Transnational Transports: Identity, Community, and Place in German-American Narratives from 1750s-1850s

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

Rebekah Ann Starnes, M.A.
Graduate Program in English

The Ohio State University
2012

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Jared Gardner, Advisor
Professor Susan Williams
Professor Chadwick Allen
Abstract

German-Americans were the most populous and influential non-British immigrant group in the British colonies and in the early nation. In order to fully understand early American history, culture, and literature, it is crucial to explore the literature produced by this group. Nonetheless, the sheer number of literary works produced by Germans in America makes such a task as difficult as it is important. This project participates in the recovery of German-American literature by focusing on German-language stories written in and about American contact zones. I begin in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania and follow new waves of immigrants south and west in the nineteenth century. I argue that German-American writers used transnational genres (the captivity narrative, the frontier romance, and the urban mystery novel) to articulate the transports and traumas of their transnational experiences.

In Chapters 1 and 2, I look at German-language captivity narratives of the French and Indian War. I argue that writing captivity narratives allowed German settlers to negotiate their culturally liminal place in Pennsylvania as a racially privileged but culturally marginalized group, to come to terms with the transnational traumas of captivity and religious persecution, and to define and police constantly shifting communal boundaries. Chapter 3 focuses on the frontier romances of Austrian-American novelist Charles Sealsfield, whose work deals with the transnational pleasures of an imaginary empty frontier. Sealsfield alleviates national guilt over Indian removal by
alleging that southwestern farmers and pioneers are the most “legitimate” Americans, more so even than Northerners and Easterners. He nonetheless suggests that unlike Indians and Africans, Yankees and European immigrants can gain legitimacy if they undergo a process of national regeneration through marriage, which operates as a metaphor for democracy in his work. In Chapter 4, I look at urban mystery novels of the 1850s. Like the authors in my first chapters, the writers of these novels also struggled with transnational traumas (in this case, the poverty, overcrowding, crime, racism, and corruption that plagued the multicultural and multilingual American city). This genre allowed them to articulate these traumas and to write themselves into American history as social and political reformers.

German-Americans have never been a unified group, and their literature is as vast and diverse as they are. By focusing on transnational genres written in and about contact zones, this project sheds light on an important thematic thread running through the larger body of work: a shared sense of anxiety surrounding community, identity, legitimacy, and place. These are not just immigrant concerns, either; they are common themes in the larger literary traditions of both America and Germany. These narratives are thus transnational in another sense of the term: they demonstrate thematic affinities between two national literatures that both countries’ literary critics once believed “exceptional,” thus helping us continue to move past national exceptionalism as an interpretive lens.
Dedication

This document is dedicated to my parents, David and Sharon Starnes, for always believing in me, and to my husband, Richard Schaper, whose unwavering support made it possible.
Acknowledgments

First, I would like to thank my committee. It was my advisor, Jared Gardner, who first exposed me to the exciting world of early American literature when I was a first-year Master’s student. I’d like to thank him for that introduction, and for eight years of patience, encouragement, and guidance. I would also like to thank my committee members, Chad Allen and Susan Williams, for their continued support. Without it, I doubt I would have made it past candidacy.

I would also like to thank the wonderful people at the Society of Early Americanists. I presented an early version of my first chapter at the 2010 Early American Borderlands conference, which was co-sponsored by the SEA, and part of my second chapter at the Seventh Biennial Conference in Philadelphia in March of last year. The feedback and support I received following these presentations was invaluable.
Vita

1999.................................................................Haltom High School, Haltom City, Texas
2003...............................................................B.A. English, Texas Tech University
2005...............................................................M.A. English, The Ohio State University
2003 to 2009 ...................................................Graduate Teaching Associate, Department
                                                of English, The Ohio State University
2009 to 2011..................................................Adjunct Faculty, Department of English,
                                                Columbus State Community College
2011 to present.............................................Annual Contract Faculty, Department of
                                                English, Columbus State Community
                                                College

Publications

“From the Periodical Archives: The Entertaining Companion—Philadelphisches
Magazin, The First German-American Literary Journal,” American Periodicals 19.1
(Spring 2009).

Fields of Study

Major Field:  English
# Table of Contents

Abstract .................................................................................................................................................. ii

Dedication ................................................................................................................................................ iv

Acknowledgments ................................................................................................................................. v

Vita .......................................................................................................................................................... vi

Introduction: German-American Literature: The People and the Stories ........................................... 1

Chapter 1: From Instigators to Victims and Scapegoats: German-language Captivity

Narratives of the French and Indian War ............................................................................................... 29

Chapter 2: On Captivity and Adaptivity: The Narrative of Regina Leininger .................................... 71

Chapter 3: Union: Marriage and (Trans)Nationality in the Novels of Charles Sealsfield

............................................................................................................................................................... 127

Chapter 4: Solving the American Urban Mystery ................................................................................. 177

Afterword ............................................................................................................................................... 231

Bibliography .......................................................................................................................................... 237
Multilingual America

It is already commonplace to begin any discussion of multilingual America with some basic facts. Nonetheless, these facts remain necessary starting points. The central fact is that America has never been a monolingual nation. The Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution are both notably silent on a national language, and although the Declaration was written in English, it was immediately translated into German, as German (not English) was the primary language spoken in Philadelphia at the time. In fact, when the Declaration was drafted, only 40 percent of the newly declared country spoke English (Shell, Multilingual Anthology Afterword, 688). It should be no surprise then that American literature has never been monolingual either. Werner Sollors, in his introduction to the Multilingual Anthology of American Literature, notes that “in Harvard University’s library system alone, there are more than 120,000 imprints published in the United States that were written in scores of languages other than English; they range from Native American texts to Spanish, French, Dutch, and Russian colonial writings, from immigrant literature in German and in all European, many Asian, and some African languages to French and Arabic works written by African Americans” (4). Multilingualism is not just part of the nation’s past, either. According to recent census data, there are 55.4 million non-English speaking people in America today, which
is 20 percent of the population. Scholars of American literature in the early days of the field acknowledged America’s multilingual legacy.¹ Why then, do modern Americans (including many academics) insist on pretending that our country—and our literature—is English-only?

Werner Sollors and Marc Shell suggest that it is our national obsession with race and ethnicity that allows us to ignore issues of linguistic diversity. Most modern American universities promote multiculturalism, but conveniently ignore the intrinsic connection between language and culture. Often, it is merely a matter of convenience: it is easier for most of us to study and teach multicultural literature (for example, the literature of Chinese-Americans who write in English), than to teach multilingual literature (like Chinese-American literature that was actually written in Chinese). By ignoring multilingual America, however, we are doing more than just making things easier for ourselves. After all, when we begin to acknowledge the centrality of language to culture, then we must acknowledge the very real damage we do to people whose cultures we pretend to celebrate when we refuse to listen to them in their native tongues. It is no coincidence that one of the first steps in turning Africans into slaves was to forbid them from speaking their native languages, or that Native American children who were made to attend Indian schools in order to become Americanized were only allowed to speak in English. The first step to suppressing a culture is to suppress its language.

¹ See Orm Overland’s Introduction to Not English Only: Redefining “American” in American Studies, pages 3-4, and Werner Sollors’ Introduction to The Multilingual Anthology of American Literature, pages 1-2, for examples.
Few American academics are competent in multiple languages, but there are things we can all do. The first step is to acknowledge our biases and limitations. We can study some documents in translation (although there are problems with relying too heavily on translated documents). Most importantly, we can continue the work begun by Sollors, Shell, and the other multilingual scholars as best as we can, in whatever capacity we can. It won’t be easy for most of us. It hasn’t been easy for me. Although I have a basic working knowledge of German, my high school and college courses didn’t quite prepare me for the difficulties of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German. Even the fraktur font used by many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German printers felt foreign to me at first.

Obviously, my own biases and limitations have shaped this study. My focus on genre has affected the dates I have covered as well as my use of translated material. My original goal was to examine German-American popular narrative genres from colonial through antebellum America. The time period that I ended up focusing on (1750s through the 1850s) was determined by that generic focus. My project begins in the 1750s because the most popular narrative genre of the colonial era was the captivity narrative, and German-language captivity narratives were most popular during the French and Indian War. The most popular antebellum genres were the frontier novel and the urban mystery novel. German-American urban mystery novels were popular during the 1850s, which affected the end date of my study.

My focus on genre has also allowed me some leeway in using translated material. For the smaller narratives in this study, I utilized original German texts. For the larger
texts, I relied on previous translations. Part of this is due to my own limitations: as I already mentioned, I am a slow reader of the German language, especially eighteenth and nineteenth century German-American work, which has its own idiosyncrasies. The smaller texts, like the captivity narratives, obviously take less time to read and translate. I also believe, however, that the smaller the text is, the more important it is to pay attention to word choices. For the larger texts in this study, many of them massive multivolume novels, I have prioritized issues of plot and characterization over language. Although my focus on genre (in particular, plot, setting, characterization and theme) has allowed me some latitude when it comes to translation, I am well aware that I am missing out on some important aspects of the work by relying on translated material. Fortunately, previous scholars have already discussed the politics of language in the novels I study here. I urge readers interested in these aspects of the novels to read my work alongside that scholarship for a more comprehensive analysis.

I’ve said that working with original German texts has not been easy. Nonetheless, the joy of reading new works, discovering new texts, and making new connections has been worth the difficulties. I use the term *joy* intentionally: this kind of work can be emotionally as well as intellectually gratifying. In this respect, I am what Winfried Fluck calls an “aesthetic transnationalist.” Aesthetic transnationalism, according to Fluck, “focuses on the rich diversity of new and interesting objects that is produced by transnational encounters and exchange. It wants to recover a world of cultural cross-fertilization that hold the promise of fuller, more meaningful experiences—experiences that American studies have suppressed for too long and to their own disadvantage” (367-
Like the aesthetic transnationalists that Fluck refers to, I find it “an enriching, revitalizing, sometimes almost intoxicating experience” to recover new and interesting literary objects, and I do think that this recovery can help combat the narrow-minded chauvinism so common in America today.

Fluck’s description of aesthetic transnationalism is not entirely positive, however. According to Fluck, when scholars extol America’s multilingual and transnational past in order to legitimize their studies, they come uncomfortably close to portraying it as some kind of pluralist utopia, ignoring transnational traumas like captivity, poverty, marginalization, slavery, and genocide. I try throughout this project to avoid such oversimplification. The narratives I study here are fascinating literary objects, reminders of an exciting time in American history where the streets and presses teemed with linguistic and cultural diversity. But they are also reminders of the violent and traumatic aspects of our transnational past. As scholars actively trying to recover America’s transnational and multilingual past in hopes of revitalizing our present and future, we

\footnote{2 Fluck also coins the term “political transnationalism.” Instead of recovering a pluralist America in hopes of revitalizing a chauvinist one, political transnationalists continue the goal of the New Americanists to break away from what they consider to be a repressive and oppressive nation-state. According to them, the U.S. has forced narrow gendered and racialized identities onto its citizens in order limit their power and agency and increase its own. Through this process of interpellation, the U.S. has intentially handicapped its citizens to keep them in check. For political transnationalists, transnationalism is one way to move beyond these false (nationalized, gendered and racialized) identities to recover political power and personal agency. For Fluck, this form of transnationalism is far from a new beginning, as it recycles nearly all of its terminology and methodology from the New Americanists. This means it carries with it the previous school’s limitations and problems, including “the tendency to reduce questions of power to questions of identity formation,…the continued reliance on the concept of interpellation for explaining identity formation,…the tendency to reduce identity formation to racialization and engendering,” and to tendency to mythologize “the marginalized and excluded” (380).}
must not ignore the dark side of that past. We must remember the pain as well as the pleasures of transnational contact.

The Case for German-American Literature

To make the case for German-American literature, some more facts are in order. German was the second most spoken language in colonial America. In some places, like Philadelphia, German speakers outnumbered English speakers. German was the unofficial second language of Pennsylvania well into the nineteenth century. As German settlers moved south and west in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, they formed additional enclaves of German speech and literature. German settlers in America were also very prolific: from 1732-1955, they produced over five thousand newspapers and periodicals alone (Andt and Olson). That number doesn’t include poems, novels, and unpublished private and communal writings. German-American writers also participated in major American and German literary trends, in addition to those of their own making.

Despite all of this, German-American literature had no academic home for some time. It was considered the ugly stepchild of German literary studies, and American literary studies ignored German-language literature along with other non-English works. This is changing, however, in large part due to the scholarship of Werner Sollors, Marc Shell, Winfried Fluck, Eliot Shore, Steven Rowan, Patrick Erben, and others, all whom have paved the way for my own work. The challenge of studying German-American literature is that there are so many texts, and that the literature itself is so diverse. Some
of the questions I hope to answer in the course of this study are those asked by Werner Sollors in the introduction to the book *German? American? Literature?*:

Was there, in fact, ever a unified German American tradition, or do quite heterogeneous linguistic, religious, and regional groups and rather unrepresentative figures dominated the scene? How did German-language writers in the United States position themselves in relationship to the various German-speaking areas and countries in Europe, and how did they interact with different ethnic and linguistic groups from the United States? Which new general insights into emigration from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, into American cultural and ethnic relations, and into transatlantic history can be gained by new scholarship and by freshly presented historical sources? (5)

Studying multilingual American literature in general forces us to reconsider the traditional history of early American literature (from Puritans to transcendentalists), and to reconsider who was writing what, when, where, and for what reasons. Studying German-language literature (whether written in America or Germany) helps us understand our reasons for creating that traditional exceptionalist narrative in the first place. The history of German-language literature, and in particular, the history of German-language literary scholarship and criticism, is remarkably similar to our own, as Hugh Ridley demonstrates in his recent book, “Relations Stop Nowhere”: *The Common Literary Foundations of German and American Literature, 1830-1917*. As Ridley demonstrates, both America and Germany were latecomers to nationhood, which made them acutely anxious to prove their worth and their legitimacy to the rest of the world. Both nations also believed that the path to legitimacy lay in a nation’s language and literature, although they approached this from opposite directions. Germany, which wasn’t a unified nation until 1871, believed that the creation of a national literature could prove to a divided nation and a skeptical world that nationhood itself was feasible.
America, which became a nation in 1776, believed that its status in the Western world—that its legitimacy—would be questioned until it had a national literature. Finally, in later years, literary critics of both nations were defensively drawn to literary and national exceptionalism (the term is Sonderweg in German) to legitimize their national literature (and hence their countries and their disciplines).

In his study, Ridley is primarily interested in a “structural affinity” (as opposed to influence and personal affinity) between the two nations, which he hopes will give future scholars a foundation for further comparative analysis. I would add that structural similarities between the two traditions have produced similar literary themes that run through both canons. Throughout this dissertation, I study transnational narratives that could be claimed by both German and American traditions (although they have historically been ignored by both), and it is clear that the themes they share resonate with German, American, and German-American readers. One common theme in all three traditions is the tension between the “real” and the “ideal,” or between democratic principles and practices. This theme runs throughout all of the narratives in this project, but especially the captivity narratives in my first chapter and the urban mystery novels in my fourth chapter. There is also a recurring theme of identity (individual and communal) in crisis in the literature of both countries, which is especially evident in the captivity narrative of Regina Leininger (explored in chapter 2), and the frontier romances of Charles Sealsfield (explored in chapter 3). The narratives in this study and their shared thematic concerns demonstrate another similarity between the two traditions, and they underscore the value of German-language scholarship for American studies. Exploring
German-language literature and the anxieties expressed in its pages can help American scholars better understand the anxieties present in the literature of our own country, in whatever language it was written, especially our own anxieties surrounding personal, communal, and national identity and legitimacy.

**German-Americans: The People**

Before I go into more details about the people behind the narratives in this study, I should address the matter of terminology. It is trickier than it looks. The term German-American literature is a misnomer, as many of the texts I study here predate America (formed in 1776) and all of them predate Germany (formed in 1871). When I refer to Germans, I mean people from German-speaking lands. When I refer to German-Americans, I mean people from German-speaking lands who are living, working, or writing in or about America (or the land that would become America). I also reference “Indians” throughout this study, a term I use to refer to the German and American conception of Native Americans. When referencing the people themselves, I will use the term Native Americans, or their particular tribal designations.³

**Eighteenth-Century German-Americans**

³ In an essay titled “Germany’s Indians in a European Perspective,” Christian F. Feest humorously claims: “The first affinity between Indians and Germans may be that both categories are largely fictional” (27). Most Americans are aware that “Indians” are a fictional category, existing only in the European and American imagination, but Feest extends that notion to Germans as well: “What one finds referred to as ‘the Germans’ in the literature and media is, in fact, an assortment of rather different peoples who speak a variety of languages and who seem to find a semblance of unity when it comes to playing soccer” (27).
Although the particular goals and aspirations of German immigrants to America in the eighteenth century varied greatly, there were many common factors. Historians of immigration refer to “push” factors and “pull” factors. Push factors refer to issues of emigration—the negative conditions of the place of origin that push residents away. Pull factors refer to issues of immigration—the (real or imagined) positive characteristics of the potential destination that draw people there. The push factors that influenced German emigration in eighteenth-century are easily enumerated. After the Treaty of Westphalia dissolved the Holy Roman Empire in 1648, the region became increasingly unstable. The Treaty had broken the German-speaking lands into 1,800 states, principalities and duchies, each with their own (often tyrannical) rulers (Tolzmann 55). The smallest and weakest states were incredibly vulnerable during wartime, and war was, unfortunately, fairly constant. Instead of helping their people, the princes and dukes often made things worse by imposing heavy taxes to support war efforts and impressing able-bodied men into their armies. In addition to economic difficulties and the constant threat of war and forced military service, Germans also lacked religious freedom, as there were only three recognized religions in Germany: the Lutheran, Reformed, and Catholic churches. It was up to each prince or ruler to decide which of the three religions would be legal in his particular state. Germans who lived in the wrong area or belonged to an unrecognized sect were persecuted.

Most of the German immigrants to America in the eighteenth century came from the Palatine region of Germany, which had its own set of push factors. It had been devastated during the Thirty Years War, which had laid waste to the region and killed
90% of the population (Tolzmann 53), and it had no opportunity to recover. It was
invaded by one country after another: the French, Swedes, Bavarians, and Spaniards
attacked the Palatine region in succession, killing many and rendering more homeless.
During the War of Spanish Succession in 1707 alone, thousands of Palatines lost their
homes, and deprived of shelter, hundreds lost their lives during the harsh winter that
followed, dying from exposure and hunger.

All of these circumstances made German-speaking peoples, especially Palatines,
eager to leave their homeland in the eighteenth century. Many were moving to England
and Holland even before America became a desirable alternative. By the mid-eighteenth
century, however, Pennsylvania had become the preferred destination of German
emigrants. Between 1749 and 1754 alone, approximately 37,000 German immigrants
came to Philadelphia (Wokeck 5). The first group of German settlers (a group of families
from Krefeld) was recruited by William Penn. Penn had visited Pennsylvania a few years
previously as a Quaker missionary, and when he received his royal charter, he published
a pamphlet in German and English emphasizing the colony’s favorable conditions in
order to recruit people of various nationalities and Protestant faiths. After Penn’s German
recruits established Germantown in 1683, they sent letters home to their friends and
families verifying Penn’s account of economic opportunities and religious freedom,
which encouraged further immigration. The appeal of Pennsylvania was strengthened by
Britain’s naturalization laws, which ensured swift naturalization of all Protestants. In
other words, German settlers coming to Pennsylvania would be accepted as full citizens,
with all of the rights that such a distinction entailed—rights they had long been denied in Germany.

Although this meant that immigration to the New World was increasingly appealing, the cost of overseas passage and initial set-up in a new place was often prohibitive. Only families with means (or with relatives already in the colony who promised to cover the costs) could afford the trip. This changed as merchants in England and Holland realized that supplying this increased demand for transportation could be immensely profitable. These enterprising merchants began allowing trips on credit, allowing even poor Germans to emigrate. “The security upon which merchants extended such credit in Europe,” Wokeck explains, “could be an explicit invitation from relatives or friends already settled in the colonies who offered to help defray costs, a well-stocked chest of goods that could be sold or a promise to work for the unpaid portion of the fares as indentured servants” (8). This system of transatlantic passenger transport allowed unprecedented numbers of Germans to immigrate to Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania was an appealing destination because it was, in many ways, all things to everyone. It appealed to those who desired religious freedom (primarily sect Germans, or those who didn’t belong to one of the three recognized churches) and those who were impoverished in their homelands and desired new economic opportunities. Unfortunately, colonial warfare soon interfered with their American dreams. The French and Indian War not only drastically reduced immigration to the colonies, but also threatened the economic and political freedom of those who had already immigrated. German and Scots-Irish farmers in particular were devastated by Indian raids on their
hinterland settlements. Although these rural farmers had little occasion to enter the public world of letters before, their need for defense and fear of death, captivity, or economic ruin led many to reach out to fellow colonists. They did so in letters and newspapers, and also with one of the most popular genres of the time: the captivity narrative.

The French and Indian War was not just an obstacle to German settlers on the Pennsylvanian frontier; it was problematic for urban settlers as well. Even though their livelihood was not at stake, newly proposed militia bills threatened the religious freedom of many sectarian Germans (those not belonging to one of the three recognized religions in Germany), as most were staunchly pacifist, and thus refused to participate in warfare of any kind on religious grounds. Unfortunately, as danger mounted in the colonies, so did resentment. Pacifist Germans were labeled cowardly and heartless for opposing a militia bill that would bring help to their countrymen on the frontier. In order to defend the right to conscientiously object to warfare, and to defend their own good names, many urban and sect Germans began to enter the public world of letters as well (most were already quite prolific in their private and communal lives). Like the church Germans on the frontier, they too used captivity narratives to voice their protests. Chapters 1 and 2 of this book closely examine a handful of these German-language captivity narratives, arguing that this genre allowed German settlers to articulate their sufferings, propose solutions to their problems, and police constantly evolving communal boundaries.

**Nineteenth-Century German-Americans**
Günter Moltmann estimates that in the period between 1816 and 1914, 5.5 million Germans came to the United States. Scholars traditionally assumed that these nineteenth century German emigrants “left because of social and political pressures; [that] they were liberals who protested against the reactionary system, who wished to escape military service, and who saw in America a land of freedom and progress” (14). Moltmann sees this traditional history as overly simplified and idealized, and notes that reasons for emigration were likely much more complex. To begin with, economics played a larger role than is typically recognized. After all, this era saw the end of the indenture system. The new emigrants were therefore largely middle or upper class men, many of whom came to America on business. Advances in technology also played a role in nineteenth century immigration: new steamships shortened the length of the journey, better communication systems made planning simpler, and new laws prohibited overcrowding.

One of the main features of this period distinguishing it from the wave of immigration in the eighteenth century was that emigrants were no longer coming from just one or two areas of Germany (like the Palatine region) but from all over. They were likewise not heading just to the Pennsylvania and other Middle Atlantic colonies, but across the United States and its Western territories. Like their eighteenth-century counterparts, their reasons for leaving Germany and their ultimate destinations greatly affected the literature they produced—ranging from frontier romances to urban mysteries. Although it is important to remember that liberal political refugees (the famed “Thirtiers” and “Forty-Eighters,” named after their departure dates) made up only a fraction of emigrants from Germany, as Moltmann reminds us, they were the most educated and the
most vocal. The political refugees were the ones writing in newspapers and novels about their experiences, and their writing thus dominates the literature of the period. It isn’t surprising that these writers were drawn to politically-charged genres, like frontier romances and urban mysteries, which are the subjects of my third and fourth chapters.

Genre and Purpose

Before I discuss the particular genres utilized by these writers in more detail, let me back up a bit. When I first began this project, it was with a simple observation: Many German-American authors were active participants in popular “American” genres—the captivity narrative, the frontier novel, the city mystery. I theorized that German immigrants utilized popular American genres because their clear rules and established conventions made it easier to enter the literary marketplace and participate in discussions relevant to their new national communities. Although I knew that these genres were not “uniquely American” in the sense that exceptionalist scholars had once imagined them, I did see them as American: they were set, written (for the most part), and read in America. What I didn’t realize was the extent to which these genres were in a sense already transnational: they were written outside of the nation as well as within it by non-Americans as well as Americans; they were popular outside as well as within its borders; and in many cases, they were even set in non-American locations.

This epiphany occurred rather late in the game, while I was researching my fourth and last chapter on urban mystery novels. I began with the texts that had been written in America about American cities, and with American scholarship about the genre: it was a
subversive genre operating “beneath the American Renaissance”; it was a segue to other
trends in American literature like the dime novel, the detective novel, and urban realism.
It wasn’t until I extended my research beyond American scholarship, however, that I
realized just how transnational the genre really was: practically every industrial nation in
the Western hemisphere participated in the trend. Not only that, but given the availability
of pirated translations, the authors of my “American” mysteries were influenced not just
by Eugene Sue, but by other French, English and German writers as well. This genre was
hardly American—it was, in fact, the most transnational genre imaginable. How, then,
was this chapter going to fit into a project that dealt with immigrant usage of American
genres?

The answer had been staring me in the face for some time. I had attended the
Society of Early Americanists’ Borderlands conference earlier that year and was amazed
at the sheer number of panels on captivity narratives originally written in Spanish and
French, as well as the English and German ones with which I was familiar. This genre
was not American either, although there was a strong American component. Captivity
narratives are a transnational, or imperial, or colonial genre, but not really an American
one. Even the frontier narratives I discuss in my third chapter are transnational, as they
were written by Charles Sealsfield, an Austrian-American writer who lived in
Switzerland. He may have identified himself as American, and his books may have been

4 This is still a hotly debated point—just last month, the Southern California chapter of
the Society for the Study of American Women Writers issued a CFP on EARAM-L (the
early Americanist listserv) soliciting papers on “women's captivity and slave narratives
to explore connections and fissures between these two uniquely American
narratives.” This sparked a small online debate on American exceptionalism in captivity
scholarship, which participants promised to continue in person at the conference.
about America, but they were mostly written in Switzerland for a German audience. They belonged to a larger trend of German literature about America just as much as they belonged to American literature written in German. I now believe that the American settings feature prominently in transnational genres because they, like the texts themselves, are at once local and global, national and transnational. They are points of intersection between cultures and groups. They are contact zones.

Mary Louise Pratt coined the term “contact zone” in her 1992 book *Imperial Eyes*. Although she uses it primarily as a synonym for the frontier, the term is flexible enough to apply to urban areas as well, as it describes “the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures, and whose trajectories now intersect” (7). While Pratt discontinued her use of the term “frontier” because of its inherent Eurocentric nature (“the frontier is only a frontier with respect to Europe,” she notes), Annette Kolodny tried to reclaim the term in 1995. In her essay, “Letting Go Our Grand Obsessions,” she suggests we “recognize ‘frontier’ as a locus of first cultural contact, circumscribed by a particular physical terrain in the process of change because of the forms that contact takes, all of it inscribed by the collisions and interpenetrations of language” (11). Without the artificial limits of geography and chronology, immigrant literature also becomes readable as frontier literature, as does the literature of the “urban frontier” (16). In order to reconceptualize the term frontier in this manner, Kolodny notes that we must drop two “willfully ahistorical” features long considered essential to the definition—“population scarcity and either primitive
technology or a site where a more developed or superior technology overwhelms an inferior one” (17).

In this study, I use the term “frontier” self-consciously for the very reasons that Pratt discontinued using it and Kolodny redefined and reclaimed it: because it conjures up images of empty uncultivated land at the edge of civilization. When I use the term, I refer to the Eurocentric, ahistorical literary construction of real historical places, similar to how many scholars (including me) use the term “Indian” to refer to a constructed image of real peoples. I chose to use the English term frontier as opposed to the German terms hinterland or Grenze for the same reason—it has important connotations for my English readers that I want emphasize. The image of the empty frontier, bereft of people/technology/ bureaucracy, is precisely how German settlers imagined their new homes. They were not expecting “contact zones” or the kind of frontier that Kolodny describes; they were expecting empty unused land at the edge of a British colony that they could use and improve. Obviously, this was not what they found, a fact that they struggle with in the course of their narratives.

The eighteenth-century German-American writers in my first and second chapters come to terms with an American landscape that was not as empty as they expected by simultaneously celebrating their cultivation of uncultivated land and lamenting the unwelcome realization that “uncultivated” did not necessarily mean “empty.” This lesson was a difficult and costly one to learn for the Le Roys and Leiningers, Swiss and German settlers who moved onto Delaware territory in the 1750s because it looked empty. They ignored Delaware warnings that they should leave voluntarily or be forced off the land,
and paid for their obstinacy in 1755, when Delaware Indians raided their home, killed the adults, and took the children captive. In the nineteenth century, Charles Sealsfield described a relatively empty American frontier in keeping with both his German readers’ ideas of America and his own Jacksonian politics. His description is far from an unbiased observation, however. Sealsfield depicts an ideal empty frontier in order to justify Indian Removal policies that would make such a wished-for emptiness possible.

Even German descriptions of American cities were colored by lingering notions of an “empty” American frontier. As Kathleen Neils Conzen explains in her essay, “Phantom Landscapes of Colonizations: Germans in the Making of a Pluralist America,” America looked “empty” to Germans well into the nineteenth century: “Much of it was literally empty—wild land, uncultivated and therefore unclaimed, waiting to be baptized in German sweat. All of it was institutionally empty—no princes, little government, no state church, no feudal obligations, and little recognizable social hierarchy” (11). The urban mystery writers in my last chapter struggle with American cities that are far from the “institutionally empty” spaces they expected: the cities they portray are teeming with institutions as corrupt (or more so) as the ones they left in Europe. Whether writing about rural, frontier America, or urban, industrial America, the writers in my study are attempting to come to terms with the reality of American contact zones that were far less empty than the frontiers they imagined.

I also use the term frontier in this study because of its usefulness as metaphor. If we take the term to mean “edge” or “margin,” it can refer not just to physical spaces, but cultural marginality as well. The German and Swiss settlers in my first chapters lived on
the European colonial frontier, but they also lived on the cultural margins of Pennsylvania. As Germans in a British colony, they were marginalized by their culture and language (although they were undeniably better off than Africans or Indians in the colony). Their sheer numbers did not mitigate their marginality, either—it only made English colonists more wary of them, as Benjamin Franklin demonstrated in an oft-quoted letter to Peter Collinson on May 9th, 1753, when he claimed that Germans “will soon so out number us, that all the advantages we have will not [in My Opinion] be able to preserve our language...Even our Government will become precarious” (484). The writers living in and writing about the antebellum American city may not have lived on the literal frontier, but they were still culturally marginalized. While some of them use transnational genres to articulate and overcome their marginality, others embrace their outsider status, using it to critique and reform their new homeland.

**America as Symbol; Indian as Metaphor**

I’ve said that German-American storytellers used popular narrative forms to explore identities in crisis and to articulate the gap between the America of their dreams and the political, social, and economic realities of American life. In the rest of this introduction, I will discuss the primary methods by which they did so. Throughout their narratives, these writers don’t simply use America as a setting, and when their stories feature Indians, they are not there merely characters or even local color. America and its Indians are instead powerful symbols with a long tradition in German literature, symbols used by these writers to praise or critique their new homeland.
For Germans as well as many other Europeans, America was as much a symbol as a concrete place throughout most of its history. What America symbolized for Germans in Europe was complicated. In the German imagination, there was a good America and a bad America. “Good America” was free of monarchical tyranny and religious oppression, a model for Europe to someday emulate. Then there was the bad image of America—uncultured, uncivilized, greedy, opportunistic, shallow and hypocritical. As Sander L. Gilman explains in his introduction to Dan Diner’s influential essay, “America in the Eyes of the Germans,” “When American is good, it is because German self-representation is bad; when America is bad, it defines the positive nature of the fantasy of the German” (xvii).

Throughout that essay, Diner shows how the image of “bad America” became particularly strong in the nineteenth century during Germany’s Romantic period. The most famous example of “bad America” was Ferdinand Kürnberger’s 1855 novel Der Amerika-Müde (The Man Who Became Weary of America). Kürnberger’s main character, Dr. Moorfeld, was based on the poet Nikolaus Lenau, who had traveled to America for business and then publicly critiqued its lack of culture. He famously wrote that there were no nightingales in America: “The nightingale is smart not to spend any time with these creatures,” he mused. “It seems to be profoundly significant that there are no nightingales in America; it is like a poetic curse” (qtd. in Diner, 35). As Diner notes, this says more about Lenau than it does about America: he went to America on business, and then denounced it for being a center of business. In other words, “the tormented soul is relieved of strain by burdening the ‘other’ with the tortured guilty conscience that
comes from realizing desire” (37). This is true on a larger scale as well—the German vision of “bad America” says more about German doubts and desires than it does about American realities.

The stereotype of Americans as materialistic and lacking culture was already widespread when Kürnberger turned Lenau into Moorfeld. What had changed by 1855 was that so-called American qualities of materialism, greed and lack of culture were seen not just as social differences, but distinct ethnic traits: “The social mask had been mutated into nature. Germanness and Americanness were made into irreconcilable and unchangeable opposites” (Diner 41). Of course, not all Germans saw America in such a negative light. America still beckoned to German emigrants in search of new opportunities, and it was still a powerful symbol of democracy for German revolutionaries. Even the liberal 1848ers, however, who immigrated to America after they had failed to establish a united, democratic Germany, utilized the stereotype of “bad America” when it suited their purpose (see Chapter 4).

Just as Germans have long been fascinated with America (as place and symbol), so have they been fascinated by its original inhabitants—die Indianer—whom they also used as a symbol to critique bad America and praise good America. In the collection *Germans and Indians*, Susanne Zantop notes that while “Indianthusiasm” (a term coined by Hartmut Lutz in the same volume) “existed in other European countries as well…the identificatory enthusiasm for things Indian…has particularly flourished in German lands” (4). Indeed, Germany has a rich Indian literature, most famously exemplified by Karl May, a writer of popular Westerns set in America and featuring a friendship between
German pioneer “Old Shatterhand” and his Apache “blood brother,” Winnetou. Although May’s fiction lies outside the perimeters of my study (his novels were published in the 1890s), it is the most commonly cited example of German “Indianthusiasm” and clearly articulates the supposed “natural affinity” between the two cultures. Even during the Nazi era, when Germans exterminated millions of Jews, they admired Native Americans. (Hitler is said to have loved Karl May’s books and admired Winnetou’s military prowess.) To this day, German hobbyist clubs get together on the weekends to dress up as Plains Indians. Some of these groups even have functional teepee villages and claim to have been adopted by Native American tribes.5

There are many theories about the German fascination with Indians. Hartmut Lutz writes that it “is intimately tied to the construction of the German nation and to German national myths” (170). When German Romantic scholars of the nineteenth century turned to folk tales and mythology in search of a national identity, they found Tacitus’s *Germania*. In this early description of the German character, Tacitus described the Teutons as “wild forest dwellers, *silvatici*, the Latin term that forms the root of the French *sauvage* and the English *sa(l)vage*” (Lutz 172). In other words, Tacitus described Germans as “noble savages” long before Rousseau; after making this discovery, it wasn’t long before Germans were considering themselves the Indians of Europe. Other scholars speculate that nineteenth-century Germans identified with *die Indianer* because they had imaginary characteristics in keeping with how Germans saw themselves: they were

5 See “Germans Playing Indian” and “Indian Impersonation as Historical Surrogation” in *Germans and Indians.*
underdogs, they had cultures but no states, and they were highly romantic in an increasingly materialistic world.

I would like to add that German and German-American writers wrote often of Indians because they were symbols that helped them to praise “good” America and critique “bad” America. In his book *The White Man’s Indian*, Robert Berkhofer discusses the common images of good and bad Indians in the European and American imagination and the uses to which they are put. For the eighteenth-century former captives in my first chapter, the bad Indian symbolized the many obstacles that immigrant families faced once in the colonies. For Marie Le Roy and Barbara Leininger, as well as Barbara’s sister Regina, the bad Indians take away the very land and freedom that lured German families to the American frontier in the first place. The girls’ captivity further demonstrates the tenuous nature of economic and personal freedom in North America, despite all promises to the contrary. Nonetheless, captivity also allows them to first articulate and then shed their position as culturally and linguistically marginalized members of their British colony. Their victimization allows them access into what Peter Silvers calls the “suffering white community” of 1750s and 60s North America. For the sectarian German Christoph Saur, who was eager to protect citizens’ rights to conscientiously object to warfare for religious reasons, “bad” Indians are symptom of a much larger problem plaguing the North American continent: British and French imperialism, both fed and fueled by ordinary citizens’ consumerism and greed.

For frontier romance novelist Charles Sealsfield, the Indian was the equivalent to a selfish European aristocrat who felt entitled to land and property. His Tokeah is the
typical “noble savage”—the last of his tribe, he bravely, romantically, tragically, yet necessarily fades away to make room for the more powerful and more deserving American nation. The initial presence and later absence of Indian characters in Sealsfield’s fiction allow him to accomplish his goal of depicting “good” (which means, in his case, Jacksonian) America. Even one of the more liberal-minded urban mystery novelists, Henry Boernstein, used bad Indians as a standard Western plot device to show the heroism of his German main character. Emil Klauprecht’s Indian characters in his *Cincinnati* are on the whole much more complex, yet even these “good Indians” function primarily to critique “bad” (greedy, violent, hypocritical, unromantic) America.

The focus on good vs. bad America also draws attention to one last theme that this study highlights. In addition to using good or bad Indians to critique America, German writers also critique America using the rhetoric of national regeneration, which mirrors that of religious regeneration. As Werner Sollors notes in his book *Beyond Ethnicity*, in both religious and melting pot rhetoric, the central tension is between consent and decent—in national terms, can someone be born American, or must that be a conscious choice? In most cases, the writers in this study emphasize consent over decent. According to most of these writers, even native-born Americans (or for some writers, native-born Americans in particular) need to undergo a regenerative experience. As the rest of this study will show, the way that these writers approach national regeneration is intriguing. While some follow the English-language tradition that Slotkin identified in his seminal work *Regeneration through Violence* of depicting the regenerative properties of frontier violence, others suggest (whether sincerely or disingenuously) that there are alternative
methods of regeneration—that national regeneration is also possible through marriage (Sealsfield, chapter 3) and friendship as well (Boernstein and Klauprecht, chapter 4).

Works Cited


Most discussions of captivity narratives in American literary scholarship begin with Mary Rowlandson. Although hers was not the first captivity narrative, it was the first stand-alone Puritan captivity narrative published as such, and it often gets credit for starting a uniquely American genre. Of course, when we look beyond the Puritan tradition, we find that Rowlandson’s was not the first stand-alone captivity narrative, and that the genre is transnational, not American. In fact, the first stand-alone captivity narrative (if we consider captivity narratives as a strictly Old meets New World phenomenon), was written and published in German: Hans Staden’s 1557 *Warhaftige Historia*. Its transnationality is obvious: Staden was a German soldier serving at a Portugese fort in Brazil when taken captive by Tupi Indians.

Not all captivity narrative scholars still hold onto the old model of American exceptionalism, of course; as the New American studies turns transnational and multilingual, scholars of captivity narratives are likewise examining narratives written outside of what would be eventually become the United States and in languages other
than English: Gordon Sayre’s 1997 book *Les Sauvages Américains*, for example, compares missionary captivity narratives of New France with the more well-known captivities of New England, and his 2000 anthology includes multilingual texts (including Staden’s) as well as Native American texts like Geronimo’s narrative (turning the genre “inside out,” as he calls it). Lisa Voigt’s 2009 book *Writing Captivity in the Early Modern Atlantic* examines the Spanish-language captivity tradition.

Despite this multilingual trend, and despite the large number of German settlers who came into contact with Indians on the colonial frontier, German-language narratives have not received the same scholarly attention as have English-, French-, and Spanish-language narratives. One obvious reason for this is that there aren’t as many of them available for study. According to one German scholar, the canon of German-language captivity narratives consists of only eight published accounts (not including Staden’s).

---

6 In Klaudia Kroke’s 2001 dissertation, she identifies eight German-language captivity narratives that form the small but important canon of German-language captivities. While three of these narratives are original texts (those marked with *), most are translations of English-language captivity narratives. Furthermore, while some of them are published in Germany and some in colonial America, they are intended for German-language readers in various parts of the world, making this body of texts truly transnational: Quintin Stockwell’s captivity, published as *Richardi Blome Englisches America* (Leipzig, 1697); Captain Richard Falconer und Thomas Randal’s captivity, published as *Richard Falconers Erstaunliche Seefahrten* (Leipzig, 1749); Jonathon Dickinson’s captivity, published as *Die Göttliche Beschützung* (Philadelphia, 1756) and then as *Jonathan Dickinsons erstaunliche Geschichte* (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1774); William and Elizabeth Fleming’s story, published as *Eine Erzählung von den Trubsalen und der Wunder bahren Befreyung* (Germantown, Pennsylvanina, 1756), and then with the previously mentioned *Jonathan Dickinsons erstaunliche Geschichte* (Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1774); Marie le Roy und Barbara Leininger’s story, published as *Die Erzehlungen von Maria le Roy und Barbara Leininger* (Philadelphia, 1759); Abraham Urssenbacher’s story, published as “Erzählung eines unter den Indianern gewesener Gefangenen” in *Neu-eingerichteter Americanischer Geschichts und Haus Calender* (Philadelphia, 1761); the story of a young English officer captured by Abenakee Indians,
Since captivity narratives are imperial narratives of contact and conquest, and Germany was not a colonizing nation until much later (and then in Africa, not in the Americas), it seems to follow that there wouldn’t be a separate German-language captivity narrative tradition. This conclusion is shortsighted, however.

To begin with, the numbers are deceptive. While there may only be a handful of German-language captivity narratives published as such, there are many more unpublished accounts, or published accounts that have been labeled differently. According to Craig D. Atwood, a Moravian minister and scholar whom I met at the Society of Early Americanists’ conference in Philadelphia last year, there are countless numbers of unpublished German-language Moravian captivity narratives in archives across Pennsylvania and Germany. Scholars have not thought to look for captivity narratives in these archives because they are usually considered repositories of spiritual autobiographies and communal journals, not captivity narratives. As archives go digital, some of these accounts are becoming available online. A great example of a now available German-language captivity narrative that has never been considered as such is available through the Bethlehem Digital History Project under “community records.” It is the fascinating communal journal of Moravian Indians who were imprisoned first on Province Island and then in Philadelphia barracks (for their own safety) during the Paxton Boys riots of 1763. This is not only a German-language captivity narrative, but it is also from the perspective of Indians held captive by the English, turning the genre “inside

published as “Rührende Anecdote von einem Wilden” in Hamburgisches Journal (Hamburg, 1765); and the story of Regina Leininger, published as “Das sechs und zwanzigste Exempel” in H. M. Muhlenberg’s Hallesche Nachrichten* (Halle, 1769).
“out,” as Gordon Sayre would say. These narratives are slightly beyond the parameters of this chapter, which focuses on a very specific group of narratives published within three years of one another in Philadelphia. They nonetheless illustrate my point: there is a rich tradition of German-language captivity narratives; scholars just haven’t been looking for them. This chapter is only the beginning of my own work on the topic, and I hope my work will inspire other scholars to uncover and analyze that rich tradition as well.

This chapter examines three German-language captivity narratives published within three years of each other in Philadelphia during the French and Indian War: two English-language captivities translated into German and published together by Christopher Saur in 1756 (William and Elizabeth Fleming’s narrative, *Eine Erzählung von den Trubsalen und der Wunder bahren Befreyung* and Jonathan Dickinson’s narrative, *Die Göttliche Beschützung*) and the original narrative *Die Erzählungen von Maria le Roy und Barbara Leininge*, published by Benjamin Franklin’s German-language press in 1759. 7 I’ve picked these texts because their shared audience (Pennsylvania Germans) and historical/political context (the French and Indian War) make it possible to identify and make sense of differences in characterization and purpose, and to attribute these differences to shifting alliances during a period of immense historical significance.

As early American historian Peter Silver demonstrates in his 2007 book *Our Savage Neighbors*, the French and Indian War saw the solidification of a diverse group of

---

7 Although his name appears on the narrative, Franklin was probably not involved in the publication—not only was he in England at the time, but 1759 was also the year he sold his German-language press to Peter Miller.
European settlers (separated by nationality, language, culture, and religion) into a community unified by their shared sense of victimization at the hands of Indians and other Europeans (first the French and Quakers, and later the British). The three German-language captivities I examine in this chapter illustrate how one group of colonists, the Pennsylvania Germans, found themselves on different sides of this new binary, as frontier dwellers (mostly Lutheran or Reformed, or “church Germans”) became members of a newly privileged group of suffering white people, and members of peace churches (or “sect Germans”) were vilified for ignoring their cries for help. When the French and Indian War began, church Germans living in the backcountry (along with their Scots-Irish neighbors) were seen as instigators of frontier violence; by the end of the war, church Germans became known as victims of violence, and their former allies—members of German peace churches—had become scapegoats.

***

In the introduction to this project, I mentioned that German immigrants to colonial Pennsylvania expected to find a “frontier” in the Eurocentric sense of the word: empty lands on the outskirts or margins of the Pennsylvania colony. What they found instead were contested contact zones. The land may have looked empty to German eyes because it was uncultivated, but uncultivated did not mean empty. In fact, every group in the region claimed it, and this wasn’t just a Native American/European contest. Among Native American groups, both the Delaware and Iroquois claimed the land. Among European groups, England and France claimed it. Among English groups, it was claimed by Pennsylvania and Delaware. It was no wonder that at the beginning of the French and
Indian war, German and Scots-Irish farmers were considered instigators of violence, as they had moved onto these lands without permission from any government, and brought ongoing tensions between all of these groups to a head.

The war also brought ongoing tensions between sect and church Germans in Pennsylvania to a head. Pennsylvania Germans were never an entirely unified bloc. Not only did established Germans look down on newcomers, many of whom were Redemptioners with little or no money and in pitiful health, but there was also a denominational divide between “church Germans” (members of the Lutheran or Reformed churches) and “sect Germans” (members of peace churches such as the Moravians, Dunkers, Mennonites, or Schwenkenfelders). The difference was significant: Church Germans believed in the tenets of their particular denomination, but this formed only a small part of their identities. As Richard MacMaster explains in his collection of original sectarian documents, *Conscience in Crisis*, for sect Germans, denomination was central to their identities:

> The loyalty of many German settlers to the Heidelberg Catechism or the Lutheran liturgy was probably no more than childhood habit…For the sectarian, on the other hand, his religious faith was his primary loyalty and primary identification. He was not a Swiss farmer who happened to be an adherent of the reformed faith, he was a Mennonite who happened to be Swiss and a Miller by trade. (44)

In other words, religion was the primary source of identity and community for sectarians. This influenced settlement patterns as well: Although most sectarians didn’t live in separate cloisters (although some did), they tended to immigrate to areas already settled by other sectarians. Church Germans, on the other hand, moved to where their economic opportunities were greatest, which sometimes meant that they squatted on contested land.
There were nonetheless shared concerns among Pennsylvania Germans. One particular concern was the possibility of forced military service, which became a hot-button issue during King George’s War.\(^8\) Sect Germans were concerned about compulsory militia service because they were strictly pacifist and therefore opposed to violence of any kind. Church Germans were not necessarily opposed to violence, but many had fled compulsory militias in the Palatinate, and were understandably wary of facing more of the same in their new homeland. Church and sect Germans were also united by their fear that the English would try (by force or manipulation) to assimilate them into English culture. This fear was seemingly validated in 1754, when The Society for the Relief and Instruction of Poor Germans formed in order to teach English to German schoolchildren and thus hasten their assimilation. William Smith, one of the group’s founders, went on to suggest more forcible means of assimilation in his 1755 pamphlet “A Brief State of the Province of Pennsylvania.” In this pamphlet Smith argued that British Parliament should pass the following five laws limiting German rights: The first would require Assembly Members to take oaths of allegiance to the crown. Since it went against their religious beliefs to take oaths, this would effectively prohibit both Quakers and sectarian Germans from participating in the Assembly. Second, Smith proposed that Germans’ right to vote on Assembly members be suspended until they assimilate; a period of twenty years should suffice. Third, Protestant ministers should be encouraged to come to Pennsylvania and teach Germans to stay away from subversive sects. Fourth, “all Bonds, Contracts, Wills, and other legal Writings” should be rendered

\(^8\) See Patrick Erben’s dissertation (Chapter 4) on the pamphlet wars between Benjamin Franklin and Christopher Saur during King George’s War.
void if not in English (42). Lastly, it should be illegal to publish or distribute periodicals, newspapers and almanacs in any language other than English.

Although Smith’s proposals may have been extreme, he was not alone in his fear. Many English colonists were worried that German settlers’ linguistic and cultural differences posed a danger to the colony. Benjamin Franklin expressed his concerns in a letter to Peter Collinson on May 9th, 1753, famously claiming that the Germans “will soon so out number us, that all the advantages we have will not [in My Opinion] be able to preserve our language.” Without a shared language unifying the colony, Franklin worried that “even our Government will become precarious…in a few years [interpreters] will be also necessary in the Assembly, to tell one half of our Legislators what the other half say” (484). As the letter progresses, Franklin reveals his darkest fear about the Germans: not only might they take over the colony and cripple the government by their sheer numbers, but they might turn openly traitorous by siding with the French in the upcoming war: “The French who watch all advantages, are now [themselves] making a German settlement back of us in the Ilinoes Country, and by means of those Germans they may in time come to an understanding with ours, and indeed in the last war our Germans shewed a general disposition that seems to bode us no good” (485).

In another frequently quoted essay (Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind, 1751), Franklin further marginalizes German settlers: “Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a Colony of Aliens, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of our Anglifying them, and will never adopt our Language or Customs, any more than they can acquire our Complexion” (234). He
clearly portrays Germans (especially Palatine Germans) as not just culturally inferior, but also racially inferior. In an article on the colonial understanding of race in mid-eighteenth-century Pennsylvania, Liam Riordan explains that “the tripartite racial formation among European settlers, Indians, and enslaved Africans was a far more variegated meeting of cultural groups with multiple distinct interests and self-understandings” (97), and that “whiteness encompassed and excluded groups in mid-eighteenth-century Pennsylvania different from those it embraces today” (100). Germans in mid-eighteenth century Pennsylvania were sometimes included in the white/European category and sometimes not. They were culturally liminal. For German settlers on the frontier, this meant double liminality—occupying both literally liminal and culturally liminal spaces. Former captives, however, were able to capitalize on the literal liminality of captivity to shed the cultural liminality of marginalization.

**From Instigators to Victims**

One of the most interesting features of captivity narratives as a whole during the French and Indian War is the use to which captives put their experience. Both Germans and Scots-Irish settlers before the French and Indian War can be described as doubly liminal. Of course, German and Scots-Irish captives were not the first to experience multiple liminalities. Puritan women like Mary Rowlandson were also doubly liminal—in a literal sense (living on contested lands) and culturally (privileged in terms of race and marginalized in terms of gender). The difference between the captivity narratives of Puritan women and those of German and Scots-Irish settlers is the use to which they put
their captivity once they returned to their home cultures. Once out of captivity, Puritan women returned to their culturally liminal status; they were once again marginalized members of a highly patriarchal society. For German and Scots-Irish captives, on the other hand, their captivity allowed them to shed their marginalized status once they returned. They utilized their captivity not only to articulate their social position, but also to advance it.

At the beginning of the war, former captives capitalized on their experience primarily through word-of-mouth and newspaper accounts. As Peter Silver demonstrates, the French and Indian War created a new rhetoric of suffering and victimization utilized by writers in public debates, literature, and private correspondence. Silver calls this rhetoric the “anti-Indian sublime,” a “horror-filled rhetoric intent on the damage that Indians had done to colonists’ bodies and families” (xx). When the raids began, the people from the backcountry discovered that the best way to make the city dwellers understand their suffering was to show them. This was mostly done through printed accounts of raids, but some colonists were more ambitious, dragging the mutilated bodies of dead colonists into towns for display. Silver claims there was a “minor vogue” for this kind of display in the early stages of the war, and since there were not enough bodies to satisfy urban curiosity, printed accounts of raids that focused on colonists’ mutilated bodies were the next best thing. The purpose of this new rhetoric of suffering and mutilation, Silver claims, was not simply to incite fear and hatred of Indians, but also to “vilify other Europeans—the French at first, and the Quakers—and to assert the existence of a suffering, victimized community” (74). The rhetoric of suffering—this anti-Indian
sublime—“fixed on the sight of attacks and not their causes” (74) and soon, “ordinary country people who had been dismissed in the cities as worse than Indians were reshaped into grander figures, defined by their hardships more than their religion, their nationality, or any of their own troublesome actions” (75). In other words, captivity allowed German and Scots-Irish frontier dwellers a way out of their cultural liminality and entrance into a new privileged community. A new binary was created, a new conception of community that united “suffering white people” and pitted them against those who caused or ignored that suffering (the French and Indians in the first case and the Quakers and other pacifist sects in the second case).

It is easy to understand why the English would vilify the French during this colonial conflict, but Quakers and their allies (German pacifist sects) were also targets of this rhetoric; they were portrayed as ignoring the people’s suffering because of unreasonable religious principles. As Richard MacMaster explains in *Conscience in Crisis*, a collection of original documents from eighteenth-century peace churches in Pennsylvania, the Quaker vision “was a sectarian vision. It sought to protect and extend that liberty that made it possible for the nonresistant sects to *live* according to conscience and not just to *worship* according to conscience” (27). They wanted to protect the liberties that Penn established in the First Article of the Charter of Privileges and that made Pennsylvania a haven for religious groups facing persecution in Europe. In that charter, Penn stated:

BECAUSE no People can be truly happy, though under the greatest Enjoyment of Civil Liberties, if abridged of the Freedom of their Consciences, as to their Religious Profession and Worship: And Almighty God being the only Lord of Conscience, Father of Lights and Spirits; and the Author as well as Object of all
divine Knowledge, Faith and Worship, who only doth enlighten the Minds, and persuade and convince the Understandings of People, I do hereby grant and declare, That no Person or Persons, inhabiting in this Province or Territories, who shall confess and acknowledge One almighty God, the Creator, Upholder and Ruler of the World; and profess him or themselves obliged to live quietly under the Civil Government, shall be in any Case molested or prejudiced, in his or their Person or Estate, because of his or their conscientious Persuasion or Practice, nor be compelled to frequent or maintain any religious Worship, Place or Ministry, contrary to his or their Mind, or to do or suffer any other Act or Thing, contrary to their religious Persuasion.

Patrick Erben notes that by the mid-eighteenth century, the Charter and “the rhetoric of protecting it catalyzed a sense of religious community” between Quakers and German peace churches: “Penn’s founding, the original principle of peacefulness, the ‘Charter,’ and the accommodation of Indians through diplomacy…became quasi-mythological reference points for Quakers and German sectarians during the conflicts of the mid and late 18th century.” When religious freedoms and the right to conscientiously object to warfare came under attack, first during King George’s War, then during the French and Indian War, “Quaker and German sectarians were prepared to suffer for the freedoms inscribed in the Pennsylvania ‘Charter of Privileges’” (9). They did, in fact, suffer for their beliefs. In previous imperial conflicts, the Quaker-dominated Assembly was able to thwart the passage of a militia bill and prevent mandatory military service for Pennsylvania colonists. During the French and Indian War, however, the pressure was even greater to create a militia act, and Quakers and other peace churches were portrayed as callously ignoring the suffering of the frontiersmen because of their seemingly irrational religious principles.

The captivity narrative of Scots-Irish couple William and Elizabeth Fleming, *A Narrative of the Sufferings and Surprising Deliverance*, is a perfect example of the
process by which the French as well as Quakers (and other sectarians) were vilified and the frontiersmen exculpated. By 1756, six English-language editions of the narrative had already been published: three editions in Philadelphia, one in Lancaster, one in New York, and one in Boston. The earliest editions were written in order to raise funds for the financially destitute couple, and the title pages emphasized their suffering: “Printed for the Benefit of the unhappy Sufferers, and Sold by them only.” The Boston edition is altered slightly to recruit soldiers, and its title page clearly vilifies the French: “A NARRATIVE necessary to be read by all who are going in the Expedition, as well as every British Subject. Wherein it fully appears, that the Barbarities of the Indians is owing to the French, and chiefly their Priests.”

Throughout both editions, the Flemings emphasize their sufferings and blame the Indian raids on the French and the settlement’s vulnerable position on the Quakers. In one particularly graphic scene, William describes the murder of his neighbor: The Indian with remorseless Cruelty gave him a Blow with the Back of his Tomahawk which stunn’d him; but before he fell, another was repeated in the same Manner, which brought him to the Ground, where he lay some Minutes motionless: The inhuman Wretch stood over him…and with one fatal Blow sunk it in his Skull. This tragical Scene renewed their Sport, they affecting to imitate his expiring Agonies: There remained nothing now to compleat their inhuman Barbarity but to scalp him which was done almost in an Instant.

Despite this cruelty, it is the French who are described as the true villains: “the French were to allow them a certain Sum per Scalp and for Prisoners.” When Elizabeth asks her captors “if they did not think it a Sin to shed so much innocent Blood?” they answer that the French had “old Men” (priests) who would “forgive all their Sins,” although they had been assured that “it was no sin to destroy Hereticks, and all the English were such” (16).
The Quakers and peace sects are also portrayed as culpable: William claims that it would be “Fool-hardy” to have “too favourable an Opinion of the friendly Attachment of these Indians to this Province” (5). This was the opinion of the Quakers in the Assembly and one of the reasons they gave to justify their opposition to militia bills. Furthermore, after Elizabeth and William are taken captive, captors and captives sit around the fire with “no distinction” (15). This practice of sitting with no distinction implicitly compares Indians, the clear enemy in the text, with Quakers, who also sit in their meetings without distinction. The text aligns Quakers with the Indian enemy because, from the perspective of frontier dwellers, Quaker inactivity ultimately aided the enemy. Additionally, the text initially aligns William with pacifist groups, because he complies with the Indians in the text instead of fighting them. His pacifism may save his life, but it endangers the lives of his wife and neighbors, and nearly gets him pressed into the French and Indian army. The message is clear: pacifism is a dangerous and selfish policy that endangers not only its practitioners, but their families and neighbors as well. Salvation comes only through active resistance.

Ultimately, William and Elizabeth Fleming don’t just blame the French and Quakers for their suffering; they also capitalize on that suffering to shed their marginalized status as Scots-Irish settlers in a British colony. This is evident in the famous scene in which Elizabeth emerges covered with soot from an oven in which she has been hiding and is nearly shot by a group of English soldiers. Elizabeth explains:

so I hasted back to my Lodging [the oven], and had not been in it long before I heard the Noise of Horses, and the Voices of several white Men, which made me look out and seeing one pass by at some distance, I cried out to him for God’s Sake to pity my distressed Condition, and take me under his Protection. The good Man
being startled at my sudden Appearance, and the strange Figure I cut (being entirely in Rags, and as black as any Chimney-Sweep) presented his Gun, and if it had not miss’d Fire, he would certainly have deprived me of that wretched Life I had gone through so many Difficulties to preserve; another of the Company perceiving it, cryed out, *Hold, hold, she is a white Woman by her Voice.* (27)

At the beginning of the war, Elizabeth, as a Scots-Irish woman, would have been seen as an instigator of violence, as a savage who brought her misfortune on herself. Now, she is physically marked by her hardships, which facilitates her entry into the suffering white community.

Of course, neither Quakers nor sectarian Germans appreciated being scapegoated. Joanna Brooks argues that the Quaker response was to “reinvent” the captivity narrative, “substituting the Irish for Indians as a violent threat to the stability of William Penn’s Holy Experiment and to the peace testimony of the Society of Friends. They did so in order to maintain their innocence against their deep historical, economic, and political implication in British colonialism” (33). Although she cites some Quaker responses to the Paxton Boys massacre and a few Quaker autobiographies, she doesn’t look at texts from other peace churches or at non-English language captivities, which together demonstrate a more nuanced sectarian response. Members of non-Quaker peace churches, for example, came together with their Quaker allies to provide material support for victims of Indian raids (MacMaster). They also looked for peaceful solutions to war that didn’t compromise their principles, even helping to arrange the peace treaty at Easton in 1758. Through their work and in their writing, sectarians attempted to complicate new binaries and search for alternative solutions, which is reflected in the German language captivity

43
literature, particularly in two repurposed captivity narratives translated into German and published by sectarian German printer Christopher Saur.

**From Allies to Scapegoats: The Sectarian Response**

Christopher Saur was by far the most influential German printer in the English colonies. His press, established in 1726, was not the first German press in Philadelphia, but it was the first successful one. One reason for his success was his use of fraktur blackletter type rather than the roman type used by English presses. Although fraktur blackletter cannot be called an exclusively German typeface since it was also used outside of Germany, German printers tended to use it when printing for German audiences (Newton). Saur’s press not only catered to German audiences, but it was also a visual embodiment of their shared German national identity (Bain and Shaw). Through typeface as well as content, Saur emphasized the commonalities shared by his German readers; he used his press to unite German settlers from various states, occupations, and religious backgrounds. Although he was a sect German, he believed that his sectarian vision of being able to live according to one’s principles would protect the liberties of all Germans living in the colony. He not only argued against compulsory military service (about which church Germans as well as sectarians were wary), but he also fought for German settlers’ right to speak, write, publish, and educate their children in their native tongue.

By 1756, however, due to the rhetoric of suffering that Silver documents, church Germans on the frontier were less likely to see sectarians like Saur as their allies and
more likely to see them as complicit in their suffering. When Christopher Saur translated the Fleming narrative into German in 1756, he did so to counter its assertion that pacifist Quakers and sect Germans are partially to blame for the couple’s suffering. Saur’s translation shows church Germans that pacifists do care about the suffering taking place in the backcountry, and more importantly, that they aren’t simply ignoring their suffering, but seeking alternative (and more effective) ways to address it. He shifts the blame from pacifist groups to the British imperial mission and proposes an alternative solution—instead of supporting their imperialistic aims, the colony should return to the kind of simple Christian living long advocated by Quakers and sectarians.

As Patrick Erben explains, “The specter of war in mid-eighteenth century Pennsylvania…generated a renewed interest in Quakers and German Sectarians in the interpretation of the province’s history. Saur, in particular, stressed the transnational and cross-denominational character of early Pennsylvania…[and its] peaceful, diplomatic relationships with Indians” (“What Will Become of Pennsylvania?” 25). Saur created this idealized version of early Pennsylvania as a model for the contemporary colony to follow. Instead of taking up arms, Saur argues that Pennsylvanians should address the real root of the problem—the gradual decline in the colony’s values from Penn’s day to his own. He makes this argument through his newspapers and pamphlets in the 1740s and 50s, as Erben demonstrates, but also through the skillful repackaging of the Fleming captivity narrative.

We saw earlier that the Fleming narrative was an incendiary text designed to vindicate frontier dwellers and lay the blame for Indian attacks on French and Quakers.
For that reason, it may seem an odd choice that Saur chose that particular captivity narrative to translate. In fact, it is a strategic move that allows him to reinterpret the events from a sectarian perspective. The vast majority of the text is the same as the English-language Philadelphia version upon which it is based, but Saur makes subtle changes throughout to vindicate Quakers and sectarians and shift the blame onto the British imperial mission and the greed of Pennsylvania citizens.

In the initial text, William Fleming originally complied with his captors, a move that saved his life, but put his family and neighbors in danger. Saur’s biggest challenge is to show that pacifism can actually be a successful defensive strategy. His first significant decision is to translate the Philadelphia edition rather than the more concise and incendiary Boston edition. Also, in Saur’s version, William does not suggest that Quakers and sectarians who believed the Indians would honor their peace-treaty were “fool-hardy;” he simply claims that he did not trust the Indians (6). Perhaps the biggest challenge Saur faced in repurposing the narrative, however, is the character of Elizabeth Fleming, given her surprising level of self-sufficiency. In fact, what has drawn modern scholars to the text, in addition to its polyvocality (deftly switching between William and Elizabeth’s narratives), is Elizabeth’s uncharacteristic agency in the narrative. From the beginning of the text, she boldly questions her captors; she plans and carries out her and her husband’s escape; she successfully navigates her way alone through the woods; and she effectively hides from her enemies when she reencounters them, all despite being pregnant. Although non-violent, she is incredibly self-sufficient. Elizabeth’s self-sufficiency is highlighted by her husband’s actions (or lack of action). William not only
passively leads the Indians to his own home and essentially hands his wife over to them, but he also burns his own house down at their request, and when Elizabeth shares her escape plan with him, he messes that up as well, missing an intended rendezvous when he trips over a stump and knocks himself out.

Saur is faced with two immediate problems in repurposing this narrative: he must turn Elizabeth from a self-sufficient character into a more passive woman aided by providence, and he must make William’s passivity appear deliberate rather than a product of his ineptitude. While Saur cannot alter the basic plotline of the story, he can make minor changes. He thus recharacterizes William in a more traditionally masculine role, as a man who chooses to remain passive for the good of himself and his wife. Elizabeth is recast as a woman who takes advantage of providential opportunities, rather than one who actively resists her captors. This is most evident in the escape scene. In the English version, Elizabeth stayed awake after the Indians had fallen asleep, and “began to think on making use of the Opportunity put into [their] Hands of making an Escape: She communicated her Sentiments in Whispers to [her husband]” (17). Although the rhetoric here is providential (the opportunity is “put into their hands”), Elizabeth’s actions demonstrate that she actually created that opportunity herself by staying awake until the Indians were all asleep. In Saur’s version of the tale, he removes Elizabeth’s agency by giving her insomnia: “My wife, who could not sleep, soon had the idea, that the Indian’s sleep was a good opportunity for us to escape” (16, emphasis mine). She no longer creates the opportunity; God provides it and she merely takes it.

9 “Meine Frau, welche nicht schlafen konte, kam bald auf die Gedancken, daß der
While Saur doesn’t need to lessen William’s passivity in the text, he does need to make it clear that his passivity doesn’t stem from incompetence but is instead deliberate, strategic and effective. The original escape scene is as follows: When William sees Elizabeth at their intended rendezvous location, he says, “I threw down my Tankard intending to hide my self on the other Side of the Run in a Thicket till she came up; but in my Hurry, I ran against a Sappling which stunn’d me, and I lay in this Condition some Time (during which I suppose my Wife came to the Run and not finding me made the best of her Way off). When I recovered, I went on in the best Manner I could” (18). In Saur’s version, William’s missed rendezvous with Elizabeth is no longer portrayed as a result of his clumsiness or ineptitude; they simply pass each other in the night: “But I had waited long by the spring and could not see or hear my wife, so I became worried. I knew she had gone from the fire, and thought it would be unnecessary and dangerous to go back to the fire, and I was obliged to leave it to Providence, so I hurried alone as well as I could” (17, emphasis mine). Everything that now happens to Elizabeth after her separation from William is attributed to providence, rather than her own strength and cunning, and William is now a man who passively accepts his new troubles not because he caused them and has no other choice, but because he believes that all is in God’s hands. Of course, the ending of both editions is the same—William and Elizabeth are safe, and their suffering makes them minor celebrities. The reason for their safety,

Indianer Schlaf uns eine gute Gelegenheit wär zu entfliehen.”

10“Aber also ich lang bey der Spring gewartet hatte, und konte nichts von meiner Frauen hören oder sehen, so ward ich sehr unruhig, ich wußte, sie war vom Feuer weg gegangen, und dachte, es fey unnöthig und gefährlich wieder zurück zum Feuer zu gehen, und ward also genöthiget sie er Vorsehung zu überlassen.”
however, has changed—pacifism is no longer a hindrance, but an effective wartime strategy.

Saur doesn’t just reinterpret the events of the war; he reinterprets the couple’s suffering as well. We saw that in the original text, the couple didn’t want to suffer, but by articulating their suffering and blaming it on others, they were allowed entry in a suffering white community. In Saur’s text, William actually chooses to suffer rather than to fight. He accepts suffering as God’s will. Saur reinterprets his suffering in Quaker and sectarian terms, in which suffering and persecution were interpreted as “tokens of true faith, evidence discipleship, and constancy in ‘Truth’” (Erben, “What Will Happen to Pennsylvania” 7-8).

Saur emphasizes William’s suffering from the very beginning of the text. In fact, on the title page of Saur’s translation, the word “suffering” [Trübsalen, or afflictions] is the largest word on the page, unlike either the Philadelphia or Boston English-language editions. Saur also writes a preface to the piece that emphasizes the Fleming’s suffering and encourages readers to feel their pain—to experience their suffering vicariously (perhaps to prepare them for the persecution they would face for defending their religious liberties during wartime). At the end of the preface, Saur asks his readers to contribute funds to the now destitute couple. This is also in keeping with the sectarian response to the French and Indian War. As Richard MacMaster showed in Conscience in Crisis, members of peace churches were far from unsympathetic to the victims of frontier violence. They may have refused to take up arms or contribute money for war, but they
took up extensive collections for those impoverished because of it (both Europeans and Native Americans alike).

MacMaster also demonstrates how sectarian groups joined together with Quakers to form the “Friendly Association for Regaining and Preserving Peace with the Indians by Pacific Measures,” a group lead by Israel Pemberton. They believed that if colonial governments had continued the example set by William Penn and dealt fairly with native tribes, then there would be no fighting. The best way to end the war was not to fight the Indians, but to address their grievances. To that end, the group initiated a series of peace conferences in Easton, Pennsylvania with delegations from the Pennsylvania colonial government, the Iroquois, and the Delaware. Because of the efforts of The Friendly Association, Pennsylvania established peace with the Delaware in 1758. Christopher Saur was an avid proponent of the Friendly Association, using his press and his clout to recruit members and gather funds. Because of this, it is somewhat surprising that another way in which Saur emphasizes the Flemings’ suffering in his version of their captivity narrative is by expanding the requisite Indian torture scene, and utilizing the trope of the Bad Indian.

As I explained in the introduction to this project, German-American writers often use the trope of the good or bad Indian to critique good or bad America. Unfortunately, despite his belief in the Friendly Association and its goals, Saur is no different. In his reworking of the Fleming narrative, he actually removes portions of the original text that show the humanity of the Flemings’ captors. Elizabeth’s captors no longer turn away when she changes. They no longer assure her that they offer her no sexual threat. And
although William still notes that they sit by the fire without distinction, his remark that this is “a Mark of no small Condescension” is stricken. Saur also expands the scene in which the Flemings’ neighbor is tortured. In the initial scene, Fleming is tied to a tree and must watch helplessly as an Indian “with remorseless Cruelty gave him [the neighbor] a Blow with the Back of his Tomahawk which stunn’d him”:

Before he fell, another was repeated in the same Manner, which brought him to the Ground, where he lay some Minutes motionless: The inhuman Wretch stood over him…and with one fatal Blow sunk it in his Skull. This tragical Scene renewed their Sport, they affecting to imitate his expiring Agonies: There remained nothing now to compleat their inhuman Barbarity but to scalp him which was done almost in an Instant.

In Saur’s version, William’s suffering while tied to the tree is exaggerated. He is tied so tightly that “blood squirts from [his] fingers” (11). He asks for mercy, but in vain: “I promised I wanted to be obedient and go where he wished! My lamentable requests would probably have softened a stone-hard-heart, but it served for nothing but that they scoffed at me and laughed at my misery” (11-12). This extended scene demonstrates quite clearly that Saur is not above demonizing Indians if it serves a larger purpose. That purpose is to critique “bad Pennsylvania.” He wants to show just how far Pennsylvania has strayed from its peaceful roots.

Saur makes one last significant change in the Fleming narrative, a change that also helps us understand his use of the bad Indian trope. He replaces the poem at the end of the Philadelphia edition (a poem comparing captivity with illness) with a new poem

---

11 “…daß mir das Blut aus den Fingern hätte spritzen mögen.”
12 “Ich versprach ich wolle gehorsam seyn und mit hingehen wo er wolle! Mein lamentabeles Bitten hätte wohl mögen ein Stein-hartes-Hertz erweichen, aber es dienete zu nichts anders, als daß sie mir nachspotteten, und mich auslachten in meinem Elend.”
that recasts the Fleming narrative as a jeremiad. In this concluding poem, Pennsylvania is cast as a modern day Israel: “God’s Jewish people/ only wanted their own way/ […]So He held court with them/ And punished them with a rod/ As one does to bad children.”\textsuperscript{13}

Although the Jews betrayed their God by crucifying Jesus (“they made like the heathen, /And brought Jesus to the cross”\textsuperscript{14}) and have thus forfeited their claim to God’s protection and affection, the Christians in Pennsylvania still have an opportunity for redemption, which they unfortunately seem to be squandering much like Israel did:

There was a beautiful Christianity
To praise of God and great fame
But like the Jews of that time,
So this Christianity lives
In hate, envy, anger, vengeance, pride and splendor
The poor are cast out like nothing

The poem ends by showing the consequences of communal sins:

Earthquake, rising prices, heathen rage
War, fear, angst, fright, scalping, death. (29)\textsuperscript{15}

This jeremiad-esque poem is very telling. Like a Puritan preacher using a congregant’s story of captivity to show how a community is being punished for

\textsuperscript{13} “Gott hat dem alten Juden-Volck,/ Das nur sein’ eigene Wege wolt,/ […]So hielt er dann mit Ihn’n Gericht,/ Und straffte sie mit einer Ruth, / Wie man den bösen Kindern thut.”

\textsuperscript{14} “Biß sie es wie die Heyden macht’n, /Und Jesum gar uns Creutze bracht’n”

\textsuperscript{15} Da ward ein schönes Christenthum,
Zu Gottes Lob und großem Ruhm;
Doch wie die Juden jener Zeit,
So lebt nun diese Christenheit
In Haß, Neyd, Zorn, Rach, Stoltz und Pracht,
Der Arme wird wie Nichts geacht:
So zeigt’ Gott die Cometen Ruth,
Erdbeben, Theurung, Heyden-Wuth,
Krieg, Furcht, Angst, Schrecken, Scolpen, Tod…
backsliding, Saur uses the Fleming’s captivity narrative to show that the violence on the frontier is due to the colony abandoning Penn’s mission. Unfortunately, in jeremiad-themed captivity narratives, Indians have only one role to play—they are the pawns of God or the devil. Saur borrowed his “bad Indians” straight from the pages of Puritan captivity narratives, and he used them to critique what he saw as an increasingly corrupted British colony. Although his methods were questionable, his goal was nonetheless laudable—to keep Germans from taking up arms against neighboring tribes, even if it means suffering and dying at their hands. After all, suffering is not a reason to blame others. It is a reason to reflect on one’s own spirituality. It is a political statement. It is a protest. It is a badge of honor.

Saur completes his pacifist revision of the Fleming narrative through the skillful repackaging of the textual object: he publishes it with the explicitly pacifist Dickinson narrative which influences any subsequent reading of the Fleming text. Dickinson’s *God’s Protecting Providence*, a 1699 Quaker captivity narrative about a shipwreck off the coast of Florida in 1696, is a fitting vehicle for Saur’s arguments. Not only does it promote pacifist principles, but it also allows Saur to subtly critique his remaining allies—the English Quakers—and urge them to stay the course.

Unlike the Fleming narrative, the original English-language Dickinson narrative already promotes pacifism, which means that Saur didn’t need to reinterpret the events in the narrative, but simply translate them. The Dickinson narrative consistently illustrates that God protects his children and violence is therefore unnecessary. For example, when the shipwrecked group encounters two Florida Natives, the crew asks Dickinson “what
they should do, whether they should get their guns to kill these two; but [he] persuaded them otherwise, desiring them to be quiet, (shewing their Inability to defend us from what would follow) and to put our Trust in the Lord, who was able to defend to the uppermost” (6). The two Indian men eventually leave, but return with even more Indians. Again, Dickinson advocates a pacifist approach: “We sitting on the Ground, the Indians surrounded us; we stirred nor moved not, but sate all, or most of us, very calm and still, some of us in a good Frame of Spirit, being freely given up to the Will of God” (7). Their calm is contagious: instead of killing them, the Indians are likewise “struck Dumb, and like Men amazed the Space of a quarter of an Hour, in which Time their Countenances fell, and they looked like another People” (8). Saur likely found in this passage a powerful example of why, since God takes care of his people, they need not resort to violence.

Because Dickinson’s text is already compatible with Saur’s agenda, he takes few liberties beyond translation. He omits Dickinson’s journal entries from before the shipwreck, streamlines lengthy passages, and adds German referents to Dickinson’s descriptions (like comparing the Savannah River to the Rhine). The most important change that Saur makes in repackaging this text as political propaganda, however, is in combining it with the Fleming narrative and affixing the jeremiad-themed poem to both texts. In concluding the two narratives with this poem, Saur suggests that the war and its subsequent captivities and fatalities are a result of communal sins of “pride and splendor” that have polluted what used to be a “beautiful Christianity.” This message may make little sense if it were affixed to the Fleming narrative alone—the Flemings are simple
farmers who could hardly be called proud or splendid. The blame is not put on the
Flemings, however, but on men like Dickinson.

Dickinson, a wealthy merchant and slave owner, was always difficult to cast as
the hero of a Quaker narrative. When the Society of Friends initially published
Dickinson’s text, they emphasized in title pages and preface that missionary Robert
Barrow was the hero of the story and Dickinson merely the recorder. Saur goes even
further, implying that Dickinson is the narrative’s unwitting villain. It is the sins and
hypocrisy of supposed Christians like Dickinson—wealthy merchants who keep slaves
and live lavishly—who have polluted the colony and put the entire province at risk. In the
pamphlet, Klare und Gewisse Wahrheit (Clear and Certain Truth), Saur asked of men
like Dickinson: “Do there have to be so many chandlers and tradesmen in a land like this,
where the craftsmen are still rare enough? Is it necessary to have and own so many
servants and Negroes and to maintain a high status or to accumulate great estates for you
and your dependants?... There is no need for ostentatious clothing, unnecessary
household goods, conveniences, and costly sensual items from foreign lands to live
decent, respectable and let alone Christian lives, as nature teaches” and if Pennsylvanians
realized that, there would be no cause for war (13). In packaging these narratives
together and affixing to them a jeremiad-themed poem, Saur argues that the present
conflict, as seen in the Fleming narrative, is the result of hypocrisy and greed showcased
in the Dickinson narrative. What’s more, in casting Dickinson—a prominent Quaker

16“Es bedürfftet ja des grausamen Kleider-Prachts, des überflüssigen Haussraths,
Gemächlichkeiten und kostbaren Wollüstereye aus fernen Landen nicht wann man nur
Menschlich-Ehrbar, geschweige Christlich nothdürfftig leben wolte, wie die Natur selbst
lehret.”
merchant—as the villain of his own captivity narrative, Saur issues a warning to his Quaker allies. Patrick Erben argues that sectarian Germans “played a key role in reminding Quakers of their original testimony of non-resistance, because they—unlike Pennsylvania Friends—never furnished the political and economic elite of the province” (“What Will Become of Pennsylvania” 8). By republishing the Dickinson narrative during the French and Indian War along with a contemporary captivity narrative, Saur reminds Quakers that they are not entirely innocent. Quakers served on the Assembly. They voted money for “the King’s Use” that they knew would go to war efforts. For better or worse, Quakers were part of the establishment, and contributed to the current state of the colony, and Saur did not want them to forget that fact. They were the only allies he had left, and he wanted to be sure that they would not abandon the cause.

The Le Roy and Leininger Narrative—The Rift Solidified

In 1756, Saur attempted to repair the divide between church and sect Germans that had been made worse by the French and Indian War and the rhetoric of suffering it occasioned. He sympathized with the suffering, but resisted being blamed for it, and suggested alternative approaches to warfare. Was he successful? In 1759, a new German-language captivity narrative was published, this one dictated by two young women who survived the first Indian raid of the war in 1755 and spent three years in captivity. Die Erzählungen von Maria le Roy und Barbara Leininger illustrates how quickly the rhetoric of suffering granted a doubly liminal group of immigrants—once cast
as the instigators of frontier violence—entry into a new community defined by a shared sense of victimization.

Although some scholars have analyzed the LeRoy/Leininger narrative, most have erroneously considered it part of the English-language tradition. This is because it was supposedly published in English as well as German in 1759. I have not been able to find any records of an English publication, however, other than the assertion by R. W. G. Vail that one existed. If a 1759 English version did exist, it has long since disappeared (Vail even quotes a 1914 English translation of the German original, not the supposed 1759 English edition). If we read this text as part of a German-language tradition, it becomes evidence not only of how doubly liminal settlers leveraged their captivity to shed their culturally liminal status, but it also illustrates the solidification of the rift between church and sect Germans that Saur unsuccessfully tried to mend.

The narrative begins in the third person voice of an anonymous transcriber, who introduces the main characters (and subsequent narrators) of the story: “Marie le Roy was born in Brondrut, Switzerland, and moved to this country with her parents approximately five years ago…About a half mile from their farm lived Barbara Leininger with her parents, who came to Pennsylvania from Reutlingen approximately 10 years ago” (2). It is unclear if the women are actually dictating the narrative to the transcriber, or if this story is second or third hand, although the title page does claim that the story is “from their able mouths written down and published.” What is clear is that the young women

---

are initially defined by their nationalities—Swiss and German—and their occupation of frontier lands, and later by their suffering.

What is missing from this introduction, however, is the fact that the LeRoy and Leininger families were knowingly trespassing on Indian lands. In a letter written on December 7, 1755, Ulrich Engel, Christen Brechbühl and Isaak Neuenschwander describe repeated complaints from the Delaware Indians that Jacob König (LeRoy in French—Marie’s father) and other settlers had “come too far out into their land and had often warned them to leave or expect misfortune” (qtd. in MacMaster 107). Die Erzählungen von Maria le Roy und Barbara Leininger makes no mention of Indian warnings. The attack seemingly comes out of the blue, taking the families entirely unawares: “On October 16th, 1755, in the early morning the le Roy’s servant went out to get the cows. He heard the Indians first fire six shots and soon eight Indians approached the house, killing le Roy’s father with a tomahawk and fighting a long time with her brother, finally overpowering him and taking him along with Marie le Roy and a little girl who was in the house” (2). Of course, the young women were little more than children at the time of the raid and may have been unaware that their farm was on Indian land. This may be an entirely accurate depiction of what the raid felt like for them. Nonetheless, it is clear that by the time their story was written down, this had become the dominant perspective. The causes of the raid and the settlers’ complicity are

18 “Am 16then October 1755 Morgens früh ging le Roys Knecht aus um die Kühe zu hohlen. Er hörte erst die Indianer 6 mahl schiessen, und bald darauf kamen 8 Indianer zu ihrem Hause, welche zuerst der le Roy ihren Vater mit der Tamehacke erschlugen und hernach mit ihrem Bruder eine lange Zeit gefochten; endlich nachdem sie seiner mächtig geworden, haben sie ihn; nebst der Marie le Roy, und einem kleinen Mädchhen, welches sich damahls in ihrem Hause aufhielt, gefangen genommen.”
overshadowed by horrific images of burning homes and mutilated bodies, like the Indians setting fire to Marie’s house and to her father’s tomahawked body.

The scene at Barbara’s house is equally gruesome: Once there, the Indians ask for rum and tobacco and tell the family, “We are Allegheny Indians and your enemy; you must all die” (2). They kill all of the adults present, including Barbara’s father and her twenty-year-old brother. (Her mother and younger brother are at the mill.) Barbara and her younger sister Regina are then taken to the same campsite in the forest to which Marie was taken earlier. At the campsite, they are shown the bloody scalps of their families and friends (the ultimate symbol of victimization). Their suffering continues in the Indian village of Kittany, where Marie and Barbara (now separated from Barbara’s little sister Regina, who stays with the Indians until the end of the war and eventually becomes the subject of her own captivity narrative) face hard labor and hunger: “The Indians had us tan the leather, we had to make their moccasins, clear land, plant corn, chop wood, build huts, wash and cook. The whole time we had neither salt nor fat and sometimes we had to make do with acorns, roots, grass and tree bark; we had nothing in the world of these new people to make food appetizing other than tiresome hunger” (4).

The sudden nature of the raid and the shocking brutality of the Indians are standard captivity narrative tropes. They are used for a specific purpose here, though.

19 “Wir sind Allegheny Indianer und eure Feinde, ihr müsst alle sterben.”

They are meant as a shocking contrast to the images of Pennsylvania and its Natives that drew German settlers to the area to begin with. From the beginning of the colony, Penn and his agents strategically promoted a very specific image of the land and its people to Germans. To German sectarians, the literature emphasized the religious freedoms guaranteed in the Charter. The literature aimed at church Germans emphasized cheap, fertile, and most of all, empty lands. For example, a letter from Thomas Paskell in 1683, which was published in German in 1684, claimed: “I know a man together with two or three more, that have happened upon a piece of Land of some Hundred Acres, that is all cleare, without Trees, Bushes, stumps, that may be Plowed without let, the farther a man goes in the Country the more such Land they find. There is also good Land, full of Large and small Trees, and some good Land, but few Trees on it.”

Of course, Europeans knew that the land couldn’t be entirely empty; they had already heard too much about Indians. The promotional materials address this as well. As Pastorius explains in a promotional pamphlet from 1700: “William Penn did not drive forth the naked native inhabitants of the land with military authority, but brought with him upon his arrival especial clothing and hats for the principal Indians, and thereby secured their goodwill, and purchased their land (and territory) to the extent of twenty leagues, and they, thereupon, withdrew that much farther back into the wild forests” (374). In other words, settlers need not worry about the original inhabitants—they happily withdrew to make way for Europeans. Just in case the recruits were still worried, Pastorius describes the Indians as incredibly accommodating and hospitable: “They strive

21 Not my translation. See Works Cited page.
after a sincere honesty, hold strictly to their promises, cheat and injure no one. They willingly give shelter to others, and are both useful and loyal to their guests” (384).

German promotional literature about Pennsylvania used the trope of the Good Indian to sell Good America. With this image of hospitable, giving, and peaceful Indians lingering in their minds, it is perhaps more understandable that the LeRoy and Leininger families did not heed Delaware warnings to vacate their lands. The settler’s narratives, when read in the context of German literature about America, is a clear response to the earlier promotional materials. Penn, Pastorius, and others used the image of the Good Indian to promote Good America; when the settlers met Indians who were not happy to give their lands away freely to newcomers, and who were willing to fight for those lands, their image of the Good Indian was shattered, and the Bad Indian took its place.

There are some surprising moments in the narrative, however, where the young women recognize the humanity of their captors—on their journey away from Penn’s Creek, they acknowledge the kindness of their master, whom they describe as “quite friendly,” and who lets them ride while the Indians walk. When Barbara takes advantage of this particular kindness and attempts to escape on her horse, she is sentenced to death by fire, but “a young Indian begged so well for Barbara that, at his insistence and after she promised not to run away again or cry anymore, the Indians pardoned her.” Finally, when they reach Kittany and are made to run the gauntlet, they describe it as a painless welcome ritual rather than an act of cruelty: “we received our first official welcome according to Indian custom, namely one of three blows upon the back, which was merciful enough, and we thought that even this was intended more to protect an old law
than to cause us pain” (4). This is similar to the occasion in Mary Rowlandson’s narrative when she recognizes the humanity of King Phillip. It is a unique feature of the captivity narrative that while the genre itself promotes “us vs. them” thinking, the captive’s time spent in captivity illustrates the permeability of those boundaries.

Like most captivity narratives, these moments are few and far between, and the text as a whole polices the boundaries between the cultures. The young women thus actively resist assimilation into native culture. The most striking scene in the narrative illustrates the dangers of assimilation. Marie and Barbara are forced to witness the torture and execution of an English woman who tried to escape during an attack:

They executed this woman in an outrageous fashion—first scalping her, then laying lit splintered wood here and there on her body. They cut off her ears and her fingers and stuck them in her mouth so that she was forced to swallow them. The woman lived under this torture from around 9 o clock in the morning until evening towards sunset. Finally, a French officer took pity on her and struck her dead. An English soldier, however, who had escaped from prison in Lancaster and betaken himself to the French and whose name was John ---, cut himself off a piece of flesh from the woman’s body and ate it. After the woman was dead, the Indians split her down the middle and left her that way so the dogs could completely consume her. (4-5)

22 “Dieser Ort solte nun unsere Wohnstadt werden, deswegen wir auch nach Indianer Gebrauch hier unseren ersten Willkommen empfingen, nemlich des drey Struche über den Rücken, welches gnädig genug war, und dünckte uns dass dieses mehr mit uns vorgenommen wurde, um das alte Recht zu bewahren, als um uns leid zuzufügen.”

23 “Sie haben diese Frau auf eine unerhörte Weise hingerichtet, erst scalpten sie sie, dann haben sie angezündete Splitter Holz hier und dar an ihren Leib gelegt, sie schnitten ihr die Ohren und die Finger ab, und steckten sie ihr in den Mund, dass sies herunter schlucken muste. Die Frau hat von des Morgens um 9 Uhr bis Abends gegen Sonnen Untergang unter dieser Marter gelebt. Endlich hat ein französischer Officier sie aus Mitleiden tod geschlagen. Ein Englischer Soldat aber, welcher aus der Gefangnüs zu Lancaster gelaufen und sich zu den Franzosen begeben hatte, sein Nahme ist John ------ hat sich ein Stück Fleisch von dem Leibe dieser Frau schneiden laffen, und solches gefressen. Nachdem die Frau tod war haben sie die Indianer in der Mitte von einander gespalten, und so liegen lassen, da sie denn von den Handen vollends aufgefressen worden.”
Although this scene is obviously anti-Indian, the real horror of the scene is not the Indians torturing the English woman; it is the English man, who, after living with the French and Indians, has become savage enough to consume her flesh. The horror of the cannibalism is emphasized through the word choice—the verb used isn’t “essen” which is the normal form of “to eat;” the text instead uses the word “fressen” which is typically used only for animals, as in the next sentence when the dogs eat the dead woman’s remains. The English soldier has devolved into a savage; he has “gone native.” The scene epitomizes the xenophobic nature of the captivity genre and demonstrates the perceived dangers of assimilation.

The rest of the narrative clearly demonstrates how the church Germans of the frontier join together with other suffering white colonists, deepening the rift between church and sect Germans. To avoid assimilation into native culture, they conspire with other suffering captives—Englishmen David Breckenreach and Owen Gibson—and escape to Pittsburg. Although neither woman is particularly passive in the beginning of the narrative (especially Barbara), when Marie and Barbara escape and find themselves in the woods, the text makes a curious move, suddenly portraying them according to more traditional gender roles:

The fear of a poor woman in such circumstances is hard to describe: the likelihood that the Indians would pursue and again catch us was two to one to the dim hope that perhaps we would come through: if we did however escape from the Indians, how would we come through the wilderness? We knew no ways and paths, we had no council, were half naked, weakened from more than three years of hard slavery, without food and hungry, in a cold and wet season over rivers and streams. If a person in these circumstances were to depend on his own suitable intelligence, so he must be foolish, and if man cannot believe that God helps him and delivers him from death, he shouldn’t run away. We took heart to believe in
For the first time in the narrative, Marie and Barbara are described as poor lost women who must call on God for help. Perhaps this is necessary to justify an otherwise shocking situation; two helpless women reliant on God to take care of them are less potentially scandalous than two young unmarried women voluntarily alone in the forest with two young men. Regardless, their characters are essentially rewritten here, and they retrospectively become traditionally passive young women who must overcome their natural passivity in order to escape. This symbolizes the increasing rift between church and sect Germans—the young women are rewritten as passive so that they can overcome and reject that passivity, a trait now negatively associated with their former allies, sectarian Germans and Quakers.

When the four captives finally cross the Allegheny River to Pittsburg, they meet English Colonel Mercer and his men. Unfortunately, they have lived among the Indians for almost four years now, and have spent months traveling through the wilderness, and therefore look more like Indians than escaped Indian captives: “They had taken us for

---

24"Die Angst einer armen Weibs Person in solchen Unständen ist schwer zu beschreiben: die grosse Wahtscheinlichkeit die Indianer werden uns nach setzen und wider kriegen, ist wie zwey gegen eins zu der dunckeln Hofnung, wir werden aber vielleicht glücklich durchkommen: wenn wir aber den Indianern entrinnen, wie werden wir durch die Wüste kommen/ keinen Weg und Steg wissen, rath- und Hulslos sind wir, halb nackend, entkrästet von der mehr als 3 jährigen hatten Sclaveren, ohne alle Speise und hungrig, in einer kalten und nassen Jarhs-Zeit, über so viele Flüsse und Vache. Wenn ein Mensch sich in diesen Unständen auf seine eigne Klugheit verlassen wolte, so müste er thöricht sein, und wenn man nicht glauben könte, dass ein Gott ist der helffen und vom Tode errettet kan, so liess man lieber das weglaufen bleiben. Wir nahmen uns das Herz an Gott unsern Schöpfer und Erhalter zu glauben, und in unssrer Noth um seinen gnädigen Beystand anzurufen.”

64
Indians…but we convinced them that we were English captives who had escaped from the Indians and that we were wet and cold and hungry so we would be overtaken” (10).25

The young German women look like Indians, and claim to be English—they have successfully sacrificed gendered and nationalized passivity/pacifism for survival. They entered captivity as doubly liminal figures—as marginalized settlers whose incursions onto Indian land helped spark war. They returned as full members of a new community built on suffering and victimization. Unfortunately, their entrance into the new community came at a cost—the tenuous bond between German settlers that Saur worked for decades to create was now broken. In the four years since the war began, a new binary was created between white victims and those scapegoated for their supposed complicity, and church and sect Germans were on different sides of that binary.

**Conclusion**

The narratives in this chapter illustrate a few points made in my introduction. First, they show how German-Americans participated in important American literary trends, but did so for their own purposes. They used the captivity narrative, an extremely popular narrative at the time, to articulate problems facing their own community. Theirs was a community that was never unified, but that faced common problems—marginalization, fear of forced Anglicization, fear of forced military service—that Christoph Saur hoped would bring them together. Saur translated, reworked, and

25“Sie hielten uns vor Indianer…aber nachdem wir sie überzeugt hatten, das wir Englische Gefangne waren die von den Indianern entrunnen sind, und dass wir nass und kat und hungrig waren, so wurden wir übigenommen.”
repackaged two English language captivity narratives to try to unify his fragmented community. Instead, the French and Indian War intensified the differences between sect and church, urban and rural Germans, which we see clearly in the LeRoy/Leininger narrative.

Additionally, while the captivity narratives written in German during the French and Indian War participate in a larger American (and transnational) trend, they do so in some interesting ways. While the captivity narratives of most British settlers tended to oversimplify the complexity of the early American frontier, reducing complex groupings of Native Americans and Europeans into an easy to understand white vs. red binary, the German narratives seem more in-tune with frontier complexities, perhaps because of the highly fragmented nature of their German homelands and their liminal position in the British colony. Even while the genre of the captivity narrative itself works to assert binaries, the LeRoy and Leininger narrative resists them. Marie LeRoy’s family was Swiss, sometimes referred to by their French name LeRoy, and sometimes the German name König. Barbara Leininger refused a French bible given to her by the Delaware, who seemed to conflate various European identities even as Europeans conflated a complex group of interconnected and strategically aligned native peoples into the designation Delaware. The village of Kittany is described by the young women as a multicultural place filled with people from various native groups, as well as a range of Europeans.

German language captivity narratives are worth further study as we continue to reevaluate our conceptions of frontier—whether we call it a contact zone, or reclaim the name “frontier” while recognizing its complexity as meeting ground for many different
cultures and peoples—because they illustrate this complexity. Reading German-language captivity narratives can help us recapture a more nuanced literary frontier.
Works Cited


---. Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind. Labaree and Bell 4: 234.


Chapter 2: On Captivity and Adaptivity: The Narrative of Regina Leininger

In 1755, when Regina Leininger was ten years old, she was taken captive by Delaware Indians. Eight years later, as part of the peace agreement at the end of the French and Indian War, soldiers took her from her new home to reunite with her biological family. Unfortunately, she no longer spoke German, she no longer knew her German name, and she could no remember or recognize her German mother. Likewise, she was so altered by time and acculturation that her mother could no longer recognize her. Frau Leininger searched the gathered crowd of children and young adults, trying to find her daughter. An officer asked if Regina had any identifying markers; she could think of none, except for her love of Lutheran hymns. Her mother began to sing, “Allein aber nicht ganze Allein” (alone but not all alone). Regina could no longer understand the words, but she understood what it meant. She ran into her mother’s arms—she was truly no longer alone.

This is the legend of Regina Leininger, also known as Regina Hartman. Her story has been told numerous times throughout the years, and with each new tale, details of her life story and even her name change (the above story is my own conglomeration), but the hymns remain constant. In every case, the memory of these hymns operates as the “identifying marker” that allows her mother to recognize her after the war. For Regina

26 Regina was the sister of Barbara Leininger, who was subject of her own captivity narrative, which was explored in Chapter 1.
and those moved by her story, hymns embody everything good about settler identity, although what aspects of that identity are most valued changes according to the teller and context of the tale. Regina’s personal identity crisis became a metaphor for Pennsylvania-German identity crises, and her story was retold every time Germans in Pennsylvania felt their identities threatened, whether by internal or external threats.

In his essay, “The Pennsylvania Germans: Three Centuries of Identity Crisis,” Don Yoder traces the communal identity politics of Pennsylvania Germans over time. He begins by discussing the eighteenth-century rift between church and sect Germans, which I already discussed in the last chapter. He then explores how church Germans, once a fairly united group, separated into “Old” and “New” Lutherans and “Old” and “New” Reformed in the nineteenth century. The “new” groups were mostly American-born English speaking descendents of colonial Germans who adapted revival techniques of the Second Great Awakening into their worship. The “old” groups were often more recent immigrants who were tied to more orthodox techniques and used German for worship services. Yoder notes these religious and linguistic divisions can be summarized by two main approaches to Pennsylvania German identity: an Americanizing approach and a Germanizing approach. In the twentieth century, the folk movement contributed to the rise of an additional approach: the dialectizing approach. Before the twentieth century, both Americanizers and Germanizers were united in their disdain for the Pennsylvania German dialect. This changed around the 1930s, with a “so-called renaissance of Pennsylvania German dialect and culture” (54).
Regina’s story was republished during each of these communal identity crises, as her captivity narrative allowed Pennsylvania Germans to articulate and police evolving community boundaries. In the eighteenth century, as we’ve already seen, spiritual or religious identity was the most important aspect of settler identity, and Henry Melchior Muhlenberg uses Regina’s story of captivity to articulate what it meant to be a church German in Pennsylvania, and to explain how to keep that identity secure against external threats. In the nineteenth century, church Germans split into two camps—the “New” Lutheran/Reformed camp vs. “Old” Lutheran/Reformed camp. Reuben Weiser, a member of the New Lutheran group, used Regina’s story, as did Muhlenberg before him, to articulate and police newly created boundaries and argue for the legitimacy of his own group. The late nineteenth and twentieth century saw a new focus on language/ethnicity as communal markers and unifiers, and Regina’s story was used to articulate and police this conception of Pennsylvania German communal identity as well. Her story became especially popular when the community felt threatened by the increasing homogenization of American culture.

Muhlenberg’s Regina: Church Germans on the Pennsylvania Frontier

Henry Melchior Muhlenberg first recorded the story of Regina Leininger in his journal on February 27, 1765. It appeared in print four years later, in 1769, in the Hallesche Nachrichten (Halle Reports), a periodical publication based on Muhlenberg’s journal entries featuring accounts of his missionary work in Pennsylvania. The Hallesche Nachrichten was essentially a fundraising periodical that Lutheran missionaries in Halle
distributed to contributors to show how their money was being used and to request more funds. It was also used as teaching material and read out loud to children at the Halle orphanage. Between 1744 and 1786, seventeen issues were published—a “brief report” followed by sixteen “continuations.” In 1787, a compilation was published in Germany, followed a hundred years later (in 1886-95) by an American compilation. By far, the most popular entry in the *Hallesche Nachrichten* was the story of Regina Leininger.27

Like the captivity narratives in the previous chapter, Muhlenberg’s narrative utilizes what Silver describes as the “anti-Indian sublime.” The Delaware are “savages” and “barbarians,” animalistic and cruel, who “pitilessly and horribly massacred the scattered, defenseless families, most of them poor Germans, and carried the children away captive through the dreadful wilderness to their heathen dwellings” (202).28 Muhlenberg describes the attack on the Leininger family as similarly horrific: “The savages suddenly attacked the house and murdered the father and oldest son in their gruesome fashion” (202).29 Like Marie and Barbara’s narrative, this one also emphasizes the “suddenness” of the attack, ignoring the fact that the settlers were knowingly

---

27 Translations are taken from Tappert and Doberstein, *The Journals of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg*, volume 2, entry for “February 27, 1765,” 202-206. These translations match the German text that was published in the *Hallesche Nachrichten*, unless otherwise noted. The German equivalent of each excerpt will also be provided in the footnotes. These German excerpts come from *Hallesche Nachrichten.*

28 “Worauf sogleich die feindliche Barbaren in die Pensylvanische Grenzen einfielen, und die zerstreuet wohnende wehrlose, meistens arme teutsche Familien jämmerlich ermordeten, und ihre Kinder durch die grausamen Wüsten, bis zu ihren heidnischen Wohnungen oder Hütten und Höhlen in die Gefangenschaft schleppen.”

29 “Die Wilden überfielen das Haus, und ermordeten den Vater und Sohn nach ihrer unmenschlichen Weise, ließen aber die zwei Mädchen beim Leben” (479).
trespassing on Delaware lands and had disregarded their warnings to leave or face the consequences.

Regina’s journey through the wilderness, told in great detail, is “long” and “toilsome.” She is made to walk barefoot through the wilderness “until [her] feet were torn to the sinews and bones.” Her “clothing was torn to tatters by the bushes, gradually they hung in threads, and finally her body was naked” (203). The cruelty of the Indians is emphasized not only in their treatment of the children—forcing them to travel naked, carry heavy burdens, etc.—but also in the way they split up families: “When they at last reached the place where the savages lived, the children were divided, one here to this family and another there to another family some miles away” (203). Regina is separated from her older sister Barbara, (who escapes after three years in captivity and is the subject of her own captivity narrative, discussed in Chapter 1) and “taken with another, still younger, girl about a hundred miles farther into the wilderness the two-year-old child being bound to her back for her to carry” (203). Although Regina was likely adopted as a daughter into a Delaware family, Muhlenberg describes her new life as a form of slavery. She (and the young girl she was forced to carry) was “given to an old, 30 “Die Kinder gingen zum Theil ihre Füße durch, bis auf die Flechsen und Knochen, daß sie meinten, sie müßten für Pein und Schmerzen sterben, mußten aber doch fort ohne Barmherzigkeit” (480).
31 “Als sie zuletzt die bewohnten Gegenden der wilden Nationen erreichten, so wurden sie zertheilet, eins wurde hier bei einer Familie, ein anders etliche Meilen weiter abgegeben” (480).
32 “Da sie ohngefähr vierhundert englische Meilen weit sein mochten, wurde die jüngste zehenjährige Tochter Regina von ihrer Schwester Barbara, welche abgegeben war, getrennet, und mußte noch über hundert englische Meilen weiter gehen mit einem zweijährigen Kinde, das ihr auf den Rücken gebunden und zu tragen auserleget war” (480).
vicious Indian woman as a lifelong slave” and forced to work for the “she-wolf.” Regina scavenged for wild nuts and fruits in warm months, and hunted “vermin” in the winter (203).  

Like the authors of the narratives in the last chapter, Muhlenberg uses the bad Indian trope to critique bad America. We saw in the last chapter that Marie and Barbara Leininger used the bad Indian to express the frustration of Germans in the hinterlands at finding contentious “contact zones” when they expected to find empty frontier lands. Saur, on the other hand, used the bad Indian to show how far Pennsylvania had fallen from its peaceful origins. Muhlenberg uses the bad Indian in a slightly different capacity. For him, bad Indians are the physical embodiment of the spiritual dangers inherent in frontier life. After all, despite this rhetoric of suffering and the litany of troubles Regina faced, the real horror of Regina’s story has little to do with her experience during captivity; it is the shocking realization that she and many other young adults who were taken captive as children looked, spoke, and acted like Indians. The little German girl who was torn from her family was now “big, strong, and formed like an Indian, and also spoke the savage tongue” (205). The very comforting line of separation between “us” and “them” that was drawn during the war had been breached. This mirrors Muhlenberg’s fear about spiritual slippage on the frontier. Without the structure of the church and the

---

33 “War der Erdboden gefroren, so suchte sie allerlei Ungeziefer zu erhaschen, als wilde Ratten, Grund-Mäuse, und andere friechende Thiere, deren sie sich bemeistern konnte, um damit den bittern Hunger zu stillen” (480).
34 “[D]ie Regina war nun über achtzehen Jahr alt und erwachsen, auch stark, und Indianisch gestaltet, sprach auch die wilde Sprache” (481).
guidance of ministers, what would keep church Germans on the frontier from abandoning their religious beliefs and becoming spiritual heathens?

This is why the hymns are so important. Unable to find her child in the crowd of returned captives, Regina’s mother can “think of no other mark of identification except the fact that her daughter had learned various prayers and hymns”:

The mother replied in German that her daughter had often sung the hymns, ‘Jesus I shall love forever,’ etc., and ‘Alone, and yet not quite alone am I in solitude,’ etc. When the mother and brother of Regina asked the captives whether they could pray, she, out of all the others, began to sing ‘Jesus I shall love forever,’ etc., and then went on to recite all the other things she had learned from her beloved parents in tender childhood. (205)

These hymns operate as an “identifying marker,” identifying her not just as her mother’s daughter, but also as a Lutheran. The most important part of settler identity in the eighteenth century Pennsylvania—religion—has amazingly remained intact. The dichotomy is reasserted, and readers are reassured.

Although this is likely what made Regina’s story so appealing and what turned it from story to legend, it is actually not Muhlenberg’s purpose. Muhlenberg is interested in a bigger question of how Regina maintained her religious identity. What made her so different from the other children in that crowd? More importantly, what can her experience teach other church Germans on the frontier about keeping their religious

---

35 “Die Commissarien fragten die Mutter, ob sie kein Merkmahl an ihrer Tochter anzugeben wüßte? Die Mutter antwortete in teutscher Sprache: Ihre Tochter hätte so oft das Lied gesungen: Jesum lieb ich ewiglich, etc, und: Allein und doch nicht ganz allein, bin ich in meiner Einsamkeit etc. Kaum hatte die Witwe solches gesagt, so sprang die Regina aus den übrigen hervor, und betete die bemeldten Lieder, endlich fielen Mutter und Tochter einander um den Hals, und vergossen viele Freudentränen, und die Mutter eilete mit ihrer wiedergefundenen Tochter ihrer Heimat zu.” (481-2)
identities intact? Through his answer, he turns her story into a lesson on piety—specifically in the necessity of blending personal piety with doctrine. Muhlenberg suggests that what kept Regina strong was an education that blended doctrine and piety. This is very much in keeping with the brand of Halle pietism Muhlenberg brought with him from Europe.

Although “piety” is a somewhat loaded term with different connotations depending on the particular religious denomination and historical context, it was very important to Muhlenberg’s particular Lutheran identity politics, and thus needs further exploration. In essence, piety means “experiential Christianity,” and most pietists were more interested in encouraging personal relationships with Christ than church orthodoxy and doctrine, although many were reluctant to abandon doctrine altogether. In general, pietists also emphasized sanctification—that a person’s relationship with Christ manifested itself in a good life and that the “fruit” of Christianity was good works. Thus many pietist groups were charity- and mission- oriented. Halle, for example, was well-known for its orphanage, hospital, and missions.

Unlike some of the more radical pietists who separated from their original churches, the Halle group considered themselves committed Lutherans. In fact, they believed they were the true followers of Luther and that it was the orthodox Lutherans who had strayed from Luther’s teachings. In particular, they objected to the orthodox Lutheran tendency to overemphasize justification (when an individual is imbued with Christ’s righteousness during conversion) and neglect sanctification (the striving for holiness in daily life that is the natural result of justification). When Luther emphasized
grace by faith, they claimed, he never meant that good works were irrelevant. For Halle
pietists, moreover, conversion was an instantaneous transformation that a Christian
should remember, cherish, and describe to others. In general, the emphasis was on the
emotional rather than intellectual experience of Christ.36

Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, although sent by the pietists in Halle to minister in
Pennsylvania, did not necessarily agree with all aspects of their theology. Although he
shared their emphasis on sanctification and pious living regulated by strict moral rules, he
did not believe that conversion was instantaneous, and he was far from anti-intellectual.
This is likely due to his own experiences, which he describes in his Selbstbiographie. He
first experienced “reproaches of conscience, awakening, and resolutions towards
godliness” when he was twelve years old. This was a tumultuous year for Muhlenberg.
Not only was it the year of his confirmation in the Lutheran church, but it was also the
year of his father’s death. Without his father’s financial support, Muhlenberg was forced
to quit school to support his family. As he recalls, without constant cultivation, these
initial feelings of awakening were “gradually smothered.” Eventually, he claims, “the
enticements of evil were alluring, and bad examples predominated” (1). At fifteen, he
began attending private tutoring sessions during the evenings, and eventually he received
a scholarship position at the newly formed University of Göttingen. Still, he claims,
“there was in [him] nothing but darkness and death, and what is more, an inclination and
disposition toward evil” (2). Only when he again found proper guidance did he once

36 I am drawing on Riforgiato, 26-33; Fogleman, 60-3; McGrath and Marks, 257-8, 384;
and Stoeffler, 1-23.
again feel the stirrings of awakening. Muhlenberg’s own spiritual awakening was sparked by a good education in the Word of God, but had to be nurtured and tended to for the spark to turn into a fire. The warmth of that fire was immediately and necessarily felt by others. Immediately after describing his conversion, Muhlenberg describes the “fruit” of his conversion, implying a causal relationship: with two other students, he opens a school to “instruct the poor, ignorant beggar children in that place in reading, writing, reckoning, and especially in the Catechism” (4). Perhaps most importantly, however, is that his “awakening” is emotional and rational, personal yet doctrinal, sparked by church rituals and doctrine and nurtured by church members.

There is danger, for Muhlenberg, in too much self-reliance as well as in too little, of being so emotionally caught up in the experience of conversion and Christianity that one abandons one’s spiritual community. This fear stems from historical precedent. Some pietist groups did break away from Lutheran and Reformed churches to establish their own groups and sects, and many of them settled in Pennsylvania. In fact, one reason that Muhlenberg was sent to Pennsylvania in 1741 was to combat the Moravian threat posed by Count Zinzendorf and his pietist Moravian congregation. Although technically still Lutheran, Halle considered Zinzendorf and the Moravians to be a grave threat to the establishment of the Lutheran church in America; with their extreme ecumenical beliefs and their claims that Christians could not sin and therefore needed no law, they threatened to dissolve what little order there was in the colonies. The fact that they were technically Lutherans made them even more dangerous in the eyes of the Halle group—they were the proverbial wolves in sheep’s clothing, and the flock in Pennsylvania lay
completely vulnerable to attack. Muhlenberg’s call to Pennsylvania, then, was a
defensive strategy on the part of the Halle group. Moravians, perhaps more than any
other sect, represented the precarious position of the church in frontier America: not quite
orthodox but not quite sectarian, they occupied a middle-ground, and in “posing” as
Lutheran ministers to congregations in need, they endangered the already precarious
spiritual welfare of settlers. Because of the dangers they represented, Muhlenberg needed
to balance an emphasis on piety with a caution for Lutherans not to stray too far from the
church, either by voluntarily in joining a sect, or by unintentionally being duped by
Moravian “pretenders” (Riforgiato 77-107).

For Muhlenberg, Regina’s story is a good model of a family striking just such a
balance between doctrine and piety. Even without access to ministers or schools,
Regina’s family gave her a strong early education in a structured environment, combining
the more orthodox aspects of Lutheranism (like the catechism) with more personal
devotional practices. Muhlenberg explains how Regina’s father “took pains to instruct his
children in God’s Word, for apart from this instruction there were few or no schools at all
in those wilderness regions” (202).³⁷ Regina’s early education in God’s Word is of
ultimate importance to the narrative: it is the anchor that guarantees her spiritual and
physical redemption, and it is what enables her to maintain some semblance of her settler
identity through nine years of Indian acculturation. Her narrative, in other words,
emphasizes the importance of an early Lutheran education for children, especially in such

³⁷ “Der Vater war schon bei Jahren und zu schwach zu harter Arbeit, bemühete sich aber,
seine Kinder in Gottes Wort zu unterrichten, weil in den wüsten Landgegeben wenig oder
nichts von Schulen anzutreffen ist” (479).
an inhospitable place as the Pennsylvania backcountry where there are few legitimate ministers.

According to Muhlenberg, backcountry settlers needed an education that would prepare them to take responsibility for their own spirituality. The ideal education emphasizes doctrine as the infrastructure on which personal piety can be built. Without the ritual of doctrine and the structure and reinforcement it brings, the narrative suggests, Regina would have never been able to remember the hymn or her family. It was the daily ritual of prayer and singing that sustained Regina and that allowed her to remember her faith and her family:

She said that during these nine years she had said her prayers many thousands of times on her knees beneath the trees with the little child kneeling beside her and praying with her; and during the last years, after almost every prayer she felt a small ray of assurance and joyful hope that she would be released from captivity and again restored to Christian people. The following hymns were, and still are, of unspeakable comfort to her: ‘Jesus I shall love forever,’ etc, and ‘Alone, and yet not quite alone,’ etc. (203)  

Muhlenberg implies that a child whose education emphasized piety alone (a sect German) would never have made it through the experience spiritually intact.

It is important that Regina’s devotions operate not only as a source of comfort for her, but also the young German girl who becomes her “foster-daughter.” Like her parents before her, Regina imparts to her “child” the Word of God as best as she can. If not for

this, the little girl, who was two years old when she was captured, would have been entirely acculturated. Because the young girl is unable to find and thus reunite with her own family, she stays with Regina and Regina’s mother after the war. Regina’s piety in the wilderness not only protects and nourishes her own soul, but that of the next generation of Pennsylvania German youth as well. Again, it is Regina’s own early education, represented by prayers and hymns, that enables her survival; and it is the imparting of that education to her foster-daughter that enables that little girl’s survival.

Equally important are the hymns themselves. Muhlenberg cites two hymns that helped comfort Regina and the younger girl: “Jesus I shall love forever” and “Alone but not entirely alone.” The order in which he mentions these hymns is the same each time, suggesting a causal relation: it is because of Regina’s love for Jesus that He does not abandon her; it is because of her piety. In later retellings of Regina’s story, the first hymn, “Jesus I shall love forever,” is excluded. The last hymn, “Alone but not entirely alone,” becomes Regina’s sole source of consolation and her only identifying marker. This is not surprising, given the heavy symbolic weight of the second hymn. Regina is never completely alone in the wilderness; as long as she maintains some essence of her settler identity, she is never abandoned—not by God, not by her mother, not by her community. It is also the more passive of the two hymns. Out of context, it might suggest that Regina passively receives God’s grace. But Muhlenberg consistently lists that particular hymn second to the one that emphasizes Regina’s actions in the wilderness—her devotions, her prayers, her singing, her teaching of her foster daughter. In other words, her active piety is what sustains her. In a footnote, Muhlenberg tells
readers in Halle where to find these hymns in their hymnbooks (*Hallischen Stadt-Gesangbuche*, numbers 660 und 554) so that they too may use them for worship. The fact that the hymns that can be found in a Halle hymnbook is also important. They are orthodox hymns, sanctioned by the church. Even a private form of piety is guided by church doctrine.

Muhlenberg ends the story of Regina with an image of her as an adult, when he met her:

Though she had not seen a German book or read a single letter for eight years, she had not forgotten how to read and was able to read as well as she had been able to do when she was torn from her parents at ten years of age and led into captivity. She was still able to understand the German language fairly well, but she could not express herself in it because it had become almost second nature for her to use the Indian tongue in the ordinary affairs of life.39

In the *Hallesche Nachrichten*, the Indian language is described even more emphatically as “ihre andere Mutter-Sprache”: her other mother-tongue. Yet even with a new mother-tongue, her Lutheran identity, symbolized by her ability to read the Bible and sing German hymns and secured by an early education that emphasized both doctrine and piety, remains intact.

As we’ve just seen, the original version of Regina’s story illustrates a Pennsylvania German identity predicated on religious identification. By the nineteenth century...

---

39 “Es war mir merkwürdig, daß, da sie bei neun Jahren kein teutsches Buch mehr gesehen, und keinen Buchstaben mehr gelesen, sie dennoch das Lesen nicht vergessen, sondern so fertig lessen konnte, als da sie im zehnten Jahre von ihren Eltern weggerissen, und in die Gefangenschaft geführet worden. Die teutsche Sprache konnte sie zur Noth noch ziemlich verstehen, aber sich nicht in derselben ausdrücken, weil die Indianische Sprache gleichsam ihre andere Mutter-Sprache geworden, in dem Sachen zum gemeisen Leben gehörig.”
century, Pennsylvania German identity would become even less cohesive, with internal divisions among once unified church Germans growing, and massive immigrations of Irish and Germans creating animosity between German- and American-born Pennsylvanians. A new telling of Regina’s story would demonstrate these new problems.

**Regina Hartman: Regeneration, Assimilation and Whiteness**

Reuben Weiser, great-grandson of Conrad Weiser (the Indian interpreter who appears briefly in Marie and Barbara’s narrative), had heard the story of Regina countless times from his grandmother, who knew the Leininger family personally. In 1856, he merged the legend of Regina with details gleaned from Muhlenberg’s account and published the English-language novel, *Regina, the German Captive; or, True Piety among the Lonely*. In the preface, he explains that the novel is intended “for our Lutheran Sabbath-schools.” Regina’s story will not only give Lutheran youth a model of piety and demonstrate the importance of education, as did Muhlenberg’s account, but will participate in that education through lessons about the history of the Lutheran church and American history.

Weiser’s implicit goals are also important. The novel was published in 1856, during another period of controversy in the Lutheran church. The debate was between two Lutheran synods (the General Synod and the Missouri Synod) and concerned the so-called “new measures” being adopted by the General Synod, practices rooted in the evangelical Second Great Awakening and Methodism. Weiser uses the story of Regina to argue that these new measures are firmly rooted in the tradition of piety and
experiential Christianity brought to American Lutheranism by Muhlenberg. Intimately connected with this first goal is Weiser’s attempt to differentiate Americans of German descent from less desirable immigrants coming to America in unprecedented numbers in the decades prior to the Civil War, essentially arguing for the Americanization of Pennsylvania German culture. In the process, he merges the rhetoric of religious regeneration with the highly charged racial rhetoric of the nineteenth century, in effect defining his personal and (communal) identity as an American of German descent in opposition not only to recent German-born immigrants who were coming to America in unprecedented numbers, but also in opposition to Indians and African-Americans.

Just as Muhlenberg used Regina’s story to advocate his version of Hallensian Pietism, Weiser uses Regina’s story to argue for the continuation of the Hallensian tradition in America, vindicating the General Synod against accusations that their ecumenical evangelic approach was diluting Lutheranism and rendering it indistinguishable from other American Protestant groups. Both Weiser and his publisher, T. Newton Kurtz, were prominent members of the General Synod, whom Clifford E. Nelson (following a nineteenth-century observer’s lead) terms “Neo-Lutherans.” These “Neo-Lutherans” of the General Synod were mostly second- and third- generation German Americans who embraced their Hallensian pietist heritage while incorporating “new measure” religious practices of the Second Great Awakening and Methodism, and in general using emotional stimuli to encourage conversion. From its beginnings in 1820, the General Synod was more interested in uniting various American Lutheran churches together than in adherence to strict confessional standards. Some of its members,
including the president of the General Synod (Samuel Sprecher) and the Rev. Benjamin Kurtz (*Regina* publisher T. Newton Kurtz’s father), went so far as to claim that the Augsburg confession was flawed and needed revision. In their *Definite Synodical Platform*, they suggested a revised confession that de-emphasized the importance of the Lord’s Supper and Baptism, and suggested that the church abandon the practice of confessions. This angered not only the orthodox Old Lutherans, but many churches within their own synod as well (Nelson).

Throughout *Regina*, Weiser makes similar arguments. The Hartmans,\(^{40}\) Weiser explains:

> had both been carefully instructed in the principles of the Christian religion according to the time honored usages of the Lutheran church. They were well acquainted with her doctrines; and, although they were not extensively read in polemics, yet they knew that the doctrines of the Lord’s supper, as taught in the Lutheran church, were not the same that were taught in the Roman Catholic church. They believed in the Catechism and in the Augsburg Confession; but they did not believe either in transubstantiation, nor in consubstantiation, nor in impanation. They had perhaps never heard those terms; but they believed—and felt it too—that the Lord Jesus is present in the holy supper. It was enough for them to know that every time they partook of the sacred emblems of the broken body and shed blood of the Son of God, they were strengthened and refreshed in their souls. This was enough for them. (41-42)

As with early pietists, the emphasis is on experiential Christianity, on the spirit of Christianity rather than on the terms, the forms, or orthodoxy. They “felt” Jesus in the Lord’s supper, and that “was enough.” The specifics of transubstantiation or consubstantiation didn’t matter; the forms didn’t matter. The *effect* of the Eucharist on the sinner, the *experience* of communion: this was what mattered.

---

\(^{40}\)By the nineteenth century, Regina’s true last name had been forgotten, and she was known as Hartman.
Weiser continues his defense of the General Synod’s position with a paragraph on baptism: The Hartmans “never were taught to believe—and they never found it taught in the Bible—that baptism was regeneration; but, on the contrary, they knew that they had been baptized in their infancy, and yet well recollected the time when they were not in a state of regeneration. They knew, too, by sad and bitter—and yet happy—experience, that all men, whether baptized or not, must be born again” (42). The General Synod often accused more orthodox Lutherans of confusing baptism and regeneration. The Hartmans, though simple people, are exemplary Christians, and their common sense and experiential Christianity is a model for Lutheran adults, as Regina is a model for Lutheran children to follow.

Although most of his references to the confessional debates of the mid-nineteenth century are subtle, made in reference to the Hartmans and therefore fitting into the narrative, there are a few occasions in which Weiser steps away from the narrative to explicitly address the present confessional controversy, such as when he decries the “inroads formalism and semi-popery are making upon the Lutheran church in America” (207). Perhaps most important, however, is whom he blames for this formalism: “The American Lutheran church has been true to the principles of her fathers; and, if it were not for a foreign element more recently imported among us, there would be no controversy in our church at present” (216). The foreigners to whom he refers are newly emigrated Germans who, after settling in the Midwest, formed the Missouri Synod. The Missouri Synod was quite vocal in its disagreements with the General Synod. Both lay claim as the “true” heirs of Luther.
The Missouri Synod brought with them a more orthodox, formal Lutheranism from Germany. Their identity as Lutherans was connected to Luther’s original confessions and to the language of those confessions. As L. DeAne Lagerquist explains, “For the Germans who formed the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod…using German was judged to be crucial to preserving the pure doctrine they came to Missouri to protect” (93). As they saw it, the liberal General Synod was diluted by centuries of religious amalgamation in America, as their exclusive use of English and their confessional leniency clearly demonstrated. The question became, who were the true Lutherans? Who managed to keep Lutheran identity and spirit “pure” despite constant threats and dangers? As Weiser’s Regina reveals, the language of this debate is similar to the mid-nineteenth century racial discourse regarding racial purity and what many scholars now refer to as the invention of “whiteness” as a category, as both debates emphasized an imagined purity threatened by foreign groups.

This is particularly evident in Weiser’s emphasis on lineage throughout the novel, in reference both to Regina and American Lutheran ministers. Regina and her parents are born in Reutlingen, which Weiser points both out (following Muhlenberg), played a crucial role in the Reformation. It was, Weiser explains, “one of the fourteen imperial cities which stood by the Augsburg Confession, and solemnly protested against the iniquitous decrees of the second Diet of Spires” (14). The Hartmans are exemplary Lutherans: her father, John Hartman, had “committed to memory nearly the whole Lutheran Catechism” by age ten, was “confirmed at the proper time, and ever after led a life of piety” (15). Regina’s mother, Magdalena, was an “amiable and exemplary
Christian” (41). When John Hartman could no longer support his family in Germany, he brought his family to America. One of the first things they did is attend a Lutheran service in Philadelphia, given by none other than Rev. Muhlenberg, who of course reappears later in the novel to record Regina’s remarkable story. Regina is thus of pure Lutheran heritage, indicated by the fact that her parents are good Lutherans, and her hometown was a stronghold during the Reformation.

Muhlenberg is also crucial in demonstrating ministerial lineage in the novel. Weiser portrays American Lutheranism (and in particular, that represented by the General Synod) as the legitimate heir of the Reformation by tracing its religious lineage through Muhlenberg back to Luther. Essential to this genealogy is a definition of Lutheranism as being essentially a Reform-based movement, centered in the “experimental piety” of Luther and Melancthon. “As long as these holy men lived,” Weiser explains, “our church prospered.” After their deaths, however, “a different spirit prevailed. The fathers of the Lutheran church, as soon as the blessed Reformers were dead…foolishly turned their acrimonious weapons against each other. In those long-continued and often bitter and unchristian controversies, the contention was more for the outward form of godliness than for its inward power” (205). He continues a few pages later: “Though the standard of piety was low, yet the Lord always had his faithful servants in our church; he never forsook her altogether. In the darkest hours of the church the Lord always raised up and qualified men of commanding talents to fight her battles, and to labor and pray and suffer for her welfare” (207). First to follow Luther were Stephen Prætorius and John Arndt. Weiser hails Arndt as the “second great reformer” and “founder of the school of Pietism.”
Fortunately, “When Arndt died, the fire that he had kindled did not go out. God raised up other men, who carried the good work forward” (210). According to traditional pietist genealogy, Philip Spener succeeded Arndt. Weiser compares Spener to modern revivalist ministers: he was the “great revival preacher of his age” who generated “the most intense excitement” and “awakened” many sinners, “and, like revival preachers of the present day, he found it necessary to employ other means than merely standing at arm’s-length from the sinner. Hence, he instituted his pious conferences, which he called ‘Collegia Pietatis,’ out of which our ‘anxious meetings’ have very naturally grown” (210-11). In other words, to combat the charge that American Lutheranism is an amalgamation, that it has assimilated with Methodism and become some ungainly hybrid, Weiser puts forward a Lutheran lineage that blossomed in America, with even controversial “new measures” coming not from Methodists or other Protestant groups of the Second Great Awakening but “naturally growing” from pure Lutheran roots.

Following Spener in Weiser’s genealogy is Hermann Augustus Franke, founder of Halle University, who was instrumental in “plant[ing] the Lutheran church in America” through men like Muhlenberg (214). The true Lutheran church is not the one that has preserved Lutheran forms, but the one that has preserved its spirit—the spirit of Reformation that moved from Luther, through Arndt and Spener, and with Muhlenberg to America. In America, it was kept safe, pure and free from the problems that faced the German Lutheran church, which became “poisoned by modern Rationalism” (215). Even Halle, “the great bulwark of pure Lutheranism,” was affected. Luckily, the “seed” of piety sown at Halle was “transplanted to this Western world” where “God seems to have
housed [it] from the storms and tempests which swept with such terrific force over the fatherland. Here the Lutheran church was to commence a new career. Unlike the church in Europe, she was here to be free and unshackled, as she had been in the beginning. Here a high and noble destiny awaited her” (216). As nineteenth-century Americans believed it was their destiny to spread democracy west across the entire continent, American Lutherans believed it was Lutheran destiny, a providential decree, to spread the spirit of the Reformation west into America.

The rhetoric Weiser uses in this long digression is similar not only to articulations of American manifest destiny, but also to nineteenth century racial discourse and “melting pot” rhetoric, demonstrating the intrinsic connection between religion and ethnicity to constructions of American identity in the nineteenth century. Reginald Horsman, in Race and Manifest Destiny, explains that in the eighteenth-century up to and after the Revolution, Americans believed that their unique promise and success lay in a “continuity of institutions” traced through an Anglo-Saxon heritage. By the nineteenth-century, however, the emphasis shifted from institutions to race—“superior racial characteristics” were seen as “a reason for strong institutions” and conversely, “inferior racial characteristics as a reason for weak institutions” (25). This is in large part due the “new science of man in the first half of the nineteenth century [that] was ultimately decisive in giving a racial cast to Anglo-Saxonism” (43). Although polygenesis arguments about race had been made as early as the sixteenth century, they did not become popular until the nineteenth (45). Ironically, it was an enlightenment emphasis on classification that eventually led scientists to separately categorize different races and
“disprove” the enlightenment belief in monogenesis. In the new racial history of mankind, “the Caucasian race became generally recognized as the race clearly superior to all others; the Germanic was recognized as the most talented branch of the Caucasians; and the Anglo-Saxons, in England the United States, and often even in Germany, were recognized as the most gifted descendants of the Germans” (43-4). At the same time, however, with a massive influx of Irish and German immigrants in the mid-century, there was a Nativist backlash. As Mathew Frye Jacobson explains in Whiteness of a Different Color, while the early nineteenth century saw the creation of “whiteness” as a fixed category, the middle of the nineteenth century began to see gradations of whiteness. Although it was the Irish immigrants who were most often seen as problematic, German immigrants were also seen as “other,” despite the fact that the Anglo-Saxonists traced their own lineage back to the forests of Germany. The way in which modern Germans’ inferiority to their ancestors is rationalized is similar to Weiser’s discussion of Lutheranism—the Germans with the purest blood, the noblest Germans, emigrated first to England and then to America, preserving and strengthening their purity (whether racial or religious) in environments that proved particularly hospitable.

Weiser also demonstrates an antipathy to recent German immigrants. While he is proud of the “hardships and trials our forefathers had to encounter when they first came to this Western world” (31), he criticizes more recent German and Irish immigrants: they “come to this country [and] become indolent and intemperate, and of course remain poor and miserable all their lives; and their coming here does not improve their condition” (70). There is something in the old German constitution, he suggests, that enabled
previous immigrants to prosper, something lacking in modern immigrants: “and the
German character, by its own innate energy, rose above the degradation which it fastened
upon it.” Religion seems to be part of this elevating character trait: even Hartman, he
notes, needed religion to combat a “naturally passionate and of a hasty tempter” common
to his “countrymen,” “and if the grace of God had not renewed his wicked heart he
would have been like the rest of them, ungovernable, and perhaps dangerous; but religion
had changed the lion into the lamb” (57). The German immigrants who came to America
during the eighteenth century were of the Muhlenbergian tradition, and their ties to true
Lutheranism allowed them to overcome any undesirable character traits and embrace a
new destiny in America. Nineteenth-century immigrants were of a different religious
tradition—Lutheranism in Germany had been polluted by rationalism and had lost its true
pietist path. These German immigrants (or worse, Irish Catholic immigrants) did not
have this religious purity, and even the New World racial alchemy could not help most of
them.

Matthew Frye Jacobson claims that it is the alchemy of slavery and frontier that
turned whites who might otherwise be undesirable into equals. An Irishman, to use Noel
Ignatiev’s now classic example, when compared to an American of English descent, was
less than white. Nonetheless, when compared to a black man or Indian, he suddenly
looked much whiter. This is undoubtedly true for Weiser—the Hartmans’ experience on
the frontier, their difference from Indians and blacks, works to make the family whiter. It
is more than this, though. Religion, for Weiser, is also a form of alchemy, changing
potential undesirables into equals. In Regina, the process by which an immigrant
becomes a white American is religious and racial. First, he must have the right racial disposition (must be white). If he is racially disposed, he must pass certain tests: he must distinguish himself from more obvious “others,” and prove his worth through industry and piety. The frontier is the perfect place to fulfill both of these requirements.

The Hartmans’ difference from Indians is established in the preface. In fact, one goal of the book, Weiser claims, is to illustrate the “cruelties” of the “American Indians” who are “fast passing away,” and “thus see why God has permitted them to be banished from their native land” (7). By the mid-nineteenth-century, the myth of the “noble savage” was in decline as Manifest Destiny became more and more integral to American politics. It was justified by the new racial science. In his Regina, Weiser does what many nineteenth century writers did, justifying manifest destiny by portraying Indians as racially and spiritually inferior to whites, to whom God has given their land.

The depiction of bad Indians as evil savages is fairly consistent throughout Weiser’s novel. Although there are a few descriptions initially of “friendly Indians,” these are always filtered through Hartman’s initial naivety and qualified by the more knowledgeable narrator. When the Hartmans first settle into their new homes, for example, their neighbors are a few German families and a few friendly Indians who had been taught by missionaries. The narrator quickly explains, however, that these Indians were “not truly converted to God” but had only “heard enough of the gospel to know … that they dare not injure their fellow-men” (40). In other words, they were barely restrained by the law of the gospel, and since they were not converted, their restraint was likely temporary.
These friendly Indians visited the Hartmans occasionally, but “the children, especially Regina, were always afraid of them; they looked so ugly, in their moccasins and dirty blankets, and the great brass rings they had in their ears” (53). Throughout the book, the truly pious are prescient, their closeness to God enabling them to intuit danger and to even foresee their own deaths. Regina’s fear of even friendly Indians is especially telling, as she is the novel’s most pious character. Hartman, though pious, is also naive. He has a vague feeling that he is “not long for this world” (98), but his naivety in assuming that Indians are rational human beings who would never “harm any person who had never done them any harm” made it impossible for him to know from whence his fear arose. His mistake is to apply European standards of behavior to those who were, by nineteenth-century standards, obviously inferior: “He used to say, when he heard of Indians, that ‘it was only the drunken Irish killing one another’” (100). But the Indians are obviously more dangerous and savage than the Irish, as Weiser makes clear. “Poor man!” Weiser calls Hartman; “he little understood the nature of those cruel and bloodthirsty savages” (72). According to Weiser, savagery and bloodlust are in the Indian’s nature. Thus, unlike the Irish or other questionable European immigrants, it is much harder for them to reform, and dangerously naive to expect civilized behavior from them.

By far one of the worst depictions of the Indians is during the attack on the Hartmans, where their cruelty is demonstrated firsthand: “Fifteen large Indians, all painted and feathered for scenes of carnage and blood, then rushed into the house, yelling most hideously, like so many fiends from the infernal regions” (104). They immediately
kill John Hartman, his son George, and the family dog. The presumed leader of the “brutal gang,” a “huge and hideous half-naked savage,” grabbed Regina and “shook her most violently, while he held a scalping-knife in his right hand, which he drew over her lips” (105). During the trip back to their villages, they violently kick the young girl German girl (whom Muhlenberg never names but Weiser calls Susan) when she cries or falls, and makes the girls carry heavy loads. Although most of this is in keeping with Muhlenberg’s description in the *Hallesche Nachrichten*, Weiser takes certain liberties that enhance the villainy of his antagonists. Most notably, while Muhlenberg correctly reports that Regina was only separated from her sister Barbara, Weiser adds to the melodrama of the story by having Barbara killed. First Barbara falls ill, and the Indians laugh at her misfortune. “Oh, what cruelty!” Weiser exclaims. “What inhuman monsters they were!” (125). Then, when they realize she will be of no use to them, “one of them walked right up to Barbara and sank his tomahawk into her head—and she hardly moved. She was then scalped. Regina was so overcome that she shrieked out and threw herself upon the yet writhing body of her sister; but the Indian fiends tore her away and soon after moved off” (126). Weiser also elaborates on the cruelty of Regina’s Indian mistress/adopted mother, whom Muhlenberg initially vilified in the *Hallesche Nachrichten*, calling her a “she-wolf.” Weiser gives her a new, equally descriptive Indian name: “The name of the old squaw, in whose charge she was placed, was Shelackla, which means ‘a dark or rainy cloud.’ She was as drunken, cross, unfeeling, and ill-natured an old hag as is rarely seen” (131). The only thing that saved Regina and Susan.
from receiving constant severe beatings was the old woman’s rheumatism which limited her mobility.

The fact that Weiser believes this is all part of the Indian nature is evident in his description of the Indian children, who, mimicking their parents, play at “scalping and torturing, and making the children run the gauntlet” (138). Some of the Indian children are nice to Regina, forming “quite an affection for her, and sometimes visit[ing] her at her own house, and teach[ing] her to weave bark and grass baskets” (134), but Weiser implies that this is more of a reflection on Regina’s nature than theirs. She is so beautiful and kind, that even the savages, once they know her, must love her. The young girls are in awe of her, calling her the “white lily.”

This is not the first time Weiser emphasizes Regina’s whiteness, not just as a skin color, but as a specific racial category, demonstrating her racial as well as spiritual superiority to the Indians who take her captive. In fact, she is the only character in the book whose person is described so completely:

She was just turned of ten years, but was quite large for her age. She was a beautiful girl; indeed, one seldom sees a more beautiful creature in town or country than she was…She had a well-formed body, neither corpulent nor slender, and fine, round, faultless head, covered with a profusion of soft, wavy, light auburn hair; a bright hazel eye; a Grecian nose; a mouth of exquisite mould; a fair, transparent kind, and her cheeks rivaled the riches carmine of the new-blown rose. (59-60)

Weiser’s description of Regina is squarely in keeping with nineteenth-century scientific studies “proving” white superiority through head shape, complexion, hair and eye color, shape of nose and mouth, ability to blush and therefore demonstrate modesty, etc. She is contrasted not only with the Indians, who marvel at her “large blue eyes and red cheeks”
(note they are now blue, rather than hazel—more on that later) but also her young German companion, Susan, who “was of a dark complexion” (135). When Susan assimilates more completely into Indian culture than does Regina, two potential causes are implied: she was, of course, younger when captured, and thus at greater risk, but her dark complexion, dark hair, and dark eyes also provide some racial justification. Again, Weiser includes varying degrees of whiteness, which he correlates with beauty and piety.

Nonetheless, Regina’s ten years among the Indians does affect her white beauty: “She was now nineteen years old,—a fine-looking woman; but, as her complexion was much tanned by the sun and weather, and her once fair and glossy hair had become darker and much coarser, and as her bright, large, blue eyes did not become a dark skin, she was not near as pretty as she had been nine years before” (152). The fact that her skin and hair have darkened is natural and to be expected, but what is remarkable is the transformation of her eyes, which have changed from hazel to blue. Perhaps this is the alchemy of the frontier—her essential whiteness, symbolized by her eyes, is exaggerated when compared with Indians. Her now blue eyes not only set her apart from Indians, but from those aspects of her own person which have become Indianized. Her tanned skin and dark hair make a striking contrast with her large blue eyes, and the combination is jarring and unattractive. The cultural blending that has taken place on Regina’s body is ugly, signifying the ugliness of miscegenation.

The possibility of true miscegenation—of Regina or Susan having Indian children—is much more frightening. Weiser mentions twice in the novel the possibility of Regina marrying an Indian, coming to different conclusions each time, although both
explanations demonstrate his feelings of racial superiority. Initially, he claims that the combination of dark skin and blue eyes make her as unattractive to Indians as it would to whites, suggesting that even Indians find miscegenation unnatural. Later, however, he claims that she was pressured to marry, and some of the “young braves tried to insinuate themselves into her good graces” (158). In an odd contradiction to his previous claims, Weiser now suggests that the Indian men are eager to marry her (that they are a sexual threat to white women is of course another reason to remove or destroy them). She, however, found all Indian men repulsive—they were “odious,” and she “would have nothing to do with those monsters in human shape” (158). Luckily, her mistress cannot spare her labor, so she is never forced to marry an Indian man, which of course is interpreted providentially: “God, in his merciful providence, averted so great a calamity, and Regina, with all the hardships and wrongs she had to endure, was never compelled to marry an Indian” (159).

Despite some superficial changes (she becomes tan, her hair becomes darker and coarse, and she can no longer converse in German) Regina remains essentially white, which is not only demonstrated physically (her blue eyes), but again through religious means—by her continued piety, and in particular, her memory of Lutheran hymns. Despite living among “savage” peoples:

She often kneeled down under a tree and recited all the prayers and hymns she had learned from her dear mother. She often took little Susan along and taught her to sing and pray. But she had no books, and no person to speak German to but little Susan; and the old squaw would not let them speak German, so they had to learn the Indian language; and they soon learned to name the few things around them, and in a short time they could understand the old hag, who spoke only the Indian language, so that in the course of a few years Regina forgot to speak the German; but, in consequence of the prayers and hymns she had learned in her
father’s house, she could always understand the German language, though she could not speak it. (133-4)

Regina’s essential identity (religious, ethnic and racial) is unchanged, her ethnic (German) and racial (white) purity symbolized by her blue eyes and her continued religious piety.

As in every telling of Regina’s story, it is the German Lutheran hymn, sung by her mother, that reveals her true identity. But in Muhlenberg’s telling, Regina was in real danger of becoming Indian. Her return was nothing short of miraculous—her early education a slim safeguard against the threat of barbarism. For Weiser, her return may still be miraculous, but the hymn is no longer a slim protection against what would otherwise surely have been racial deterioration. For Weiser, the hymn, like her blue eyes and white skin, demonstrates that her true identity was always there, in danger of being “covered up” but never entirely lost. “Her German was not forgotten: it was only covered up under the rubbish of the Indian tongue,” Weiser explains. So with her complexion—the pure whiteness of her skin is only “covered up” by a tan. Even Susan, who is naturally darker than Regina, is able to regain some whiteness: “by carefully protecting her face from the sun, [she] lost much of her Indian color” (227).

Nonetheless, Regina’s re-acculturation is slow. One further difference Weiser makes to Muhlenberg’s tale is to explore what happens after Regina’s return in greater detail. As Regina recovers her use of the German language, she learns to read from her German bible. She slowly abandons her Indian habits (such as sleeping on the floor and eating acorns) and complexion, and as she does, she becomes aware of her depraved nature. The process of re-acculturation is not complete until she is spiritually
“awakened,” a process which Muhlenberg does not relate, but to which Weiser dedicates much narrative space. While attending lectures in preparation for her confirmation, Regina becomes aware that she has been “such a great sinner” (218). Trying to explain her feelings to her mother, she “burst[s] out in an uncontrollable fit of weeping. Her heart was almost broken, and she could say no more” (219). Luckily, her mother, “who had once been an awakened sinner, knew at once what was the matter. The Spirit of God had touched her heart, and the waters of repentance were flowing from her eyes. The pious mother thanked God, and directed her as well as she could to the Savior.” During the confirmation ceremony, “the young people were so much excited that you could hear them weeping and sobbing all over the house, and many a sturdy sinner, who was reminded of bygone days, was affected to tears.” At the alter, the minister told the children “to give themselves away to the Lord in an everlasting covenant. Regina did this, and found peace in believing in Christ her Savior. She felt that the burden of sin was removed and she had found her Savior. Oh, how happy she was!” (221-2).

Again we see Weiser arguing that encouraging an emotional response to religious stimuli is an appropriate way to encourage conversion. This mark of the Second Great Awakening’s revivalism and potential indicator that American Lutheranism is a religious amalgamation is firmly within the Muhlenberg pietist tradition. Furthermore, we also see that Regina’s re-acculturation—the process by which she “uncovers” her essential whiteness—is intimately linked with her regeneration as a Christian. After her own conversion, Regina ministers to Susan and her younger brother Christian. They both also convert, and eventually get married. Regina never marries, according to Weiser. His
portrayal of her later years is nun-like: “she loved to visit the sick; it was part of her religion, and it was also good for her own soul. Thus she spent her time, in the service of her God and Savior, until she became old; and died at a good old age, with strong confidence in the Lord” (251).

The link that Weiser makes between the process of regeneration and assimilation is not unique. In Beyond Ethnicity, Werner Sollors notes the similarity between melting pot rhetoric and regeneration rhetoric throughout early American history: “the melting pot represents an ethnic extension of the religious drama of redemption and rebirth which has also been portrayed in the imagery of melting… The parallels between American sermons and the rhetoric of ethnicity are compelling” (85). In assimilation debates, the question is whether becoming a “new American man” is a matter of descent (American through birth) or consent (American by choice), and is often figured in terms of spiritual regeneration. A well-known example of the descent-based approach in religious rhetoric is what Sacvan Bercovitch termed the “genetics of salvation”: when second-generation (unregenerate) Puritans received grace through their regenerate parents as part of the Half-Way Covenant. This is in contrast with a consent-based approach, which is aligned with the kind of “universal regeneration” that evangelical preachers, including Weiser, advocated, meaning that baptism and confirmation meant nothing if not accompanied by a spiritual awakening. Sollors notes that when applied to ethnicity, a “genetics-of-salvation” interpretation of assimilation was usually advocated by native-born Americans who viewed “American identity as something they have safely and easily received by birth and descent, but something that foreign-born workers would have to strive long and
hard to achieve” (88). Sometimes a generational timeline was applied, in which it takes three-generations for true assimilation. On the other hand, there are those who believed that even Americans needed to be regenerated, or Americanized, or that Americans in particular need to be regenerated, as they take their American identity for granted, like a nominal Christian who thinks that because he is baptized, he doesn’t need to repent and undergo a conversion experience.

Throughout Regina, Weiser loudly proclaims the need for universal regeneration in spiritual terms. This is one of the main problems with Lutheran orthodox churches: they think that adherence to Lutheran forms and practices is enough. The Lutheran church in Germany, he claims, “has creeds and confessions enough—she has orthodoxy enough; but her living piety is too small—too feeble” (217). Even ministers needed conversion, Weiser explains, using the example of Hermann August Franke: “Franke, like thousands of his contemporaries, had assumed the ministerial office without conversion; but, like the great Origen, it pleased God to make the sermon he had intended for others, the instrument of his own conversion” (212). As the Hartmans well knew, “all men, whether baptized or not, must be born again” (42).

At first, it may seem that Weiser applies the notion of universal regeneration to ethnic assimilation as well. He sets himself up as an example of the perfect American citizen: his ancestors went through much hardship to give their children better lives, and he has reaped the benefits of their hard work. Nonetheless, he has learned from and respects his ancestors. He may speak and write in English, for example, but he knows German and uses this knowledge to better understand and appreciate his own heritage.
Furthermore, his comments about more recent immigrants suggest a belief that native-born Americans of foreign-descent make better citizens than foreign-born immigrants, who, at the very least, need to work extra hard to obtain what he has simply inherited. This would, however, overlook one important aspect of Regina’s story. Weiser intends not only to teach Lutheran children lessons on piety, but to inspire them to be grateful for what they have, to inspire them not to take their American identities and privileges for granted. He consistently tells his children readers to put themselves in Regina’s shoes, to be thankful that they have what she didn’t. “What dangers must have surrounded those early settlers!” he exclaims, “and how thankful we should be to our heavenly Father for the peace and safety we now enjoy” (87). Regina, he reminds them, “had no pious Sabbath-school teacher, as you have; and no good little books, such as you have. The children of our Sabbath-schools have great reason to thank God for all the blessings they enjoy” (234-5). They should therefore “take Regina for a pattern.” In other words, his purpose in writing the book is to get young American children of German descent not only to embrace their religion, but also their ethnic heritage, and to undergo a sort of American regeneration. By getting emotionally caught up in Regina’s story, they can be “awakened,” they can become Americans in spirit as opposed to Americans in name alone.

In retelling the story of Regina, Weiser demonstrates his belief that universal regeneration applies not only to the process of conversion and salvation, but also to the process of assimilation/ Americanization. Much like a revivalist minister, Weiser uses emotional strategies to reach his young readers and encourage a conversion. There is a
caveat, however. Universal regeneration in this case is not quite universal. There is a limit to who can be Americanized. All Americans should be American in spirit as well as name, but not everyone is capable of regeneration/ Americanization. Again, the difference falls along the lines of nineteenth-century racial hierarchy. He uses the trope of the bad Indians to argue that Indians may be taught the law of the gospel, but not its spirit. With very few exceptions, Indians are incapable of regeneration, both spiritually and in terms of Americanization, which means that German-Americans are more deserving of their lands.

The limitations of universal regeneration, in both religious and ethnic terms, are emphasized through two significant narrative digressions in the novel. One is, as already mentioned, regarding the history of Lutheran pietism. The other two explicitly and implicitly compare eighteenth-century German immigrants in America to Indians and Africans. As a background on the Indians, and a preview or foreshadowing of what is to come, Weiser quotes extensively from two sources—first, from Muhlenberg’s *Hallesche Nachrichten*, then from “Weem’s Life of Washington.” He begins by explaining his digression: “In order fully to understand the state of things in our country in 1744, (the year in which the terrible calamity which we are about to narrate fell upon the Hartman family,) it will be necessary to refer to the colonial history of that period” (73).41 “The American Indians,” he explains, were the “first settlers of this country,” were found “from the sunny south of Central America to the frozen regions of Labrador,” and were

41 The attack actually occurred in 1755. Weiser’s dates are constantly changing and often wrong.
“all pretty much alike” (73). He then backs up, noting that many “learned men” now believe that the Indians were not the earliest settlers, but that there were probably “other and far more intelligent races here before them,—races who were much further advanced in the arts and sciences than the present races,” and this is evident by “many monuments” left behind which the present race of Indians could never have constructed (73).

After explaining their racial inferiority both to whites and to these supposed earlier more intelligent and cultured inhabitants of America, he claims he will “try to account for their extreme wickedness and the reasons why they took such delight in the shedding of the blood of their fellow-creatures” (74). This is a combination of their inferior racial status and a savage nature, combined with the influence of Catholic missionaries from Spain and France. Weiser thus conveniently gets to insult both Catholics and Indians at once. Already prone to wickedness, the Catholics “made them ten times worse than they found them” (74). The missionaries “baptized them and called them Christians, but they knew nothing of the spirit of Christianity” (75). Some Indians have been truly converted by Protestant missionaries despite Catholic influence, he claims, but the examples he gives are martyrs or graveyards, suggesting any opportunity for conversion is long past. Like many narratives of the French and Indian War, Weiser blames the French for much of the Native violence, since they offered money for scalps, only exacerbating an already violent nature: “so anxious were they to get the scalp that sometimes the person scalped was not murdered.” He then gives a detailed description of the “horrible operation” of scalping:

The person was either shot, tomahawked, or knocked down with a club; as soon as the poor victim was prostrated, the cruel savage rolled him over on his back,
then sprang upon him with his keens on his breast, took hold of the hair in the front part of the head with his left hand and pulled with all his might, then gave a tremendous yell, and applied his scalping-knife and cut off a piece of skin about as large as a child’s hand, thus laying the skull bare. (77)

The French and Indian War was, he claims, were the “Bloody Age of American History”: “It would require volumes to record half the scenes of blood that came to light; and thousands of the most cruel murders committed have, no doubt, never been known” (79-80). He then gives several anecdotes of people surviving massacres and scalpings. He quotes a particularly violent scene from the biography of Washington, in which the then General found “a young-looking woman lying on [her] bed, floating in her own warm blood! Her head was cleft with a tomahawk; and on her bosom lay two lovely infants, apparently twins, bathing that bosom with the crimson current of life yet flowing from their deeply-gashed heads!” (90). He gives even more examples of women and children being butchered by natives. The clear message is that Indians are neither capable nor worthy of regeneration, either spiritual or ethnic.

In another narrative digression, he implicitly compares Germans with African slaves. The purported purpose of the digression is to explain the practice of indentured servitude, which the Hartmans fortunately avoided, and he quotes liberally from Muhlenberg’s Hallesche Nachrichten. The trip to America is explained in terms reminiscent of the “middle voyage”: “The more passengers can be crowded into the ship, the better it is for the captain and owner, provided they do not die on the way” (26). Some ships are kept “clean and pure” in order to ensure that the “chattel” are brought “into market in a sound and healthy state” while others “permitted those to die who could not live” (26). The indentured servants are described as “chattel” (26) and “white
slaves” (30); they are advertised in papers as “so many Germans to be sold for their passage” (28); then sold at “auctions” in which children are torn apart from their parents, perhaps never to see them again (29).

Although he implicitly compares German indentured servants with African slaves, this in no way suggests readers should be sympathetic to the plight of slaves. Despite these horrors, he claims that “the German character, by its own innate energy, rose above the degradation which it fastened upon it” (22). Those who could not recover, he implies, did not work hard enough, or did not deserve their freedom. Quoting Muhlenberg, he claims (in italics, no less) that the Germans who received the worst situations and meanest masters generally deserved it: “It has often been observed that those children who were disobedient to their parents, and left them without their consent, generally fell into such hands where they received the reward of their evil ways” (29).

Even the novel’s subtitle makes this comparison: True Piety Among the Lowly is reminiscent of Uncle Tom’s Cabin’s subtitle, Life Among the Lowly. This purpose of the digression and the subtitle is to demonstrate the inherent superiority of Germans to blacks. Even in circumstances remarkably similar to the system of African slavery, the German character can “rise above” through industry and perseverance.

Weiser, a native-born American of German-descent, demonstrates the whiteness of Germans by comparing them with Africans and Indians, then shows the gradations in this whiteness—native-born Americans of German descent are even whiter then present-day Germans, as the best blood emigrated to America centuries ago. Religion is an important part of this assimilation process by which Germans become white Americans.
It not only gives Weiser a metaphor for the process (Americanization as regeneration), but it also justifies his own branch of Lutheranism against attack, suggesting American Lutherans (Lutherans in spirit) are purer in spirit and racially superior to their German-born Lutheran counterparts. The distinctions that Weiser makes between Americans of German descent and new immigrants not only sheds light on the period of Nativism and contributes to whiteness studies, but it also demonstrates one particular trajectory of Pennsylvania German literature: that of colonial German descendents who embrace American melting pot ideology and a certain degree of assimilation. It is a striking example of the Americanizing approach taken by some Pennsylvania Germans in response to their identity crisis. The third approach mentioned by Yoder to the Pennsylvania German identity crisis—the dialectizing approach—can also be seen through Regina’s story.

**Coda: Preserving Identity through Dialect**

As Weiser noted in 1856, Regina Leininger had been transformed into Regina Hartman by the nineteenth century. It wasn’t until 1904 that Regina’s true last name was discovered, as well as her connection to Barbara Leininger and Marie le Roy.\(^{42}\) Weiser remembers fondly hearing the story of Regina: “When I was a little boy, I often heard

\(^{42}\) H. M. M. Richards, Secretary of the Pennsylvania-German Society, announces this discovery in a 1904 address to the Society, and writes of it in *The Pennsylvania-German in the French and Indian War: A Historical Sketch* in 1905. The confusion was apparently due to several factors: Muhlenberg’s *HN* did not contain Regina’s last name, and while some of his journals did, others did not. Additionally, the story itself had fractured into several stories that bear little resemblance to the original. As Richards claims, “it has been told in many different forms, and with many poetical embellishments” (82).
[my grandmother] tell the story of the Hartman massacre and the captivity of Regina. And the recital of those terrible scenes made such an impression on my mind that the lapse of near forty years has not erased them” (6). Regina’s story was had a strong oral tradition. With the exception of Weiser’s novel, however, I am aware of no other written account of the legend during the nineteenth century. This changes during the twentieth century, during what Yoder calls the “Renaissance” period of Pennsylvania German culture and dialect. This “Renaissance” was part of a larger folk movement designed to preserve stories, legends, and dialects of particular regions before the processes of industrialization and urbanization made them obsolete. Although it is somewhat outside the range of this project, this section traces Regina’s story into the twentieth-century, revealing another aspect of ethnic identity upon which Pennsylvania Germans focused in times of crisis. While Muhlenberg focused on Regina’s religion, and Weiser on her religion and race, early twentieth-century Pennsylvania Germans saw language as the most important aspect of their ethnic identity, one in serious danger of being obliterated.

Emblematic of the larger twentieth-century folk movement, of which the Pennsylvania German “Renaissance” is one small part, are the collections of Henry Wharton Shoemaker. In Black Forest Souvenirs: Collected in Northern Pennsylvania, he explains his motivation for collecting stories like Regina’s. After making occasional trips into the Black Forest as a college student, he was kept away for several years. “Life withheld the Black Forest until 1907,” he explains,

But what a change those five years had made. Where was the Black Forest? Miles of slashings, fire-swept wastes, emptiness, desolation, ruin met the eye on every side; the lumbermen had done their work. Hoping against hope, the writer rode on, but only dreariness was his portion. Gone were the hemlocks, beeches,
maples and pines; gone the sweet singing birds, the balmy breezes, gone even were the lumbermen with their red or blue shirts, the lumber camps, the stemwinder log railways, gone was everything but ruin. Other trips were taken into the ‘forest’ in 1908, 1909 and 1910. These visits only accentuated the sense of sadness for the arboreal paradise that was no more, which on the wholesale plan, lumbering had swept away. The hand of man had changed the face of nature from green to brown.

In addition to being concerned about the fate of the forest, Shoemaker worries about the stories and legends it holds, which he is afraid will disappear with the trees: “the ancient legends which were so easy to hear in 1898, but so difficult to obtain in 1910. What were listened to with seeming indifference then, were listed to breathlessly towards the last. As the result, the contents of this volume were obtained, and many more” (15-16). He explains that his central concern is with the content of the stories rather than the language in which they are told. “Dialect stories are galore,” he explains; “there is hardly room for more of them” (17). There is room for more stories, however, stories that “treat of a phase of life that is no more, in a region which has been laid waste, that can never be restored. They are a chapter added to American folk-lore, especially as relating to the Indians” (18). It is not just the Indians, however, who populate these legends—“the bizarre happenings of the sturdy pioneers and the doomed Indians must always awaken a pang of interest” (19).

For Shoemaker, sturdy pioneers are as much a part of the past as the doomed Indians. This is especially evident when we compare his “Story of Regina” with Muhlenberg’s and Weiser’s stories. Although Shoemaker’s story is also about the captivity of a young German girl named Regina, the old prospector who tells him the tale emphatically claims that this Regina should not be confused with that other Regina
Hartman. Shoemaker’s Regina is a German Juliet to an Indian Romeo, kept apart because they come from different worlds—a world of sturdy pioneers, destined to become Americans, and a world of Indians, doomed to make way for them. In his judgment, Pennsylvania German culture as well as Indian culture were both doomed—their extinction sad but inevitable, like Shakespeare’s lovers. The story is different enough from our other stories about Muhlenberg’s Regina to merit only passing reference. What is important is the spirit of preservation pervading Shoemaker’s works, the need to preserve certain elements of a culture before it becomes obsolete, and the fact that the language of a culture is not one of those elements that warrants protection. His lack of concern for the language of the stories he collects is likely due to his outsider status. Although he is part of the general folk movement sweeping America in the early twentieth century, he is an outsider to the culture whose stories he is collecting. He has no real attachment.

The two other early twentieth-century versions of Regina’s story are not only about Regina proper (Muhlenberg’s Regina) but also written in Pennsylvania German dialect, which is the spoken language of the Pennsylvania German folk—those Pennsylvanians whose ancestors are colonial Germans. Whether Shoemaker’s Regina really was another girl, or Regina Leininger’s story had morphed into an entirely different tale, is less important than the intrinsic connection between the plot of the original story and the language in which it is told. For dialect writers Daniel Miller and John Birmelin, Regina’s story is one about language preservation, a perfect analogy for the dialectizing movements of which they both were a part.
While Don Yoder discusses the Renaissance of Pennsylvania German culture during the 1930s, Earl F. Robacker traces the urge to “preserve” the dialect to the 1860s. Although there was dialect material published during the antebellum period, it mostly consisted of bawdy and humorous letters to newspapers. It was during the post-bellum period (concurrent with the local color and dialect fiction trend in English-language American literature) that, according to Robacker, the writers began to use the dialect as a literary language. Writers such as Henry Harbaugh, considered the father of the dialect verse, aimed “to employ the lowly, everyday dialect as a language of culture, and thus perpetuate the memory of a way of life which seemed in great danger of being lost” (72). Robacker groups Daniel Miller, who published a dialect version of Regina’s story in 1903, in this “language-conscious” era, as one of the scholars who consciously tried to elevate the dialect into a literary language, to give it value and preserve it for future generations.43

Miller’s “Die Regina Hartman,” from his collection Pennsylvania German, is exemplary of the nostalgic tone Robacker sees in much of the prose and poetry of this era. Miller was in fact nostalgic for an era in which High German was a language with real literary possibilities in America, an era in which the German language in America had a vibrant future. In 1862, before Miller began to write dialect literature, he helped

43 Robacker describes Miller as a “zealous newspaper man who found time in his busy life to write a great many dialect letters for one purpose or another. Under the standing head of “Humoristisch,” he published sketches for forty years, beginning in 1869, when he established his first newspaper in Reading. The numbers which seem to show him at his best are those which he reprinted in 1903 and 1911 in his two volumes entitled Pennsylvania German” (95).
found the High German *Verein der deutschen Presse von Pennsylvanien*, which aimed, according to Roback, “to further the use of High German as a literary language” (73). In essence, Miller was what Yoder would call a Germanizer, but he made a practical choice to let go of High German as a literary language and instead turned to the actual language of the people, which he saw as a literary medium with more of a future.

Although the basic plot elements remain, Miller’s tale is quite different from Muhlenberg’s and Weiser’s accounts. It is difficult to know to what extent the legend itself had changed over years of retelling, and to what extent Miller is taking artistic liberties. Either way, rather than describing the raid as a terrifying and dramatic event, he presents it matter-of-factly. Miller also describes Regina’s actual captivity as a matter-of-fact:

> Regina was ten years old at the time of the raid and was given over to the care of an Indian squaw. There she spent close to ten years, learning the ways of an Indian maiden. She spoke their language and worked as an Indian woman was taught to do. During those years, she lost all hope of ever seeing any of her family again. And gradually, she forgot faces and voices. She thought and felt as an Indian maiden, and her memory of early life faded almost into oblivion. (257)

In Miller’s account, even the squaw to whom Regina is given, whom both Muhlenberg and Weiser demonize, is portrayed more as a teacher than a cruel mistress, and Regina no longer seems a victim, but rather a member of the Delaware community. She is sad to have lost her family, and she misses them, but she is not all alone in solitude.

---

44 The translation is mine. In dialect, this passage reads: “Die Regina iss endlich an en Inschingfraa iwwegewwe warre. Datt hot sie en hatt Lewe ghatt. Nein Yaahr lang waar sie bei de Inshcing. Sie he, uff kors, net deitsch gschwetz, un die Regina hot die Inschingschprooch un die Inschingwege gelannt” (102).
suspense in Miller’s narrative is not due to the dangerous and savage natives, but the possibility that her German mother-tongue will be forever lost. Although this is an element of the previous tales as well, the stripped-down plot and matter-of-fact tone of Miller’s story makes it the primary concern in this case. The pathos of the scene is in the reunion of daughter with mother, but even this ultimately means the reunion of daughter with her mother-tongue, since her mother is the only one in the story to speak German.

To further emphasize the importance of the German mother tongue, Miller reprints the hymn itself, something neither Muhlenberg nor Weiser did. Despite the fact that the tale is in dialect, the hymn is immediately recognizable as High German:

Allein und doch nicht ganz alleine  
Bin ich in meiner Einsamkeit;  
Denn wenn ich ganz verlassen scheine,  
Vertreibt mir Jesus selbst die Zeit;  
Ich bin bei Ihm un Er bei mir,  
So kommt mir gar nicht einsam für.

Perhaps because the hymn has been such an integral part of the legend, Miller does not translate its High German into dialect. For example, the word “alone” is the High German “allein” rather than the dialect “allee.” The only change at all, in fact, is the dropping of the “d” in the High German word “und” to make the dialect “un.” He also ends by describing Muhlenberg’s gift to the remaining Hartmans of a new Bible, which is of course in High German, and which helps complete the process of Regina regaining her language. Although Regina can go back—she can reclaim her mother tongue—Miller cannot. He thus embraces dialect and uses the highly symbolic story of Regina to argue for its preservation as the only remaining link to a High German literary past.
The other early twentieth-century dialect version of Regina’s story is the poem “Regina Hartmann” published three decades later by John Birmelin as part of his 1938 collection *Gezwitscher*. Birmelin was “discovered” in the 1930s by Presten A. Barba, who ran the popular department in the Allentown Call, “‘S Pennsylvaanisch Deitsch Eck” (or “Pennsylfawnisch Deitsch Eck” – The Pennsylvania German Corner), in which Birmelin published his first dialect poems. The popularity of the Eck is symptomatic of the period that Yoder calls the Pennsylvania German “Renaissance” and Robacker calls the “Folk-Conscious Period” of Pennsylvania German literature. During the 1930s, there was a burgeoning interest throughout the US in antiques, collecting, folk art, folk cooking, etc, and interest in Pennsylvania German or Pennsylvania Dutch culture was also revived.

With Barba’s support, Birmelin quickly made a name for himself as a Pennsylvania German dialect writer, and within three years of publishing his first poem in the Eck, he had published his first collection, *Gezwitscher*. According to Robacker, Birmelin follows in the tradition of earlier dialect poets, but with crucial differences in tone and quality: “in a short time he had created almost a new literature in itself,—a melodious, whimsical body of essentially narrative verse rooted in the present rather than in the past. This quality of his verse is a pleasing one, for, even though he does now and then indulge in reminiscence, he maintains an essentially contemporary tone that is a welcome relief from too much nostalgia” (164-5). Although Birmelin’s poem is

---

45 It is also reprinted in *A Pennsylvania German Anthology*, which is the version I am using.
nostalgic in subject matter and sentimental tone, the argument he makes is thoroughly contemporary. Birmelin argues for the preservation of the Pennsylvania German dialect, not as a practical substitute for a long lost German, but for its own literary value.

Birmelin’s poem is a long, sentimental ballad in common meter. It begins by establishing the setting:

More than one hundred eighty years ago –
A long time past –
There flowed in a beautiful, quiet valley
The Tulpehocke Creek.

And on the Creek there was a house
In this old time,
It was a log house, poor and happy,
Occupied by farming folk.46

Birmelin then goes on to describe the pious family, and the lovely Regina. Following in Weiser’s steps, he paints her as especially beautiful, and as nearly divine.47 When he describes her favorite hymn, his quotes from it are in High German, which alternate with his lines of dialect:

“Allein und doch nich gans alleine,”

46 The translations in this section are all mine; unfortunately, translation ruins the meter and rhyme of the original. The original reads:

Schunn meh wie hunnert achtzich Yaahr –
En langi Zeit zerick –
Do fliesst im scheene, schtille Daal
Die Tulpehocke Grick.

Un an der Grick do waar en Haus
In seller alde Zeit,
Es waar en Blockhaus, aarm un glee,
Bewohnt vun Bauersleit. (231)

47 “En fromm un himmlisch Wese” – as pious as a divine being (231).
So wie’s im Gsangbuch schteht.
“Bin ich in meiner Einsamkeit,”
Un wie’s noch weider geht.
(“Alone and not entirely alone”
That’s how it is in the song book,
“Am I in my loneliness,”
And so on it goes.)

Like Miller, he inserts the hymn nearly unchanged; the only difference at this point is the change from the high German spelling of “ganz” to the dialect “gans.”

Throughout the poem, Birmelin returns to the refrain, which is always some variant of the last two lines of the first stanza: “There flowed in a beautiful, quiet valley / The Tulpehocke Creek.” When the family is happy and the region at peace, the creek flows peacefully through the valley. When the Indian raid occurs, the entire landscape responds—the wind sighs, and the leaves of the trees turn blood red. When Hartman dies trying to protect his family, the creek actually dries up. In the calmer aftermath, the creek once again flows.

In tone and characterization, Birmelin’s poem has more in common with Weiser’s novel than with Miller’s dialect tale. The loving descriptions of Regina, the naming of the brave family dog (Wasser), the savage natives, the sentimental reactions, all are reminiscent of the nineteenth century novel. The raid is once again made terrifying, the Indians again villianized: they are a “swarm” that “rolled over the field / In a wild raging fury.”

They roared up against him;
An axe flashed in the air

---

48 Der Inscheschwaarm rollt iwwer’s Feld
Im wilde Wutgeraas; …
Then it was over for [Hartman].49

The Indians then burn the house, “like wolves in a blind rage,”50 and the children are kidnapped. When she returns, Mother Hartman must “force herself awake, as from a dream/ Her heart was broken.”51

The sentimental language—the descriptions of Mrs. Hartmann’s tears, for example (“re Dreene”), and her broken heart (“re Harz”), and the savagery, cruelty, and villainy of the natives, again is reminiscent of Weiser’s account. One crucial difference, however, that links Birmelin’s poem to Miller’s tale, is the focus on language as the most important aspect of Pennsylvania German identity. Although Regina loses then regains her ability to speak German every version of her story, it is only in the dialect versions in which language is the essential feature of her identity. As in Miller’s telling, the real pathos of the scene is less the fact that the children look Indian (“En yedes hot wie’n Insch geguckt” – “They all had an Indian appearance”) but that none of them one could understand Mother Hartman when she questioned them: “Ken eens ass sie verschteht” (“Not one of them understood her,” 235). The narrator explains:

They had learned the Indian language
While they had lived with the Indians
They had their own mother tongues
Almost entirely lost.52

49 Sie brause uff ihn drei;
En Beil hot in der Luft gezuckt,
Dann waar’s mit ihm verbei.

50 Wie Welf in blinder Wut
51 Sie wendt sich weck, ass wie im Draam,
Gebroche waar ihr Hatz.
52 “Die hen die Inscheschprooch gelannt
   Weil sie bei Insche waare;
Nonetheless, when Mother Hartmann sings “Allein aber nicht ganz alleine,” Regina immediately recognizes the tune, exclaiming, “Wer singt mir so’n bekanndi Weis? / Des muss die Mudder sei!” (“Who sings such a familiar tune to me? It must be my mother!”) She embraces her mother, and together they sing more of the song, which this time gets its own stanza:

Denn wenn ich ganz verlassen scheine  
Vertreibt mir Jesus selbst die Zeit;  
Ich bin bei Ihm un Er bei mir,  
So kummt mir gar nichts einsam fuer. (235)

I’ve given the original text rather than a translation to demonstrate how the hymn is now more diaeticized than it was earlier in the poem, and certainly more than it was in Miller’s version. Compare this verse, as Birmelin writes it, to the original:

Dann wann ich gantz verlassen scheine,  
Verbtreibt mir Jesus selbst die zeit.  
Ich bin bey Ihm, und Er bey mir,  
So kommt nun gar nich einsam fur.53

The changes may seem slight, but they are enough to give the poem a definite dialect feel. In particular, note the change of prominent vowels (o to u; a to e) and the absence of umlauts in the dialect version (Pennsylvania German dialect does not use them at all). Regina has reunited with her mother and through her mother, with her mother tongue—not Muhlenberg’s High German, but Birmelin’s own Pennsylvania German dialect.

Sie hen ihr eegni Muddersprooch  
Schier gans un gaar verlore” (235).

53 The full German lyrics of the poem, as well as a translation by Rev. Samuel R. Fisher, are from a nineteenth-century biography of Colonel Henry Bouquet by Cyrus Cort, 71-72.
Conclusion

The fact that Regina’s story was used by Americanizers, Germanizers, and dialectizers (to return to Yoder’s terms), illustrates the flexibility of the captivity narrative genre, and the heightened value given to some aspects of culture (whether religion, race, or language) in times of identity crisis. Pennsylvania Germans have never been a unified group. They were divided in the eighteenth century by religion; in the nineteenth by religion as well as different waves of immigration and gradations of whiteness; and in the twentieth century by questions regarding the place of non-English languages in an increasingly English-speaking America. Regina’s story is incredibly flexible, her hymn an easy symbol of identity endangered yet preserved.

As a case study, it gives valuable insight into the complex nature of group identity over time, not only into German-American identity, but also into the nature of ethnicity itself as a concept in America. German-American literature is a vast category with many subgroups and divisions. Like other national and ethnic groups in America, Pennsylvania Germans were divided not only by generational status (first generation, second generation, third generation), but by the places from whence they emigrated, the places to which they immigrated, by religion and even language. Regina’s story continues to resonate because every generation has its own crisis, and must identify for itself what parts of their culture deserve protection.\textsuperscript{54} In other words, ethnicity must be continuously redefined by each generation in a changing American environment, sometimes in relation

\textsuperscript{54} For a recent example of Regina’s story, see the young adult book by Sally M. Keehn, \textit{I am Regina} (New York: Philomel, 1991).
to other groups (such as American Indians and Africans), but often through internal conflict as well.
Works Cited


---. “Das Sechs und Zwanzigste Exempel,” in *Nachrichten von den Vereinigten Deutschen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Gemeinen in Nord-America, absonderlich 124*
in Pennsylvanien. Halle: 1787. 479-482.


Chapter 3: Union: Marriage and (Trans)Nationality in the Novels of Charles Sealsfield

In one of the most famous questions in Early American Literature, J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur in *Letters from an American Farmer* asks, “What is an American, this new man?” (69). The question points to one of the central themes in American literature: American identity, or lack thereof. It is a question that has plagued writers from Crèvecoeur’s day to our own. It also plagued Charles Sealsfield, the most prolific and perhaps well-known German-language American novelist of all time.

In many ways, Charles Sealsfield’s life reads like a novel. He was born Karl Postl to a family of vinters in Poppitz in 1793. Although many biographical details are disputed, we know that as a young man, Karl Postl joined the Order of the Holy Cross with the Red Star in Prague, and disappeared in 1823. Although no one knows how he escaped (some have speculated he had help from Freemasons), we do know why--his liberal beliefs made him a target of the tyrannical Metternich. Later that year, he resurfaced as Charles Sealsfield in New Orleans. His Louisiana passport read: “Citizen of the United States, clergyman, native of Pennsylvania” (Arndt). For the next few years, Sealsfield lived in Pittsburgh, New York, Philadelphia, Kittanning and Louisiana before going back to Europe for a year and a half, where he published his first book, a non-fictional portrait of life in America, published in German as *Die Vereinigen Staaten von Nordamerica* (by “C. Sidons, citizen of the United States of North America”) and English
in two books as *The United States of America as They Are* and *The Americans as They Are* (anonymously). In 1827 he returned to the U.S., where he published his first novel: *Tokeah; or the White Rose* (Philadelphia, 1829), which he revised and published in London as *The Indian Chief; or, Tokeah and the White Rose*. He worked for and wrote articles for the *Morning Courier* and the *New York Enquirer*, worked for the Napoleonic family, and perhaps even owned a plantation in Louisiana. He eventually moved to Switzerland where, with the exception of two more visits to the states, he spent the rest of his life.

It is here, in Switzerland, that he wrote the novels for which he became famous—novels written in German and set on the American frontier. Thanks largely to these novels, he quickly became a success in Europe, and soon after his last novel was published, he became famous in America, too. In 1844, Theodor Mundt named “Seatsfield” as an American writer superior to Irving and Cooper, which sparked a wave of American interest in his works. Winchester’s New World Press capitalized on this interest, taking advantage of the lack of international copyright laws to translate and reprint pirated copies of Sealsfield’s works. Since the books were “American,” the press also avoided attacks on their patriotism by American literary nationalists like Poe and Hawthorne (which helps explain these authors’ dislike of the Austrian author). Although initially proud to be so popular in America, “in the hands not just of thousands but of hundreds of thousands of citizens of the United States,” as he put it in 1845, by 1854 Sealsfield was calling the New York publishers “leeches and torturers of all authors” *(qtd. in Grünzweig)*.
By the time of his death in 1864, Charles Sealsfield was a transatlantic literary celebrity nicknamed “Der Grosse Unbekannt” or the Great Unknown. On his tombstone, he had carved his real initials “C.P.” with the inscription: “Bürger von Nord Amerika” (citizen of North America). His true identity as the Austrian refugee monk was finally revealed in his will. He left his money to two of his nephews in hopes that they would follow his example and immigrate to America.55

Charles Sealsfield’s books, both his fiction and his non-fiction, explore the same question asked by Crèvecoeur decades earlier: “What is an American, this new man?” Perhaps this similar interest is due, in part, to the writers’ similar backgrounds: They are both transatlantic writers, Europeans who came to America as adults and embraced it whole-heartedly. They both believed in the power of agrarian republicanism to create a utopia where people from Europe could seek asylum, could start over, and could become “new men.” When their utopias proved unsustainable, they both left America and returned to Europe, but never lost interest in their once-adopted country. Sealsfield, as we’ve seen, continued to call himself “American” until his death.

Unlike Crèvecoeur, however, who celebrated American diversity, Sealsfield was concerned where such diversity might lead. One of the central questions asked in his novels is: How can such a vast nation, made up of different economies, different values and ideologies, remain unified? Sealsfield’s answer to this question is not to be found

55 Although there is plenty of biographical information on Sealsfield, much of it is speculation and rumor. I have relied primarily on the biography given by Jeffrey L. Sammons in Ideology, Mimesis, Fantasy: Charles Sealsfield, Friedrich Gerstäcker, Karl May, and Other German Novelists of America, which is corroborated by most Sealsfield authorities.
where critics usually look—it is not in his adventure and frontier stories, but in the romance stories and marriage plots that so often frame them. In their zeal to rescue Sealsfield from literary oblivion, critics have long ignored the aspects of his fiction that seem to “pander” to popular readers. But in taking Sealsfield’s adventure and frontier stories out of the context of the marriage and romance plots that frame them, we miss the larger question with which his fiction grapples—not only, What is an American? but, With so many different kinds of Americans, which groups are legitimate, and what connects them together?

**National types**

Critics have long acknowledged that one of Sealsfield’s primary goals was to portray the “national characteristics” of the American, although they have debated his reasons for doing so. An early example is Bernhard Alexander Uhleidorf’s 1922 book, *Charles Sealsfield: Ethnic Elements and National Problems in his Works*, which identifies the basic “national types” described by Sealsfield as: Kentuckians, Backwoods Settlers, the French element (including Creoles) and the American planters in Louisiana, the Negroes, the German element, and the Yankees. Throughout his books, Sealsfield attributes to each of these peoples unique characteristics deriving both from their countries of origin and their new environment. For example, Kentuckians are rash and impulsive, uncouth, yet goodhearted. The backwoods settlers are rough, raw and often violent—the “dregs” of civilization or the “rabble”—yet they are necessary for progress, as they begin taming the wilderness for the planters and farmers who inevitably follow.
The Creoles are a little too French—they like to dance and entertain and often spend their money frivolously—but they can also be kind, unaffected, and they can be excellent plantation managers. The American planter is the best national type, as the farmer was for Crèvecoeur, and for similar reasons—both authors believed that farming fosters a love of industry, liberty, and self-reliance. For Sealsfield, the Yankees embody the worst of America, as they are the oldest region and have already begun to decay, just as Charles Town in the south embodied decadence and decay for Crèvecoeur. Sealsfield’s ranking of regional types may be due to his own observations in America and to his identification with the South and West. Regardless, it begs the question, Who are the legitimate Americans, and what binds them together?

These questions are very real ones for Sealsfield; as much as he loved his adopted home, he worried about its sustainability. In *The United States of North America as They Are*, written in 1827, Sealsfield praises the people and the nation in glowing terms, but warns, “Nothing can be less solid, nothing can offer less security for the future, than the bond of the Union itself.” The Union is, he claims, “A vast unwieldy body, held together only by motives of self-interest and of egotism” (55). He fears the dissolution of the Union if Adams is reelected in 1828: “No doubt then remains about the fate of the northern divisions. Its separation from the Southern and Western States with an hereditary President, perhaps a crowned head to govern it, will be the natural consequence” (60). It is up to the “most distinguished men of the south and west” to prevent disunion from occurring. If they come together for the good of the nation, they just might preserve its liberty. In particular, Sealsfield claims that the impetus lies with
Virginia, which must give up its claim to the Presidency and support a candidate that will truly bring the nation together: Andrew Jackson. “The question is now, whether the State of Virginia has sufficient republican strength left to induce it to sacrifice the monopoly which it has hitherto exercised” (68). Virginia must unite with the rest of the Union under Jackson in order to save the nation from dissolution and monarchy. For Sealsfield, Jackson is the nation’s only hope, “and the year 1828 will decide whether this people, after the lapse of another quarter of a century, will be still free and united citizens, or divided and obsequious subjects” (68).

Sealsfield believes that the ties that bind the nation together can be strengthened if individuals and states are willing to sacrifice personal interest and join together for the common good. This is allegorized, in his fiction, through marriage, as marriage is the ultimate consensual union. For marriage to work, two people must abandon their own selfish egotism for mutual and communal gain. For a nation to work, citizens and states must do the same. Nonetheless, not all people are qualified for marriage, just as all people are not qualified for citizenship. The allegory of marriage allows Sealsfield to argue who is qualified for citizenship—who are the legitimate Americas—as well as how legitimate Americans can come together for the good of the nation.

The use of marriage as metaphor for nationhood is not unique to Sealsfield. In William R. Handley’s book, *Marriage, Violence, and the Nation in the American Literary West*, he notes that the marriage and nationality have long been linked both symbolically and practically in American life and literature. On a symbolic level, they mirror one another as “two forms of consensual union” (3), and by the latter half of the nineteenth
century, marriage was seen as creating and sustaining American citizenship, and marital “nonconformists,” like Indians and Mormons, were thus seen as threats not only to marriage, but to the nation. For Handley, “the allegorizing of nation through intimate relationships has consequences, both literary and historical, that need to be considered in tandem in order adequately to assess how readers imagine themselves as citizens” (5). Werner Sollors in *Beyond Ethnicity* notes a similar parallel between American national identity and love-stories. Romantic love, since it is based on mutual consent, is affiliated with American democratic virtue, while arranged marriage is identified with a European emphasis on hereditary, or descent. “American allegiance,” he explains, “the very concept of citizenship developed in the revolutionary period, was—like love—based on consent, not on descent, which further blended the rhetoric of America with the language of love and the concept of romantic love with American identity” (112). For Sollors, this contrast between consensual marriage and arranged marriages is merely one example of the central tension in American literature between “consent” and “descent.”

Although Sealsfield’s allegorizing of nation was neither new nor original, critics have long ignored it. Initially, they focused on Sealsfield’s strange and tumultuous life. For early scholars like Eduard Castle, Sealsfield’s books were clues to an adventurous life shrouded in mystery. In the latter part of the twentieth century, American critics began advocating for his position as an American writer worthy of study, and the central questions became those of audience and intent. When Walter Grünzweig published his book in 1985, his intent was to resituate Sealsfield in an American context, to establish his “‘Americanness’ on the basis of his works and their meaning to American readers”
American literary critics like Grünzweig and those who followed him established his Americanness based on the American content of his works, especially his similarities to American writers like James Fenimore Cooper, William Gilmore Simms, and Timothy Flint (from whom Sealsfield had borrowed liberally). Like early scholarship on Cooper, much of this Sealsfield scholarship was apologetic—advocating for his inclusion in the American cannon as an American writer despite his transatlanticism and supposed literary inferiority. Grünzweig, for example, argues for his Americanness through genre:

Rather than restricting himself to the traditions of the sentimental, gothic, or picaresque novels or even that of the tale of seduction, Sealsfield created his own version of Sir Walter Scott’s historical romance which replaced the English writer’s strictly historical subject matter by topics less removed in time. Sealsfield’s great theme is the civilization of the country from East to West and in describing this process in fiction terms, he becomes one of the country’s earliest Western writers. (7)

Later scholars have argued that Sealsfield is American in more than just theme, setting and influence. Jeffrey L. Sammons, for example, argues that Sealsfield’s audience must have been American, despite the fact that most of his books were written in German and published in Europe. The details and references are so obscure, according to Sammon, they would have been missed by German readers. He thus concludes that the ideal reader must have been an American who read German.

Although questions of audience and intent are still debated, most contemporary American scholars take it for granted that Sealsfield is a legitimate part of the American literary canon. The focus has shifted instead to the particularities of his politics—in particular, his Jacksonian politics, his views on Manifest Destiny, and his apologetic attitude to slavery. Recent scholars are still missing a crucial part of the puzzle, however,
as they focus almost exclusively on his frontier and adventure stories and ignore the marriage plots framing them. For example, Hugh Ridley has a fascinating analysis of Sealsfield’s “Jacinto Prairie” (part of his novel Das Kajütenbuch, or The Cabin Book) reading it as a transatlantic *Heart of Darkness* that explores the inherent connection between imperialism and violence. Nonetheless, Ridley ignores the narrative frame that surrounds this adventure story about Texas independence, even stating that “there are no love-stories here, the material of the encounter with nature and the founding of Texan independence are felt to be adequate for a novel, without being made more palatable to traditional readers by the addition of love-interest” (179). It is a puzzling mistake in an otherwise interesting analysis, as a love story is the focus of six of the book’s twelve chapters and it operates as a structuring and thematic strand. The only reason that Colonel Morse of Texas is in Mississippi telling his story of Texas independence to a room full of grandee planters is because he has followed his love-interest Alexandrine Murky there. The last six chapters of the novel are entirely devoted to their burgeoning romance, which the narrator links explicitly to themes of Union and nation initially brought up in Morse’s Texas story.

I will return to the *Das Kajütenbuch (The Cabin Book)* later in this chapter and explore more thoroughly the connection between Union and union established there. For now, suffice it to say that throughout his fiction, Sealsfield explicitly “allegoriz[es]… nation through intimate relationships” (Handley 5), aligning romantic love with American republicanism. The rest of this chapter will explore the reasons behind these allegories. I argue that he unites Union with union in order to argue for the legitimacy of
some Americans over others, and to promote specific Jacksonian policies (such as Indian removal, slavery, and Manifest Destiny and the settling and incorporation of new territories), which he saw as necessary for the survival of the nation. He also uses marriage as a metaphor to forge transatlantic links between characters of the Old World and the New. In other words, Sealsfield’s books suggest that it is only through marriage (both literally and metaphorically) that a country with the size, diversity, and imperial appetite of America can conceivably operate as a “Union.”

**Sealsfield and the Marriage Plot**

One year after the publication of *Americans As They Are* and *The United States of North America As They Are*, Sealsfield published his first (and only English-language) novel, *Tokeah; or the White Rose*. Although the book is set during the War of 1812, it deals with contemporary issues. Gone is the fear of disunion that we saw in the nonfiction books, as Adams was no longer a threat. This novel instead explores two related themes: how Europeans become American, and why Indians never can. It argues for the legitimacy of certain Americans in order to justify the removal of others.

Initially, Sealsfield takes great pains to portray Indians as aristocratic and prejudiced—much like European aristocrats. He describes the Indians as “haughty” and their tribal societies as hierarchical. Although their dress and rituals appear at first glance to be ‘exotic,’ their social structure resembles that of Europe more than any real tribal society. For example, these Indian chiefs, just like European kings, inherit their titles and wear crowns (plumage dipped in gold). What Sammons noticed as a leitmotif in
Sealsfield’s revised and expanded version of Tokeah (Der Legitime und die Republikaner, 1833) is already present in the original: the literalization of the term “noble savage,” or the association of Indian chiefs (called Der Legitime in the revised edition) with “the despots of Europe who claimed to rule legitimately by divine right” (Sammons, “Austrian Jacksonian” 11).

One way that Sealsfield associates Indian chiefs with European despots is by linking them both with the practice of arranged marriages. In Tokeah, or the White Rose, Indian chiefs solidify alliances with other tribes through arranging marriages, much like European royal families. The character El Sol is the perfect example: he is the son of a “Cumanchee” (Sealsfield’s spelling) chief’s daughter and a Pawnee chief. His parents’ marriage was arranged for political reasons, and El Sol inherited his ruling position, which he has held since infancy. The titular character Tokeah also arranges marriages for political gain. He is the ruler of the Oconees (a position he too inherited), who has been driven from his tribal lands in Georgia into Louisiana and Texas by white men. To strengthen his vulnerable position in his new land, Tokeah secures an alliance with the powerful Cumanchee tribe by marrying his daughter, Canondah, to their chief El Sol. Luckily for Canondah, she is very much in love with El Sol, and he with her. This is not the case with Rosa, Tokeah’s other “daughter,” whose marriage he has also arranged. Rosa is a young white girl whom Tokea took captive as an infant and adopted. He arranges her marriage to the “chief of the Saltlake,” who is actually a French pirate named Lafitte. When Tokeah becomes aware of the “chief’s” true identity, he no longer desires an alliance, and Rosa no longer has to marry him. This is fortunate for her;
although Rosa has been raised by Indians, she is still a white woman to whom the very thought of an arranged marriage is repellent.

To use Sollors’ terms, while the Indians are aligned with “descent” in their practice of arranged marriages, Rosa is aligned with “consent.” She meets a young Englishman named Arthur, who has just escaped from the pirate Lafitte, and they fall desperately in love. Although Arthur is an Englishman who is initially aristocratic and prejudiced against Americans, he eventually learns to appreciate this young country and its peoples. We see this through his changed attitude towards romantic love: he was initially was unsure whether he could ever marry Rosa, as she is an uneducated orphan of unknown origins raised in the forest by Indians. After spending time with the Creole Senator Mr. Gentillon, Arthur loses much of his class prejudice. Mr. Gentillon explains that he was once equally prejudiced against Americans, but has since changed his view. He first shows Arthur that the “mobs” or “rabble” or the US are different from those of Europe, as American rabble must become useful or they will starve. Furthermore, American rabble has the potential to become freeholders. Gentillon shows Arthur that Europe’s time is passing and America is rising to take its place. The English and French are the fathers of liberty, but America is the land of liberty—the place where liberty can truly take root. After these lessons in democracy and nationality, Arthur is much less prejudiced against Americans of the lower classes, as illustrated by his renewed commitment to Rosa: he no longer cares that she is beneath him.

Tellingly, the possibility of white-Indian marriage is never even hinted at in the novel, even when it comes to Rosa, the white captive. Like Weiser’s Regina, her sexual
purity is never threatened, as if they Indians know she is too good for them. After Rosa and Arthur are brought together and Arthur learns the power of democracy, the Indians have served their purpose in the novel and consequently disappear from its pages. This is Sealsfield’s first and only book about Indians (not counting an expanded and revised edition of *Tokeah*), and it is his “vanishing Indian” book in more ways than one. At the end of the book, Tokeah and El Sol move further west to avoid the white men, and as if that wasn’t enough of a removal, Tokeah dies on the journey. As the last of his people, Tokeah’s death means that his ancestral homelands now truly belong to the white men. This is tragic, the book suggests, but necessary. The Indian characters in the book cannot join in Union with the white Americans any more than they can join them in the union of marriage.

In case the necessity of Indian removal is not clear enough to readers, Sealsfield stages a dialogue between El Sol, Tokeah, and Andrew Jackson, where we hear Jackson’s Indian policy from his own mouth: The Indians should remember, he tells them, “that we [white Americans] are as lawful possessors of the land as they are, and certainly the strongest. We could have made them slaves, and sent them into our mines as the Spaniards did. We have left them their lands, and treated them as brethren.” When Tokeah protests, Jackson says with “vehemence”:

Chief...the Great Spirit has made the lands for the white men, and the red men, that they may live on the fruits which grow on the earth, and dig the soil, and plough the ground; but not for hunting grounds, that some thousands of red men may find deer, where millions of happy people might live peacefully. If you keep those lands which are left to you, and plough and hoe the ground, you may live as well as we do, and as independently as we live—you will have the same right as we have. But if you choose a roaming hunting life, you must abide the consequences, and look for the desert. (165)
The issue thus appears to be one of choice: the Indians could consent to being more American, but never will (or never can), and they thus have given up their rights to the land. Historically, we know that their lands were taken away anyway, that this “choice” was anything but. In Sealsfield’s fiction, however, the illusion of choice is preserved, and the Indians leave of their own volition.

Although Arthur and Rosa eventually settle in Jamaica rather than Louisiana, Arthur overcomes his Europeans prejudices, and the men he once called “rabble” are now his dear friends. His transformation, along with Tokehah and El Sol’s removal, demonstrates that Europeans can become American if they so choose, while Indians cannot. He thus justifies Indian removal not only from their lands, but from his fiction as well. There is no place left for them in the American southwest, as there is no room left for them in his books. While he continues to write books set on Southwest frontier, he refers to the original inhabitants only through metaphor, and only to justify the continuation of policies that push them even further away.

* * *

In his five-volume Lebensbilder aus der westlichen Hemisphäre, (published in English as Life in the New World), Sealsfield continues to pair union with Union, and he once again chooses Louisiana for his setting. The first book in the series, George Howard’s Esq. Brautfahrt (The Courtship of George Howard), was written in 1834, a few years after Sealsfield had settled in Switzerland and had entered the most prolific stage of his literary career. We’ve seen that his earlier fears about disunion, which he had articulated in 1827, had been calmed because Virginia had, as he had hoped, supported
Jackson and helped him defeat Adams in 1828. For Sealsfield, this is a momentous event in the nation’s history, and he allegorizes it in *The Courtship of George Howard* through the titular character’s choice of brides.\(^{56}\) He also extends the argument regarding legitimacy that he made in *Tokeah*. In *Tokeah*, he argued that Indians are not legitimate Americans and thus have no role in a union/Union with true Americans; this book makes the same argument against black Americans in order to justify Jacksonian pro-slavery policies. While he excludes them from joining in the Union, Sealsfield offers hope for other Americans whose legitimacy is questionable—for Yankees and recent European immigrants. They can become legitimate Americans if they undergo regeneration through marriage.

As Grüzweig notes, the books in this series detail “the Education of George Howard” in *buildungsroman* fashion. In the beginning of the novel, which is set in the election year of 1828, George Howard is an aristocratic Virginian, and despite his nominal status as a Southerner, he has as much in common with New England and New York as he does with the South. For example, Howard looks to New York for a wife, and although he is disgusted by the Bowsend family—“mushroom aristocracy” who thought of nothing but “their own spongy, sapless, rotten selves,” and for whom “even their children are … only things, chattels”—he nonetheless offers to buy their “chattel,” bragging to the Bowsends about the worth of his cotton and tobacco crops, and trying to woo their daughter Alexandrine with “the latest productions of Walter Scott, Cooper, Bulwer, etc,—to surprise her with our Atlantic Souvenirs, Tokens, and also with the

\(^{56}\) All quotes from *Life in the New World* are from nineteenth-century English-language translations. (See Works Cited page.)
English Keepsakes and Amulets,” all of which “had cost [him] a heavy sum” (7).

Despite all of his supposed indignity about Yankee parents treating their children as chattel, this is his sixth time in New York “on this important business” (marriage) and “it was high time to close, if I would not be speedily turned out of the market as an uncurrent commodity” (8). His language shows that he too considers marriage as just another business transaction, and is thus more like the Yankees than he would like to admit.

One of the central lessons that George Howard must learn in this book is that aligning himself with Yankees through marriage would be selfish; it would increase his position in society and his net worth, but at the expense of his plantation, his slaves, his future family, and even his country, for Yankee women are too fragile and frivolous to be the wife of a plantation owner. As Howard’s old friend and neighbor, Harry Richards, says of Alexandrine Bowsend, “She has not even the patience to read a novel of Cooper through…[she] has studied geography and the globes, astronomy and Cuvier, and the Cartoons of Raphael; but on my life, does not know whether a veal-cutlet comes from beef or pork—[she] would boil tea like cabbage, and pickle eggs in German crout!” to which Howard adds, “And who falls into convulsions at the sight of a needle; but that is in the blood” (8). Howard knows a New Yorker is an unsuitable match, but is “enchanted” by the young “fairy” and cannot quit her, until she accepts the suit of a much older, and richer man, after which he gives up and departs with Richards for Virginia. It is just as well, however, as his large plantation in Louisiana requires a more practical choice—a wife who can be of real use to him and his future family, and thus to the country.
Howard next falls in love with a Boston woman, Emily Warren, but she is already engaged to another old acquaintance of Howard’s, Ralph Doughby, a rough and uncouth Kentuckian who also owns land in Louisiana. It is clear that Emily Warren does not love him, but the marriage has been arranged by her aunt and father, who, as Richards says, “only wishes a respectable husband for Emily, who has the power of making her independent for life, without his giving part of his fortune as a dowry” (39). This arranged marriage confirms Howard’s initial feelings about Yankees: “Yes, all Yankees are real, double-distilled Jews, who sell their daughters to the highest bidder just like their barrels of onions, flour or whisky.”

He criticizes Mr. Warren for hypocrisy, as the man prides himself on his patriotism (“since the revolution, he has had nothing foreign on his body”) and yet he “tread[s] so closely upon the liberty of his daughter” (39). Howard is learning an important lesson: freedom of choice in marriage is akin to freedom of choice in politics; mutual consent in politics is akin to mutual consent in love. Arranged marriages are anti-American, and the arrangers are tyrants. His marriage needs to be based on love and true compatibility.

Howard returns to his own plantation heavy-hearted. He had bought the plantation nine years ago, but found it to have none of the “improvements” that were advertised. He worked hard to improve it for three years, but then left it with an overseer to search for a bride. He recollects these facts on the riverboat trip down the Red River, where he meets his future wife—a young Creole girl. Nonetheless, because he has been caught up with the idea of going North for a bride, it takes him quite some time to see her as a

---

57 Dan Diner notes that the comparison between Yankees and Jews was a common anti-American trope in the nineteenth century.
potential wife. Unlike the prolonged reveries with which he introduced his previous love-interests, Louise and her sister Julia are introduced with shock rather than admiration:

They came toward me, saluted me like an old acquaintance, and offered me part of their sweet stores [bananas] with as much familiarity as if we had for years eaten at the same table. This is polite, upon my word! I might travel ten years, among my fair country women, without the danger of spoiling my stomach in so sweet a manner. I had to join them; we sat down, and now the girls began to chat and laugh, until, in spite of my ill humor I could not help chiming in. A very pleasant hour was passed, a second and third would have followed, if my native, stiff, Virginia etiquette had permitted me any longer to enjoy the company of these merry beings. (44)

“These demoiselles are really charming beings,” he muses later, “so merry and lively!”

The contrast between stiff and cold Yankee women like Emily Warren and the warm and merry Creole women is important here, as it again illustrates an interest in national types, but equally important is that George Howard is also stiff and formal, which shows that he has more in common with Yankees than with the citizens of his new home state.

Despite their charm, Howard does not consider either girl as a possible wife until later in the text. This is partially due to his regional prejudices. We’ve seen that as a Virginian, he may be southern, but he has more in common with New Englanders than with these new Americans, these Creoles. Louisiana is still a rather new acquisition to the United States at this point, and Howard fears that these Creoles are too French, and thus lazy, narcissistic, and more interested in immediate pleasures than in long-term goals. Even worse, he fears that they are of mixed blood, as the French (characterized as pleasure-driven and egocentric, therefore not concerned with national or regional consequences) are more likely than the English or Americans to take mulatta mistresses. The rest of the text proves some of his presuppositions correct—many Creoles are too
caught up with pleasurable pursuits to improve their cities, let alone to be useful to their country—but the Menous are genuine Americans who happen to be of French descent. They are racially pure with an American work ethic. They work hard, and only entertain after their work is complete. But Howard has yet to learn this about them. On the riverboat, there is little to challenge his prejudices about Creoles, and when Mr. Menou follows him home and inquires into his affairs, Howard is galled by his familiarity. Nonetheless, he lets the Creole man look at his books, and Menou finds that Howard’s overseer has been cheating him. Howard fires the man, and Menou sends for a judge. He also offers to lend Howard his son Charles as a temporary substitute, and invites him to stay at his own house while Charles puts the plantation in order, but asks for an investment of eight-thousand dollars for improvements. Howard is still irked by Menou’s meddling, but takes him up on his offers.

Although he has met his future wife at this point in the text, Howard’s _bildung_ is far from complete. He must learn a few more lessons before he can become a suitable husband. The first lesson is one of Jeffersonian-Jacksonian democracy—to be a good citizen, he must improve his land. When he turns his cheating overseer over to the justice, the law man lectures him: “you gentlemen come down from the north, with your dozen darkies, expend a few thousand dollars, and then think you may play the absentee-gentleman, and that you do us a great honor, in leaving us the trouble of scraping dollars together and sending them off, that you may spend them in other countries. I am almost sorry, Mr. Howard, that you did not come six months later.” He explains: “He [the overseer] has at least been working; he has a wife and children; and he has been useful to
the county and the country” (50). Howard, on the other hand, has not been useful, and thus not a good citizen.

At this point in the text, Howard is slowly shedding his Yankeeism, but he still must learn to appreciate his new state and its women—to affiliate himself with the Southwest. When they arrive at the Menou’s plantation at dawn, Howard is amazed to see Louise, the younger of Menou’s daughters, waiting for them: “Who, of all our northern daughters of Eve, could be induced, for the sake of seeing her papa, to leave her maidenly couch at six in the morning, and to have black coffee ready for him, that the vapors from the swamps might not take away his appetite?” (50). Not only does she show “self-sacrificing devotion” to her father in this respect, but she also is surprisingly well-informed regarding the state of affairs of the plantation: she is able to inform her papa about many of the specifics regarding the slaves: their health, their work, etc. Yet Howard, looking around the drawing room, is not yet won-over by the Creoles. Their furnishings are too French, he thinks: “The French are still in a barbarous state: splendor and show in the drawing-room—dirt and decay in the bed-room and on the body” (51). He is nonetheless pleased by their hospitality: “Ma Menou” “receives me like an old acquaintance, as if I had already been for years her intended son-on-law. No compliments, no forced politeness; even her features do not take the trouble of seeming gay, as is usual on the reception of strangers” (usual among Yankees and Virginians, that is). And their cooking, he soon learns, is no less charming. He begins to think better of these Creoles, especially once he sees the size and shape of Menou’s plantation, but he is held back by the thought: “But what would the world say. The aristocratic Howard and a
Creole, perhaps half-breed!” (52) These fears are soon alleviated when Menou reveals his aristocratic pedigree. Convinced that they are not racially mixed, and that they are sufficiently American, Howard begins to think more of young Louise.

It is eight weeks later that Howard fully realizes his love for Louise, and their marriage is a graduation ceremony into adulthood and citizenship. The courting itself takes little time. The men decide to go for a nocturnal dear hunt, and a mysterious Mexican man who is also staying with Menou is injured. They carry him home, and Louise, thinking that it is Howard who is injured, cries out: “Oh! It is only the Mexican! God be praised!” Howard responds, “Thanks, dear Louise, for your merciful words; they make me happy!” and kisses her (55). After the Mexican is taken care of, Howard begins to think more of Louise. At breakfast, he describes her person for the first time in the text: “she is no doubt a very nice girl, slender, with a fine taille, milk and blood in her face, from which fun, goodness and frugality are beaming; beautiful hands, and a gait!” (55) Immediately after breakfast, he proposes to her, and leaves for his house to make arrangements.

Once alone, Howard mulls over his choice: “My choice was a good one—I felt that; Louise is a most excellent girl; modest, smart, lively, charming, and witty; under her hand everything succeeds, everything grows; she treats the negresses like sisters, and the negroes with great kindness” (56). In short, she is a practical choice, a Southern woman accustomed to slavery who can remain charming and gay despite the challenges of running a plantation. His engagement cements his status as citizen, which his age and even his status as landowner could not procure. Now that he is improving his plantation,
he is treated differently, with more respect: “I, the rich traveling planter, had hardly been marked until now; my overseer was even more in the eyes of my fellow citizens than myself. The metamorphose on my prosperity had at once induced a sudden revolution of ideas, and everybody stood around me, listening to my words, as if they were those of some great reformer, or even, of a greater still—a demagogue” (57). Indeed, Mr. Menou reveals that the request for eight-thousand dollars was a test to gauge his commitment to improving his plantation. “If you had refused me,” Menou says, “Louise would never have become yours, even if you had possessed all the plantations on the Mississippi” (57). Having learned the lessons of a true Jacksonian—the importance of land, hard work, and respect—he is able to marry, to become a true citizen. Like his home state of Virginia in the election of 1828, George Howard has turned his back on the Yankee Northeast and united with the Southwest under Jacksonian principles. In doing so, he has saved his plantation, just as Virginia saved the Union.

This theme of regional unification through marriage (of uniting the Old South with the New South and West for the good of the nation) is continued in Book 2, Ralph Doughby’s Esq. Brautfahrt (The Courtship of Ralph Doughby). Doughby is the impetuous and rough Kentuckian who was engaged to Emily Warren at the end of Book 1. He is already a strong Jacksonian, but he lacks finesse. He must learn how to harness his wild nature in service of the greater good. He cannot do this by marrying Emily, a selfish choice that would grant him social status but would not allow him to improve his Louisiana plantation or campaign for Jackson (she is a Yankee and an Adams woman). To further emphasize the aristocratic and selfish nature of the Adams men, Sealsfield
calls them “Federalists” throughout the text, despite the fact that the Federalist Party was already defunct. He also aligns them once again with arranged marriages. On a trip up the Red River to Harry Richard’s Virginia plantation, we see that the “Federalist” Richards had helped to arrange the marriage between Dougby and Emily in order to convert Doughby to Adams and use his plebian qualities as a campaign tool. Richards, it turns out, is quite afraid of the growing “mobocratic” movement: “our Houses of Representatives, and Congress, swarm with persons without education, without position, who have crawled in by the lowest flattery. By means of whisky-feasts and stump-speeches, our offices of trust will be degraded, and will become footmen’s places” (93).

Doughby is a man’s man—“he drinks, fights, smokes, chews, and converses with planters, hunters, squatters, peddlers, and can make himself agreeable with all, and yet commands a certain respect from all.” Richards believes that “If he becomes one of us, our party will have gained a great deal. His influence, particularly among the middle classes, especially the upland planters, is very considerable” (93). George Howard is immediately taken aback. He thought that the Richards were his friends, and that they wanted the best for Ralph and Emily, but they only wanted to use them for political purposes. Again, he is appalled at Yankee cunning, and the schemes of the quasi-aristocrats who want to control the masses without lowering themselves to their position.

Luckily, the engagement between Ralph and Emily doesn’t last long, as there is no real attraction or affection between them. Indeed, Doughby reveals to Howard that his uncouth behavior has increasingly disgusted his intended: first he stepped on Emily’s petticoat and tore it, not once, but three separate times; then he drank too much; and
finally, he goaded the captain of the boat into a race with another steamboat, even after Emily begged him not to. When they arrived in Ohio to look at Mr. Warren’s lands near Dayton, they took a trip into the Miami cliffs. Here Doughby bet a young Yankee that he could jump across an eighty-foot high precipice that looked to be only four or five feet wide, but was actually much wider. Again, the Warrens begged him to reconsider, but he cited Kentucky honor, and jumped. The gap was too wide, however, and he didn’t make it all the way across. While he clung to the rocks, Emily had the presence of mind to tie the men’s handkerchiefs together with her scarf and use this as a rope to rescue him. The next morning, he awoke to find the Warrens gone, and their engagement terminated.

Doughby tells Howard that he still hopes to get her back, but again he cannot control his impulsive behavior. This is corroborated when he sees a buck swimming in the Red River, pursued by an Indian; he impulsively jumps in after it and nearly drowns. Most of the women on board are impressed with his daring, but Emily is only annoyed. All is well, however, for as soon as he renounces Emily, he notices Julia Menou, Louise’s sister. Their first conversation is filled with blushes on both sides, and Doughby pulls Howard aside to exclaim: “Ah! That would be the wife for me—that’s the woman! She pleased me at first sight. There, no Mrs. Houston nor Richards necessary to preach to me now. She is the woman!” (98) Even Emily seems to see the wisdom of the match: Julia will make a “worthy wife, who understands how to subdue your rashness, and who possesses sufficient tenderness to win your love” (99).

It is no accident that the arranged marriage between Emily and Ralph is revealed to be a “Federalist” scheme—arranged marriages in this text are not only aligned with the
Old World aristocracy, but also with Adams and his “Federalists,” while Ralph is a proud Jacksonian democrat whom no woman would have been able to convert. Ralph and Julia’s love is a wild and spontaneous love at first sight; like Howard and Louise before them, the couple epitomizes Union at its best, as they represent *consensual* union. Howard muses: “These Northerners are too pure, too upright, for our fiery Southerners, on whom again the *vis inertia* of the soft, feeling Creole, makes a deeper impression. A slight, but only very slight touch of indolence, or rather *laissez aller*, distinguishes Julia—who is active in her domestic circle, and will certainly subdue that wild power quicker than any one else. She is just the girl to suit old Doughby” (101).

And what of Emily Warren? Despite all of the insults heaped onto Yankees in his texts, Sealsfield does not portray all of them as unfit for marriage (and symbolically, citizenship). Bostonian Emily Warren is the daughter of a patriot, and as we’ve seen, she stages her own small rebellion against her arranged marriage to Ralph Dougby. Her rebellion suggests that a spark of republicanism exists in her cold Yankee shell, but she must find a suitable partner to fan that spark and turn it into a fire. She finds that partner in the elderly French-American Count Vignerolles, who virtually hijacks the last two books of the series. His tale (which begins in *Die Farbigen* [literally, *The Colored Ones*, but published in English as *Life of a Planter*] and ends in *Nathan der Squatter-Regulator, oder Der erste Amerikaner in Texas* [*Nathan the Squatter-Regulator, or the First American in Texas*]) demonstrates how he has come to adapt American (or rather, Jacksonian) views on slavery, squatting, and manifest destiny, and when his narrative ends, he marries Emily, further emphasizing his status as American citizen. While
embracing his American identity, the Count does not necessarily abandon his French identity, though, and constant presence of unassimilated Creoles attests that this is not necessary—it is only the adoption of Jacksonian republican ideology that matters—the gayity, warmth, and contentedness of the Creoles is an undeniable asset to America, necessary in fact to counter the cold aloofness and greed of the stereotypical Yankee. The old man’s marriage to young Emily rejuvenates him and makes him feel young again, but metaphorically, it is Emily, the Yankee, who needs rejuvenation by a young American—an immigrant who knows what it means to be American better than most Americans do. His patriotism helps fan Emily’s waning patriotic spark.

We saw in the last chapter the connection between religious regeneration rhetoric and melting pot rhetoric. Some writers believed that native-born Americans were American by descent, while others claimed that they, too, needed to be regenerated—to become Americans by choice. For Sealsfield, one of the problems with Yankees is that they are perfectly satisfied to be Americans by virtue of their descent. As the oldest region of the country, however, Yankees are actually the farthest removed from American principles—the Northeast is decaying and decrepit, more like Europe than the land of Washington and Jefferson, which is now best represented by the lands of the south and west. These Old Americans of the Northeast need to undergo a conversion experience, to be rejuvenated by choosing to be American—to become Americans by consent rather than descent. Unlike Weiser in the previous chapter, however, who allegorized this process through a religious metaphor, Sealsfield does so through marriage. Emily becomes a New American by marrying a New American, who reignites
her waning spark. Yankees, as Old Americans with waning and decaying principles, must recommit to the Union. They must re-ignite their revolutionary spark, and one way to do this is through union with new Americans who have recently undergone the regeneration process and can help them experience their own.

We’ve seen throughout *Life in the New World* that previously questionable Americans—Yankees and French—can included in the union if they are regenerated through marriage. While the legitimacy of two groups are verified, Sealsfield makes equally clear in this series that black Americans can never be included in Union/union. He does so in order to justify his Jacksonian pro-slavery beliefs. Sammons notes that in order to understand Sealsfield’s faithful replication of the Southern discourse on slavery, modern readers need to understand two points: “The first of these is that it was possible to believe that slavery was an evident evil, yet to hold that nothing could be done about it without creating a worse situation…The second point is that Sealsfield’s contemporaries did not necessarily see a contradiction between liberty and democracy on the one hand and slavery on the other; indeed, arguments developed that slavery was not only advantageous to the slaves but a foundation of a democratic civilization” because it “permitted claims of the true antiaristocratic equality of all whites, diminishing class differences in proportion to the huge gap from Negro inferiority” (41).

The first of these points—that slavery was seen as a necessary evil, and that nothing could be done—is made very clear in Book 4 (*Nathan der Squatter-Regulator*) during a debate that takes place at Menou’s plantation. While newly arrived Frenchmen claim slavery is terrible and argue for the rights of the colored men, the southerners
defend slavery on three grounds: 1) it is none of the Frenchmen’s business; 2) whether
“right” or not, these slaves are property, and who is going to reimburse slave holders for
their investment if slavery is abolished?; and 3) it is an evil that must be endured, as
immediate emancipation would cause more harm than good.

Marriage operates as a defense of slavery in the text as well. Nancy F. Cott
explains that in response to abolitionist attacks on slavery as a labor practice, the south
“domesticated” it. This began as an analogy comparing the master-slave relationship to a
parent-child relationship, and increasingly the husband-wife relationship as well: “In this
counterattack, proslavery spokesmen legitimated the inequalities of slavery by praising
all the domestic relations of domination and subordination—master-servant, parent-child,
and husband-wife—as one and by seeing the three types as indivisible…This vision of
slavery as one among several accepted relations of dependence naturalized its imposed
inequalities” (60). The problem with the parent-child metaphor, of course, was that
childhood was temporary and transitive—the child eventually becomes a parent
himself—while slavery is permanent and hereditary. For this reason, by the late 1830s
(when Sealsfield is writing), the marriage metaphor supplemented the parenthood
metaphor: “Just as women were fitted by nature and God to conform to their place as
wives, enslaved African Americans were suited for slavery; and slavery, like marriage,
was a relationship of unequals benefiting both parties. Both women as a sex and blacks as
a race flourished best where they were guided and protected, it was said” (61). And since
marriage was a permanent relationship between unequals, the analogy justified the
permanent nature of slavery.
Sealsfield likewise domesticates slavery to justify it. Indeed, this is his most powerful argument for slavery, made in narrative rather than didactic terms in Book 3. Book 3 details the early days of Howard and Louise’s marriage, and is fittingly described by critics as a plantation novel, complete with racist descriptions of happy darkies. At this point in the series, Howard has completed his bildung in the strictest sense of the term—he has found his place in society and become a full-fledged member of that society through marriage—but he still has much to learn about being a planter and slaveholder, as he has been absent from plantation life for so long. When he first returns to his plantation with Louise, he knows that slavery is a necessary evil, but he still has qualms about it, especially about buying, selling, and punishing slaves (the most contentious aspects of slavery). In particular, he worries that slaveholding will turn him into a despot rather than a democrat. Book 3 (Die Farbigen, or Life of a Planter) is a concrete illustration of the supposed necessity of slavery and its congruence with democratic principles using the metaphor of parenthood and appealing to the sanctity of marriage.

Of course, the discourse around slavery is centered around racial difference. Sealsfield contrasts black slaves with white laborers, who are sullen and angry and oppressed by laboring for others, and Indians, who labor proudly, silently and stoically. Americans are obviously at the top of the hierarchy he creates: “May not the natural superiority of the English and the Americans, and the higher degree of civil liberty to which they have attained, be considered as attributable to their different elements of constitution, and national character? I think so!” (140-141) Black slaves in the text are constantly compared to children and primates—they possess a limited intelligence,
enough to mimic but not to think independently, which makes them dangerous without proper guidance.

The book opens on such a scene of mimicry: a slave dance, for which the slaves are dressed in finery and mimic white behavior like “apes” in clothing. They mimic not only their master’s style of dress and behaviors, but also their politics. A fight nearly breaks out between a slave and his son when the man discovers that his son is a Jackson man. They then form “divisions” and march with banners and music (i.e., a fiddle and triangle in the Jackson group, and a triangle and two cow-bells for the Adams group), while singing political slogans (The Jackson song: “Jackson says black man for eber”; the Adams song: “Andrew Jackson son of nasty Irishman. Irishman says black man be a dammée” [or “be nebber handy” in the English text]). The spectacle is absurd. A fight breaks out, and the parties involved are sent away, with the most violent offender to be whipped, demonstrating the danger of such mimicry and the need for a slaveholder to be in control. Howard considers: “Too much tenderness is a fault in the slaveholder; with it, he is unfit to own slaves, and the latter are unfit for him. He must use the lash, as the father uses the rod” (134).

Although Howard thinks of slaveholding as parenthood early in this book, it is rhetorical: he does not yet fully embrace the domesticity of slavery. It is Louise, more accustomed to plantation life and slavery, who sees the slaves as “her family” and “meddles” in their affairs, while he stands aloof: “Maum (that is, Mrs. Howard,) is the only received authority on the occasion; everyone refers to her; her name is in their hearts and on their lips; in short, she is prime minister, parliament, all in all. I, as sovereign, am
a mere appendix, and must content myself with my sinecure” (127). His approach is hands-off because he is uncomfortable and worried about having so much power, and he is compared to a monarch. It is Louise, with her more hands-on approach, who is aligned with the more democratic forms of government.

It is not until his slaves nearly revolt that Howard finally embraces his new role, and then it is nearly too late. Howard uncovers a potential uprising, and eventually tracks Hannibal, the key conspirator, into the woods where he is plotting with two slave women and an unknown black man. They are plotting to kill “Master” and “Maum,” and what’s worse, Hannibal plans to rape Louise: “maum be for Hannibal,” a fact which Howard resolves never to tell her: “To her pure heart, the mere though of having excited the brutal passions of a negro would be painful, terrifying, horrible!” (152) They justify their rage by calling their masters “tyrants,” which is crucial for understanding this scene. Once again, they seem to be mimicking political rhetoric they can’t understand, but this time the rhetoric seems to come from abolitionist sources. This justifies a claim Howard makes later—that abolition, not slavery, is the real threat not only to his union with Louise but to the Union: “Could they [northern abolitionists], by their act of emancipation, change the most bestial, the laziest race, upon the face of the earth—a race whom only the lash can induce to labor—into active, useful citizens? Would they not, in the first months of their liberty, becomes the playthings of some black Spartacus, and begin the struggle of life and death with us?”

Howard has learned his lesson, and like a good father, refuses to “spare the rod” any longer. The unknown black man was an escaped slave whom Howard returns to his
owner to deal with as he chooses, but to punish his own slaves, he follows through on what had previously been an empty threat: he sends them to the sugar plantation. Despite the fact that “every punishment which I am compelled to enforce, touches me more than him upon whom it is inflicted,” he resolves to turn “to advantage an evil exciting in our civil society” though he still fears he shall become “a hard-hearted tyrant like many others” (153). Howard ultimately strikes a balance between despot and democrat by embracing the domesticity of slavery. When he and Louise leave their plantation at the end of Book 3 to visit her father, he tells her:

They cause us much sorrow and anxiety, but also pleasure. With our property, we might live at the north without care—might spend our days in ease and plenty. But Providence has placed these black creatures—the children of savage fathers, dragged by avaricious monsters to our country, from the deserts of Africa—in our hands, that we might civilize and educate them. Louise, let us be their father and mother. It is an enviable station, to be father and mother of twenty-five families. (156)

It is important to note that Howard does not seem to notice the discrepancy between the temporary nature of childhood as opposed to the permanence of slavery. This is because he expands the metaphor in this case to cover not just his own relationships with individual slaves, but to cover the relationship between the races in general. He imagines a time, long in the future, when the black race will have evolved enough to handle freedom without hurting themselves or others. “A brutal race,” he says, “—a race brought among us without our consent, cannot be civilized in a few years—nor be taught in so short a space, to bear liberty. Years, nay, centuries, can alone achieve that end” (142). In a few hundred years, when the entire race has reached adulthood, then they can be free. In the meantime, they are children who need the parental guidance of an older,
more civilized race. Just as an adult cannot marry a child, an American in this text cannot marry an African. Black Americans in this text are thus excluded from both union and Union.

* * *

Let us return to Ralph Doughby and Julia Menou, as the story of their union is not yet finished. Through Doughby and Julia’s union, Sealsfield returns to an issue first explored in *Tokeah*: manifest destiny and territorial acquisition, which he sees as essential to the Union’s sustainability and prosperity. He again justifies the American policy of taking unused or underused lands to “improve” them. This time, however, he does so through a marriage metaphor—Ralph Doughby, the American frontiersman and Jackson stand-in, takes Julia from her family by force when they won’t hand her over willingly, and this is justified by her consent and (currently underutilized) usefulness.

The first obstacle to their union is that Mr. Menou has already promised Julia to a Frenchman. Furthermore, Menou is outraged that Doughby has begun courting her without his consent, which George Howard aligns with old-world ideals: “you repulse him inhositably—because he has not asked your formal consent! What American girl is there, I would ask you, who would deign even to look on the man, who should, on such a subject, speak with her father ere he addressed herself?” (109) Mr. Menou has arranged Julia’s marriage to protect his family lineage: “Upon your principles,” he tells Howard, “respectability of descent would soon be lost amid the common herd” (109). “I allowed one of my children,” he continued, “a ‘marriage par inclination;’ it is but just, then, that the other should make some trifling sacrifice to the disarrangement of my affairs” (110).
Howard is appalled. He had considered the Menous to be good Americans of French
descent, but now he reconsiders: “Those Creoles will never become Americans.
Affection, liberty—they never take into consideration. ‘Convenience’ is their word, and
they conclude the marriages of their children—sign contracts—and consummate
sacrifices just as calmly as despots” (110).

The wild Kentucky man will not be governed by a tyrant, however. He and Julia
elope, and when they return the next day, he embraces Howard with the exclamation: “I
am a man now, I tell you! Yesterday I was but half a man—but half. Now, Howard, now
I am a man!” (112) The news doesn’t go over well at first. Mr. Menou shouts that he has
brought dishonor on the house, and Merveille, to whom Julia was promised, shoots
Doughby in the right arm. Doughby, incensed, cries out to the man, “I have conquered
her, and I’ll keep her, and defend her against you and anybody!” (121). His language
seems more like a pioneer or the squatter taking new lands than a new husband defending
his wife. At the end of the tense scene, everyone present begs Menou to forgive
Doughby, and Doughby himself apologizes and picks up Menou in a bear-hug, and
Menou forgives him and dresses his wound. They follow the elopement with a Catholic
ceremony, and Howard sees immediate changes in his friend: “Doughby appeared
strikingly changed to me; he seemed to be twenty times more reasonable, and fully
satisfied with his new destination” (124).

What is important here is not only the emphasis on consensual union—it is also
important that the consensual nature of the union (and the fact that Julia is over 18)
justifies Julia’s disobedience to her father. His objections are based on outdated,
European notions of heredity (descent), which makes him not just a bad father, but also a tyrant, and rebellion is thus justified. This has revolutionary undertones, of course, but what this really speaks to is not Old World/ New World dynamics, but a more contemporaneous issue: Manifest Destiny and Indian Removal. After all, this series of books was written and published between 1835-37, during the height of Indian Removal. As Michael Paul Rogin explains in his book *Fathers and Children*, Jackson and his followers believed that westward expansion would “rescue America from growing tensions over slavery, and [would] provide the Union with regenerating national purpose” (307). Nonetheless, not all Americans believed in taking away lands that were already occupied. In *Tokeah*, Sealsfield aligns the Indians with Old World despots and argues that their claims of hereditary legitimacy are overshadowed by the republican claims to the land, as republicans will put it to better use. In calling Menou a tyrant and aligning him with the practice of arranged marriage, he connects him not only with Old World monarchs, but also with Indians like Tokeah. Doughby and Julia’s elopement despite her father’s wishes thus symbolizes America’s expansion onto lands already occupied, and justifies it once again by making it an issue of “consent.”

Justification of manifest destiny as a path to national preservation is allegorized in another section of the text as well. Book 5, *Nathan der Squatter-Regulator, oder Der erste Amerikaner in Texas* (Nathan the Squatter-Regulator, or the First American in Texas), is a framed story within a story within a story. This section of the text occurs during Count Vigneron’s narrative, mentioned earlier. In the course of his narrative, the Count meets a man named Nathan, whose story justifies squatting as a legitimate tool of
manifest destiny. Vignerolles and his friends meet the squatter Nathan when he rescues them from a fire in the swamp. After the fire, Nathan takes them through the swamp to a blockhouse on the outskirts of a small town and solemnly gives its history.

In his story, Nathan describes his entry onto this land, on which he squatted with his wife, his sister and brother-in-law, Asa. Convinced that it won’t be long before the Spanish try to evict them, Nathan, Asa and their wives and children prepare the blockhouse to protect themselves and their land. When Spanish soldiers do come to evict them, the squatters are prepared. They boldly protect their land, which they figure is theirs because a) no one else is using it, even if it technically does belong to the King of Spain, and b) because Louisiana is made of the dirt collected in the States by the Mississippi, which the river has brought south and deposited. The men, women and children protect their land against the soldiers, and eventually prevail, although Asa is killed in battle. They bury him in the blockhouse, and proclaim that the land is now paid for with his blood. They rebuild their cabins, and turn the area into a full-blown settlement, recruiting more squatters from Kentucky. Although one of Nathan’s justifications for squatting—the one about Louisiana being made up of US soil, deposited by the Mississippi, and therefore US land—is farfetched, likely intended to provide local color and comedy rather than serious consideration, Sealsfield clearly feels believes in the right of a man to take land that is not in use, if he intends to “improve” it. Although the blockhouse battle takes place between Americans and Spaniards over contested land, these transatlantic dynamics operate as a metaphor for strictly American issues: specifically, Manifest Destiny and the removal of Indians from Western territories.
We see the same thing in the Das Kajütenbuch, oder Nationale Charakteristiken (The Cabin Book, or National Characteristics), this time in reference to Texas. According to Sealsfield, annexing the independent nation of Texas is an issue of mutual consent, and he once again allegorizes consent through marriage. The book, after all, opens with the characters discussing whether or not Texas should become part of the Union, and the first and most famous story is told in response to this conversation. The book opens with a frame set-up: a group of planters are arguing over various topics important to them, “on Chambertin and Lafitte; on wagers lost and won; on slaves and cotton prices; and on Bank and Sub-Treasury systems” (1). Suddenly, these gentlemanly arguments are disrupted by the shout, “We will not!” The planters all turn their attention to the offended planter, asking what it is he will not do. The response: “My worthy neighbor is of opinion that Texas must annex itself to the South.” Many planters mumble their agreement. “Why should it,” he asks them? Thus the central debate of the novel begins.

On one side of the debate, the unionists argue that it is part of Louisiana, and that it is peopled by Americans, without whom it would never have gained independence. On the other side, the disunionists ask what the South would gain by a union with Texas: it would only “spoil our [cotton] markets,” it would be difficult to settle, and it would bring a new “swarm of exiles, gamblers, murderers, and lawless rabble” (3). This last insult to the national character of Texans (the subtitle of the book is, after all, National Characteristics) brings a new voice into the fray: that of Colonel Morse, of Texas. His name alone brings respect: all seem to have heard of his role in the revolution, fighting at
Fort Velasko, at San Antonio, and at “the last decisive battle” (4). Morse, the main character of the book, forces the offending man to apologize, then laughs as he admits that Texas is, in fact, made of rabble. But, he claims, this is no bad thing: it is a necessity. “The rabble was of great service to us, perhaps more so than your quiet, peaceful, respectable citizens would have been” (4). He illustrates this point with a story, which also explains how he came to Texas in the first place—the most famous of Sealsfield’s fictions: “The Jacinto Prairie.”

Morse’s story covers more than a decade of adventure in Texas, beginning in 1832. He describes how he came to Texas in order take possession of land he had purchased from the New York based Galveston Bay and Texas Land Company. Once there, he found that the Land Company had neglected to disclose an important caveat. The 1824 law that encouraged emigration to Texas also mandated that all emigrants become Catholics. Feeling cheated by the Land Company and outraged at the Mexican government which, he felt, was creating a “bulwark against the heretical union—a kind of flying corps for the Catholic religion, which, in case of necessity, should take the offensive against us, and bring into confusion our peaceful religious condition” (17). Morse decided to stay anyway (and stay a heretic), especially after learning that many Yankees before him had done the same. He bought a mustang and began to tour Yankee plantations, including that of Mr. Neal. Here is where his story really begins.

Neal invites Morse to help him round up cattle to sell to New Orleans. Morse is unaccustomed to riding mustangs, and his mount throws him off and runs away. Morse mounts another horse to chase after the mustang, which he does for some time before
realizing that he is lost in the prairie. He wanders the prairie for four days, becoming more lost and delirious by the minute. When he becomes too delirious to guide the horse, it takes him to a river, which Morse falls into. He nearly drowns, but is rescued by a rough-looking man named Bob Rock—the hero of Morse’s narrative. Bob takes Morse to his acquaintance Johnny’s place where Johnny’s mulatta mistress nurses him back to health. Bob is evidently tormented by something that happened eight days ago. When Morse regains his strength, Bob asks him to accompany him to the Alcalde (judge), where he confesses to murdering a man for his money pouch and burying him beneath an oak tree he calls the “patriarch.” Bob admits that he has killed people before, but this man in particular haunts him, presumably because he had a wife and child. He cannot escape the “spectre” or his dying words: “I’m a dead man! my poor wife! my poor children!”

Bob is an unlikely hero, but the Alcalde sees potential in him: he thinks it would be a shame to execute Bob, as he could be useful in the revolution that the Alcalde sees as imminent. Nonetheless, he reluctantly gathers a jury and they get ready to hang him on the patriarch, under which he buried his victim. As the horse under him is whipped, he struggles to say something. The Alcalde grabs hold of his hanging body and lifts him onto his own horse so that he can speak. Bob manages to tell them that Johnny has gone to the Mexicans and become Catholic, at which news the men all leave to find Johnny. Morse leaves on an errand for the Alcalde, assuming as he departs that Bob is dead or dying.
When the revolution comes, Morse of course plays a pivotal role, which he
describes to the planters who listen eagerly. They are grateful to be done with the
unfortunate tangent that was Bob Rock, but Bob is not yet dead. Morse and his men are
in a tight spot, and are on the verge of defeat, when and Bob sweeps in saves the day,
once again saving Morse’s life, and with it, securing the fate of the revolution. After the
battle, Morse tries unsuccessfully to find Bob, but once again mysteriously appears in
another battle and saves Morse’s life, although he receives a bayonet in the shoulder in
the process. This time, Bob is not alone: he is fighting with his old friend and advocate,
the Alcade, who had saved Bob from execution years ago so that he could fight in the
current revolution. Unfortunately, Bob has received no less than six wounds, and dies in
the Alcalde’s arms. The judge is genuinely distraught, telling Morse: “Four years has he
served us; lived for us; fought for us; acted the spy, without hope, expectation, honor,
comfort; without a single quiet hour, or one other wish than for death. The most exalted
virtue, the highest patriotism, would turn back shudderingly from the sacrifice which this
man opened for us, for Texas—and he was a sixfold murderer!” (161)

The planters, who had expected a story of adventure, not a lesson on the value of
“rabble,” are silent when Morse finishes. One man finally speaks, thanking him for the
war stories, but chastising him for the story of Bob: “—forgive me, this your story of
Bob, Colonel, this story, as true as I live, I don’t know what I ought to say to it. The
longer I reflect upon it, so much the more singular thoughts come to me. If I did not
know that you are of one of the best houses, in truth, Colonel! ” He is not alone—many
of the planters have lost their initial respect for Morse. After further silence, someone
suggests they all go home. The Irish steward, however, refuses to let them go without one last drink, for fear of bringing Kishogne’s curse upon them—the Irish story of Kishogne’s curse follows, about a man who missed his stay of execution because he refused his last drink at the gallows. This story is much better received than Morse’s. As one man describes it, it is received as a “masterpiece of Irish description” which has “elastically, drolly, tragic-comically drawn the wild humour of the Irish national character.” (188) They compare it to Morse’s story, revealing their dislike of the story and the storyteller now that he has left the room and making fun of him for his queer attachment to “the Bobs” (190).

Sealsfield/Morse’s story is perhaps the most critically commented-on narrative in his entire body of work. It has been read in various ways—as exposing the connection between imperialism and violence, as exploring the necessity of “rabble” to the progress of civilization. Nonetheless, most critics do not bother trying to connect the first and most famous story to the other stories in the frame narrative. Glen E. Lich, in his foreword to a new release of the book by the German-Texas Society in 1985, is an exception. He sees Colonel Morse’s mustang as a metaphor for Texas:

When we remember that a horse is a beast of burden—a favored conveyance of young men and a symbol of their freedom—the nature of Sealsfield’s wonderful emblem becomes clear: Westering Texans try to capture something they have lost, something that has run away from them, something that promises to take them far. This metaphor unites the novellas of The Cabin Book, Sealsfield having discovered here an emblem that is both destination and process. (vi-vii)

For Lich, the connection to the rest of the novel becomes clear when the novel transitions from the story of Texas independence to the Irish folk tale of Kishogue’s Curse—this “widens the scope of the novel” and reveals that, like the mustang, “Sealsfield’s Texas is
not an end, but a means to an end”—“Sealsfield compares the ‘birth’ of Texas with the ‘resurrection’ of ‘whole peoples’ elsewhere in the world,” not only Texans, but “Cubans and Bolivians and weary Europeans” (many of whom are also featured in separate Cabin Book stories), “to captive nationalities like Sealsfield’s native Bohemians and their counterparts—the Poles, Slovenians, Ruthenians, Wends, Hungarians, Serbs, Croats, and so on—through the Holy Roman Empire” (viii-ix).

Texas is indeed a “means to an end” in the Cabin Book, but the central metaphor is not the mustang, but marriage. Marriage is a metaphor for the annexation of Texas, which Sealsfield sees as a consensual union that will save the Union from dissolution. Although Jackson turned down requests to annex Texas in 1836, fearing it would inflame sectional divisions, by 1843 he strongly supported annexation. In a letter to Tennessee Congressman Aaron Brown that Brown later made public, Jackson wrote that by annexing Texas, America was “extending the area of freedom” (qtd in Rogin, 307). As he had during the era of Indian Removal, Jackson believed in the power of western expansion to unite the nation in a common goal, to give it a shared purpose and minimize sectionalism. Sealsfield also believed in the power of expansion to unify America. He allegorizes this in the Cabin Book through Colonel Morse’s courting of Alexandrine Murky.

After “Kishogue’s Curse,” different narrators continue to tell stories. One man, a bank director, tells a story about their host, Captain Murky, which takes place during the Latin American Wars for Independence. After these stories are done, the bank director and Colonel Morse, who turn out to be uncle and nephew, are left alone. Morse reveals to
his uncle that he has come to Mississippi to court Alexandrine Murky after meeting her in Paris while serving as “Charge d’Affaires for our government” (246). It is here that the plots all come together—where union meets Union. The bank director is appalled at his nephew’s indelicacy in “having entered into love relations with the daughter, without the knowledge of the father” (247). The issue is once again consent vs. descent. Morse is passionately in love with Alexandrine, whom he has followed from France, but his uncle objects to his pursuit for more than just a lack of propriety: he has financial reasons (she is richer than he), practical ones (she is used to luxury and would not be happy in Texas), and personal ones: he wants Morse to marry his daughter, Eleanor: “You were destined for each other ten years; she was, in fact, always your little wife” (259). Ned soon sees reason, and vows to leave, but Murky comes back and asks him to stay.

While at Paradise (Murky’s plantation), Ned and Alexandrine become more acquainted. During their courtship, they too discuss Union: “‘Are you a good American?’ asked she, with animation. ‘Quite American!’ rejoined he, warmly. ‘But,’ said she, inquiringly, ‘I hear you wish to separate from us—from the Union?’” His response demonstrates otherwise: “What nature, and blood, and education have united, can these separate themselves?” He obviously uses the ambiguity of the term to his advantage: suggesting the possibility of their union. Indeed, after this discussion, “they looked at each other with consciousness; they had broken down another partition wall. Their looks had now something in them of familiar confidence; they regarded each other as if they had been intimate for years” (269). The final “wall” is broken down when Alexandrine realizes her father’s affection for Ned; indeed, unlike the uncle/bank director
who would keep them apart, the captain has been finding excuses to leave them alone.
The next day, after touring the captain’s plantation and seeing Alexandrine nurse an
ailing slave, he admits his love to her. She reciprocates, and for many pages the narrative
is a sentimental depiction of their first kiss, their exclamations of love, their tears, and
their unwillingness to leave their bench. They finally get ready to tell the captain, but he
had come up behind them earlier and heard everything, and heartily consents.

The ending is odd both in terms of narrative and tone: it switches from a framed
set of adventure stories to a third-person sentimental romance. What connects it with the
rest of the text is Morse himself and his relationship with the nation and with his beloved.
It is union that unifies the book as it unifies the nation: a union based on mutual consent,
between the main character and his lately introduced lover, which has already been
allegorically connected with national union during their courtship, and is connected
structurally to the beginning of the book with the discussion of Texas joining the Union.

Slavery and expansion were key issues for Sealsfield for most of his writing
career, since he saw them as necessary for the continued success of his beloved nation.
Towards the end of his career, however, he once again began to fear for America’s future.
His new concern was the expansion of the market economy and nation’s newfound
reliance on credit/soft money. To illustrate these fears, he sets his unfinished novel Die
Deutsch-Amerikanische Wahlverwandtschaften (the direct translation is German-
American Elective Affinities, but it was published in English as Rambleton) during the
Speculation of 1836. His main character is Harry Rambleton, a New Yorker who, after a
failed engagement, becomes tired of the money-obsessed New York society life and
travels to Switzerland where he meets a young Prussian family, the Schochsteins. Like most Americans, he is initially prejudiced against Germans, but when he meets young Luitgarde Schochstein, he falls in love with her, and with her family, who offer such a contrast to New York society. They are naturally noble and full of character and grace, without being haughty. When they form friendships, they first inquire into a man’s character instead of his bank account. For Harry Rambleton, this is a breath of fresh air.

Rambleton’s cousin and former fiancé, Dougaldine Ramble, is also tired of the New York highlife, and is searching for more meaning in her life. She might have found it with her cousin Harry, but for a terrible blunder on his part. When they met for the first time as adults, he was instantly smitten, but he recalled her aversion to him when they were children. He thus pretended to be another man in order to gain her hand, but when she discovered his charade, she broke the engagement. In the meantime, she floated aimlessly though New York society with another cousin, the dandy Erwin. Erwin symbolizes all that is going wrong with America. He is extremely feminine, incredibly vain, and is obsessed with money and status. He is primarily interested in Dougaldine for her family connections and wealth. When young Schochstein (Luitgarde’s brother) comes to America, he and Dougaldine are instantly attracted to one another, just as Luitgarde and Harry before them.

The book’s title *Die Deutsch-Amerikanischen Wahlverwandtschaften* suggests that Germans and Americans have a mutual attraction, an affinity to one another, and that a union between them would benefit both parties. America could presumably lend funds and strength to Prussia as it works towards its own independence, and Prussia could
remind America of its Revolutionary past. The book is unfinished, however, and thus no such transatlantic unions occur. Perhaps this is because Sealsfield’s faith in the Union is shaken; perhaps it illustrates doubt that an easy solution could solve America’s increasing problems. Regardless, the promise of transatlantic union suggested by this book—the hope that a transatlantic relationship could help save the union—remains hazy, indistinct, and ultimately unfeasible, as evidenced by the unfulfilled, unconsummated transatlantic romances.

Recent historians claim that the great irony of the Jacksonian era was that the very policies enacted to save the union hastened its dissolution: Territorial expansion didn’t save the union; it simply made it even bigger and less manageable. The focus on land and slavery did not return the nation to some agrarian republican utopia, but instead led to an unsustainable system of single-crop agriculture and eventually the very monetary crisis that Jackson denounced. Charles Sealsfield, who championed Jackson as America’s savior, was crushed by his failures. As Sealsfield critic Paul Hartley says, “Sealsfield has constantly praised the American dynamism and positive attitude to work, the importance of the self-made man, but finds he cannot accept what it can eventually lead to” (178-9).

Not long after German-American Elective Affinities and The Cabin Book we published, at the height of his popularity, Sealsfield quit writing. Fortunately, the next generation of German-American writers would pick up on his abandoned theme of German-American affinities and imagine new and more perfect U/unions.
Conclusion

Charles Sealsfield is an interesting and somewhat anomalous figure. He doesn’t fit in with typical story of nineteenth century German-American literature—he didn’t identify as primarily German, nor did he champion abolition or reform-based politics as did the more famous Dreissigers or Forty-Eighters. Sealsfield’s fiction demonstrates the appeal (for Europeans and Americans alike) of the empty frontier. Running away from his past in an oppressive country, he valued individual and states’ rights to such an extent that his ideal America was not just free, but empty. The fact that the frontier was not empty, but filled with Native peoples, did not seem to bother him, nor did the fact that the actual labor involved in transforming the frontier would be carried out by slaves. He justified his politics by creating frontier romances where truly deserving people are granted citizenship metaphorically through marriage.

Unlike the German-language captivity narratives of my first chapters, the literary frontier imagined by Sealsfield perpetuates the outdated, ahistorical cliché decried by critics like Annette Kolodny. It is worth studying nonetheless, because it demonstrates another kind of literary frontier—a transnational frontier. Just as real frontiers are complex places where various cultures, peoples, and languages meet and exchange influences, the pages of Sealsfield’s fiction are a place where one man’s Austrian, German, American, and Swiss identities converged in fascinating ways.
Works Cited


Uhlendorf, Bernhard Alexander. *Charles Sealsfield; ethnic elements and national problems in his works*. Chicago, Ill., 1922.
Chapter 4: Solving the American Urban Mystery

Although translated as “mysteries” due to its indebtedness to Sue’s *Mysteries of Paris*, a more accurate translation of the German word *Geheimnisse* is secrets. One of the main characters of the *Geheimnisse von New Orleans*, the Prince of Wurtenburg, makes this distinction when another character chides him for “bearing mysteries”—he quickly corrects her: “Secrets—not mysteries!” (408). What is the difference between secrets and mysteries, and why does it matter? A mystery is something unknown, unexplained. For Germans pondering emigration to America, America must have seemed different, foreign—*mysterious*. In particular, German immigrants to America expected it to differ from Europe in terms of what Kathleen Neils Conzen calls institutional emptiness: “no princes, little government, no state church, no feudal obligations, and little recognizable social hierarchy” (11). What immigrants to American cities found instead was that these cities were far from “institutionally empty”: the cities were full of institutions as corrupt (or more so) than the ones they left in Europe. In many ways, the disappointment of urban immigrants during the nineteenth century echoes the disappointment of earlier German writers at finding contact zones when they expected empty frontiers. In the case of the urban mystery novelists, the longed-for emptiness was “institutional” rather than literal, but the disappointment is nonetheless palpable. The “secret” of the American city, for the German-American writer, is that it is not so mysterious after all, or rather, that the mysteries were all-too-familiar—greed, corruption,
conspiracy, crowding, crime, poverty, oppression—“mysteries and miseries” that city dwellers in any industrialized nation would recognize. The only mystery was how to combat these miseries.

This chapter will explore how various writers in the genre attempted to solve this mystery, from Eugene Sue, the first urban mystery writer, to Charles Dickens, George Lippard, and the German-American writers who came after them. I will show that, for all of them, imagination is the first step in the process of reform, although the way in which German-American urban mystery novelists invoke the power of imagination is unique. For them, the problems of the American city were representative of much larger, national problems: the crisis of the American city was symptomatic of a country in crisis. While Sealsfield tried to combat national crises with exclusionary politics, these writers suggest that the exclusionary politics embraced by Sealsfield were part of the problem. Their solution is inclusive: America needs to embrace its reform-minded German immigrants who can help them undergo a much-needed national regeneration.

The Mysteries Genre

Stephen Rowan describes the urban mysteries genre as follows: The setting is a familiar yet menacing city “where events are steered by forces beyond the control of ordinary mortals…by persons and institutions invisible to the casual observer.” The poor and the rich are alike affected by these events, and “professional criminals and princes are shown to have more in common than they would let on.” Verisimilitude is also highly

58 The term “mysteries and miseries” refers to a series of urban mystery novels written by Ned Buntline, such as the Mysteries and Miseries of New York.
important, and is created “by using real persons to interact with the fictional characters, against the backdrop of genuine buildings and neighborhoods and in the context of concrete political history” (xxvi). Authors in this genre also borrow extensively from other genres (especially the gothic) and other mediums (mainly the press and the stage) and have complicated “rope plots” (numerous subplots that the author winds together, usually through the use of coincidence), as Anne Humpherys has noted. The goal of these texts is to expose the corruption of urban institutions, especially those that claim to help the poor but actually prey on them. The reason for this shared theme is the rapid increase in urbanization and industrialization, accompanied by rising crime rates, spreading across the United States and Europe at mid-century. Authors of the urban mysteries novel mixed popular genres and utilized complicated sensational plots to make sense of, and help solve, the overcrowding, poverty, crime, sickness, and overall corruption that plagued the modern city.

In *Les Mystères de Paris* (*The Mysteries of Paris*), considered the first urban mystery novel and the inspiration for those that followed, Eugene Sue critiques the capitalist system that subjugates the poor and women. He also offers a solution for the problems he exposes. He suggests that influential men and women (those with money and contacts like his protagonist, Prince Rodolphe) can and should act like gods. Rodolphe, a German prince, masquerades as a commoner and explores the city’s slums looking for unsung heroes to reward and unseen villains to punish, and he encourages others to do the same. When his friend Clemence D’Harville becomes so bored with her aristocratic life that she nearly commits adultery, he attempts to recruit her: “[I]f you would only become
my accomplice in a few dark intrigues of this sort, you would see that apart from the praiseworthiness of the action, nothing is really more curious, inviting, attractive, or diverting, than these charitable adventures. And then, what mystery is requisite to conceal the benefits we render!” The use of the word mystery is important here, referring as it does not to plot or character secrets, but to the strategies employed by the rich to help the poor. In other words, the mystery of Sue’s text, as well as many of the urban mysteries that follow, is not just which characters and institutions are corrupt, but how exactly they might be reformed.

Sue’s answer seems to be that reform is possible (on both individual and institutional levels) through imagination. If we cannot imagine a better society, then creating a better society is impossible. We see the importance of imagination on an individual level when Rodolphe helps the young prostitute Fleur-de-Marie; he first has her create “castles in the air,” or imagine a better life. After she does so, Rodolphe takes her to his farm and provides her (and other worthy unfortunates) with food, shelter, and educational opportunities. When unforeseen circumstances land Marie back in prison, she is able to help fellow prisoner La Louve create her own castles in the air, which depresses La Louve at first, but ultimately enables her to stay virtuous once released.

Imagination is even more crucial when the projects are bigger and the stakes are higher—when institutions need reform. Sue takes great pains to point out the injustices and faults inherent in the French prison system; then he tells his readers to build our own castles, to imagine a better system that not only punishes the bad but rewards the good: “[T]o terrify the wicked, we materialize, or rather we reduce to human, perceptible, and
visible proportions, the anticipated effects of divine wrath. Why should we not do the same with the divine rewards to worthy and virtuous people?” (284) The characters encourage each other (and the narrator encourages readers) to build these air castles because for Sue, imagination is the first step in the reform process. This suggests that fiction (as an act of imagination) is also an important part of reform: it sparks readers’ imaginations, allowing them to visualize change, and visualizing change is the first step in affecting change.

Later urban mystery novelists also believed that imagination is key to change and used fiction to help readers see the problems in their societies, and sometimes, to imagine a better world. In *Bleak House* (1852-3), for example, Charles Dickens uses fiction and satire to expose the corruption of London’s Chancery court. The plot centers around the court case Jarndyce vs. Jarndyce, a lawsuit which has been drawn-out so long and is so convoluted that it has become little more than a joke to those involved. Those who take Jarndyce vs. Jarndyce seriously do so at their own risk. Richard Carstone, who stands to inherit a fortune if the case is ever settled, begins the text a healthy and vital young man but his obsession with the case slowly drains away his health, energy and sanity. This is due not only to a flawed system, but to corrupt individuals who take advantage of the system. The epitome of such corruption is Mr. Vholes, a vampire-like lawyer who preys on naïve and hopeful clients, and who actively encourages Richard’s obsession for his own ends—he bleeds Richard of his wealth and health in order to line his own pockets. By the end of the novel, the entire court system seems much like a vampire; it feeds and
grows fat off once-hopeful people like Richard, until it kills them (as it does Richard) or drives them insane (as it does the elderly Miss Flite).

Unfortunately, none of the characters are able to change the court system; the most any of them can do is to avoid it as much as possible. The closest thing to advice that Dickens gives to reform-minded readers is to start at home. Mrs. Jellyby is the epitome of what not to do if you are charitably-minded. In her zeal to help strangers in Africa, Mrs. Jellyby completely ignores her own family, often neglecting to feed or clean her own children. Esther Summerson, part-time narrator and heroine, states this clearly (although understatedly) when her guardian Mr. Jarndyce asks her what she thought of Mrs. Jellyby: “We thought that, perhaps…it is right to begin with the obligations of home, sir; and that, perhaps, while those are overlooked and neglected, no other duties can possibly be substituted for them.” Mr. Jarndyce and Esther Summerson, on the other hand, do start at home, and are therefore able to make visible (albeit small-scale) changes in their communities. Mr. Jarndyce takes in Esther, Ada and Richard, and provides them with a happy and safe environment away from the pressures of the city and the stress of the courts. Esther nurtures, guides, and inspires not only Ada and Richard, but the neglected Jellyby children and various other characters in need that she meets along the way. With Esther’s help, Cady Jellyby is able to imagine a happy domestic life, which she is able to realize after her own marriage. The changes that the characters make may be small, but they are tangible. Ultimately, however, Dickens does not give his readers any solutions to the problems of the city. Jarndyce vs. Jarndyce ends because the estate
has been used up in court costs, not because the characters reform the system, and the happy ending necessarily takes place outside of, rather than within, the city limits.

At first glance, it may seem as if George Lippard’s infamous *Quaker City* is an exception, as he does not ask readers to imagine anything better, instead inundating them with terrible and horrifying images of cruelty and corruption. Through his grotesque and horror-filled narrative, he critiques nearly every aspect of Philadelphia society: the banks, the churches, the law, even the institution of marriage. Members of all of these respected institutions visit the den of iniquity known as Monk Hall where they drink, smoke opium, brag about their double lives, murder, and terrorize innocent women. Even the press is corrupt in *The Quaker City*. The two men of the press in the novel—Buzby Poodle and Sylvester J. Petriken—represent the daily papers and the literary magazine. Lippard describes them as follows:

The one fattened on the garbage of the town; the other lived on stolen literature. One was a Scandal-monger, a Bravo on a small scale; the other a plagiarist; a very Jew, who lived by clipping the coin of the wide realm of Intellect. There they walked, the one living on the Murder, Suicide and Bloodshed of the town, the other thriving on the fruits of various adroit literary robberies; there they walked, arm in arm, alike the boon companions of blackguards, and the loathing of all honest men; these Courtezans of the Press. (427)

The more despicable of the two is Poodle, whose paper is called appropriately called the *Daily Blackmail*. As he explains earlier in the text: “Do I want the cash? I stick in an article charging some well-known citizen with theft, or seduction, or some more delightful crime. Citizen comes down in a rage—wants the article contradicted in the next day’s paper. He pays for the contradiction, of course” (163). Poodle not only publishes false stories about respectable citizens, but also praises real murderers and seducers in the
pages of his paper if they are fellow Monks. One of the last images in the novel is a newspaper (presumably the *Blackmail*) praising the very antagonists whom the reader knows are villains.

Although Lippard believed in the power of an organized working class to affect social change, he does not mention this in *Quaker City*. In fact, Lippard never sheds light on the mystery of how to combat so much injustice and corruption. His text is instead a warning, a jeremiad of sorts. This is most evident in the dream/vision of the sinister villain Devil Bug, who observes Philadelphia one hundred years in the future. The people have given up on the American democratic dream and established a monarchy; white wage slaves and black chattel slaves still labor for other people’s profits; the city must therefore be punished. On the city’s apocalyptic last day, the dead rise from their graves, the words “Wo unto Sodom” appear in the sky, and the innocent and the guilty alike are destroyed. Lippard offers this biblical warning of impending doom in order to encourage his readers to reform their corrupt cities and institutions while they still can. Although he doesn’t ask his readers to imagine a better system, he does ask them to imagine the country’s future if nothing changes. Imagination is thus just as important to Lippard as it is to Sue; it is just invoked in different ways.

In fact, the only alternative to the corrupt capitalist system in the entire novel is the one imagined by the mysterious Ravoni, a mesmerizing cult leader who tries to establish a “religion of man” where he is both god and prophet. In a trance, his “priestess” Izole (better known as Mabel) sees the following vision of the future two centuries hence: “I am in a large city, whose domes arise into the blue sky. The streets are
filled with free and happy people. There are no rich; there are no poor; I see neither church nor gaol, priest nor gaoler, yet—yet—all are happy!” (529). Yet there is something sinister in Ravoni’s methods—these are hardly the benign “castles in the air” that Rodolphe helps Marie imagine. Ravoni mesmerizes his followers, turning them into fanatics without freewill or rational thought. He rescues or abducts young women who function as his priestesses and as members of his harem. When Ravoni is murdered before he can establish his religion, it is unclear whether readers should be upset or relieved. Regardless, it is clear that the utopia he envisions is extremely unlikely.

As Devil Bug’s vision regarding the fate of Philadelphia demonstrates, American urban mystery novels are not just concerned with problems associated with life in the city; they are also concerned with the fate of the nation—of democracy itself. There is a fear running through American urban mystery novels that political corruption and greed have replaced the principles of liberty and democracy on which the nation was founded. American cities therefore represent all that is going wrong with the American experiment. They are full of political and individual corruption—of greed and selfishness—of the decadence that signaled the fall of Rome and could also to lead to the fall of the republic.⁵⁹ German-American authors of urban mysteries share this fear. Like the other writers mentioned, they also suggest that imagination (specifically fiction) is key to reform, but they take this idea even further. They suggest that German immigrants are the key to the country’s future. Drawing on romantic notions of German

---

⁵⁹ See Summers’s *The Plundering Generation: Corruption and the Crisis of the Union, 1849-1861* for a more complete analysis of such rhetoric in antebellum letters and literature.
exceptionalism, like those of Johann Gottlieb Fichte, who believed that Germans were more courageous, honorable, creative, honest, and even loved liberty more than other Europeans, these novelists suggest that German immigrants are the key to American reform because of their natural romantic idealism. One of the primary arguments set forward in their books, in addition to the familiar argument against corruption and institutionalized hypocrisy, is that America’s best hope for reform lies in its immigrant population—particularly, in its German-immigrant population. German romantic revolutionaries, together with a few remaining American patriots, can re-ignite the flames of the bygone revolutionary era, when men had morals and neither politicians nor voters could be bought, sold, or intimidated into compromising their principles.

The Mysteries of St Louis

Heinrich Boernstein immigrated to America in 1849, and although he was not a political refugee, he had much in common with the radical Forty-Eighthers (failed German revolutionaries and political refugees) and shared their revolutionary zeal. He had previously lived in Paris and run the cultural weekly Vorwärts! and wasn’t in St. Louis long before he took over the Anzeiger des Westens and used it to promote his progressive agenda. The Anzeiger published Die Geheimnisse von St. Louis (The Mysteries of St. Louis) from February through June of 1851, and an English-language translation was published from 1851-2. Boernstein saw many problems with American society, problems which were intensified in a city environment—he not only feared the growing

60 See Rowan and Sims’s introduction to this text for more biographical information on Boernstein.
number of Catholics and their potential political power, but he also worried about the effects of soft money and the land-speculation that it encouraged, predatory capitalists who valued money over people, and a court system that cared more about money than guilt or innocence. These are all problems that he addresses in this novel, and they all stem from one main source: greed. Like Lippard, he worried that these problems endangered not just specific cities, but the entire nation. Unlike Lippard, he offers a concrete solution to the contagion of greed: German romanticism and revolutionary zeal, qualities epitomized by the Boettcher family, a German-American family that embodies the power of the romantic imagination.

The central protagonists in this book are the Boettchers, a family just arrived from Germany. The Boetchers had lived in St. Louis many years before, but had moved back to Germany after the death of their son Robert. On her deathbed, Grandmother Boettcher (the family matriarch) reveals the real reason for their sudden return to Germany so many years ago: Robert’s death was no accident; he had discovered a Jesuit priest’s secret treasure, and the priest had murdered him to keep it a secret. When Grandfather Boettcher found this out, he and a friend (whose fiancé had been raped by the same priest) took revenge by burying the priest alive with his treasure. The secret remained buried as well until Grandfather Boettcher finally revealed it to his wife on his deathbed. Grandmother Boettcher had then convinced her remaining son and his wife and children to move with her to America, in hopes of relocating the treasure. Instead, the old woman gets infected with cholera, and all she can do is to pass on the secret to her granddaughter Maria. Unfortunately, the Jesuits had been keeping an eye on the Boettcher family since their
departure from St. Louis a generation before, and their sudden trip back to St. Louis arouses the order’s suspicions. When the Jesuits enlist land speculator and predatory lender Mr. Smartborn to help them find the Boettchers and the treasure, they become the target of his greed as well.

As this short summary suggests, the treasure is at the thematic center of the book and carries heavy symbolic weight—it is the desire for the treasure that sets all of the events in motion, and desire/greed is the reason for the corruption at the heart of the city and at the heart of the text. Greed is a cancer that is killing the republic. The corruption begins with the Catholic Church, particularly the Jesuits, as the treasure was initially theirs. In this book, not only are individual Jesuits murderers and rapists, but the society as a whole is actually on the frontlines of a vast Catholic conspiracy to take over America. Even the debate over slavery is a Jesuit trick designed to split the nation into two, as members of the secret society reveal in a secret meeting. What is even worse is that the American government gives tax-breaks to the very people who plot its overthrow, as the villain Smartborn notes enviously: “You pay, by the laws of our wise legislator, no taxes for all your immense property, but we have to pay heavy taxes for ours…” (97).

Although the takeover of America by the Catholic Church may seem farfetched to modern readers, Boernstein was a free-thinker who was all-too-familiar with the evils that an alliance between state and church had occasioned in Europe, and was genuinely worried about something similar happening in his new country.

Boernstein’s other fears are more familiar to modern readers, like his concerns about predatory lending practices and land speculation. These two issues are personified
in the character of Mr. Smartborn. Mr. Jeremy Smartborn started his life poor, but now “did a splendid business—bought lot after lot, until at length he was represented as one of the big bugs of St. Louis and belonged to that very respectable body—land speculators” (23-4). When Mr. Boettcher comes to his office to inquire about a farm outside of town, Smartborn charges him far more than the farm is worth ($1200). Mr. Boettcher takes the farm at this price, paying half of it down and promising the other half in one year, after he receives the money from the sale of his land in Germany. We see Smartborn’s true character when he brings up the interest: “Our sage legislators allow only six percent interest on lawful documents. A law, you may guess yourself, that nobody can observe in the country where money is worth so much.” He proposes that they circumvent the law in such a way that would require Boettcher to pay interest on the interest. Unfortunately, Boettcher’s “arithmetical talent was not much developed” (30) and he consents to the illegal deal without even realizing the extent to which he has been taken advantage of.

Boettcher has to worry about more than just interest though. We learn earlier in the text that Smartborn has no mercy on those who owe him money, sending them to jail or auctioning their property if they cannot pay the very day the loan is due. Boettcher is in serious trouble when the German government confiscates his money and he is unable to pay his debt to Smartborn. At first the Boettchers hope that Smartborn will be lenient despite warnings that he is “a usurer and land speculator, and always willing to skin poor people” (188), but future events demonstrate the naivety of their trusting nature. Because of their debt to Smartborn, the family is under his power. This is dangerous not only to their financial security, but to their personal and moral safety as well. To help pay off the
debt, Boettcher’s daughter Maria becomes a companion to Smartborn’s sister. Once Maria is in the Smartborn’s home, he drugs and attempts to rape her. The drug he gives her makes her feverish, delirious and overly passionate: “an unwonted wasting fire seemed to rage within her; thoughts, feelings and emotions awoke, never known before to the virgin, interwoven with an ardent desire for her absent lover” (210). When Smartborn enters her room, her delirium causes her to see her fiancé Charles, and she nearly succumbs to him. Luckily, Smartborn’s kiss is “vampire-like” rather than loving, and she immediately regains her senses and begins to fight back. When she resists, Smartborn exclaims: “You are in my power; be wise therefore, and resign yourself to what is unavoidable; let me obtain by my prayers what I otherwise must acquire by force” (211, emphasis mine). His language is telling. He does indeed have her in his power—not just her, but her entire family. It requires a combination of luck and extreme moral fortitude for Maria to escape from his clutches; fortunately, she is able to grab a small poisoned dagger that has fallen out of Smartborn’s breast pocket, which allows her to escape unharmed. Of course, her resistance does not go unpunished. Smartborn evicts her family from their farm and accuses her of theft, which lands her in prison. The scenario clearly demonstrates how damaging predatory lending actually is—once a poor citizen is in another’s debt, he or she is little better than a slave. As Mr. Smartborn sees it, he owns Maria, and even her body belongs to him.

Underlying this anxiety about predatory lending and land speculation is a concern about “soft money,” as this is what makes land speculation possible for men like Smartborn. David Anthony in his book Paper Money Men argues that anxiety about
paper money is at the heart of much popular antebellum literature: “[T]his period was marked by widespread economic insecurity and failure, as the increasing extension of paper forms of credit connected local communities and their inhabitants with distant, unseen markets and as the value of paper currencies fluctuated with changes in those markets” (3-4). In *St. Louis*, the paper money is not only unstable because of fluctuating markets—it is inherently problematic. It allows men like Smartborn to engage in land speculation, and as another subplot reveals, it is easily counterfeited. Anthony further suggests that nostalgia for hard money is revealed through “hidden treasure” motifs in much antebellum popular literature—hidden treasure represents “a form of financial stability otherwise absent.” He references *Quaker City*, arguing that the gold coin stolen by Devil-Bug and Gabriel Von Gelt is at the “thematic and emotional center of the novel” and the “real object of desire” (2). Whether or not this is true in *Quaker City*, the hidden treasure is certainly the primary object of desire in *St. Louis*. The hidden treasure in *St. Louis* represents elusive stable currency—it is the antidote to unstable paper money that is so easily counterfeited; it is the antidote to an unstable American economy.

Unfortunately, this antidote is buried in a pre-industrial St. Louis. As the city changed, the objects marking the location of the treasure disappeared. One tragedy of the book is that the buried treasure is lost forever, buried in a pre-industrial past. The city has swallowed the Prairie and its treasure, and paper money has forever replaced gold. Neither Grandmother Boetcher nor any of the other characters can ever find the elusive Jesuit treasure.
The rise of organized crime and its affiliation with the justice system is also a key concern in Boerstein’s novel. When the Boettchers initially hear about a counterfeit ring operating in the city, their neighbor Joshua Shaw suggests they belong to a group of organized criminals known as the “Rascal’s Union” who are in league with corrupt lawyers and politicians. Although most Americans stand little chance of regaining their freedom once arrested, if a criminal belongs to this “Rascal’s Union” and is arrested, “Lawyers are daubed with money to get the fellow out by a habeas corpus, jailors are bribed to let him escape, judges and juries are bombarded with menacing letters…” (129). Because the court/legal system *should* be the means by which innocent victims find justice, its corruption is particularly tragic. When Mr. Boettcher and Maria’s fiancé Charles Assmann find out that Maria has been arrested, they immediately cross the ferry into St. Louis to post her bail. Unfortunately, it is a Sunday and the courts are all closed. The narrator uses the occasion to complain of “our bigoted Sunday laws”: since “an innocent person arrested on Saturday must pine in prison without trial over Sunday, for no judge would desecrate the Sabbath by trying and releasing an innocent person from an unjust punishment” (275). They soon get even worse news—Maria never made it to the jail. The very people sworn in to arrest her were cohorts of Mr. Smartborn, and instead of taking her to jail, they have taken her to an abandoned sawmill for Smartborn to terrorize once again.

Maria’s brother Joseph discovers the corruption of the justice system even earlier in the text. He and a friend (St. Louis fireman Tom) happen upon an attempted murder in progress and try to stop it. In the scuffle that follows, Joseph seriously injures the would-
be-murderer, who begins to shout loudly to anyone in hearing distance that Joseph has attacked him. The two men run away in fear, but Joseph soon considers going back: “I defended myself only, whilst he attempted to shoot me. The matter will be examined thoroughly, and then they will see that I acted only in self-defense.” At this, Tom laughs and calls him “very green.” He explains that since neither of them are rich, they would both be arrested and sit in jail for months waiting for a trial, and even then, they would not be taken at their word, and would likely be sentenced to at least ten years in the penitentiary.

What can an honest immigrant possibly do when even the justice system is against him? Although the book doesn’t say so directly, there is a hint in the book’s dedication. Boernstein dedicated his novel to the infamous former Senator of Missouri, Thomas Hart Benton. Just a year before the book began serial publication, Benton announced that he no longer believed in the institution of slavery, a conviction that cost him his Senate seat. The dedication to Benton alludes not only to Benton’s abolitionism (a cause Boernstein shared) and to their shared concerns about soft money and land speculation, but is also highly symbolic. Benton represents a truly singular politician for the age—one that wouldn’t sell out his principles for political power or money. Politicians of the decade were a far cry from the idealistic patriots of the past who were willing to sacrifice anything for freedom. Even those that started out as reformers succumbed to a system that rewarded the basest behavior. The idealism of the country’s past had been replaced by pragmatism and a desire for wealth and power that made
political leaders easily tempted by promises of money and power.\footnote{Again, see Summers.} Because of this, Benton’s willingness to sacrifice political power for his principles made him a powerful symbol of incorruptible idealism.

The dedication to Benton implies the need for a strategic alliance between recent German immigrants and the remaining honest Americans. After all, the German immigrants of the decade—Driesigers and Forty-Eighters—were political radicals and revolutionaries. They immigrated to America not for greed or wealth, but because of their ideals. As Boernstein saw it, they were the kind of pure idealists that America so desperately needed—citizens who could not be corrupted by political power or wealth. Within the text, the Boettchers are the epitome of this kind of incorruptible idealism. They are attacked on all sides, but they stay true to their principles. The ultimate illustration of their motives lies once again in the treasure; after Grandmother Boettcher dies, they never even look for it. We see other examples of their incorruptible natures throughout the text as well. Maria refuses to succumb to Smartborn’s advances (even when he offers her money), and she is also quite selfless in other ways: She gives money to a poor immigrant woman and her children, and she cares for the (now quite insane) man whom her brother rescued from being murdered. Her brother Joseph is also selfless, although his selflessness is demonstrated in more masculine ways; instead of nurturing others, he rescues them from danger. He rescues Tom after a fire badly injures him. He prevents a stranger from being murdered with no thought to the repercussions, which are severe enough to force him and Tom to flee to California. And although he goes to
California with Tom and strikes it rich, he does so more to escape a corrupt system that would punish him for doing good than to find gold. Even during his trip to California, he consistently puts the welfare of others over his own. For example, when Indians attack their caravan, many travelers die and one man is severely wounded. The other survivors want to leave the wounded man to die, but Joseph refuses. Despite the captain’s warning—“You are fools—you can’t help him, and will ruin yourselves”—Joseph and Tom remain behind as the rest of the caravan departs (along with supplies and directions) to help the wounded man. Although Joseph and Tom do eventually find gold, the money seems more a reward for their goodness than a source of motivation or even temptation.

Although the Boettchers’s idealism makes it difficult for them to adapt to American society, despite their previous residence in St. Louis, it also makes them ideal reformers. Instead of trying to adapt themselves to their new country, they would prefer to change their homeland to meet their higher standards. They imagine a better system and strive to realize it by aligning with a select group of honest Americans. These American characters are also trustworthy, idealistic, and they seem to have a natural affinity and attraction to the German characters. Their selfless natures are revealed in their choice of professions and in their actions. We have already seen how St. Louis fireman Tom, along with Joseph, consistently risks his life to rescue others in danger. His job reveals his selflessness as well. Charles Assmann, Maria’s fiancé, is a painter, a profession symbolizing a love of beauty over profit. Bob is a criminal who renounces his life of crime and profit to help those he had been hired to hurt, and so is Pepita, the woman Joseph eventually marries (also an immigrant, but from Mexico), who was hired
to kill Joseph but falls in love with him instead. Neighbor Shaw is a farmer for whom home and hearth is of utmost importance, and he offers friendship, advice and support to the family throughout the book.

By the end of the novel, all of these honest characters have come together in marriage and friendship. They form a family unit outside of the city that is incorruptible and unassailable. This is similar in many ways to the ending of Bleak House, where the main characters are unable to reform the city and instead leave it. The difference is that the Jarndyce and Jarndyce plot is resolved via coincidence (the estate is used up in court fees) rather than through the character’s actions, making it impossible for readers to emulate. In St. Louis, the characters come together and actively fight Smartborn and his cohorts. When they finally leave the city for their new farm, it is in victory. The suggestion is that if German readers align themselves with American idealists like Thomas Hart Benton, much is possible.

**Mysteries of Cincinnati**

Boernstein’s urban mystery novel revealed that the root cause of urban corruption was national corruption—American citizens and politicians were putting profit over principles; they were abandoning the republicanism of their forefathers. They needed to rekindle their republican idealism before it was too late. Luckily, German-American immigrants were in the perfect position to fan those dying flames, as many were themselves revolutionaries. In Cincinnati, oder die Geheimnisse des Westens (Cincinnati, or Mysteries of the West) (1854), Emil Klauprecht takes this idea even further. Like many
immigrants who came to America in the 1830s, he was a political refugee (a Dreissiger or Thirtier). He believed strongly in the power of the written word, and soon after settling in Cincinnati, he established a German-language literary journal and began editing the local German-language Whig paper. In his paper and in this novel, he encouraged German-Americans to participate in local and national politics, believing in their unique potential to affect change. In Cincinnati, or Mysteries of the West, he takes this one step further: he suggests that Germans have always been there to counterbalance America’s excesses, and that they are needed now more than ever.

In a complex subplot that affects the destinies of all the major characters, Klauprecht reconstructs a version of American history in which Germans are central. The Jesuits (once again villains plotting the overthrow of America) have possession of a secret document that reveals what really happened to the co-founder of Cincinnati, John Filson. The historical John Filson (of Daniel Boone fame) owned part of the land on which Cincinnati was built, but disappeared mysteriously—presumably attacked and killed by Indians. Because he never married and had no sons, his rights to the land transferred to his partners in the endeavor after his disappearance. In Klauprecht’s version of the story (revealed in a letter from John Filson to his son David), Filson was not actually killed by the Shawnee, but taken captive. After his captivity, he reunited with his former fiancé and abandoned his previous plans in Cincinnati, living out the rest of his life in obscurity outside of Detroit with his wife and son. Nonetheless, the point of the letter is not to lay claim to Cincinnati. John Filson’s message to his son is actually

62 See Tolzmann’s introduction for more biographical information on Klauprecht.
religious—it is about how he changed from a vengeful and violent young man into a hopeful and forgiving adult through the help of German Moravian missionaries.

His story begins in the Pennsylvania hinterlands during the French and Indian War. Filson’s childhood home is attacked by Delaware Indians while he is away on an errand; he returns to find that Indians have killed his father and brothers and taken his mother and sister captive. Vowing revenge, he soon meets up with the Paxton boys and participates in their gruesome massacres. In one raid on a Delaware camp, he is taken captive, then rescued from certain death by a strange white man living amongst the Indians—a German Moravian missionary named David Zeisberger.

Zeisberger (also a historical figure), opens Filson’s eyes to his horrible actions, and shows him that the English history in America has been marked by hypocrisy and the constant betrayal of Native Americans:

The whole archive of your past constitutes nothing but a chain of unheard-of crimes committed against the redskins. And just as in the East, so here in the West…Do not complain about their creeping deceit when you murder the openness of their hearts, or about their bloodthirstiness when you strangle their peace—do not talk of their gruesomeness when you have drowned their gentleness in blood. (327)

First the English then the Americans, Zeisberger argues, have hypocritically used their religion as an excuse to murder Indians; they have claimed that Indians were “heathens” and “savages” incapable of living civilized Christian lives in order to justify genocide. When some Indians nonetheless adapted Christianity and agriculture, proving that they were not heathens or savages after all, it made no difference, since Christianity was never the true motivation—it was always about land and profit: “And you English,” Zeisberger tells Filson, “wanted no Christianity, no civilization among the redskins; your
consciences had a harder time forgiving you for your atrocities if the muzzles of your muskets and the points of your hunting knives were aimed at decent brother Christians” (327). Thanks to Zeisberger and other German Moravians, John Filson turns his life around, becomes a Moravian missionary and friend to the Indians he once despised, and helps form the first settlement in Ohio—the German town of Schönbrunn. While Boernstein used the trope of the bad Indian to praise a good German, in creating an alternative reason for John Filson’s disappearance, Klauprecht uses the trope of the good Indian to critique bad America. He also suggests that Germans always have been more capable of holding onto their principles than the Anglo-Americans (people of English descent).

According to Klauprecht, Germans have always been America’s moral and idealistic compass, and they are needed now more than ever. In particular, they are needed to reform two of the country’s most corrupt institutions: the institution of slavery and the justice system, both of which conspire to deprive citizens of their freedom. Although most of the novel is set in Ohio—a free state—two of Klauprecht’s main characters (Isabelle Beaufort and Alphonse Gonzoles) come from Louisiana. This allows him to set some scenes on a Louisiana plantation in order to demonstrate the horrors of slavery. Isabelle Beaufort is a beautiful young Creole woman who is unhappily married to a sinister old plantation owner, but in love with her childhood friend, Alphonse Gonzoles. Although Isabelle grew up in the south, it takes living with her husband and his sister Zenobia, who are particularly cruel slave-owners, to convince her that the practice is wrong. One scene in particular demonstrates the savagery and cruelty
encouraged by the system of slavery: Zenobia’s lover, Captain Butler, tries to rape a young mulatta slave named Ruth, but is interrupted by her lover, the mulatto Telemach. Telemach’s defense of Ruth earns him a cruel punishment—he has to “run a race” with Zenobia’s fastest bloodhound. Although Telemach manages to find safe haven in the hollow trunk of a tree, he becomes stuck. When Ruth brings him food against Zenobia’s orders, Zenobia sets the tree on fire. Only Isabelle’s interference saves Telemach’s life, and both he and Ruth are fiercely loyal to her after that.

Before this scene, Isabelle is ambivalent about the practice of slavery, as she naïvely thinks that the courts can keep slaveholders in line. When she warns Zenobia to curb her excesses or face the consequences in court, Zenobia merely responds with laughter:

The courts? Do you realize that there is not a court which would dare to entertain a case against the house of Beaufort over a Negro body. Do you know that my brother disposes a horde of votes which would bring any court official to heel. The house of Beaufort is as absolute as the Czar of Russia. It can roast a Negro on a spit, hang him by the legs and whip him to death, or feed him to the hogs like the Roman Pollio. No policeman would concern himself, even if some abolitionist would be so crazy as to make a charge. (111)

Isabelle is shocked to learn how powerful the owner of a large plantation is in the south—he not only controls his slaves, but the politicians and courts as well. A plantation owner in the south is as powerful and corrupt as any European despot. Zenobia herself is also a tragic figure—she is the daughter of a slave who was raised to be an owner, and she must assert her power in the cruelest ways in order to be taken seriously.

Although most of the scenes critical of slavery take place in Louisiana, Klauprecht is also critical of Ohio and the rest of the North for its complicity in the
system. When the rope plot brings the Isabelle to Cincinnati with Telemach and Ruth, Klauprecht exposes Ohio’s collusion. The nefarious Captain Butler (Ruth’s would-be-rapist) forges papers claiming that Telemach and Ruth belong to him, and they are powerless against him. The narrator notes sarcastically: “the free state of Ohio had once again acquitted itself of its federal duty; it had delivered two people to eternal slavery” (292). The condemnation of the “free state” of Ohio is extended to the entire “home of the free” for its endorsement of slavery via the Fugitive Slave Act. He addresses Northern complicity in a discussion of abolition vs. slavery earlier in the book as well. Zenobia wryly points out the pervasive racism in the “happy North”: “Many of them [free states] forbid the entry of free blacks as if they brought leprosy or plague. They are true friends of the nigger, these Temperance-popes and bluestockings of the North!” Alphonse Gonzoles (Isabelle’s childhood love) agrees, adding: “Abolitionism began blustering in the North only after it had sold the South almost all its own slavers. The ‘smart Yankee’ has the money in his pocket, so now he demands that the Negroes be set free, in his lovely phrase, ‘on the basis of human rights’” (122). Americans have become so corrupted by the pursuit of profit, that even supposed idealists are corrupted. Klauprecht blames Yankee pragmatism as well as southern greed for the institution of slavery.

Klauprecht is also concerned about the rise in criminal activity, and the rise of organized crime in particular. He notes at one point that there is so much crime in American cities that only the most brazen criminal acts make it into the papers. Cincinnati alone, he claims, “exceeds the total for all of Germany in its annual statistics of crime” (68). What is worse than crime rates is the fact that the criminals have
organized, making crime harder to combat and justice harder to come by. As in
Boernstein’s novel, this novel features a secret organization of criminals, known in this
text as the “Tunnel Rats.” Members come from all walks of life, all classes, all races,
both genders, and every state. Their numbers and pooled resources enable them, through
bribes and threats, to manipulate the justice system. As one member brags:

Thirty-five courts of the West and South are subject to us, with judges, sheriffs
and jailors in the League; prosecutions in forty-three other jurisdictions came to
naught due to the energy and harmony of our League; seventy-six brother Rats
were freed from the gallows or long prison terms through the bribing of grand
juries, prosecuting attorneys and jurors. Our maxim, that everyone who sets foot
in the Tunnel is safe from justice, has been truly made a reality. (215)

Just as southern slave-owners can manipulate the political and legal system to hide their
criminal actions, the Tunnel Rats also manipulate the system—in the North as in the
South, “justice” is a commodity that can be bought and sold.

We might expect criminals to be corrupt, but as the Tunnel Rats reveal, so is the
justice system that should punish and/or reform them. While members of criminal
organizations like the fictional Tunnel Rats get away with murder, innocent people who
cannot afford to pay for bail, or to hire good lawyers, or to bribe judges, are forced to rot
in prison. This is revealed through a fairly complicated rope-plot. Although the main
characters are the German immigrant family, the Steigerwalds, fate brings them together
with the American Washington Filson and the New Orleans couple Isabelle Beaufort and
Alphonse Gonzales. Isabelle has come to Cincinnati to unite with her lover, Alphonse (a
steamship captain), only to have their (illegitimate) child stolen from the man she trusted
to watch it (an Indian doctor named Habakuk Maleachi). When Washington Filson
interrupts the theft of the child and attempted murder of Maleachi, he is arrested for the
crime. Through this plot device, Klauprecht brings Isabelle and Filson’s subplots together and exposes how the justice system favors the guilty rich over the innocent poor. The narrator complains of how “a free citizen, who need not be accused of a crime but be simply lacking bail for his appearance in court, is declared a beast and treated accordingly” (170). In the spirit of sensational journalism, Klauprecht then vividly describes the sights, sounds, and smells of the jail, arguing that even “in the slums of London there is no more pitiful picture” (172).

Once Filson goes to trial, we see evidence of even more corruption. As Filson’s lawyer explains to the “green” Steigerwalds, “In Cincinnati there is no justice, only justice officials elected by the parties, and the fact that they are entirely under the control of those who grant them offices and titles is not to be marveled at, considering the corruption prevailing everywhere” (251). Unfortunately, Filson must worry about more than run-of-the-mill corruption. His trial is being manipulated by yet another secret society, one that is far more dangerous than the Tunnel Rats—the Jesuits. Like the Boettchers in St. Louis, Washington Filson possesses a treasure of which he is unaware, although in this case, it is land rather than gold, as he is the heir to the land on which Cincinnati sits. This makes him a target of Jesuit greed—the Jesuits want the city for themselves so they can establish a New American Rome. To keep Filson in their sights and in their power, the villainous priests Signor Vitelleschi and Father Jerome have handpicked a judge to preside over Filson’s trial—one who is in their pocket. Under the Jesuit’s orders, the judge blatantly dismisses evidence that would help Filson’s case.
As the last paragraph suggests, the Jesuits in this novel are similar in many ways to those in *St. Louis*, as the authors of both novels were highly critical of the power the Catholic Church exerted over European governments. Klauprecht and Boernstein were both freethinkers who were concerned that the church might eventually exert a similar influence in America. In both novels, the Jesuits conspire to takeover the United States.

As one Jesuit describes:

> The rich resources which this country offers us are the childish naiveté of a people which knows neither us nor our history, the freedom of instruction, the rottenness of the party leaders, the corruption of the statesmen, the sectarianism, the armies of European voters at our command...No legislature receives its political contour, no governor, no president, is elected in the Union against our will. We are not forming a mere dictatorship of a majority between the parties, like the contemptible little band of Freesoilers. We are already the soul of the entire political corporation of the Republic. That party is dead without hope of recovery which opposes us. (208)

Note however how the “rottenness of the party leaders” and “the corruption of the statesmen” enable the Jesuits to progress with their plans. Not only can they select judges to rig particular court cases, but they can also manipulate the political system through another secret society: a group of Democrats called the Kickapoos who use every means at their disposal to elect Jesuit-approved candidates.

The Kickapoos are a secret society of Democrats who dress like Indians and use underhanded methods to ensure Jesuit-approved candidates succeed in elections. In a chapter sarcastically entitled, “The Sovereignty of the People,” one member reports: “We just have *plenty of money* to make sure our *boys’* throats will not want for moisture and that our Irish *bullies* are distributed about ready to fight the evening before the primaries, then we can be sure that no ‘paleface’ will slip through in any of the twelve wards” (165).
Through the Kickapoos, we see how the Jesuits, the Democrats, and organized crime are all linked. These Kickapoos are politicians who don’t just tolerate organized crime, but actively utilize it for their own ends. They hire “Irish bullies” (members of Irish street gangs) to bribe voters with alcohol, and to trick and intimidate them. The tricks involve telling legitimate voters the wrong voting time and bringing in ringers to take their place (voters from other districts who will vote as told). If legitimate voters try to vote anyway, the street criminals are there to prevent them from doing so. On the night of the primaries, the bullies are told that the “Dutch” are being “rather rebellious,” so it will be necessary to “Beat their hides tender as diapers if it gets serious” (276).

One Kickapoo hopes it won’t come to that—this is Colonel Schwappelhuber, the editor of the German daily newspaper, the Demokratische Staatstrompete. As he explains to his fellow Kickapoos, Schwappelhuber would prefer to use the power of the press, rather than trickery and violence, to get the German vote. This doesn’t make him any less corrupt, however. In fact, the character of Schwappelhuber allows Klauprecht to explore the corrupt nature of party newspapers (something that he understood firsthand), while continuing to condemn the Democratic party. Schwappelhuber is vain, proud, hypocritical, deceitful and ambitious, and instead of printing the truth, he prints whatever it takes to further his own political career. We see this firsthand as Klauprecht, much like Lippard before him in Quaker City, occasionally inserts news clippings into his novel, clippings that tell drastically different versions of the story than the ones to which readers are privy. For example, Schwappelhuber prints a transparently biased version of Filson’s arrest under the headline “Shameful Robbery and Murder.” Schwappelhuber also
reported after Filson’s initial trial that the “hearing of witnesses gave thorough proof of
the accused’s guilt,” which readers know is quite far from the truth. Nonetheless, he
would rather win Jesuit (and Kickapoo and Democratic) favor than be honest, expecting
political rewards once they come to power.

While not all of what Schwappelhuber prints is lies, much of it is devoid of
substance. It is empty party rhetoric that no longer has any real meaning. We are told that
“the arsenal of his auctorial eloquence in campaigns was not very large; with a very
modest supply of turns drawn from the orthodox party catechism always at his command,
the Colonel managed the most astonishing miracle of making them appear ever new.”
The narrator compares him to a French chef who “takes the same old potatoes and the
same cuts of beef and serves them up with the most various sauces and ragouts” (55). In
fact, we discover through the pranks of rival editor Herr von Wendel of the Deutches
Whig Herold how little Schwappelhuber actually believes his own Democratic party
rhetoric. Twice during the course of the chapter, Wendel sends poor German immigrants
to Schwappelbuber’s office. The first is a railroad laborer who fell sick in Wheeling. His
captain brought him to Cincinnati to find help from his countrymen. He explains to the
Colonel that he is a refugee who finally “reached the goal of his dreams, this free
country,” to which the Colonel replies in the rhetoric of his party: “This is a splendid
country, a free, democratic country, where everyone who is willing to work can also find
a good life” (60). The man explains that he did work—so hard, in fact, that it made him
sick. Schwappelhuber is unmoved. Convinced that Wendel sent him over simply to
interrupt his important work, he tells him, “Suffering Germans come here all the time, sir.
One cannot support all of them even with the best will” (61). Despite his Democratic rhetoric about how the average man in America can succeed through hard work, he is unwilling to help this poor man who has worked himself sick. He then turns away a poor German woman with five children who was abandoned by her husband and who only wanted a train ticket to New York. Once again, Wendel’s “prank” exposes Schwappelhuber’s true character—he is not a man of the people at all, nor is the party to which he belongs.

Curiously, we never see anything Wendel prints, nor are we privy to his motivations since we only ever see him through Schwappelhuber’s eyes. This is an odd omission, as it would seem the perfect opportunity to contrast the hypocrisy of the Democrats and their paper with that of the Whigs. The fact that Klauprecht doesn’t take advantage of this opportunity is suggestive—perhaps he had nothing nice to say about the Whig paper either, despite (or because of) the fact that he edited it in real life. His characterization of the Whig editor may not be malicious (we never see Wendel involved in election scams or writing puff pieces like Schwappelhuber), but Wendel nonetheless appears ineffective as an editor. He is so consumed by his rivalry with Schwappelhuber that it is difficult to see how he gets any actual work done. His entire job and his sole source of joy seems to involve outwitting and playing pranks on the other editor. Although this depiction is certainly not as negative as the representation of the Democratic editor, it does suggest that when it comes to the political press, political rivalry too often trumped journalistic integrity and ethics—perhaps even Klauprecht’s own.
There are other parts of the text, too, where Klauprecht seems less than happy with his own party. When Old Steigerwald attends his first political rallies, he is appalled:

Instead of independent testing and convincing concerning political principles and persons, he found, for the most part, intellectual slavery, mechanical pursuit on the heals of plebian demagogues and bored overseers of cliques. The place of ripe republican judgment had been taken by the power of stupid custom, attached to particular party names, which traded votes for individual advantage or drink, like Esau giving away his birthright. (301)

The comparison to slavery here is especially damning—the people are slaves to the political parties, whose members are more interested in gaining personal power than justice. “What servility bereft of thought or will! What corruption! What political decadence!” he exclaimed to Filson. “Party! And nothing but the party, not for principles, but only for the sake of those who slather after offices and positions” (301). Here, then, is the root of all the corruption—it is not just the Democratic Party that is problematic; it is the party system itself. As Filson explains to Steigerwald, the parties have outlived the principles on which they were founded. Filson is nonetheless hopeful: “We are living in a period of transition…the old battlecries of the parties are gradually fading…Soon the Alcide of young America will awaken and with his powerful arm will lift up the Anteus of corruption from his mother-earth of office, which supplies him with new strength everyday, and he will destroy him” (302). And who is the “Alcide” (or Hercules) of young America? He is represented by the very figures having this conversation: the German immigrant and the idealistic young American (who is the grandson of a Moravian missionary and pioneer). Together, the book suggests, they can fight the corrupt system.
In this novel, German immigrants like the Steigerwalds are perfectly positioned to critique and reform the government of their new country. Their position as outsiders and their natural idealism allows them see that to which native-born Americans turn a blind eye. Not all outsiders are thus positioned, though—certainly not the Irish, who slavishly follow the Church and are part of the Jesuit conspiracy. What makes German immigrants the perfect reformers is their romantic natures and revolutionary spirit, which protect them from being tempted by money and power. We’ve already seen Old Steigerwald’s idealism; this comes from his own experience with revolution. He is a Forty-Eighter, a failed revolutionary who fought to protect Schleswig-Holstein from the Danes.

Americans are now several generations removed from their own revolution, and thus take democracy for granted; it is this laxity, combined with a drive for wealth and power, that has made American politicians corruptible. America needs to get back into touch with its revolutionary roots, and recent German revolutionaries are just the people to help it do so.

It is not just their recent revolution that makes Germans the best American reformers, though. It is also their romantic natures—they value beauty and family over money and power, which makes them more difficult to corrupt. Gunther Steigerwalt’s son Wilhelm is the perfect example. Wilhelm is a “German painter, trained in the Dusseldorf school, growing up among that splendid youth dedicated to art, joined together by a glowing love of beauty in the golden Rhineland, in that German paradise where every breath was a poetic joy.” Despite how difficult it is to be a romantic painter in a country that worships profit, Wilhelm cannot “simply shed his nature in a country which surrounded him with the limitless monotony of the mad hunt for money” (197).
We saw evidence that German romanticism protects Germans from temptation in John Filson’s letter as well—the Germans were the only white settlers who were not corrupted by their desire for land. (Klauprecht conveniently ignores church Germans like the Le Roy and Leininger families who did steal Native American land.) This is in stark contrast to most of the American characters in the book: stereotypically greedy Yankees who are completely devoid of culture and will do anything for money and power. In Cincinnati, they are called the “pork aristocracy,” but as Zeisberger showed John Filson, this greed dates back all the way to the Pilgrims.

The importance of German romanticism is most obviously revealed in this book through its loss—through Old Steigerwald’s son Carl Steigerwald, who abandoned his German heritage to pursue a career in pork. Through him we see many American faults. He has become “as bald and cold as any full-blooded native spawned in blessed Connecticut” (196). He marries a pork merchant’s daughter, a woman who despises everything German, and has children who likewise detest their father’s heritage. This assimilation has cost him much: “The endless pursuit of business in this country, a life without any rest for the soul, without any recreation other than an fashionable concert or a Sunday sermon alongside his wife, had bestowed on his once-handsome face a vague, blasé, indifferent expression. His blue eyes lacked sparkle, his small mouth was insipid and loose; premature wrinkles were lodged on his well-formed forehead” (195). Carl Steigerwald abandoned his German heritage (and even his German family) to pursue power and wealth, and now embodies the worst qualities of an American: obsessed with business, money and power, and willing to do anything to get and keep it.
As Carl’s assimilation demonstrates, German romantic sensibility is something that can be lost, but this means it can also be gained. Although this is bad news for Carl, who decides to abandon his heritage, it is good news for the rest of America. It means that Americans can learn from the recent influx of German immigrants; through them, America can recapture its earlier revolutionary zeal. The Filsons are the perfect example of Americans who have picked up German sensibilities—John Filson from the Moravians, and Washington Filson from the Steigerwalds. When he declares his love for Johanna Steigerwalt later in the text, she is skeptical that he can feel love like a German—“the men of the New World do seem to me to be so preoccupied with their plots and plans that the feeling for love, such as a German experiences, has no time for full, sensual ripeness.” Filson responds, “If the sensual ripeness of German love only developed after years of complaining at the moon and poetic pains, my dear girl, then my own would bear a German consecration. When I saw you for the first time, Johanna, I felt with the German poet the full ripeness of that divine feeling…” (490). The alliance between Filson and the Steigerwalds in this text (as well as the alliance between John Filson and the Moravians in the letter) suggests that Germans should share their nature with Americans, to help cure them of their dispassionate greed and their growing apathy to their once-cherished principles.

As we have seen, however, not all Americans are sympathetic to German romanticism or to German revolutionary idealism. Washington Filson is not the average American. He learned during his childhood at a Jesuit school the importance of independent thought and staged his own revolution against his Jesuit teachers at a young
age. He was aided then, and throughout his life, by a mysterious mentor who is later revealed to be the Senator Thomas Hart Benton. Like Boernstein, Klauprecht saw cause for hope in the Democratic politician who gave up party favor and political power for personal principles. In particular, Klauprecht saw cause for hope in Benton’s Freesoil policies—the idea that American westward expansion (without the simultaneous extension of slavery) was important to the survival of the nation—the Turnerian notion that settling the west will keep alive the pioneering spirit of the country. This is also revealed through Washington Filson: after learning about his claims to the city, Filson tears up the deed that could make him rich, demonstrating that the welfare of his country and fellow citizens means more to him than personal wealth or power. It also demonstrates that the pioneer spirit of his grandfather is still alive in him—he would rather go west and establish his own homestead rather than take away already improved land from others. At the end of novel, he does just that: he and the other idealistic characters move away from corrupt Cincinnati to establish a farm in Iowa. As Old Günther Steigerwald explains to his son Wilhelm: “Every minute I long with great intensity to flee this alien, breathless driving, where money ennobles swindle and crime, and its lack shames productivity and virtue, I must get out of here to the free country air of the West, into a circle of naturally-living, honorable spirits” (638). Johanna likewise feels as if “the clouded sky of Cincinnati robs her of breath and life, like a coffin’s lid” (638). Thus all of the main protagonists move west to live together on a farm, on land in Iowa given to Filson as a wedding present from Thomas Hart Benton.
There is a limit to Klauprecht’s belief in manifest destiny, however. As Benton’s presence in the novel suggests, Klauprecht does not support the expansion of the U.S. if it means the expansion of slavery. To illustrate this point, he has two of the most despicable characters in the text—Zenobia and Blanchart Beaufort—advocate for the annexation of Cuba. Alphonse Gonzoles, on the other hand, notes that “the Spanish creoles… cannot really stand the Yankees…They take us for a calculating, raging nation of shopkeepers possessed by the eternal quest for the dollar” (118). Later in the novel, Alphonse actually participates in the attempted filibuster to annex Cuba, but only because of a debt owed to a friend. The fact that the Cubans did not want “freeing” and the mission was a total disaster proves Alphonse’s point, and Klauprecht sarcastically comments on the American urge to simultaneously extend both slavery and freedom: “a wayward little band of ignorant adventurers were the victims in what they believed to be a struggle against a European despotism on behalf of the interests of American slaveholders” (571).

Even western expansion is shown to be potentially dangerous if motivated by Yankee greed. When describing Cincinnati’s “Potter’s Field” for example, he claims, “A little more time and it will fall victim to restless speculation, America’s ‘Wandering Jew,’ and this boneyard will be cleared, the graves dug up, and the innumerable human remnants sent to a more distant catacomb to make way for friendly houses and factories on the moldy earth” (401). According to Klauprecht, America suffers from a “restless speculation” (note too the reference to Sue’s *Wandering Jew*) that causes its citizens to never be happy with what they have. Instead of appreciating the beauty of natural spaces, Americans are driven to “improve” them. Klauprecht sadly notes, “Churchyards are the
only large, free spaces in this young city, which hungrily gobbles up every inch of its space,” and claims that this contrast between the churchyard and the city defines “the character of American progress!” (401). As this passage makes clear, American western expansion has the potential to whet American’s insatiable appetite for resources, and this must be tempered by German idealism and romantic appreciation for beautiful natural open spaces. America’s best hope lies in the West, but only if German-Americans do their part to protect their adopted country from its own worse impulses.

The Dirty Secrets of New Orleans

The previous novelists lamented the corruption inherent in American politics and urban life, but found cause for hope in the Freesoil party and its leader, Thomas Hart Benton, and in the influx of idealistic, revolutionary German immigrants. Highly idealistic, they believed in democracy, in family, in goodness, in beauty, and most of all, in the power of change. Modern America had lost its way, but an alliance of revolutionary Germans and patriotic/idealist Americans could light the way back. Baron Ludwig von Reizenstein, the author of the Geheimnisse von New Orleans, was not so optimistic. His portrait of America, centered on the city of New Orleans, is of a country beyond repair. There can be no reform, only destruction, because it isn’t just American/Yankee qualities of greed and selfish pragmatism that perverted a once-great republic and threaten its collapse. The problem goes much deeper.

Reizenstein was the son of impoverished nobility in Bavaria. He immigrated to America to manage an acquaintance’s farm, but the acquaintance died on the voyage and
the opportunity died with him. After trying his hand at various odd jobs in various American cities, Reizenstein settled in New Orleans and became a surveyor and civil engineer. He also wrote occasionally for German papers (once trying and failing to start his own journal). His *Geheimnisse von New Orleans* was published serially in the *Louisiana Staats-Zeitung*, a radical German daily paper, from January 1854 to March 1855. Like the other novels, the text is adamantly abolitionist. His message to New Orleans (and by extension, to the South and the rest of the country) is clear—like a Puritan preacher in a Jeremiad, he suggests that the horrors of the previous year (the yellow fever epidemic of 1853) are punishment for the communal sin of slavery, and that the nation needs to change or die. The entire novel, including quite tender and sometimes humorous depictions of interracial love, is an indictment of the slavery and racism that are endemic in his adopted country. Humphreys notes that the goal of a city mystery novelist is to expose the corrupt nature of various urban institutions; in this case, Reizenstein attacks what he sees as the most problematic and hypocritical institution of his city and country—slavery. Towards the beginning of the novel, he quotes an (nameless) American author: “New Orleans is paved with Negro skulls,” and adds that it is also paved with beautiful women. Negroes and women—these are the two most oppressed peoples in this novel: oppressed by social systems designed to keep them in their place for the profit of white men.

The entire novel is an indictment of slavery, but there are certain chapters that emphasize this more than others. One of the more horrific scenes in the novel, which the

---

64 See Rowan’s introduction to this text for more biographical information on Reizenstein.
narrator prefaces with a suggestion that squeamish readers skip, is set in a brothel where young colored girls from the ages of 11 to 14 have been forced into prostitution by their owner, Madame Parasina Brulard, an ex-slave so corrupted by slavery that she now buys and sells children for sex. When Pharis, a particularly young and naïve girl, does not ask for her money upfront, Madame Brulard has the Catholic priest Monsieur Dubreuil torture and rape her. Although the specifics of the torture are left to readers’ imaginations, we know that the torture chamber is full of “tongs, nails, hammers, brushes, and ropes,” along with an unnamed “universal tool comme il faut” (53). The young girl is stripped naked and left tied up in the chamber from the early morning until late that night, until after the priest had delivered his weekly sermon. The act of torture itself is glossed over with extended ellipses, after which the narrator states, “By the time the hour of ten sounded from the tower of the Catholic church, the dreadful crime had already been accomplished, and the moon was illuminating a sin that cried to heaven” (58). This scene occurs early in the first book of the novel, and illustrates clearly the crimes endemic to the South—crimes unspeakable, yet legal under American laws, as Pharis herself complains: “What are the courts for, the lawyers and all those white gentlemen? If I have suffered an injustice, why can I not make a complaint? Does color make a difference there, too?” (51). Slavery, racism, prostitution, even the courts rob people of their humanity and create vicious cycles of violence that inevitably spiral out of control. Even an ex-slave like Parasina Brulard is far from free—her time in slavery has convinced her that one must be either master or slave, and thus she inflicts the torture she once endured onto a new generation of children, who will likely continue the cycle.
Slavery robs people of their physical beauty as well, which for Reizenstien is also tragic. Another villainess in the novel is the 16-year-old “zambo negress” Merlina (the term *zambo negress* is defined in a footnote as “the offspring of a Negro and a female mulatto…a ragingly insatiable sensual being” (236)). She is the leader of the sinister and gothic Hamburg Mill, a building that to the uninitiated appears to be simply a barroom and boardinghouse, but is actually a secret criminal organization and brothel. Under Merlina’s leadership, the Mill became “a hell of the most shameful vice and crime” where “arsonists, murderers, and thieves drank her together with the most debased creations of the colored race, from whose female portion Merlina drew most of her income” (236-7). Like Parasina Brulard, Merlina buys and sells the flesh of children, because in the South, one must chose a life as a slave or a master, and Merlina refuses to be a slave. Nonetheless, this has taken a toll on her. Merlina, we are told, “was no longer young, although she was only sixteen. For women of this type flourish between their seventh and eleventh years. A *zambo negresse* is already wilting by the age of eighteen, and her glistening white teeth have already begun to acquire that dark blue sheen that is the certain signal of a loss of freshness. Merlina was *already* sixteen!” (237). Then, in a sarcastic aside to readers: “And you, paleface, are *merely* thirty or forty! It is a secret of chemistry which neither Liebig nor Boussinggault can explain” (238). It is no real secret, of course: white men who use and abuse these women are like vampires, draining away their youth and beauty so that even a free woman is old by the age of sixteen, and when her own body is no longer a desirable commodity, a woman like Merlina begins to sell the bodies of even younger children to satiate white lust.
Like Klauprecht before him, Reizenstein also condemns the racism that allows slavery to flourish. Americans are obsessed with race and with racial purity and miscegenation, which Reizenstein illustrates in an extended footnote. The footnote begins by explaining Merlina’s racial category (a “zambo negresse”), but then lists 17 other racial categories, including the well-known terms *mulatto* and *quadroon* as well as less known categories like “*dark chino*, produced by the impregnation of a mulatto woman by an Indian of good race” and “*pale chino zambo chola*, a colored creation with a dreadful confusion of species (a pitiful race)” (237). Considering how careful Reizenstein is throughout the novel to show the humanity of his colored characters, this list, which refers to entire groups of people as scientific specimens or animals, only makes sense as a sarcastic aside designed to reveal Americans’ obsession with race.

Just as Reizenstein must teach readers about these categories of racial mixing, his European characters must also learn American racism. The young German cook Urschl, a very recent immigrant, is quite pleased to be courted by a young slave boy, Tiberius: “The saucy cook from the Lüneburger Heath—where her uncle still held sway over several fields of buckwheat—had naturally not acquired the southern outlook on the relations between black and white, so she subordinated herself without complaint to the commands of the ‘moor,’ as she called a black person” (346). What follows is a comedic romance between the green young cook and the young slave boy, which, as Steven Rowan rightly points out, is likely the only comic depiction of a romance between a black man and white woman in all of antebellum literature. Their romance demonstrates that racism is a learned, rather than inherent, belief—and thus quite unnatural.
As the appearance of the Abbe Dubreuil in Madame Brulard’s brothel suggests, Reizenstein has no faith in religion to solve the country’s problems. Unlike the previous novelists, however, Reizenstein’s condemnation is hardly limited to Jesuits or Catholics. He claims that at one point in time, “Christian peoples were bound together in flourishing life, filled with poetry, and their martyrs and saints were not yet hypocrites and charlatans.” After this “classical era” of Catholicism and Christianity had ended, however, “the whole pretension of an orthodox Christianity should have ended as well. The history of mankind would then have been saved the insult of three hundred years of hypocrisy. Christianity has used understanding only as an instrument for exploitation and shameful purposes” (54). This condemnation of Christianity is in line with Reizenstein’s philosophy that any institution that limits man’s freedom of thought is dangerous. Reizenstein is in keeping here with other German transcendental thinkers like Kant, Schiller and Fichte. In fact, Fichte’s definition of philosophy as “free thinking released from the shackles of a belief in external authority” is appropriate. For Reizenstien, all sources of external authority shackle free thinking, and in effect, enslave the mind. This includes the institution of marriage.

At the beginning of the book, Reizenstein noted that New Orleans was paved with the skulls of Negroes and beautiful women. While much of the book condemns the South, and indeed, the entire nation, for building itself on the backs of slaves, Reizenstein is also concerned with the effect of modern society and institutions on women. Tellingly, the first characters we meet in the novel are the women characters—the free mulatta Lucy Wilson, German sisters Frida and Jenny, newlywed Frenchwoman Claudine, and the
beautiful German Creole lesbian, Orleana. The married white women in the story—Frida, Jenny, and Claudine—are nearly ruined by marriage. Frida and Jenny left their homes and families in Germany with their husbands, only to be abandoned by them in America. Luckily, they have a cottage in Algiers, and are able to support themselves by teaching music lessons, and are not, therefore, financially ruined. Mentally, however, marriage and abandonment have taken their toll. Jenny is still madly in love with her husband Emil, even though he has left her for the mulatta Lucy. When she begins to have feelings for another man, her divided loyalties nearly drive her insane. When she succumbs to her feelings for Albert in a crazed stupor, the guilt of her affair and the resulting pregnancy turn her into a mere shell of her former self.

Frida is undoubtedly the stronger of the two sisters, and she is content at first to live as a widow with her sister. She consistently warns Jenny to stop pining for Emil and move on, as she has moved on from her own failed marriage. When Frida’s husband—the evil Hungarian count Lajos—returns, however, she foolishly takes him back, despite his obvious manipulation of her. He only returns because she is soon to inherit a fortune, and despite his criminal activity (arson, murder, and even necrophilia), he is destitute. Frida suffers immensely for her decision—she gives birth to a sickly son only to watch helplessly as a giant rat kills him in his crib, a rat Lajos has unwittingly brought home from the Hamburg Mill. Frida, we have been told repeatedly in the novel, is the more levelheaded of the sisters, and she certainly had the mental and moral fortitude for independence. In fact, in an odd side plot involving doppelgangers, we briefly see what Frida could have been, had she kept her independence.
Lajos first meets Frida’s double in a hotel in St. Louis—she looks exactly like Frida, speaks like her, even her clothing and possessions are identical (including a chrysaloid green album for her drawings and mementos). When Lajos confronts this Frida in her room, however, she immediately demands he leave and tries to call for help. Eventually she faints from fear, and Lajos tears open her sleeve looking for a birthmark—a split heart—to confirm her identity. Instead, this Frida has an anchor burned into her arm “of the sort sailors receive when they are initiated” (338). Lajos then riffles through her album, finding none of his own drawings and writings were they should be. Instead he sees a note from an acquaintance addressing her as “Miss.” This episode is quite brief in relation to the rest of the book and does nothing to advance the plot. What it does instead is show an alternative life for Frida, one unencumbered by Lajos or marriage. The difference is symbolized the by marks on their arms—Frida-proper has a split heart, indicating the effect of marriage on her spirit. Frida’s double has an anchor like a sailor, indicating her boldness and most importantly, her freedom. Jenny later sees Frida’s double in the woods, running through the trees away from her companion, who is Lajos’s double, calling to him, “Leave me here, Lajos! It is just too beautiful here!” (371). Apparently, Frida’s double knows Lajos’s double, but she is not encumbered by their relationship. She is free to run in the woods and enjoy their natural beauty, and he has no choice but to chase after her.

In this book, marriage is the death of love. The only happy woman in the entire text is Claudine, the French ex-wife of German Albert, and this is because she has broken free from the chains of marriage—and escaped into the arms of her lesbian lover,
Orleana. This relationship between two women is the only loving and happy relationship in the entire book. The two women are together because of love, not obligation. Free from marriage, free to love, they find happiness in each other’s arms.

In this novel, as in the other urban mysteries, the German characters are more idealistic than their American (or non-German European) counterparts, and they seem to embody those German characteristics describes by Fichte that make them natural reformers: they are honest, reliable, courageous, honorable, and most importantly, they love liberty. In the other novels, this allows them to reform their new countries—and to inspire likeminded Americans to help. Nonetheless, we saw in Cincinnat with Carl Steigerwalt that not all Germans are able to maintain their German idealism once in America. While Klauprecht uses his character Carl to caution Germans not to abandon their culture in America, his main focus is on the rest of the Steigerwalt family, and on the positive changes Germans can bring to their new homeland. Once again Reizenstein is less optimistic. In his novel, men like Carl Steigerwalt are in the majority, and men like Wilhelm and his father are rare and ultimately impotent. For Reizenstein, it is nearly impossible for German men to keep their integrity once they reach American soil. Their pure German idealism quickly becomes polluted by their need to succeed in America on American terms. Instead of changing America with their idealism, America changes them. We see this most clearly with Karl, Jenny and Frida’s cousin, who compromises his ideals as soon as he arrives in America in order to become financially stable—he becomes an agent in the slave trade. Karl, the narrator explains, would be judged harshly by most Germans for taking such a job, “Yet, considering that he took this position at a
time when he was in great financial need, it should not cast any shadow on his character. After the material discomfort had been somewhat relieved, one would hardly expect him to leave the agency right away and place himself in distress once more just to yield to childish scruples” (38). What is surprising about this passage is that Karl is actually a good man; in fact, he is one of the most honest and likable characters in the book. This passage demonstrates that even good German men are likely to abandon their idealism when confronted with the harsh realities of American life, where money beats scruples any day.

The German women are more capable of retaining their German character, but this is not because of any essentialized gender trait; it is because they are not allowed to participate in the public world of men, and in their isolation (isolated both by gender and culture), they can only mourn the past. “It is not proper for a man,” the narrator explains, “to wring his hands in despair and summon up his household gods…He is, after all, in a land where the free development of his material and intellectual abilities are given the widest play, and even if he is poor and abandoned today, a lucky toss tomorrow could put him among persons who value his company and find him irreplaceable. It is not so with a woman” (91). Women are not allowed to develop their intellectual abilities or to participate in economic matters in America. Immigrant women are therefore isolated by their gender, by their language, and by their culture. In this new environment, their Germanness is more of a curse than a blessing. As the narrator explains:

Our stars in a blue field can encourage and even enthuse a man, for they remind him of the greatness of the nation called to spread its blessings to the entire globe. But a woman? The woman sees in the stars of our flag only the stars that once shone in the cloudless heavens of her homeland and enchanted her heart with
endless longing. What does she care for the greatness of a nation? It is the
greatness and richness of a heart that fills up, encourages, and steels life. (91)

Jenny and Frida are heartsick and homesick women, thus they remain true Germans
despite living in America—not that this does them or anyone else any good.

The only German men who are not corrupted by America is Emil’s father (only
because his aristocratic breeding makes him an utterly incompetent American
businessman) and Prince Paul of Württemberg, because his wealth enables him to avoid
American business and capitalism altogether. His station and his fortune allow him to
remain idealistic, and to follow his heart wherever it takes him: “Love had taken the
prince far from his assigned place, causing him to breathe a purer and fresher air on the
soil of a republic…Only when love has played such a great role in the active life of a man
can one say to him with confidence, ‘You are one of those fortunate ones who has not
lived in vain’” (203). His love is pure and selfless; his love, his wealth, and his courage,
and his honor allow him rescue Emil’s family, who have followed him to America, when
they get into financial trouble (which seems to happen every time the prince turns his
back). When Jenny gets pregnant with an illegitimate child, he arranges for a discrete
convalescence and then takes the child into his own household. He is the guardian angel
of the German characters in the book, and would surely have succeeded in rescuing and
protecting them all if not for Hiram, a centuries-old mysterious Freemason, who releases
a plague of yellow fever into the city to punish the guilty with the innocent.

Hiram is the mysterious character behind the scenes in the text, pulling the strings
of many characters and setting many events in motion. He has discovered the cause of
yellow fever in a plant that blooms at the mouth of the Red River—the *Mantis religiosa*—which he releases, causing a devastating plague of yellow fever that ravages the city and kills nearly all of the main characters before they can escape the city. Prince Paul valiantly tries to help the other characters, much like Prince Rodolf in *The Mysteries of Paris*. If it weren’t for Hiram, Prince Paul would have been able to rescue a few deserving souls, but then the corrupt systems would have remained intact. Hiram’s plague, on the other hand, is the first stage in a revolution that will level the playing field. America will have to start from scratch. Again, this is a Fichtian idea that a corrupt society must annihilate itself before a new society can emerge. Fichte opens his 1807 *Addresses to the German Nation* by reminding his listeners “that our age lies in the third principal epoch of world history, which epoch has mere sensuous self-interest as the impulse of all its vital stirrings and motions.” He had predicted that this age could only come to an end when “selfishness has annihilated itself by its complete development” (9). Fichte believed that this occurred in Germany when Napoleon took over the German states. Only now that the German states were no longer under their own control—when selfishness was no longer a possibility—could real change happen. Reizenstein apparently also believed in the theory of world epochs, and saw American culture as firmly entrenched in the third epoch of selfishness. Only when American selfishness reaches its complete development and the country destroys itself can change occur. Hiram brings this to fruition, not just through the plague he releases, but also by orchestrating a racial revolution that will occur 18 years hence.
Hiram orchestrates this racial revolution by handpicking two characters—Jenny’s wayward husband Emil and his mulatta lover Lucy Wilson—to conceive an American Toussaint L’Ouverture, a “yellow messiah” who will be the “liberator of the black race” (416). Although the pairing of Emil and Lucy seems in some ways similar to the alliance between Germans and Americans we’ve seen in other books, Hiram does not pick these characters for their idealism, patriotism, or strength of character. In fact, as we’ve seen, Emil has none of the qualities of the romantic and revolutionary Steigerwalts or the brave and loyal Boettchers, and Lucy is little more than a pretty prostitute before Hiram’s intervention. Hiram picks them for one reason: because they are beautiful. He tells them “there are chains to be broken here—and only beauty has the right to break them…The motivation for cleansing our soil of the shame that has been committed against a portion of mankind should not be self-seeking, vanity, or mere profit” (67, italics in original).

Part of their beauty is that they are also amazingly free in ways the other characters aren’t. Their gender, class, and racial status do not limit them. Lucy dresses in Emil’s clothes and passes for a white man at the beginning of the text. Emil then dresses as a woman and together—both in drag—they dance in public. Later in the text, Emil forgets to wear pants and walks through town with his “bon-bons” showing, entirely unaware of the attention he receives from all of the astonished women he passes. Emil and Lucy are both almost childlike in their naive carefree playfulness, which allows their beauty to shine and to endure, rather than wither away with care and stress, as happens with so many other characters.
The novel ends in 1854, with Emil and Lucy leaving New Orleans for Haiti, leaving their son in the care of Hiram’s female companion Diana Robert. The yellow fever has passed, and the “wholesalers in human flesh continue to drive black gangs to the market…as if nothing had happened…as if they did not know why the dreadful epidemic had murdered half the city” (537). The last words of the text—“Ruin awaits him who does not take heed!”—echo the words at the bottom of the novel’s title page: “Wo unto he who does not heed.” But this is no call for American politicians or German reformers to come together, to return to some earlier state of grace. It is a simple warning that the revolution is imminent and that none will be safe. The third world epoch of American selfishness is nearly at an end.

By the time Reizenstein published *New Orleans*, the era of the urban mystery novel was likewise ending. During their heyday in the 1840s and 1850s, these novels played a key role in American literary history. American authors took a genre famous for exposing the atrocities of city life and adapted it into a form of national critique. These writers operated, as David S. Reynolds famously put it, “beneath the American Renaissance,” and as the subtitle to his study suggests, reveal the “subversive imagination” of the age. Nonetheless, the power of imagination invoked by the German-Americans novelists is far more concrete than that invoked by other American writers like Lippard. For these German-American writers, the power of the imagination could not be detached from the people doing the imagining, and German-immigrants were, as they saw it, uniquely positioned not only imagine change, but to affect change as well. For many German immigrants, America was not all they imagined it to be, but that didn’t
matter. They had the ability to imagine it better, and thus the power to make it better. They refused to let America change them, and worked hard to use what they saw as their exceptional German romantic natures to change America instead.

**Conclusion**

While Chapters 1-3 dealt with frontier literature in a conventional sense, this chapter explored the urban frontier. Eugene Sue said in his introduction to the *Mysteries of Paris* that his novel was inspired by the frontier novels of James Fenimore Cooper. Like the frontier, Sue saw modern cities as being full of savagery and lawlessness. The cities in these German-American urban mystery novels are also urban frontiers. They are also urban frontiers in Kolodny’s sense of the term—places were people, cultures, and languages meet and mix. Much like the captivity narratives in Chapter 1, the German writers were attuned to the complexity and nuances of the urban frontier. These German-American reformers were disappointed that the American cities were not institutionally empty—that they had firmly established, and already corrupt, laws and institutions, which meant that they could not step in with their own new (and better) models. They nonetheless carefully portrayed the cacophonous and savage nature of the multicultural and transnational antebellum American city. As we continue to look for more nuanced and complex literary frontiers, German-American literature is a rich source of material. This project has only just scratched the surface.
Works Cited


Afterword

In the introduction to this project, I suggested that this study would help answer the following questions asked by Werner Sollors:

Was there, in fact, ever a unified German American tradition, or do quite heterogeneous linguistic, religious, and regional groups and rather unrepresentative figures dominated the scene? How did German-language writers in the United States position themselves in relationship to the various German-speaking areas and countries in Europe, and how did they interact with different ethnic and linguistic groups from the United States? Which new general insights into emigration from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, into American cultural and ethnic relations, and into transatlantic history can be gained by new scholarship and by freshly presented historical sources? (5)

In response to his first question, we’ve seen that German-Americans cannot be approached as a unified community, because they have never been a unified group. They have consistently been divided by religion, by region, and by generational status (first vs. second or third generation immigrants).

Nonetheless, there are threads that run throughout much German-American literature that connects it to both German and American traditions. Dan Diner explained that there is a good and a bad America in the German literary tradition. In German-American texts, German writers praise good America and critique bad America based on their own preconceptions of America before immigration. They use the trope of the good Indian or the bad Indian to praise and critique their new countries. The themes they explore are similar to the themes explored in German literature and in American literature: issues of identity, community, and legitimacy prevail. In fact, these narratives
show that uniquely American themes like identity in crisis are no more exceptionally American than the so-called American genres. The fact that German-American literature deals with themes similar to those expressed in German-language literature in Germany and English-language literature in America suggests that these themes are tied to globalization or industrialization rather than some form of cultural exceptionalism or Sonderweg.

Another thread that connects these texts is that many of these writers use jeremiad-like strategies in their critiques of bad America. All of the writers in this study who critiqued bad America did so in order to argue for a particular kind of national regeneration. Le Roy and Leininger argued for a Slotkinian regeneration through frontier violence. Saur had a more pacifist solution, but all of the captivity narratives addressed in this study suggested that personal and communal regeneration was possible through suffering. Although Sealsfield’s Jacksonian politics argued for regeneration through violence, much of his fiction attempted to cover up that violence through the myth of the Vanishing Indian, and his marriage analogy was useful in portraying an alternative regenerative solution, allowing him to exclude certain groups from national legitimacy through seemingly rational (and consensual) means. Klauprecht and Boernstein were more sincere in their belief that national regeneration was possible through peaceful, transnational friendships. Klauprecht, we saw, went so far as to reconstruct an alternative peaceful history in which Germans in America never sought regeneration through violence, but always through peaceful means—through transnational friendship. Of
course, this was a fictional history—in reality, German Americans participated in frontier violence and exclusionary politics, just as did Anglo-Americans.

In response to Sollors’ second question about how German-language American writers interacted with other ethnic and linguistic groups in America, the answer depends on the particular group and writer and their position in American culture—the extent to which the writer was marginalized and the extent to which he or she desired to overcome that marginalization. Some Germans, like the Le Roys, the Leiningers, and Charles Sealsfield, wanted to overcome their marginalized status in America and did so through an exclusionary politics whereby they gained access to white America at the expense of other groups. Other groups, like the sectarians in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania and the Forty-Eighters in nineteenth-century cities, embraced their marginalized status and used their position as outsiders to argue for change, both for themselves and for other oppressed racial and ethnic American groups.

Sollors also asked what lessons German-American literature can teach us about our transnational history. One lesson that German-American identity politics teaches us is that racial categories, and in particular, black/white and white/red binaries, were complicated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Pennsylvania Germans in eighteenth-century America saw themselves as united or divided by religion more so than language, culture, race or ethnicity. For Germans, “race” (whiteness/ blackness/ Indianness) was not used as a category for defining and policing communal boundaries until the nineteenth century, and even then it was complicated by religion, class, and
generational status. Germans thus provide an interesting example in the history of “whiteness,” urging us to pay more attention to religion and gradations of whiteness.

The specific body of literature explored in this project can also teach us other lessons about transnationalism. The texts explored here show that literary genres long considered “American,” like the captivity narrative and the frontier novel, have never been solely national genres. In fact, German writers used these transnational genres to expose transnational problems in America. In particular, there is much to learn in Emil Klauprecht’s reconstructed history of early America in Cincinnati, in which he rewrote the history of Germans in America, ignoring their complicity in frontier violence against Indians in order to provide a peaceful model for contemporary German-Americans to follow. His fictional alternative history reminds me of Fluck’s warning to transnationalists, which I mentioned in my introduction—that we must be careful not to ignore the painful aspects of our transnational past in an attempt to use our pluralistic and polyglot past as a model for our present and future. It is hard not to read the present in the past, or to rewrite the past to influence the future. It is a lesson that is especially important today.

As I finish this project, it is February 2012 and the Republican primaries are still raging. All of the Republican presidential candidates support a constitutional amendment that would make English the official language of America. In recent news, Alejandrina Cabrera was removed from the ballot in San Luis, Arizona, for not being proficient in English, even though the city she would have served was 98.7 percent Hispanic (Myers). Her case has revitalized the discussion about multilingual America. Not surprisingly,
some news articles suggest that this Official English Movement would promote and protect diversity. For example, a writer for the Fox News site *Fox News Latino* says, “Knowledge of English leads to the realization of the American Dream of increased economic opportunity and the ability to become a more productive member of society. After all, how can one fully appreciate all that America has to offer, and how can one participate fully in the democratic process, without a firm grasp of the English language?” (Mujica) I am reminded of the German Charity School debates of eighteenth century Pennsylvania. The message is still, Learn English for your own good; the subtext is still, You cannot be legitimate Americans or good citizens unless you suppress your own language in favor of English. I am not the only one who has made this connection, either. Many news sites are giving their readers mini-history lessons about Germans in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania, reminding Americans that we have been here before.

Transnationalist Americanists may be tempted to, like Klauprecht, rewrite our past to influence our present and affect our future—to write our own jeremiads. We may want to argue for regeneration through multilingualism or transnationalism, as the German writers in this study argued for regeneration through violence or marriage or friendship. We must not forget the lessons of the past, however—that transnational contact has always been full of both pleasure and pain. In an age of globalization, we are entering a new wave of transnationalism in America. Hopefully, we can continue to learn from the transnational crises of our past rather than pretending that they never happened. German-America is an excellent place to start.
Works Cited


Bibliography


---. “What will become of Pennsylvania?: English Quakers, German Sectarians, and the Common Language of Suffering For Peace.” Georgia Workshop in Early


---. *Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind*. Labaree and Bell 4: 234.


Moltmann, Günter. “The Pattern of German Emigration to the United States in the Nineteenth Century.” America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-


Uhlendorf, Bernhard Alexander. *Charles Sealsfield; ethnic elements and national problems in his works*. Chicago, Ill., 1922.


