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An Intersectional Analysis of Newspaper Portrayals of Mathilde Franziska Anneke**

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# **‘Barnum’s Fat Woman,’ ‘Velvet-Robed Amazon,’ German-American Civil War Hero, or Man? An Intersectional Analysis of Newspaper Portrayals of Mathilde Franziska Anneke**

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**ANDREW DORSEY, JACQUELINE WAGNER, AND MARY WALLE**

German-American activist Mathilde Franziska Anneke created a “great sensation” when she spoke at the annual meeting of the American Equal Rights Association (AERA) held in New York City in 1869. Reporters for mainstream U.S. newspapers, however, focused much less on her words than on various aspects of her identity. Situating Anneke’s speech in the context of her relationship to the white U.S. Women’s Rights Movement, we apply an intersectional framework to analyze Anneke’s public reception through the close reading of six contemporary Anglo-American newspapers’ reports on the speech. Looking at the interlocking identities of class, ethnicity, and gender, we argue that the public, via these newspapers, perceived Anneke as worthy of attention because they perceived her as more masculine than her immigrant sisters. At a key moment in the U.S. Women’s Movement, an intersectional analysis of public perceptions of Mathilde Franziska Anneke shows the deep entrenchment of contemporary gender roles, as well as their intertwined relationship to class and ethnicity.

## *Introduction*

Mathilde Franziska Anneke created a “great sensation” when she spoke at the annual meeting of the American Equal Rights Association (AERA) in New York City in 1869.<sup>1</sup> Reporters for mainstream U.S. newspapers, however, focused much less on the words of the German-American activist than on the various aspects of her identity. After analyzing Anneke’s speech within the context of her relationship to the white U.S. women’s rights movement, we examine the images of Anneke circulating in six Anglo-American newspapers.

In order to analyze the perception and evaluation of Anneke in Anglo-American mainstream society the construction of identity has to be understood as an interplay of different categories. Anneke’s reception was shaped by how her ethnicity, gender, and class interacted. According to Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw’s “intersectional analysis”—which was developed in order to point out the histori-

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<sup>1</sup> “Anniversaries: The Equal Rights Association Still on the War Path: Ventilation of Views on Free Loveism, the New York Newspapers and the Bugbear, Women’s Suffrage,” *The New York Herald*, May 14, 1869, 3, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1869-05-14/ed-1/seq-3/>.

cal exclusion of Black women from the U.S. feminist movements—an individual's identity is located in a particular socio-political situation. Furthermore, one's whole identity is constituted by inextricably linked identities such as class, race, ethnicity, religion, gender, and sexuality. These identities change and develop over time and in relationship with each other. Thus, the concept of intersectionality provides the framework to analyze systemic injustice and social inequality as systems of oppression that are created by interrelated forms of discrimination such as racism, sexism, xenophobia, and classism.<sup>2</sup> This analysis relies on understanding gender and other identities as socially constructed rather than as biological differences. With an intersectional framework each identity is understood in relationship to others.

Though we are moving this analytical framework out of its original context, applying the tools of intersectionality to U.S. history helps to more fully understand women such as Anneke. Regarding gender history in the U.S., Sonya Michel and Robyn Muncy have pointed out that “putative gender characteristics have contributed to the formation of racial and ethnic hierarchies that almost invariably place white European men at the apex.”<sup>3</sup> During the period of our analysis, this ‘apex’ was specifically occupied by white Anglo-American Protestant men. Anneke deviated from this social center on many counts. Although she could claim European identity, her status as an immigrant, and especially as a non-native English speaker, distanced her from the center. In the patriarchal system of the time, she was further pushed toward the periphery simply by being a woman. Moreover, these two identities are inextricably intertwined. As a German-American and a woman, she did not fit in the contemporary stereotype of a German-American woman, who was considered to be the traditional culture bearer in the sanctuary of the German-American home.<sup>4</sup> Given Anneke's many ‘deviations’ from the societal norm of a public actor, we thus examine her representation in contemporary newspaper articles and her speech at the AERA meeting through the lens of the interrelated identities of ethnicity, class, and gender.

Due to her various literary and political publications, Mathilde Franziska Anneke's biography has been thoroughly investigated; however, her significance and role in the women's rights movement has not been integrated into the larger discourse.<sup>5</sup> Two works are particularly relevant for our case study. In *Twice Removed*:

<sup>2</sup> Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” *University of Chicago Legal Forum, special issue: Feminism in the Law: Theory, Practice and Criticism* (1989): 139–68, esp. 143.

<sup>3</sup> Sonya Michel and Robyn Muncy, *Engendering America: A Documentary History, 1865 to the Present* (New York: McGraw-Hill College, 1998), 3.

<sup>4</sup> Dorothea Diver Stuecher, *Twice Removed: The Experience of German-American Women Writers in the 19th Century* (New York: Peter Lang, 1990), 18–20.

<sup>5</sup> See for example: Anna Blos, *Frauen der deutschen Revolution 1848: zehn Lebensbilder und ein Vorwort* (Dresden: Kaden & Comp., 1928); Manfred Gebhardt, *Mathilde Franziska Anneke: Madame, Soldat und Suffragette: Biografie* (Berlin: Verlag Neues Leben, 1988); Mar-

*The Experience of German-American Women Writers in the Nineteenth Century*, Dorothea Diver Stuecher analyzes Anneke's "Otherness" and her isolation and frustration as a female immigrant writer. She argues that due to their cultural affiliation and gender status, German-American women writers were not only separated from the (literary) mainstream in the United States, but also were subject to nativist attacks from their homeland constructing them as "Fremdgewordene" and "Heimatlose." In *Women of Two Countries: German-American Women, Women's Rights, and Nativism, 1848–1890*, Michaela Bank situates Anneke within the U.S. women's rights movement as part of her broader examination of nativism's impact on the women's movement and German-American activists. Bank attributes Anneke's high standing within both the movement and her own immigrant community to Anneke's significant function as mediator and translator between the two frequently opposed groups, as well as the respect Anneke gained for her active part in the 1848 Revolution. Thus, the literature has so far focused on Anneke's role as a writer and activist within the U.S. women's rights movement.

As discussed, scholars such as Bank and Stuecher have previously attributed Anneke's historical importance to her role as mediator between the U.S. women's rights movement and the German-American community.<sup>6</sup> This essay employs intersectional analysis to determine which aspects of Anneke's identity appeared salient to the reporters covering the 1869 AERA meeting, who both represented and influenced the American mainstream outside of activist or ethnic circles. Why did Anneke make a strong impression on these reporters?

### *The Life of Mathilde Franziska Anneke*

Mathilde Franziska Anneke was an exceptional woman. Brought up as a devout and conservative Catholic, she came to be the most prominent German-American women's rights activist.<sup>7</sup> She was a writer, advocate of revolutionary liberal principles, and an active participant in both the German Revolution of 1848 and the women's rights movement in the United States. Born on April 3, 1817, Anneke was the daughter of a wealthy mine and landowner in Leveringhausen, a small village in Westphalia. Owing to financial difficulties, she was prompted by her family to marry the wine merchant Alfred Philipp Ferdinand von Tabouillot in 1836. However, one year later, and shortly after giving birth to her first child, An-

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tin Henkel and Rolf Taubert, *Das Weib im Conflict mit den sozialen Verhältnissen: Mathilde Franziska Anneke und die erste deutsche Frauenzeitung* (Bochum: Verlag Edition Égalité, 1976); and Susan Piepke, *Mathilde Franziska Anneke (1817–1884): The Works and Life of a German-American Activist, including English translations of "Woman in Conflict with Society" and "Broken Chains"* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> Stuecher, *Twice Removed* and Michaela Bank, *Women of Two Countries: German-American Women, Women's Rights, and Nativism, 1848–1890* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> The biographical section draws mainly on information provided by Blos, *Frauen der deutschen Revolution* and Bank, *Women of Two Countries*.

neke filed for divorce to escape domestic violence. This experience triggered for her a religious and political reorientation, and can be seen as the beginning of her politicization and commitment to women's rights.

Following her divorce, Anneke pursued a literary career in order to find solace and distraction. She wrote and edited a number of almanacs, short stories, poems, and published drama. As her involvement in democratic and freethought circles grew, she extended her professional field to non-fiction and journalism. For instance, she wrote for the Augsburgian *Allgemeine Zeitung* and the *Kölnische Zeitung*, two contemporary popular, liberal newspapers.

In 1847, Anneke married the editor of the *Kölnische Zeitung*, political activist Fritz Anneke. Fritz Anneke was imprisoned in July 1848 for high treason and inflammatory political activities. During his internment, Anneke assumed management of her husband's newspaper, and after its legal prohibition in 1848 she founded her own paper, the *Frauenzeitung*. After only three issues, political pressures by those who found it too radical forced the paper to cease publication. Following Fritz Anneke's release in December 1848, the couple joined the Palatine revolutionary army. When the liberals were finally defeated by Prussian troops, the Annekes were forced to emigrate to the United States (via Switzerland) along with about 6,000 participants of the uprisings who became known as the "Forty-Eighters" in their destination country. Following various relocations, the family was eventually able to settle in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

After her arrival Mathilde Franziska attempted to establish the newspaper *Deutsche Frauen-Zeitung* with the intention to create an organ for German-American women. However, the paper folded after only two years. Given its conception in the spirit of the radical politics of the recently-arrived Forty-Eighter group, it is not surprising that the ideas put forth in it were too assertive for the tastes of the established, more conservative German immigrant population. In her first few years in the United States Anneke travelled frequently. She gave a lecture series in various German-American communities, providing accounts of the events of the failed revolution and the current political situation in Europe, and, already, attempting to promote gender equality. Although her reports on the homeland were met with interest, her plea for women's rights raised initial skepticism and rejection within the established ethnic communities. Nonetheless, she soon entered into the prestigious German-American literary and press arena, which at that time was the most significant branch of immigrant literature and foreign-language press in the United States. Anneke was, however, never able to write professionally in English. Due to this fact and the lack of sufficient readers for the type of literature and newspaper content she would have liked to produce for the German-American community, she eventually became insecure about her own writing aspirations. Ultimately, she gave up writing in 1865, when, on her return to the U.S. from a five-year residence in Switzerland during the American Civil

War, she founded the Milwaukee Töchter Institut, a girls' school which she led until her death in 1884.

Due to her previous experience in public speaking, newspaper editing, and utilizing the networks of political migrants, Anneke was granted easy access to political circles. Although not a central protagonist, she became a substantial participant in the U.S. women's rights movement. She supported the movement by coordinating communication with the German-American immigrant community and serving as honorary Vice President of the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA) for the state of Wisconsin. This lesser, but not insignificant, role in the movement can be traced back to the fact that she never succeeded in overcoming her difficulties with the English language, and also to her seclusion after suffering various illnesses, the loss of five children, and the separation from her husband Fritz Anneke.

### *Gender Roles and the U.S. Women's Rights Movement in the Nineteenth Century*

In order to place Anneke's appearance at the 1869 AERA Annual Meeting into context, we now examine the state of gender roles and activism at the time of her speech. Industrialization, a growing middle class, and the resulting conceptions of gender shaped the women's rights movement in the nineteenth century. At the beginning of the century the family shifted from the productive unit of the colonial period to an emotional and childrearing unit. This economic shift changed the role of women within the family and society. In the model of home-based production, women had played a significant role in the family economy. With the rise of industrialization, however, came an increasing emphasis on wage labor and the separation of "public" and "private" spheres. This separation produced the ideology of the "cult of domesticity," which limited women's influence to the home. While men took up the economic opportunities of new industrial jobs in the "public" sphere, women, mostly white and from the middle and upper classes, remained relegated to stay in the home and raise the children. "Separate spheres" and the ideology of the "cult of domesticity" profoundly shaped gender roles in the United States from the nineteenth century through the early twentieth century.<sup>8</sup>

Beginning as early as the 1830s, white middle class U.S. women reformers started entering politics on the basis of expanding the woman's sphere for the benefit of society. Stemming from the abolitionist movement, this early iteration of the U.S. Women's Movement in the nineteenth century focused on the right to vote, primarily for white women. These middle class white women reformers called not for the destruction but rather the expansion of the woman's sphere into political life in order to protect society from the harms of industrialization and,

<sup>8</sup> Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860," *American Quarterly* 18 (Summer 1966): 151–174. In addition, Welter expands on this definition in *Dimity Convictions: The American Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1977).

implicitly, to protect white racial purity. Thus, the early women's rights movement often relied on racist and xenophobic narratives to promote white women's right to vote and participate in public political life. Although not all suffragists eagerly promoted racist rhetoric, overarching arguments for (white) women's rights in the mid-nineteenth century relied on the dominant narratives regarding race and gender roles.<sup>9</sup>

Soon after the Civil War ended in 1865, the U.S. suffrage movement—the focal point of the early Women's Rights movement—split due to differing opinions on strategy. The issue of whether to support the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which granted suffrage to Black men without mentioning women, drove a wedge between two factions. Following the 1869 Annual Meeting of the AERA, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who did not support passing the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment without the inclusion of women, founded the more aggressive National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA). The NWSA focused on the passage of a national Amendment on women's suffrage, advocated on a variety of additional issues related to women, and did not permit men in leadership roles. The other faction, led by Lucy Stone, Henry Blackwell, and Julia Ward Howe, formed the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA), which took a more incremental approach. The AWSA and its leaders supported the passage of the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment even if it did not include women, focused *only* on women's suffrage, allowed men in leadership roles, and advocated for state-by-state legislative reform.<sup>10</sup>

*Anneke's Speech at the Annual Meeting of the American Equal Rights Association*

It is within this context that Anneke participated in the U.S. women's rights movement and gave her speech at the Annual Meeting of the AERA on May 13, 1869. As Michaela Bank argues, Anneke was able to gain the respect of white women's rights advocates because of her standing in the German-American community and her participation in the German Revolution of 1848/49.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, two weeks after the meeting, the leaders of the movement used Anneke's positive reception to advance the idea of German-American support for the movement, writing in their newspaper *The Revolution* that the “fond and enthusiastic applause” which met Anneke's speech “was an unmistakable proof of a large German attendance.”<sup>12</sup> Anneke spoke on the second day of the meeting, and was followed by two other immigrant women: Jenny d'Hericourt, a French immigrant,

<sup>9</sup> Louise Michele Newman, *White Women's Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, ed., *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement* (Troutdale: NewSage Press, 1995).

<sup>11</sup> Bank, *Women of Two Countries*, 68.

<sup>12</sup> “German Advocates of Woman's Rights,” *The Revolution*, May 27, 1869, 330, <https://archive.org/details/revolution-1869-05-27>.

and Ernestine L. Rose, a Polish immigrant. In her speech, Anneke celebrated how far public opinion had come since she spoke to a similarly large crowd at a women's rights event two decades prior.<sup>13</sup> After a brief introduction in English, she changed to German, "the language of [her] childhood's play," as she was never as comfortable speaking in English as she was in German. Anneke spoke of her own "varied life" which had "carried [her] through the terrors of bloody revolution" and brought her to the United States where "*Sanitas Libertas* is free to all those who seek it." She situated women's desire for equality within a larger pursuit of "scientific knowledge" which she argued had always existed in women as in men, but had been to that point "violently suppressed." Despite the history of suppression, she claimed that now was the time and place, in that "enlightened century... under the protection of the star-spangled banner" for men to receive the other "half of the human family." Anneke argued for women's rights on the basis of "Reason, which we recognize as our highest and only law-giver, which commands us to be free" above all else. She called on men to "give women [their] rights in the State. Honor [women] as [men's] equals. And allow [women] to use the rights which belong to [them], and which reason commands [women] to use." The speech shows that Anneke's arguments for equal rights were grounded in freethought and human rights discourse, unlike the often religious, nativist, and gender-essentialist arguments of the U.S. women's rights movement. Her speech was commented on by many of the mainstream papers of the time.

### *Newspaper Analysis*

The following analysis of Anneke's reception by the American mainstream is based on a study of high-circulation U.S. newspapers from major cities: *The New York Herald*, *New York Times*, *Philadelphia Evening Telegraph*, *Boston Daily Advertiser*, and *Charleston Daily News*. Little is known about the individual authors of the articles, whose by-lines are not given, but their style of writing reflects the dominant male, Anglo-American culture, as embodied by the *New York Herald* article's title, "The Equal Rights Association Still on the War Path."<sup>14</sup>

While we have a transcription of Anneke's speech (summarized above), we unfortunately do not know what information the press had access to, and thus cannot say how much of their coverage was based on their own observations and interpretations. Specifically, no transcription of Mary Livermore's introduction of Anneke appears to have survived, and neither *The Revolution*, a weekly newspaper run by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton at the time of the convention, nor the massive *History of Woman Suffrage* (second volume) which

<sup>13</sup> The speech appears in Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, eds. *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. II, 1861–1876 (New York: Fowler & Wells, 1882), 392–394, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/njp.32101075729069>.

<sup>14</sup> "War Path," *New York Herald*.

they and others published about a decade later, contain Livermore's words. Both texts state merely:

[A]ddresses were delivered by Madame Anneke, of Milwaukee (in German), and by Madame d'Hericourt (in French). Both of these ladies are of revolutionary tendencies, and left their native countries because they had rendered themselves obnoxious by a too free expression of their political opinions.<sup>15</sup>

The *New York Herald*, however, does provide a little insight, suggesting that "Mrs. Livermore excited the curiosity of the audience to the highest pitch" with her description of Anneke's life.<sup>16</sup> Within her own speech, Anneke spoke rather humbly of her "own strangely varied life," and referred to "the terrors of bloody revolution" only once, so further focus on these aspects must either have resulted from Livermore's introduction or the reporters' imagination.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, without knowing exactly what information the reporters received, it is impossible to attribute exactly the source of any embellishments beyond Anneke's speech itself. Despite this limitation, several themes emerge.

Anneke's "Germanness," while ever-present, did not greatly excite the journalists. Every newspaper article in our sample contains reference to Anneke's German nationality, usually in the form of the descriptor "a German lady" directly following her name.<sup>18</sup> The journalists thus immediately identified her as German—not surprising given Livermore's introduction and the fact that Anneke spoke mainly in German—but having established this fact, most simply moved on. Only one paper, the *New York Herald*, made further reference to "her full Teutonic face," which it claimed caused spectators to believe she was "a vender [sic] of lager in disguise."<sup>19</sup> Drawing attention to Anneke's accent, the paper also mentioned that she delivered the second half of her speech in "the sweet language of Faderland [sic]." Generally, however, the papers merely stated her nationality without dwelling on it.

Even less obviously visible in the newspaper assessments of Anneke are considerations of class. The *New York Herald* briefly described her as "Barnum's fat woman... in a long, loose, black velvet riding habit," an outfit which the *Philadelphia Evening Telegraph* corroborated, and to which it added "expensive lace" and "several valuable rings." The articles, however, also provided descriptions of the attire of other participants in the convention, suggesting that Anneke's clothing

<sup>15</sup> "Annual Meeting of the American Equal Rights Association: Second Day's Proceedings," *The Revolution*, May 27, 1869, 323; and Stanton, Anthony, and Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. II, 392.

<sup>16</sup> "War Path," *New York Herald*.

<sup>17</sup> Stanton, Anthony, Gage, *History of Woman Suffrage*, vol. II, 393.

<sup>18</sup> The texts produced by the women's rights movement, however, further describe her as "of Milwaukee."

<sup>19</sup> "War Path," *New York Herald*.

did not widely set her apart on grounds of class. Indeed, most of the participants at the meeting, as well as the target audience of the newspapers, were middle-class. Therefore, it is not surprising that this aspect received very little attention, as it was an assumed characteristic.

By far the most salient characteristic which the newspapers fixated on was Anneke's perceived masculinity, which stood out even among a group of publicly active advocates of women's rights. Some newspapers emphasized this subtly by drawing attention to Anneke's military activities during the failed 1848/49 Revolution in Baden. As previously discussed, mid-nineteenth century society was divided into public and private spheres. Waging war fell strictly in the male public sphere, so to mention that "Madame Anneke commanded a body of troops during the revolution of 1848, and shared in many a battle" imbued her with an exotic masculinity.<sup>20</sup> The *Philadelphia Evening Telegraph* suggested that this extended into her bearing as well: "When she bows to, or salutes, an acquaintance, it is with a distinguished inclination of the head."<sup>21</sup>

The *Boston Daily Advertiser* sedately suggested that Anneke "served on the staff of General [Franz] Sigel in Germany,"<sup>22</sup> while the *New York Herald* relayed the information that Anneke had "fought 'mit Sigel' in the '48 trouble in Germany. She rode at the head of her command, and wielded her sabre like any other man."<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, it is impossible to say if Livermore specifically used the culturally-charged words "mit Sigel" in her introduction, or if this is an embellishment of the journalist. After the revolution, Sigel moved to the United States and achieved fame commanding a corps of primarily German-American immigrants in the U.S. Army during the Civil War. The phrase "I'm going to fight mit Sigel" became well-known, inspiring a popular song which caricatured German-Americans and their way of speaking.<sup>24</sup> The phrase "mit Sigel" would thus have conjured up images of the recently-ended American war, a major reference-point of post-War America. Indeed, the *New York Times* followed this suggestion to its extreme conclusion, incorrectly reporting that "just before the breaking out of the [civil] war here [Anneke] came to this country. She served on General Sigel's staff, was present in many battles, and rendered important service to the Union

<sup>20</sup> "News Summary," *The Charleston Daily News*, May 18, 1869, 2, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84026994/1869-05-18/ed-2/seq-2/>.

<sup>21</sup> "New Yorkisms," *The Evening Telegraph*, Philadelphia, May 15, 1869, 1, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83025925/1869-05-15/ed-1/seq-1/>.

<sup>22</sup> "News by the Mails," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, May 15, 1869, 4, <http://find.galegroup.com/ncnp/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=NCNP&userGroupName=fub&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=AdvancedSearchForm&docId=GT3006456789&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0>.

<sup>23</sup> "War Path," *New York Herald*.

<sup>24</sup> John F. Pool, "I'm Going to Fight Mit Sigel," [https://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/song-sheets\\_bsvg100370/](https://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/song-sheets_bsvg100370/).

cause.”<sup>25</sup> In fact, the Annekes arrived in New York in November 1849, more than 10 years before the firing on Fort Sumter.<sup>26</sup> While Fritz Anneke fought for the U.S. Army during the American Civil War, Mathilde Anneke most certainly did not. She wrote much against slavery in this period, but the purported Civil War heroine spent the years 1860 to 1865 in Switzerland. Historical inaccuracy aside, the paper’s attribution of an illustrious Civil War military career to Anneke put her firmly in the masculine sphere.

Although appearing nearly a year later and in reference to a different women’s rights conference, an article by the *Rutland* [Vermont] *Weekly Herald* of February 1870 likewise subtly emphasized Anneke’s masculinity, through omission. Describing nearly all the other participants as mothers—President Elizabeth Cady Stanton appears only as “a fine looking mother of about sixty”—the paper omitted any mention of the many children Anneke bore.<sup>27</sup> Rather, it noted that she “fought on horseback side by side with her husband for liberty.” The U.S. American press clearly fixated on Anneke’s martial characteristics while downplaying her femininity.

The *Boston Daily Advertiser* provided a powerful metaphoric image of Anneke’s rejection of the “two spheres” world of nineteenth-century gender discourse. Reporting in quotation marks what may have been direct citations from Livermore jotted down by the correspondent, the paper noted that “When the [1848] revolution was put down, Madame Anneke ripped up her carpets and sold her household furniture to get the means to start a newspaper, through which she filled Germany with liberal ideas of freedom.”<sup>28</sup> The violent image of ripping and the exchange of domestic, middle-class concerns for worldly, political ones positioned Anneke securely outside contemporary gender norms for women and into the public “man’s sphere.”

Other papers emphasized Anneke’s perceived masculinity even more explicitly. In addition to noting, as quoted above, that Anneke had fought “like any other man,” the *New York Herald* also reported that at the 1869 convention, Anneke wore her hair “in masculine fashion.”<sup>29</sup> The *Philadelphia Evening Telegraph* reported that her “gestures in talking, standing, sitting, are those of a man,” and

<sup>25</sup> “Equal Rights: Another Interesting Debate by the Female Surface Agitators: Moral Maps and Celestial Kites: Proposition to Throw the Negro Overboard and Advocate Only Woman Suffrage,” *New York Times*, May 14, 1869, 8, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/92492129?accountid=11004>.

<sup>26</sup> Stephani Richards-Wilson, “Mathilde Franziska Anneke (née Giesler),” in *Immigrant Entrepreneurship: German-American Business Biographies, 1720 to the Present*, vol. 2, ed. William J. Hausman (German Historical Institute: last modified June 30, 2014), <http://www.immigrantentrepreneurship.org/entry.php?rec=204>.

<sup>27</sup> “From the *Herald’s* Special Correspondent: Washington Letter: Virginia Bill—World’s Fair—The City Government—Woman Suffrage and the Suffrage Convention,” *Rutland Weekly Herald* (Rutland, Vermont), February 3, 1870, 1, <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84022367/1870-02-03/ed-1/seq-1/>.

<sup>28</sup> “News by the Mails,” *Boston Daily Advertiser*.

<sup>29</sup> “War Path,” *New York Herald*.

that, "Before she rose, and while only the upper portion of her body could be seen, many of the audience thought she was a man."<sup>30</sup> The paper further compared her to Felicita Vestvali, a lesbian opera star and actress well-known for playing male roles.<sup>31</sup> Anneke's perceived masculinity clearly made a great impression upon the reporters present at the convention.

This perceived masculinity also led them to attribute competence to Anneke. The *New York Herald* described her as an "Amazonian Orator" and "the great sensation of the evening."<sup>32</sup> The *Philadelphia Evening Telegraph* concluded its polemical coverage of Anneke by stating, "Madame Anneke is one of the most unmitigated of the women's rights women, and I have no doubt that she would look well at the head of a regiment." This statement combined fear and awe of Anneke's competency based on her perceived martial masculinity.

The *Evening Telegraph's* coverage also drew explicit comparisons between Anneke and the two other immigrant women who spoke after her. The author noted the "striking contrast" between Anneke and Jenny d'Hericourt, "an emotional woman" in "attire so dandysh [sic] you might think it was English or German," who pursued universal suffrage as a "hobby," clearly showing awe of the former and disdain for the latter. Similarly, Ernestine L. Rose, although identified (questionably) as German, received short shrift compared to Anneke. The paper focused mainly on her age, her "interesting lisp," and her inability to speak English like a native. The article exoticized both of the other immigrant women as foreign but did not imbue either of them with the same degree of competency as it attributed to Anneke, to whom it ascribed overwhelming masculine characteristics.

### Conclusion

Despite strong nativist sentiment within the U.S. women's rights movement, Mathilde Franziska Anneke enjoyed relatively high-standing due to her access to the German-American community and her active participation in the German Revolution of 1848/49. Newspaper coverage of her speech at the Annual Meeting of the American Equal Rights Association in 1869 demonstrates that she also enjoyed the respect of the U.S. mainstream society outside of the movement, but on different grounds. Overwhelmingly, reports perceived her as having masculine qualities, repeatedly highlighting activities such as riding into battle—an activity securely in the "male sphere"—and referring to her appearance and behaviour with masculine signifiers. At a time when women were not taken seriously and were believed to belong in the "woman's sphere" (i.e. the home), these writers ascribed more competence to Anneke because they perceived her as being mascu-

<sup>30</sup> "New Yorkisms," *The Evening Telegraph*.

<sup>31</sup> "Matthew Brady's National Portrait Gallery: A Virtual Tour," Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery, <http://www.npg.si.edu/exh/brady/gallery/18gal.html>.

<sup>32</sup> "War Path," *New York Herald*.

line. Though this proved to be the most salient aspect of her identity for reporters, Anneke's positive reception cannot be solely attributed to her perceived masculinity. Reporters 'read' her within the middle-class dominated women's rights movement culture and never failed to also note her 'Germanness.' These intersecting identities contributed to her ability to be taken seriously inside the women's rights movement and in the general public through coverage of her speeches by many high-circulation newspapers. At a key moment in the U.S. Women's Movement, the perceptions of this German-American activist show the deep entrenchment of contemporary gender roles. Though she herself argued for equality for women on the basis of their human rights, the public could only take her seriously by seeing her as like a man.