," his body is "saturated by the spirit…of the hero he portrays." A reviewer in Gotha takes a decidedly different tack:

> In our opinion, a German actor should not dare to exaggerate the scenes of affect as orientally as the foreign actor did; now and then his outbursts of rage struck us as very unlovely. Shakespeare did not want to portray the Moor in Othello, but rather the human being in the Moor; thus, the actor playing Othello should not appear with African gestures, loud howls and wild cries; instead, for all his Moorish hot-bloodedness, he must remain within the bounds of aesthetics.[155]

The Gotha reviewer's description gives some interesting detail regarding Aldridge's style of performance and that style's signification within the mid nineteenth-century German context.

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[153] See Lindfors, *Ira Aldridge: Performing Shakespeare in Europe, 1852-1855* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2013), 55, 287. Lindfors quotes from *Mnemosyne*, no. 62, November 3, 1852. The quote was reprinted in the *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung,* September 19-24, 1852 as well as *Der Bürgerfreund,* October 7, 1852, and the *Mannheimer Unterhaltungsblatt,* October 13, 1852.

[154] *Gothaisches Tageblatt*, November 22, 1852. Quoted from Lindfors, *Ira Aldridge,* 57. To avoid confusion, I will point out that this review is indeed from Coburg, Germany, not from a reviewer at the Royal Coburg Theatre in London, at which Aldridge performed for years.

[155] *Gothaische Zeitung,* November 20, 1852. Quoted from Lindfors, *Ira Aldridge, 57.*

One can imagine from the review that Aldridge acted in a demonstrative style – perhaps it is true that he employed "loud howls and cries" as a method of embodying Othello's emotional state. The two reviewers differ in their application of aesthetic categories and in their notions of fidelity to Shakespeare's intent. For the Coburg reviewer, Aldridge's passionate performance comports with Shakespeare's character, while for the Gotha reviewer, it reverses Shakespeare's "intent." For that reviewer, Othello is a character trying to conceal his "true" nature, and Aldridge reveals that nature too plainly. In addition, the latter review offers the implication that a certain level of understatement and suppression of emotions is required by the "bounds of aesthetics."

Yet another reviewer, this time from Leipzig, claims that Aldridge's performance, were it done the same way by a German, would cause the audience to "feel aversion at such a violent distortion" as he "contort[s] his face into such a grotesque expression of suppressed pain."[156] But due to his alleged Africanness (Aldridge was often advertised inaccurately as a native of Africa),[157] the viewer "felt profound pity for the son of nature who is catapulted back into his innate savagery by the terrible pain at his lost happiness and his rage at the humiliation he has suffered."[158] This reviewer's emphasis on Aldridge's alleged Africanness, or more to the point, his actual blackness, leads him to an interpretation of Shakespeare's play that focuses on Othello's "innate savagery" as his hamartia or fatal flaw, rather than one of the other interpretive possibilities, such as his obsessive ideas about virtue, his mistreatment as an outsider, or the treachery of Iago, the play's devilish antagonist. This example demonstrates that Aldridge's

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[156] *Leipzig Tageblatt und Anzeiger,* November 25, 1852. Quoted from Lindfors, *Ira Aldridge,* 59.

[157] *Memoir and Theatrical Career of Ira Aldridge,* 8.

[158] *Leipzig Tageblatt und Anzeiger,* November 25, 1852. Quoted from Lindfors, *Ira Aldridge,* 59.

position as a black man, perhaps combined with his acting choices, causes critics to see his blackness as constitutive of his performance.[159]

In addition to *Othello,* Aldridge's European performances frequently include "The Padlock," a two-act comic opera written by Isaac Bickerstaffe in the 1760s and set to the music of Charles Dibdin.[160] The short play is an English-language adaptation of Cervantes' *El celoso extremeño.* It tells the story of Dion Diego, an old miser who keeps his fiancée Leonora locked in his cottage in order to keep her from being unfaithful. Its humorous attributes stem primarily from the antics of Mungo, an enslaved man from the West Indies played by Aldridge. Mungo speaks in an exaggerated dialect, sings and dances on command, and acts obsequiously toward Dion Diego, at least until he drinks to excess. In the play's climax, Mungo emerges drunk from the basement and calls Diego an "old dog," and an "old rascal," and challenges him to a fight.[161] The text of the play includes hiccups of intoxication, and it is clear that Mungo's drunkenness is meant to be played for laughs. An 1825 edition of the play praises Charles Dibdin, who wrote the music and performed the role of Mungo in blackface, claiming "[Dibdin] played the part of Mungo […] in so capital and original a style, as to contribute greatly to the very uncommon success of this piece, which was acted fifty-three nights during its first season."[162] This first

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[159] My focus on Aldridge's reception as an actor has precluded a more complete consideration Desdemona's proximity to race and racialization. For an analysis of Desdemona's role in nineteenth-century blackface versions of *Othello*, see Brigitte Fielder, "Blackface Desdemona: Theorizing Race on the Nineteenth-Century American Stage." *Theatre Annual* 70 (2017): 39-59.

[160] Various dates are given for the date of publication of the play in published materials. The latest possible year is 1768, as a second edition is printed for W. Griffin, at Garrick's head, in Catherine Street in that year. I have been unable to locate a scan or a physical copy of the first edition.

[161] Isaac Bickerstaff, *The Padlock: A Comic Opera, in Two Acts*. (New York: Charles Wiley, 1825).

[162] Bickerstaff, *The Padlock,* 11.

version of Mungo, beginning in the latter half of the eighteenth century, is an early and influential example of blackface performance in the context of the English farce. Ira Aldridge's version of Mungo presents a hermeneutic challenge. How did Aldridge's interpretation of the role reckon with the play's particular history of racial (mis)representation in the context of more widespread blackface minstrelsy throughout the Atlantic world?

German critics were generally fond of the play, and one Polish reviewer took it as serious social commentary: "In *The Padlock*, Ira Aldridge wanted to give us a picture of the life of a Negro slave in the West Indies, though changed a little and more real than the sentimental book of Beecher Stowe, and this was also a new side of his talents."[163] This passage shows the breadth of Harriet Beecher Stowe's influence, and it also shows a tendency to treat Stowe's novel as less than an authoritative account of slavery in the United States. Given the script of *The Padlock,* it stands to reason that Aldridge took some serious liberties with the portrayal of the character of Mungo in order to create an effect of authenticity in the mind of this viewer.

Bernth Lindfors points out that Mungo was "a ridiculous figure but also an appealing one, full of humor and high spirits." He adds that Aldridge "took care to appear in this role only after he had performed a serious tragic or melodramatic role that night."[164] Lindfors's characterization suggests that Aldridge viewed the role as a kind of guilty pleasure, a bit of fun that must be tempered by the real work of dramatic acting and its attendant seriousness. Several years before his continental tour, Aldridge performed *The Padlock* in England to much acclaim. A reviewer in the *Illustrated London News* calls the performance "laughable," in a positive sense, and claims "his representation of Mungo differ[s] entirely from the Ethiopian absurdities

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[163] Marshall and Stock, *Ira Aldridge*, 197.

[164] Lindfors, *Ira Aldridge,* 3.

we have been taught to look upon as correct portraitures; his total *abandon* is very amusing."[165] This review suggests that Aldridge made a mockery of the farce, abandoning the "absurdities" that had, by then, come to serve as "correct portraitures" of enslaved characters like Mungo. Perhaps Aldridge's Mungo is not simply an early example of minstrelsy, but rather a kind of double bluff, an inhabiting of a racist type for the purpose of exposing its constructedness.

Some twenty years earlier, when Aldridge began to play Mungo in England, the role was still extremely fraught, given the political situation. As Hazel Waters points out, "the abolition of slavery in Britain's overseas possessions was imminent (to be effected in 1834), and the proslavery interest, propagandizing the inability of blacks to exist without tutelage […] was still powerful in London."[166] The ideological position of critics in the journal *Figaro in London* was such that Aldridge's performances of white characters were unacceptable, but also that his performance of Mungo was not up to standards of propriety. The reviewer "accuses him of being a former slave, of using foul language outside the theatre, [and] of slurping beer off the stage floor as Mungo."[167] This reviewer, who refers to Aldridge using the N-word four times in just one paragraph, claims that in his performance of Mungo, "he behaved *in toto* so disgustingly, that we quitted the house with the most unaffected indisposition."[168]

Though they usually did not harbor the kind of ill intent exhibited by the reviewer in *Figaro in London,* German-language critics sometimes relied on racist assumptions in their descriptions of Aldridge's Mungo. One particularly puzzling review published in the *Wiener Allgemeine Theaterzeitung* reads as follows:

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[165] *Memoir and Theatrical Career of Ira Aldridge,* 26.

[166] Waters, "Fight for Equality," 108.

[167] Waters, "Fight for Equality," 107.

[168] *Figaro in London,* April 27, 1833, 73.

> *The Padlock* was received in Berlin with almost the same acclaim as *Othello* and *Macbeth* […]. This black son of the African desert is also a comic actor of the first rank, able to depict the bestialized Negro slave with the finest nuances of well-thought-out declamation. In this figure, drawn from life, he emphasizes the peculiarities of his Ethiopian tribe with the finest and most delightful traits, and increases the fascination of this original phenomenon still more by including several folksongs whose melancholy and droll melodies, heard in our German inland for the first time, create an extremely strange impression.[169]

By highlighting the "finest nuances" and "particularities of his Ethiopian tribe" in Aldridge's performance, this reviewer refers vaguely to an ideal or authentic type corresponding to the characteristics of African peoples. It need hardly be explained that this kind of authenticity is illusory. To take a travelling New Yorker's performance of an enslaved Caribbean man written by a white British playwright as a representation of the "peculiarities of [the] Ethiopian tribe" is to ignore the multiple layers of artifice in play. The reviewer's comment regarding the "strange impression" made by Aldridge's folksongs begins to reveal the almost postmodern assemblage of identity constructions at issue in the performance. No folksongs appear in the text of *The Padlock,* so we can only assume that Aldridge went off-script and added them.

Aldridge's performances included an attempt to connect with audiences by way of an appeal to their local languages and customs. This was true both for his performance of tragedies and of comedies. In 1852, at the suggestion of a writer in the *Kölnische Zeitung,* Aldridge began performing with guest actors from local companies. These actors performed in local languages while Aldridge, as the lead, performed in English.[170] This helped audiences to comprehend the performances, and sometimes it went well, but problems were caused by uneven levels of talent and preparation among the various local companies. Bernth Lindfors points out that "audiences […] regarded this [bilingual performance] as strange and sometimes absurd, but the strength of Aldridge's acting always won them over. They also found his careful articulation of English easy

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[169] *Wiener Allgemeine Theaterzeitung,* February 12, 1853. Quoted in Lindfors, *Ira Aldridge,* 75.

[170] Lindfors, "Ira Aldridge in Germany," 10.

to follow."[171] According to Herr Heine of the *Fremden-Blatt,* in Vienna, some of the supporting actors "had not learned their lines and continually had to be prompted," though Aldridge's Shylock "was hailed as a brilliant performance" despite the "confusion of languages" on stage. "With Shylock speaking in English, Portia in High German, Nerissa in Berlin dialect and Tubal in the purest unadulterated Lerchesfeldish," the performance itself was a multilingual and cosmopolitan absurdity: tragedy teetering on the edge of farce.[172] It is easy to imagine that these bilingual, and even multilingual performances, would have a proto-Brechtian alienation effect on the spectator. Especially in the case of plays featuring Aldridge as an outsider such as *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello,* the added contrast between the protagonist's language and that of his fellow performers must have underscored the themes in fascinating ways. One Russian reviewer picked up such a thread when he claimed "Ira Aldridge is a Mulatto born in America and feels the insults levelled at people of another colour by people of a white colour in the New World. In Shylock he does not see particularly a Jew, but a human being in general, oppressed by the age-old hatred shown towards people like him, and expressing this feeling with wonderful power and truth."[173]

Aldridge travelled to too many countries to become acquainted with all of their languages, but he spent enough time in Germany to learn at least some German.[174] He learned and performed local German folk songs, in addition to performing English-language folksongs, commented on local events, and even began portraying Mungo from *The Padlock* in German. Mungo's English was written in ungrammatical linguistic caricature, so Aldridge's imperfect

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[171] Lindfors, "Ira Aldridge in Germany," 10.

[172] Lindfors, "Ira Aldridge," 90-1.

[173] Quoted from Marshall and Stock, *Ira Aldridge*, 234.

[174] Lindfors, "Ira Aldridge in Germany" 10.

German was effective.[175] By performing the role of Mungo in broken German, Aldridge took roles devised by others, often roles freighted with racial significance, and found a way to inhabit them differently than almost anyone else could have. Whether by performing in whiteface, adapting his material to local audiences, or toying with language and linguistic constraints, Aldridge managed to transcend the boundaries set up for him at every turn.

Ira Aldridge's example demonstrates the extent to which the many scales of identification overlap and interact. Aldridge is generally (inaccurately) viewed first and foremost as a representative of Africa, an embodiment of difference, exoticism, and colonized subjectivity. But at times he is also associated with particular nations, especially England and the United States. For German audiences he is a purveyor of Shakespeare and an embodiment of the Bard's most enduring characters. More subtly, Aldridge also connects with audiences by transferring, adopting, and adapting to local tradition. His performance of both local German-language folk songs and African American folk songs demonstrates an attempt to link disparate localities by way of a common folk tradition, and his depictions of Shakespeare's most famous protagonists, conversely, shows his desire to connect to audiences from a cosmopolitan, universalist perspective.

iv. The Fisk Jubilee Singers' German Legacy

The Fisk Jubilee Singers, a group of students from Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, embarked on several tours of the British Isles and Europe in the 1870s. Their performances have long been a topic of conversation for many thinkers interested in the processes of cultural transfer and the image of African Americans in the (trans)Atlantic world.

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[175] Lindfors, "Ira Aldridge in Germany" 10.

Paul Gilroy, Zora Neale Hurston, and W.E.B Du Bois have each written at some length about the Jubilee Singers. Gilroy dedicates a large section of one of his chapters in his extremely influential book *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. He claims that the "status of the Jubilee Singers' art was [...] complicated by the prominence and popularity of minstrelsy."[176] And to combat the pre-existing context created by the prevalence of minstrelsy, they "constructed an aura of seriousness around their activities and projected the memory of slavery outwards as the means to make their musical performances intelligible and pleasurable."[177] It is precisely this "seriousness" that Zora Neale Hurston critiques as false and inauthentic. "From the Jubilee Singers down to the present," Hurston contends, "there has been no genuine presentation of Negro songs to white audiences."[178] Hurston is of the opinion that the Fisk Singers were the first to develop the "trick style of delivery [...] [that] helped spread [the] misconception of Negro spirituals."[179] W.E.B. Du Bois finds no such problem in the Jubilee Singers' authenticity. "The world listened only half credulously" he claims, "until the Fisk Jubilee Singers sang the slave songs so deeply into the world's heart that it can never wholly forget them again."[180] The Fisk Jubilee Singers, then, have been understood variously as inauthentic (Hurston), authentic (Du Bois), and as negotiating a landscape constructed by the inauthenticity of minstrelsy (Gilroy). Gilroy's analysis of the Jubilee Singers is transatlantic in scope, but he focuses on their performance in the English-speaking part of Europe. Hurston does

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[176] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993), 88.

[177] Gilroy, *Black Atlantic,* 89.

[178] Zora Neale Hurston, "The Characteristics of Negro Expression," in *Negro,* ed. Nancy Cunard (London: Wishart & Co., 1934), 46.

[179] Hurston, "Characteristics," 46.

[180] W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 168.

not specify which performances she has in mind. Only Du Bois alludes briefly to their European tour in its entirety: "they sang across land and across the sea, before Queen and Kaiser, in Scotland and Ireland, Holland and Switzerland."[181] Until recently, however, their time in the German-speaking world has received little attention.

The performances of the Jubilee Singers in Germany certainly made a splash. The reviews of the performances were somewhat varied, but were generally very positive, if a bit condescending. A reviewer in the *Berliner Bürger-Zeitung* said: "The songs plainly reveal their national element, and have lost none of their negro charm by their extremely simple polyphonic treatment [...] We only regretted the absence of German text-books."[182] This short statement summarizes a great deal of what one finds in the reviews. First, many emphasize the Jubilee Singers' "national element," or US-American origins. There seems to be agreement among the various reviewers that these are strictly American singers, rather than members of the African Diaspora. "We did not hear original melodies from the home in Africa, but various childlike airs, bred and nursed tearfully among the miseries of slavery" claims a reviewer in *The National-Zeitung*.[183] In addition to the historic and geographic specificity of the origins of the music, the reviewer insists on its simplicity, naiveté, and childlike qualities. *The Volks-Zeitung* speaks of their "childlike and limited" musical scope "owing to the elementary sphere accessible to

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[181] Du Bois, *Souls,* 169.

[182] "The Jubilee Singers in Berlin." *The Tonic Sol-Fa Reporter,* 265. Access to this text provided digitally by the Special Collections and Archives at Fisk University. The Tonic Sol-Fa Reporter selected and translated various European newspapers and printed excerpts for readers in the United States, leaving out the dates of the newspapers in question, which makes them difficult to track. In any case, the Tonic Sol-Fa Reported is a source in itself, a collection of German reactions to performances curated for an American readership. By "German text-books" the reviewer likely means translations of the lyrics of the songs from English into German. Such a book would become available shortly thereafter.

[183] "The Jubilee Singers in Berlin," *The Tonic Sol-Fa Reporter,* 266.

them."[184] Yet in the same review, the Jubilee Singers are praised as "marvelously accurate, well-trained and efficient [...] Berlin could not muster eight singers capable of such pure chords."[185] They are, the review claims, "free from the bad habits that we have to reprove so constantly in European singers."[186] The reviewer treats the Jubilee Singers as something like outsider artists. Their example, like local and regional cultural production more broadly, appears to come from outside of the established western world, though it was born and bred of modern forms of mobility: the transatlantic slave trade, the creole culture forced by US enslavement, and the Fisk Singers' own mobility across the Atlantic.

The German context differs in some important ways from that of the United Kingdom, where both transatlantic abolitionist solidarity and blackface minstrelsy more thoroughly saturated the culture in the decades before the arrival of the Fisk Jubilee Singers. Kira Thurman argues, "the musical ensemble served as a test case by which Germans could see for themselves whether blacks were amenable to westernization and evangelization."[187] Thurman argues further that "Germans heard the Fisk Jubilee Singers and their music with a "civilizing" ear. Their conversations about the Fisk Singers and how to classify their music illustrate how notions of civilizing mission shaped their listening processes."[188] Ultimately, Thurman argues, Germans came to see the Fisk Singers as proof that people of African descent could participate fully in western religious and cultural values. But more can be said about the cultural transfer at play. The Jubilee Singers' German-language songbook, translated by Ernst Gebhardt, must have had a

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[184] "The Jubilee Singers in Berlin," 266.

[185] "The Jubilee Singers in Berlin," 266.

[186] "The Jubilee Singers in Berlin," 266.

[187] Thurman, "Singing the Civilizing Mission," 445.

[188] Thurman, 445.

far greater impact on the society than the performances themselves, as it went through over thirty printings in the thirty years following the Singers' arrival. Each of the editions maintained the same text as the first 1877 edition. In my view, the legacy of the Jubilee Singers in Germany relates more to domestication than to civilization. Domestication, here, has two distinct meanings. First, the texts of the Jubilee singers were "domesticated" in Lawrence Venuti's sense, meaning that they lost some of their historical and cultural specificity when translated into the target language. And second, they were "domesticated" in that they were included at the pianos of many German households and came to find a place in the life of the German petit bourgeoisies.[189]

In 1877, Songwriter and Methodist preacher Ernst Gebhardt published a songbook entitled *Jubiläumssänger. Auserwählte Amerikanische Negerlieder in deutschem Gewand nebst andern beliebten Hymnen* (Jubilee Singers: Selected American Negro Songs in German Garment Alongside Other Beloved Hymns.)[190] Gebhardt's collection is not a direct translation of the already extant Fisk Jubilee Singers songbook, which contained 128 songs as well as a 120-page history of the group, though it stands as the closest German-language equivalent. Its subtitle "American Negro Songs in German Garment" anticipates the point I wish to make about the nature and role of the text. Indeed, the "German Garment" plays a significant role. The book contains translations of 46 songs, 26 of which were created by enslaved people and were

[189] "Domestication" as a term carries with it an echo of proslavery rhetorical appeals that dehumanize as they praise a notion of home that involves enslaving other people. I use the word not to echo these ideas, but nevertheless to point to a tension that results from taking these songs, translating them, and treating them as a part of the bourgeois German home, far removed from their origins.

[190] Ernst Gebhardt. *Jubiläumssänger. Auserwählte amerikanische Negerlieder in deutschem Gewand nebst andern beliebten Hymnen,* Dreiundzwanzigste Auflage. (Basel: Kober Verlag, 1907).

performed by the Jubilee Singers. The rest stem from white American songwriters from the nineteenth century, primarily Philip Bliss, Robert Lowry, and Stephen Foster. The organization of the text itself performs the task of integrating slave songs, developed in the manner of folksongs which lack a particular author, with single-author hymns. The edition at hand distinguishes the two types of songs by the use of asterisks next to the titles: two asterisks indicate a Jubilee Singers' song, and one asterisk indicates a song from a different author. This technique is not very effective, in practice, to differentiate the Fisk songs from the single-author hymns. They are all mixed together, and one could easily mistake one type of song for the other. Ernst Gebhardt's organization of the text causes the songbook itself to perform a subtle act of appropriation; placing these songs next to each other in no particular order elides the distinctions in their historical origins.

The translation of musical lyrics, presented along with a score, poses a great challenge to the translator. Rhyme and rhythm must be preserved at the expense of fidelity to the original content. It is no surprise, then, that the translation of the Jubilee Singers' songbook goes through a domesticating process. And presumably without the intent by the translator, the text becomes, finally, as much a German text as an African-American text through this transformation. I have selected three examples of such translation difficulties to illustrate the way in which these songs, though initially understood as deeply American and deeply wedded to the experience of enslavement, became associated with a broader Christian imagined community, and even occasionally with a German sense of place.

First, the translator repeatedly uses the word *Heimat* to render such English expressions as "heavenly home," or it is simply added where no such term is found in the English. *Heimat* might be translated as "homeland," but also carries with it more localized visions of rural and

idealized, pre-modern community. As Applegate points out, "*Heimat* has never been a word about real social forces or real political situations. Instead it has been a myth about the possibility of a community in the face of fragmentation and alienation."[191] The image associated with *Heimat* often functions as a metonym for the nation as a whole, though it tends to appear in regional vestment. Nevertheless the term is a rather elegant rendering of the vision of heaven in the songs of the Jubilee Singers, who themselves had long been removed from an earthly *Heimat*. But there is no way to get around the locality of the word *Heimat*, which is essentially untranslatable and associated with German images of provincial life.[192]

Second, I would be remiss if I did not point out the ways in which the translation highlights the alterity of the songs, even while smoothing them out for common consumption. The song titles provide the clearest example of the push in this push/pull relationship. In general, the titles are the most radically changed parts of the translations. "My Lord What a Morning" becomes "Posaunenschall" (Trumpet Blast.)[193] "Now We Take This Feeble Body" becomes simply "Hallelujah."[194] But most interestingly, in my view, two songs "Nobody knows the trouble I see," and "I've been Redeemed" go through a process in which the first person is replaced. The title "Nobody knows the trouble I see" becomes "Klagelied eines Bedrängten," (Lament of a Beset Person.)[195] And "I've Been Redeemed" transforms into "Jubel eines Erlösten," (Rejoicing of a Redeemed Person.)[196] In both cases the subject who clearly speaks the

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[191] Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials,* 19.

[192] See Applegate, *Nation of Provincials,* 1-19.

[193] Gebhardt, 23.

[194] Gebhardt, 41.

[195] Gebhardt, 20.

[196] Gebhardt, 26-7.

song's message is removed from prominence in the title. The removal of the subjective position thus distances the German reader or singer from the one who has experienced enslavement. "Nobody knows the trouble I see," the famous line goes, and the choice of the title's translation acknowledges this to be so. The speaker's suffering can be performed, but not adopted.

My third and final example comes from the song "We'll die in the Field," translated as "Der heil'ge Glaubenskrieg," or "The Holy War of Faith."[197] The original lyrics follow a common theme in spirituals, relief through death and the subsequent reward of heaven. "And I will die in the field, Will die in the field; Will die in the field, I'm on my journey home" is the song's chorus. The German translation of this chorus reads "Ich will kämpfen in dem Feld, sterben in dem Feld, siegen in dem Feld, Heim geht es im Triumph,"[198] that is, "I will fight in the field, die in the field, achieve victory in the field, and go home in triumph." It might be worth remembering that this translation was done less than a decade after the Franco-Prussian War and the subsequent establishment of the German nation-state. Military victory, then, might have been the more appealing metaphor for religious salvation. To achieve salvation through victory, rather than through death, is the aim of the German-language version.

These three examples of domestication each point to the way in which the songbook was made to connect to its German-speaking consumers through discourses of local, and national affiliation. The refiguring of the image of heaven in terms of *Heimat* suggests the prevalence of the imagery being developed by the *Heimat* movement which kicked into high gear at the time of German unification. In addition, the metaphorical use of military victory as a proxy for a spiritual path present in the translation of "I Will Die in the Field" underscores that aspect of

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[197] Gebhardt, Jubiläumssänger, 7.

[198] Gebhardt, Jubiläumssänger, 7.

national belonging following the Franco-Prussian war. Despite these relatively minor changes to the status and details of the Jubilee Singers' songbook in its German-language context, it is plausible that the act of playing and singing these songs, like the viewing of the Jubilee Singers' performances, did something to communicate the history of enslavement more directly than *Uncle Tom's Cabin* could accomplish.

v. Conclusion

One might ask why this chapter focuses so heavily on performances and songbooks rather than other types of texts. Why stray from the newspaper as a cultural product associated with large-scale affiliations in the Benedict Anderson mode?[199] While the newspaper certainly plays an outsized role in the establishment of national sentiment, I argue that public performances and private household activities play a different and more nuanced role. Both the example of Ira Aldridge and of the Jubilee Singers offer glimpses into the various and sometimes contradictory ways in which a viewing public negotiated the presence of black people, and in turn, negotiated their own multiple positions on the geopolitical landscape. Public performance involves physical proximity to other physical bodies. In opposition the textually and materially mediated newspaper, a notion of the public based in some part on performance predictably offers more nuance, and thus a wider variety of affiliations and identifications. And a songbook with lyrics and piano music is not just reading material – it is meant to be used, performed, elaborated upon, and integrated into domestic life. The challenge now is that the performances at issue in this chapter are accessible largely in indirect ways, reading newspaper reviews against-the-grain

[199] See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities.*

and piecing together facts and details from various other archives are the chief ways to assemble evidence.

In tailoring his performances to localities through the use of local folk songs, and multiple languages and dialects, Ira Aldridge seems to have carefully considered the complexities of the playing field of identifications he was entering. Keenly aware of the politics of racial representation, Aldridge takes it upon himself to take control of his image, embodying and then exploding prior representations of black characters. Similarly, the Jubilee Singers enter into a complex field of signification which had been marked by decades of misrepresentation and offered a vision of who formerly enslaved people were which contrasted strongly with minstrel performances and notions developed by racist pseudoscience. In contrast to the relatively modest impacts made by the few books authored by African Americans that appeared in German translation, the social importance of Aldridge and of the Jubilee Singers suggests that the unmediated face-to-face contact offered by a performative commons and the adoption and domestication of cultural artifacts through a translated songbook helped to establish connections between localities and regions, in a way that challenges imperialistic fantasy and nationalistic self-conceptions.

Though both Ira Aldridge and the Fisk Jubilee Singers performed for a significant number of people, and many more people read about their performances, the group of Germans who knew nothing about them was likely much larger. Partially for that reason, I suggest that the model of the "Counterpublic" as theorized by Michael Warner is one way to describe how both Aldridge and the Jubilee Singers intervened in nineteenth-century Germany and altered the perspectives of some members of the society. Counterpublics "tend to be those in which [the] ideology of reading does not have the same privilege […] they might not be organized by the

hierarchy of faculties that elevates rational-critical reflection as the self-image of humanity; they might depend more heavily on performance spaces than on print."[200] The performers analyzed in this chapter created counterpublics in which the everyday ideologies of white supremacy no longer made sense. Though some of the reviewers attempt to retain the theatre as a mainstream ideological space in which a black man should not play the lead in a Shakespeare play, and the concert hall is for Bach, Brahms, and Beethoven, the bulk of the reviews show that these performers created an alternative, open view of humanity, fleeting as it may have been.[201]

If the counterpublic model provides a way of reading audiences of the performances in this chapter, it may still fall short of explaining Aldridge's and the Fisk Jubilee Singers' positions in the face of those audiences, and that is where Christina Sharpe's theorizations can help again. This chapter has attempted to show how the emergent geographical scales of affiliation experienced by the German-speaking audiences of Ira Aldridge's and the Fisk Jubilee Singers' performances came together with or collided with spatiotemporal experiences of what Christina Sharpe calls the wake. Sharpe declares that "If we are lucky, we live in the knowledge that the wake has positioned us as no-citizen. If we are lucky, the knowledge of this positioning avails us particular ways of re/seeing, re/inhabiting, and re/imagining the world."[202] In a time and place in

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[200] Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics,* (Brooklyn: Zone Books, 2002), 123.

[201] It is worth noting that in a different mode, blackface performance in Germany some years later might have again complicated and rewritten the codes of affiliation and difference between German audiences and at least the image or idea of African American performers. As Jonathan Wipplinger has argued in relation to blackface performance in Germany at the end of the nineteenth century, "if the German reception of blackface began as but a curious reaction to a strange American import, in the colonial and global world of the *fin de siècle,* its presence had the effect of forcing a reevaluation and reinterpretation of the very notion of what it meant to be German in modernity." Jonathan Wipplinger, "The Racial Ruse: On Blackness and Blackface Comedy in "fin-de-siècle" Germany," *The German Quarterly* 84, no. 4 (Fall 2011): 458.

[202] Sharpe, *In the Wake,* 22.

which citizenship of the local, regional, national, imperial, and even domestic were in flux, the performers analyzed in this chapter might be understood to be operating as diasporic affiliates, re/seeing, re/inhabiting, and re/imagining the world across oceans, languages, and nations. While the experience of the spectators of Aldridge's and the Fisk Jubilee Singers' performances may have helped created a liberatory space, the experiences of the performers themselves track closely with "wake work," the work of mourning that which is not yet past.

Chapter 3. The *Lokalposse* Crosses the Atlantic: Reinhold Solger and the Problems of (Self)Translation

i. Introduction

Regionalism appears to concern itself with spaces marked by continuity, by settled and long-established communities that constitute a periphery to oppose the metropolitan center, but regional writing is and always has been affected by the same forces that have shaped the modern world: the flow of people, the circulation of goods, and the establishment of infrastructure and trade routes. Regional writing negotiates with those forces, rather than escapes from them. This chapter considers the German-language *Lokalposse*, a regionally based genre, though not one typically included in studies of regionalism, here exemplified by two plays by German-American writer Reinhold Solger (1817-1866). Tracing what became of the *Lokalposse* across the Atlantic allows for the consideration of the roles of exile, translation, dialect, race, and political movements in the reconfiguration of region. Solger's self-translation and expansion of his play offers a glimpse of the way genre and language help to determine the way images of region are transformed and transferred.

Elizabeth Maddock Dillon's 2014 book *New World Drama* pushes back against the dominance of "the model of the print public sphere [...] articulated at the intersection of the work of Jürgen Habermas and that of Benedict Anderson."[203] Through attention to performativity rather than textuality, Maddock Dillon arrives at a new framework for understanding the rise of nationalism and the erasure of the transnational Atlantic which she articulates as a "performative commons" rather than Habermas's notion of the "public sphere." For the purposes of this

[203] Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, *New World Drama: The Performative Commons in the Atlantic World, 1649-1849* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 14.

chapter, I will consider two plays that have unusual textual and performance histories, and which neither the "public sphere" model nor the "performative commons" model can entirely explain. Performances of Reinhold Solger's two plays, as we shall see, were both suppressed in one way or another, and thus they have a performance history that is scant and hard to trace. This chapter also considers the role of farce, and to some extent, the minstrel show, in the late antebellum Atlantic world. It asks what role farce plays in the key political questions of the era: slavery and revolution. In particular, it looks at Reinhold Solger's farce *Der Reichstags-Professor: Posse in Einem Akt,* which was initially written in the wake of the failure of the revolutions of 1848, and then at *The Hon. Anodyne Humdrum; or, the Union Must and Shall be Preserved*,[204] a translation and reworking of the first play for a new home and political situation in the United States.

Farce and the farcical draw attention to the artificiality of the performance of power. In the examples this chapter analyzes, language plays a central role in hierarchical relationships. Socioeconomic and racial difference in the characters is marked by their speech. Language becomes an arena in which appearances and reality often split to underscore the irrationality of stereotypes. The pretensions of those whose language is more standard are on full display, while the dialect forms allow space for verbal innovation and clever wordplay. The best lines of *Der Reichstags-Professor*, for instance, all come from the mouth of Hanne, a working-class woman

[204] The German-language play was first published anonymously in the autumn 1850 edition of the Stuttgart-based quarterly journal *Deutsche Monatsschrift für Politik, Wissenschaft, Kunst und Leben.* Subsequently the play was published in the October 1864 edition of Caspar Butz's Chicago-based journal *Deutsch-Amerikanische Monatshefte für Politik, Wissenschaft und Literatur.* In the later publication, Solger's name appears as the author, and a hyphen is added to the title, making it *Der Reichstags-Professor* rather than *Der Reichstagsprofessor*, as it appeared in the 1850 edition. Otherwise, the editions are identical, aside from a handful of spelling changes. I use the hyphenated title in this chapter because I am working from the edition in Cora Lee Kluge's *Other Witnesses*, which is based on the American publication.

with a thick Berlin dialect. Sally, an enslaved character in *The Hon. Anodyne Humdrum* likewise speaks in dialect, but talks circles around the other characters in the play. It is not the dialect forms, such as Berliner Deutsch or dialect meant to impersonate the speech of enslaved people, that indicate absurdity in these farces, quite the opposite. By and large, the pretensions of the upper classes come off as hackneyed and self-serving.

The plays in this chapter also use comic violence and malleable identity, two common elements of farce, as ways of interrogating the social order. On the one hand, violence in the plays serves as the foundations of much of the comedy, but at the same time, violence is clearly a frightening prospect; both plays expose the way in which mob violence can be given a form of quasi legal legitimacy that threatens the safety of individuals, both enslaved and not. In the context of each of these plays, the German counterrevolution and the American antebellum period, violence of this nature was indeed sanctioned by the state. Finally, the plays employ the old comic technique of mistaken or malleable identity, which call into question the authority of those in power. Solger himself is a somewhat fluid persona, as he moved between languages, countries, and continents. Solger's plays offer a rare glimpse of how American culture looked from the point of view of a sympathetic, thoughtful, and engaged immigrant who had a knack for both German and English, and who wrote with humor and dexterity. I will argue that Solger's plays and his political thought provide examples of the untranslatability of local cultures, historically bound political struggles, and literary forms.

ii. The Life of Reinhold Solger

Reinhold Solger was a German-American Forty-Eighter, political activist, poet, playwright, novelist, lecturer, and minor political figure. He lived a life surrounded by famous people from many countries and on two continents; he was a friend of Mikhail Bakunin and

Charles Dickens. Solger was appointed to a governmental position by Abraham Lincoln, and he published books and gave lectures alongside people like Ralph Waldo Emerson, yet he remains largely unknown today outside of the field of German-American studies. What we know of his biography comes from only a few sources: a eulogy written by his friend and associate Friedrich Kapp and Solger's own remaining papers housed in the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. In addition, two scholars of German American studies, Milton Allan Dickie and A. E. Zucker met with Solger's last remaining relative, his grandson Frederick Solger, in the 1920s and 1930s. Together with Frederick, Dickie worked to reconstruct Solger's life; the results of his research are published in his 1930 dissertation. Zucker then continued Dickie's work a few years later, promoting Solger's status in *The Dictionary of American Biography.*[205] In the twenty-first century, Solger has received some renewed interest from scholars in the field of German-American studies, especially from Lorie Vanchena, who translated his novel *Anton in America* in 2006, Cora Lee Kluge, who published one of the plays I will discuss in this chapter, *Der Reichstags-Professor*, in her compilation of German-American literature entitled *Other Witnesses: An Anthology of Literature of the German Americans,* and Arne Koch, who published a modern edition of his novel *Anton in Amerika* in the original German.[206] Solger's literary

[205] The traces of Zucker's and Dickie's work exist in the Reinhold Solger Papers in the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. Frederick Solger appears to have been helpful, if initially a bit reluctant and suspicious. The papers contain a letter sent to Frederick Solger from a sitting congressman testifying to Dickie's good intentions. Likewise, Zucker found the need to write Frederick a description of the work of the Carnegie Foundation, which funded Zucker's work on Solger for the Dictionary of American Biography. Zucker writes "the Carnegie Foundation [...] does not solicit subscriptions. I certainly understand your suspicions, for book agents use very strange dodges these days." Source. A.E. Zucker to Frederick Solger, 22 October, 1934, Box 1, Folder 6, Reinhold Solger Papers 1840-1944, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., USA.

[206] Several other scholars have published works on Solger's life and writings in the interim as well. For an expanded bibliography, see Arne Koch's 2009 edition of Solger's novel *Anton in Amerika.* Reinhold Solger, *Anton in Amerika. Novelle aus dem deutsch-amerikanischen Leben*,

production was met with some acclaim in his lifetime, but his career was cut short by illness. He won prizes both for his aforementioned novel and for a poem written for the celebration of Friedrich Schiller's one-hundredth birthday, but he did not live long enough to see the first non-serialized printing of his novel, which did not sell well in any case.[207]

Solger lived an itinerant and multilingual life. Before moving to the United States, he lived in Prussia, the United Kingdom, France, Switzerland, and in several German cities. He became acquainted with Charles Dickens and became an excellent speaker of English. Solger then moved to Paris. While there, he befriended Mikhail Bakunin, Alexander Herzen, Georg Herwegh, and Karl Ludwig Bernays.[208] In addition, he began a friendship with Ludwig Feuerbach, which according to Friedrich Kapp, remained a "lively intellectual connection" for years to come.[209] Solger married a young French woman named Adèle Marie Bémere in Paris on February 19th, 1848, less than a month before the eruption of revolutions across Europe. [210] Just after his marriage, Solger found himself playing a non-combatant role in the revolutions of 1848.

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ed. Arne Koch (Hannover: Wehrhahn Verlag, 2009), 351-52. Lorie Vanchena' work has been instrumental in recovering *The Hon. Anodyne Humdrum* from obscurity. See Lorie A. Vanchena, "From Domestic Farce to Abolitionist Satire: Reinhold Solger's Reframing of the Union (1860)," in *German Culture in Nineteenth-Century America: Reception, Adaptation, Transformation,* ed. Lynne Tatlock, (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2005), 289-316.

[207] See Lorie Vanchena's introduction to her translation of *Anton in America* for more detailed information about the book's commercial history. Reinhold Solger, *Anton in America: A Novel form German-American Life,* trans. Lorie Vanchena (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), xxvii.

[208] Friedrich Kapp. "Reinhold Solger," *Deutsch-Amerikanische-Monatshefte.* [Chicago] January, 1866, 184.

[209] Kapp's German reads "lebhaftem geistigem Verkehr." The above translation is mine. See Kapp, "Reinhold Solger," 184.

[210] Frederick Reinhold Solger, the couple's grandson, testifies to the date of the marriage. Frederick Solger, Written with Aunt Luce, 14 February 1912, Box 1, Folder 8, Reinhold Solger Papers 1840-1944, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., USA.

Due to his excellent grasp of German, English, and French, he worked as an adjutant and translator for Ludwik Mierosławski, the Polish general and revolutionary.[211] He subsequently fled to Switzerland, where he became an acquaintance of other exiles and political dissidents. It was there that Solger wrote the first of his two farces, *Der Reichstags-Professor,* a short, humorous play that mocks both sides of the 1848 conflict, but is particularly critical of the violent currents in Prussian society and of the so-called intellectuals who entered the parliament after 1848. Horst Denkler, who included the play in his compilation of revolution-era comedies, argues that it would have had wide appeal if not for the censorship of the counterrevolution.[212] As far as I can tell, neither *Der Reichstags-Professor* nor *The Hon. Anodyne Humdrum* were ever performed in a public theatre, the first due to the counterrevolution in Europe, and the latter due to racist theatre practices in the United States. *The Hon. Anodyne Humdrum* called for both white and African American actors, and thus directors refused to perform it as written, though Boston publishers Stacy & Richardson printed the script of the play. [213] Friedrich Kapp suggests that the German play was performed in the bars of Zürich by Solger and his fellow European exiles,

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[211] Kapp, "Reinhold Solger," 184.

[212] See Horst Denkler, *Der deutsche Michel. Revolutionskomödien der Achtundvierziger* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1979), 18. Lorie Vanchena translates Denkler's claim as follows: "Solger's play no doubt would have found a large audience if it had not been buried by the counterrevolution." Vanchena goes on to relate that the quarterly journal in which the play was first published, *Deutsche Monatsschrift für Politik, Wissenschaft, Kunst und Leben,* was banned in 1850 in Prussia and then more widely after that. It ceased publication in June of 1851. Vanchena, "Domestic Satire," 290.

[213] Friedrich Kapp comments on both *Der Reichstags-Professor* and *The Hon. Anodyne Humdrum* in his eulogy for Solger. He claims that the German play was performed in bars in Zürich by Solger and his many fellow refugees of the 1848 revolutions. Solger planned to have his American play performed, but the American play was not allowed to be staged because, as Kapp puts it, "the major theater directors refused to accept the play, characteristically for the time, because it features negro as well as white characters together on stage." Kapp, "Reinhold Solger" 187. My translation.

some of whom also contributed to the quarterly newspaper led by Solger and others entitled *Deutsche Monatsschrift für Politik, Wissenschaft, Kunst und Leben*, which was published in Stuttgart in 1850 and 1851.[214] After his time among the exiles in Switzerland, Solger continued on to the United States, arriving in Philadelphia in the spring of 1853; shortly thereafter he moved to Boston.

While in the United States, Solger lived in various places on the East Coast, remained friends with German compatriots Friedrich Kapp, Caspar Butz, Carl Schurz, and other German-Americans, but also branched out into Anglo-American intellectual circles.[215] In 1857 he lectured at the prestigious Lowell Institute in Boston on the history of the reformation, and two years later he spoke on Rome, Christianity, and the rise of modern civilization.[216] In addition, he gave talks on ethnology, eighteenth-century intellectual history, the philosophy of history, linguistics, international relations, German and French Literature, women's rights, and important figures of recent intellectual history such as French utopian thinker Charles Fourier, and naturalist Alexander von Humboldt.[217] He also published long newspaper articles on

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[214] This journal includes articles by such well-known figures as Richard Wagner and Fanny Lewald. *Der Reichstags-Professor* was first published in the fourth issue of this journal in late 1850.

[215] Mischa Honeck points out that Solger's "ability to address people in fluent English secured [him] an audience outside the immigrant community" Mischa Honeck, *We Are The Revolutionists: German-Speaking Immigrants and American Abolitionists after 1848* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 141.

[216] The Reinhold Solger Papers contain a list of the titles of the Lowell Institute's lectures from 1839-1894. Solger appears on the list as a lecturer in the above-mentioned years. A List of the Lecturers, together with the subjects of the lectures delivered for the Lowell Institute, Boston, Massachusetts, Box 1, Folder 5, Reinhold Solger Papers 1840-1944, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., USA.

[217] I was unable to find a transcription or a description of Solger's lecture on women's rights, but it might be suggestive that on the poster the following names are printed under the title "The Social Problem, and the Woman's [sic] Rights Question": Saint Simon and Fourier, Louis Blanc, Proudhon, Lamennais, Guiraud, Genode, Louis Napoleon, Lord Brougham. Solger thus viewed

contemporary European and Ottoman politics, and thus served as an authoritative informant on some of the goings-on across the Atlantic.[218] He also stumped for Abraham Lincoln in the 1860 presidential campaign.[219] Solger was among the most respected sources of his day on a startlingly wide variety of subjects. Friedrich Kapp's eulogy laments Solger's tendency toward dilettantism, and claims that his real calling, which he should have followed with single-minded focus, was to be a historian.[220] In addition to his lectures and his newspaper columns, Solger worked as a tutor for young New England women; he is immortalized in this role as Professor Friedrich Bhaer in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women,* for which he is one of several models.[221] He suffered a stroke in 1865 and, due to neurological damage, lost his ability to speak French

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the question of gender through the lens not of early American women's rights advocates, but through the lens of male French thinkers, several of whom espoused radical thoughts on social organization. Bound Newspaper Clippings and Other Items., Box 2, Folder 1, Reinhold Solger Papers 1840-1944, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., USA. It is difficult to categorize this item, as it is not placed within a box or folder in the collection. I consider it its own box for the purposes of citation. The newspaper clippings appear in a large, bound scrapbook.

[218] Solger was widely read on the politics and history of the Ottoman Empire and was appointed as an ambassador, but he did not live to take the post. His papers contain several completed worksheets for the study of Arabic. Perhaps he had intended to learn the language in an attempt to broaden his knowledge of the Muslim and Arabic world. Bound Newspaper Clippings and Other Items., Box 2, Folder 1, Reinhold Solger Papers 1840-1944, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., USA.

[219] Kapp, "Reinhold Solger," 187.

[220] Kapp, 188.

[221] Lorie Vanchena cities Lynn Tatlock's essay "Domesticated Romance and Capitalist Enterprise: Annis Lee Wister's Americanization of German Fiction," on the subject of Solger's similarity to Professor Bhaer. Madeleine B. Stern may have been to first to uncover this connection. See Madeleine Stern to Frederick Solger. 9 January 1944. Box 1, Folder 6. Reinhold Solger Papers 1840-1944, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Library of Congress. The Reinhold Solger Papers also include a photograph of Solger with six young female pupils. Their names are printed on the photo. Louisa May Alcott is not among them. Photograph of Reinhold Solger and class, undated, 1868-1944, Box 1, Folder 3, Reinhold Solger Papers, 1840-1944, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., USA.

and English. His once expansive vocabulary and native-like fluency in three languages was reduced to a basic ability in his native German. A second stroke led to his death on January 11th, 1866 at the age of forty-nine. He is buried in Congressional Cemetery in Washington D.C.

iii. Translating the region/nation divide from Europe to America

Eric Lott, following Michael Rogin, points out that 1848 and the following few years were times of great upheaval not just in Europe but in the United States as well.[222] An 1852 article in the influential magazine, *The Democratic Review* claims that if you replace certain names, "the histories of the French and American republics for these four years [1848-1852]...have been identical."[223] This example only cites French connections to the American conflagrations such as the 1850 compromise and the unrest leading to the US Civil War, but it might logically be connected to other parts of Europe going through similar transitions and upheavals, such as the German-speaking countries. It is thus not such a surprise that exiled European social reformers would be drawn to a new fray across the Atlantic–they entered that fray in various ways, including in the writing of political plays.

Solger's plays are written in the tradition of the *Volkstheater*. The *Lokalposse*, or local farce, is, along with the *Hanswurst* and the *Zauberstück*, a type of theatrical performance that developed and bloomed in the German-speaking realm, especially in Vienna, Berlin, and Frankfurt, primarily in the first half of the nineteenth century. These farces are "local," as the name suggests, partially by virtue of their implementation of dialect both for comic effect and as a way of differentiating social classes and depicting regional identities. The characters are not

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[222] Lott, *Love and Theft*, 105.

[223] Lott, *Love and Theft,* 105.

people in some town somewhere, but in a very specific place and time, namely, a version of the time and place in which the plays are performed.[224] At the same time that national sentiment grew, these various forms of "local plays" resisted the totalizing vision of the nation.

The popularity of the local farce spanned a key time period in the history of national consciousness in Europe. The two and a half decades between the French Revolution and the Congress of Vienna witnessed changing borders from year to year and an attendant crisis of cultural orientation.[225] Even after the stabilization of borders through the Congress of Vienna and the period of relative stability that followed, the push for national unity in parts of the German-speaking lands continued to take on new forms. Local plays took part in the shuffling and reshuffling of cultural identities through what Volker Klotz calls "local patriotism," or what Friedrich Sengle calls "local fashions."[226] Even plays that avoided specifically political subject matter, of which there were many, took part in cultural identity creation or protection by way of aesthetic choices. Though it is difficult to argue that a coherent political program applies broadly to this highly varied set of genres, it does follow that highlighting, celebrating, and at times mocking regional differences supports the ideological goals of those who would either question the goal of national unity, or contrastingly, those who would define the nation by way of a local metonym. National identity is at stake in depictions of the local.

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[224] See Volker Klotz, *Bürgerliches Lachtheater: Komödie, Posse, Schwank, Operette* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2007), 103.

[225] See Hans-Peter Bayerdörfer, "'Lokalformel' und 'Bürgerpatent.' Ausgrenzung und Zugehörigkeit in der Posse zwischen 1815 und 1860," in *Theaterverhältnisse im Vormärz,* ed. Maria Porrmann (Bielefeld: Aisthesis-Verlag, 2002), 139.

[226] See Klotz, *Bürgerliches Lachtheater,* 103-104.; See Friedrich Sengle, *Biedermeierzeit,* vol. 3, *Die Dichter* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1980), 191-227.

In order to understand Solger's use of the *Lokalposse* in the United States, it will be necessary to take a closer look at his first play, *Der Reichstags-Professor.* This farce features five main characters and an additional four members of the Berlin police force. It consists one act containing twenty-two short scenes. The action takes place at the home of a pensioner named Herr Heuler, whose name, meaning "howler," or "crier," as Lorie Vanchena points out, connects him to "the liberal bourgeoisie and also to reactionary conservatives who supported the politics of the Prussian king."[227] Heuler wants his niece Amalie to marry Professor Duselmann, an old academic and a member of a moderate party. The play takes place entirely on the Heuler property, and it has a built-in single-day time constraint: Amalie is about to turn twenty-one, and will thus be "mündig," or "of age" when the clock strikes twelve.[228] A former member of the Frankfurt leftist party named Mr. Oertel has designs of marrying Amalie, and he arrives at the Heuler house on the same night as Professor Duselmann. The action begins when Amalie and her maid Hanne have to hide Oertel from Heuler's view. This kicks off a series of events in which the newly arrived Duselmann, fresh from a brief false imprisonment and violent encounter with the police, inadvertently switches clothes (and passports) with Oertel. Because Oertel is a known leftist and enemy of the Prussian state, Duselmann, who is mistaken for Oertel, is repeatedly ridiculed and threatened. Ultimately Oertel's real identity is revealed, but unlucky Duselmann only succeeds in demonstrating that he is, in fact, the same man that the police had beaten and jailed a few days earlier. As punishment, he is sent away, stripped of his wig and plat and

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[227] Vanchena, "Domestic Farce," 292.

[228] The word "mündig," given its root, "Mund" or "mouth" suggests that to be mature is to be able to speak, specifically to have a voice in the private sphere. Perhaps for this reason, the maturity of a young woman is a recurring theme in several post-revolution comedies. See, for example, Eduard von Bauernfeld's "Großjährig: Lustspiel in zwei Aufzügen" (1846) Revised (1849). This repeated theme of the maturity and sometimes marriage of a young woman stands in for the revolutionaries' desire for their own political maturity and a unified, *married*, Germany.

paraded through Berlin.[229] Defeated, he decides to remove himself from political life. As the clock strikes midnight, Hanne declares Amalie to be of age. The implication is that she is now free to marry Oertel, who confirms as much with the final line of the play, in which he declares that in time "we will lead the bride home." The use of the first-person plural, "we" (wir) suggests that he is not only speaking of his own marriage, but of the political hopes of the German revolutionaries of which their marriage is a symbol.[230] It is a hopeful ending, yet it remains pointedly unfinished. The marriage does not take place, nor is its intention explicitly confirmed, yet there is a belief that in time there will be a happy ending.

The characters in the play function as stand-ins for political parties or types. Heuler is a bourgeois conservative who supports Frederick William IV, the Prussian King, in his attempt to create a unified "small Germany" through an alliance with Saxony and Hanover.[231] This agreement falls apart in early 1850 and Prussia is left in a precarious position. The play takes place just after the Erfurt Parliament, where a constitution was quickly ratified in which the King's wishes were at the forefront.[232] The audience or readers of the play would know that

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[229] This punishment, riding through the streets of Berlin in disgrace, may be a reference to Friedrich Wilhelm IV's humiliation after the triumph of the March Revolution in Berlin: "...only three days after the fighting began, the king displayed his defeat symbolically by riding through Berlin draped in the black, red and gold colours of the revolutionaries" Andrea Wulf, *The Invention of Nature: Alexander von Humboldt's New World* (New York: Knopf, 2015), 267.

[230] The German line reads as follows: "Und mit *ihr* [time] führen wir doch zuletzt die Braut heim" 1.22. 43. "And in time, we shall at last lead the bride home." My translation. Reinhold Solger, *Der Reichstags-Professor* in *Other Witnesses: An Anthology of Literature of the German Americans, 1850-1914,* ed. Cora Lee Kluge (Madison, WI: Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies), 1.22. 43.

[231] Lorie Vanchena argues that "Amalia symbolizes the revolutionaries' goal of a unified Germany based on popular sovereignty." See Vanchena, "Domestic Farce," 293; Small Germany, or "Kleindeutschland" was a plan for a united Germany led by Prussia. It was so named because it was the smaller of two options geographically, the larger of which would have included Austria. See Wulf, *Invention of Nature*, 268.

[232] Vanchena, "Domestic Farce," 291.

Heuler's enthusiastic support for this convention is misguided, as Frederick Wilhelm IV later abandoned his plan and "signed the Punctation of Olmütz with Austria, thereby bowing to Austrian pressure and accepting the country's plan to reconstitute the German Confederation of 1815."[233] Duselmann is a fictionalized version of one of the delegates who signed the agreement with its excessive concessions to the Prussian king. Oertel and Amalie, along with Solger and his associates, are critical of Duselmann's and Heuler's positions.

The subtext of the play participates in a process of deciding who, in fact, can or should speak for the German nation. It is obvious that Heuler should not represent a new, revolutionary Germany. His language is muddled, unclear and inarticulate, despite his complete self-confidence. One illustration of his style of speech occurs in the fifth scene as he begins to explain that he has promised his niece to Professor Duselmann:

> **Heuler:** Amalia!–hm! Du wirst morjen in dasjenigste Alter eintreten, welches man sehr passend [...] das einundzwanzigjährige nennt. Richtig also: das einundzwanzigjährige nennt. Hm! hm! Also das einundzwanzigjährige Alter, welches ein Alter ist–insofern, als ich, wie ich dich frieher einmal jeeißert habe, auch schon die nöthijen Schritte jethan habe; welche ich, als ich, insofern ich, wie ich dich frieher einmal jeeißert habe; welche ich, als ich, insofern ich, wie ich dich auch frieher schon einmal jeeißert habe, janz allein zu deinem Besten jethan habe [...].[234]

This rambling, repetitive, stuttering speech eventually gets to the conclusion that he, Heuler, has offered Amalie's hand in marriage to Professor Duselmann. Two things are notable here. The first is Heuler's Berlin dialect, which changes "g" to "j" and modifies "ü" to "ie," and "äu" to "ei." A few other sound changes appear elsewhere in the play. This dialect style is more or less consistent through the play for the Berliner characters, including all of the police officers and

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[233] Vanchena, "Domestic Farce," 291.

[234] Solger, *Der Reichstags-Professor,* 1.5. 28-37. "Amalia!–hm! Tomorrow you will reach a certain age very appropriately– [...] called the age of twenty-one. That is, you will be called a twenty-one-year-old. Hm! hm! So the age of twenty-one, which is an age, inasmuch as, as I, as I expressed earlier, and which necessary steps I have already taken; in which I, as I, inasmuch as I, as I expressed earlier, independently decided to, for your benefit [...] My translation.

Hanne the maid. The second thing that is striking here is the lack of fluency and clarity with which Heuler speaks. The reader imagines him to have a loud voice and a commanding presence, yet his tongue-tied repetitions undermine his authority, making him an object of ridicule by way of the juxtaposition of his confidence and his flawed self-presentation.

The maid Hanne's voice follows the same dialectic-based sound deviations; she too is tied to a sense of place by her speech, yet while Heuler's speech sounds provincial, Hanne's affords her a kind of authenticity and room for verbal play. For example, in the eleventh scene Professor Duselmann grabs her hand affectionately and calls her the most beautiful of the beautiful. Hanne replies by calling him an "alter ausjemerjelter ejiptischer Reichsmumie" (broken-down Egyptian imperial mummy).[235] This insult pairs nicely with an earlier instance in which she refers to Duselmann as an "abjetakelte Reichsjerippe" (rundown skeleton of the state).[236] Hanne's accent is perhaps more extreme than Heuler's, yet she is the most effective speaker in the play. Solger gives her the best jokes and verbal skill. When compared to the ostensible heroes of the play, Oertel and Amalie, Hanne is the more magnetic and dynamic figure. Though she remains in servitude to Amalie even at the end of the play, she, more than anyone else, stands for the voice of German people, and thus functions as a gentle auto-critique by Solger of his own compatriots in the 1848 revolutionary effort. Hanne is the populist antidote to the intellectualized approach to revolution, ultimately embodied in Professor Duselmann himself, whose frequent erudite references to antiquity are misunderstood and twisted by the Berlin working class characters. The play favors a unified, democratic Germany, which one

[235] Solger, 1.8. 13.

[236] Solger, 1.11. 12-13.

might associate with the standard speech of its ostensible protagonists, yet Hanne's dialect is meant to embody the spirit of the nation, a national ideal located within a regional form.

The four members of the oppressive Berlin police state, a lieutenant, a constable, a gendarme, and a police commissioner, show the dark side of the Prussian populace. They are bloodthirsty, lecherous, uneducated, and eager to employ the full force of their authority. Oddly, the reader roots for this mob to exact revenge upon the hated Duselmann, despite the fact that Duselmann has done nothing within the confines of the play to deserve the treatment he receives. The police figures are eager to fulfill what they see as their duty, so long as it involves the physical punishment of an enemy of the state. These characters, through their nearly aimless brutality, highlight the role of state violence, yet as agents of farce, they also serve to level the hierarchies in the play. They could turn on anyone; their anarchic violence both reflects the brutality of the counterrevolution and exposes the unpredictable power of a militarized state.

As the above description makes clear, Solger's play is extremely difficult to translate without a significant overhaul. Its every detail is historically, politically, and linguistically situated. Even if it uses certain universal themes and familiar techniques such as forbidden love, coming of age, dramatic irony, and mistaken identity, these are not the crux of the play's ambitions. Its attempt to speak to the political situation following the failed revolution is its primary goal, and that goal has little currency in any other context.

iv. Domesticating the Local: (Self)-Translation as (Self)-Erasure

Translation theorist Lawrence Venuti makes a well-known distinction between foreignization and domestication in the process of translation.[237] Foreignization, on the one hand,

[237] See Lawrence Venuti *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. (London: Routledge, 1995.)

retains a source text's feeling of difference: culturally, linguistically, or both, even as it carries it into the target language. Domestication, on the other hand, reshapes the source text to fit into the target culture and language as seamlessly as possible, thus erasing the distinctiveness and difference of the original. Many theorists of translation, from Schleiermacher to Venuti, prefer the foreignization model, as it disrupts the co-option of a text and forces the text's foreignness to the surface. Like a viewer of a Brechtian epic theatre performance, the reader is not allowed to forget that the text is, in fact, not merely itself. It is a rendering of a different text that cannot be fully subsumed into the target language. Solger's translation and adaptation of his play into English, however, attempts seamless translation and nearly achieves domestication.[238] The play does not read like a translation on the level of the sentence, and its cultural context, as well as linguistic content, also goes through a significant transformation and relocation.

It is important to take note of the fact that Solger translates his own play into English. In the middle of the nineteenth-century, literary self-translation was itself a politically charged activity, as it challenged the connection between language and national identity. As Jan Walsh Hokenson and Marcella Munson point out in one of the few studies of literary self-translation, "Schleiermacher's promise of "One Country, One Language" exiles the bilingual to a no-man's land, a vacuous [...] zero point empty of all originality of mind and expression."[239] Solger, from the perspective of the same cultural nationalist German thought associated with the revolutions of 1848, becomes, through self-translation, a citizen of Schleiermacher's no-man's land between nations, languages, and cultures. "The most far-reaching result of German philosophy of

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[238] Lorie Vanchena mentions several transfer effects from Solger's German. Vanchena, "Domestic Farce," 297.

[239] Jan Walsh Hokenson and Marcella Munson, *The Bilingual Text: History and Theory of Literary Self-Translation* (Manchester, UK & Kinderhook, (NY), USA: St. Jerome Publishing, 2007), 143.

language," Hokenson and Munson argue, "was to replace Western universalist concepts with cultural specificities."[240] Self-translation disrupts many of the standard ways theorists think about the transfer between language and culture. For instance, the moralizing notion of "fidelity" or "infidelity" to a source text, a frequent concern in the history of translation theory, changes its meaning in this context. Fidelity to a source text is, in some ways, fidelity to an author. But if the translator is also the author, then from one perspective the new, transformed text bears comparatively less obligation to its original. "Infidelity" to the original might in some sense do harm to the source text, but not, by extension, to the author or to the author's intentions. This reduction in obligation to the source material casts the new work into a different light. It becomes more fully its own work, and it becomes less traditionally a translation.

In Solger's process of self-translation, his own authorship is effectively erased. When Solger reworked the play and translated it into English, he used the nom de plume "Aristophanes Junior." Taking a pen name from antiquity echoes the authors of the Federalist papers, who wrote under the name "Publius," and it places the work into the lineage of the originator of the farce tradition, Aristophanes the "Father of Comedy." By taking a pen name and writing in idiomatic English, Solger establishes himself as a native authority, despite his outsider status. Elizabeth Maddock Dillon discusses a process by which the United States' culture underwent an erasure of the creole status of whites which was "effected through newly articulated claims to white American 'Nativism' in the early nineteenth century as well as by the eradication of an Atlantic framing of the culture."[241] Though Maddock Dillon refers to a slow cultural transformation, this process of erasure occurs all at once in the case of Solger's play. In the

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[240] Hokenson and Munson, *Bilingual Text*, 143.

[241] Dillon, *New World Drama*, 230.

nearly seamless transition Solger makes between the plays' contexts, he exemplifies a privileged position within the transatlantic world in which he claims ownership over two contexts despite his material inability to exist fully in either. Unlike many of his Forty-Eighter compatriots, Solger, at least in the case of this play, did not aim for a strictly German-American audience. Rather, he sought to shed his foreignness and integrate himself into the Anglophone political and literary realm.

I have considered Solger's self-translation in regard to longstanding concerns in translation theory such as "domestication," "foreignization," and "fidelity" to the source text, but as the next section will discuss in more detail, Solger's translation ought to be considered in relation to more recent discussions in translation theory as well. Barbara Cassin and Emily Apter have highlighted the notion of "untranslatability," and Anna Brickhouse's work on translation in the Atlantic world have created a new way to think about translation's messiness and importance as well as its frequent limitations.[242] As Allison Margaret Bigelow has recently pointed out, "translation is now understood as a task whose practitioners dwell in the interstices of ideas, beliefs, and sounds that move among multiple languages, cultures, and ways of knowing."[243] Solger faces the difficulty, or even the impossibility of translating one cultural situation into another, but on the granular level, he also has to translate dialect into another dialect – an area in which "word-for-word" or "sense-for-sense" translation loses its orientation.

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[242] See Anna Brickhouse, *The Unsettlement of America: Translation, Interpretation, and the Story of Don Lis de Velasco, 1560-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015) 17-45.; See Emily Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (New York: Verso, 2013).

[243] Allison Margaret Bigelow, "Transatlantic Quechuañol: Reading Race through Colonial Translations," *PLMA* 134, no. 2, (March 2019): 242-43.

v. Translation as Relocation: The Politics of Dialectal and Theatrical Representation

Der Reichstags-Professor is retrospective, the conflict of 1848 was already over at the time of its composition; Solger and his fellow exiles could only look back with cathartic laughter at their failed attempt. The stakes in *The Hon. Anodyne Humdrum* seem higher, perhaps because the play is written just before the Civil War, at a time when a violent confrontation seemed all but inevitable. The conflict in the play stems from an arranged marriage plot between Miss Emily Olivebranch and Anodyne Humdrum; Humdrum plans to run for president as a member of the Constitutional Union Party.[244] Emily's uncle, Mr. Dough Olivebranch, originally of New England but now of Richmond, Virginia, believes that his niece could become the first lady or "presidentess" if married to Anodyne Humdrum. As in the German play, there is another suitor for Emily, Frank Sterling, a "noted Republican." Frank is the polar opposite of Humdrum. As his name connotes, he is forthright and worthy, far from the dullness of his counterpart. Despite Sterling's apparent prowess, Emily is in complete control of their relationship. She always stays a few steps ahead of Frank, and she even uses the prospect of her impending arranged marriage to toy with his emotions.

The Honorable Anodyne Humdrum is longer and more complete than its German counterpart: it contains more characters, another act, and a second location. Key characters remain, though they are transformed to fit into a different society. In addition to the replacement of the maid Hanne with the aforementioned Sally, and enslaved woman. Solger swaps many

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[244] Humdrum is a loose send-up of John Bell, the nominee for the short-lived Constitutional Union Party, who supported slavery but not secession. This party's beliefs, even more that the beliefs of the Southern secessionist, are the target of the play's mockery.

other German characters for their rough U.S. equivalents. Some of Hanne's clever lines are translated almost verbatim from her exaggerated Prussian German to Sally's exaggerated dialect. "Abjetakelte Reichsjerippe" becomes "old Black 'Publican fossil" and "ausjemerjelter ejiptischer Reichsmumie" becomes simply "old mummy."[245] Solger's facility with Berlin dialect outpaces what he can do in his second language, but the tenor of Hanne's voice is nevertheless maintained in the character of Sally. Many of the play's formal elements and plot-points remain. The humor is derived from dramatic irony, slapstick violence, and bawdy jokes. The threat of an unwanted arranged marriage still guides the story, two strangers come to town and mix up their identities by switching clothes, but the most important consistencies lie not in the plot but in the treatment of the subject matter, especially regarding class, race in the second play, and violence. Again, the most prominent figures look the most foolish. This extends, in a limited way, even to the white Northern Republican, Frank Sterling, who most closely resembles Solger's own social position and political persuasion.

To make up for the reduced importance of Sterling's character, Solger adds another enslaved character named Sambo, who fulfills some of the dramatic role played by Oertel, Sterling's counterpart in *Der Reichstags-Professor.* It is Sambo rather than Sterling, who finds himself in a humorous midnight misrecognition scene. As his name suggests, he bears a resemblance to a minstrel figure; understanding how he is implemented in the play is crucial to understanding the cultural work the play is performing. The name Sambo carries with it a problematic connection to a history of racist performance. It is possible that Solger envisioned Sambo as a minstrel character, meant purely for the kind of comedy used in racist performances

[245] "Black Republican" is a term of derision for northern abolitionist republicans who support racial equality. See Vanchena, "Domestic," 315. Sally purposely misapplies the phrase to Humdrum, who is not a Republican, in order to put him on edge.

in which white men put on black makeup and embody stereotypical African American caricatures. Certainly, such a choice would have made the play marketable in the era in which it was released. There are three reasons to believe that the case of Sambo is not so simple. First, if we are to take Friedrich Kapp at his word, the play was never performed precisely because it mixed African Americans and whites. This suggests that the roles of Sambo and Sally were not to be performed by white actors in makeup, but by African American actors. Second, Sally describes Sambo as "right cute,"[246] and she claims that "He and I's mor'n a match for Massa."[247] This might be taken for an ironic statement if it weren't entirely true within the play. Sally and Sambo easily outwit Mr. Olivebranch and Anodyne Humdrum. Finally, as I will describe in more detail later, Sambo is given the last laugh of the play. It is possible that Solger wishes to have it both ways, to laugh both with and at Sambo. But there is something of William Wells Brown's character Cato from "The Escape: or a Leap for Freedom" in Sambo. Cato, whom I will discuss in the final chapter, likewise participates in many of the tropes and trappings of minstrelsy while at the same time demonstrating an emotional depth not afforded to minstrel figures.[248] On the other hand, Solger's use of Sambo lacks much of William Wells Brown's subtlety.

It is worth taking a look at the play's ending to get a sense of some of its chief differences from the original. Despite his largely passive role in the play, Frank Sterling, the American

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[246] Acute, intelligent.

[247] Reinhold Solger (pseud. Aristophanes Junior). *The Hon. Anodyne Humdrum or, The Union Must and Shall be Preserved. A Farce in Two* Acts. (Boston: Stacy and Richardson, 1860), 1.1. 405-06

[248] For an informative reading of the literary and political context of *The Escape: or a Leap for Freedom,* see Ezra Greenspan, *William Wells Brown: An African American Life.* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014), 349-58.

version of Oertel, is given the decisive monolog. While the Southern politicians give speeches in the town square as they decide how to punish Humdrum for being an abolitionist subversive, Sterling takes the stage to have his say:

> **Sterling.** Stand back, gentlemen! I came here on a lawful errand of a private nature, not as an invader. You are but haunted by the nightmare visions of an evil conscience in imputing to the people of the North designs of invading your soil, or interfering in a hostile manner with your concerns. It is not you but *we* who are interfered with. The slave-power having taken possession of our national government, wherever the flag of the Union waves, the safeguards of our liberty are secretly undermined or openly broken through, its principles cynically derided, its defenders insulted, persecuted, struck down.[249] And unless the Union be thus continued and confirmed as a cover for the spread of despotic practices and the degradation and corruption of liberty, you threaten to separate from it. And it is in this demand that the wretches who affect to monopolize the love of our country and the respect for its institutions vie with each other to encourage you. Gentlemen, they treat you like spoiled children, whose irritation must be appeased by ever new concessions to the ever increasing demands of an imperious temper. *We*, on our part, propose to treat you as men. We owe it to you not less than to ourselves to make a stand upon our dignity as men, and upon our principles as freemen; to preserve intact the institutions and the area consecrated to liberty by our fathers; not to allow one further inch of either moral or territorial ground to be diverted from the legitimate uses of human progress and civilization. Do you understand, gentlemen? Not one inch! That is *our* platform. Upon it we make our stand, be the consequences what they may.[250]

Sterling's speech should, one would think, inspire rage in the crowd composed of Southern Democrats and members of the Constitutional Union Party, who are its ultimate targets. And the first response comes from Humdrum: "Treason! Horror! Civil war! Pirates in every bay! The borders drenched in brothers' blood!"[251] But Humdrum himself is then shouted down by the crowd. They consider killing him until he debases himself by swearing that he will disappear from public life. The crowd, until now utterly impervious to reason, comes to see Sterling's point

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[249] Sterling refers, here, to the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. He suggests that by forcing northerners to participate in slavery, the law has encroached on those who wish to uphold the ideals of the founding of the United States; namely, unity and equality under the law, which he interprets as applicable to African Americans as well.

[250] Solger, *Humdrum,* 2.3. 360-386.

[251] Solger, *Humdrum,* 2.3.387-388.

clearly. The governor even declares his allegiance to the Union, and the group disperses, Humdrum in disgrace; Emily leaves along with Sally and Sambo in a car, Sterling waves a Union flag, and the governor leaves to the sound of a band playing Yankee Doodle. The ending is abrupt and absurd, far more farcical than the ending of *Der Reichstags-Professor*. An additional stage direction suggests that as the play ends Sambo should stand on top of the car and "perform [a] derisive motion to Humdrum and McDougal with his digits at the end of his nose."[252] The last laugh is thus given to Sambo, but it takes a rather silly form.

Late in the final scene, Sally and Sambo decide to go along with Sterling, Emily, and Mr. Olivebranch as they head to the north. There, presumably, they will be free, yet they give every indication that, like Hanne in the German play, they will remain in servitude to Emily and Mr. Olivebranch, and by extension, to Sterling. Sally and Sambo appear to fulfill purely servile roles; they are unwilling to leave their enslaver and mistress even when free under the law. But there is one small detail that suggests otherwise: Sambo, when declaring his intention to stay within the Olivebranch circle, puts it this way: **Sambo:** Vere young gemman goes, Missus goes. Vere Missus goes, Sally goes. Vere Sally goes, I goes. And vere I goes Massa goes! *(Placing himself ostentatiously before Mr. Olivebranch. They are all in single file.)*[253] Sambo's speech and the subsequent stage directions suggest a hierarchy based on affection, rather than servitude. Emily follows Sterling, Sally follows Emily, Sambo follows Sally, and Mr. Olivebranch, follows Sambo. Sambo asserts himself not as the follower, but as the leader of Mr. Olivebranch, who begins the play as the ostensible head of the household. In a staged final image, the group has reorganized itself according to chosen affiliation, and the newly established order following

[252] Solger, 2.3. 479-80.

[253] Solger, 2.3. 464-67.

Olivebranch's humiliation. Though it is a common and problematic trope to reassert affective connections between enslavers and enslaved people in narratives of emancipation, such narratives do not usually include a reshuffling of the hierarchy within the group, as this one does. The reversal of the trope remains incomplete. Mr. Olivebranch has been shoved to the back of the line, but the rest of the hierarchy remains intact. Sally still follows Emily, remaining tied to her through sentiment rather than enslavement, and the once independent Emily now falls in line behind Sterling, whose privileged position seems unearned, despite his inconceivably effective speech at the play's climax.

It is perhaps not surprising, given Solger's abolitionist goals, that he should write a play ridiculing a politician running on the platform of compromise with slavery. Solger's two plays contain clear political messages, one in accord with the principles of the failed revolutions of 1848, and the other in support of the abolition of slavery and the candidacy of Abraham Lincoln. But the genre in which the plays are written becomes fraught with issues of representation in the process of translation and relocation. Since the genre demands the humorous use of dialect, translation from one language and dialect to another necessarily results in cultural mismatch. In *The Hon. Anodyne Humdrum,* dialect comes to represent racial difference in addition to class hierarchy. Solger replaces the dialect speakers from the first play with enslaved African Americans and white speakers of southern dialects. The new play thus participates in the process of racialization through representation in complex ways.

Dialect is untranslatable on a literal level, and also on a figurative or connotative level. Berlin dialect, when translated into so-called "slave dialect," reduces some characters to minstrel figures, despite their favorable positions within the plot. Solger relies on pre-established stereotypical representations of dialect speech as he transfers his German farce into a polyphonic

regional American English, containing "standard" American English voices, as well as several varieties of dialect. Although the Berlin dialect in the German-language play derives from a theatrical and literary tradition, it is based on a dialect Solger would have known from his Prussian childhood, and thus he is able to produce it in a way that is both humorous and creative. But the dialect Solger uses for African American characters in his second play comes, it appears, purely from representations of African American speech gleaned from blackface minstrelsy and perhaps from journalistic accounts of African Americans. The dialect in both plays performs the political work of situating characters in relation to the larger forces governing their lives. However, the political message of the English-language play, the fight for abolition and for the candidacy of Abraham Lincoln, is undercut precisely by the way in which dialect is represented. More broadly, this example demonstrates the extent to which representation of speech serves as a battleground in defining region, class, and race. Dialect representation is never merely mimetic– it always draws lines between who belongs and who does not, though these lines themselves fluctuate with social and national contexts. Moreover, positioning characters in alongside one another via racial dialectal representation, black dialect in particular, is not directly comparable to positioning them via class-based dialectal representation, hence the mismatch between these two plays. Solger's translation of the German dialect into the racialized dialect of blackface minstrelsy should give us pause.

Typical minstrel shows contained novelty performances such as comic dialogues, "stump speeches" featuring frequent malapropism, performances in which men dress up as women, and the like.[254] Solger's play also features some of these elements, but not in precisely the manner of racial representation found in a minstrel show. For example, there is a series of stump speeches

[254] Lott, *Love and Theft,* 7.

in the English-language play, to which no equivalent is found in the German play, but the speakers whose speech is marked by malapropism are white Southern politicians, and the final speaker in the scene, Frank Sterling, as discussed above, is an eloquent northerner who convinces the crowd of the just cause of abolition. From this example Solger's text looks like a reversal of the minstrelsy tradition. White characters play some of the comic roles normally played by characters in blackface.

Sally's position is less fraught with problematic elements than Sambo's. She is less silly and comical, and her wit, like Hanne's, manifests in her successful negotiation of the domestic terrain. She sets characters up to find themselves in difficult situations and generally stays ahead of everyone else in the chess game that plays out in the script. The play emphasizes the role of Sally's race by giving Mr. Olivebranch the following line directed at Sally: "if you should ever presume to play the old boy with our beloved Union, you would find me more terrible in my just wrath than the lioness of your own African desert, when defending her cubs."[255] In using this comparison, Mr. Olivebranch attempts to connect Sally with Africa. Sally understands this as a slight, and she finds ways of twisting it around to mock Mr. Olivebranch. She uses the word "terrible" not to mean fierce or frightful, but to mean "bad" when she says to Mr. Olivebranch "Yer lookin' more terrible, massa, dan de liness of my own African desert when offendin' yer cubs."[256] Coupled with the pointed malapropism "offendin'" rather than "defending," Sally twists Olivebranch's words to mean that he looks awful in the act of mistreating his daughter. Sally's malapropisms often have the effect of speaking to a larger truth and undercutting the

[255] Solger, 1.1. 229-230.

[256] Solger, 1.1. 242-243.

other characters. Her jokes throughout the play follow the following logic: Sally mishears or misspeaks, but in doing so she gets at the truth.

Like Sally, Sambo speaks in Solger's rendition of dialect, which follows the patterns set up in minstrel shows; in a striking example, he replaces the *w* sound with the *v* sound, "Vat a strong voice she's got ven she's a dreamin.''[257] The replacement of a "w" with a "v" sounds more like a mockery of a French or German accent than the form of dialect associated with African American characters in the nineteenth century, but in fact, that particular sound has a long history in the orthographic representations of African American speech. Mordecai Noah is credited for the invention of this particular style, which he used in his "derisive reportage of black dialect."[258] An example of the "v" sound replacing a "w" can be found in Noah's written description of an African American performance of Richard III: "Now is de vinter of our discontent made glorus summer by de son of New-York."[259] What appears idiosyncratic in Solger's rendition of dialect is in fact present elsewhere at the time, and it is likely not just a quirk of Solger's own foreign perspective.[260]

Solger, it seems, attempts to create an equivalent play to address an alternative society and a very different social problem. His self-translated play reveals not only the contrasts

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[257] Solger, 1.1. 960.

[258] Dillon, *New World Drama*, 228.

[259] Dillon, 229.

[260] There are some other possible explanations for the use of the "v" sound here. Lorie Vanchena attributes it to Solger's own German-language background. See Vanchena, "Domestic Farce," 297. Secondly, Eric Lott mentions that "blackface, bizarrely enough, was actually used to represent *all* ethnicities on the antebellum stage prior to the development of ethnic types." See Lott, *Love and Theft*, 98. While I am most convinced that Solger probably based this element of Sambo's speech on extant examples of black dialect like the one cited above, it is possible that Lorie Vanchena's hunch is correct, or that Sambo is undergoing some kind of code switching, representing multiple types at once.

between the ostensibly similar struggles on each side of the Atlantic, but it also reveals the ways in which those conflicts interact with the cultural forms each society has produced. The genre of the plays cannot be said to be very different; indeed, the second play is in many ways the same as the first, but because of its proximity to blackface minstrelsy, the American version does different cultural and political work. Blackface minstrelsy doesn't correlate with the *Lokalposse*; the former's effect is the dehumanization of the characters who are mocked, and the latter's effect is playful imitation that ultimately establishes the "local" characters as representatives of a specific community. Though Solger's play overturns some of the tendencies and tropes of blackface minstrelsy, it nevertheless employs some of those same tendencies and tropes, and this is to its detriment.

vi. Solger's Political Thought

Solger's political opinions differ in certain ways from the logical conclusions of his farce. At Music Hall in Boston, April 28, 1861, he delivered a speech entitled "War and its Blessings" in favor of a large-scale military action against the south. He speaks both as a student of history and as a foreigner.

> One thing I never could understand since I have been in this country [is that] whenever war was spoken of, it was with expressions of horror and contempt; war was brutalizing men and ruining nations, and absurd and childish way of settling difficulties. Yet in spite of this theoretical opinion, whenever the boom of the cannon was heard, in whatever distant part of the globe, all America jumped, so to say, on her feet, and took sides, enthusiastically, in the contest.[261]

[261] This speech was reprinted in a newspaper after it was delivered in Boston. See "War and its Blessings," *Daily Atlas and Bee,* June 15, 1861, Reinhold Solger Papers. Bound Newspaper Clippings and Other Items., Box 2, Folder 1, Reinhold Solger Papers 1840-1944, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., USA.

Solger has highlighted an apparent contradiction in the American character: the United States is peaceful in words but violent in temperament. This, he implies, reflects the deeper reality that war is indeed a galvanizing force, and thus is desirable in the context of national cohesion. He takes the position of the foreigner to make this point:

> There was a time, when a German in a foreign country, would stammer a blushing excuse for being from Germany, he rather avowed himself a Prussian, or an Austrian, or if needs be, rather nothing at all than a German. And why? Because the Germans were no nation; Germany was disintegrated, while there was at least a show of national self-assertion in the governments of Austria and Prussia; nay, some evidence of independence and plucky action in the smallest of the German States. This has become different now, simply because the Germans have made an attempt, however unsuccessful, in 1848, to reconstitute themselves as a nation.[262]

Solger then applies this logic to the situation in the United States. His chief argument in favor of fighting a civil war is to create a new national sentiment in the United States. When Anodyne Humdrum shouts "The Union Must and Shall Be Preserved" the crowd finds him laughable, yet Solger's own sense of the Union is just as strong, but rather than appease the Southern states to preserve it, as Humdrum suggests, Solger calls for a war to reconstitute it.

This speech in Boston privileges this "blessing of war," nationalist sentiment, even above the fight to end slavery. It is clear that Solger's April 28th speech is delivered before an abolitionist crowd; when he exclaims: "We shall prescribe the law to them [states where slavery is legal]. What is that law to be? It is obvious: No slavery in any of the States of this Union." The crowd applauds here, but Solger quiets them with the following caveat:

> I am afraid I do not deserve the plaudits of this audience. I am not an abolitionist in that sense that I should make the abolition of slavery the paramount aim and highest object of our national existence. [...] Under any circumstances, the idea of having it accomplished

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[262] Bound Newspaper Clippings and Other Items., Box 2, Folder 1, Reinhold Solger Papers 1840-1944, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., USA. I should emphasize here that Solger's notion of the nation, like many of the German-Americans I discuss in this dissertation, corresponds largely with the modern notion of a nation state. It should be differentiated from the kinds of nationalism that would arise later in the century.

> by a negro insurrection has nothing attractive to me, from whatever aspect I may consider it. I do not expect from a negro insurrection any results so beneficent as to compensate for its horrors. In fact, I cannot expect any beneficent results at all from it.[263]

Again we see here a strong connection between Solger's political beliefs and those that he mocks in the play. In the play, the threat of insurrection by enslaved people is presented as a paranoid fantasy and a preoccupation of cowards, but in the speech it appears to be a present danger, one which more radical members of his audience might welcome. Solger the satirist is more brash and bold than Solger the political speaker. He also speaks against the idea of African American nationalism, and in his weakest claim, he uses a straw-man argument to combat a statement by Wendell Phillips. He argues, "If slavery, as Mr. Phillips says, is barbarism, as it most surely is, then slaves, its victims, are barbarians. They will be not less barbarians for having cut their master's [sic] throats."[264] The notion that slavery dehumanizes both enslaved people and slaveholders is a common theme in slave narratives, yet to take that fact as a predictor of failure for communities of the formerly enslaved ignores the more central message of such narratives. Namely, that the humanity of enslaved people is never extinguished. Solger's depiction of Sally as an intelligent, plucky, and innovative character speaks directly against his own claim here. It seems that Solger's democratic messages in *Der Reichstags-Professor* and in *The Hon. Anodyne Humdrum* are to some extent diluted when placed in the context of racialized slavery. While Hanne seems able to stand in for the spirit of a nation, rooted in her working-class performativity, Sally and Sambo are able to do so only in the realm of fiction. Though Sally and

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[263] Bound Newspaper Clippings and Other Items., Box 2, Folder 1, Reinhold Solger Papers 1840-1944, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., USA.

[264] Bound Newspaper Clippings and Other Items., Box 2, Folder 1, Reinhold Solger Papers 1840-1944, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., US

Sambo seem to operate as representatives of enslaved people more broadly, they bear little resemblance to the legions of brutalized people who are ready to commit unspeakable violence in Solger's political, rather than poetic, imagination.

The heart of Solger's political perspective stands on an untranslatable footing. His advocacy for the democratic revolutions of 1848 approximates, but does not precisely correlate to his advocacy for the abolition of slavery. Inherited forms, whether literary, political, or ideological shape, and at times misshape, Solger's work in artistic and political spaces. The previous sections have sought to highlight two important contradictions in Solger's attempt to translate his drama and political thought from Europe to the United States: first, his play's populist implications become obscured when race as well as class is at issue. And second, Solger's political thought extends this progression; faith in the ability of subjugated people to self-govern is evident in his support of the revolutions and his depiction of Hanne, but the same faith is not as clear in the case of enslaved people in the United States. While Solger has no fear of a revolt of working-class Germans, he cannot translate that confidence into the context of slavery. There is a lot at stake in this: the inability to translate white working-class struggles into African American political spaces remains a serious challenge for progressive politics. Solger's drama seeks, perhaps unsuccessfully, to find equivalencies, while his political thought cannot quite imagine them.

Conclusion

How are we to understand the role of these plays in the context of theories of "print nationalism" or the "performative commons"? On the one hand, *Der Reichtstags-Professor* plays arguably a small role in a counter-history of both German and American print culture. It was first published in a journal made by Solger and his exiled colleagues in 1850. It was then republished

in Caspar Butz's *Deutsch-Amerikanische-Monatshefte* in September of 1864. Butz's journal was an important German-language quarterly, which presumably brought Solger's play to many German readers living primarily in the Midwest, where a sizable German community had settled and was continuing to settle. *The Hon. Anodyne Humdrum* was likely less widely read, since it was published on its own rather than in a circulating journal. I have found no evidence of any performance of the American play, and scant evidence of performance of the German play. It is safe to say that Solger's plays did not have significant impacts in either the Anglophone print or performance spheres and are thus not of interest to the paradigm of print nationalism or the performative commons. But what is to be done with works that fall short of either of these frameworks? How should we understand these cultural artifacts, which, though not widely read or seen in their own time, offer a valuable snapshot of transatlantic transfer?

It is fair to consider Solger's plays to have been failures in a material sense. Their impact, due to censorship of various kinds, was negligible in their own time. But Solger, in my view, offers an example worthy of consideration in the context of the study of regional writing in a broader scale. His American play exhibits an effort to uproot an established European regionally inflected tradition, the *Lokalposse*, and transplant it to a new culture and context, and in a new language. Though there is no guarantee that particular examples will find fertile soil in their new location, the movability of genres exhibited here suggests that the acceleration of circulation of texts, people, and ideas can lead to a diversification of cultural forms. In addition, the transfer of a local genre shows in a new way that regional writing has to be considered on a transnational scale.

Solger is not the only German immigrant to write plays in the *Lokalstück* tradition in the United States. Another Forty-Eighter, Christian Essellen wrote a play that was performed in

Milwaukee entitled *Bekehrung vom Temperenzwahn,* sometimes translated as *Deliver Us from Temperance*, which uses the genre to critique the temperance movement, which sought to ban the sale and consumption of alcohol. An uncertain, but probably substantial number of similar plays were performed in German in the United States in the latter half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, though many are lost to history or remain largely untouched in archives. The Milwaukee Public Library's Trostel Collection, for example, houses a large collection of German-language theatre scripts. The collection contains more than 1500 plays that were performed in Milwaukee in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Many of these plays are farces imported from Europe, and some are German-American originals. Though this lies outside the scope of this chapter, this collection could provide a much fuller picture of the genre's fate in the United States both as a performative and textual phenomenon.

Beyond that, to gain yet a larger picture of regional writing within the United States, it will be important to approach literature in languages other than English. The canon of German-American literature, for example, consists largely of regionally inflected writing that has received relatively little attention in American studies or transatlantic studies. Chapter one attempts to address this gap. In addition, as chapter two has shown, cultural production such as folk songs travelled the reverse path across the Atlantic during the late nineteenth century. In chapter four, I will discuss another use of a genre very similar to the one Solger is working in, particularly Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins's comic, musical melodrama "Peculiar Sam: or, The Underground Railroad." Chapter four will focus on the play's Midwestern performances, and it will offer a view into the ways the archival memory of performance often falls short of offering a complete picture. Yet examples such as these also point to the possibility of a new arena in which cultural forms emerge from non-dominant spaces. Both examples demonstrate that local

and national identities are in a constant process of being renewed, reimagined, and reformed both on stage and off.

Chapter 4. "Peculiar Sam" in the Transatlantic Midwest: African American Performance and the Problems of the Archive

> The Underground Railroad
>
> The company of colored dramatists that appeared at the Opera House last evening, in the play with the above title, drew an excellent audience, and pleased them most thoroughly. The piece is well written, and abounds in exciting situations and points where peculiar talents of the colored artists find excellent opportunity for display. As the name of the play indicated, it is founded on the system in vogue in old slavery times, when the fugitives from bondage were passed from "station" to "station," that is, from one friend to another. The author has truly depicted scenes that took place, and of course they are exciting.
>
> The company is really good throughout, and that irresistible fellow, Sam Lucas, has a splendid part, which, of course, he gives to the fullest satisfaction of his auditors. He does not forget to introduce his famous specialties, and has added many new ones to his list. The singing is good, prompt, spirited and characteristic, and the entire entertainment compares most favorably with that given by the Hyers Sisters. The audience frequently showed their pleasure by repeated applause to the admirably rendered choruses.
>
> The parlor concert that followed was very good, the ladies giving their solos with fine effect, and Signor de Sallis playing his violin solo in a manner that surprised and pleased all who heard it. –[Free Press, Detroit, March 11, 1879][265]

i. Introduction

It is difficult to know for certain what kind of work Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins's 1879 play "Peculiar Sam; or, The Underground Railroad" set out to accomplish. When I have presented the play to students, they have been taken aback by its use of dialect, its inclusion of problematic character types, and its apparently straight use of minstrel songs. There tends to be widespread agreement that the play could not, or at least should not, be performed today. Interestingly, the viewers and reviewers of the play's 1879 midwestern tour knew what the play was doing, or at least they thought they did. What they *knew* did not always correspond to what others *knew.* Some reviewers thought of the play as a musical showcase, a loose plot orchestrated

[265] Published in "The Underground Railroad" *Kansas Daily Tribune* May 20, 1879.

as an excuse to put accomplished musicians and singers together on stage. Others viewed it as an unambiguous, run of the mill, minstrel show. Still others focused less on the play's trappings – its character types and musical numbers – and trained their analysis on its plot, acting, and significance to the history of African American cultural production. The reviewers saw more or less the same play from night to night, city to city, but left with significantly different senses of its basic function and goals as a work of entertainment and art.

Given the complex histories of representation embodied in Hopkins's play and its 1879 midwestern tour, it is useful to consider Tavia Nyong'o's formulation of "afro-fabulations" as a way to help theorize the play's cultural work. According to Nyong'o, "fabulation points to the deconstructive relation between story and plot."[266] This term normally applies to written literary works, but Nyong'o demonstrates its utility for visual and performance art, and in adding the dimensions of race and gender, argues that afro-fabulations "operate as a queer hack of the codes of an anti-black world." "Knowing how the rules and codes are stacked against them," Nyong'o continues, "competitive black subjects…perfect the skill of back chat, shade, reading, and other hacks of the color line."[267] Hopkins's play exhibits something along the lines of Nyong'o's "afro-fabulations." We ought not to be daunted by the archival absences that make this claim difficult to substantiate. The performers presumably know the expectations of white as well as black audiences, varied as those might be. And rather than consent to audience expectations, these performers find ways of contrasting the message with its container.

"The Underground Railroad," now commonly called "Peculiar Sam," was performed over fifty times in dozens of cities along the newly constructed railroads of the Midwest. It

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[266] Tavia Nyong'o, *Afro-Fabulations: The Queer Drama of Black Life* (New York: New York University Press, 2018) 4.

[267] Nyong'o, *Afro-Fabulations,* 4.

starred Sam Lucas (1848-1916), a prominent African American actor, singer, and comedian, alongside an all-black cast. The first performance for which I have located evidence took place in Joliet, Illinois.[268] The play then moved through Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, and back to Illinois. Pauline Hopkins's play demonstrates the ways that genre conventions as well as regional and ideological affiliations conspired to make the play simultaneously conventional and radical, depending largely on who was in the audience.[269] It may be banal to suggest that there is no one consistent object that we can point to and define as the essential version of the play – plays are living things, newly articulated and interpreted with each performance – but this is true to an exceptional degree in the case of Hopkins's play. For twenty-first century critics such as Lois Brown, Marvin McAllister, and Hannah Wallinger, it is a deeply subversive play. It struggles against caricature and rejects plantation nostalgia. But for white, Midwestern reviewers in 1879, it was largely a showcase for those very things – some reviewers understood the play to be a loosely-plotted variety show written in such a way that Sam Lucas could employ his considerable talent in the service of "low" humor. Because minstrelsy was a cultural product which depended on certain audience expectations and relied on localized (and sometimes racist) marketing gimmicks, attempts to subvert its form were unlikely to overturn the racist attitudes of some white audience members. But it is a disservice to the play's performances to focus exclusively on those audiences.

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[268] The March 11, 1879 issue of the *Inter Ocean,* a Chicago paper, states the following in its section relating the previous day's news from Joliet, Ill: "Sam Lucas in "Underground Railroad," with Z. W. Sprague, played to a full house here to-night." This does not prove definitively that Joliet was the first place where the play was performed, but it is the earliest date that I can offer with any certainty.

[269] I hope to add yet more evidence to support Eric Lott's claim that minstrelsy was "one of our earliest culture industries." See Eric Lott. *Love and Theft*, 8.

The play dramatizes the mobility of African Americans to the north, with all of its dangers and necessary negotiations. Hopkins's play enters a short-lived but highly significant time in the history of race relations in the United States. By 1879 much of the idealism of the Reconstruction Era had waned, but the horrors of what historian Rayford Logan termed the nadir of American race relations was begining.[270] The nadir was marked by segregation, exclusion of African Americans from all manner of civil rights, murders by the white supremacist Ku Klux Klan, and countless other acts. Historians differ when it comes to the precise dates of the nadir; some cite the end of Reconstruction in 1877 as its beginning, and others claim that it began around 1890. With the end of Reconstruction, many African Americans moved from the south to the Midwest and other northern regions. Contrary to common conception, African Americans did not move exclusively to large cities in the north. Some moved to medium-sized cities and rural towns like those where the play was performed.[271] James Loewen's book on the phenomenon of "sundown towns" argues that postbellum and post-Reconstruction migration took place in two related movements. First, there was the movement north of African Americans to all manner of municipalities, to distant and rural regions like the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and North Dakota, and as far west as Oregon and Washington. Second, there took place a kind of "great retreat," as Loewen calls it.[272] During this later phase, beginning around 1890, but continuing for

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[270] Rayford Logan, *The Betrayal of the Negro* (New York: Collier Books, 1965).; I cannot begin to provide a complete history of the post-Reconstruction era in the United States in this chapter. For a historically informative discussion of African American drama after reconstruction, see Koritha Mitchell *Living with Lynching: African American Lynching Plays, Performance, and Citizenship, 1890-1930* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011).

[271] See James W. Loewen, *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism* (New York: The New Press, 2005). 47.

[272] See Loewen, *Sundown Towns,* 47-89. Loewen makes clear that just after reconstruction African American populations were not concentrated in major cities. The number of counties with fewer than ten African Americans dramatically increased across nearly the entirety of the United States from 1890 to 1930, despite the fact that this era saw widespread migration of

much of the twentieth century, African Americans were excluded from a great many towns, cities, and even whole counties through the enforcement of "sundown ordinances."[273] As a result, 1879 emerges as a pivotal time in the history of black migration and midwestern race relations. African Americans were in in the process of moving to places like Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota, Michigan, Wisconsin, and especially Kansas, and they were beginning to create communities by founding newspapers and other cultural, political, and social institutions. If the nadir begins with the end of Reconstruction, then African Americans moving to the Midwest (and performers visiting the region) could expect hostile treatment. But if some of the post-war idealism felt throughout the country during Reconstruction lived on in the Midwest, then the 1879 tour might represent a brief moment for black and white audiences to come together and enjoy a play about the process of migration they were all negotiating. To add another significant wrinkle, as I will point out in detail later, the "Exodus to Kansas," in which many African Americans left the south and fled to Kansas corresponds precisely with the performances of Hopkins's play in many Kansan cities.

Of course, race relations rarely change in an instant, and what follows in this chapter will confirm the reasonable hypothesis that audiences, cities and towns vary significantly, and what Sam Lucas and company could expect was, at best, a mixed bag. We as modern readers and researchers can only access a portion of the experience of these performances. Both the black and immigrant members of the audiences for Hopkins's play remain between the lines of the

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African Americans from the Deep South. This suggests both that African Americans were present in rural and suburban areas in considerable numbers in the late nineteenth century and that they were subsequently driven from those areas.

[273] Loewen, *Sundown Towns.* 90-115.

available record. Their absences speak to the power of newspapers to shape regions and localities, as well as nations.[274]

The review cited at the beginning of this chapter appeared in the *Kansas Daily Tribune* on May 20, 1879 as an advertisement for the upcoming performance of "The Underground Railroad. Written some fourteen years after the US Civil War, the above review testifies to the play's strong plot, performances, audience reception, it's blending of old favorites with new songs, and its realistic depiction of life during "old slavery times." It claims that the new troupe compares favorably with the beloved Hyers Sisters, a pioneering African American sister act whose fame spread throughout the region. The review contains not a single critical word and comes from the *Detroit Free Press*, Detroit's leading daily. But a detailed look at that newspaper's March 11th, 1879 issue reveals that no such review was published on that date.[275] No mention of the play's star, Sam Lucas, appears any time in the month of March. Lucas appears in the pages of the *Free Press* five times in late January and early February, but all five are reviews or advertisements for "Sprague's Georgia Minstrels," a minstrel variety show featuring ballads, humorous stump speeches, and violin performances. In fact, despite access to a searchable archive of several of the state's newspapers, I have found no record of "The Underground Railroad" ever being performed in the state of Michigan. The first performance for which I have newspaper evidence was in Illinois. The play then moved through Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, and back to Illinois. It seems possible that the review cited

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[274] For more on the role of newspapers and, particularly, national feelings of affiliation see Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* (London: Verso, 1983). I have applied the logic of Anderson's claim to a smaller scale of affiliation, namely the region or even the municipality.

[275] *Detroit Free Press* March 11, 1879.

at the beginning of this chapter is a fabrication. Some of its phrasing resembles the review of the Sprague Minstrels in the *Detroit Free Press*; someone may have taken a few choice phrases from the review of the "Georgia Minstrels" and rewritten it to apply to "The Underground Railroad," then published it in the unsuspecting *Kansas Daily Tribune*. Perhaps the show's promoters, Z.W. Sprague and his partner Wash Blodgett had a hand in this. Among the many difficulties inherent in writing about performance in the nineteenth century, particularly African American performance, is the process of finding and evaluating "reliable" sources. What exactly constitutes a reliable source on black performance in a time and place still overwhelmingly dominated by white owned and operated periodicals which are, as the above example shows, susceptible to marketing stunts and misrepresentations?

The above example serves as an emblem of the humbuggery and deception baked into the culture of nineteenth-century minstrel performance. Minstrelsy is, at its core, an exercise in deception; it often features white performers wearing makeup in order to darken their skin to embody caricatured African American types. In the case of Sprague and Blodgett's "Georgia Minstrels," starring Sam Lucas, the Hyers Sisters, and other African American performers, the characters and caricatures developed during the history of minstrel performance remained present.[276] African American culture in the nineteenth-century United States has often been caricatured, removed from particular localities and regions, and then applied to broad spatial areas in the form of generic types. One such example is that of the "Jim Crow" and "Zip Coon" pairing in blackface minstrel performance. Jim Crow stands in as a caricatured representative of rural African Americans, while Zip Coon correspondingly caricatures dandified urbanites with

[276] See Eileen Southern, "The Georgia Minstrels: The Early Years," *Inter-American Music Review* 10, (Spring-Summer 1989): 157-67.

some ability to be mobile, especially toward the north.[277] This divide between southern/rural and northern/urban bisects the United States twice, and thus the comedic duo applies a fabricated blackness to a placeless United States. Both the rural and urban versions are extracted from specific localities, and as a result, local and regional identities outside the South typically get defined exclusively in relation to white populations. To compound the geographical displacement that marks many depictions of African Americans on stage, there is often a lack of domestic life to be observed. As Lois Brown puts it:

> conflicts involving slaves were often played out in rooms of the main house such as the kitchen, in wooded areas nearby, or in various Northern locales, resulting in critical, dehumanizing, and disorienting displacement of African American characters. It seriously compromised their ability to assert domestic sensibilities of their own, and, by extension, denied their humanity and autonomy.[278]

As Brown points out, Hopkins's play deviates from these tendencies. It offers a glimpse of the domestic life of enslaved and formerly enslaved individuals. It brings up questions of home and highlights familial and generational conflict in addition to the conflict endemic to narratives of escape.

The previous chapters in this dissertation have all focused on genres associated with particular regions moving across the Atlantic. This chapter differs by turning its attention to a play and its Midwestern performances that offer a direct view into the processes of regional formation within the United States and focuses on archival absences. Social histories of places like Milwaukee suggest that by the time this play was performed, a large part of the population of that city was German-speaking and politically progressive; many of those immigrants and

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[277] Paul Gilmore "'De Genewine Artekil': William Wells Brown, Blackface Minstrelsy, and Abolitionism," *American Literature* 69, no. 4 (December 1997): 746.

[278] Lois Brown, *Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins: Black Daughter of the Revolution* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 118.

children of immigrants were deeply engaged in the city's political and cultural life. The same can be said for many of the small towns and larger cities discussed in the chapter. Chapter Two of this dissertation discusses German audiences of African American performers across the Atlantic, and given the proliferation of the German-language press by the late 1870s, one might expect to find the same dynamic playing out in the United States, thus creating a kind of "transatlantic Midwest," a space in which large numbers of people living in the central United States maintained cultural and/or personal ties to Europe. But the available sources offer something different. A few of the German-language papers that remain from this time and place do not make mention of the play. And in many of the smallest cities on the tour, where such a performance would likely have been a rare event worthy of comment, the newspapers themselves are no longer available, though they did exist at the time. Where one might expect to find evidence of German-speaking people negotiating their own belonging in the Midwest vis-à-vis African Americans, as the first chapter of this dissertation has analyzed, one finds primarily a lack. The currently available record offers commentary almost exclusively from white, English-speaking sources. It is as if the large German population and the present and growing African American populations were not around.

ii. The Dialectics of Minstrelsy: Brown's and Hopkins's Aesthetic Interventions

Many years of criticism and theorization from Robert Toll to Eric Lott to W.T. Lhamon and beyond have complicated our understanding of the social role of blackface performance. Lhamon, for example, emphasizes complexity, suggesting that earlier studies of blackface minstrelsy risk "turn[ing] a tangle into a binary."[279] In other words, deriding blackface minstrelsy

[279] W. T. Lhamon *Jump Jim Crow: Lost Plays, Lyrics, and Street Prose of the First Atlantic Popular Culture,* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003) 10.

as merely a racist practice (though it is a racist practice) obscures the minutiae of its social function. At risk of relying too heavily on the old binaries, I want to suggest that the plays I will discuss in this section necessarily function as negations of racist practices and narratives. Produced in the context of blackface minstrelsy, these plays sometimes attempt to overturn racist elements directly, rather than complicate narratives of racism and misrepresentation. But at other times, Brown's and Hopkins's plays overturn the tropes of minstrelsy in complex ways. The plays offer depictions of empathy, forgiveness, scenes of domestic life, and sentiment relating to notions of place and of what it means to be at home. Rather than simply parodying or rejecting the genre of minstrelsy, the plays counter racist tropes by unveiling humanity beneath the caricatures, performing what Nyong'o calls "Afro-Fabulations," and participating in a long and still present tradition in African American literature. For black performers in minstrelsy or minstrelsy-adjacent productions, whether in black face paint or not, the stakes of representation were high and the performance was complex: As Wesley Morris puts it, "A black minstrel was impersonating the impersonation of himself. Think, for a moment, about the talent required to pull *that* off."[280] The performance "could curdle into an entirely other, utterly degrading double consciousness, one that predates, predicts and possibly informs W. E. B. DuBois's more self-consciously dignified rendering."[281]

William Wells Brown's (1814-1884) *The Escape; or, a Leap for Freedom: A Drama in Five Act*s (1858) is, as far as we know, the first published play authored by an African American.[282] According to Brown's preface, the play contains references to real people who

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[280] Morris, "Stealing Black Music."

[281] Morris, "Stealing Black Music."

[282] See "William Wells Brown (1814-1884)," in *The Wiley Blackwell Anthology of African American Literature, Volume 1: 1746-1920,* ed. Gene Andrew Jarrett, (Chinchester, U.K.: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 222. An earlier play called "The Drama of King Shotaway" was written by a

"still reside in Canada," and the play was "written for my own enjoyment, and not with the remotest thought that it would ever be seen by the public eye."[283] The play was disseminated largely as a text, rather than as a performance. Published in Boston in 1858 by R. F. Wallcut, the play's readership was likely made up of abolitionists both white and African American.[284] Brown's play appears within a context marked by abolitionist melodrama on the one hand, and blackface minstrel performance on the other; it clearly reflects the tensions and forms surrounding those modes of cultural production. Many critics have noted the odd amalgamation of minstrelsy and melodrama, and some have pointed out that popular texts by white writers contained the same mixture, particularly Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin.*[285] It is certainly the case, however, that Brown's approach to this duality in representative performance differs markedly from Stowe's.

Brown's play begins on a Mississippi farm where Dr. Gaines, the farm's lecherous proprietor, and his wife, Mrs. Gaines, oversee a group of enslaved people named Cato, Sam, Sampey, Melinda, Dolly, Susan, and Big Sally. Dr. Gaines's brother-in-law, Mr. Hamilton, also enslaves several people, including another major character named Glen. The play's conflict is twofold: it is one-part relationship drama and one-part escape narrative. Melinda, who is in love

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different William Brown and premiered at the African Grove Theatre in 1822, though it was never published. See Marvin McAllister, "The Rise of African American Drama, 1822-79," in *The Oxford Handbook of American Drama,* eds. Jeffrey H. Richards and Heather S. Nathans. (Oxford, England: Oxford UP, 2014), 218-233.

[283] William Wells Brown, "The Escape; or a Leap for Freedom: A Drama in Five Acts," in *The Wiley Blackwell Anthology of African American Literature, Volume 1: 1746-1920,* edited by Gene Andrew Jarrett, (Chinchester, U.K.: Wiley Blackwell, 2014) 263.

[284] R. F. Wallcut also published the works of such writers as William Lloyd Garrison, Henry Ward Beecher, and Wendell Phillips. His publishing house also published several other works by William Wells Brown.

[285] McAllister, "African American Drama," 223.

with Glen, is under constant threat of rape by Dr. Gaines. Mrs. Gaines becomes jealous of Melinda and wishes to remove her from the estate. Exasperated by the situation, Mrs. Gaines declares "I've had my life tormented out of me by the presence of that yellow wench, and I'll stand it no longer. I know you love her more than you do me, and I'll – I'll – I'll write – write to my father."[286] Melinda, meanwhile, plans to escape along with Glen. Cato and Big Sally follow a parallel course as they plan to escape from the farm at Muddy Creek. Eventually the main characters escape and travel through Ohio, where they meet a group of Quakers, and plan to cross into Canada. In a violent scene, they overpower their pursuers, who seek to re-enslave them, and shout triumphantly as they enter their new country.

The play opens with a scene reminiscent of the style of humor found in blackface minstrelsy. Cato, an enslaved would-be dentist who speaks in a pronounced dialect, accidentally pulls out the wrong tooth of another enslaved character named Bill. In many minstrel shows, enslaved or free African American characters perform tasks that require more education or training than they have, such as practicing medicine or law; this is meant to create a comic effect. Cato's pulling of the wrong tooth is one such scene.[287] The play then moves immediately to a contrasting scene in which Glen, who is enslaved by Mr. Hamilton, delivers a romantic soliloquy about his beloved Melinda in prose reminiscent of romantic melodrama. Glen and Melinda's language is inflected with pointed formality and sentiment. The two characters exhibit two sides of what white audiences, both abolitionist and not, expected of black characters: the eloquent defender of individual rights, as in the case of Glen, and the comic minstrel figure in the case of

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[286] William Wells Brown, "The Escape; or, a Leap for Freedom: A Drama in Five Acts," in *The Wiley Blackwell Anthology of African American Literature*, ed. Gene Andrew Jarrett (Chinchester, U.K.: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 275.

[287] See note 4 to chapter one of Lott, *Love & Theft*, 253.

Cato.[288] These two contrary figures follow the illogic of racism which expands hyperbolic types to encompass contradictory characteristics.

Being familiar with the forms of racism comprising the cultural atmosphere in the antebellum period, Brown systematically challenges the types and stereotypes created both by minstrelsy and by melodrama while nevertheless participating in both genres. Minstrel shows, for example, often contain musical numbers still familiar today such as "Oh, Suzanna." Brown's play showcases several of these songs, but with new lyrics that were re-written to contradict and challenge the original lyrics, which were often explicitly racist. Cato, for example, sings a song to the music of "Dearest Mae" containing lyrics like "Massa gave me his ole coat, an'd thought I'd happy be, But I had my eye on de North Star, an' thought of liberty."[289] As this line makes clear, Brown does not shy away from the use of minstrel songs and dialect in constructing the world of the play; rather, he uses them as malleable forms into which his interventions can be made. There is a risk of being too optimistic on Brown's behalf, as Douglass A. Jones Jr. warns, "[g]iven the contorted and grotesque ways in which blackness signified within normative sociocultural practices, Wells Brown's reliance on mainstream forms such as blackface minstrelsy and melodrama yielded representations whose significations were perhaps more overdetermined the he might have intended."[290] These "mainstream forms" may well be overdetermined, but Brown finds ways to critique them by unveiling the complex motivations of his characters, Cato in particular.

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[288] See Gilmore, "Genewine," 745.

[289] Brown, "The Escape," 291.

[290] Douglas A. Jones, Jr. *The Captive Stage: Performance and Proslavery Imagination of the Antebellum North.* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2014), 138.

Near the end, (Act V, Scene 4), Brown offers a callback to the play's opening scene. Cato references his dental mishap when he says "Ef any body tries to take me back to ole massa, I'll pull ebry toof out of dar heads, dat I will! As soon as I get to Canada, I'll set up a doctor shop, and won't I be poplar? Den I rec'on I will. I'll pull teef fer all de people in Canada."[291] Cato's prior instantiation as a comic figure who capitulates with apparent alacrity to his enslaver's requests is, by this scene, totally transformed. Rather than serving as a punch-line, Cato sees work in the medical field as a real path to establish himself professionally in his new life after self-emancipation. Cato remains a humorous figure through his final soliloquy, but his humor no longer conforms to the tropes of minstrelsy. His final statement in the play comically decries his enslaver for standing in the way of his love of Hannah: "Cuss ole massa, fer ef it warn't for him, I could have my wife wid me. Ef I hadn't church, I'd say "Damn ole massa!" but as I is a religious man, an' belongs to de church, I won't say no such thing."[292] Cato curses his enslaver even while pretending that he wouldn't do such a thing, thus adding a final, satisfying iteration of his tendency to operate as a trickster.

Like William Wells Brown, Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins worked in several genres. She wrote everything from dramatic stories, to mysteries, to comic plays. Her impact in her own time probably came most from her work on the *Colored American Magazine*, which she edited and contributed to from its beginning in 1900 until 1904.[293] Hopkins's serialized novels *Contending Forces: A Romance Illustrative of Negro Life North and South, Hagar's Daughter: A Story of*

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[291] Brown, "The Escape" 296.

[292] Brown, "The Escape" 298.

[293] For more on Hopkins's work at *Colored American Magazine*, see Alisha Knight, *Pauline Hopkins and the American Dream: An African American Writer's (Re)Visionary Gospel of Success*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2012.

Southern Prejudice, Of One Blood: Or, the Hidden Self, and *Winona: A Tale of Negro Life in the South and Southwest* have each received more scholarly interest than her early plays. Many of Hopkins's stories and novels dramatize the notion of "passing" for white when a character has a sometimes-secret African American lineage. The stories often explore racial kinship and the illogic of racism. "Peculiar Sam" addresses race in the United States using a very different mode. While Hopkins's stories often employ what might be described as melodramatic or neo-gothic, her play fits into a much smaller category, that of the anti-minstrel show, while including elements of melodrama.

Like Brown's "The Escape," Hopkins's play is a provocative pastiche containing a variety of African American character types familiar from minstrelsy, along with African American spirituals and various minstrel songs. Also like Brown's play, "Peculiar Sam" challenges and repurposes those generic forms. As Hannah Wallinger puts it, Hopkins "uses the minstrel model, exposes its ridiculous hyperbole, and subverts it with her own message."[294] William Wells Brown's recent biographer, Ezra Greenspan, suggests a personal connection between Hopkins and Brown: "she [Hopkins] had known [William and his wife Annie] nearly all her conscious life, but the relationship also had overlapping familial and communal dimensions. The Brown, Gray, and Hopkins families were reputable strands in Boston's tight-knit black community, which numbered no more than 2,500 people after the Civil War."[295] Though "The Escape" was not widely performed, it is quite plausible that Hopkins knew of it as a result of

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[294] Hannah Wallinger, *Pauline E. Hopkins: A Literary Biography* (Athens: University of Georgia Press), 36.

[295] Ezra Greenspan. *William Wells Brown: An African American Life.* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2014), 455.

their intersecting social circles.[296] In a sense, then, Hopkins's play is a generational response to Brown's. Her play enters a very different *Zeitgeist* than Brown's play, and there is a correspondingly different tone and approach. Hopkins's play extends the self-emancipation narrative into the Reconstruction era.

"Peculiar Sam" begins with a scene in which an enslaved family lives on a southern farm. The family escapes after the title character, Sam, discovers that his love interest Virginia, known as Jinny, has been forced to marry Jim, an overseer at the farm who is himself enslaved. Much of the play occurs after Sam, Virginia, Mammy [Sam's mother], Juno [Sam's sister], Pete, and Pomp [Sam's friends] escape from the Magnolia Farm. The play follows their travails through the Underground Railroad as they try to make it to Canada. The second act begins when the travelers arrive at the home of Caesar, a stationmaster on the Underground Railroad, and eventual love interest of Mammy. In the next act, the group crosses the river into Canada in dramatic and triumphant fashion. In contrast to the ending of "The Escape," the final act occurs years later in Canada. We learn that Sam has been elected as a congressman from the state of Ohio, and Jim, the overseer from the plantation, has become a successful attorney in Massachusetts. Virginia has maintained fealty to her marriage to Jim, despite the fact that it was not legally binding and that she was married under duress. With Jim's blessing, Virginia feels free to marry Sam.

The characters in the play exhibit generational differences in their actions, and most obviously, in their speech. The older characters speak and sing in dialect, while the younger

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[296] At the age of 12, Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins, then named Pauline Allen wrote a prize-winning essay on the subject of temperance. The contest had been created by William Wells Brown. As Ezra Greenspan muses, "It would not take much imagination […] to see him personally handing her a gold coin-a fit act of literary patronage by one generation of its successor. See Greenspan, *William Wells Brown*, 455.

characters lose their dialects and speak Standard English. The generation gap also comes clear when the characters escape enslavement. The titular Sam develops an ability to code-switch, performing both sides of what Marvin McAllister calls the Sambo-savant symmetry.[297] He ends the play as an accomplished politician and public speaker, but he continues to perform minstrel songs in dialect as well. As Lois Brown argues, "The key to Hopkins's rebuttal of American blackface minstrelsy lies not in her rejection of burnt cork and face paint but in her characters' masterful deployment of language."[298] Dialect speech, Brown continues, "constitutes a mask of blackness, or even more specifically, a mask of blackface."[299] Hopkins subverts the distortion of blackface performance by using its characteristics as a mask, then removes that mask to emphasize its artifice.

The play's songs, both spirituals and minstrel songs, likewise enter into a complex interplay with racial representation. The songs are used as occasions for Sam Lucas, the star of the play, to demonstrate his ability as a performer. Lucas enjoyed considerable fame as a performer in the Midwest and elsewhere, and as we shall see in the next section, there is reason to believe that some of the play is meant as a way for him to perform his standard hits. The songs also tend to underscore the action in the play. When the group escapes, they sing "Steal Away," and "Gospel Trail," both spirituals that refer to salvation, but also clandestinely to self-emancipation. Similarly, the nostalgic minstrel songs are performed in the context of Mammy's and Caesar's musings about their sensory memories of their prior home in the South. Perhaps the

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[297] McAllister, "The Rise of African American Drama," 224.

[298] Brown, *Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins*, 129-30.

[299] Brown, *Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins*, 130.

play is a story about home, leaving home, and not having a home in a way that produces ideological responses in the form of quasi-pathological nostalgia.

Ezra Greenspan views the use of the minstrel songs, as well as the characters of Mammy and particularly Caesar, as "regressive."[300] There is some textual evidence to suggest this. For example, Caesar falls into nostalgic rapture at the sound of Virginia's performance of the Stephen Foster standard "Swanee River." When contemplating his death, Caesar wishes to return to the land of his birth to be buried along with his former enslavers at Magnolia Farm. In a slightly different vein, Mammy appears to view her own blackness as an embodiment of sin. Though she states that "we's all [God's] chillren, an He lubs us all," she also believes that in death "we's all to be washed in a powerful riber, an' arter that, we'll be all white."[301] It would seem that Mammy and Caesar exhibit a false consciousness that endears them to their prior enslavement and makes them ashamed of their blackness. But there are two further complicating factors. First, the play is portraying, but not endorsing, the poignant fact that slavery remains a commanding force years after the condition of enslavement has ended both on a small and large scale. As Lois Brown puts it, "Hopkins ultimately invites audiences to consider if it is possible to free oneself from home, no matter how contested a site that is."[302] Second, though the characters engage in some nostalgic acts even in the end of the play, these acts surround their own, created domestic space, not that of their enslavers.

It is worth quoting Lois Brown at some length on the subversive use of the Mammy figure:

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[300] Greenspan, *William Wells Brown*, 458.

[301] Hopkins, "*Peculiar Sam,*" 559.

[302] Brown, *Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins*, 110.

> Hopkins systematically challenges the domestic iconography and proscriptive cultural politics applied to characters that were antithetical to femininity, desirability, or womanhood. Mammy's desire for freedom is never complicated by her allegiance to the white family she serves. Her primary allegiance to her children and their happiness obscures the typically romanticized slavery relationship between a mammy and the family of her white owners. Once again, revisionist slavery drama did not feature a black mammy but instead introduced audiences to an African American mother, one whose priorities emanated from her republican desires to facilitate her children's acquisition of citizenship and domestic stability.
>
> …In *Underground Railroad*, domesticity in general, and African American domesticity in particular, was under siege by a willful white patriarchy and a complicit African American contingent. Hopkins suggested that self-emancipation was not only necessary for slaves who wanted to wrest control of their bodies away from their masters, but for all those who sought to determine their own domestic and familial agendas.[303]

Brown's analysis implicitly answers one part of the question as to Hopkins's choice to include characters whose connection to stereotypes is so on the nose – Mammy chief among them. It is only by directly countering the idea of a mammy figure as exemplifying affective relations between enslaver and enslaved that one can hollow out and refill that figure with new signification. When Mammy learns of Sam's election, she declares that she has nothing left to live for, suggesting that providing a chance for better life outcomes for her *own* children was the chief goal of her life.

In the first two scenes, Sam's speech patterns closely resemble those of Mammy or Caesar, but after he has lived in Ohio for a few years, he sounds as follows: "I think you may safely congratulate me, on a successful election. My friends in Cincinnati have stood by me nobly."[304] Marvin McAllister views Sam's rapid transformation as evidence that one of the play's optimistic messages is that the United States has progressed rapidly and experienced an impressive degree of racial reconciliation."[305] I would counter that the generational divide presented in the text undercuts this optimism to some extent. In contrast to Mammy, Sam has a

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[303] Brown, *Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins,* 124-25.

[304] Hopkins, "Peculiar Sam," 562.

[305] McAllister, "The Rise of African American Drama," 230.

great opportunity to succeed in the North during the Reconstruction era, which carried significance not only in the South. While Sam finds strategies to excel in his new environment, Mammy finds solace in passing the baton to the next generation. Hopkins resists a homogenizing narrative. Writing more broadly of U.S. theatre history, Douglas Jones claims that "there was no way playwrights, actors, or other theatre makers could homogenize the vast and growing differences that reorganized American life, and they did not try."[306] Locality and place are almost absent in William Wells Brown's play; for Hopkins, on the other hand, the elements we usually associate with regionalism: dialect, landscape, and local culture, are all key components in the development of characters' identities. Above all, new forms of domesticity create alternative senses of emplacement usually denied to African American characters in minstrelsy and even melodrama. The ways this play breaks genre conventions relates closely to what P. Gabrielle Foreman argues about African American women's prose in the nineteenth century: "nineteenth-century Black women authors…often forward multiple imbricated agendas" employing "a formal complexity often denied to prose affiliates with sentimental and domestic thematic conventions."[307] Similarly, Hopkins's play operates in this register of "simultaneous address" in order to speak to, about, past, and/or for the play's diverse audience members.[308] The next section will seek to find out what can be discovered about that audience and its engagement with the text.

iii. "The Underground Railroad's" Midwestern Tour

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[306] Douglas Jones, "American; or, The Emergence of Audiences and their Blackface Salve," *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 6, no. 2 (Fall 2018): 407.

[307] P. Gabrielle Foreman, *Activist Sentiments: Reading Black Women in the Nineteenth Century* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 4.

[308] Foreman, *Activist Sentiments*, 4.

Given that Hopkins's play both critiques and employs tropes of minstrelsy, takes subtle jabs at plantation nostalgia, and supports a message of black self-empowerment, it is worth questioning how the play was received by both white and non-white audiences in the Midwest, just after Reconstruction. Mary McAvoy begins her essay on the 1879 midwestern tour of "The Underground Railroad" by claiming that it was a flop. "Reviews panned the production," McAvoy asserts, calling it a "plagiaristic knock-off of Joseph Bradford's *Out of Bondage*."[309] Indeed some reviews of the play's midwestern performances critique the plot and the performances of Sam Lucas's troupe, though almost all praise Lucas himself. On the other hand, despite the absence of the famous Hyers Sisters, many reviewers were exuberant about the performances of Inez Fernandez, Alice Mink, Jennie Smith, and particularly Claudio Brindis de Salas Garrido, a black, Cuban-born violinist. The dozens of available newspapers contain many reviews that describe loud ovations, encores, and large crowds. Though the tour was relatively short, it stirred up a good deal of notice in the press, and some of the reviews testify to the significant aesthetic and even moral contributions of the play.

It is challenging to imagine the work these performances did at the time. What, for example, did Hopkins's play mean in 1879 in northern rural and urban areas? Who were the spectators, and what were they expecting to see? Lois Brown points out that in the late nineteenth century, Milwaukee, for instance, was dominated by socially progressive German immigrants who had become accustomed to seeing black performers on the stage.[310] The Grand Opera, where Hopkins's play staged a four-performance run, also featured Benedict & Cotton's

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[309] Mary McAvoy, "Between Blackface and *Bondage*: The Incompletely Forgotten Failure of *The Underground Railroad*'s 1879 Midwestern Tour." *The Journal of American Drama and Theater* 26 no. 1 (Winter 2014): 7.

[310] Brown, *Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins*, 113-114.

Grand Troubadour Minstrel Scene, as well as a dramatic adaptation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* earlier in the season.[311] Brown's suggestion that the Milwaukee audiences were composed of progressive German immigrants has proven difficult to substantiate. While leading English-language Milwaukee newspapers published advertisements and reviews, I was unable to find any mention of *The Underground Railroad* in Milwaukee's German-language press. On the dates when one would expect to see coverage of Hopkins's play, the *Banner und Volksfreund Sonntagsblatt* ran advertisements for a German-American play by Julius Collmer, called *Doctor Klaus,* and a show called *Loreley: Die Rhine-Nixe*, a musical presentation about the mythological mermaids of the Rhine most known from Heinrich Heine's poem "Die Lorelei." The paper also mentioned performances of some of J. S. Bach's works and the works of other classical composers in the days before and during the performances by Lucas and company.[312] The *Freie Presse* advertised the show preceding *The Underground Railroad* at the Grand Opera, *Der Diplomat der alten Schule* [Diplomat of the Old School], but appears never to have mentioned Hopkins's play, as far as I have been able to determine.[313] Many German-language papers exhibit a predilection to cover German-American cultural events, but this is not universally the case, and these papers certainly engage with the broader current events in their cities and regions. This does not mean that Brown's suggestion is incorrect, though it leaves some doubt regarding how engaged the German-American community in Milwaukee was with this particular performance, and it emphasizes the difficulty in judging exactly who attended the performances of the play in various cities.

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[311] Brown, *Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins*, 114.

[312] "Nordseite Theater," *Sonntagsblatt des Banner und Volksfreund,* March 30, 1879.

[313] "Neue Anzeigen," *Freie Presse,* March 29, 1879.

The marketing of *The Underground Railroad*, given its context on the minstrel circuit, contrasts with the play's message of African American progress. The advertisements found in white-owned periodicals emphasized the presence of the actor Sam Lucas, for whom Hopkins purportedly constructed the role of Sam.[314] Lucas was a useful choice because of his known talents as a minstrel performer. As Lois Brown points out, he could perform the "sharp repartee, malapropisms, and other lexical deviations" associated with minstrelsy only to remove his figurative mask and speak in other forms of self-conscious and constructed speech later in the play.[315] Just months before, Sam Lucas could be found touring the Midwest with "Sprague's Georgia Minstrels," and his fame was tied to his ability in that brand of humor at that point in his career. Though advertisements tend to put Sam Lucas's name in the largest print, they also refer to the play as a "Great Moral and Musical Drama" featuring a "Grand Parlor Concert" to follow the show.[316] Though this suggests that the performance aimed at moral and artistic seriousness, its placement alongside minstrelsy is also apparent to audiences.

One of the first advertisement for the show exhibits the contrast between the play's content and its marketing to largely white audiences. The advertisement for the March 14th and 15th 1879 performances in Ottawa, Ill states "The piece is said to be replete with startling incidents, negro eccentricities, and soul stirring plantation melodies portraying slave life and their struggles for freedom."[317] This line exoticizes the characters in the play, focusing on "negro eccentricities," and it hints that the play's music will be in service of its emotion-stirring

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[314] "Written expressly for him by Miss Pauline E. Hopkins." See "Amusements," *The Des Moines Register* May 7, 1879.

[315] Brown, *Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins*, 131-32.

[316] "Amusements," *The Saint Paul Globe,* April 17, 1879.

[317] "Opera House," *The Ottawa Free Trader,* March 8, 1879.

melodrama, when in fact, many of the "plantation melodies" and minstrel songs function as parodies of minstrelsy itself. The advertisement invites a reading of the play as a piece of nostalgia.

Hopkins's play was performed in many cities and towns throughout the Midwest.[318] Not just major cities were on the docket. Towns as small as Humboldt, KS and Austin, MN also hosted performances.[319] The tour likely began in Joliet, Illinois on March 10, 1879 and went on to Ottawa, Rockford, and Freeport, then north to Wisconsin, where the troupe gave seven performances in six days in Milwaukee, Appleton, Green Bay, and Oshkosh. They then moved on to Watertown and Madison for one show each, northwest toward the Twin Cities, then south through several towns in southern Minnesota, then Iowa, Nebraska, and on to Kansas, where Sam Lucas had an especially dedicated following. The troupe performed in Leavenworth, Lawrence, Topeka, Kansas City, Atchison, Newton, Wichita, Emporia, Humboldt, and finally at Fort Scott, adding an unplanned encore performance on June 7th.[320] The troupe then made their way back through Illinois, ending in Aurora. Lasting under four months, the midwestern tour of *The Underground Railroad* reached an impressive number of locations, many of which were rural and remote.[321] The mileage covered during the tour would have been impossible just a few

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[318] Brown, *Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins*, 111.

[319] Prior scholars have often cited Eileen Southern's list of states where the play was performed: Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan, Iowa, Kansas, and Missouri. Though this is mostly correct, the list leaves out Nebraska and, I believe erroneously adds Michigan and Missouri. I have included what I believe to be an accurate list of cities where the play was performed as Figure 1 at the end of this chapter. I assembled the list using contemporary newspapers.

[320] See the final page of this chapter for a list of tour dates that is as complete as possible as of this writing.

[321] I established the details regarding the dates and cities where *The Underground Railroad* was performed together using advertisements and reviews from contemporary newspapers. See Figure 1 for a complete list of the cities and dates of the 1879 *The Underground Railroad* Midwestern tour.

years earlier; many of the railways that Sam Lucas and company travelled on were less than a decade old in 1879.

A reviewer from Atchison, Kansas offers an intriguing hint regarding the composition of the audience in that city. "Sam Lucas and his company with the new play of 'The Underground Railroad' drew a large audience at Corinthian Hall last night composed of all grades in Atchison society, and of both colors."[322] The same reviewer goes on,

> The success of this company is another triumph for the colored race. In the old days Ira Aldridge, the black tragedian, went to Europe for a hearing. 'Blind Tom,' one of the first of the 'genuine' who appeared on the stage was regarded only as an inspired idiot. The Hampton singers and other troupes of the kind attracted attention but gained no credit for originality. They were supposed to sing their plantation melodies just as birds sing, by nature.[323]

The reviewer continues this litany of African American performers and ends with the line "the color line may yet be abolished in music, and possibly [in] drama." By the account of this reviewer, the play was successful not only in bringing together a diverse group of Kansans, but its aesthetic achievements also carried the promise of racial reconciliation. The reviewer seems to point to a shift in the role African American performers have taken on in the culture, no longer, he implies, should African Americans fulfill a role defined by white people as curiosities or exceptional cases. For this reviewer, "The Underground Railroad" represents a milestone in artistic achievement.

At the time of the "Underground Railroad" tour, the star of the troupe, Sam Lucas, was already well known as a minstrel performer and was identified with the Hyers sisters and their recent performances of Joseph Bradford's *Out of Bondage*. A review in the Iowa State Register

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[322] "The Underground Railroad," *The Atchison Daily Champion,* May 20, 1879.

[323] "The Underground Railroad," *The Atchison Daily Champion,* May 20, 1879. The reviewer refers to Ira Aldridge, 1807-1867, Blind Tom Wiggins, a piano prodigy, 1849-1908, and The Hampton Singers of the Hampton Institute, a historically black university in Hampton, Virginia.

in Des Moines from May 11th begins with a sentence aimed at those who follow Sam Lucas's career closely: "Those who were under the impression that Sam Lucas…had "missed it" when he left the company to whose fame he had contributed so much, were probably agreeably disappointed if they saw him in his new play and new role at the Opera House last evening."[324] Lucas was so well-known that people would go to the trouble to speculate about his decisions in taking on new roles and joining with a new troupe. Similarly, a review in *The Atchison Daily Champion* claims that "the Hyers Sisters were the first [African American performers] to appear in anything requiring dramatic construction, and now the Lucas troupe proves that the ability required is not confined to the Hyers Sisters alone."[325] In Kansas, many newspapers contained informal blurbs and jokes about Lucas, some of which are difficult to understand without context. For example, *The Clay Center Dispatch,* a newspaper from Clay Center, KS, where Lucas and company never even performed, contains the following decontextualized line: "The Mayor of Fort Scott allowed the Sam Lucas troupe to preform [sic.] Sunday night but forbids any applause."[326] Perhaps this joke suggests a heavy policing of black people in the region, or maybe it just says something about the particular personality of the mayor of Fort Scott. Either way, this and similar references to Lucas suggest a close relationship between him and his fans, or at least the existence of an inventive marketing campaign. Many advertisements punned on the connection between the play's title, *The Underground Railroad,* and the newly constructed midwestern railways. "Great Reduction in railroad fare. Excursion tickets now on sale at 318 Walnut street. Sam Lucas, Conductor…Tickets now on sale over the Underground Railroad to

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[324] "The Underground Railroad," *Iowa State Register*, May 11, 1889.

[325] "The Underground Railroad," *The Atchison Daily Champion*, May 20, 1879.

[326] *The Clay Center Dispatch,* June 26, 1889.

the Opera House this evening. First class tickets only 50 cents."[327] Such jokes are to be found in many papers and amount to a lighthearted treatment of the play's serious subject. In addition, Sam Lucas's personal life was speculated upon in the style of a tabloid. *The Des Moines Register* reported that "Sam Lucas, formerly of the Hyers Sisters troupe, and who severed his connection with the same because one of the sisters wouldn't marry him, has now a colored troupe of his own."[328] The record of advertisements and reviews from the 1879 tour reveals a free-wheeling approach to promotion paired with a level of excitement and in-group talk among the newly connected rural audiences.

Many of the most glowing reviews of the play and of Lucas's performance rely on racist essentialism. "The vocal efforts of the company were very good, and the blending of their voices in exquisite harmony recalled the old thought that some day the African race will excel in musical science," writes a reviewer in Fort Scott, KS. The reviewer continues, "no other race possesses the same natural aptitude for song, or the same unconscious and inventive gift of voice and note, and it must be that education and culture will produce great results in the field where nature seems to have done so much."[329] This reviewer relies on essentialist notions of innate musical talent among "Africans," and compounds the backhanded compliment by suggesting that perhaps, one day, the race could employ presumably European "musical science" to reach new artistic heights. It is worth noting that Pauline Hopkins herself seems to have held adjacent but distinct opinions regarding music in African American culture. According to Hannah Wallinger, Hopkins "emphasizes the unifying genius of musical talent that is not confined to the educated

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[327] *The Des Moines Register,* May 10, 1879.

[328] *The Des Moines Register,* April 17, 1879.

[329] *Fort Scott Daily Monitor,* June 8, 1879.

and white part of the population. She is one of the early writers who claim that African American music is America's most original contribution to world music: 'the genius of music, supposed to be the gift of only the most refined and intellectual of the human family, sprang into active life among the lowly tillers of the soil and laborers in the rice swamps of the south.'"[330] Hopkins continues, '"The distinguishing feature of Negro song is its pathos and trueness to nature.'"[331] The Fort Scott reviewer would surely agree with Hopkins's assertion that African American music exhibits a "trueness to nature," but would likely disagree with her subsequent assertion, that it is "a part of the classical music of the century."[332]

One final review will serve to temper the enthusiasm stoked by the play's subversive nature and its various progressive reviewers. *The Evening News* of Emporia, KS writes:

> The Lucas company gave an entertainment last night that deserved a big house, and would have had it had there not been so many public entertainments of late. In the play, "Underground Railroad," there is not a word or act that could offend the most refined taste, and the performance which simply represents the escape of a company of plantation darkies from bondage, and their flight to Canada, during the existence of slavery, is interspersed with a plentiful supply of plantation songs, which are sung better than by any company we have ever listened to.[333]

This review makes plain the fact that the play's attempt to subvert the trappings of minstrelsy sometimes went unnoticed. This reviewer liked the play for its consistency with familiar portrayals of "plantation darkies" and for its "plentiful supply of plantation songs." It seems that some audiences enjoy it for its familiar elements, some who watch a bit more closely notice something not quite right about those elements, and some applaud its aesthetic achievement precisely because it outstrips many prior depictions of African Americans on stage, especially those embodied by white actors in makeup. Mary McAvoy's observation that "Midwestern

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[330] Wallinger, *Pauline E. Hopkins,* 30-31.

[331] Wallinger, *Pauline E. Hopkins,* 31.

[332] Quoted in Wallinger, *Pauline E. Hopkins,* 31.

[333] "Sam Lucas," *The Evening News* [Emporia, KS], May 29, 1879.

territories provided sites for theatrical experimentation between 1865 and 1900 [and had an] open-minded atmosphere [that] arose from a variety of both ideological and pragmatic reasons" is to some extent borne out in the case of "The Underground Railroad." The midwestern states, hardly monolithic then or now, offered the kind of cultural and ideological mixture that resulted in loose, almost tailor-made performances. It is no wonder that Hopkins's original script left so much space for Sam Lucas and company to read the room and improvise.

iv. Absented Audiences: The African American Press, the German-Language Press, and some Limitations of Searchable Archives

The assumption that a particular Midwestern audience was composed of white, US-born people in 1879 is difficult to prove or disprove, but it is certain that the new archival infrastructures in the form of searchable newspaper databases such as Chronicling America and Newspapers.com, and other providers of digitized historical primary documents, tend to reproduce the sense that white-owned, English-language newspapers are the chief sources of historical record, sometimes despite significant efforts on the part of these organizations to counter this trend. On the one hand, various digitized archives, especially Newspapers.com, has made it more possible to establish the dates and other details of the performances of "The Underground Railroad," a task that would have required many trips, phone calls, microfilm reels, and a fair bit of good fortune not too long ago. But the ease that these archives provide also has a tendency to de-emphasize the use of those newspapers that are not included; and there are a great many in this case. Reflecting on the state of digitization of African American newspapers, Ben Fagan points out that he is "routinely confronted with the deeply uneven nature of digitization

projects."[334] Many African American newspapers are absent from the most widely available databases, or they were not preserved in the first place, leaving a spotty record in the digital archive. In fact, there may well be African American newspapers that I have not found, or which have not survived.[335]

The *Underground Railroad* tour of 1879 comes at a time just before a large boom in black newspapers in the Midwest. Wisconsin's first black newspaper, the *Wisconsin Afro-American*, was founded in 1892, and foundered shortly thereafter.[336] Only seven issues of the newspaper have been digitized for availability on newspapers.com as of this writing. Minnesota's first known black newspaper the *Western Appeal* likewise did not begin publication until shortly after Hopkins's play made its way through the state.[337] A more robust eighty-three issues of that newspaper exist in digital form. Iowa saw the publication of its first black periodical somewhat earlier; the *Colored Advance* of Corning, Iowa published its first issue on August 1 of 1882, to be followed one year later by the Des Moines *Rising Son.* While the

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[334] Benjamin Fagan, "Chronicling White America," *American Periodicals: A Journal of History & Criticism* 26, no. 1 (2016): 10.

[335] It is an exercise in humility to research nineteenth-century newspapers that are not always readily preserved and/or digitized. For recent examples of deep engagement with early African American print culture, see Ben Fagan, *The Black Newspaper and the Chosen Nation* (Athens: University of Georgie Press, 2016); Eric Gardner, *Black Print Unbound: The Christian Recorder, African American Literature, and Periodical Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Lara Langer Cohen and Jordan Alexander Stein, eds. *Early Black American Writing and the Making of a Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); and Derrick R. Spires, *The Practice of Citizenship: Black Politics and Print Culture in the Early United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019).

[336] Genevieve G. McBride, "The Progress of 'Race Men' and 'Colored Women' in the Black Press in Wisconsin, 1892-1985," in *The Black Press in the Middle West, 1865-1985,* ed. Henry Lewis Suggs (Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 1996), 329.

[337] Henry Lewis Suggs, "Democracy on Trial: The Black Press, Black Migration, and the Evolution of Culture and Community in Minnesota, 1865-1970," in *The Black Press in the Middle West, 1865-1985,* ed. Henry Lewis Suggs (Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 1996), 167.

Western Post of Hastings, Nebraska appeared as early as the summer of 1876, it was short-lived and no copies remain; successful black newspapers did not appear in Nebraska until the 1890s.[338] Like Nebraska, Illinois had one African American-run newspaper before the 1879 tour, the *Cairo Weekly Gazette,* but Sam Lucas and company didn't make it that far south. It wasn't until the 1890s that black newspapers burgeoned in Illinois.[339] Of all the midwestern states touched by the tour of 1879, only Kansas had an active African American press in cities relevant to the tour. The "Underground Railroad" tour might have enjoyed a far different presence in the public sphere, especially in the realm of black public discussion, had it taken place a decade or two later, once many black newspapers had been established throughout the Midwest. I make this claim provisionally, since there could be earlier African American newspapers that have not survived, or which researchers have not yet uncovered. As it is, the play received some attention from the *Colored Citizen,* then published in Topeka, Kansas. This newspaper has not been digitized as of this writing, but it is available on microfilm. That one account, alongside a history of black life in the Midwest before 1880, will provide some needed counterbalance to the prior accounts of the performances in white newspapers.

Up to this point, the newspapers I have cited in this chapter have all been white-owned and operated. The reviewers are anonymous, so it is impossible to prove that each review was written by a white writer, yet I think it is clear from the perspectives cited in the previous section that most or all of the reviewers saw Sam Lucas as a member of a separate community. There is

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[338] D. G. Paz, "The Black Press and the Issues of Race, Politics, and Culture on the Great Plains of Nebraska, 1865-1985," in *The Black Press in the Middle West, 1865-1985,* ed. Henry Lewis Suggs (Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 1996), 215-16.

[339] Juliet E.K. Walker, "The Promised Land: The Chicago *Defender* and the Black Press in Illinois, 1862-1970," in *The Black Press in the Middle West, 1865-1985,* ed. Henry Lewis Suggs (Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 1996), 13-15.

evidence that some, and at times many, of the members of the audience were black, but a consideration of that fact is only occasionally present within the newspaper reports. By the late 1870s, there was a significant African American population in some of the cities where "The Underground Railroad" was performed.[340]

The following review appeared in the May 30th issue of the *Colored Citizen* of Fort Scott and Topeka, Kansas:

> The Underground R. R. Troup (colored) that performed at the Opera House on Thursday was truly wonderful and surprising; Jose Brindes De Sallis, as a violinist, operates upon his instrument with the greatest of ease and accuracy, and is as fine as we have ever heard; Sam Lucas, well deserves and sustained his wide known reputation as the King of all colored comedians, and in fact the entire Troup [sic] was of a first class character; the play is sensitive and well worth the price of admission.[341]

At first glance, the review does not differ significantly from many of those cited in the previous section. It lavishes praise on Sam Lucas and Jose Brindes De Sallis; it is a bit more complimentary of the rest of the actors than most reviews. But what is most interesting is the word "sensitive" that is used to describe the play. Rarely, if ever, is the play described in this way in the white press. Some comment on the play's melodrama, most comment on its humor, but none comment on anything like sensitivity. What could it mean to call a comedic melodrama set to music sensitive? The evidence is tantalizingly scant. Normally the word sensitive refers to the viewer of an aesthetic object rather than the aesthetic object itself; viewer of a performance could be sensitive to its emotional or aesthetic impressions. Perhaps the play is sensitive in that it exhibits complex emotions and character motivations not always found in works of a similar genre.

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[340] Loewen, *Sundown Towns,* 47.

[341] "Untitled," *Colored Citizen* (Ft. Scott and Topeka, KS), May 30, 1879.

Commentators on the Midwestern tour often mention the German population in Milwaukee as a component of their analysis of the audience. As previously mentioned, I was unable to substantiate the presence of the play's advertisements in German-language periodicals in Milwaukee at that time. It is nevertheless intriguing to consider the fact that a number of the cities and towns where the play was performed were home to significant numbers of foreign-born people, especially from German-speaking countries. In fact, many if not most of these cities had German-language newspapers in 1879, and of those, only those in Kansas are available in digital form at present. The German-language newspapers from several other states are available on microfilm, which can often be accessed only at historical societies. Seeking to establish facts surrounding German audiences for "The Underground Railroad" has proven relatively difficult. Did German-American audiences attend the play, and if so, did they view it in the same ways that other white audiences did? The answers to these questions are maddeningly elusive due to the unavailability of most of the newspapers that existed at that time.

Of the Kansan newspapers available in digital form and the Wisconsin newspapers available on microfilm, I have found no mentions of Hopkins's play in the relevant places on the relevant dates. I did, however, find traces of a public conversation regarding the beginnings of post-reconstruction movement of African Americans out of the increasingly violent and inhospitable Southern states. Hopkins's play was indeed pertinent to its moment. What became known as the "Exodus to Kansas," a period in which thousands of African Americans moved to the West and Midwest was in full swing in the spring and early summer of 1879. Newspapers in both Kansas and Wisconsin published pieces critical of plans for African Americans to move to the West, but some took the opportunity to gloat over the Union's victory in the Civil War and to

lampoon the laziness and greed of Southerners while welcoming African American migrants as a valuable addition to the workforce.

An editorial in the April 3rd issue of the Green Bay *Currier,* argued from a "limited government" perspective.[342] Citing congressmen Joseph Rainey, Richard Cain, and Robert Smalls, all African Americans, the author claims that African Americans don't want to go to the West or the Southwest to win new political rights, they simply want to have peace, and the freedom to enjoy their rights as citizens. Such a plan would require opening a new territory for African Americans. But, the author counters, the government could never manage to do that: the only thing the government can do to help is to defray taxes on new land acquisitions. In short, the author advocates for limited action by the government toward establishing an African American state or territory.

In Kansas the issue was far more pressing, and the debate was more heated. While the Green Bay observer remains in the realm of ideas and abstractions such as tax incentives and philosophies of government, one writer in Kansas focuses on practical notions such as the timing of planting season, suggesting that it is too late in the season for new arrivals to the state to plant crops in time to get a significant harvest in the fall.[343] Others highlight the strain on trains and other infrastructure caused by the new arrivals who were "laid upon our throats by demagogues from the East," referring to the U.S. Congress.[344] The more or less civil debates in some parts of the Kansas-German press are accompanied by snide, one-line comments that show a tendency to cast African Americans as "other." One paper highlights the birth of an African American girl in

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[342] "Die Neger wollen auswandern," *Green Bay Courier*, April 3, 1879, 4.

[343] "Unsere Einwanderung," *Kansas Freie Presse*, May 14, 1879, 2.

[344] *Das Neue Vaterland,* [Newton, KS], May 31, 1879, 4.

Topeka with twelve fingers and twelve toes.[345] Another scoffs at the possibility that African Americans come from noble lineages.[346] Each of these texts is what newspaper historians call a "slug," a short piece used to help with the spacing of more significant articles, but their message is one of skepticism and othering.

One exception to the skeptical treatment of the issue of African American migration to Kansas is to be found in the *Kansas Freie Presse.* The writer sneers at the southern states for their mistreatment of African Americans, but more to the point, for their foolishness in "bulldozing" the workforce that ought to allow for great prosperity.[347] Now, the writer claims, the South is poised to lose its only manual laborers and has no hope of replacing them, except perhaps with workers of Chinese descent, which, the writer points out, the Southern states have voted to keep out. In short, this argument rests on the assumption that African Americans from the South stand to make Kansan farmers and merchants wealthy through their surplus labor power, while the South stands to lose what economic viability remained after the Civil War. It is an argument from a capitalist perspective, and one that views African American workers exclusively as manual laborers.

These examples from the German-language presses in Wisconsin and especially Kansas demonstrate a few things. First, they show that African American migration, advancement, and continued persecution were front-page news at the time of the tour. Second, they demonstrate a sense of ownership by German-Americans, many of whom were themselves new arrivals to the United States. Finally, that sense of ownership takes several forms; on the one hand, it leads

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[345] *Der Courier,* [Atchison, KS], May 27, 1879, 1.

[346] *Das Neue Vaterland* [Newton, KS], May 24, 1879, 4.

[347] "Die Auswanderung der Neger aus dem Süden" *Kansas Freie Presse* [Leavenworth, KS], May 14, 1879, 2.

these observers to cast the newly arriving African Americans as other, and on the other hand, it leads the writers to view the new arrivals as potentially exploitable labor power. It is easy to see in these public debates in 1879 the beginnings of the challenges that would ultimately cause many African Americans to leave rural Kansas and rural Wisconsin.

Using the most available sources, an analysis of the nature of the performances and the nature of the audiences at the performances of "The Underground Railroad" is almost certainly inadequate and unrepresentative of the people who were actually in the audiences. Dozens and dozens of reviews and ads geared toward white audiences are there to tell the story of the play's performances, while reports by and for immigrant and African American audience members remain largely inaccessible. This case gives evidence to the Foucauldian claim that the archive is an active participant in history, based on sets of power relations, and is not merely a neutral repository. This is true even when the intention is to make primary sources open and available.

v. Conclusion: *Peculiar Sam* in Boston

The midwestern tour ended in the summer of 1879, and "The Underground Railroad" would sit on the shelf for about half a year. The next performance took place in Pauline Hopkins's home city of Boston at the on December 8th, 1879 at the Boston Young Men's Christian Union.[348] The following year at the Oakland Garden, a newly established seasonal garden theatre in Boston's Roxbury neighborhood, Hopkins's play was performed eight times in six days. Then called "Escape from Slavery," the play included the Hyers Sisters alongside Sam

[348] Wallinger, *Pauline E. Hopkins,* 36.

Lucas.[349] Hopkins also received a more prominent position in the advertising campaign, as the troupe was renamed "Hopkins's Colored Troubadours."

The play ran each evening from July 5th through July 10th, 1880 and twice on the 7th and 10th. Advertisements and reviews in the Boston Globe and the Boston Post depict an extravagant staging of the production complete with a boat race on a faux Mississippi River using "working representation[s] of the boats Robt. E. Lee and the Natchez."[350] The play was followed each night by "the cotton plantation scene…in a grand plantation festival."[351] The one short review of the show from the July 1880 run reads as follows:

> Hopkins's Colored Troubadours, in which organization are included the famous Hyer [sic] Sisters and Sam Lucas, are the principal attraction at Oakland Garden this week. The drama, "Excaped [sic] from Slavery, or the Underground Railway [sic]," is presented by them with fine effect, and the plantation songs, which are incidental to the piece, are sung melodiously and pleasantly. Between the acts a number of artists contribute songs and dances, and after the performance, the famous plantation scene, with a new effect in the way of a steamboat race, is given on the lawn.[352]

This description makes clear that the performance was extravagant almost to the point of absurdity. The play's subtle acts of subversion in the plot and character presentation, so tantalizing to readers today, may have been overshadowed by the plantation themed musical numbers and the steamboat race. On the other hand, it is possible that the southern themed steamboats are meant to mock white southern identity while nevertheless evoking scenes of plantation nostalgia, perhaps for the purpose of satire. This example underscores the great

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[349] The two Boston newspapers that ran advertisements for the show gave two slightly different names. The *Boston Post* called it "Escaped from Slavery, to the Underground Railway," while the *Boston Globe* called it simply "Escape from Slavery," leaving out the subtitle and leaving "escape" in the present tense.

[350] "Oakland Garden," *The Boston Globe,* July 7, 1880.

[351] "Oakland Garden," *The Boston Globe,* July 7, 1880.

[352] "Oakland Garden," *Boston Post,* July 7, 1880.

difficulty in decoding and understanding a performance by relying on the textual evidence printed in newspapers.

What remains in the most accessible parts of the archive of the earliest performances of "Peculiar Sam" gives evidence primarily of the workings of a culture industry that made its money by exploiting caricatured blackness. Nevertheless, there is reason to believe that Hopkins's play was not just for white, US-born individuals both from demographic realities and from a few hints in the less readily available parts of the newspaper archive. This example shows the necessity for deeper dives into performance history that includes newspapers not found in searchable, online formats. Otherwise the African American Midwest and the transatlantic Midwest might continue to be erased from the record.

Scholars often focus on the fact that Pauline Hopkins's play is the first play we know of authored by an African American woman. Admittedly, there are dangers in making too much of this "firstness." For one thing, too much emphasis on the novelty of Hopkins's work elides the work of performers who were on stage prior to 1879, even including the performers who were in Hopkins's play. As Koritha Mitchell points out, "African Americans working on and behind the nineteenth-century stage preceded playwrights in the struggle to transform U.S. theatre so that it did not automatically dehumanize blacks but instead would enable self-representation."[353] "Peculiar Sam," then, ought not to be considered the first time African Americans found ways of countering the dehumanizing performances tied up with minstrelsy. Sam Lucas in particular enjoyed a great deal of notoriety both before and after the 1879 tour. Also "Peculiar Sam" does not comprise the first time an African American woman's perspective was heard across the Midwest. For example, Eric Gardner has traced many public lectures by Frances Ellen Watkins

[353] Mitchell, *Living with Lynching*, 44.

Harper in roughly the same places Hopkins's play would be performed half a decade later.[354] Rather than focusing on "firstness," I propose a focus on what might be termed "timeliness." What can we make of the particular combination of temporal and spatial contingencies accompanying the performance? This chapter has sought to establish the significance of recovering not just important early African American texts, but also in reconstructing their temporal, spatial, and performative configurations.

[354] Eric Gardner, "Frances E. W. Harper, the Mission of the War, and the Midwest" (presented paper, 61st Annual Convention of the Midwest Modern Language Association, Chicago, Ill, November 16, 2019). See also Carla Peterson, *Doers of the Word: African-American Women Speakers and Writers in the North (1830-1880)* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

The Underground Railroad: 1879 Tour

This list borrows from and builds on the archival work of earlier scholars, especially Mary McAvoy. Modifications and additions have been made based on evidence from digitized or microfilmed newspaper sources. It remains provisional.
(*) indicates that a date has been added or corrected from prior scholarly accounts.

March
10 – Joliet, IL*
14 – Ottawa, IL
15 – Ottawa, IL
23 – Rockford, IL
26 – Freeport, IL
28 – Racine, WI
29 – Racine, WI*
31 – Milwaukee, WI

April
1 – Milwaukee, WI
2 – Milwaukee, WI (Two performances)*
3 – Appleton, WI*
4 – Green Bay, WI*
5 – Oshkosh, WI*
9 – Watertown, WI*
10 – Madison, WI*
11 – Winona, MN*
12 – La Crosse, WI*
16 – St. Paul, MN*
18 – St. Paul, MN
19 – St. Paul, MN
20 – St. Paul, MN
21 – St. Paul, MN*
22 – Minneapolis, MN
23 – Mankato, MN
24 – Rochester, MN
25 – Faribault, MN
26 – Minneapolis, MN
28 – Owatonna, MN
29 – Austin, MN
30 – Waverly, MN

May
1 – Dubuque, IA
2 – Waterloo, IA*
5 – Clinton, IA
6 – Maquoketa, IA
8 – Cedar Rapids, IA
10 – Des Moines, IA
11 – Des Moines, IA (Sacred Concert)*
14 – Lincoln, NE*
15 – Lincoln, NE*
20 – Leavenworth, KS*
21 – Lawrence, KS
22 – Topeka, KS*
26 – Kansas City, KS*
27 – Atchison, KS
29 – Newton, KS*
30 – Wichita, KS*
31 – Wichita, KS

June
3 – Emporia, KS*
4 – Humboldt, KS*
5 – Humboldt, KS*
6 – Fort Scott, KS*
7 – Fort Scott, KS*
12 – Quincy, IL
13 – Quincy, IL
15 – Quincy, IL
17 – Galesburg, IL
20 – Aurora, IL

Conclusion. Toward a Cosmopolitan Regionalism

This dissertation has argued that transatlantic subjects in the latter half of the nineteenth century used the discourse of regional writing both to establish the boundaries of new communities and to form connections between communities that normally remain isolated from one another. I will conclude with a consideration of the implications for the life, politics, and art in the early twentieth century. As regional writing and regional art reveal themselves to operate as mobile discursive modes, it follows that the various elements comprising regional writing can be removed, reshuffled, reused, and reconfigured in new forms and new places. The following examples demonstrate regional writing's tendency to jump from local to international scales. These represent only a tiny sample of what might be called cosmopolitan regionalism.

In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, regional elements in poetry, music, and literature moved from sub-national to super-national. A clear example of this transfer appears in the work of Antonín Dvořák, as his operas and orchestral pieces show both modes in action. To take a few well-known examples, Dvořák's opera *Rusalka* and his series of orchestral pieces called *Slavonic Dances* employ elements of Slavic folk stories and repurposed folk music. *Rusalka*, the story of a water nymph who falls in love and becomes human, stems from Bohemian folktales that had been collected in the middle of the nineteenth century. Similarly, *Slavonic Dances* seeks to approximate the rhythms and melodies of Bohemian and Slavic folk music in orchestral form. Both of these examples fit squarely into artistic nationalism – they attempt to collect, curate, and repackage local cultural elements in order to apply them to broader national boundaries. One might counter that Dvořák's work is nationalist rather than regionalist, but I would claim that its application

to the national paradigm is artificial. The folk culture represented comes both from local and regional sources, which is placed into an emergent national frame.

Dvořák makes the leap to what I'm calling "cosmopolitan regionalism" when he travels to the United States and writes perhaps his most celebrated work, *Symphony No. 9 in E minor, "From a New World."* This symphony presents Dvořák's musical interpretation of the fabric of the United States. Dvořák, in considering how to represent the heterogeneous nation states the following:

> All races have their distinctively national songs, which they at once recognize as their own, even if they have never hea[r]d them before. When a Tcech, a Pole, or a Magyar in this country suddenly hears one of his folk-songs or dances, no matter if it is for the first time in his life, his eyes light up at once, and his heart within him responds, and claims that music as his own. So it is with those of Teutonic or Celtic blood…. It is a proper question to ask, what songs, then belong to the American and appeal more strongly to him than any others? What melody could stop him on the street if he were in a strange land and make the home feeling well up within him?[355]

The language Dvořák uses demonstrates the importance he places not only on nationalistic sentiment but on ethnic identity. It is a bit surprising, then, that Dvořák's American symphony treats African American music as the most representative of the United States. One might expect Dvořák's nationalist and possibly racist lines of thought to lead him to conclude that the music of African Americans is more African than American, but this is not the case. To look at it another way, Dvořák's opinion is not so surprising. As chapter two of this dissertation points out, African American spirituals penetrated into the consciousness of Europe in the 1870s, and the textual remnants they left behind could have influenced Dvořák long before he ever visited the United States. Nevertheless, Dvořák remains committed to thinking in terms of nation above region or race.

The *New World Symphony* borrows primarily from African American Spirituals, Native American Songs, and other influences from particular regions in the United States.

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[355] Quoted in John D. Kerkering *The Poetics of National and Racial Identity in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 132.

Dvořák then reconfigures these influences, modified them, and added to them. The famous Largo theme "Going Home" is often mistaken for a traditional spiritual, but in fact Dvořák was its creator. Joseph Horowitz points out that Dvořák's

> intuition that black music would gird a future American music was wonderfully prescient. A pedigreed outsider, he influentially validated African-American music…. He provocatively saw music as a necessary means of defining America, an ecumenical vehicle for articulating the New World.…He would not have understood the curatorial or Eurocentric attitudes of many American musicians to come.[356]

It is striking that Dvořák would look outside the nation's cultural and economic center in order to find its most representative music. Dvořák may have succeeded to some extent in defining a music of the "New World," but what he himself produced is both sub-national, i.e. regionally specific, and super-national insofar as it stands as a transatlantic, transnational, and even global artform. Dvořák is late to the game, so to speak, when it comes to connecting art and national consciousness, and perhaps as a result, he is able to view this process with more nuance than the writers, musicians, and visual artists from the age of revolution.

The career of the great African American contralto Marian Anderson (1897-1993) provides another example of cosmopolitan regionalism, but in a more fraught political environment. The following snippet from Anderson's career also offers a glimpse of the fascist backlash aimed at those who work to create a more inclusive vision of the notion of "home" through artistic expression. In the middle of the 1930s, Philadelphia native Marian Anderson toured Europe, performing in Scandinavia, Western Europe, Central Europe, and the Soviet Union. Like the Fisk Jubilee Singers decades earlier, she stunned audiences with performances of spirituals. Describing Anderson's performance at a festival in Salzburg, Vincent Sheean writes:

> In the last group she sang a spiritual, 'They Crucified My Lord and He never Said a Mumblin' Word.' Hardly anybody in the audience understood English well enough to follow what she was saying, and yet the immense sorrow–something more than the sorrow of a

[356] Joseph Horowitz, *Classical Music in America: A History of Its Rise and Fall* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005), 231.

> single person–that weighted her tones and lay over her dusky and angular face was enough. At the end of the spiritual there was no applause at all–a silence instinctive, natural and intense, so that you were afraid to breathe.[357]

What Sheean describes here resembles a moment of religious reverence. The concertgoers appear to have experienced some fraction of the collective trauma embedded in the sorrow songs. Yet a critic from the *Salzburger Volksblatt,* which had by then been taken over by the Austrian Nazi Party, presented a wildly different interpretation:

> Without letting oneself become enticed by the exotic, the song recital by the Negro singer Marian Anderson–actually she is a–Mulatto, who has most recently studied with madame Cahier in Vienna–was a great surprise. Of medium build, slender, amply brown, the lady is, in so far as a white person is entitled to a judgment of taste, a charming, lively figure with pitch raven-black hair, beautiful intelligent eyes and mobile play of features. In a long, white, low-necked silk dress, on her a giant, pale-red flower, she looks as if she has for far too long bathed in the sun of Africa.[358]

The review continues in this manner, describing Williams's voice, body, dress, and elocution in racial and sexualized terms. The reviewer ultimately praises Williams's performance of the spirituals at the end of the concert, and even calls her interpretation of Schubert's *Lieder* "perfect, much to the audience's surprise." "Der Tod und das Mädchen" [Death and the Maiden], in particular was "staggering, thanks in part to the contrast between the light voice of the Maiden and the dark, old timbre of Death."[359] Despite using racial language to describe Williams's body and voice, "The voice has a negroid coloration, brown like her skin," even this reviewer is unable to deny her ability to perform a wide array of songs perfectly.[360]

Marian Anderson performed songs in several languages and from a variety of traditions. Her performances, blending art and folk song traditions from numerous countries

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[357] *Salzburger Volksblatt,* August 29, 1935, 5. Translation quoted in Allan Keiler, *Marian Anderson: A Singer's Journey* (New York: Scribner, 2000), 156-7. "Theater, Kunst und Musik: Konzert Marian Anderson,"

[358] Translation quoted in Keiler, 156.

[359] Translation mine. "Theater, Kunst und Musik: Konzert Marian Anderson," *Salzburger Volksblatt,* August 29, 1935, 5.

[360] "Theater, Kunst und Musik," 5.

and linguistic boundaries, can more easily be described as "cosmopolitan regionalism," than "transatlantic regionalism." Regional specifics and qualities in the songs Williams performed came from many different localities and regions, and she performed them around the world, thus moving between the sub-national to the super-national scale, all in a time of rising fascism, defined along nationalist lines.

I turn, for my final example, to the Harlem Renaissance. The movement contains a number of writers whose work centers on representations of region. Zora Neale Hurston's stories of central Florida paint a rich picture of life in predominantly African American towns, complete with representations of African American Vernacular English, and attentiveness to human connections with climate and place. In addition to Hurston, Jean Toomer writes regionally-inflected sketches, especially in his groundbreaking novel *Cain.* The Harlem Renaissance represents not only a multifaceted mix of African American cultural production, but also a form of international modernism. As such, it funnels regional writing into a transnational, cosmopolitan context.

I want to turn, in particular, to Toomer's novel *Cane* as case and point. The novel is collage-like both in form and content. Its various vignettes and poems stitch together images of African American life from various regions, many but not all in the South. It creates a patch-work image of decentered U.S. spaces using an experimental, multi-genre structure. But *Cane* did not start out as a novel. Many of its sections were initially published individually in a variety of magazines, some with regional orientations, and others focused on international themes, topics, and readers. *Cane* contains multitudes – it is both a reorientation of regionalism from a black perspective and a reorientation of African American experience on the global stage.

A poem entitled "Storm Ending" was published in the New Orleans magazine *The Double Dealer.*[361] As Eurie Dahn puts it, "*The Double Dealer*, with its emphasis on the American South, positioned itself in opposition to the national emphasis on Northern writers, artists, and magazines."[362] This magazine was doing the work we now associate with nineteenth-century regionalism, decentering the nation's sites of cultural production, and it also published a diverse group of authors including women and people of color. Toomer thus took part both in an effort to reimagine the South and alter who speaks for the South.

In the other extreme, Toomer published a part of the novel in *Broom, An International Magazine for the Arts.*[363] *Broom,* as its subtitle suggests, fashions itself in the style of high modernism. It ran from 1921 to 1924 and many of the contributors are well-known today, including the art of Picasso, Alice Halicka, and Man Ray, and the poetry and prose of William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, Marianne Moore, and E. E. Cummings. In the September, 1923 edition, Toomer published the short play "Kabnis" which came out shortly thereafter as the final section of *Cane.* The play is perplexing, spare, and it alternates between dialogue and narration. The titular character, Kabnis, goes into flights of fancy that resemble some of Faulkner's characters that would appear a few years later, especially in his novel *As I Lay Dying.* The characters speak in slight written accents, and their language is depicted in non-standard orthography, but in a manner distinct from most regionalist writing. Toomer leaves out apostrophes and vowels in relatively unpredictable ways: "I thought I didn't hear y, but I did Mumblin, feedin that ornery thing thats livin on my insides…. What does it mean

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[361] Eurie Dahn, "Cane in the Magazines: Race, Form, and Global Networks," *The Journal of Modern Periodical Studies* 3, No. 2 (2012): 122.

[362] Dahn, "Cane in the Magazines," 122.

[363] Jean Toomer, "Kabnis," *Broom: The International Magazine for the Arts* 5 no. 2 (Sptember 1923): 83-94.

t you?"[364] Dropping the letter "g" at the end of a word is common practice in regionalist writing, but leaving out the "o" in "to" and the "ou" in "you" has an altogether different effect. It presents the reader with language that is, in some way, disrupted, but how precisely it is broken is hard to say. It draws attention to the transition between the spoken and the written, but maintains a slight but uncrossable chasm between the sound and sight of language.

In its form, content, and publication history, Toomer's work epitomizes regional writing in a cosmopolitan framework. It is at once "high modernism" and small-town literature. Eurie Dahn, whose work has emphasized the role of Toomer's magazine publication as a way to explain the collage nature of *Cane*, argues that the novel's "amalgamation of different genres…works to reassemble different groups into a whole network. These connections, which are made possible through Toomer's formal experimentation, reveal the universality of the local, the region's relevancy to nation and world, while still insisting on the distinctiveness of the particular."[365]

Antonín Dvořák, Marian Anderson, and Jean Toomer demonstrate the continuation of the process begun by writers and performers of what I have been calling transatlantic regionalism. While transatlantic regionalism remains tentatively tethered to place, even if that place is new or foreign to the writer or performer, cosmopolitan regionalism attempts to extract the "essence" of a location, then repackages it in an internationally recognized artwork. In the march toward postmodern experiences of place as commodifiable and hyperreal simulacra, transatlantic regionalism is one step, and cosmopolitan regionalism is the next.

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[364] Jean Toomer, "Kabnis" 91.

[365] Eurie Dahn, "Cane in the Magazines," 131-2.

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