Travel Writing and Transnational Relations: Francis Lieber as *The Stranger in America*

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ABSTRACT: In this paper I analyze Francis Lieber's 1835 travel book *The Stranger in America* with regard to Lieber's portrayal of transnational relations. By exploring his account of US culture, politics, and institutions, and by examining the comparative framework he cultivates, I carve out Lieber's transnational perspective. To investigate whether he was indeed the "Stranger in America" he claims to be, I map out the identity he claims for himself. I conclude that Lieber purposely situated himself as a cultural intermediary to profit from a position of authority and to pave the way for a future in US political science and academia.

KEYWORDS: Transnational Relations; Travel Books; Travel Writing; Francis Lieber; The Stranger in America; Migration; Cultural Studies; Political Science

> Travel writing, one may argue, is the most socially important of all literary genres. It records our temporal and spatial progress. It throws light on how we define ourselves and on how we identify others. Its construction of our sense of 'me' and 'you', 'us' and 'them', operates on individual and national levels and in the realms of psychology, society and economics. The processes of affiliation and differentiation at play within it can work to forge alliances, precipitate crises and provoke wars.
>
> (Youngs 1)

Introduction: A Transnational Biography

In 1835 German migrant Francis Lieber published *The Stranger in America; Or, Letters to a Gentleman in Germany: Comprising Sketches of the Manners, Society, and National Peculiarities of the United States* in Philadelphia and London.[1] This book contains seventeen letters in which Lieber outlines his impressions of culture, institutions, and politics in the United States. As a migrant, he chose to compare his experiences in the US with the life and institutions of his home country Germany. Throughout his life, Lieber cultivated a transnational mindset: by way of extensive correspondence he established a vast transnational network between countries on different sides of the Atlantic. Lieber furthered

[1] The London version was published under the slightly different title *The Stranger in America: Comprising Sketches of the Manners, Society, and National Peculiarities of the United States, In a Series of Letters to a Friend in Europe*. Throughout this article, I will use a shortened version of the title, namely *The Stranger in America*.

transnational knowledge exchange through his publications and the interexchange of books and documents across the Atlantic. He dedicated his life to transnational communication and exchange and even acted as an umpire between Mexico and the US following the Mexican-American war. The US as a young republic with an awe-inspiring landscape, a multicultural society, and a novel political system aroused the interest of many in Europe—some were eager to see the US fail in their endeavors as an independent nation but others enjoyed descriptions of a country simultaneously similar and vastly different from their own. With *The Stranger in America*, Lieber made the culture and landscape of the US accessible to those who were interested in an examination of the political and legal system, to those who wondered about daily life in the new republic, and to those who were curious but could not afford the expensive journey to the American continent.

Franz 'Francis' Lieber was born in Berlin, Prussia, in 1798, the son of a merchant. He grew up in Berlin and as a teenager he joined Friedrich Ludwig Jahn's nationalist *Turner* movement.[2] In 1815 Lieber volunteered to fight in the war against Napoleon and was wounded in battle at Namur. He returned to Berlin, where he was arrested by the Prussian authorities in connection with the murder of August von Kotzebue in 1819. Lieber was released soon afterwards but remained under surveillance. His application to the University of Berlin (today Humboldt University of Berlin) was rejected by the Prussian administration and he was forced to attend university in Jena and Halle instead. During the Greek War of Independence in 1821, Lieber spent a few months in Greece and Italy. In 1823 he returned to Germany and attended university in Halle, where he was again arrested and accused of subversive activities. While he was released after seven months and ceased associations with the *Turner* movement, police continued to interrogate Lieber repeatedly and eventually he decided to leave Germany. In 1826 he secretly moved to London, where he stayed for a year. In 1827, at twenty-nine years old, Lieber migrated to the US as a political refugee (Schnurmann 37-78). He settled in Boston and later moved to New York City, where he gained US citizenship in 1832. Originally a studied mathematician with a PhD, Lieber worked as a swim teacher, gym instructor, publisher, author, translator, trans-Atlantic book broker (Schnurmann 11, 20), and university professor and was one of the most prolific thinkers and writers of the nineteenth century.

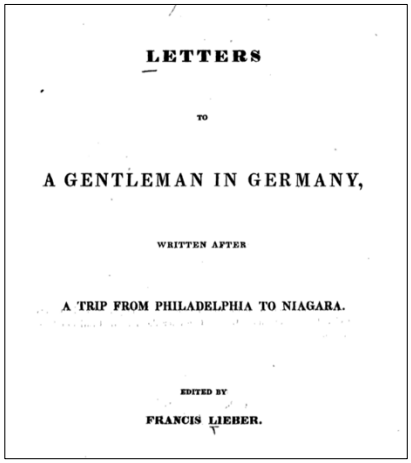
In his monographs, Lieber covered a variety of subjects ranging from law to politics to poetry and song. Throughout his life he cultivated an extensive transnational network and, in the

[2] The *Turner* movement emerged in the early nineteenth century in Germany, established by Friedrich Ludwig Jahn. While Jahn promoted gymnastics and physical training, the *Turner* movement had a political agenda: the gymnasts engaged in paramilitary training and participated in the national movement for German independence and unity. Their worldview was shaped by ethnocentrism—Claudia Schnurmann describes the *Turner* movement as a community in which xenophobia, antisemitism, and misogyny ran rampant. Lieber partook in the rhetoric of the *Turner* movement; however, later in life he married Mathilde Oppenheimer and renounced his antisemitic beliefs (Schnurmann 59). Like Lieber, other members of the *Turner* movement migrated to the US. Some established *Turner* associations there, whose members not only promoted physical fitness but were also politically active.

process, interacted with numerous well-known scholars, lawyers, and politicians on both sides of the Atlantic. In his life-long endeavor to examine cultural differences, establish transnational relations, and mediate between Germany, his home country, and the US, his chosen home, Lieber published several works analyzing and comparing German and US-American institutions. *The Stranger in America* is an early example of such a work. In this article I argue that Lieber aimed to carve out a niche as a cultural negotiator and an expert on the US when he published *The Stranger in America*. By portraying himself as a "Stranger" he positioned himself as a neutral observer of US politics, customs, and mentalities. He hoped this reputation would help him secure a position of authority within US high society and obtain a professorship in his new home and, thus, a future in academia.

The Stranger in America: Publication History

In 1834, Lieber published an earlier version of *The Stranger in America* in Philadelphia under the title *Letters to a Gentleman in Germany, Written After A Trip From Philadelphia to Niagara*. Interestingly, in this earlier version Lieber positioned himself as the editor of the work and did not claim authorship (Fig. 1).


LETTERS

TO

A GENTLEMAN IN GERMANY,

WRITTEN AFTER

A TRIP FROM PHILADELPHIA TO NIAGARA.

EDITED BY

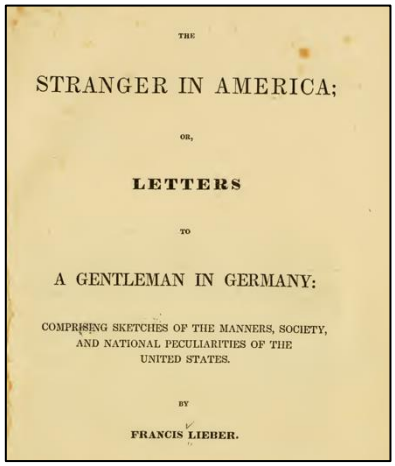
FRANCIS LIEBER.

Fig. 1. Title page of *Letters to a Gentleman in Germany* (1834) showing Lieber as the editor.

Lieber dedicated the work to Washington Irving, who had recently returned from a seventeen-year stretch of living in Europe, where he acted as a diplomat and negotiator between Great Britain and the United States.[3] In the foreword Lieber stated that in dedicating the work to Irving "I know that I have but acted in accordance with the view of the author, which in this case entirely coincides with my own" (*Letters*). He thus denied authorship and instead constructed a fictional author as a stand-in. In 1835, when *The*

[3] Irving sent Lieber a letter on November 15, 1834, asking Lieber to "accept my sincere acknowledgements of the honor you have done me in dedicating to me your new work." He continues, "[t]hinking with such a liberal and enlightened spirit of my country, its people and its institutions. a [sic] book of this kind, so ably executed, cannot fail to have a wide circulation on both sides of the 26tlantic [sic], and to do a great deal of good." (Washington Irving, New York, to Francis Lieber, Philadelphia, November 15, 1834, South Caroliniana Library, Francis Lieber Papers).

Stranger in America was published in Philadelphia and London, Lieber named himself as author rather than editor. Notably, the contents of all three versions are identical (Fig. 2). Even the foreword remains unchanged, causing a sense of confusion about the authorship.


THE

STRANGER IN AMERICA;

OR,

LETTERS

TO

A GENTLEMAN IN GERMANY:

COMPRISING SKETCHES OF THE MANNERS, SOCIETY, AND NATIONAL PECULIARITIES OF THE UNITED STATES.

BY

FRANCIS LIEBER.

Fig. 2. Title page of *The Stranger in America* (1835) showing Lieber as the author.

This paper focuses on the version best-known today: *The Stranger in America; Or, Letters to a Gentleman in Germany: Comprising Sketches of the Manners, Society, and National Peculiarities of the United States*. Lieber published this work in Philadelphia in 1835, after eight years of living in the US. The work was published simultaneously in London under a slightly different title and consequently, the work exists in three versions with three titles. The section of the title, "Gentleman in Germany," was likely substituted with "a friend in Europe" in the English title to expand the pool of prospective readers and make the work more attractive to British audiences. The segment "The Stranger in America" was likely added to the second and third version to offer a catchy title, imbued with allusions. The title works as a direct reference to Charles William Janson's *The Stranger in America*, published in 1807. Janson resided in the United States from 1793 until 1805 and laid down his impressions and experiences in 500 pages. As Janson points out in the preface to his work, his stay in the US disappointed him and eventually he returned to England, his home country (v-vii). While Lieber's work showcases a more positive attitude towards the US, he shares certain biographical commonalities with Janson and the structure and content of his work also resemble Janson's. Where Lieber writes in letters, Janson structured his work in chapters, yet both authors deal with topics such as climate, geography, religion, legal institutions, and transportation and infrastructure. The title section "Letters to a Gentleman in Germany" and the division of the content into letters furthermore bears a certain resemblance to a 1782 work titled *Letters from an American Farmer; Describing Certain Provincial Situations, Manners, and Customs, Not Generally Known; and Conveying Some Idea of the Late and Present Interior Circumstances of the British Colonies in North America. Written for the Information of a Friend in England*. This collection of letters written by J. Hector St. John de Crèvecœur details his experiences during the 26 years he lived in

America.[4] Due to its popularity in Europe and due to the similarities in title and structure, it seems possible that Lieber read *Letters from an American Farmer* and references it in his title. While this conclusion remains unproven, it can certainly be said that Lieber's *The Stranger in America* stands within a tradition of works written by European migrants, who traveled or settled in the US and aspired to convey aspects of US culture through their works.

The Question of Genre: Travel Books

Lieber's *The Stranger in America* is part of the genre of travel books, popular during the nineteenth century. Europeans were curious about what life was like in the "new world" but only a few could afford a journey across the Atlantic. Thus, most relied on travel reports to experience traveling second-hand. These readers were part of Lieber's target audience. As Barbara Korte points out, ever since the 1750s travel writing was "a prestigious, prolific and highly popular genre in Europe, being a mainstay of the rapidly expanding print market" (173). Early travel books emerged within the context of European colonialism and conquest and included works by sailors, missionaries, and diplomats. During the Enlightenment period, the urge to understand the world and promote science encouraged travel. While scientific exploration and the study of non-Western Indigenous cultures motivated expeditions, all travel during this period was inextricably linked to colonial expansion, resource exploitation, and land annexation and upheld notions of Western and white supremacy, as Korte shows (174-76). She identifies a "centrality of travel and cultural encounters in the intellectual life" of the late eighteenth century and during the Romantic period (174). Travelers wished to learn about other cultures but also to understand themselves better, and as travel writing evolved into an act of self-exploration, it also became more autobiographical and individualistic (178-79). In the second half of the eighteenth century, picturesque tourism—travel for aesthetic appreciation—developed (180). As the idea of "tourism" gained in popularity, travel became intertwined with "the rise of the West to global dominance, and the spread of Western modernity" (173). A global network of transport and trade spanned across many countries, enabling easier travel (174). As Barbara Korte points out, the rise of capitalism "helped to democratize but also to commoditize travel as it generated the means and leisure time" necessary to embark on journeys (173). Some travelers aimed to escape Western notions of modernity but ironically facilitated its expansion through travel into distant regions (180). During the second half of the nineteenth century, the publication of women's travel writing became more frequent (176). Guidebooks also gained in popularity as middle-class tourists began to travel more frequently and in larger groups (180). Lieber's work can be situated within this context of

[4] Crèvecœur fought in several wars, traveled the continent, became a naturalized British subject and eventually settled on land he had purchased in New York. In 1778 he was accused of being a Revolutionary spy and was imprisoned for two years. Upon his release he returned to Europe. His series of letters written to a friend in England was published in London shortly after his arrival in 1780 and became very popular in Western Europe (Grabo 159, 172).

travel writing as autobiographical self-exploration, the rise of globalization through colonialism, and the emergence of tourism. *The Stranger in America* stands both as guidebook to US politics and culture and as an autobiographical narrative about Lieber's migration and transnational identity.

The emergence of guidebooks indicates an inherent generic issue: how to define the genre of travel writing. Due to its "hybrid nature," travel writing accommodates different genres and "straddl[es] the border between fiction and fact," as Grzegorz Moroz points out (23, 24). Paul Fussell differentiates between travel books and guidebooks. Travel books, Fussell argues, are "a sub-species of memoir in which the autobiographical narrative arises from the speaker's encounter with distant or unfamiliar data, and in which the narrative—unlike that in a novel or a romance—claims literal validity by constant reference to actuality" (203). While travel books contain narrative elements and combine them with a claim of actuality, guidebooks are neither autobiographical, nor are they "sustained by a narrative exploiting the devices of fiction" (203). Instead, they are written for fellow travelers who plan to venture on the same journey (203). Jan Borm identifies texts with predominately fictional and texts with predominately non-fictional elements within the genre of travel writing (13). Following his definition, a travel book is

> [a]ny narrative characterized by a non-fiction dominant that relates (almost always) in the first person a journey or journeys that the reader supposes to have taken place in reality while assuming or presupposing that author, narrator, and principal character are but one or identical. (Borm 17)

The Stranger in America can be appropriately delineated as a first-person narrative with a non-fiction dominant. The events described in *The Stranger in America* are identical to events in Lieber's life, suggesting that author and narrator are identical.[5] Lieber wrote the book following a documented trip to Niagara Falls in 1834, and although he wrote many letters during his journeys, the letters in *The Stranger in America* are not included in his estate, suggesting they were indeed addressed to a fictional friend.[6] In this text, Lieber combines the study of US society with a retelling of his journey, producing a literary text which, in Charles Forsdick's words, is "situated somewhere between scientific observation and fiction, while simultaneously problematizing any clear-cut distinction of those two poles" (58). In this hybridity lies the text's potential: it offers descriptions of manners, customs, and institutions in the US, and positions them within a narrative of the author's journey. *The Stranger in America* consists of seventeen letters addressed to a gentleman in Germany, or, in the version published in England, to a friend in Europe. The volume contains

[5] This includes minute details included in *The Stranger in America* which Lieber also recorded in actual letters. An example would be the exchange between him and his father on page 99, which can also be found—though in German—in a letter Lieber sent to his fiancé Mathilde Oppenheimer in 1827 (Schnurmann 48).

[6] According to his diary entries, Lieber left for a trip to Niagara Falls on June 3, 1834. On July 18 of the same year Lieber writes in his diary "At present the following subjects are continually in my head: Letter on my Trip to Niagara…" (*Life and Letters* 99).

only Lieber's side of the conversation, and the letters reflect the progress of Lieber's journey from Philadelphia to Niagara Falls and include a description of the sights. Each letter focuses broadly on a topic of interest, which Lieber elaborates on through a combination of landscape descriptions, retellings of experiences, and expanding comments. These topics include the political institutions of the US, the transport and communication infrastructure, US society and its different social groups, a flashback to Lieber's experiences during the battle at Waterloo,[7] a comparison between European and US cities, the disposition of US-Americans as a people, an examination of US-American English and naming practices in the US, an opinion piece on religion in the US, and depictions of the sublimity of nature on the North American continent. The focus is on Lieber's comments rather than the descriptions of the landscapes and encounters. Unlike in an actual travel report, the account of Lieber's journey acts as a stepping stone to his examination of US culture and institutions. Lieber bases his assessments of society and institutions largely on his own observations but offers additional information and references in footnotes.

In the following sections, I examine Francis Lieber's transnational perspective on the US and US-American customs, mentality, and politics. I explore Lieber's descriptions of US society and culture and argue that with *The Stranger in America*, Lieber's goal was to firmly establish himself as an authority on US politics and institutions. In my analysis I consider instances where Lieber touches on transnational relations in order to carve out his identity as a cultural negotiator. Therefore, I bring together relevant information contained in different letters, rather than considering the letters chronologically. An examination of Lieber's transnational identity also allows for the inspection of transnational relations in general and offers a glimpse into the experience of German migrants in the US during the nineteenth century.

"The whole social life of the Americans"—Transnational Comparison and Relations in *The Stranger in America*

As Lieber explains early on, he chose to write in the form of short letters to break down the subject matter and make it accessible to a large audience (*Stranger* 9). While the US-American title indicates an exchange with someone in Germany, Lieber chose to write in English. Thus, he made his work accessible to those in the US and England but not to many of his former compatriots in the German states. This decision indicates that German readers were not Lieber's main target audience. Likely, Lieber intended for his work to be read in the US and in Great Britain in particular.[8] This is substantiated by the fact that Lieber explains elements of German culture in greater detail than a German addressee would require. As a

[7] As Claudia Schnurmann points out, Lieber liked to claim that he had fought in the battle at Waterloo on June 18, 1815. In fact, Lieber was wounded in a battle at Namur and never reached Waterloo (50).

[8] This is in accordance with most of his other works, which were largely written in English and published in the US.

political refugee, Lieber could not return to Prussia at the time of publication; he had also been naturalized as a US citizen in 1832. While he still felt a deep connection to his home country, his choices indicate that he wished to carve out a niche for himself in US society through this work. Lieber had already gained some recognition as the editor and co-author of the *Encyclopædia Americana*, the first encyclopedia of keywords in US culture and politics. With *The Stranger in America*, he aimed to cement his position as a cultural intermediary. A review of Lieber's *Reminiscences of an Intercourse with Mr. Niebuhr*, authored by Edgar Allan Poe in the *Southern Literary Messenger* in 1836, proves that *The Stranger in America* was well received in the US: in the review Poe names *The Stranger in America* as Lieber's only former work and calls it "two volumes, full of interest and extensively circulated" ("Critical Notices" 125).[9]

Lieber begins his work by confronting the genre of travel writing. He criticizes other travel writers who, he claims, merely roam a country for a few weeks and afterwards state their opinions in travel books. Lieber likens these authors to "inexperienced youths, to whom every thing is new, every thing important," who fail "to speak sensibly of a people and their institutions" (14). This passage highlights what Lieber demands of travel writers, himself included: to "speak sensibly" of a country, to spend more time there than a short vacation, and to engage seriously with the people, to be able to convey substantiated information. By demanding thorough research and rejecting a simple narrative, Lieber simultaneously characterizes his own approach as nuanced and reliable. The US, he claims, is neither as "primitive" as critics claim, nor filled with "heroes and matchless citizens […] pure philanthropists and never-sullied politicians" (15-16). To offer a refined approach to his cultural study, Lieber aims to look at "the essence of things," and to contextualize them through personal experience (14). He argues that his occupation and long residence in the country have given him ample opportunity to collect "more materials in regard to the United States than, perhaps, ever a native of a foreign country" (14, 18). In keeping with his usual sense of grandeur, Lieber positions himself as a pioneer of cultural studies and an authority on US culture.[10] He considers himself "intimately acquainted with the whole social life of the Americans," but interestingly Lieber introduces the category of "the Americans" without detailing whom exactly he is referring to—despite being a naturalized citizen, he defines

[9] *The Stranger in America* was not, in fact, Lieber's first work. He published two works in German, which were not circulated in the US (*Tagebuch meines Aufenthaltes in Griechenland während der Monate Januar, Februar und März im Jahre 1822*, Leipzig 1823; *Vierzehn Wein- und Wonnelieder*, Berlin 1826, written during his time in prison and published under the pseudonym Franz Arnold). Lieber also authored many articles in the *Encyclopædia Americana,* but *The Stranger in America* was his first well-received literary work published in the US.

[10] In this first letter, Lieber also states that he will, at some point, author a comprehensive treatise on US institutions, people, and the "true state of civilization" but that for now theology, law, and jurisprudence cannot be covered appropriately in letters (20). While his statements seem boastful, Lieber followed up his claims with the publication of *Manual of Political Ethics* (1838), *Legal and Political Hermeneutics* (1839), *Essays on Property and Labor* (1841), and *On Civil Liberty and Self-Government* (1853). He analyzed in depth political and legal institutions and became one of the leading political science scholars in the US.

himself in opposition to "the Americans" (18). He thus achieves a seemingly detached position—he presents himself as an objective observer.

Lieber quickly focuses on the political institutions of the young republic. He proposes that in the US, and especially in the West, "the boundaries of organized society, the incipient stages of political relations, of law and justice [are] laid bare, as if prepared for the student of history, and of the gradual development of man as a member of political society" (18). Lieber is interested in historical analysis and considers the US an alluring case for the study of innovative political institutions and of human nature. Established countries could benefit from observing this social experiment, he claims. Through comparison with European institutions, Lieber applies a decidedly transnational perspective and gleans knowledge about law and politics from the innovations put to the test in the US. Lieber then explores what makes the US unique as a nation and which factors contribute to the—according to him—superior institutions, laws, and government in the US. In this country, he proposes, "a thousand favorable circumstances concur" and enable "a far greater amount of liberty […] than ever was possible with any other nation, or will ever be at any future period" (32). US history combines "persecuted colonists, severed from the mother country" with a territory "vast and fertile," modern means of communication, a great distance to Europe, and a majority of Protestant migrants, settled in different colonies and yet "all of one metal" (33).[11] By sharing his impressions gathered at a city election in Philadelphia, Lieber emphasizes the pluralism and égalité of opinions in the US: "I believe that nowhere else do men allow, with so much good humor, every one to have and follow his political opinion […] it is because people here have always been accustomed to acknowledge in every one the right politically to act as he thinks best" (28-29). The young republic showcases all the features necessary for successful governance, namely two houses, separation of powers, an independent judiciary, freedom of the press, and legislation that stands above the president (31). Free elections secure democracy and are paid for with taxes (26). The law possesses extraordinary authority and is upheld by all citizens (34). Through the comparison with other models of government, Lieber arrives at the conclusion that "there never was a nation so fitted […] to solve a number of difficult political problems, as the Americans" (30). US citizens improved upon their individual cultural and political heritage, Lieber claims, and in turn the cultural and political influence of the US on Europe is considerable and will only expand further throughout the nineteenth century (32).

Inspired by his own journey on steamboats and railroads, Lieber explores the transport system in the US and its relation to communication and national unity. "The history of civilization," he argues, "runs parallel with the history of communication" (44). In the US everyone is eager to read and every traveler is obliged to transport neighbors' letters from

[11] Throughout this work, Lieber ignores the misery the US-American "social experiment" caused to Indigenous nations and victims of the slave trade. He does not recognize the sovereignty of Indigenous nations and disregards the opportunity to study their social structures, which prove so vastly different from European societies.

place to place (41-42). If two steam trains pass each other, newspapers are exchanged between passengers through the windows (42). Railroads and canals are built by "a self-taxing people" and offer a form of transport where "all trades and classes" meet (48, 43). Steamboats are essential to the connection and unity between the different states; the boats travel immense distances to transport passengers, packages, and newspapers, and thus act as "the conductors of the political fluid" (43). The vastness of the country propels technical innovation and distances are measured by a different scale in the US, literally and figuratively. As Lieber argues, "[t]he early settlers had to think of many thousand miles off, whenever they thought of their beloved home. Thus, a far different unit by which to estimate other distances, was laid down in their minds" (285). Nonetheless, US citizens are still "intimately connected" with Europe; the home of their ancestors. The deep connection between Europe and the US is a continuous theme in this text, highlighting the importance Lieber attributes to transnational relations. If compared with Europeans, the US citizen "distinguishes himself […] by a restlessness, a striving and driving onward" (48). Frequent innovation and a discontent with the status quo are the consequences in a "moving nation" which would be ruined were it to "counteract [its] own impetus" (49, 288). This constant movement results from "[a] young country, placed in a very peculiar situation, by the side of the most civilized and old nations" (169). Lieber strongly emphasizes the transatlantic interconnectedness of Europe and North America: each nation shapes all others and none exist in a vacuum. Transnational ties between countries come with benefits and duties. They encourage trade and cultural exchange but they also require political and legal cooperation. Decisions on a national level have repercussions for countries on the opposite side of the Atlantic and thus, the cultivation of transnational relations cannot be neglected. He also recommends traveling to experience other cultures and to share one's own: anyone, Lieber claims, profits from traveling and getting to know other countries. Only by learning a foreign language can one learn about one's own language and only by learning about other countries can one understand one's own culture (214). Lieber assigns attributes to specific cultures and argues that cultural exchange through traveling expands and enriches both cultures involved. Germans in particular, he suggests, are changed for the better by travel as they "obtai[n] more practical views of things and lear[n] to keep their diffusive thinking more within definite limits" (214). Here Lieber illustrates a process of cultural transmission by extrapolating from his own experience as a German migrant, whose scattered and aloof thoughts became more focused and concise through contact with cultures foreign to him.

During his journey, Lieber meets many Germans traveling through New York towards Michigan (201). He continues his discussion of transnational relations by exploring cultural similarities and differences as well as the processes of cultural transmission and adaptation. As an immigrant, he highlights the similarities between members of different cultures:

> An emigrant leaves the place of his birth, travels many hundred miles through a foreign country, crosses the wide ocean, travels a thousand miles into the interior of another hemisphere, and builds his hut. He is among strangers, it is true, yet he finds

> there the same dress, the same manners, the same principles of morality, the same God. If the language which surrounds him in his new country, be not his native tongue, the sentiments, views, and customs of the people, whose neighbor he has become, are mainly those with which he has grown up, and the friendlessness of a foreign tongue, which must have weighed most heavily upon the mind of an exile in antiquity, loses much of its asperity. (202)

Due to the interconnectedness of (specific) cultures, a migrant can feel at home in another country—though Lieber clearly refers only to members of (former) colonies here, who share language, religion, and customs with their "mother country." Additionally, Lieber does not attribute the characteristics presented to German *culture* but rather to race. He refers to the construct of a white European race, the members of which often share religion, morality, and manners. He also does not consider migration to other, truly foreign regions. Similarly, he ignores the existence of Indigenous nations on the same continent, who speak vastly different languages and cultivate dissimilar sentiments and customs.

While Lieber highlights transnational similarities throughout his discussion of immigration, he also emphasizes characteristics he deems inherent to a specific culture. German migrants, for example, he characterizes as "sober, industrious, and excellent farmers" (58). "The German," he states, is frugal and economic, rejects speculation, and takes little pride in the "appearance of domestic and substantial comfort" (59-60). Through contact with US culture, German migrants then change and adapt—as long as they intermingle with US-Americans. Lieber promotes active cultural exchanges and criticizes migrants who isolate in small communities when he states: "the current of civilization of the country in which they live does not reach them; and they are equally cut off from that of their mother country: mental stagnation is the consequence. They remain a foreign element, an ill-jointed part of the great machinery" (62). The technical metaphor of a great machine emphasizes that Lieber considers migrants valuable additions to US society—as long as they prove useful and could be integrated. Migrants should, Lieber believes, accept both rights and duties that come with citizenship. Those who assimilate may choose their own career, he argues, and everyone could be naturalized after just five years of residency and then:

> enjo[y] every privilege of which a free-born American can boast, an unstinted citizenship[…] The least that could be expected, in return for such a boon […] would be the frankest and most heartfelt union, in every thing, with the nation, which so hospitably makes no difference between its own sons and the new comers […]. Whatever the inmost feelings of an emigrant toward his native country may be, and with every generous heart will be, as a citizen of America, he should be American and *American only*, or let him remain alien. (204; emphasis added)

While Lieber seems to favor interconnectedness, he demands that immigrants cast off their former identity to be accepted as citizens of the US. While they may continue to feel a sense of connection to their home country internally, they must accept a new identity as a citizen

of the US and discard their old associations. Thus, Lieber simultaneously demands a detachment from old national affiliations and a lively exchange with fellow US-Americans. The proposed goal is to become a fully-integrated and naturalized US-American, who will not merely enjoy the benefits of citizenship but also serve the nation. Interestingly, Lieber seems to reject the notion of a hybrid identity or even a dual citizenship for migrants such as himself. This seems surprising since Lieber often emphasizes transnational connections as well as customs and mentalities shared among nations.

Throughout his letters, Lieber discusses such commonalities that bring together different cultures. Transnational exchange through elements such as food, music, science, trade or letters benefits involved nations and demonstrates, he claims, "a universal acknowledgement of certain broad principles of honor and morality" (184). Such connecting elements strengthen transnational relations, enable cultural exchange, and smooth over existing differences. He discusses food as a cultural artifact: eating habits differ, yet "food is the only thing upon which poor mankind can agree," he writes (139). Food accomplishes "[w]hat neither religious forbearance, nor the love of country can effect […] What would become of mankind were not this cement in existence, to hold families, nations, mankind together," Lieber asks (139). While all nations value food immensely, its potentials are often underestimated: food brings people together and drives trade and the economy. Lieber goes so far as to claim that civilization itself is inextricably intertwined with appetite and food (136). Other aspects shared among most cultures are mathematics and music, which both "defy the bars of nations and are understood through all zones alike. The one proceeding from the absolute understanding, and addressing it, the other the pure language of feeling—both as universal as the principles of the understanding and the elementary feelings of the soul" (177). Lieber's emphasis of cultural similarities and transnational agreements throughout his work stresses his core belief that while cultures differ, they share a common essence.

Alongside cultural connections Lieber also focuses on physical connections between countries: the sea connects many nations, this "same swelling and heaving mass [which] extends from here to China […] [which] has rolled and roared for years without number[…] [which] connects the most distant nations, and on its back rides history" (140). Across the sea, letters and packages travel and connect migrants with their home country and travelers with their new acquaintances. Newspapers make news from other countries quickly accessible (156). The postal system "shows strikingly the existence of a common bond and trust among civilized nations; so does a letter deposited in a post-office of the farthest west of Missouri, which safely arrives in a village in the most eastern part of Germany, if it only has the two words 'Via New York and Havre' on its direction" (184). Via the transport and postal system, national borders can be crossed and transnational relations maintained, allowing for mutual reciprocal influence.

Francis Lieber—A Citizen Of Two Worlds[12]

The notion of Lieber's own identity in the text raises the question: where does he position himself in relation to the US and US citizens? As transpires from the text, Lieber was a US citizen with all rights and duties. He felt intensely patriotic towards the US and was deeply involved in all matters of national politics. He could not return to his home country Germany—his negative experiences with government authorities may be responsible for Lieber devaluing German culture and praising the US government throughout this text. His attempts to cultivate his own identity as a US citizen may also explain the occasional rejection of deep connections with Germany, despite Lieber's markedly transnational identity. Simultaneously, Lieber likely positioned himself as apart from US-Americans for the purposes of this work: with *The Stranger in America* he claimed a position as transnational negotiator between different parties. When paratext, publication history, and content of this work are considered in alignment, it becomes clear that Lieber aimed to create a work which would serve as a tool in transnational—and transcultural—communication. He recognized the potential inherent in his position as a migrant at home in two countries and decided to explain one culture to another.

Whether Lieber intended to publish his work in Germany is uncertain. Yet judging by the available evidence, he directed his work at the Anglosphere in particular. He places his explanations of US culture and politics within a framework of transnational comparisons and his work contributes to the establishment and cultivation of transnational relationships. While addressing either "a gentleman in Germany" or "a friend in Europe" Lieber nonetheless directs his comments and—occasionally—advice to more than one party. His work addresses those who planned to travel or migrate to the US, those who already dwelled in the US as migrants, and those in Great Britain who were merely interested in the current state of the young republic. Last but certainly not least, as proven by its publication in Philadelphia, Lieber also intended for US-Americans to read his work. With the earlier publication of the *Encyclopædia Americana*, Lieber began carving out a niche for himself as a cultural negotiator, who analyzed and conveyed US culture and politics to US-Americans. He followed up his efforts to establish himself as an authority on US culture and politics with *The Stranger in America*. As an accessible and entertaining travel book with short letters, it was likely to reach a wider audience than an extensive encyclopedia. With the combination of both works, Lieber laid the foundation for more scientific examinations of US culture, law, and politics in his later works. He cultivated a proto-academic stance, which helped him attain a professorship for history and political economy at South Carolina College and—later

[12] This title is inspired by *Franz Lieber, ein Bürger zweier Welten*, a work by Hugo Preuß, published in 1886. Preuß states that Marie-Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de La Fayette (1757-1834) first received the epithet "citizen of two worlds" after the Frenchman fought against Great Britain in the American Revolutionary War (1775-1783). Preuß claims that many "citizens of two worlds" from Germany connect America and Europe through an indestructible net of individual threads, maintained by migrants such as Lieber (Preuß 3-4).

on—a prestigious professorship for history and political science at Columbia College.[13] Lieber transformed his private fascination with, and enthusiasm for, US law and politics into methodical analysis and in many ways, he helped establish political and social sciences in the US (Weiss 273).

Conclusion: A Forerunner to American Studies

Analyzing a work like *The Stranger in America*, written from a transnational point of view and focused on transnational relations and comparisons, adds a valuable perspective to the field of American studies. *The Stranger in America* provides insights into US culture, politics, law, and history, embedded within a transnational context. Lieber authored a travel book in which he combined his perspectives as a migrant and a traveler. By retelling his experiences of a recent trip to Niagara Falls, Lieber aligns anecdotes from his travels with deeper explorations of US culture and politics. He supplements his analysis with direct comparisons between aspects of German or European and US-American cultural and political institutions. As an ardent supporter of transnational relationships and exchange, he believed that nations could learn and benefit from each other. Nevertheless, he only included certain nations in his call for transnational relationships and restricted himself to comparison with European nations. While Lieber cultivated a decidedly transnational perspective through his own migratory experiences, he engaged in cultural essentialism and perpetuated the construct of a white European race with shared characteristics. His analysis of culture and politics in North America ignores Indigenous nations and largely disregards the lived realities of enslaved humans. This highlights the restrictive nature of Lieber's perspective: when he speaks of "Americans," he focuses only on US citizens. Interestingly, he excludes himself from his category of "American," despite being a naturalized citizen, and instead positions himself as a stranger. Lieber places significant value on his identity as a citizen of the US, not just a traveler or temporary visitor. He applied for citizenship immediately after completing the required five years of residence and cultivated a US-American identity (Schnurmann 142). Lieber claimed all rights citizenship granted him and readily accepted all duties that came with it. Within the work he emphasized that "an unstinted citizenship" is available to "any alien" (204)—a claim factually untrue since citizenship was only available to white European males at that time. Thus, Lieber must have purposely excluded himself from the category "US-American" in this work in order to retain his detached and seemingly objective position. While Lieber branded himself a "Stranger in America," he simultaneously considered himself an authority on US culture and politics. He situated himself as a stranger in order to claim objectivity and to present himself as a cultural negotiator, a profitable position. Yet as a refugee and citizen of the US, Lieber adopted a decidedly transnational identity and felt part of two cultures.

[13] Today, South Carolina College is the University of South Carolina in Columbia. Columbia College is now Columbia University in New York City.

Though colored by subjective assessments, Lieber's works offer valuable information on nineteenth-century US society, politics, and institutions. Through direct comparison with other cultures Lieber positions the US within a transnational network and paints a broader picture of the complex transnational relations at the time. His work encourages drawing conclusions regarding cultural similarities and differences, potential areas of conflict, and processes of identity formation. He investigated the legal system and actively participated in the formative processes that took place in the US during the nineteenth century.[14] Lieber traveled the country to collect data and knowledge on US customs, language, and politics. He processed his findings in publications, such as the *Encyclopædia Americana*, and *The Stranger in America*. As a professor teaching young students, he passed on his collected knowledge in his lectures and penned thorough analyses of US political and legal institutions. Thus, Lieber can be considered an important forerunner to American Studies.

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[14] Lieber lobbied Congress in order to change international copyright legislation and acted as umpire between the US and Mexico following the Mexican-American War. At the request of president Abraham Lincoln Lieber drafted the General Orders No. 100 applied by the Union Forces during the Civil War.

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