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An Absorbing Travel Account: Review of *Like a Sponge Thrown into Water: Francis Lieber's European Travel journal of 7844-7845. A Lively Tour Through England, France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Austria, and Bohemia with Observations on Politics, the Visual and Performing Arts, Economics, Religion, Penology, Technology, History, Literature, Social Customs, Travel, Geography, Jurisprudence, Linguistics, Personalities, and Numerous Other Matters by One of the Nineteenth-Century's Most Influential Minds. Transcribed from the Autograph Manuscript Preserved in the Collections of the South Carolina Library at the University of South Carolina*. Edited with an introduction and

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An Absorbing Travel Account

Lance Schachterle

Like a Sponge Thrown into Water: Francis Lieber's European Travel Journal of 1844–1845. A Lively Tour Through England, France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Austria, and Bohemia with Observations on Politics, the Visual and Performing Arts, Economics, Religion, Penology, Technology, History, Literature, Social Customs, Travel, Geography, Jurisprudence, Linguistics, Personalities, and Numerous Other Matters by One of the Nineteenth-Century's Most Influential Minds. Transcribed from the Autograph Manuscript Preserved in the Collections of the South Carolina Library at the University of South Carolina. Edited with an introduction and commentary by Charles R. Mack and Ilona S. Mack. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002. xxviii+193pp. \$18.95 (cloth), ISBN 1-57003-447-8.

Motivated by his interest in Francis Lieber's importance in the history of the University of South Carolina, as well as Lieber's reflections on European works of art, Charles R. Mack, professor of Art History at South Carolina, with his wife Ilona S. Mack, has edited from manuscript the journal Lieber kept for much of his European "sabbatical" of 1844–45. The extended title provided by the editors advances their views of the significance of Lieber's journal and implies a potential readership for their text. Indeed, the editorial claim that Lieber was "one of the nineteenth-century's most influential minds" is bold. More realistic is their fear expressed in the first paragraph of the Preface (xiii) that, "with the passing of the years, memory of his many accomplishments (and their lasting impact) has begun to fade." (A brief and wholly unscientific poll of several colleagues in relevant fields disclosed no recognition of his name; only one of his books, *On Civil Liberty and Self Government from 1853*, is still available through a special-order service.)

Francis Lieber was, nonetheless, an active scholar important in several disciplines in mid-nineteenth-century America. According to the *Encyclopedia Americana*, of which

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he was founding editor in 1829, Lieber's publications on political theory and practice, on Civil War military law and code, and especially on penology, were influential in their day. The Macks cite ten common words or phrases Lieber claimed to have introduced into American usage (xxiv); of these, the online OED cites him as the first recorded source only of "penology."

Born in Berlin in 1798 or 1800 (scholars differ), Lieber enjoyed a vigorous and romantic youth, fighting against Napoleon at Waterloo and later (like Byron) for Greek independence. Yet, he also achieved a doctorate in mathematics at Jena and served as tutor in several distinguished German families (marrying Matilda Oppenheimer, the daughter of one employer, a match that seems to have worked out well). Lieber's liberal political activism led to imprisonment in his native Berlin, followed by emigration to London in 1826 and then to Boston the following year. Various attempts to find employment in the North suited to his broad academic achievements and his growing family all failed, and in 1835 he accepted the post of professor of history and political economics at the newly founded South Carolina College (which became the University of South Carolina in 1906).

In 1844, Lieber seized the opportunity to return to Europe, eager, as he later wrote a friend, to absorb European sights and ideas "like a sponge thrown into water." Leaving Matilda and the children with her family in Hamburg, he traveled around northern Europe, visiting and memorializing galleries and prisons (the two loci of cultural interest to so many nineteenth-century travelers). His substantial production of monographs—*Legal and Political Hermeneutics* (1837), *A Popular Essay on Subjects of Penal Law* (1838), *Manual of Political Ethics* (1839), and *Essays on Property and Labour* (1841)—assured him of recognition and acceptance among Europe's leading intellectuals. Interviews with Alexander von Humboldt and Prussian king Friedrich Wilhelm IV are given in detail (with Lieber recording the conversations in German); other more casual contacts with European intellectuals often include recorded exchanges of views on politics or penology.

For the most part, however, Lieber's journal entries are records of "on-the-spot" observations, with no larger intentions. Lieber apparently never reworked the entries into a

larger critical and analytical essay, unlike other Americans such as James Fenimore Cooper, who visited many of the same European states a decade earlier than Lieber and whose own letters and journals yielded five volumes of sharp observations about the differences between American and European polities. *Like a Sponge* comprises journal entries from 6 March 1844, as Lieber prepares to leave Columbia, South Carolina (a singularly elliptical set of observations about people not identified in the usually excellent annotations), to an abrupt terminal entry in London, dated 16 January 1845. Cultural and political historians will find occasional entries of interest such as first-hand observations about local facts or opinions. For example: 9 March 1844—most of Webster's work on the Webster-Ashburton Treaty was done by Webster's chief clerk, since Webster "drinks very badly"; 21 April 1844—"Much fear entertained that Queen [Victoria] will one day become deranged; she is melancholy, figdity [sic], no fine character"; 20 June 1844—a summary of the unusual process for entertaining amendments in the Dutch States General; 24 June 1844—a lengthy description of the engineering of the draining of the Haarlemer Meer.

Much, however, of Lieber's diary is more prosaic: the minuting of travel conditions, expenses, and hospitality. Lieber's two great interests—art and penology—will provide valuable entries for scholars of nineteenth-century intellectual history in terms of which pictures Lieber singled out for special praise. And, like Dickens, when traveling, Lieber sought out prisons to examine, often measuring them against the Philadelphia system of solitary confinement aimed at effecting spiritual renewal (a system then, as now, debated for its tendency to induce madness after excessive isolation.) The "Thematic References by Entry Date" provided by the editors helpfully directs readers interested in Lieber's recurring concerns to the appropriate entries. Works of art, penology, and social customs occupy the most space. (Under the last heading, Lieber often notes the prevalence of "public women," indicating on 21 June, for instance, his surprise that prostitutes in the Low Countries displayed themselves in windows along thoroughfares.) Lieber's advocacy of removing public executions from public view may be one of his most important contributions to the nineteenth century. He argued his case to the liberal-minded Friedrich Wilhelm, and believed his views on the blood-sport licentiousness of public spectacle executions may have made a difference in future policy.

The editors' general introduction, "Francis Lieber and His Journal," provides a good point of entry for the nonspecialist reader, who (like this reviewer) may not have been aware of the range of Lieber's achievements. Clearly, as the introduction shows, putting Lieber's journal into print was as

much an appropriate act of institutional piety celebrating the 200th anniversary of the founding of the University of South Carolina, as answering the needs of general scholars for widespread access to a journal that had remained with the university after Lieber moved from Columbia, South Carolina, to Columbia College in New York in 1856. (Lieber's political and religious views, especially his reasoned opposition to Nullification and slavery, made him uncomfortable in the South; tragically, one of his sons remained there and died in the Civil War, in which his two other sons participated on the Union side.)

The scholarly apparatus of *Like a Sponge* is full and complete. In addition to the introduction, a statement on "Illustrations" records and locates existing known visual images of Francis Lieber. More important, a "Commentary by Entry Dates" comprises roughly a third of the volume and provides detailed information for most (not all) of the diary entries. People and places are identified, and, most helpfully, extracts from contemporary travel books published by John Murray often illuminate the context for what Lieber saw. It is of special interest to contrast Murray's descriptions and evaluations of artworks with Lieber's.

No principle for offering annotation is given, however. While some entries enjoy full coverage, others are curiously bereft of the usually helpful editorial contextualization. For example, in the first week of August 1844, Lieber is with siblings near Berlin, but the editors fail to tease out any implications of his sketchy remarks about family relationships (though they offer some insights to the industrious reader who turns to page 121 in the "Brief Biographies" section where Lieber's siblings are mentioned.) Again, on 28 and 29 August 1844, Lieber fills his journal with typically detailed observations while on the road to Brussels and Paris, but the Commentary is oddly silent, even though similar entries before and after are fully documented.

Lieber's own occasional confusions of dates also provide minor headaches for editors and readers: on some occasions, several days after the actual event that has already triggered an entry, Lieber seems to provide additional text at a later entry date. On 26 April 1844, Lieber visited Pentonville prison (an institution that also fascinated Dickens), and his entry for that date offers some detailed observations. Later, on 2 May, the entry begins "To Pentonville. See April 26 in addition I have to say ...," and the Pentonville description resumes. Since here the editors transcribe the texts exactly as they appear in the journal, it's not entirely clear whether Lieber actually returned to the prison or just (as the 2 May entry suggests) decided he had more to say about the 26 April visit.

The editors argue for a "reader friendly" text (xxvi).

Based on their statement of principles and a collation I performed of their text against one of the key passages on art in the journal (Lieber's appreciation of Raphael's "Sistine Madonna"), their editorial work appears solid and reliable. No apparatus is provided to record variants between the manuscript and printed text; "some corrections and modifications" (xxvi) have been made silently, while passages with words doubtful or impossible of transcription are so noted. Of greater concern, from my point of view, are the anachronistic assumptions about punctuation. "Commas, for example, are scattered about in a seemingly indiscriminate fashion; the same is true for semicolons," the editors write (xxvi). Only at mid-century, with the rise of publishing houses commanding a trade beyond their own cities, did the need and occasion first arise for publishers to begin to codify grammar, spelling, and punctuation around house standards. Lieber simply punctuated as most nineteenth-century writers did—as dictated by his sense of rhetorical flow (perhaps, like Cooper, always keeping in mind that the performance of writing was still largely oral). To verify that comma and semicolon usage is still an arbitrary social (or commercial) convention and not based on some ideal logic of grammar, simply compare contemporary practices of British and American editors in these matters. With respect to pointing, Lieber, obviously trained in German usage and then adapting to American practices in these regards, was thus at a double disadvantage from the point of view of an anachronistic modern editor.

Thus, I found some curious (but, ultimately, not damaging) editorial choices when I collated the passage from 8 October 1844 on the "Sistine Madonna" by comparing the printed text on page 81 with the manuscript from which it derives, a photograph of which is presented on page 82. One sees immediately that Lieber has an excellent hand, making the transcription comparatively straightforward. A comparison of manuscript and printed text yielded the following variants (identified by the line number in the printed entry with the first line of the passage, beginning "I saw it again," counting as line 1):

Manuscript (page 82)	Text (page 81)
l. 1 Sisto,	Sisto
l. 4 viz	viz.
l. 9 Coreggios	Correggios
l. 17 angels,	angels;
l. 19 occasions,	occasions;
l. 21 bambina	bambino
l. 22 indeed	indeed.

Silently correcting the spelling of "Corregio" and changing (if not correcting in every case) the punctuations at lines 1, 4, 17, 19, and 22 are not greatly problematic editorial intrusions.

Nor is calling attention to a foreign word, "Sisto," by underlining it—a policy clearly explained in the Introduction. More puzzling is the silent emendation of what Lieber clearly wrote in reference to the Christ Child: the feminine "bambina" becomes "bambino." Given the intense femininity of the picture, preserving Lieber's original form could be of importance to some readers—for example, to any interested in gender representations.

While *Like a Sponge* is handsomely produced, a few errors occur. In their introduction, the editors refer to "Philadelphia's Gerard College" (xxi, perhaps following Lieber's form, as at page 104), but the correct spelling is "Girard." And, at xxiv, they place Harvard in Boston, not Cambridge. A few typos are noted: "nobel" for "noble" (91), "hero" for "hero" (129), "[in 1868]" for "[in 1868]." (135), and "Deathof" for "Death of" (161).

Like a Sponge supports a case for a place in intellectual history for Francis Lieber that ultimately may not be accorded him. Nonetheless, by putting into print an accurate and useful edition of this brief journal, the Macks have served the scholarly community well by providing a record of observations about cultural and political history by an observant European-American scholar. Cultural and intellectual historians of the American nineteenth century will find *Like a Sponge* rewarding reading.

