

W. E. B. Du Bois as a Study Abroad Student in Germany, 1892-1894

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Introduction

AMONG THE most prominent Americans to study abroad in the nineteenth century was undoubtedly W. E. B. Du Bois, but the road that led him there was anything but direct. After his graduation from high school in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, Du Bois wanted to attend Harvard, but was gently dissuaded by friends and counselors, who convinced him that he should go to a traditionally black college. Du Bois chose Fisk in Tennessee, where he was active in the choir, worked on the student newspaper, and took classes in German, among other subjects.

On graduating from Fisk, Du Bois, demonstrating his customary tenacity, applied for and was admitted to the program of study at Harvard, where he continued to use his knowledge of German in his classes in economics and philosophy. Finally he decided that he wished to study in Germany, and set sail for Europe. The years that he spent there were decisive for his further development.

This paper examines Du Bois's study in Germany, making use of a variety of documents relating to his stay in Berlin. Du Bois describes his life as a student in Berlin quite vividly in chapter 10 of his *Autobiography*, which is largely based on diaries and notes Du Bois kept as a student. The Du Bois papers stored at the University of Massachusetts (Amherst)¹ provide an interesting perspective on chapter 10, for here we can see the diaries in their original form, unedited by Du Bois, who wrote the *Autobiography* many years later and who left out much that is of interest not only to students of Berlin in the 1890s but also to biographers of Du Bois. In this paper I will draw not only on his correspondence and *Autobiography* but also on unpublished sources, including documents I found in Berlin. Although

the focus will be on Du Bois, it is also important to sketch in the cultural and political climate of the time, since this provides the setting for Du Bois's development and helps explain some elements in the further course of life.

Preparations

Du Bois's first acquaintance with the German language appears have been in classes at Fisk University in Nashville (1885-1888), where he took beginning German and read excerpts from Schiller's play *William Tell*. His commencement speech was on Bismarck. At Harvard (1888-1890) he read Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* with George Santayana, who himself studied in Gottingen and Berlin shortly before.² Du Bois wrote a paper on the German Railway System for his course on political economy (he got an A). At commencement, Du Bois spoke on Jefferson Davis as a representative of Teutonic civilization.

After receiving his B.A., Du Bois applied for a stipend from the Slater Fund, which wanted to finance graduate study abroad. Du Bois missed deadline for application and indeed only heard about the existence of the fund after its director, former President Rutherford B. Hayes, complained publicly that no worthy black man had applied. Eventually, after a protracted correspondence with Hayes, Du Bois was awarded the prize.³ At age of twenty-four, he set sail for Europe armed with a good education in philosophy, history, and the German railroads; an adequate knowledge of the German language; intense curiosity; and little idea where he was going to study.

At first he landed in Holland, "an extremely neat and well-ordered, mud-puddle" (*Autobiography*; 157), then took a boat trip up the Rhine before going over to Eisenach in central Germany, where he took a room with the Marbach family. After improving his knowledge of German over the summer (and falling a little in love with the eldest daughter of the family, Dora Marbach), Du Bois determined that the best university in Germany was that in Berlin, and so he set out for that city in the fall of 1892.

University Life

At the time the Friedrich Wilhelms-Universität zu Berlin was the most modern in the world. Just a year before Du Bois's arrival, electric lights had replaced the gas lights in the library. There was a new, centralized clock system with bells that rang every quarter hour. The first toilets had been installed, along with central heating and ventilation. It certainly must have seemed a highly developed place to Du Bois, who not so long before had been looking for a summer teaching job by wandering on foot over the hot and dusty roads of rural Tennessee.

The university building, located then as now on the tree-lined Unter den Linden boulevard, had thirty-six lecture halls distributed over three floors. One room with two cells was set aside for the detention of students. The catalog room in the library was open to students daily, but only from noon until 2 P.M. As far as is known, Du Bois checked out only two books during his three semesters in Berlin.⁴

The winter semester of 1892, Du Bois's first semester, ran from mid-October until mid-March. The student body was made up of approximately 4,700 young men, of whom anywhere from 8-11 percent were foreign. More than 150 Americans were enrolled, and the largest group, 59, took classes in philosophy, philology, and history.

Of all the German language universities, only Vienna had a larger faculty. And on the faculty in Berlin were some of the most famous names anywhere in the academic world: the philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey; the economist Gustav Schmoller; the historian Heinrich von Treitschke ("the most instructing and interesting especially for the modern ultra German point-of-view," noted Du Bois, *Autobiography*, Chap. 10); one of the founders of the field of German literature, Erich Schmidt; Max Weber; the classical philologist Theodor Mommsen; and the scientists Helmholtz, Planck, and Virchow.⁵

Students lived in apartments they sublet for the semester and frequently moved, never staying long enough in one place to be registered in the official Berlin address book. This was the case with Du Bois, as he moved at least four times during his stay in Berlin.⁶ As he wrote in an unpublished essay "Harvard in Berlin" (ca. 1893): "The correct Berlin method is to hire a nook in a flat, from three to five stories

up. There with pipe and bier, coffee and black bread, he lives not like a king, but as a free and easy viking bound to the student world by his kneipes (drinking bouts) his societies, and-possibly-his lectures" (p. 11).

There were no required classes, and attendance was never taken. Students typically spent a semester at one university and then moved on to a second and a third to complete their education. This so-called "triennium" was in fact a requirement for all students. To get a degree it was necessary only to pass a final examination, and students often simply crammed for his exam after doing little or no studying for years.

Problems were caused not by the majority of students but (even then) by certain fraternities. According to the *Berliner Zeitung*, membership in certain student organizations meant they were taken care of for the rest of their lives; their careers as administrators or as judges were guaranteed. And yet these students were the laziest drudges imaginable.⁷ They spent two to three years carousing in bars, dueling, and discussing correct drinking customs. At a university in western Germany one fraternity was said to have forbidden its members to attend classes as being "improper behavior."

The *Vossische Zeitung* cautioned that these problems actually used to be worse. Whoever looked at the courses listed on the bulletin boards could find numerous announcements of student associations that invited participation in their meetings, where students would give lectures on topics they had investigated themselves. Others invited professors from their own and her institutions to lecture on issues of current concern.⁸ Du Bois wrote that there were clubs "for all purposes, from philosophy to chess, and from converting the Jews to Alp-climbing" (*Autobiography*, 167). The students generally shared with the faculty members the conviction that the key to the answer to social problems was education.

But what was it that brought on the outpouring of newspaper commentary on the conditions of student life in August 1893? Why does the collection of Professor Virchow contain all these now-yellowed clippings? The uproar was brought about by a complaint by Professor Schmoller at the end of his course on national economy. His lectures were usually attended by more than one hundred students, guests, and dignitaries both from home and road. Schmoller thanked the students,

but addressed his thanks only to those who had done the work, not to those who had skipped the entire semester and appeared on the last day to pick up their certificate of participation—something that, as he pointed out, was to be found nowhere else on earth and in no other system of education. Schmoller was concerned for the future civil servants and for the welfare of the nation, which he saw largely resting in their hands, and he (somewhat hysterically) compared the situation to that of France before the revolution. One paper (the *Volks-Zeitung* nr. 185 of 9 Aug. 1893) urged Schmoller to use his influence to ban fraternities, which encouraged overindulgence, rowdiness, and "Nichtstun" (idling or inaction) among their members.

It is hard to imagine today any comments on student behavior by any professor, no matter how prominent (except maybe the late Allan Bloom), attracting such widespread attention and controversy as followed Schmoller's remarks. The reaction illustrates the esteem with which the views of distinguished professors at the Berlin University were held in German society of the 1890s.

The Political Situation

One national holiday in which of course the university participated took place every 27 January: the Kaiser's birthday. All the newspapers reported in great detail the celebrations of 1893, when the Kaiser turned thirty-four. The ceremonies began at 3 A.M. with martial music, a reception, a church service, and speeches, and lasted the entire day. Huge crowds lined Unter den Linden; boys climbed trees to get a better view of the parades. The guard of honor fired their guns in salute. There was a festive meeting at the Academy of Sciences, which Du Bois was to become a member of some sixty-five years later. At the university there was a ceremonial gathering in the main hall, and speeches on the history of the university, stressing the role played therein by the Kaiser's ancestors; other speeches focused on riveting topics such as the Kaiser's voyages to northern countries, and plays were performed with titles such as *The Guardian Angel of the Hohenzollerns*. In the evening a banquet took place followed by a gala opera.

One must remember that Germany had been united for only twenty-one years on Du Bois's arrival. The Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1871

had seen the triumph of German armies led by Prussia over the French of Napoleon III at Sedan and the later fall of the Paris Commune. The Prussian King, William I, had been reluctantly persuaded by Chancellor Bismarck to accept the crown as Kaiser. The coronation took place in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles.

By the time Du Bois arrived in 1892, the first Kaiser had been succeeded by William II, the man we think of as *the* Kaiser, who had forced Bismarck into retirement. With his departure the intricate system of alliances that he had maintained began to fall apart. Rapid industrialization, the acquisition of colonies, the creation of a fleet nearly equal to that of the British, and the powerful army all led Germany's leaders to claim for their country world power status. In reaction to this came the formation in 1892 of a Franco-Russian military convention. An essential component of the coming world war was thus in place.

On the domestic side, an election took place in the summer of 1893, and Du Bois was an eager student of the campaign as he saw it unfold in Berlin. By American standards, it was a rather quiet affair, with the Social Democrats the only party to engage actively in electioneering. Du Bois's unpublished essay "The Present Condition of German Politics" (reel 87, frame 391 ff.) records his observations, although his definition of left wing and right wing takes some getting used to. Evidently the young Du Bois could be described in today's terms as a libertarian, so his perspective looks skewed to today's viewer. Du Bois lumped the German Social Democrats together with the anti-Semites on the *right* wing. For Du Bois socialism meant state control and was therefore on the right. Even stranger is Du Bois's surprise that workers identified themselves with the Social Democratic party. Du Bois seemed to think that a socialist was an intellectual, that socialism was a theoretical, philosophical affair best represented by some of his professors at the university. Du Bois, who himself had been active in the choir at Fisk, was amazed when he attended what was billed as a reunion of two hundred workingmen's glee clubs, only to find himself "in the midst of 10,000 socialists!" He evidently did not know that these groups often were camouflage organizations for political clubs during the time when Bismarck's antisocialist laws were in effect. In addition to glee clubs

(which performed the "Marseillaise" and other tunes from the official party songbook), there were dance clubs, athletic clubs, zither clubs, and a volunteer fire brigade. These clubs provided entertainment for working-class families, for example, by setting up photographic exhibitions and displaying items such as a barrel filled with workers' sweat.⁹ Du Bois noted at the gathering of the socialist glee club, "I asked a neatly dressed and harmless-looking little maiden with whom I danced: 'Are you too a socialist?' 'O yes!' she replied; 'And why?' She looked a bit puzzled and then answered half-timidly: 'Because my father is.' I danced with her again." Du Bois was interested in the Social Democrats, not because he agreed at this time with their Politics, but because they were a political movement for the disenfranchised and underprivileged, and so he saw in them a possible model for what could happen someday for his own race in America. Du Bois felt a similar attraction to Bismarck, whom he had described in his commencement address at Fisk as the unifier of a disparate and fractious nation.

The social democratic clubs did have an overtly political dimension as well. They would invite prominent speakers such as the revered founder of the party, August Bebel, who lectured in smoke-filled halls in sessions that lasted from 8 PM to midnight. Or the clubs engaged in debate on a topic such as the right to strike. Everyone was expected to participate in these debates, which were used as preparation for debates against other political parties.

Near the end of his long life (he lived to be ninety-five), Du Bois was to become a Communist candidate for the U.S. Senate from New York after World War II and later a member of the Communist Party of the United States, and East German accounts of his student days in Berlin frequently mention the allegedly lasting impression made by August Bebel on the young Du Bois. But this is a self-serving reinterpretation of history by the East Germans, who wanted to claim both Bebel and Du Bois as their own. The documents Du Bois wrote while in Berlin tell a different story.¹⁰ He was probably including himself when he said that most Americans would side with the German Democratic party, which in Du Bois's terminology was left wing but which would not be considered so today. The Democrats opposed state intervention and upheld the rights of the individual and the state over and against any

centralized authority. Particularly they supported free trade and deregulation.

The result of the 1893 election was that fourteen groups were represented in the newly constructed Reichstag. The largest party was the Roman Catholic Center party, with ninety-six seats (about a quarter of the total), based on the support of 19 percent of the voters. The Social Democrats, although they received a larger percentage of the votes, had fewer than half as many seats, because Bismarck's restrictive voting laws did not permit one man one vote. The anti-Semites, who had had zero representation in 1884 and six in 1890, shot up to sixteen in this election.

Anti-Semitism in Imperial Berlin

Anti-Semitism was present in the 1890s not just in politics but also in the university. Among the professors, Gustav Schmoller could be heard saying: "We see that where large properties are the rule, the little Jew represents the middle class but by no means completely replaces it, we see above all that in these regions small towns, small markets with healthy life are missing..."¹¹ But the most prominent anti-Semitic professors, the historian Treitschke and the economist Wagner, both of whom were professors of Du Bois.

Students, too, had their anti-Semitic organizations. The Vereine Deutscher Studenten (Clubs of German Students) founded in the 1880s under the guidance of Court Preacher and influential anti-Semite Adolf Stoecker were politically quite active. In 1893 they invited one Dr. Brecher, a notorious anti-Semite, to become an honorary member of their fraternity. The rector of the university, the famous public health reformer Rudolf Virchow, tried unsuccessfully to keep Brecher from receiving this dubious honor.¹²

This led to scathing denunciations of Virchow in the anti-Semitic press as "judenfreundlich" (philosemitic), as though that were a term of opprobrium. The university was called a bastion of Judaism with a high percentage of Jewish professors. One paper commented that Virchow in his ivory tower had lost contact with the people, who were (allegedly) suffering, under the increasing influence of Judaism. "We Germans," said another paper, still have reason to be proud of our higher

education, but if Jewish, materialism takes hold then it will be in danger."¹³ One could without difficulty list many more such commentaries, as these examples are by no means isolated.

At the same time, the liberal press, influential although small in number, stoutly defended Virchow and said that the fame of the Berlin University was suffering under the onslaught of anti-Semitic students and professors. Virchow fought back in his formal address to the faculty, saying that although no professorship of anti-Semitism had yet been demanded, anti-Semitic professors had been called for—a highly unusual and courageous reference to current events in a speech in which only nice sentiments and vague words were expected.

The Club for Social Policy

One of Du Bois's professors, Gustav Schmoller, was a founder (in 1872, of the Verein für Sozialpolitik (Club for Social Policy), the primary organization for social reform.¹⁴ The fast pace of industrialization after the defeat of France had led to increasing class conflict and the prospect of worse confrontations to come. The state sought to head off these clashes by means of intervention in the private sector. There were widespread calls for a third path, one between communism and capitalism, one that would avoid the twin dangers of revolution and reaction.¹⁵

The Club for Social Policy, which brought together economists, government officials, scientists, and academicians, led the way with radical calls in the early 1870s for the abolition of private property. In the years that followed, however, the club retreated from the front lines somewhat and became an academic publication company (vom Bruch 1985, 67). Two representatively drab titles of the *Publications of the Club for Social Policy* under Schmoller's editorship are *The Conditions of Farmworkers in Germany* (3 volumes, 1892; the third volume was edited by Max Weber) and *New Investigations into the Housing Question in Germany and Abroad* (4 volumes, 1901).

A central tenet of the club was that it should fall to the educated classes, the talented tenth, as Du Bois would later call them, to moderate between the propertied class and the proletariat (vom Bruch 1985, 62). As Schmoller himself said, "Science can and should not be

impartial and colorless, but, while standing above the minor squabbles and controversies of the day, should deal with the large political questions of the age" (Ritschl, 258).

Another fundamental principle of the club was that the state was responsible for all its subjects and for their welfare. After careful study of a problem, the government must be prepared to take action.¹⁶ A prerequisite for reform was a description of how a problem (such as child and female labor) arose, followed by, an exact statistical description of the problem. Du Bois notebooks of his courses with Schmoller include the following sentence, written in a mixture of German and English: "My school tries as far as possible to leave the 'sollen' [what should happen] for a later stage and study on[ly] the 'geschehen' [what actually happens] as other sciences have done" (Economics Notebook 1893/94, reel 87). Reform should be scientific, based on observation and quantification. Only then could the arguments be made for limiting work hours, improving hygiene and safety, reforming the tax code, and seeing to the education of the working class.

Schmoller, who became chairman of the club in 1890, was one of the most prominent members of a group known, at first pejoratively, as "Kathedersozialisten," or socialist professors. Under his leadership, the club concentrated on labor conditions. Questionnaires were distributed, and students in his seminars conducted interviews with workers. It must have been at Schmoller's encouragement that Du Bois became a member of the Club for Social Policy.

Du Bois's memory of Schmoller did not fade with the years. In 1958, when Du Bois went to East Berlin to accept an honorary degree from his old university (now renamed the Humboldt University), he was greeted by the dean, who still lives there in retirement. The dean recalled that the first thing Du Bois did when they met was to pull out of his pocket a calling card of Gustav Schmoller and say that when he (Du Bois) was a student, Schmoller had given him that card and invited him to attend one of his upper division courses. Du Bois never forgot the kind gesture.¹⁷

Departure

Among the documents in the archive of the Humboldt University relating to Du Bois, one sheds some light on the question: Why was Du Bois not allowed to take his degree at Berlin? The minutes of the faculty meetings show that typical topics discussed in the 1890s were these: Who is to be considered a candidate for tenure? Which professors are leaving for jobs elsewhere? There is also the occasional case of plagiarism. Another burning question was, Should students with no knowledge of Latin be allowed to graduate with a degree they could not read? Old Professor Helmholtz called awarding these degrees a "deception of the nation" (minutes of 6 July 1893).

Du Bois, like a number of other students, wished to be admitted early for a degree, and his petition was considered on 18 January of 1894. The official minutes do not record the pro and contra, but only the final, somewhat convoluted decision:

The student of national economics du [sic] Bois from America, who spent 4 semesters at the Harvard [sic] University and is now enrolled in his 4th semester at the Berlin University, requests the faculty to recommend to the ministry {of education} that he be dispensed from taking the triennium and he admitted now to the final exam. The faculty is of the opinion that in the case of foreigners, whose education is significantly different from that usually to be found at German schools, a dispensation from proof of having fulfilled the triennium should be granted only in quite special and exceptional cases and even then only when it is a matter of the last semester, and therefore rejects the petition of the student du [sic] Bois.

In later accounts of this incident, Du Bois attributed the denial of his petition to the members of the English Department (and at other times to the Chemistry Department), who were afraid of the precedent that would be set for all their foreign students. In the official statement, however, the issue was decided on the basis of the differing educational systems, and no mention is made of any department. I suspect that the correct information is supplied by Du Bois, who likely was told by Schmoller, who was present at the meeting and who informed Du Bois what the real reason was. As is often the case, the statement by the administration was a smokescreen for something quite different. Du Bois, although disappointed, packed his bags and returned to

America, where he became the first African American to receive a Ph.D. from Harvard.

Lessons Learned

What did Du Bois learn from his study abroad in Germany? Why was his time there of importance in his life?

First of all, it changed him on an intimate and personal level. Du Bois was so taken with some aspects of German social behavior that he retained certain habits from his student days in Berlin for the rest of his life. Prussian social customs gave him, or at least reinforced in him, a certain distinguished bearing or carriage, an apparent aloofness not uncommon among shy people. This trait, augmented by a clipped manner of speech Du Bois acquired in Germany, was often misunderstood as reserve, distance, even haughtiness, and was to characterize Du Bois for the rest of his life. In his physical appearance Du Bois, described later in life as a mandarin, was just following the fashion set by the Kaiser in his style of trimming his hair and beard, as well as his habitual use of a cane and gloves. Pictures of the two men show a striking similarity, even when the pictures are from much later in their lives.

Consider also Du Bois's account of his twenty-fifth birthday celebration on 23 February 1893, which is described in detail in the *Autobiography*. This is an important document because it not only describes what he did that day but closes with his resolve to "work for the rise of the Negro people, taking for granted that their best development means the best development of the world" (p. 171). In editing this for publication in the *Autobiography*, Du Bois omitted one curious part of the document: the title page, a virtual program sheet that he drew up, listing every activity by the clock for the evening before and day of his birthday, down to his guests and his menu. Du Bois celebrated the Kaiser's birthday with the rest of Germany, and then turned his own birthday celebrations into miniature imitations of the royal ones, replete with their own ceremony, ritual, and court reporting.

Germany provided Du Bois with his first sustained exposure to classical music: Schubert's symphonies, operas by Weber and Wagner, and German folk songs are some of the works that made a lasting impression on him. It is in Germany that Du Bois says he learned how to drink beer and wine.¹⁸ One of the most amusing souvenirs of this fact is a slip of paper Du Bois saved that has the following text printed on it: "I have been out drinking this evening and cannot find my way home. My address is.....Please put me in a cab home. The fare is in my vest pocket." This was to be affixed to one's buttonhole when the occasion warranted. It should be noted that the address

is not filled in, and that Du Bois probably saved it only as a curiosity, not because he ever needed it.

On a more serious note, when Du Bois went to the University of Pennsylvania as assistant professor of sociology, he began a major work studying the black community in Philadelphia. Elijah Anderson, in his introduction to a reprint of this work, notes: "In intellectual terms, Du Bois's studies in Germany were a profound influence on the course of his life's work. When he returned to the United States in 1894, he had been inspired by his academic and social experiences abroad, not to mention the work of sociologist Weber. He brought some of this inspiration to the study of the black community."¹⁹

Du Bois himself writes: "The Negro problem was in my mind a matter of systematic investigation and intelligent understanding. The world was thinking wrong about race, because it did not know. The ultimate evil was stupidity. The cure for it was knowledge based on scientific investigation" (*Autobiography*, 197). In other words, Du Bois had precisely the same attitude toward the discrimination against his race in America as Schmoller had toward class conflict in Germany. The solution to a major social problem is exact study by the educated elite followed by government intervention to avoid the potential for violence or civil war. This is the impetus behind works that Du Bois churned out over the next seventeen years at the rate of one volume per year, with titles ranging from *Social and Physical Condition of Negroes in Cities* (1897) to *The College-Bred Negro* (1900) to *Morals and Manners Among American Negroes* (1915). What is this but DuBois's effort to create on his own the entire program of Schmoller's *Publications of the Club for Social Policy*? What is amazing is that Du Bois, unlike Schmoller who was supported by a staff and had a different author for each volume, carried on this operation year after year with minimal assistance and on a shoestring budget, and did not utterly exhaust himself in the process.

We have seen that anti-Semitism in Germany was widespread and growing in influence in the last decade of the nineteenth century, and Du Bois did not escape it entirely.²⁰ Du Bois was evidently ambivalent in his attitude toward the Jews. In the unpublished essay on German politics he noted on one page that "It may surprise one at first to see a recrudescence of anti-Jewish feeling in a civilized state at this late day. One must learn however that the basis of the neo-antisemitism is economic and its end socialism. Only its present motive force is racial hatred," a fateful but widespread misreading of the phenomenon. He goes on, however, to say: "It must be ever remembered that the great capitalists of Germany, the great leaders of industry are Jews; moreover, they work for each other.... [T]hey have forced citadel after citadel,

until now they practically control the stock-market, own the press, fill the bar and bench, are crowding the professions—indeed there seems to be no limit to the increase of their power.

One year later, Du Bois noted the attributes of some of his fellow passengers on the voyage back from Southampton to New York. In a passage omitted from the *Autobiography*, Du Bois writes in words that echo Schmoller: "In spite of all I have seen the Jew remains a half veiled mystery to me. I should be the last to join in any prejudice against him both from principle & from the acquaintance I've had with noble individuals in his race. Yet there seems to fail so far as I've seen that strong middle class which in every nation holds the brunt of culture. I have seen the noble aristocracy of the race and the low mean cheating *Pobel*—but seldom the ordinary good hearted good intentioned man. I suppose this is of course the result of their curious history ... On board we have various specimens but none of a very inviting character ... There is in them all that slyness that lack of straightforward openheartedness which goes straight against me. . . ." He concludes, "I have great hopes & great admiration for the Jew people only I see that their national development is over widely different obstacles than those of my nation." One could go on and on discussing this topic.²¹ Suffice it to say that in this respect Du Bois's experiences in Europe did nothing to lessen his ambivalence.

It was in Berlin that Du Bois evidently had his first significant—and tragic—love affair. The details of this are sketchy, but Du Bois lived with a German shopgirl, probably Amalie Lebenfeldt, a name noted at the end of an unpublished list of women's names Du Bois compiled. Since the city address books do not list anyone of that name, she likely lived the kind of transient existence in Berlin that Du Bois did. Or perhaps she lived in one of the suburbs of Berlin not covered in the address books. We simply don't know. All that Du Bois says of her in the *Autobiography* is that he feels remorse for having caused her "(perhaps) life-ruin" (171). What can this mean? Did she become a social outcast for having a relationship with a man outside of marriage? And a foreigner? And a "Neger," as the Germans of the time would have said? Did she become pregnant? Did she have his child out of wedlock? One can continue to ask such questions, but answers will be difficult to come by.

Whatever the problems were with Amalie Lebenfeldt, they might well have involved something more than American-style racism. Recall the incipient love affair when Du Bois was staying in the town of Eisenach with the Marbach family. The only hindrance to his marriage to Dora Marbach was Du Bois's own realization that he could not take her back to America with him and have her go through the social ostracism that most certainly would have awaited

her. Dora apparently would have been happy to marry him and her family would have been pleased as well. But if Du Bois needed any reminding of what would happen to them in America, it was provided by a professor from Colorado and his wife, who stayed briefly with the Marbachs and who thought it necessary to explain to their hosts "the truth about American Negroes." In any event, if the Marbachs in the town of Eisenach were open-minded enough to accept Du Bois as a member of their family, there is no reason to think that the big city of Berlin was less tolerant of an interracial relationship. If he had been Jewish or Slavic, that might have been a different matter, but Du Bois in Berlin was what is called in German a bird from paradise, an almost unique creature, yet cultured and mannered, a member of the intellectual elite.

When Du Bois renounced Dora Marbach he was sacrificing his personal happiness for the sake of a greater good, a higher goal-in this case, for the sake of Du Bois's own sense of his mission life to work for the betterment of his race in America. Sacrifice and renunciation-concepts that would have been quite familiar to Du Bois in the cultural atmosphere of Germany at the time. The German language has a word that neatly includes both meanings, and it was given its most pregnant formulation by, of course, Goethe in *Faust* (verse 1,549): "Entbehren sollst du! sollst entbehren." Thou shalt forgo, shalt do without-a line that Du Bois quoted twice in his *Autobiography* (212, 404).

Goethe had been the single most important cultural icon in Germany long before Du Bois arrived. Testimony to this can be found in the letters of a professor who greatly influenced Du Bois at Harvard, William James. In a letter from Dresden in 1867, the young James wrote to his family: "I went to the theatre again two nights ago to see Goethe's *Faust!!!* which was acted with hardly anything omitted, and was, naturally, a great failure, though the audience, who knew the poem by heart, seemed greatly delighted."²² Goethe's *Faust* was quoted on innumerable occasions; the play (over twelve thousand verses long) was performed frequently, and certain sayings entered the permanent vocabulary of the German language. The yearnings and interests that Du Bois took with him to Germany were given a framework, a vocabulary in Berlin that allowed him to understand himself better and be able to express himself in a new idiom, and part of this idiom came from Goethe. Henceforth he regarded his years in Berlin as the culmination of his *Lehrjahre*, his apprenticeship (a reference to the title of Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*), and his return to America was to be the beginning of his *Meisterjahre* (adult years-see *Autobiography*, 184). When he wrote on his twenty-fifth birthday that "I am striving to make my life all that life may be" (*Autobiography*, 171), he was drawing on the tradition of Goethe's *Faust*, one of the quintessential figures of the modern world.

Another quotation from *Faust* is, in fact, the inspiration for the title of Du Bois's most famous work. *The Souls of Black Folk* -how often do we see this title misquoted as *The Soul of Black Folk* or *The Soul of Black Folks*? But it's *The Souls of Black Folk*, because Black Folk according to this book have more than one soul: "One ever feels his twoness-an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body. . ." (Chap. 1, "Of our Spiritual Strivings"). This passage and this title is nothing but a paraphrase of one of the most famous lines (verse 1, 112) from *Faust*: "Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach! in meiner Brust"- "Two souls, alas, reside within my breast / And each withdraws from, and repels, its brother" (trans. Bayard Taylor), a quotation familiar to everyone whose native tongue is German. This connection was first pointed out in print in the first volume of David Levering Lewis's recent biography of Du Bois; previous researchers, trying to explain the title, have looked into what doctrines of the soul were taught to Du Bois at Harvard in his psychology classes-all this speculation completely misses the point: Du Bois was claiming for his race the dilemma and also the status of Faust, the one who risks his soul in the search for knowledge of the last secrets of the universe.

Finally, what was the most important thing that Du Bois learned from his time in Europe? It was there that Du Bois had his first adult experience of whites who did not discriminate against him. There Du Bois overcame what he termed his own narrow and provincial view of race relations. He realized that it was not an innate trait of whites to be prejudiced against people of his race, for he was treated as an equal and with human warmth by some of the first people he met in Europe, a Dutch family on the boat going up the Rhine. It became clear to Du Bois, as it was later to become clear to Malcolm X, that racial prejudice of the kind he was familiar with was a peculiarly American institution. As he wrote in an unpublished note on his birthday in 1894 (reel 87, frame 491): "I have finally proved to my entire satisfaction that my race forms but slight impediment between me and kindred souls-that in spite of vexatious curiosity, I am here free from most of those iron bands that bound me at home. Therefore I have gained for my life work new hope and zeal-the Negro people shall yet stand among the honored of the world."

Conclusion

Du Bois was already a prodigious talent before he went to study in Germany. While there, he absorbed much of what German culture had to offer, both in and outside the classroom. When he came back, he was transformed. He did not simply borrow German ideas and transport them to

America, however. Rather, he amalgamated aspects of German culture with his own preexisting interests and concerns. Germany gave Du Bois a language and a cultural framework that provided decisive impetus to his own innate strivings.

¹ This paper would not have been possible without the assistance of Linda Seidman of the special collections of the library at the University of Massachusetts (Amherst) and Prof. William Strickland, head of the Du Bois Papers project there.

² George Santayana, *Persons and Places, Fragments of Autobiography*. Ed. William G. Holzberger, Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr. Critical Ed. (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press, 1986), 253-265.

³ It is no exaggeration on Aptheker's part when he writes that in making this decision Hayes "may here have performed the greatest service of his career" (*The Correspondence of W. E. B. Du Bois*, ed. Herbert Aptheker [Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press], 1, 16). Only the renewal of this stipend enabled Du Bois to stay in Europe as long as he did.

⁴ They were Charles K. Kingsley, *Hypatia: or, new foes with an old face*, two vols. in one (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1857), checked out on 16 May 1893, and Wilhelm Dilthey, *Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaft*, vol. 1 (1883), checked out on 20 January 1894, returned on 21 February.

⁵ A list of the courses taken by Du Bois can be found in vol. I of his (*Correspondence* and in Ingeborg H. Solbrig, "American Slavery in Eighteenth-Century German Literature: The Case of Herder's 'Negerldyllen'," *Monatsbeft* 82/1 (Spring 1990), 38-49. A lively description of what it was like to attend a lecture by Treitschke can be found in chapter 10 of Du Bois's *Autobiography*.

⁶ *The Amtliches Verzeichnis des Personals und der Studierenden der Klynglichen Friedrich Wilhelms-Universitdt zu Berlin* for the years 1892-1894 lists the following addresses for Du Bois: Winter Semester 1892-1893 OranienstraBe 130a (a house with this number exists, but was evidently constructed after the last war); Summer Semester 1893 MauerstraBe 45 and 46 (Du Bois apparently instead lived during this semester on the Schoneberger Ufer, according to his letters; the site is now a park); Winter

Semester 1893-1894 Oranienburger StraBe 66 (only the back part of this address still stands; it is part of the Henschel publishing house).

⁷"Die verbummelten Studenten," *Berliner Zeitung* nr. 186, 10 August 1893.

⁸"Der Unfleiß der Studenten," *Vossische Zeitung* , Nr. 311, 10 August 1893.

⁹ Paul Gohre, *Drei Monate Fabrikarbeiter und Handwerksbursche. Eine praktische Studie* (Leipzig: Friedrich Wilhelm Grunow, 1891), 101. Du Bois recommends this "excellent little essay" in his unpublished ms.

¹⁰ See my article "Censoring Your Ally: W. E. B. Du Bois in the GDR," *Crosscurrents: African-Americans, Africa, and Germany in the Modern World* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1996 [forthcoming]).

¹¹"Korreferat Über innere Kolonisation mit RÜcksicht auf die Erhaltung und Vermehrung des mittleren und kleinen hindlichen Grundbesitzes." *Schriften des Vereins für Sozialpolitik* 33(Leipzig 1887), 91.

¹² The minister of culture Dr. Bosse was compelled to overturn Virchow's decision "in the interests of academic freedom" in early August 1893.

¹³*Dresdner Nachrichten* no. 218, 6 August 1893; *Pommersche Reichspost* , Stettin, no. 187, 11 August 1893; (Neue PreuBische {Kreuz-} Zeitung no. 399, 26 August 1893).

¹⁴ Here and in the following I am indebted to Rudiger vom Bruch, *Weder Kommunismus noch Kapitalismus. Bdrgerliche Sozialreform in Deutschland vom Vormarx bis zur Ara Adenauer*, (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1985), 61ff.

¹⁵ There was (apart from Werner Sombart) surprisingly little interest in academic circles in the principles of socialism and communism in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Marx was regarded as pass6. The club relied more on Christian concern for the welfare of one's neighbor than on *Das Kapital* , and was primarily interested in practical questions of influencing public opinion, and reforming the process of making and administering the law (vom Bruch, 64). ¹⁶ This marked a significant shift in social philosophy from the Bismarck era to the Wilhelminian epoch. Now the accent was no longer placed on creating the greatest productivity in the economic sector, but rather on the equitable distribution of wealth. This shift in emphasis involved a redefinition of the whole field of economics to include cultural and historical

dimensions. Vis-a-vis the classical school, the new economists emphasized social facts: the role of the state, law, customs, and so on (vom Bruch, 62).

¹⁷ Personal interview with the author, July 1992.

¹⁸ At the time a bottle of beer cost about 7 pfennig, and the invention of the bottle cap had made beer easily transportable, thus leading to an increase in the consumption of beer and a decrease in the consumption of brandy (Gohre, 30).

¹⁹ *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (1899; reprint Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), xiii.

²⁰ In the *Autobiography* Jews do not play a major role; in the chapter on Europe, Du Bois reports that he was "several times mistaken for a Jew" in Hungary; "arriving one night in a town of north Slovenia, the driver of a rickety cab whispered in my ear, 'Unter die Juden?' [To the Jews?]. I stared and then said yes. I stayed in a little Jewish inn" (175).

²¹ This ambivalent attitude had its effect on *The Souls of Black Folk*, although most readers of that book are not aware of the passages that could be read as anti-Semitic. That is because in later editions Du Bois replaced pejorative references to Jews with words such as "immigrants" and "foreigners." Du Bois wrote in 1953, "the case but illustrates how easy it is, especially in race relations, inadvertently to give a totally wrong impression" (Aptheker introduction, 43), and it is clear that Du Bois, especially during and after World War II, came to advocate "Negro-Jewish Unity." Nevertheless, before then he was not so sure. One unpublished and undated jotting has the revealing lines, "Let Jews & women remember black folk," followed by: "Suddenly came the thought-are Jews black? do they know, have they suffered?" (reel 89, frame 888).

²² Ralph Barton Perry, *The Thought and Character of William James*, vol. I (Boston: Little, Brown, 1935), 239.