Narrating Empire: 
*Die Gartenlaube* and Germany's Nineteenth-Century Liberal Expansionism

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Contrary to widespread belief that naval power and overseas colonies were anathema to the liberal conception of the German nation, both were in fact essential to the national-liberal understanding of what characterized a successful nation-state. An analysis of a wide variety of contributions in Ernst Keil’s ostensibly apolitical periodical Die Gartenlaube illustrates how this liberal vision of the German nation-state as a first-rank Weltmacht was endorsed in popular cultural discussions of the role and future of the German nation abroad during the “pre-colonial” era.

Among those incarcerated or sent into exile from the German states during the post-1848/49 Reaction was Leipzig publisher Ernst Keil, who was sentenced and jailed for his association with seditious liberal publications during the revolutionary period.* Undeterred, Keil, from the modest environs of Cell 74 of the Hubertusburg Landesgefängnis, planned the founding of a new national weekly publication committed to the furthering of Germany’s ascendant bürgerliche Gesellschaft in the post-revolutionary era. Yet, mindful of having been imprisoned for nine months as a result of overtly political publishing activities, Keil envisaged this new periodical as taking the form of a seemingly innocuous family magazine, replete with serialized fiction, stylized illustrations, and detailed general interest stories from across Germany and around the world.

With his new publication, Die Gartenlaube, established in 1853, Keil opted for a more nuanced approach that would see the creation of a periodical that, although largely congruent with the tropes and substance of mid-nineteenth-century liberal discourse, sought to further this discourse without recourse to the type of overtly political content that had led to his earlier detention. This new publication was specifically designed to present the substance of liberalism and of an ascendant, bürgerlich culture through the subtle and intensely personal medium of a seemingly apolitical family magazine, with which, it was hoped, not even the most conservative of censors could take issue.

With many of German liberalism’s activist politicians having been rounded up and jailed or hounded into exile, remaining liberal forums such as Die Gartenlaube became critical in sustaining liberal currents of thought, and a markedly liberal form of cultural and social commentary. The continued transmission of liberal values through the print media came to be integral to the maintenance
of a public profile for a recognizably liberal social milieu. By offering a distillation of the public and private worlds of the German liberal bourgeoisie, *Die Gartenlaube* came to both reflect and shape the processes of what Geoff Eley has described as the increasing *embourgeoisement* of German society.3

As a magazine whose origins in the *Nationalbewegung* of the German liberal middle classes of the 1840s continued to influence its editorial direction, it is unsurprising to find that, whilst apparently low in what could be viewed as strikingly overt political agitation, a diffuse but nonetheless discernible nationalist-liberal sensibility permeated virtually all aspects of the magazine.4 As Kirsten Belgem has argued,5 *Die Gartenlaube* was the organ of a liberal milieu that had been persecuted for its radicalism both prior to and after the events of 1848, and nationalist liberalism remained the guiding ethos of the magazine's editorial direction. Despite his earlier imprisonment, Keil and his magazine consistently adhered to and exhibited a commitment to the liberal principles of industrial modernization, commercial, and naval expansion and nation building. Indeed, so close was the magazine to influential liberal political figures, the editorial position of *Die Gartenlaube* can be seen as prefiguring and, in the 1860s, mirroring the political stance of the overtly political *Nationalverein* and later the *Nationalliberale*.6 As such, *Die Gartenlaube* arguably ranks among the more important and influential liberal publications in the second half of the nineteenth century.7

Seeking to further a nationalist liberal agenda from within the realms of the private sphere, *Die Gartenlaube* illustrated Keil's somewhat precarious understanding of the osmotic nature of the public and private sphere divide. The deliberate colonization of personal subjectivities by a magazine so closely associated with the nationalist liberal movement afforded *Die Gartenlaube* enormous enunciatative power, able as it was to speak directly to and on behalf of the German liberal middle classes in a situation of pronounced intimacy.8 In positing the domestic sphere as an arena for national discussion and social debate, *Die Gartenlaube* was able to situate the bourgeois family simultaneously as a legitimate space within which the processes of ideological conditioning and national consensus building could be carried on, and as a familial and social model worthy of nation-wide emulation. As such, *Die Gartenlaube* was able to both reflect and construct the complexion of the ascendant German liberal middle classes, and through them attempt to formulate an attractive model of what the German nation should become.9

This process of blending a normative liberal social, political, and familial model in order to further liberalism as a discourse of national identity has been pointed to by Heidemarie Gruppe, whose work on *Die Gartenlaube* amply demonstrated that "Ernst Keil and his editorial team were in no way content to compose their articles in isolation from politics and controversies, but rather determinedly attempted to influence public opinion in the direction of liberal democratic ideals."10 Thomas Nipperdey too observed, that this was a central part of how the illustrated periodicals of the nineteenth century functioned, serving as an embodiment of liberal values and liberal politico-cultural engagement in and with the German nation:

These new periodicals were conversational, literary, and informative—about nature, foreign lands, history—warm-hearted and in no way apolitical, rather before all else liberal and national and integrative, if also harmonizing and a little idyllic and sentimental.11

In bridging the space between the public and the domestic, *Die Gartenlaube* was not forced to expunge all politically contentious issues from its pages, as Gruppe has made clear, but rather was able to adopt narrative strategies that framed these issues in such a manner as to partially conceal their controversial or polemic nature.12 Cleverly interspersed amidst the homely advice, serialized stories, and pictorial reproductions that comprised much of the magazine was an important corpus of articles that reflected the more political and material interests of its *bürgerlich* readership,13 which included support for the processes of industrialization, the foregrounding of Germany as a mercantile, sea-going nation, and the approval of an expansionist and distinctly national foreign policy.

The following seeks to argue that the implicitly politicized nature of what was ostensibly an apolitical domestic periodical was evident in the magazine's coverage of expansionist, indeed imperialist activity, as conducted by both the citizens of foreign powers and by Germans, and that this pro-imperialist content exemplified the discursive dimension of a strong imperialist current in nineteenth-century German liberalism.14 Throughout the nineteenth century, forums and organizations such as the 1848/49 *Nationalversammlung* in Frankfurt, the *Nationalverein* of the 1860s, as well as scholarly journals, newspapers, and even novels were increasingly positing Germany as a global power commensurate with Britain.15 *Die Gartenlaube*, as the premier popular culture organ of Germany's *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*, followed this expansionist liberal line.16

Clearly, *Die Gartenlaube* was unable to report on the colonies of a German nation-state prior to both national unification in 1871, and the creation of state colonies in the mid 1880s. To this extent, the political context within which the magazine was situated impacted upon the presentation of political material, notably liberal nationalism, within the periodical. National unification, the re-emergence of liberalism as a national(ist) force, and Germany's rapid ascendency within Europe after both the Austro-Prussian and Franco-Prussian wars altered the complexion of discussions about the German nation-state and the role of liberalism within it.17 Yet, despite this changing context, the magazine displayed a firm and consistent commitment to supporting and expanding German influence abroad, both through Germany's private-sector colonies and in the colonies of other European powers, throughout the pre-colonial era.
Similarly, it invariably maintained a commitment to a forward naval policy and presented a consistent anthropological paradigm that situated Europe’s global expansion as an inevitable consequence of natural law and a scientifically established racial hierarchy. Despite changes in political context being reflected in other elements of its narrative structures, these changes did not substantially impact upon the magazine’s discussions of colonial alterity, which followed consistent modes of narration discernible through their adherence to a number of identifiable tropes and motifs.

Focusing on these pre-colonial patterns and the discourse of imperialism rather than its practice, the following does not explore the position of Die Gartenlaube once state-orchestrated colonialism became a reality, when the reportage became colored by the material facts and political complications brought about by active state imperialism. Rather, it views German liberal imperialism during its oneiric phase, when the vision of Germany as a Weltmacht with a clear Weltanschauung was an oppositional discourse that envisaged a more successful national future in imperialist terms. As such, this is a case study in the construction and maintenance of a liberal imperialist topos within German popular culture precisely during those years when Germany did not have a formal colonial empire.

From a theoretical point of view, the insights garnered from postcolonial studies shed light on how popular stories of the non-European world transformed the German understanding of their place in that world. This theorizing imputes to cultural representations of the non-European world, and the place of Europeans in it, a not insignificant role as part of an overall system of surveillance, ordering and domination of the colonized by the colonizers that enabled and accompanied the more active processes of imperialism. As has been noted by Homi Bhabha, among others, as intimate, ostensibly apolitical textual forms, periodicals, novels, and artworks offered up a portrait of the imagined colonial periphery that confirmed the impressionistic understanding of colonies held by the European reading public whilst shaping and manipulating this understanding. Popular culture representations of alterity offered a simplified and easily digestible form of colonial “knowledge” that could be called upon consciously or subconsciously as a portable tableau of distant lands and how they should be best handled. Precisely because popular narrations of colonial otherness, through a variety of narrative modes, both reflected and constructed mid-nineteenth-century liberal imperialist agitation and discourse, a description of the reportage of Die Gartenlaube becomes critical for understanding how the German liberals objectified alterity and offered the extra-European world up as a realm for German action.

These narrative modes, used by Die Gartenlaube to examine German people and interests overseas, can be divided into five different categories, each of which reveals the magazine’s support for and shaping of public opinion in favor of an imperialist German nation, albeit within the structural constraints of a supposedly apolitical magazine. Through each of these modes, the construction of an expansionist German national identity was discussed, delineated and manipulated, within the context of narratives of the encounters and interactions of Germans with the non-European world.

i) Deutschabroad
The first and by far the most prevalent of the narrative strategies used to endorse German overseas expansion was the assemblage of reports on the lives and successes of German communities in the colonies of other powers, most notably in North and South America. Often such reports held out the hope that a large degree of autonomy would be afforded to these communities, or in the absence of such hopes, the emphasis would switch to the self-reliance and self-help ethic of these communities, as well as to the broad acknowledgement and fame these communities had won in their adopted homes. With their success, the magazine argued, the high esteem in which Germans were held as colonists was assured. Exemplifying the magazine’s discrete commentary on conditions within the German states themselves, these settlements were portrayed as being notably free from the particularism that seemed to plague the German sense(s) of cultural and political identification.

In reporting on the experiences of German settler communities abroad, Die Gartenlaube sought to highlight the ways in which these communities represented a successful form of German colonialism in the absence of a centralized, national colonial policy. The magazine also sought to present a form of German national identity that was informed by the German colonial experience. German settlements were constructed as models for cultural and political development in Germany itself, with these settlers, defined as German, untainted by autochthonous social or political impediments such as particularism, class identity or hypertrophic confessionalism. As exemplary cohesive, proto-national entities, German communities living in overseas settlements were, it was argued, perfectly situated to enact a forgetting of internal differences that Die Gartenlaube, (and theorists such as Homi Bhabha) posited as central to the successful narration of a totalizing national identity.

Beginning with issue one of 1853, Germans in North American settlements in particular were posited as independent, intelligent, honest, and competent, when compared with other settler groups, with their competence such that “[t]hrough them Germany has risen greatly in esteem.” Rhetorically positioned within Die Gartenlaube as Germans by nationality, politically these emigrants belonged of course to the “Free States” of America, the very name of which was offered as an oblique criticism of Germany’s domestic political affairs in the post-1848 era. These settlers, despite now being technically American, were nonetheless positioned as irrevocably German and with them were invested
the nationalist hopes and imperialist dreams of German liberals, who actively sought throughout the mid-nineteenth century to establish an independent “New Germany” in North America, and then later, as the material consequences of the Monroe Doctrine became ever clearer, South America.\textsuperscript{27}

This depiction of German colonists abroad, on the one hand winning German international recognition, and on the other poignantly enjoying political freedoms unavailable in Germany itself, was used continuously as a means of supporting domestic liberal nationalism on the basis of its reported overseas successes. By 1856 this had been consolidated to form a picture of German settlers forgetting their instinctive Kleinstaateri to create strong communities exercising new political freedoms. The metaphorical translocation of liberal hopes to the American continent, was evident in proclamations that “Deutschtum will fulfill its mission in America first,”\textsuperscript{28} and in reports on the “second, only this time happy, free Mecklenburg” established on land that 20 years earlier had been dotted with the “wigwams of the red sons of the forests,”\textsuperscript{29} a colony that allowed the “honest German soul” to breathe “the air of freedom.”\textsuperscript{30}

Exemplifying the construction of a simulacrum of a liberal Germany abroad, a report on the opening of Baltimore’s Concordia House in 1866 was rendered as the dedication of a monument to German unity, energy, and freedom, in which the writer addressed a German audience, in terms that would have been approved of by the Nationalverein:

And this monument has not been built for us here in Baltimore alone. It has been erected to honor all Germans in America, so that I might I call out these words to my old Fatherland today: Unity creates strength. I wish that my words were repeated in all regions of Germany, that freedom follows unity.\textsuperscript{31}

However, it was not merely North America that was offered as an ersatz liberal Germany to the readership of Die Gartenlaube, particularly with the increase in emigration from Germany to South America in the 1860s. The parameters of discussion were similar, with events abroad commented upon and then used to comment on German national identity, how it was perceived by Germans in the colonies and what lessons this held for the emerging German state. Thus, at the end of a fairly mundane report on the mercantile importance of various South American port towns, a fairly blunt domestic message from “Germans living abroad” was sent to the magazine’s readership:

they know no particularism—they want a united, large German Fatherland and greet with joy every report from home that shows that the North German—hopefully soon the German—League is growing and becoming stronger. They know best, that only then can our nation and our name be respected overseas, when we stand steadfastly united and thereby take the position among the nations that is our due.\textsuperscript{32}

This appeal, ostensibly from the colonies, for national unification as a means of enhancing Germany’s international standing, neatly illustrates how Die Gartenlaube attempted to use the concept of Deutschtum abroad as a means of furthering the domestic political agenda of German liberals. Energetic Germans in the colonies and in trading ports, it was implied, could show the sluggish Vaterland the way out of the pre-unification national impasse.

Descriptions of German settlements abroad were also used to sustain liberal hopes of future imperial possessions, imaginatively transforming foreign lands into German realms, either through the use of linguistic sleights of hand such as “New York is the third largest German city in the world, in terms of the size of the population”\textsuperscript{33} or through the explicit entertaining of imperialist fantasies, as in an 1869 plan for the United States:

In the United States of America the German element is not only making itself a numerically significant proportion of the population, but has also gradually set itself up to be such a national influence, that it truly appears to be no illusory hope, that the future of the great transatlantic republic will be won for the Germans.\textsuperscript{34}

South America also figured in colonial plans, with for example a (London-based) German plan for the establishment of a “New Germany” in 1859 advocating the “[c]onquering of an entire land that is larger than all of Germany... Indeed, the intention is... to make Ecuador a new Germany.” The plan was introduced as the latest in a series of efforts that saw, in the eye of Die Gartenlaube the German nation as “das eroberte Volk.”\textsuperscript{35}

Of course it should be pointed out that this reporting on Deutschtum abroad also encompassed articles dealing with the issue of “white slavery,” in terms reminiscent of Johann Sturz\textsuperscript{36} and Samuel Kerst\textsuperscript{37} opposition to Brazil as a colonial destination, where it was described how unwitting Germans had taken out contracts with transportation firms, agreeing to be taken to the colonies for free, in exchange for bonded labor there—labor that did not enable them to ever pay off their debt, leaving the emigrants in a state of “weiße Niggerie.”\textsuperscript{38} However, far from dampening the magazine’s enthusiasm for Germans who had emigrated, or the notion of Deutschtum abroad, it led to calls for government protection, and implicitly, the regulation and direction of German emigration, as well as to general warnings against dealings with particularly unscrupulous firms.\textsuperscript{39}

Such concerns notwithstanding, this first mode of reportage, the celebration of the German communities who had established themselves overseas, was a means by which Die Gartenlaube could offer not only a view of Germans flourishing overseas in a way that would make the notion of a centralized project of German colonialism seem more viable, but also that would make a liberal German nation appear more tangible and definable, through its ventures and presence abroad. In this way, the German nation came to be imagined and
narrated from within as if from an external Archimedean point, ostensibly free from the parochial concerns of the *Vaterland*.

**ii) Popular Anthropology**

As a form of popular science, in its second narrative mode, *Die Gartenlaube* offered in often incidental descriptive passages, or more tellingly as part of an overview of the fauna and flora of a foreign land, descriptive and distorted renderings and illustrations of “exotic” peoples that presupposed pseudo-scientific classifications of indigenous populations, as an article in 1836 amply demonstrated (see Fig.1, Fig.2, Fig.3.). Such descriptions had the effect of producing forms of “knowledge” about subject peoples that could be instrumentalized in projects of colonial rule, construing, as Bhabha has argued, “the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction.”

This mode of reporting saw colonized peoples objectified, as either a servile labor force or as an unwanted obstacle to Germany's desired colonial future. Far from harmless, these descriptions were often transparently teleologically driven, with the colonial end firmly in view.
Far from clinical, empirical observations, these descriptions were often cast in moral terms, according to the indigenous peoples' degree of docility and predisposition towards the labor tasks assigned to them by Europeans. Often, racial hierarchies were expressly presented as an invitation for German involvement in the imperialist project, such as in the 1853 report of colonial life in Nicaragua, in which a three-tiered racial system comprising of Spanish rulers, a German and Spanish middle class, and an indigenous lower class was commended: “The first class of the population here rules and does nothing, the second helps rule and also does nothing, the third allows themselves to be ruled and looks after the little work to be done, very cheerfully, diligently and reliably.” From the German settler's point of view, this social hierarchy bore all the hallmarks of a colonial utopia replete with a compliant and productive indigenous labor force.  

Racial hierarchies were common within the reports of *Die Gartenlaube*, and were often little more than vulgarizations of anthropological assumptions laid bare in thumb-nail sketches of the population of a region, seen for example in sweeping statements such as “The Fellatahs are Muslims and of a nobler, more beautiful (Berber) race, than the blacks of other countries,” or through the infantilizing of non-European populations in statements such as “the black children of Africa bring a livelihood to thousands of workers in Europe” or the peddling of homespun wisdom such as “the blacks of East Africa are the product of their home, luxuriant and therefore lazy and little disposed to undertake more than is necessary to fill their bellies from day to day.”

However, often the language of scientific and cultural superiority was used to support the Europeans' colonial claims, as with the following, in which the lack of culture of the indigenous population was juxtaposed quite neatly against a quote from Goethe that shored up European claims to cultural superiority:

“The natural, uncultivated man is and remains a product of the earth... a product of the climate, of landscapes and scenery. For himself, the educated man requires a meaningful moral strength in order to become master of this dependency. “No-one strolls beneath palms unpunished,” quoth Goethe.”

Similarly drawing on the ideas of European science, this time a crude Darwinism, was an article in the form of a published letter from Australia. Referring to a photo accompanying the article (see Fig. 4), in which the man of culture sits with a controlling hand on the shoulder of the subdued native, the writer spoke of an Australian Aborigine in the following terms:

The basket-carrier is known by myself and my wife only as the “missing link” [Uebergang] as one could believe that he is midway between an overgrown chimpanzee and the true homo sapiens.
iii) Heroic Individuals

Counterpoised against this classification of indigenous peoples was the third mode of reportage, which related tales of Germany's heroic individuals abroad, its explorers, soldiers, surveyors, traders, and even missionaries, who were actively engaged in the project of “opening up” new lands for German advantage. It is here that Belgium's useful notion that *Die Gartenlaube* used individuals synecdochically to represent a favored social, cultural, and/or material process can be seen as having operated, as the magazine's editorial position cast those involved in imperialist exploration, and then later exploitation, in the most favorable of lights, as the heroic representatives of a unified, unproblematic German national character, enacting a national destiny in the wider world.

Foremost among these national heroes was Dr. Heinrich Barth, who was lauded throughout the decades for his pioneering work in “opening up” Africa. “By this hero,” it was proclaimed, “Africa has been unlocked and a larger, smoother path into the center of the secrets of the interior has been discovered.” Barth served as a model for those Germans who sought to expand the trading capacity of the German nation via the establishment of trade routes and trading stations around the world. Such individuals were viewed as ensuring Germany's role in global trade, and its name as a liberal, mercantile power.

The assumptions of such activity were explained in manifest enlightenment terms—“With trade and change, exchange and white contact comes culture, peaceful employment, and humanity...” Accompanying such claims however was the assumption that what had to be found was a way that Europeans could better “use” the indigenous population.

This appeal to the tropes of scientific enlightenment and the production of utilitarian imperialist knowledge of colonized lands and peoples, as both grounds for German exploration and as a means of expressing Germany's cultural superiority, was expressed repeatedly in the years between 1849 and 1884, lionizing German explorers as heroes of German science, supported by the entire nation:

An enthusiastic movement moved through the German lands... The German people wanted to prove to the world that it knows full well to appreciate that through which it dominates the civilized and educated people of the earth—German science!

The German expedition is a German affair; it will be a fine victory in a field in which we have never been surpassed; in addition it will contribute to Germany attaining new honor and glory abroad.

Such projects were not merely reported on, but also supported by *Die Gartenlaube*, with for example one article on an expedition to Africa accompanied by details and prices for membership in the *Afrikanische Gesellschaft*. In the article itself, apart from the customary personification of German imperial success in the figure of the expedition's leadership team, the expedition was termed purely scientific, although it was admitted that such geographical studies, presented as national triumphs, also served an economic end, and were predominantly funded by donations from the internationally active *Wirtschaftsbürger*um, who stood the most to gain from such ventures. In other words, the values, priorities, and interests of Germany's liberal traders were nationalized through their representation in *Die Gartenlaube*, which, as part of a growing network of liberal cultural and political institutions, hoped to prepare the nation for overseas expansion and dominance. Indeed in more honest articles, the interests of the liberal traders who stood behind the façade of the “heroic” individuals, and their connections to and interests in imperialist activity were spelled out.

iv) Vicarious Imperialism

In a fourth mode of reportage, *Die Gartenlaube* enacted a vicarious imperialism through the empires of other European nations, scrutinizing elements of their rule, as well as the material and cultural benefits imperialism was said to bring. Sometimes critical, particularly when Germany's interests abroad were seen as running contrary to those of other nations, these reports generally offered a positive appraisal of both how events in the colonies were handled and of the benefits of colonialism. In these articles, the cultural norms of imperialism, including its racializing tendencies, were transmitted to Germany—most tellingly in the reproduction of the notion that indigenous populations were destined to become a source of labor for Europe, or, as was often reported were simply to “die out” or be “necessarily” exterminated.

In an 1855 report on the Dutch and English in South Africa, the necessity of exterminating an entire indigenous community was explained. In this early report, the English were seen as partially to blame for this “necessity”:

If the English had only dealt honestly with the blacks... the conquering of their land for culture would already be complete. However they have made these savages savage, turned the barbarians into wild beasts... From raw materials something can be made, but not from ruined material.

Faulty logic regarding the nature and root of indigenous resistance aside, what is striking here is the acceptance of the notion that, as “spoilt” peoples, Africans necessarily required destroying—an idea reported in the English press and reproduced in *Die Gartenlaube*.

If this article expressed ambivalence towards the genocidal potential of imperialism, another pointed to the *Schändlichkeit*, of imperialism, even as its inevitable, nomistic nature was ultimately reinscribed:
Where the whites appear, they come as masters over all that is not their equal, turning the owners of the land into their dependents and slaves, and what appears as their enemies, what will not acquiesce to their commands, they crush and annihilate. For it is the destiny of the white race to conquer the world and to carry the banner of culture throughout all lands, and whether their victory is characterized by the demise of entire peoples, they must fulfill their task, and what races are not comparable in their cultural capacity also have no right to exist as equals.59

As attitudes towards indigenous populations and native insurgency hardened, theories of inevitable decline and disappearance became more prevalent, as the European mission of bringing culture, the teaching of “a new world order”60 was complemented with the patient (and sometimes impatient) wait for the inevitable Untergang of indigenous peoples. For the indigenous peoples of North America, it was declared: “The demise of the American Indian approaches inexorably.”61 Similarly, in South America, the concern was whether ethnographers would have the requisite time to study properly the “dying out native population,” the “destined for extinction Race of red-skinned natives.”62 In Australia, came the matter-of-fact report of frontier conflicts, “that will end only with the extinction of the natives.”63

Regarding the seemingly chaotic conditions of the African coast that had interrupted a German expedition, it was declared that these conditions would persist “as long as each misdeed of the natives is not followed by swift punishment, and that can only happen when this important coastal strip is no longer without a master.” That German explorers intended to return to provide the necessary firm punishment was hinted at in an extensive footnote to the article.64

Signaling a further hardening of opinion on the question of colonial justice, was an 1876 report on skirmishes with indigenous Americans, which ended with the stark proposition that a genocidal war was necessary for the sake of peace in America:

It is desirable that the first task of the republic in the second century of its existence is to cleanse the land of the Indian plague that has already cost millions and seen the sacrifice of thousands of precious lives! For when this occurs, it will be possible to open up the West, and to live in peace and security under the protection of the laws of the republic.65

With the furthering of the liberal commitment to imperialism came an investigation of, and ultimately, support for the violence necessitated by the processes of imperialism. As the pro-colonial propagandist Ernst von Weber wrote in an article about Africa’s Zulus, colonial powers should first attempt peaceful means of pacification and dispossession, however, should these prove unsuccessful, then violence was an acceptable means of ensuring the colonies were properly subdued, until such time as a reversion to the normal modes of domination was possible:

The unwise pampering of the black race, which the colonists have had to endure thus far must give way to a strict discipline, a systematic education, that alone is in a position to make a civilized people out of savage peoples.... The true interests of the blacks will be served by such a reorientation of government policy. And should such a result spring from the present blood-letting, at least the blood will not have flowed for nothing.66

v) Overt Expansionism

Domestic political developments related to commercial, naval and colonial policies were, somewhat carefully, reported on in the fifth mode of reportage in Die Gartenlaube related to Deutschland abroad. Whether in the shape of potted histories of government policy, or support for new government ventures that sought to expand Germany’s engagement with the wider world, these reports were overwhelmingly in favor of Germany becoming a maritime power with a colonial capacity.

Marking many of these reports was a nostalgia for the German navy established at the 1848/49 Frankfurt Nationalversammlung. However this fond commemoration represented more than mere sentimentality, in that, while the articles themselves focused on details from the past, their subtext was directed towards the future. Nostalgia, far from being an end in itself, was deployed strategically to exhort Germany’s liberal middle classes to support any future or current national naval programs like that instigated by the Nationalverein.

Articles on the German fleet created at the Nationalversammlung followed predictable patterns of narration. A fleet, it was argued, was a symbol of national unity and progress and a demonstration of how national energies should be harnessed in the prosecution of an active national foreign policy. In 1857, Die Gartenlaube reminded its audience of the symbolic importance of a naval fleet as a signifier of liberal nationhood, stressing the intense popular support for the fleet.67 Recounted were the replacing of the Hamburg naval flag with the German flag, the naming of a ship the Deutschland, the oaths of allegiance sworn to a united Germany—all details so moving that the writer was unable to think about it without the tears welling in his eyes.68 Cheers were raised announcing “There is only one Germany! The German people have a Fatherland! It is armed and fortified on land and sea!” while toasts “to the first naval battle” were made.69

Such politically charged remembrances also appeared in 1859, with the centrality of a German merchant and naval fleet underscored. Sea trade, the article argued was the most important part of Germany’s past and future progress, while German naval power was seen not only as the protector of German
industry abroad, but also as a “pledge of German unity.” The disappointment of the demobilization of the German naval fleet was seen as being a temporary state of affairs, with “lively thoughts about German naval prestige...[remaining] alive in the nation.”

Pro-naval sentiment strengthened in the ensuing years, as the naval campaign of the Nationalverein got underway, with an 1861 article arguing that the “disgraceful end” to Germany’s first attempts at establishing a naval fleet had only served to strengthen support for a German fleet, now posited as an outgrowth of the Prussian fleet. In an unusually overt political pronouncement, the conclusion to this article replicated the Nationalverein argument that stressed the interconnectedness between Germany’s global mercantile aspirations, the naval fleet and German unity, as well as Prussia’s role as the link between the two:

That the gift of Germany is coming, that the Prussian citizens in the Nationalverein itself, as Germans, combine their [naval fund] contributions with those of other brothers of German origin and have allowed them to flow as a gift to the entire Fatherland from their own government, must tenuously remind us of the end goal, with which the German navy, like everything positive for us, is bound up—the unity of Germany, the securing of which Prussia, due to its historical calling and position of power, owes Germany and itself.... Prussian honor is responsible for the redemption of the honor and power of the German Fatherland. We hope to God that we will not be betrayed this time.

Germany’s naval and imperial aspirations were also revealed through the poetry of Die Gartenlaube, with a series of poems by Albert Traeger published in 1861, 1863 and 1865 concentrating on German unity, as manifest in its military and navy. The first, “Zur deutschen Flotte,” rather prosaically demanded that “German taxes” be used to establish a German fleet, which could ensure Germany’s international position and internal unity:

The sail shall billow with the breath of unity:
“The German fleet is in proud arms
A united Germany on the oceans wide!”
... And where disgrace to German honor threatens,
No distant foe may any longer delude themselves unpunished....

Traeger’s 1865 poem “Deutschland auf dem Meere” continued this notion of the fleet as a symbol of a robust, united and liberal Germany, whilst Traeger’s poem devoted to the Schleswig-Holstein question, bluntly entitled “Wann, wann marschiren wir gen Norden?” was a martial hymn. As with “Zur deutschen Flotte” and “Deutschland auf dem Meere” the central poetic fiction was that of a united Germany, poised to intervene militarily. Unable to unite from within, Germany could become a nation only through its external actions.

After 1871, no real change in the treatment of the naval question is discernible, with the commitment to the establishment of a German fleet, along with the later establishment of a naval college and Ministry, applauded. Approvingly cited in this context was Friedrich Wilhelm Barthold’s 1850 call for “strong territorial unity at sea, permeated by a proud democratic spirit,” which according to the periodical had now come to pass.

In the 1880s, a different aspect of Germany’s overseas mission was covered, in the form of an article entitled “Deutschlands erster Kriegshafen,” a description of Wilhelmshaven. Beginning with a panegyric to sea power and its role in supporting the German coast and German trading posts around the globe, it moved on to a description of the harbor town that personified Germany’s “young naval power.” The article’s conclusion spelled out precisely what lessons the reader was to have extracted, namely:

Now we stand before the future... Is it too bold if we imagine this... as rosy and propitious, if we assume that in the future, under Kaiser Wilhelm and for our naval base in the well-suited Fatherland, something still more important awaits? This we believe in: long live the new era.

With this conclusion, the German navy, to be fostered by the Kaiser, was positioned as the guarantor of future national success and as an integral component of the “new era” of activity abroad.

However, the discussion of German imperialism was not confined to naval longings, with overt calls for colonialism in evidence, particularly after 1880. At the forefront of this was colonial propagandist Ernst von Weber, whose articles heightened the visibility of the magazine’s commitment to colonialism well before Bismarck’s colonial volte-face.

Commenting on the precarious situation of the Boers in South Africa, situated by Weber as victims of English oppression, Weber came up with the bellicose suggestion that they should be taken under the protection of the German government, with the German government declaring part of South Africa to be a German protectorate and the Boers becoming German colonists, a move which he argued the Boers would be favorably disposed towards. Having introduced the notion of colonialism, Weber continued on to articulate his vision of an aggressive German colonial policy:

We Germans must assist in the struggle for the freedom of our African blood brothers... for the sympathies that the Boers harbor for Germany will be of great worth to us... to the simultaneous advantage of unbounded expansionist capacity offered by a German national colony, which would assist in the future regular and lasting relief of our Fatherland from its
annual worryingly threatening growing proletarian masses, and by their remaining membership to the German economic sphere, bringing about a broadening of the German markets and therefore of our national wealth, whereas the millions of previously emigrated Germans, because of the lack of colonising, have become totally lost to our nation both commercially and national-economically.\(^8^6\)

Also noting the necessity of maintaining the energies of Germany's emigrants was an article of 1881, detailing the causes of migration in antiquity. Framing the article within a modern context, the article proclaimed:

It is as urgent a task of German politics as numerous others that have been tackled since 1871 to ensure in a comprehensive fashion through colonization that in the future these thousands of German workers will be retained by us and not as previously be lost to competitors, even to become enemies of the German homeland.\(^8^7\)

Immediately prior to the German government's abrupt change of policy in favor of colonial imperialism, Die Gartenlaube began to more shrilly announce its support for a Kolonialpolitik, even as it lamented the dearth of colonial opportunities left for German colonizers to create exclusively German colonies, with this problem blamed on the historical lack of political unity: "Sadly, splintered and powerless for centuries, Germany comes too late, after it is finally successful through providence to take its proper position once more, to acquire colonies of its own..." Significantly, the counterfactual question was posed; what would have happened if Prussia had undertaken a colonial policy years earlier?\(^8^8\)

At the height of the Kolonialrausch of 1884, some few weeks before Bismarck's pro-colonial parliamentary speech of 26 June, Die Gartenlaube once again displayed its pro-colonial sympathies, when, in an article entitled "Deutschlands Kolonialbestrebungen" the "apolitical" magazine forthrightly demanded that the colonial movement be supported:

awake in all hearts is the question, whether the time has not finally come, where a bold statesman will take up the legacy of the great Electors. We see in Germany a powerful agitation and hear the loud call for a definitive solution to the colonial question! Here a great field of action has opened up for all, irrespective of party position, and this high end seems to us attainable without the complications posed by war or the sacrifice of human life... With this confidence we depart today from the old Brandenburg fort, to seek new worlds of vitality.\(^8^9\)

Of the five modes of reportage on matters imperialist in Die Gartenlaube, it is in the fifth that direct appeals for a more activist form of expansionism on the government's behalf are to be found. With the retreat from state-driven colonialism that came with the dissolution of the Frankfurt Nationalversammlung, there were no overt calls for government sanctioned and supported colonies. Rather, the periodical prudently concentrated on examples of private imperial initiatives and calls for a navy to protect these initiatives and German emigrants. However, colonial imperialism came to have an increasing voice in the pages of Die Gartenlaube, as, given the cultural hegemony and political weight of Germany's liberals, and the ascendency of the National Liberal party in the post 1871 era, it was no longer seen as mere liberal utopianism to urge for government supported colonialism.

Meanwhile, the first four modes of reportage had offered the German liberal reader a vulgar, easily digestible understanding of the multifaceted nature of imperialism, its perceived dilemmas and responsibilities, albeit from an obviously Eurocentric position. Additionally, these four modes created a social space for the celebration of German imperialist successes abroad, and in so doing left the question hanging, how much more successful would the forces of Deutschstum abroad have been if they had been supported by an expansionist liberal government. Die Gartenlaube presented German action abroad, and German encounters with alterity, as a national crucible in which the mettle of the German nation would be tested and compared against that of its European competitors.

On the one hand, the narratives drawn from Die Gartenlaube can be seen as an attempt to further the nationalist-liberal metanarrative through the sublimation of a suppressed domestic political liberalism within narratives of German liberalism flourishing in German settlements abroad. In these narratives, the domestic locus of liberalism was displaced and relocated to the settlements of Germans abroad at a time in which German nationalist liberalism was comparatively weak when seen against its cultural significance.

Yet on the other hand, through its representations of Deutschstum abroad, the construction of a form of an intrinsically racialized popular anthropology, the discussion of heroic German individuals abroad in the wider world, the representations of the imperialisms of other nations and the adoption of a more overtly pro-expansionist stance, Ernst Keil's Gartenlaube constructed the non-European world as a site for the fulfilling of a German Weltaufgabe. Implicitly and explicitly comparing and contrasting Germany's global position with that of other European nations, the magazine sought to convince German liberals of the necessity of expansion.

What made Die Gartenlaube so much more effective in its agitation was that it purported not to be engaged in any at all. Rather, as a periodical that addressed the reader within the private sphere and seemed to eschew formal programmatic political statements, Die Gartenlaube was able to penetrate the consciousness of its bürgerlich audience through the establishment and constant repetition of key ideas: German superiority in comparison to other
European colonists and certainly in comparison to colonized subject peoples, the unavoidable necessity of naval and colonial expansion, and the tradition of success enjoyed by Germans already abroad.

In and of itself, *Die Gartenlaube* was unable to effect wholesale change in government policy direction, nor could it crudely manipulate or condition its readership. However, as an important example of nineteenth-century liberal popular culture, the journal both reflected and shaped liberal attitudes towards the non-European world. By both seeming to "inform" its readers and by reconfirming their pre-existing attitudes towards colonized lands and peoples, *Die Gartenlaube* became an instrument in the objectification of alterity. As such it represents an important case study of how a societal understanding developed, that Germany had a right and responsibility to expand, and that Germans had a right to expect that their hitherto theoretical overseas imperialism would be translated into fact.

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6. Keil was a member of the Nationalverein during the 1860s. See Expedition des Wochenschriftenverbandes Nationalvereins, *Verhandlungen der vierten Generalversammlung des deutschen Nationalvereins* (Coburg: Verlag der Expedition des Wochenschriftenverbandes Nationalvereins, 1863), 39. On the close links between *Die Gartenlaube*, the Nationalverein, the Nationalliberalen, and the German nationalist movement, see Gruppe, "Volk," 27–32, 103.  

10. Gruppe, "Volk," 37. All translations from German are by the author unless otherwise noted.  
13. Ibid., esp. chapters 3 and 4.  
15. Müller's analysis of imperialist tendencies in both the Augustbürger Allgemeine Zeitung and the 1848/9 Nationalversammlung can be supported by an examination of the Wochenschrift and Woben-Blatt of the Nationalverein, as well as Petermann's Mittheilungen aus Justus Perthes' geographischer Anstalt über wichtige neue Entdeckungen auf dem Gebiete der Geographie. The novels of Otto Ruppius, Sophie Wörishöffer, and Friedrich Gerstäcker as well as the treatises of Friedrich List, Hermann Blumenau, Johann Sturz, Wilhelm Roscher, Alexander von Bülow, Karl Gaillard also represent varying approaches to the theme of German expansionism.

16. Contra Belgum *Popularizing the Nation*, 151. In positing overseas expansionism as an essentially bourgeois liberal aim is not to discount the resonances such activities found in working class circles, particularly during the colonial era. See John Phillip Short, "Everyman's Colonial Library: Imperialism and Working-Class Readers in Leipzig, 1890–1914," *German History* 21/4 (2003): 445–75.  
18. Far more overt were the official political mouthpieces of the Nationalverein, Wochenschrift des Nationalvereins (WS) and Woben-Blatt des Nationalvereins (WB). E.g. "Die deutsche Kriegsfloette," *WS* No. 133, 14 November 1862: 1116; "Noch einmal: Die deutsche Floette," *WS* No. 203, 17 March 1864: 1719; "Die Flotten Sache," *WS* No. 232, 6 October 1864: 1999; "Die deutsche Seemannsschule in Hamburg in ihrer Bedeutung für die Zukunft-Marine Deutschlands," *WB* No. 23, 7 September 1865: 183. These papers, as overly political, at times doctrinaire periodicals, could afford a more forthright position than the ostensibly apolitical Gartenlaube, which sought to further its political agenda through the more intimate, personal narrative modes delineated below.  
On changes in broad narrative structure and approach in *Die Gartenlaube* during the nineteenth century, see Gruppe, "Volk," 13–14, 103.

As per Hans Fenske, "Imperialistische Tendenzen" and "Ungeduldige Zuschauer" and Frank Lorenz Müller, "Imperialist Ambitions" and "Der Traum von der Weltmacht."

For an example of this approach, see Susanne Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770–1870* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).


"Eine mecklenburgische Kolonie in Nordamerika," *DG* 1861, No. 9: 140.

Ibid., 139.

"Ein Denkmal deutscher Eintracht in der Fremde," *DG* 1866, No. 5: 76–78.


"Das Thor Amerikas," *DG* 1866, No. 31: 477.


"Neu-Deutschland unter dem Aquator," *DG* 1859, No. 52: 763–64. The introduction continues, "Keine Nation, keine Regierung der Welt kann sich so vieler festen und sichern, gedeihenden und vergrössernden Kolonien rühmen, als Deutschland."

Johann Jakob Sturz, *Die deutsche Auswanderung und die Verschleppung deutscher Auswanderer* (Berlin: Kortkamp Verlag, 1868).


"Rettung vor Seeenhänden," *DG* 1869, No. 25: Frontispiece.


Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 70.


"Der entdeckte Schlüssel zum Herzen Afrikas" *DG* 1856, No. 41: 557.

Ibid., 556.

"Die Jagd auf Flußpferde," *DG* 1874, No. 43: 698.


"Ein deutscher Drücks von Australien her," *DG* 1868, No. 44: 700. See also "Die Asteken, der Buschmann und die Corama," *DG* 1856, No. 12: 156–58. The use of images in *DG* in such articles always emphasized the advanced nature of the Europeans, in comparison to the "backward natives."


Belgum, *Popularizing the Nation*, 81–82.

"Der entdeckte Schlüssel zum Herzen Afrikas," *DG* 1856, No. 41: 556, 559.

Other individuals lauded by *Die Gartenlaube* included Theodor von Heuglin in *DG* 1862, No. 5: 72; Paul Büffeldt in *DG* 1874, No. 38: 613; Eduard and Theodor Vogel in *DG* 1875, No. 40: 679; C. Wölder in *DG* 1878, No. 4: 64; Henry Stanley in *DG* 1878, No. 7: 113; and, of course, the non-German but nonetheless "heroic" Dr. Livingstone, whose spirit was invoked in not a few of *Die Gartenlaube*’s articles on imperialist exploration: *DG* 1878, No. 27: 443.

Ibid., 74.


Ibid., 74.

"Die Afrikanische Gesellschaft" and the deutsche Expedition nach Loangoküste," *DG* 1874, No. 38: 613. For the expedition’s funding, see page 614; also *DG* 1883, No. 7: 116.

Fenske, "Imperialistische Tendenzen" and "Ungeduldige Zuschauer," Müller, "Imperialist Ambitions" and "Der Traum von der Weltmacht."


"Die Transvaal-Republik im Kafferlande," *DG* 1855, No. 32: 425.


"Von den 'rothen Teufeln,'" *DG* 1874, No. 47: 754. The article ends with a dismissal of "Romantic" ideas about their preservation. See 757.

"Die weißen Flecken unserer Landkarten," 478.


"Neue Indianerkämpfe," *DS* 1876, No. 33: 552.


Ibid., 10.


Ibid., 54.

The Nationalvereen undertook a vigorous pro-naval stance at the Nationalvereen