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**Through Others' Eyes:
Narratives of German Women
Travelling in Nineteenth-Century America**

. . . eben nur die schlichten
Mittheilungen einer Frau . . .¹

Scholarly inquiry into travel narratives written by women has been stimulated by renewed interest in travel literature in general as well as by women's studies. Since the late 1970s, increased attention has been given travel narratives, narratives based on real, not fictional, journeys wherein the author mixes personal experience with information regarding the cultural, economic, social, and political life of the country visited.² The underlying structure of such accounts, a structure which contrasts "us-here-*Heimat*" with "them-there-*die Fremde*," suggests that a travel narrative can be utilized to reveal the culturally determined subjectivity of the traveller as well as to gain information about the land and people visited. The historically determined subject-object relationship, the double focus inherent in travel narratives, makes them ideal sources for cross-cultural studies and for research in *Mentalitätsgeschichte*, the history of subjectivity. This new emphasis in scholarship on travel literature parallels trends in women's studies, socio-historical approaches to literature, and the revived interest in "low" genres. These lines of inquiry converge to not only allow, but demand, study of the ways women described their own travels.³ Such studies of women as travellers are indeed beginning to emerge.⁴

The field of women's studies has provided scholars with the background needed to delineate the different historically determined conditions under which men and women lived and wrote in the nineteenth century. The ideology of *Geschlechtscharakter*, the ideological construct of separate spheres and complementary gender-specific character traits, formed to a great extent the subjectivity of both men and women.⁵ Since men were assumed to possess such characteristics as activity, energy, independence, and intellectual prowess to be used in public life and the

wide world, their travels and any writing based on these travels were fully in harmony with society's expectations. The situation was quite different for women for whom travel meant leaving the postulated "female" sphere, a sphere limited to the interior realm and domestic life. Women travellers would thus most likely have felt conflict between their need to fulfill cultural expectations which viewed them as the weak, passive "other" and their deliberate entrance, perhaps even escape, into a world of danger and difficulty, a world of travel to faraway places. Women's travel narratives reflect these tensions, tensions missing in men's narratives. Yet another aspect of the complex subject-object relationship underlying women's travel narratives is related to the prevalent ideology which assigned to women the role of passive mirrors of their men and of the world. Since women were presumed to be the passive/receptive mirrors of the world, then these travellers should logically have been seen (and perhaps even saw themselves) as ideal observers of foreign lands. One may postulate that a different subjectivity is at work in women's travel narratives than in men's accounts.

Very few women broke out of the domestic circle in the nineteenth century to venture into the wider world as self-acknowledged travellers. Clara von Gerstner (*Beschreibung einer Reise durch die Vereinigten Staaten von Nordamerika in den Jahren 1838 bis 1840*), Ida Pfeiffer (*A Lady's Second Journey Round the World*), Catharina Migerka (*Briefe aus Philadelphia*), Louise Weil (*Aus dem schwäbischen Pfarrhaus nach Amerika*), and Fredrika Bremer (*Homes of the New World*) were among the few who undertook a trip to America and published an account of their adventure.⁶ Women emigrated from Europe, to be sure, in ever-increasing numbers, but they did not have or assume the status of a worldly sophisticate who had the leisure and experience to write down impressions of the trip. It would be of value to compare the attitudes of the German women travellers with the attitudes and values of German-born pioneer women. One might speculate that there will be noticeable differences: Since the travellers were only temporary visitors, they still identified with the dominant code of their native land and judged the United States within the structures of this code, whereas the pioneers, the immigrants, had most likely identified with America and American practices to some extent and thus would be prone to judge differently. Some of the women who did undertake the adventure that a trip to America entailed may well have been prevented from writing about their adventure or publishing their account due to a feeling something akin to the "anxiety of authorship" Gilbert and Gubar discuss in *Madwoman in the Attic*, "an anxiety built from complex and often barely conscious fears of that authority which seems to the female artist to be by definition inappropriate to her sex."⁷ A woman attempting to write an account of her travels would sense that her activities were diametrically opposed to those of the nineteenth-century feminine ideal, the selfless "angel of the house," for not only had she ventured out of the domestic circle into the wide world, but the very act of writing—especially a travel narrative with its strong autobiographical element—might reveal an unwomanly preoccupation with the self. Thus, the women authors of travel nar-

ratives would have experienced a double anxiety; they would be uncomfortable with their "male" role as traveller to unknown realms and with their "male" role as author.

The anxiety of these women travellers to America is most noticeable in their compulsion to justify to the reader both the autobiographical elements of their book and the journey itself, an anxiety not shared by German male travellers. German male authors, of course, also often supplied the motives for their journey and for writing about America. Spahn ironically writes that these men

wished to make available to their readers, hitherto misled by various distorted accounts of America, their first opportunity to learn, from completely impartial observers, the true facts about life in the new country. They warned prospective emigrants against the accounts of unreliable persons—including, of course, all previous writers—who, motivated solely by self-interest had grossly misinterpreted the new country. (477)

In "The Great Visitation to American Democracy," Clark agrees that the main purpose of most of the travel books was to refute the accounts of earlier travellers.⁸ The tone of the introductory remarks made by the women is substantially different from that voice of authority found in men's travel books, exhibiting as it does an apologetic and almost formulaic tone of self-denigration.⁹

Clara von Gerstner begs the reader's indulgence in the foreword to her book, *Beschreibung einer Reise durch die Vereinigten Staaten von Nordamerika in den Jahren 1838 bis 1840: In Gesellschaft des Ritters Franz Anton von Gerstner*. She is in essence excusing the publication of her book when she writes: "Da ich nie für den Druck geschrieben habe, so würde ich es auch nie gewagt haben, dieses Werkchen der Öffentlichkeit zu übergeben, wenn mich nicht so viele meiner Freunde und Bekannten wiederholt und ernsthaft dazu aufgefordert hätten . . ." (vii). She adds that she has attempted to report "treu und ungeschmückt das Gesehene und Erfahrene" (vii). Gerstner emphasizes that she was accompanying her new husband, the well-known railroad specialist, on his inspection tour of the American railways. By referring repeatedly to her husband's untimely death at the end of their journey, Gerstner gives the sense that her narrative is meant to somehow carry on his work; and, in many ways, Gerstner did assume the viewpoint of an engineer as her narrative is replete with facts and figures.

As part of her second voyage alone around the world, the Austrian Ida Pfeiffer travelled through the United States from 1853 to 1854 and published an account of her journey in *A Lady's Second Voyage Around the World*. Halfway through the second volume, the middle-aged Pfeiffer justifies her journey to the reader in a footnote:

Perhaps it may be objected to me that, in leaving my home and travelling about the world as I have done, I have in some measure emancipated myself from the duties of my sex; but I beg it may be borne in mind, that I have only done so when my children were grown up and settled, and

had no longer the slightest need of my care; and when I had really no longer any household duties to perform. (2: 370)

Pfeiffer emphasizes that she is "a most simple and unpretending person, and can claim as a writer no merit whatever beyond that of describing truly and without exaggeration what I have seen and experienced" (2: 423).

Catharina Migerka, another Austrian, attended the 1876 World's Fair with her husband and published an account of her travels in *Briefe aus Philadelphia: An eine Freundin*. Migerka begins her "Mittheilungen über Amerika" by telling the girlfriend to whom the letters are ostensibly addressed that she is writing her chronicle because "ich es Dir versprochen, thue es aber zagend und mit dem Vorbehalte, daß das, was ich hier niederschreibe, leicht die Berichtigung eines schärferen, klareren Geistes erfahren kann, thue es aber auch mit der Versicherung, daß ich wissentlich nichts Falsches, nichts Übertriebenes aufnehme . . ." (2). She further excuses her narrative, stating that it contains "nur die schlichten Mittheilungen einer Frau," and, although it is not scientific or deep, she has tried to write "mit ehrlichem und parteilosem Sinne" (Foreword). Since Migerka's repeated apostrophes to her girlfriend seem to be only a stylistic device and since her narrative, organized thematically into chapters, is by no means a simple series of letters recording daily activities or observations, it is doubtful that the book is really a collection of letters. It is more likely that the fiction of writing promised letters was used both as an organizing principle and as justification for the book.

Louise Weil offers several reasons for her journey in *Aus dem schwäbischen Pfarrhaus nach Amerika*. She writes that she travelled to America in 1854 as a sixteen-year-old because she wanted to visit her brothers, to find a position as a governess, and to visit the country to which she was so magnetically drawn, as had been so many others after 1848. Weil's experience is different from that of the other women in that she came to America not solely as a visitor, but as a potential immigrant. Since she was not as successful in America as she would have liked, consequently returning to Germany four and a half years later, it is perhaps not surprising that her comments about America are the most negative of the group.¹⁰ Indeed, Weil specifically conceives of her book as a warning, written "im Interesse der Töchter meines Vaterlandes, die so häufig in Amerika ein Eldorado erwarten" (2).

A fifth narrative, *The Homes of the New World: Impressions of America*, written by the well-known Swedish novelist Fredrika Bremer, details Bremer's visit to the United States from 1849 to 1851. Bremer fears that her book suffers from egotism, the "offense of all autobiography" (1: iii). She offers one justification after another for this supposed fault: the letters which compose the book were originally meant only for her sister, to whom one can reveal all (1: iii-iv); her recurrent illnesses in America had made her weak and thus susceptible to egotism (1: iv); the letters, written "heart to heart," may for that very reason provide a warm, intimate picture of American life (1: vii); and perhaps it is her duty to share her experiences (1: viii). Bremer denigrates her abilities,

writing that the "great matter" reflected in her book is mirrored "without any merit of mine" (1: iv). Bremer puts her whole undertaking into a socially acceptable light by stating that she hopes to lead the reader "into a more familiar and cordial intimacy with that great country beyond the Atlantic, with its people, its homes, and its inner life, than might otherwise have been the case" (1: v); that is, Bremer, the woman, will lead the reader into the domestic sphere, woman's sphere. Although Bremer is Swedish and, unlike the other women, already an established author of international repute when she was invited by American admirers to visit the United States, her lucid narrative fits in well with the narratives of the German-speaking women. In light of the differences in age, social class, marital status, occupation, and nationality, it is all the more remarkable that these women would share the pronounced need to justify, even excuse, their publications.

Some of the critical response to the work of the women indicates that their fears were by no means unfounded. The account of Louise Weil's adventures and misadventures in America prompted the *Morgenblatt* to publish a lengthy, anonymous article entitled "Über weibliche Bestimmung,"¹¹ which attacked modern, unmarried, overeducated women who have let themselves be blinded by Satan (516) and who therefore no longer possess "das richtige Gefühl, lieber in der Dunkelheit zu bleiben, sich den gewöhnlichsten Haushaltungsgeschäften in verwandten Familien, der Pflege alter Anverwandten oder der Erziehung der Kinder als Glieder des Hauses zu widmen" (495). Criticism was also voiced in America. In *America and Her Commentators: Travel in the United States*,¹² Tuckerman ridicules women travellers, especially Fredrika Bremer, whom Tuckerman had personally met during her stay in America. He writes:

There are few situations in modern life more suggestive of the ludicrous, than that of a woman "of a certain age," professedly visiting a country for the purpose of critically examining and reporting it and its people. Every American of lively imagination who has been thrown into society with one of these female philosophers on such a voyage of discovery, must have caught ideas for a comedy of real life from the phenomena thus created. "Asking everybody everything," the self-appointed inspector is propitiated by one, quizzed by another, feared by this class and contemned by that, all the time with an unconscious air, looking, listening, noting down, and, from the most evanescent and unreliable data, "giving an opinion," or drawing a portrait, not of a well-known place or familiar person, but of an unknown country and a strange nation! (298)

Tuckerman condemns Bremer's detailed reports of the "fabrics of the ladies' dresses, the modes of dancing, the style of the meals, the trees, furniture, books, schools, and private history of all persons of note, and even those unknown to fame" as a "breach of good faith and good taste" (299). It is, I may add, exactly these details and intimate portrayals which make Bremer's book, as well as the narratives of the other women, so reliable, interesting, and valuable.

In light of the possibility of such vicious attacks, it is not surprising that these women would repeatedly reaffirm the accuracy of their accounts or would tend to limit—to a greater or lesser extent—the content of their narratives as well as any subjective commentary to those aspects of American life felt to be most in keeping with what was deeply accepted as woman's role in society. The authors' own internalized self-censors, rigorously formed by the prevalent ideology, guided them in this task. Thus, when not reporting factual details concerning the stations and mode of their journey,¹³ they reported extensively, although not exclusively, on the relationships of certain social groups to one another. These travellers commented on the domestic habits of Americans; child-rearing practices; religious life; public institutions for the social welfare such as prisons, orphanages, insane asylums; social experiments such as Rapp's colonies, the Shakers, the Quakers, the Phalanstery; and the lot of the American Indian and the slaves. The role of women and the relationship between the sexes in American society was often the avowed object of their scrutiny. Bremer writes that she wanted to "observe the popular life, institutions, and circumstances of a new country . . . in particular, to study the women and the homes of the New World" (1: 53). Migerka devotes her first chapter to American women, since, she reasons, if one wants to get to know a country, then one must study the "Frauen in erster Linie" (3). Although these topics are also treated in the travel books written by men¹⁴ and although there is no absolute dichotomy with respect to content, style, or analysis between the male and female accounts, there is nevertheless the clear sense that the women realize they are not writing a factual travel guide or a semi-scientific treatise, projects which might indeed be more suitably left to men. Weil writes that she will not attempt to describe Cincinnati, an undertaking better "einer geschicktern Feder und—Männern überlassen" (122). Migerka will not attempt to portray the 1876 World's Fair since others with more knowledge should undertake the task; at most, she might write of the "Frauenpavillon" (30). Alongside these similarities, there is, of course, variation among the women's books, with Gerstner's account the most factual, filled with data concerning such subjects as means of transportation and interior decoration, while Bremer's book contains the most personal and anecdotal material.

Americans eat too fast; they are interested only in business and money; they succumb to the national obsession with, as Pfeiffer states, "going ahead" and "keeping moving" (2: 287)—these are some of the prevalent observations on the domestic manners of the Americans. Many of these observations echo those found in Frances Trollope's *Domestic Manners of the Americans* and Charles Dickens' *American Notes*, both immensely popular books and books with which most—if not all—of the women travellers were acquainted. Their narratives do not repeat the very negative portrayal of the American as the boorish, tobacco-juice-spitting bumpkin sketched so vividly by Trollope. Indeed, most of these women excuse any unseemly behavior Americans may exhibit as reflecting the energy of a growing nation.

Education is a subject of concern to all the women and is closely linked by them to the question of woman's role and female emancipation. Weil, who had come to America with the hope of becoming a governess and who eventually taught school in America, criticizes Americans for spoiling their children and treating them too much like adults (162). Migerka, echoing this view, notes that girls are not made to help at home and are allowed to become women too soon, thereby losing "jene liebliche Schüchternheit, jenes holde Bangen und Schweben zwischen Kind und Jungfrau" (9-10). The authors agree that American girls are provided with a broader education than are German girls, but the writers' praise is tempered by concern that this extensive education largely ignores the domestic sphere and thus may be detrimental to the girls' future duties as wives and mothers. Weil speculates: "In wie weit dieser Umstand auf die künftige Führung einer Haushaltung Einfluß hat, wage ich nicht zu bestimmen. Man kann eben auch in Amerika nicht zwei Herren dienen" (116). Pfeiffer contrasts the American system of female education, "this one-sided education, in which all that is most peculiarly feminine is entirely neglected" (2: 367), with education in Austria, commenting that "the girls in my own country also study foreign languages, music, history, and so forth; but they find time to make themselves acquainted with womanly duties" (2: 368). Admitting that the "male" sphere should be open to women, Pfeiffer warns that if a woman chooses a career, then she cannot be a wife, since one cannot perform the duties of a man and a woman (2: 369). Gerstner criticizes American educators for filling the heads of girls with facts not needed by wives and mothers (51); Migerka feels that women should be primarily interested in the "Erziehung der Kinder" and the "Culturzustand" and not in politics or the public sphere (3).

These women, however, all concern themselves at length in their books with American politics and the public sphere. At this point the discrepancies and contradictions engendered by the clash between the internalized concepts of the feminine ideal and their own activities emerge. Pfeiffer, for example, laments the fact that in America "the timid modesty, the bloom and freshness of youth, is soon lost among the girls, and that the women are sadly deficient in the tender feminine grace which is the truest ornament of our sex" (2: 280), and sadly notes the "uneasy longing for what they call emancipation that characterizes American women" (2: 367). Yet Pfeiffer herself was embarked on her *second* journey around the world during which time she travelled alone and unprotected into, to cite just one adventure, the depths of the Amazon jungle, visiting places no European woman (and few European men) had previously seen. Pfeiffer's own vehement, total identification with the male world and complete disdain for the domestic sphere as a young girl have been recently examined.¹⁵ Only at the end of Clara von Gerstner's narrative can the reader infer from a detail relating the baptism of her daughter that Gerstner must have been pregnant during most of her journey, a journey which entailed the rigors of almost daily travel either by stagecoach or train, certainly a most strenuous activity in 1839. Despite her "delicate condition," Gerstner continuously visited

American jails, orphanages, and insane asylums, with and without her husband. One might indeed propose that these women so vehemently upheld the "feminine ideal" because on some level of their consciousness they feared that they themselves did not conform to the internalized ideal and thus would be considered unwomanly, even unnatural.

All the authors speak more or less approvingly of the activities of American women in the public sphere, noting their work in philanthropic societies and in temperance societies, their public speeches against social evils, and their campaigns to aid runaway slaves by collecting money and clothing. The activities of the women belonging to the Midnight-Association of Philadelphia are chronicled by Migerka. She writes:

In der Nacht wandern sie hinaus, um verlorne Seelen zu suchen; sie scheuen sich nicht, verrufene Häuser zu betreten, um Verirrte zu ermahnen, umzukehren von dem Pfade der Schande, und, mehr noch, sie sind bemüht, ihnen ein freundliches Heim zu bieten und für ihre Zukunft zu sorgen. Die Frauen . . . handeln begeistert durch ihren Glauben, sie gehören streng kirchlichen Secten an und die Bibel ist die Waffe, mit der sie streiten. (12-13)

Judgment on such activities varies; Weil hypothesizes that the burning issue of slavery has given American women the mandate to act in the public sphere (172). Migerka speculates that this charitable work arises out of the "heimische Eitelkeit" of American women, their religious faith, and their American sense that "Gleichberechtigung" should reach all members of society (14). Bremer is more unambiguously positive in her responses to these endeavors than her German counterparts, allowing women a full range of possibilities as mother, wife, and citizen.

While tending to agree that German women are better wives—"der Amerikaner findet in seinem Hause nicht das trauliche Heim, die liebevolle Fürsorge, die das deutsche Weib ihrem Manne bereitet" (Migerka 6)—these women underscore the fact that American men treat women with respect and chivalry. Pfeiffer rather naively observes that "the Americans treat their women far too tenderly to allow them to undertake any such severe labors [as working in the fields]" (2: 295). She implicitly contrasts these tender American men with European men who tend to be courteous only to women possessing "youth, beauty and fine clothes" (1: 67). The source of the courteous behavior of American men is located by Bremer:

Of a certainty, that chivalric sentiment and love which generally prevail in America for the female sex had their origin in the dignity and the noble conduct of those early women [the Puritans]; of a certainty, from that early equality, that equality in rule and in rights which prevails here in domestic and social life, although not as yet politically. (1: 171-72)

Migerka predicates this special respect on the feats of the pioneer women who stood by their men "tröstend, helfend, rathend" (9).

Despite the fact that these European women admire the courteous treatment American men afford women—one might ask to what extent these reports are broad hints to European men—the sight of an American husband going shopping for his wife with a market basket in hand is so foreign to the *Vorstellungswelt* of Migerka that she comments on it:

Geradezu komisch wirkt es auf uns Fremde, Herren . . . mit glänzendem Zylinder, mit gefüllten Körbchen oder Körben vom Markte kommen sehen. Was würden unsere deutschen Ehemänner zu einer solchen Zumuthung sagen, bei uns, wo selbst der Gymnasiast sich schämt, mit einem Korbe über die Straße zu gehen! Ich meine, Männer hätten überall einen ganz berechtigten Grund, Widerwillen gegen Körbe zu hegen, und seien die Hände, die sie ihnen bieten, auch noch so zart. (8)

Two similar passages recounting conversations reflect most interesting cross-cultural perceptions. Louise Weil reports that she was attacked by Americans for her abolitionist views: "Miss W., in dieser Frage haben Sie keine Stimme! Wie ich erfahren habe, sind Sie eine Deutsche; die Deutschen aber sind von Haus aus Sklaven, und zwar sind die Frauen die Sklavinnen ihrer Männer, und ihre Männer die Sklaven ihrer Fürsten." Weil writes that she remained silent, although she would have liked to retort that in the United States "die Männer die Sklaven ihrer Frauen seien" (172). Over twenty years later, Migerka relates that "die amerikanischen Frauen haben oft, im Vollbewußtsein ihrer sozialen Stellung und Würde, für uns arme vermeintlich unterdrückte, deutsche Frauen ein Gefühl des Mitleides. 'O, in Deutschland ist die Frau die Slavinn ihres Mannes!'" (7). Migerka, too, feels that the reverse could be said of the American man, who is "der gehorsame Diener . . . der willig alle Wünsche und Launen seiner Gebieterin erfüllt, der es nicht wagen möchte, die Luft, die sie athmet, durch Cigarrendampf zu trüben . . ." (8).

All visitors to the United States are forced to confront their expectations with the realities of American life. The realities in turn tend to modify and correct the original expectations.¹⁶ These nineteenth-century women were no exception. Many of the women had anticipated a land of "edle Einfachheit," a spotless page, a land where the spirit of the great George Washington still ruled (Weil 161; Migerka 39). Gerstner's shipboard dream of Indians, slaves, wild animals, and primordial forests (48) reflects the image of America as the great exotic wilderness. Most of these dreams were destined to be disappointed. The American emphasis on wealth and luxury, the indulgence of judges towards crimes committed by whites, and the strict, sterile observance of Sunday rest were features of American life noted by these women which were most at odds with their expectations.

The issue of slavery in the self-proclaimed land of equality was dealt with at length by the women visiting America before the Civil War and, among all the social issues discussed, deserves to be singled out. Here the clash between expectation and firsthand observation, between European and American (more precisely, Southern) views is thrown into stark relief. Here, too, the individual differences among the women

are most noticeable. The women came to America firmly opposed to slavery, having read and been influenced by such books as *American Slavery as It Is* (from which Ida Pfeiffer quotes liberally) and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. After Clara von Gerstner stayed at a Kentucky farm and observed what she perceived as an idyllic treatment of the slaves, she muses: ". . . ganz verschieden war das Bild des Lebens und der Behandlung der Sklaven, wie ich es hier erblickte, von demjenigen, welches sich meine Phantasie in früheren Jahren entworfen hatte" (373). Gerstner was apparently so convinced by the pro-slavery arguments advanced by her various Southern hosts that although she concedes that slavery goes against the American ideal of freedom, she acknowledges it as a necessary evil whose abolition would mean the total ruin of the South. Indeed, Gerstner seems to be parroting Southern views when she affirms one stereotype after another concerning the lack of intellectual prowess and culture found in Negroes (325-29). Ida Pfeiffer portrays her visit to a public slave auction in New Orleans as a painful experience (2: 249), commenting that "I am, of course, like every person with the ordinary feelings of humanity not warped by early prejudice, an enemy to slavery . . ." (2: 251). However, after visiting several plantations, she admits, "I am bound in truth and candor to state, that on those I visited the slaves appeared to be by no means in the unhappy position I had imagined" (2: 252). Despite this modification, Pfeiffer remained firmly against slavery as well as the shameful treatment freed slaves received. A visit to the South changed the views of neither Louise Weil nor Fredrika Bremer as to the evils of slavery. While acknowledging that there are some good masters, Bremer insisted that slavery was destroying the moral fabric of the South. After visiting the South, Bremer became even more vehemently opposed to slavery, siding wholeheartedly with her abolitionist friends in the North. In this respect, the reactions of the women to slavery do not seem to differ substantially from those of German men, who are said to have been "honestly objective in dealing with the South, and most of them . . . even able to look at slavery analytically. . . ." ¹⁷ It was, in fact, not unusual for some travellers who had enjoyed being pampered by black slaves to become "confused as to their moral reactions" (Clark 13).

In summary, let me emphasize that these narratives are valuable documents in terms of women's history both by reflecting the complex subjectivity of the German women travellers and by providing a female traveller's perspective of American women and domestic relations. As such, these accounts complement other available sources such as diaries and letters. In addition, the narratives are truly indispensable to any comprehensive investigation of nineteenth-century German attitudes towards America and American institutions since the writings do not present merely another view of nineteenth-century America, but present, at least in part, the "other's" view, woman's view.

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Notes

¹ Catharina Migerka, *Briefe aus Philadelphia (1876): An eine Freundin* (Wien: Carl Gerold's Sohn, 1877), Foreword. This article is a revised version of a paper first presented at the symposium of the Society for German-American Studies, April 24-26, 1986. I wish to thank Jerry Glenn and Jeannine Blackwell for their useful comments.

² See, for example, Thomas Bleicher, et al., eds., *Reiseliteratur* (Bayreuth: Univ. Bayreuth, 1981); Wolfgang Griep and Hans-Wolf Jäger, eds., *Reise und soziale Realität am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1983); Götz Großklaus, "Reisen in die fremde Natur: Zur Fremdwahrnehmung im Kontext der bürgerlichen Aufstiegs-geschichte," *Jahrbuch Deutsch als Fremdsprache* (1982): 72-85; Michael Harbsmeier, "Reisebeschreibungen als mentalitätsgeschichtliche Quellen: Überlegungen zu einer historisch-anthropologischen Untersuchung frühneuzeitlicher deutscher Reisebeschreibungen," *Reiseberichte als Quellen europäischer Kulturgeschichte*, eds. Antoni Maczak and Hans Jürgen Teuteberg (Wolfenbüttel: Herzog August Bibliothek, 1982), 1-31; Boris I. Krasnobaev, Gert Robel, and Herbert Zeman, eds., *Reisen und Reisebeschreibungen im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert als Quellen der Kulturbeziehungs-forschung* (Berlin: Camen, 1980); Wulf Wülfing, "Reiseliteratur," *Deutsche Literatur: Eine Sozialgeschichte*, Horst Albert Glaser, ed. (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1980).

³ Women's travel narratives have been largely ignored in scholarship dealing with German travel to America. The relative paucity of published narratives written by women is certainly one reason for this neglect. A less tangible reason for this neglect may well be the very categories used to classify travel literature and travel authors. Raymond Jürgen Spahn, for example, examining the roughly two hundred known travel books about America published in German from 1820 to 1850, finds that the authors were either professional authors of fiction, men of means who wrote semi-scientific books, individuals commissioned by European governments to describe conditions for potential emigrants, or "persons urging settlement of a particular place, usually because of vested interests" ("German Accounts of Early Nineteenth-Century Life in Illinois," *Papers on Language and Literature* 14 [Fall 1978]: 476-77). These categories may seem to arise logically from the body of literature, but once these categories are in place, their parameters make it easy to overlook women authors.

⁴ See, for example, Elke Frederiksen and Tamara Archibald, "Der Blick in die Ferne," *Frauenliteraturgeschichte: Schreibende Frauen vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, eds. Hiltrud Gnüg and Renate Möhrmann (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1985) 104-22; Leo Hamalian, ed., *Ladies on the Loose: Women Travellers of the 18th and 19th Centuries* (New York: Dodd, 1981); Dorothy Middleton, *Victorian Lady Travellers* (Chicago: Academy Chicago Pr., 1982); Annegret Pelz, "Außenseiterinnen und Weltreisende," *Schreiben* 16 (December 1981); Wulf Wülfing, "On Travel Literature by Women in the 19th Century: Malwida von Meysenbug," *German Women in the 18th and 19th Centuries: A Social and Literary History*, eds. Ruth-Ellen B. Joeres and Mary Jo Maynes (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Pr., 1986) 289-304.

⁵ Silvia Bovenschen, *Die imaginierte Weiblichkeit* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1979); Susan L. Cocalis and Kay Goodman, eds., *Beyond the Eternal Feminine* (Stuttgart: Heinz, 1982); Viola Klein, *The Feminine Character: History of an Ideology*, 2nd ed. (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois, 1971); Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann, *Die deutsche Familie: Versuch einer Sozialgeschichte* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1974); Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann, *Frauenleben im 19. Jahrhundert* (München: Beck, 1983).

⁶ Clara von Gerstner, *Beschreibung einer Reise durch die Vereinigten Staaten von Nordamerika in den Jahren 1838 bis 1840: In Gesellschaft des Ritters Franz Anton von Gerstner* (Leipzig: Hinrich, 1842); Ida Pfeiffer, *A Lady's Second Journey Round the World*, 2 vols. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1855); Ida Pfeiffer, *Meine zweite Weltreise* (Wien: C. Gerold's Sohn, 1856); Louise Weil, *Aus dem schwäbischen Pfarrhaus nach Amerika: Reiseschilderungen* (Stuttgart: Franckh, 1860); Fredrika Bremer, *Homes of the New World: Impressions of America*, trans. Mary Howitt, 2 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1853). It appears that comparatively more travel books were published by British and French women than by German women, a discrepancy perhaps linked to the differing patterns of immigration or perhaps simply linked to the fact that an annotated bibliography of all German-language travel books concerning America is lacking. A cross-cultural comparison of women's travel books would be a profitable scholarly undertaking.

⁷ Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Pr., 1979) 51.

⁸ Thomas D. Clark, "The Great Visitation to American Democracy," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 44 (June 1957): 3.

⁹ In *A Literature of Their Own* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Pr., 1977), Elaine Showalter discusses the self-denigration often displayed by nineteenth-century British women authors. Feminist critics have hypothesized that apology and self-denigration are feminine language strategies used to make potentially shocking content "harmless."

¹⁰ In this respect Weil resembles to some extent Frances Trollope, who, after her family's unsuccessful attempt at establishing itself in America, returned to England and wrote the quite negative *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832).

¹¹ "Über weibliche Bestimmung," *Morgenblatt* 21-22 (1860): 492+.

¹² Henry Theodore Tuckerman, *America and Her Commentators: With a Critical Sketch of Travel in the United States* (New York: C. Scribner, 1864).

¹³ The "Grand Tour" of America which these women followed included the important cities of the Mid-Atlantic states, Niagara Falls (which Weil did not visit), and a trip through the South to New Orleans. Pfeiffer also journeyed to California.

¹⁴ The remarks of the ethnographer Edwin Ardener are revealing in this respect. Asking "if the models of a society made by most ethnographers tend to be models derived from the male portion of that society, how does the symbolic weight of that other mass of persons—half or more of a normal human population, as we have accepted—express itself," he notes that "no one could come back from an ethnographic study of 'the X,' having talked only *to* women, and *about* men, without professional comment and some self-doubt. The reverse can and does happen constantly" ("Belief and the Problem of Women," *Perceiving Women*, ed. Shirley Ardener [New York: Wiley and Sons, 1975] 3).

¹⁵ Pfeiffer's book *Reise nach Madagaskar* (1861) is prefaced by a "Biographische Skizze, nach ihren eigenen Aufzeichnungen." Here we are told that Pfeiffer "lernte alles, was ihr für Knaben passend schien, mit Fleiß und Eifer, betrachtete dagegen jede weibliche Arbeit mit der tiefsten Verachtung, und da sie beispielsweise Klavierspielen mehr als weibliche Art betrachtete, so schnitt sie sich häufig in die Finger oder brannte letztere mit Siegelack, um nur den verhassten Übungen zu entgehen" (qtd. in Pelz 6, see n. 4). Pelz notes that Pfeiffer's first love precipitated the inner changes whereby she distanced herself "von ihren bisherigen Feiheitsvorstellungen" (8). I wish to thank Tamara Felden for bringing Pelz's article to my attention.

¹⁶ Cf. Joseph Strelka: "Denn nicht nur führt die vorgegebene Wesensart und Perspektive des Beschreibenden zu einem entsprechenden Auswählen, Unterstreichen, Übersehen bestimmter Elemente des Beschriebenen, sondern das Beschriebene kann umgekehrt gleichzeitig die Einstellung und Blickweite des Beschreibenden beeinflussen" ("Der literarische Reisebericht," *Jahrbuch für Internationale Germanistik* 1.3 [1971]: 65).

¹⁷ Lawrence S. Thompson, "German Travellers in the South from the Colonial Period Through 1865," *South Atlantic Bulletin* 37.2 (1972): 64.