

The Art and Craft of Comic Imitation: The Parodies of Daniel Ottolengui

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The 19th-century Jewish impresario, producer, director, theatre manager, chess player, newspaperman, and wit Daniel Ottolengui of Charleston and New York left his mark on American literary culture through his searing parodies of popular contemporary works. Ottolengui's racist pen targeted the writings of, among others, Henry Ward Beecher and Edgar Allan Poe. Not apparently an observant Jew, Ottolengui was, as a young man, an outspoken advocate of Jewish rights in connection with the Edgardo Mortara case in 1858, and may have authored a significant pamphlet issued in response to Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's 1862 Field Orders No. 11, which directive barred Jews from parts of Tennessee.

This paper analyzes Ottolengui's parodies for both style and content; addresses Ottolengui's approach to the treatment of Jews; and evaluates his perspective as a white Southern Jewish writer living in post-bellum New York City.

The paper is in the process of being revised for publication. The author welcomes inquiries about this research, and can be reached at sallystokes@comcast.net.