

“A DREAM DEFERRED?”

A Philadelphia Success Story: Elizabeth T. Greenfield, the Black Swan

Philadelphia has always boasted itself as the “city of firsts” and rightfully so in many unexpected ways. Especially endearing was its progress in musical affairs of black musicians. One of the earliest was Peter of Isaac Norris Sr. who in a letter to his son in London 1719 asked him to “buy and bring” a fiddle for Peter to keep him from worse employment.”¹

Throughout that century many black musicians were visible in the performing arena. However, the next century brought forth a plethora of musicians who earned a livelihood both in and outside of Philadelphia the most heralded being the black bandmaster Francis Johnson (1793-1844) and Elizabeth Greenfield née Taylor (ca. 1819-1876). Our curiosity about these two persons incurred our interest and stimulated us into extensive research on their lives. Thus when new materials about them appeared we were eager to read and hopefully gain more insight into their achievements.

When browsing the Internet On-line-Grove to see if Ms. Greenfield’s biography was included we ran across the name Julia Crybowski as the author supplanting its earlier version by William Austin. It mentions her work in the *American Music Journal* xiv (2004), 7-25 which we had not seen because our Detroit Public Library does not always display all their new music journals. However, the Grove article referred to Ms. Greenfield’s birth as Natchez, MI which caught our attention and we immediately notified our cartographers that there was a lost Michigan city of Natchez, Michigan. One can easily picture their surprise!

However, we remembered an old World War II saying “The slip of the lip might sink a ship” we sent for our copy of the Journal and immediately recognized both its positive and negative attributes of which we now make comment.

The 2004 article attempts to link a possible dual relationship with the Harriet Beecher Stowe novel (*Uncle Tom’s Cabin*) and the Abolitionist Society of England was written to explore an

¹ Cited in my *Black Musicians of the Colonial Period (1700-1800)* Detroit, Michigan (1976; revised 1994).

supposedly unwritten episode in the life of Ms. Greenfield. When she arrived in England in April, 1853 she experienced certain difficulties not of her own choosing. Ms. Crybowski's valiant attempt at explaining the situation in England, however, is unrewarding for it posits situations without coming to any conclusion. She not only recounts the many English critiques about her vocal episodes – her 'slave' status, etc. – and how the Beecher-Duchess of Sutherland Abolitionist Society aided her during her 12-month sojourn. But the question of whether this help was positive or negative remained unanswered. In Ms. Greenfield's own 1855 biography she skimmed over the points brought out in Ms. Crybowski's article and the question remains "Why?"

During the course of her article Ms. Crybowski tackled such issues as whether to believe the James Monroe Trotter account [*Music and Some Highly Musical People* (Lee and Shepards 1878; reprinted 1881)]. Her reflections and inflections seemingly deprecate his remarks (which reflect a bias of her own choosing) by using such words or phrases such as "Trotter insisted" (?) [p. 8] or "Trotter compared" (?)

Then at page 16 she writes "It cannot be stated too strongly that Trotter and more recent historians who use Trotter as an authority on Greenfield when comparing her with Lind habitually neglect to contrast the receptions of the two women in their respective concerts." She makes no note that Trotter had used Ms. Greenfield's own 1855 biography for his remarks and is seemingly unaware of the evaluation of Trotter's book by Robert M. Stevenson in "America's First Black Music Historian."² Stevenson had traced many entries of Trotter's leading black figures only to find that Trotter had written a truthful account even if devoid of tedious footnotes and the likes (the modus operandi in twentieth-century publications) and further supported in my article "Trotter Vindicated?" An occasional paper on America's First Black Music Historian (1994), 112 pp.³ but subtitled: "How does Trotter Fare With Present Day Scholarship and Scholars?" or "Is What *Was* Better than What *Is*?"

Both Trotter and Greenfield must have had apprehensions about venturing into such territory as Ms. Crybowski. They undoubtedly realized what was common knowledge – that the English episode exposed the failing of the Society in helping Greenfield to achieve her

² Robert Stevenson, "America's First Black Music Historian," *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 26/3 (Fall, 1973), 383-404.

³ *Afro-American Music Review* 5/2 (January-June, 1994).

ultimate goal – two or three years of vocal study under a recognized teacher (hopefully Manuel Garcia) – and simply refrained from casual comment.

However, Ms. Crybowski’s valiantly ventures into the Jenny-Lind episode and ruefully reflects that there was a significant need to verbalize her thoughts. But first let us keep in mind that comparisons between Lind and Greenfield are insignificant avenues in which express one’s points on subject matters not in evidence. For example Lind’s reception to American audiences was guided by the famous P. T. Barnum who used publicity hypes to attract the public. Elizabeth’s agent, on the other hand, used his own methods to advance his client. The question of who was the best singer never entered the equation.

On the presence of black vocalists in England Crybowski posits no knowledge of an earlier singer, Doña Maria de Morena Martinez (c. 1830’s-) who appeared in London in 1850. She, too, was a casualty of English snobbery whom Ms. Greenfield learned about after her arrival.

Secondly, as to any episode reflecting Ms. Greenfield’s role in any Uncle Tom production Ms. Crybowski attempts to make the reader believe it ‘could-a-would-a’ have happened. It did not or Ms. Greenfield, Frederick Douglass, Trotter and the Philadelphia press would have been eager to make mention of it. It is true that the sentiment for the abolition of slavery was foremost after Beecher’s novel appeared and evoked sentiments used in advancing Greenfield’s career but it would not have been used as a ploy to sanction their use of Ms. Greenfield predicament as an object lesson in humanitarianism. The use of the words ‘former slave’ was taken to mean “recently in bondage” and was not true. Elizabeth had been released as a child (one year old) and had no first-hand knowledge to slavery in Mississippi. She was by all accounts a Philadelphian.

Particularly annoying after reading Cryboski’s account was the temerity in her final statement: “I hope to have fulfilled my promise to complicate our [read “her”] understanding of race as a factor in the exportation of nineteenth American music” which she does in her opening sentence announcing that the English budget “The Black Swan” was presented in Liverpool when the actual performance took place in London!

In trying to understand why Crybowski undertook to write on the life study of Ms. Greenfield we find that she underused my publication *Elizabeth T. Greenfield The Black Swan* published in

1969 (89 pages)⁴ especially for the 50th anniversary of the National Association of Negro Musicians, Inc. which honored Ms. Marian Anderson.⁵ It was not written for the general public and attempted to fill-in many episodes which Elizabeth did not include in her Biography of 1855 to show that organization what could be done in the nature of scholarship about present-day Black musicians including its own unheralded female singers. Using only comments from that period that presentation did not particularly remark on episodes (initiated by others on her behalf) especially the abolition societies both in America and England.

After realizing that no one else was interested in completing her story during and after her English sojourn, our later research resulted in a second volume extending the 89 pages to an additional 162 pp. (total of 288pp.) for publication at a later time (1984) which also covered materials of the same time period.

In both of these works as much documentary evidence was assembled as then possible about Ms. Greenfield's career mostly from newspapers and mostly white commentators who had actually heard the Swan in performance. This would enable other historical writers to weigh their comments without the encumbrances of later writers, many of whom conflated unnecessary issues about Elizabeth's career by embellishing it with subjective considerations. Ms. Chybowski's report illustrates that point. For example at page 62 of our second volume we published Elizabeth's rebuttal to an announcement at the Strand Theatre "that she is the original Black Swan." She thought an impersonator was using her alias. A corrective reply from the theatre manager seemingly explained that he meant no person but a piece bearing the popular title. However, the following year the Burton Theatre in New York City also introduced its little budget, *The Black Swan*, in which a white singer rejected for a job, reappears in black-face and is accepted by the

⁴ Mentioned and reviewed in *Inter-American Music Review* I/No. 2 (1979), p. 232: "In his first publication, LaXXX corrected Elizabeth Taylor-Greenfield's age at death, reported erroneously in her *New York Times* obituary (April 2, 1876, 2:4) at age 68. On LaXXX's evidence she was 57 . . ."

⁵ Ms. Chybowski mentions my work in only 4 places: footnotes 28, 32, 63 and 67. She omits it as an authoritative resource in footnote 7 preferring to cite Eileen Southern, William Austin and Rosalind Story all of whom used my work in their presentations as my predecessors. Only Austin used the correct date of her birth year. Ms. Crybowski is incorrect in stating that their accounts served as inspiration for "other scholarly accounts" and totally dismissing our efforts.

impresario but rejected by other singers. The singer then removes the black-face and is accepted [see in *New York Herald-Tribune*, March 1, 1855]. Ms. Crybowski has indicated her knowledge of our 1984 publication containing this information but does not transmit its significance to her readers.

She shows no familiarity with an additional tribute for Ms. Greenfield (published in 1981,⁶ pp. 9-20) which included information found in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Music*, January 1, 1853 and July 8, 1853 and referred to Doña Martinez who was called the “Black Malibran.”

Ms. Chybowski’s desire to tell us more about Greenfield’s reception with the élite of London and their particular response to her situation gives the impression of knowledge not generally pursued by later writers even the well-known James Monroe Trotter. She writes at p. 16 that those using the Trotter account “habitually neglect to contrast the *receptions* of the two women.” The question “Does she seek to silence the results contained in our volumes because we also the same biography as Trotter” but supplemented by information in an earlier biography (1853) biography (published in England and which is never mentioned by Crybowski) in which we filled out episodes which that were omitted.

Ms. Crybowski’s interest in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and the connection with Ms. Greenfield and the Abolitionist Society in England triggered her interest and subsequently published in the 2004 Journal. However, it is only one part of a multiple-sided perspective.

Ms. Chybowski’ evokes as part of her thesis “Now that there is a scholarly space opened for research and writing about nineteenth-century black female musicians, further research and *theorizing* about their historical reception and historiography is needed” is but a subterfuge. A great deal of material has already been written on this and other related musical subjects. One does not know if she knew about Maria Martinez whose biography was mentioned by such writers as Alejo Carpentier in his *La Música in Cuba* and gives her name as Maria Gamboa. Other sources: Peress y Gonzales, Felipe: “La ‘Malibran’ Negra – La ‘Patti Negra” in *La Ilustracion Espanola y Americana* (Madrid), 49, No. 12 (March 30, 1905, pp. 182f. and No. 13 (April 8, 1905, pp. 206f. See also, *Le Menestrel*, 17 avril

⁶ *Afro-American Music Review* I/1 (July-December, 1981).

1859, p. 158; *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*, 9 juin 1850 (194), 16 juin, 4 janvier 1852 (6), 18 avril 1852 (122), 1 mai 1853 (161), 29 mai 1853 (194), 25 decembre 1895 (429) and 5 fevrier 1960 (46) have advanced our knowledge of this ‘black female singer’. Grabowski’s particularizing negative comments on Greenfield from English commentators did not need as much attention for those who had sufficiently read the same accounts beginning 1853-1854 to form their own opinions.

Later she puts on her armor of braggartry “Through *my exploration* of the cultural work Greenfield performed abroad, we get a better—or more complicated—understanding of perceived racial identity as a factor in the nineteenth-century exploration of American music and the later writing[s] of that history” and cites such already well-recognized black female singers as Nellie Brown Mitchell, the Hyer Sisters, none of whom received their training in England and first given credence in Trotter’s work. She even cites the recent article by John Graziano on the life of Sissieretta Jones [The Black Patti] as evidence that the subject matter on Black female singers needs more exploration. The fact never enters her mind that both she and Graziano are white writers with no credential on Afro-American historical music would not be an issue but because they elect to deprecate the impressions of early Black writers on the same subject speaks volumes!

So what did Ms. Chybowski give us that was useful in developing the Greenfield episode? The subject of black-racial identity in England which had been a topic of discussion since the sixteenth century (or even earlier) in as much as England had been heavily involved in the slave trade—*hardly new*. On the subject of the racial factor in nineteenth-explorations of American music she may be permitted some leeway because American music had always been denigrated since the Revolutionary period (viz. Yankee Doodle) — *hardly new*. Perhaps she rightly decided that with the admission of the Uncle Tom story she had a perspective on a new topic. We know that Mrs. Stowe’s novel was fuel for the sentiments of the abolitionist societies in England but not the kind of critic to make informed judgment on musical matters which she witnessed. As a subject of discussion most English journalists found Ms. Greenfield attempts worthy of some attention but is over stressed the Journal’s report.

After Elizabeth’s entry in England, the Society (and probably Mrs. Stowe) helped prepare Greenfield’s initial biography (1853) that

elucidated why she chose England to develop her studies. That subject first appeared while Elizabeth was touring in America (1848-1852) – she wanted to seek further musical study. However, she was warned about the anti-slavery meanderings in England.

During her early tours (1851-1853) the novel of Mrs. Stowe appeared but whether Elizabeth had read or been informed about its contents, etc. may not be presumed! When in England she was undoubtedly surprised that the sentiments of this novel would be used to reflect and be opined regarding her own career. The English and American curiosities on questions – such as the probability of a former-slave making significant progress with sufficient help – was paramount.

After being deserted by her manager, inquiry led her to Lord Shaftsbury who referred her to Mrs. Stowe, the only American he knew who might immediately help her either to seek her goal or even find a way of returning back to America.

Mrs. Stowe was fortunate in entertaining persons connected with the intimate royal circles, especially those connected with the abolitionist movement. The most important being the Duchess of Sutherland (1829-1881). They were most helpful in arranging her in recitals the first of which took place at the Stafford home. They were also responsible for sponsoring most of her remaining tours and intermittent private recitals. All this climaxed in a presentation before Her Royal Highness in 1854 whose personal remarks from her Diary were published in our presentation.

Ms. Chybowski's reports on the English episodes by detailing subject matter such as Elizabeth's birth in a slave state in America, her color and lastly her vocal proclivities. However, when she discusses the issue of comparison of Jenny Lind or any English singer, she is on very shaky grounds by attempting to introduce unrelated discussions about the lack of comparisons between the two.⁷ Instead she introduces two of Mrs. Stowe's casual remarks (1) about "old Auntie Frankie" (p. 16f.) [honest, bluff, black face, her long strong arms, her chest as big and stout as a barrel and her hilarious hearty laugh, perfectly delighted to take ones [sic] washing and to it for a fair price, they would appreciate the beauty of black

⁷ At page 72f. in my study I introduced material from her biography that one "E. T. N." wrote her two letter expressing his interest to helping in securing engagements citing his travels with Jenny Lind and connection with Barnum. Whether he is the person who entered into the final contract for her tour in England is not yet known.

people] as a way of measuring “black beauty” (2) and Mrs. Stowe remarks about Jennie Lind’s “innocent” appearance to accentuate the two approaches to the subject of beauty. But is it not a fact that none of the female Black singers of that period or the entire twentieth-century had features of their white counterparts?

If such accent on beauty was special a consideration in Elizabeth’s biography while in England it was dismissed on the American side which looked more to cultivating her special musical abilities.

England’s elite society has always been noted as patronizing so any discussion of this attitude toward Elizabeth is hardly newsworthy.

The effect of Mrs. Stowe’s novel on the success on Elizabeth certainly merits discussion. However, the question has two sides – positive and negative. We surmise that the most telling effect produced a negative reaction in Elizabeth’s perspective and thus omitted from her biography. She had never experienced the effects of slavery in Mississippi, had not been exposed to years of hearing the great music of foreign countries, had not had an opportunity to study with a teacher of European prominence and had not set out to prove was equal to any one.

In Ms. Chybowki’s survey we incur entries of least consequence regarding Elizabeth’s career. Many of her personal remarks are buttressed by observations of interested writer’s [using published books beginning with black Martin Delaney (1852 before she went to England) and culminates with Trotter [1878/reprints 1881 1968] and Arthur R. LaXXX (1969 and 1984). Then she introduces supplementary works to support certain aspects of her summary. Listed in chronological order we find the following authors (viz. in bibliography):

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| Mrs. Stowe (1855) | Sunny Memories |
| Charles Edward Stowe (1890) | Harriet Beecher Stowe |
| Florine Thayer McCray (1889) | The Life and Works [Stowe] |
| Christine Bolt (1969) | Anti-Slavery Movement; Victorian Attitudes to Race |
| Thomas F. Gossett (1985) | The Reception . . . Uncle Tom’s Abroad |
| Jane Tompkins (1986) | Sentimental Power: Uncle Tom’s Cabin |
| Thomas Riis (1986) | The Cultivated The Cultivated White Tradition and Black Music and Nineteenth-Century America |
| Richard Leppert (1987) | Music, Domestic Life, and Cultural Chauvinism: Images of British Subjects at Home in India |

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| Mary Burgin (1989) | Heroines at the Piano . . .in Nineteenth Fiction |
| Arthur Loesser (1954) | Men, Women, and Pianos |
| Joan D. Hedrick (1994) | Harriet Beecher Stowe |
| Clare Midgley (1992) | Women Against Slavery |
| Shirley Foster (1994) | American Women Travelers to Europe in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries |
| Thomas Riis (1998) | Concert singers, Prima donnas, and Entertainers |
| Audrey A. Fisch (2000) | American Slaves in Victorian England |
| John Graziano (2000) | The Early Life and Career of the 'Black Patti' |
| Paula Gillet (2002) | Musical Woman in England |
| Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff (2002) | Out of Sight |
| Elsie Lemire (2002) | Miscegenation: "Making Race in America" |
| Ronald Radano (2003) | Lying Up as Nation: Race and Black Music |
| Katie Graber (2004) | Fisk Jubilee Singers |

However, even after fulfilling her promise of her subject "The Black Swan" in England: Abolition and the Reception of Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield" we must confess that both Ms. Chybowski and her commentators failed in their expositions by not mentioning other Black female musicians who contributed to nineteenth century racial thought before Elizabeth.

At page 51 fn. 46 of our first volume we noted that when Elizabeth was appearing in Worcester, Massachusetts in February, 1852, the *National Anti-Slavery Society of New York* also noted Martinez as "pet to the Queen of Spain," then active in France. Her activities in England prior to Elizabeth were certainly newsworthy to the press in Detroit, Michigan (1850).

In 1981 I wrote a special tribute for Ms. Greenfield⁸ (pp.9-20) which included supplementary information found in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Music*, January 1, 1853 but referred to a Black singer of that period:

In Wien ist ein schwarze Sangerin, Miss Greenfield, aufgetreten. Wenn diese Dame einmal die Fides in Propheten singen wolte, musstesich doch gewiss der Darsteller des Johann wenigstens dunkelbraun – die Hautfarbe der Mestizen.

And further (July 8, 1853)–

In London ist die schwarze Sangerin Elizabeth Greenfield en vogue. Wo weiss Saison die Matthaus=Passion zur Aufführung bringen

⁸ *Afro-American Music Review* I/1 (July-December, 1981).

No reflections of this information enters the above mentioned accounts although appearing during this period of the abolitionist movement in England.

The abolitionist movement, prior to Elizabeth's appearance, was alive with the fictionalized story titled "Uncle Tom's Cabin" by Mrs. Stowe and had sparked many debates on its merit and effect both in England and in America. On this subject of slavery the Duchess of Sutherland's address to the women of the United States⁹ fueled by the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* drew many immediate responses from American readers one of whom was the wife of ex-president John Tyler¹⁰ who responded (with candor): "There are some of the concerns of life in which conventionalities are properly to be disregarded, and this is one of them." In essence the tone of Mrs. Tyler's article suggested that the women of London not meddle in affairs of slavery in America. Correspondents to the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* from the abolitionist state of Boston were also in agreement with Mrs. Tyler and suggested that these English women look to their own shores for evidence of slavery. So the subject of slavery was a very hot-topic when Elizabeth appeared in England and she was thrust almost immediately into a situation not of her choosing.

If she had not been deserted by her American promoter she may or may not been forced to seek help from the abolitionist society or even Mrs. Stowe. However, Greenfield says very little about her thoughts during this crucial period in her life.

We have mentioned that the side of Elizabeth as reflected in abolitionist terms is partially covered but strange that Elizabeth's side of the story is not reflected in that article or those of others writers. After her sojourn in England she had a manager Col. J. H. Wood who never allowed her to be presented as an agent of anti-slavery propaganda. Wood must have been aware of Frederick Douglass' virulent attack about his attitude in his treatment of Ms. Greenfield (and her previous contractors one of whom was the Black Philadelphia artist Robert Douglass who had drawn the daguerreotype of Francis Johnson and wrote a special tribute after his

⁹ Published in *The People's Paper*, March 12, 1853 by Karl Marx who viewed the Stafford House Assembly of women as philanthropic in choosing its objects as far-distant from home as possible. . ."

¹⁰ *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, February 10, 1853.

death). Wood, like others must have realized that emphasis upon that controversy might prove damaging and therefore only allowed her appearance with the Queen to circulate. Trotter, too, did not tarnish the work of the Society in relationship to Greenfield having recognized their valiant attempt on her behalf.

Then, too Ms. Chybowski's article is not only speculative but also trivializes Elizabeth's musical repertoire. She is impressed with such operatic selections but does not inform us that during her tours Elizabeth's auditors preferred the more simple ballads than the operatic "screeching" of the period. Frederick Douglass' remarks were indicative of a general American sentiment felt throughout that and the next century!

Or the least charm of Miss Greenfield, is the singular ease with which she performs the most difficult parts of what she sings. There is, in her case, no distortion of countenance, no straining of the voice, no curving the neck, no gasping, no pumping for breath, (always a source of pain to listener) but she does all with ease and grace, and without the slightest apparent effort.

When one critic called Home, Sweet Home" a ditty he would probably been jolted if the English glee "Where the bee sucks there lurk I" had been ridiculed in the frontier societies of America! Ms. Chybowski's careless use of such phrases as "the first known history of music to include a detailed description of Greenfield's performance career [Trotter]" is not true [p. 7]¹¹ or "he [Trotter] is clearly identified with Western European élites" to belittle the purpose of his and hundreds of other Black's thinking regarding their attempts to rise to a better state of mental and moral purpose whether it be European, Asian or whatever!

Her self-serving rumination "Now that there is a scholarly space opened for research and writing about nineteenth-century black female musicians, further research and *theorizing* about their historical reception and historiography is needed" is but a subterfuge.¹² The evidence she presented is not new in light of historical perspectives. Perhaps she is referring to the less informed [students] but certainly not to the better read public [scholars and

¹¹ Trotter's work was not a history and he only used Elizabeth's own 1855 biography in his presentation.

¹² Apparently she has not read other accounts which have explored the same subject.

historians]. She miserably fails to posit an Afro-American view that notes the failure of the abolitionist society in which Elizabeth's effort to study with a recognized music instructor in London were thwarted. Therefore her repertoire remained essentially the same.¹³ She does not signal Ms. Greenfield's *acquiescing* to singing Manuel Emilio's ballad "Little Eva" [referencing Uncle Tom's Cabin] "by request" of Mrs. Stowe at her Hanover concert and, moreover, the mental effort she had to overcome in her vocal portrayal of what such a slave song written in a European context of harmonic and melodic structure would sound like.¹⁴

Ms. Chybowski effects no familiarity in her bibliography with such comments from sources as the *London Atheneum* and *London Era*, *London Post*, the *Illustrated London News* which mention Ms. Greenfield in the second part of our presentations. Some notices introduced her as "Miss Greenfield" while other trumped "The Black Swan."

Elizabeth's sojourn in London was a personal failure for she prevented from receiving proper instruction. She does not remark in her 1855 Biography what she did between performances and we may easily speculate that she found it necessary to occupy her time by acquiescing to episodes involving both Mrs. Stowe, various societies and perhaps more activities of the female society of Mme. Sutherland.

Ms. Chybowski's particularizing negative comments from English commentators did not need such attention for those who had sufficiently read enough of them to form their own judgments. In my second volume I mentioned nearly everything regarding Elizabeth's sojourn in England except for reviews of her concerts in Brighton,

¹³ The Duchess of Sutherland was surely familiar with possible instructors such as G. F. Flowers (Mus. Bachelor, Oxon) whose *British School of Vocalization* was under her patronage and his students were being exhibited at this period. Whether there was some discussion as to protocol, i. e. – not to offend Sir George Smart or whether Flowers would not have been the correct instructor for Elizabeth – is an area for possible further research thus far unexplored.

¹⁴ Reflection about Ms. Martinez introducing Cuban (or Spanish) songs in England brought forth the remarks "but still enough disapprobation was mingled with approval to render it pretty certain the Cuban style of vocalization will obtain no permanent footing in this country." The question "how would a presentation by Elizabeth singing a genuine Negro Spiritual (if she knew any) would have been received at this period?" would, indeed, be another subject of investigation.

Dublin, Glasgow Lynn, Leeds and included the remainder of her American tours as detailed from the many public notices.¹⁵

To knowledgeable readers Ms. Chybowski's conclusions fail in adding substantive information about Ms. Greenfield's personality and she is not particularly modest about her own perspective.

Then, too, Ms. Chybowski presents no data from documents of Elizabeth's patrons [Lord Shaftsbury or the Duchess of Sutherland] to support her thesis of the value of her auditors as abolitionist messengers. For example was it the Duchess' abolitionist sentiments or her very personal views which led her to help Ms. Greenfield?

Likewise Ms. Chybowski does not emphasize the fact that of the many reviews only reflect the sentiments of the music critics not the Society itself! The English propensity for critical snobbery was well known in England even since the time when the illustrious Handel invaded its shores. Germany and Paris, too, also held snobbish views of Blacks in general. She does not postulate how Elizabeth felt about the more malevolent reviews.

Ms. Crybowski, as the writer selected to prepare the entry of Ms. Greenfield, the *Oxford-on-Line Grove* allotted Ms. Greenfield a miniscule amount of words and by approval the article which begins (b. c. 1819 [a la LaXXX], Natchez, MI. . . .). Obviously no one looked over her article because the postal abbreviation MI stands for "Michigan!" Again this proves the point that the too errors and omissions in publications of a general nature are not as trustworthy as writers and editors wish us to believe and even the scholarly

¹⁵ Ms. Crybowski's continuing the so-called Foster remarks also states that Ms. Greenfield "acquired status through a European and study tour." The word "status" is deceptive because Ms. Greenfield had already acquired "status" during her American and especially Canadian tours. Enumerating the reviews which spoke to her so-called former status, her color and her vocal quality is prelude to Ms. Chybowski's conclusion that the many writers failed at not making a comparison with Jenny Lind both vocally and physically. Other concerns in Ms. Chybowski's article speaks of "others" who had attained a similar "concert singer" status besides Elizabeth but includes no citations of any American-styled concert singer in England, black, white or invented, at the same time as Elizabeth. Elizabeth's sojourn was preparatory to other singers at a later time—possibly the "first." None of that information enters Ms. Crybowski's *Oxford-on-line* summary occupying 2 or 3 lines] (even correcting Mrs. Stowe's error in attributing Stephen Foster's *Old Folks at Home*). The Stephen Foster reference had intrigued Prof. Austin who had written "*Susanna*," "*Jeanie*," and "*The Old Folks at Home*"; the *Songs of Stephen C. Foster from his Time to Ours* (New York, 1975) thus his interest.

community is often repelled !¹⁶ Our Michigan and Detroit scholars and librarians were appalled because they depend upon correct resources when dispensing information to the general public!

As a writer on the subject of Afro-American music I am particular in what passes for scholarship and not opinion (the attempt to prove things not in evidence). For example, one writer asked if there was any evidence that Ms. Greenfield was a lesbian because she “seemingly” effected no marriage or was seen in the company of a continuous male consort (Gay liberation). Perhaps the next question will be “Because of her high and low tones” she may have been a hermaphrodite! Does this fit Ms. Chybowski’s “Now that there is a scholarly space opened [through her efforts] for research and writing?”

The help that Elizabeth received from members of the England abolitionist society was admirable but to extend that help to Mrs. Stowe by presuming Elizabeth initiated, acted, sang or participated in anything connected with Uncle Tom’s Cabin as a personal response cannot be proved! Only once did she honor such a request. If any other such ideas were contemplated they were never brought to fruition by Elizabeth herself!

Ms. Chybowski gives us no indication that she was familiar with other episodes of Mrs. Stowe’s use of real Black persons to help dramatize Uncle Tom’s Cabin – *The Christian Slave*,¹⁷ which was premiered in Boston in December¹⁸ and reported in my study *Boston: Black Music in an Abolitionist State* (Detroit 1989, 287 pp.):

The Slavery Course of Lectures.–

Instead of one of the usual Thursday evening lectures at the Tremont Temple, last evening, Mrs. Webb, the coloured elocutionist, read to a very full house the drama of “The Christian Slave,” which has been written for her especially by Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe.

¹⁶ Grove’s 1986 edition on the history of Afro-American music on page 14 could admit the phraseology: “As they became *naturalized*, the Afro-Americans gradually developed new traditions . . .” which invokes numerous meanings including “becoming a citizen” still rankles us as being insensitive to exact word usage.

¹⁷ *The Christian Slave, A Drama, Founded on a Portion of Uncle Tom’s Cabin. Dramatized by Harriet Beecher Stowe, Expressly for the Reading of Mrs. Mary E. Webb* [Boston: Phillips, Sampson & Company, 1855].

¹⁸ Harriet Beecher Stowe, the Known and the Unknown (Edward Wagenknecht (Oxford University Press, 1965, p. 132 et sequiter.

Mrs. Webb has a very sweet voice, with great power of modulation; is also very correct and expressive in her gestures, and her reading was in every respect a success, and elicited at intervals very hearty applause. The drama is on sale by Messrs. Phillips, Sampson & Co.

[Transcript]

The Legitimate Drama.—

It will not be questioned that the drama is legitimate when it is made to subserve the interests of humanity, and conducted that all classes, churchmen and laymen, can consciously and consistently attend upon the recitation of a play. We chronicle with pleasure, therefore, the success of the new drama of “The Christian Slave,” dramatized by Harriet Beecher Stowe, from her own inimitable “Uncle Tom’s Cabin.” There are faults about the production, and great ones, too, but it contains many passages of real pathos, which could only be penned by a writer who could unloose at will the flood-tides of emotion. It was read last evening, at the Tremont Temple, to an audience that thronged every part of the large hall. The reader, Mrs. Mary E. Webb, is a lady of mixed blood, with a good voice, perfect self-possession, and most graceful in her attitudes and gestures. We cannot very highly commend her renderings, though they were creditable. From her peculiar relation to Christian slaves, she succeeded in commanding the sympathies of her hearers, which were retained to the close of the performance. The various points in the drama were readily appreciated by the audience, and as rapturously applauded as they would have been in any theatre in the city.

When the novel *Tit-For Tat* by a Lady of New Orleans was published by Garrett Company, New York, 1856 a partial review remarked: “While British philanthropists are weeping over Uncle Tom, and British aristocracy is toasting Mrs. Stowe and the Black Swan, a system of domestic slavery exists at their own doors whose atrocities almost exceed belief.” Oblivious to the slavery of its own citizens who were criminalized and suffered greatly in the dismal prisons, they often used their vitriol to denounce America’s institution of slavery and to appear as heroes in the eyes of the world.

But, then, I think I have said enough! It seems that everyone wants to have a say about Elizabeth’s career. Elizabeth’s *credo* was always to be recognized as a worthy singer and not a puppet or tool for other people’s meanderings. This she did until the end of her life.

I do not think Ms. Chybowski added significantly to the Greenfield story from an historical point of view because we do not learn anything that has not appeared in other more magisterial presentations. The signaling of themes from the works other writers on the English subject is a *mélange* of information, which presents a

“skewed” view (my interpretation). Many of those themes were not unusual only in England but in almost every society ever in existence!

Needless to say, I am not from the school of researchers who will probably say “If you want Ms. Chybowski to use your information why don’t you send her a copy.” My answer is “Phsaw!” My publications are written first to have assorted information at my disposal when investigating other area of Black scholarship. Then, too, she never purchased our volumes!

The Greenfield story is unusual and especially speaks to a well-deserved anomaly the first of many Black American singers, male or female. Comparisons of efforts by later artists are not needed and we personally think it meritorious that a woman, Black and *only five feet-two inches tall* with a figure often described as fat/fleshy, etc. would valiantly attempt to introduce her musical attributes on broader canvass than her home town. Philadelphians and others should rightfully be proud of the achievements and efforts of Ms. Greenfield with and without the criticisms she endured! What would Greenfield’s life have been if her road had not been taken [apres Robert Frost]? With her help Philadelphia keeps its rank as a “city of firsts!”

I would hope that Elizabeth’s real story will still take wings without the encumbrance of unproved materials. In the words of Langston Hughes it is a story of a ‘dream deferred!’