

Thomas Otto Massnick

Marauding Tribesmen for Unity and Equality: The Forty-Eighters' Creation of a German-American *Genius Loci*

The refugees who left or escaped the German lands following the failure of the revolutions of 1848 and 1849 have long stood as examples of transference of political will. The leaders of the so-called Forty-eighters worked, in America, to build the society that they failed to bring about at home. This task required of its leaders rhetorical acumen, political savvy, and an ability to connect with a large and disparate community. In this paper I will analyze the political and intellectual climate of the German-American community before and during the United States Civil War, I will then read closely the poetry of Caspar Butz, and to a lesser degree Konrad Krez, for the purpose of answering the following question: how did German-Americans go about transferring the leftover fury from the revolutions into the American political arena? I will argue that Krez's and Butz's poetry operates primarily in the discursive fields of gender, the body, and national origin myth to make a connection with a wide variety of German-American readers. The poetry of the Forty-eighters demonstrates the importance of *Heimat* (homeland) to the entire German-American community, not just the recent immigrants. Ultimately, the poetry of Butz and Krez reflects an effort to create a new *genius loci* in America.¹

The Forty-eighters in America covered a very wide range on the ideological spectrum. As Carl Wittke puts it, "Among them were irrepressible radicals like Heinzen who never became completely adjusted to their new home; and extreme social reformers like Weitling, Sorge, and Weydemeyer who advocated a thoroughgoing social revolution according to their own plan for utopia or the gospel of Karl Marx."² As such, the group never established a clear narrative. Otilie Assing, a contemporary of the revolutions and mistress of Frederick Douglass, provides an interesting reading of the rhetoric of the Forty-eighters. In the following passage Britta Behmer paraphrases Assing's

categorization of the German-Americans of the nineteenth century, Assing claimed that they “. . . made it their business to uphold their Germanic ways as a counterbalance to the pragmatic, ordinary American manners. From sentimental poetry, full of homesickness, to ethnocentric slogans, the faith in their ethnic inheritance resulted in a self-styled mission to polish up their uncultured fellow men and to civilize philistine America.”³ Certainly these characteristics do jump out at the reader of the works of Butz and his contemporaries. This “sentimental poetry, full of homesickness,” and poetry containing “ethnocentric slogans” or at least ethnocentric metaphorical conceptions, filled the front pages of the many German-language newspapers of the antebellum period. These trends, though looked down upon by Assing, provide at least interesting possibilities for rhetorical analysis of the German-American community, and at most, examples of poetry that we should take more seriously.

In order to understand the context of the poetry of the Forty-eighters, it is important to understand both the climate of print culture and the politics in German-America following the revolutions of 1848/49. The eventual failure of these revolutions created a mobile group of radicals who had been exiled or had escaped the punishment by the government against which they had fought. Many of these refugees, the so-called Forty-eighters, moved to the United States. Early estimates suggest that about four thousand of these political refugees fled to America, though subsequent scholars have determined that this estimate is quite low.⁴ Since the publication of the monumental studies by A. E. Zucker and Carl Wittke, a fair amount of work has been done to explore the historical impact that this group had on the political climate of the mid-nineteenth century.⁵ In addition, some attention has been paid to the literature of the Forty-eighters, though often in the larger context of “German-American literature.”⁶

Recently, particular attention has been paid by historians to the effect the Forty-eighters had on the politics of slavery and on the U.S. Civil War,⁷ some have demonstrated that the German-American population, led in a significant way by the Forty-eighters, played a role in the abolitionist movement.⁸ Wittke points out “it was self-evident that radical reformers among the refugees of the 1850s would not compromise with human slavery, which they regarded as the blackest stain on the banners of the new land which claimed their political allegiance.”⁹ Wittke continues, “As the hope of the exiles for a new revolution in Germany faded, their idealism and talents for agitation and reform found an outlet in the rapidly mounting controversy over slavery.”¹⁰ These “talents for agitation” exist primarily in the realm of political protest, journalism, and poetry. Lorie Vanchena argues that political poetry in periodicals within Germany “proved central to the evolution of

German nationalism in the nineteenth century.”¹¹ Less attention has been paid to the role of German-language poetry in America; however, it is clear that poetry in periodicals played a significant role in the development of the German-American community, particularly as the immigrants lamented their separation from the homeland. This *Heimweh* (homesickness) played a significant role in the unification of the German-American community.

To understand the totality of *Heimweh* in America, we must first understand the nature of the German-American community before the arrival of the Forty-eighters. Many earlier German immigrants reacted very strongly to the ultimately doomed revolutions. A number of factors played into this; first, many German-Americans were supporters of a unified German state. Charles Wallman explains, “On the night of May 10, 1848, the village of Watertown in the Wisconsin Territory buzzed with excitement. Four hundred people – townspeople and farmers, Americans and Germans alike – crowded into or around the English Methodist Church to celebrate a very special occasion, the Revolution in Germany.”¹² The village of Watertown was, and remained to be until well into the twentieth century, a heavily German-speaking city. Soon after the triumphant night described by Wallman, many of those involved in the struggle against the Prussian regime escaped to live all over the United States.

German immigration to the United States spiked in numbers even before the arrival of the Forty-eighters. Between 1830 and 1848 the immigration from Germany was driven primarily by economic opportunity.¹³ Wittke adds the caveat that the earlier immigrants were successful, often educated, and did not differ entirely from the Forty-eighters in their desire to remain German. Indeed German identity in the United States “did not originate with the Forty-eighters and most of the institutions which were typical of German-American life already existed before they came.”¹⁴ Essentially, the earlier immigrants laid the fiscal and cultural groundwork for the so-called Forty-eighter renaissance. The years preceding the revolutions saw a spike in German-language newspapers in the United States even before the population boom caused by political refugees. Twenty different German-language newspapers were printed in the United States before the revolution even took place; the burgeoning resistance to the German absolutist governments had inspired support from Germans already living in America, and the medium of the newspaper provided a means to espouse this rekindled love of homeland. It also gave a forum for fund-raising, discussion, and advertisement. Wittke explains, “The German-language press not only reported the revolution in detail, but appealed to its readers to support it in every possible way, and particularly by collecting funds for its victims.”¹⁵ German-Americans contributed considerable amounts of money toward the revolutionary effort

despite their physical removal from it.

The coming revolution in Germany served as the greatest catalyst to reverse the trend of assimilation in America; in addition, the harshening trend toward nativist sentiment played a role in the unification of the German-American community, and its increased separation from Anglo-America. For instance, the *Wisconsin Banner*, established in Milwaukee in 1844, served as a German-language reaction to the Whig-run Milwaukee *Sentinel*.¹⁶ The *Volksfreund*, established in 1847, was essentially a German version of the *Sentinel* at its inception, but evolved into a more liberal mouthpiece for the revolution and eventually merged with the *Wisconsin Banner*. An example of this slow move toward liberalism occurred on March 9, 1848, just before the revolutions, the *Volksfreund* added its first recurring phrase in English: "Devoted to Equal Rights" was printed near the top of the front page of each subsequent paper for several months.¹⁷ This one line represented solidarity with the cause of the German revolutionaries as well as, by way of being in English, a call for fair treatment of Germans in America.

The arrival of the Forty-eighters added a great deal to the concept of German-American identity and to the journalistic marketplace. The fact that more Forty-eighters went into journalism than any other profession (as A. E. Zucker counted) speaks to the scope of the impact they had on German-American thought and the modification of a young community.¹⁸ Even by 1850, New York had more German-language dailies than Leipzig or Berlin.¹⁹ Twelve years after the failed revolutions, Milwaukee had as many dailies in German as in English, not to mention the many weekly and monthly periodicals. Perhaps most astoundingly, the number of German-language papers in America nearly doubled between 1848 and 1852, from 70 to 133.²⁰ Many of these political refugees held strong resentments of German immigrants already living in America at the time of the revolutions. The founder of the *California Staatszeitung* described the earlier immigrants as people who would "rather pay for lager-beer, wine, sausage, Swiss cheese and bread with caraway seeds than for newspapers."²¹ Though this sentiment fails to account for the considerable political and journalistic achievements of the earlier immigrants, it succeeds in reflecting the stereotypes that many Forty-eighters had of their predecessors.

The Forty-eighters' influence on the creation of *Deutschtum* (Germandom) in America was so great largely because of their success in journalism.²² The Forty-eighters extended and capitalized on the public forum of the nineteenth century—the newspaper. They reconstituted "German-America" by telling its stories and voicing its concerns in the German language, thus separating this imagined community from that of mainstream America.²³ Ultimately, the basis for a united German-American community is tied to experience in

America, but also to descent.

The self-identity of Germans abroad turned from exuberance about the possibility of a German nation-state to a dreary ennui. This appeared in form of the notion of *Heimweh*. What Cora Lee Kluge terms "Poetry of Heimat" (poetry of homeland) was hard to miss in American German-language periodicals throughout the 1850s.²⁴ This concept was most visible in the writings of the Forty-eighters, but even the *Wisconsin Banner*, a Milwaukee press run by relatively assimilated American citizens, frequently published poems on the topic of homesickness.²⁵ Caspar Butz, who left Germany after being persecuted for his revolutionary speeches and writings, and eventually settled in Chicago, wrote a provocative poem in 1853 called "Heimwehtod" (Death by Homesickness). This poem begins with an epigraph, in English, from an American newspaper:

A German woman committed suicide
in Syracuse a few days since.
Home sickness was assigned as the cause.
Rather a queer reason. (1-4)²⁶

By quoting this short passage, Butz highlights the lack of understanding between the American and German conceptions of homesickness, or *Heimweh*. To the much of Anglo-American audience, the German conception of *Heimweh* is absurd; to kill oneself because of homesickness soars beyond melodrama. Kluge argues "the American idea of home is both larger and more abstract than the German notion of *Heimat*; . . . the German *Heimat* is a place one can perceive with one's senses, while the American "home" may just as easily be something in the mind."²⁷ This follows logically when one considers that the German communities in America could have re-created something like a mental "home," but could never have re-created the physical attributes of the German *Heimat*. Because of the physical focus of *Heimat*, *Heimweh* is logically more akin to a physical illness than a mental one. *Heimweh* could feasibly lead to the extreme act of suicide in two ways: first, death could be a form of euthanasia; the woman in the poem is irrevocably plagued by her inability to return to her homeland, thus she has a terminal *physical* illness. Butz describes this woman as sick, rather than in pain, contrary to what the direct translation of *Heimweh*, "home pain" would suggest. He describes her pain in terms of physical ailment, "Auf hartem Lager, wie im Fiebertraum" (Upon a hard bed, as if in a fever dream).²⁸ The symptoms of this ailment that the American-born citizen would consider mental, in this case manifest in an extremely physical way, just as Kluge's analysis would suggest. This explanation makes up only part of the equation; the second

part lies in the German conception of *Vaterland*, which cannot be captured in the English language. Kluge argues that “fatherland,” which most closely matches *Vaterland*, is “essentially not English; an American does not refer to the United States as his or her fatherland.”²⁹ To consider a land to be a father to its people reflects a very different conception of a nation than that of the United States. America did not give its people life; the people gave America life. This functions at least as the dominant metaphorical conception. On the other hand, Germany *fathered* its population. Butz’s “Heimwehtod” reflects this idea:

Die Lind’, an der so oft als Kind gespielt,
Wo Er die Jungfrau Abends schüchtern grüßte,
Wo Er zuerst sie heiß umfangen hielt,
Das Wort der Liebe von der Lipp’ ihr küßte. (29-32)³⁰

The linden, so oft played upon as a child,
Where in the evening he shyly greeted the maiden.
Where he first hotly held her,
Kissed the word of love from her lips.³¹

The *Vaterland*, for this persona, relates strongly to fertility. Thoughts of the *Vaterland* immediately turn to images of first loves in lush woods. The woman in the poem simultaneously represents child and mother; this contrasts strongly to the poem’s vision of America, the image of a sterile deathbed:

Das ist ihr Sterbezimmer, öd’ und leer
Wie all’ ihr Hoffen, einst im vollen Blühen, (17-18)³²

That is the room of her death, barren and empty
Like all of her hopes, once in full bloom,

For this woman, the United States represents an end of fertility. Her body is left alone and barren. Butz presumably did not know this woman, yet he laments her death and provides a plausible reason for her despair. Butz’s poetry seeks to unite; his demonstration of solidarity creates an alliance between himself and the poem’s subject, and also between his readers and the poem’s subject. Ultimately, this collective sympathy engenders a community of sufferers, joined together by their ailment. True to his nature as a politician, Butz operates as a rhetorical poet whose concern is a connection with the audience, and the potential to move that audience to action, as his later works

will demonstrate.

The poetry of *Heimat* is so significant because it exemplifies the method by which Butz and other German-American poets depicted and created a cohesive German immigrant narrative by using origin myth and corporeality. These poems, nearly ubiquitous in German-American publications, helped to bridge the major gaps separating Germans of different ages, classes, genders, and political affiliations. Essentially, poetry of *Heimat*, created, or at least documented, an imagined community of metaphorical orphans, children separated from their father. Ottilia Assing looked down on these attempts to make the emotional appear physical, lived, maybe even essentialist. The question arises, though, whether the readers and writers of the poetry of *Heimweh* considered this feeling to be something constructed; that is, did they know that they were creating this idea, or were they simply feeling it? This is a very difficult question to answer, but it seems unlikely that the woman in Syracuse would have killed herself merely as a rhetorical statement. *Heimweh* is engrained deeply in these writers and readers; it is so deep that it differs from a rhetorical trope, or a piece of propaganda to stir the masses into action. Though it served specific political purposes, namely galvanizing the German-American population to fund and work toward various political projects, the poetry of *Heimweh* should be considered an achievement in nineteenth-century American literature.

Even after the U.S. Civil War was over, and the unification of German-Americans for particular gain was no longer as necessary, the poetry of *Heimweh* lived on. Probably the most celebrated poem by any Forty-eighter is a poem of *Heimweh* from 1870, long after one might assume that some assimilation could have taken place. Konrad Krez's "An Mein Vaterland" (To My Fatherland) considers his separation from his homeland with continued melancholic tone:

O würden jene, die zu Hause blieben
Wie deine Fortgewanderten dich lieben,
Bald würdest du zu Einem Reiche werden,
Und deine Kinder gingen Hand in Hand
Und machten dich zum größten Land auf Erden,
Wie du das beste bist, o Vaterland! (25-30)³³

O, if thy children all, who stayed at home,
Did love thee like the ones thou badest roam,
A Union soon, an empire would have birth,
And thou wouldst see thy children hand in hand
Make thee the mightiest land on earth,

As thou art the best, my Fatherland!³⁴

Krez, whose collected poems has the title "Aus Wiskonsin," (from Wisconsin) often wrestled with the concept of the physical land of his adopted country. Some of his poems contain visions of landscapes, a typical trope in poetry of *Heimat*, but many of these landscapes are American, not German. Krez wrote poetry to make Wisconsin more like Germany in his own mind; the title of his collected works declares Wisconsin as his home; yet, over twenty years after leaving Germany, he still laments his separation from what could have been a great nation. Krez's consistency shows that metaphors of identity are anything but fleeting. They change with age and overlap with other metaphors, but they rarely disappear.

It is not accurate to consider *Heimweh* to be a notion completely unique to the German-Americans of the nineteenth century. Indeed, it is not even accurate to apply this particular tendency to focus on the physical as a way of representing the lost homeland only to those who have left Germany. The physical nature of homesickness is a common to many cultures in many epochs. My narrow focus on select German-Americans is not an attempt to claim this notion for a particular group; rather, it is an attempt to provide a framework for the analysis of discourse in a particular place and time. The Krez's and Butz's use of this concept gives a glimpse of the first step toward the transference of the spirit of the Forty-eighters.

With the coming of the U.S. Civil War, the German-American community's unity through German nationalism and *Heimweh* began to lessen in degree. Other political, economic, and religious forces caused something of a division in the German-American community over the slavery issue. There were few German immigrants of any generation who openly supported the institution of slavery, but there was quite a range in willingness to fight it.³⁵ This range did not always form in predictable ways. For instance, Missouri Synod Lutheran leadership "quoted scripture to prove that slaveholding was not a sin."³⁶ Wisconsin synod Lutherans took exactly the opposite approach. Strangely, the German population in Missouri voted overwhelmingly for Lincoln in 1860, while the German wards in Milwaukee voted overwhelmingly against him. Some of the most extreme anti-war riots in the country were started by German-Americans in Port Washington, WI. Many of the so-called "Old Lutheran" types were against slavery, but were far more adamantly against fighting a war with the Confederacy. The multiplicity of political, economic, regional, and religious forces surrounding the reality of the Civil War, and the confusion of political association amongst the German-Americans, made for a diverse and divided community.

This variety of opinions, in part, is what made the poetry of the Forty-

eighters so politically important. The poems aimed at particularly German feelings, the trajectory of German history and ideology in the context of America. It is important to remember that many of the Forty-eighters do not share in the romanticized narrative of immigration to the New World which many European immigrants either felt or had put upon them. It is safe to say that most would rather have remained in a free Germany, in contrast to Otilie Assing, who would not have returned to Germany even after a revolution.³⁷ America, at least to begin with, was not a city on the hill, but a stepfather whose home the exiles had been forced to move into under threat of violence.

The slavery question allowed for a recapitulation of prior Forty-eighter ideals. Many radicals considered the fight against slavery to be an opportunity to put in place the ideals of the failed revolutions, and indeed hoped that they would have some effect in Europe. Radical Forty-eighter Karl Heinzen wrote, "This republic cannot and will not be able to do anything for European freedom until it has shaken the yoke of slavery from its own."³⁸ Caspar Butz was as outspoken for the cause of abolition as any of his prominent colleagues. He advocated for abolition in his Chicago journal *Deutsch-Amerikanische Monatshefte für Politik, Wissenschaft und Literatur* (German-American Monthly Journal of Politics, Science, and Literature). First published in 1864, this journal resembled *The Atlantic Monthly*.³⁹ Butz voted for Lincoln in 1860, but later came to despise him for his relatively moderate stances. Later, Butz claimed that he could produce 400,000 German votes for John Fremont if the Democrats would have given him the nomination in 1864.⁴⁰ As a legitimate leader of the German-American community in Chicago and nationwide, and as what Wittke calls a "capable poet," Butz provides an excellent case study for analysis of radical discourse in a relatively broad context. Furthermore, Butz represents something of a gatekeeper in the German-American literary realm; he managed the literary department in the journal *Um die Welt*, the so-called "Pioneer high class paper in the German language."⁴¹ Indeed, his poetry served simultaneously as high art and as propaganda; it was often initially published in politically charged newspapers, but it ended up in stately volumes of collected poetry. I found it in a book taken from Carl Schurz's personal library, though recently Kesslinger publishing has done a reprint of Butz's 1879 collected works entitled *Gedichte eines Deutsch-Amerikaners*. Butz wrote of *Heimweh* as well as German origin myth; his poetry may be precisely what Otilia Assing spoke against in her scolding reviews of German-American culture.

In his 1865 lyric "Das Siegesfest," (The Victory Festival) Butz transposes the images of German nationalism onto American soil. To do this, he changes the national gender metaphor of America as barren and incapable of

reproduction into a site of newfound fertility, available for the conquest by the masculine:

Dann schwör' bei deinem Schwerte, o! greif's mit fester Hand:
Dies Blut für immer taufe das freie Vaterland!
Hau' nieder jeden Oelbaum, Zeit ist nicht jetzt noch hier,
Für künft'ge Friedenszweige bewahr' den Samen dir;
Und wenn die Zeit gekommen, dann säe' ihn wieder aus,
Dann mög' er blüh'n und wachsen im Land um jedes Haus! (54-
59)⁴²

Then swear by your sword, O grasp it with a firm hand:
May this blood forever baptize the free fatherland.
Chop down every olive tree, the time has not yet come,
Stow away the seeds for future olive branches;
And when the time has come, then sow them once again,
Then may they bloom and grow around every house in the land.

This description of a violent clear-cutting of a nation, followed by the planting of seeds, or "Samen," which means both 'seeds' and 'semen' in German, serves to alter the prior image of the United States as a whole. No longer is the image of America one of barrenness; now it is a place where there exists the possibility of reproduction and fertility. Butz imagines a takeover, by the sword, followed by planting of the seed and a creation of a new, blooming and growing nation. This "Victory Celebration" is, in fact a celebration not of emancipation, or even of victory over the Confederacy; in a very important sense, it is a celebration of an imagined conquest of a nation. Significantly, Butz uses the term *Vaterland* to describe the United States; a move which, coupled with the images of fecundity, serves to bring up the possibility of a new *Vaterland* which only a few years earlier might have been unthinkable for many Forty-eighters and other German-Americans. Essentially, Butz, like Krez, works to transfer the unique physical qualities of the *Vaterland* to a new context, thus transferring the German *genius loci*. Unlike Krez, Butz does not conform his tastes to include the landscape and other physical attributes of the United States, but he imagines using force to create the landscape anew. This requires violent imagery as well as the use of Germanic origin myth.

Elsewhere in the same poem, Butz uses German literary history:

Da sprach zu seinen Freunden manch' narbenvoller Held:
Ob auch die Wunde brannte, sie hat mich nicht entstellt;
Vergessen sind die Schmerzen in dieses Morgens Roth,

Sieg halt's, nun ist vorüber der Nibelungen Noth! (13-16)⁴³

So speaks to his friends many a scarred hero:
Though the wounds burned, they left me not deformed;
Forgotten are the pains in the red of this morning,
Victory keeps it, now is past the Nibelungen Noth!

Butz compares the U.S. Civil War to the medieval epic poem "Das Nibelungenlied." Again, this demonstrates Butz's desire to use a collective ideology to speak to a very deep place in his readers. The reader is encouraged to play around with this comparison and plug herself or himself into the equation as is desirable.

Butz employs both physical elements and origin myth with even greater intensity in his satirical poem "Heil dem Gewinn" (Hail Profit), which was probably written in 1862 or 1863.⁴⁴ In an acerbic tone, Butz satirizes the American South; he implicitly compares the Confederacy to Rome, the slaves to the Roman slaves, and adopts as the poem's persona a profit driven slave-owner who forces his slaves, and perhaps hired hands, to create a house for him that stands as a monument to money and excess:

Nehmt das Gerüst hinweg! Ihr Sklaven laßt mich sehen
Was ihr gebaut, mein Haus, wie es fortan soll stehen,
Pompeji's schönste Zier, mit hohem Säulengang.
Nicht für die flücht'ge nur, die Stunde, wollt' ich bauen,
Nicht Lohn hab' ich gespart, noch Peitsche, laßt mich schauen
Wie es gelang! (1-6)⁴⁵

Take away the scaffold! You slaves let me see
What you have built, my house, as it will henceforth be,
Pompeii's most beautiful adornment, with a high colonnade.
Not only for the fleeting hour did I wish to build,
I have spared neither expense nor whip; let me look at
How it succeeded!

The persona demonstrates his love of excess and use of cruelty. This house does not reflect his particular design, nor his taste or hard work. Rather, it is a product only of his power and competitive desire. Slave owners in the Confederacy, by way of Butz's comparison, represent extravagant and cruel tyrants who care only for money.

The poem's setting, in the shadows of Mount Vesuvius, is significant on its own terms, as it is the site of the famously destructive volcano which will

destroy the persona's prized house. It is also significant thematically in two ways: first, it allows the poem to approach the large issue of pride and the necessary fall which follows. More importantly, the setting and the poem's extended metaphor invites German-American readers to place themselves within this equation both as Americans and as Germans. The poem's first eight stanzas are voiced by the wealthy Roman; during this part of the poem, the German-American reader imagines herself or himself not as a Roman, but as one of the tribal groups to which the persona alludes: "Die stets mir Gold gebracht auf meines Handels Bahnen, / Ich kaufe sie für Rom, den Gallier, den Germanen" (29-30, They always brought me gold on my trade routes, / I buy them for Rome, the Gaul, the Teuton). In one aspect this is a favorable and unifying comparison for the German-American reader. In the world of this poem, Germans are the ones who will ultimately destroy this decadent and brutal empire. When one applies this to the United States' Civil War, as Butz does in the second part of the poem, the message remains encouraging, but asks more of the reader than a simple denunciation of the Confederacy. By bringing up the economic ties between the northern tribes and Rome, Butz asks the reader to consider a possible equivalent in the United States. Naturally one does not have to look far to discover economic ties between the northern and southern states; perhaps Butz is asking the reader to take seriously the role she or he is playing in the economics of slavery, as many abolitionists did. Also significantly, the setting is not just the Roman Empire, it is a place and time destined to be destroyed by a natural disaster. The imminent destruction of this particular citizen of the Roman Empire is the impending volcano, not the tribesmen at the gate. This again complicates the metaphor; the question emerges: is the destruction an act of God or of man? Perhaps Butz's reader would understand this as a declaration that the Confederacy will receive retribution one way or another—that the German-Americans and the citizens of the Union will work together with the forces of nature and God.

As the poem transitions from its first to its second part, Butz develops a theme which is remarkably similar to that of Percy Shelley's poem "Ozymandias." Like Shelley's poem, a persona from the modern world comes across ancient ruins which display a carved prideful phrase, made pathetic by time and circumstance. The following two stanzas contain the poem's transition from an ancient to a modern persona:

Vollendet ist der Bau; in des Vesuvius Schatten
Das schönste Denkmal auf Campanien's üpp'gen Matten.
Noch zeugen wird's von mir, nahm längst die Nacht mich hin;
Nur Eines fehlet noch: der Inschrift Weiheworte!

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Komm her du Sklave, schnell, und meißle auf die Pforte:
"Heil dem Gewinn!"

* * *

Wer war der stolze Mann? – Sein Name ist verschollen;
Man grub die Inschrift aus in jenem Bergwerkestollen,
Aus dem aus alter Zeit der Mensch die Schätze bricht.
Pompeji's Trümmerwelt, empor an's Licht gehoben,
Das übermüt'ge Wort sie sendet es nach oben.
—Den Namen nicht! (48-59)⁴⁶

Finished is the construction; in the shadows of Vesuvius
The loveliest monument in Campania's lush meadow.
It still will testify of me, even once the night has long since taken me;
Just one thing yet is wanting: the inscription of consecrated words!
Come here you slave, quick, and carve upon the portal:
"Hail profit!"

* * *

Who was this proud man? – His name is forgotten;
Someone dug the inscription out in that cave's tunnel
From which the person broke loose the ancient treasures.
Pompeii's world of ruins, lifted up to the light,
The careless phrase is sent upward.
—Not the name!

One major difference between this poem and Shelley's is that the name of the once powerful ancient person never appears. This fact is significant to the persona in the second part of the poem, and perhaps to the readers. Perhaps it is better for the cruel and greedy Roman to have lost his name to history; a modern archeologist or traveler might have made his name more infamous than famous. But the question remains, what significance does anonymity have for Butz's audience? In the next stanza Butz sharpens this question, and then takes an abrupt turn by using a grotesque image:

Willst du für immer auch auf deine Bauten graben,
Amerika, den Spruch der Zeit, die, längst begraben,
Als warnend' ernstes Bild durch die Geschichte geht?
Ihr häßlich Leichentuch, wir seh'n es mit Entsetzen,
Mit jeder Schaufel Staub fliegt auf ein blut'ger Fetzen,
Moderumweht. (60-66)⁴⁷

Do you forever wish also to engrave your buildings,
America, with the saying of the time, which, long buried,

Goes through history as a cautionary tale?
We look upon your hideous shroud with horror,
With every shovelful of dust flies away a bloody rag,
 Enveloped in mildew.

This juxtaposition of stone remnants with bodily remnants is immediately jarring to the reader. Again, Butz connects with the reader both by way of historical narrative and corporeality. Both images function as threats to a country which must re-evaluate its current mode of operation or else die in infamy. The image of the mildew-covered bloody rags thrown to the air with every shovelful outweighs the threat of shame which stands as the poem's major concept. Butz undercuts the poem's own narrative by this return to physicality. "Heil dem Gewinn," in addition to demonstrating Butz's ability to use biting satire, shows once again that his connection to his audience cannot be divorced from physicality and historical narrative.

In addition to the narrative of German nationalism, Butz makes use of another trope—the apocalypse. In his poem "Die schwarze Schaar," (The Black Flock) Butz continues the metaphor of African-American slaves as gladiators or Roman slaves, but he adds another vision of them as sheep in an apocalyptic slaughter.⁴⁸ In the following stanza, Butz draws a vision of the Civil War as a righteous event:

Die Salve prasselt, o! der Tod macht frei,
 Und dunkel wird die Erde von den Leichen.
Sie wanken, ihre Reihe schwankt und bricht;
 Wer hat im ersten Kampfe nicht gezittert!
Doch einen Blick nur, wie der Feind dort sieht,
 Und sie, sie fechten bis zum Tod erbittert. (66-71)⁴⁹

The Fusillade patters, o! Death brings freedom,
 And the earth will be dark with corpses.
They waver, their rank fluctuates and breaks;
 Who in the first battle did not tremble!
Indeed, just one glance at how the enemy there appears,
 And they, sword-fight to grim death.

This scene describes the glory of death in combat. The line "death brings freedom" works both to romanticize military conquest, and to connect to the Christian narrative. "Death brings freedom," in this context, has two distinct but related meanings. First, it highlights the cost of war: human life must be lost when seeking a higher cause. This is echoed in the final line of the poem:

“Der Baum der Freiheit sei mit Blut begossen!” (112).⁵⁰ (May the tree of freedom be watered with blood!) Butz’s prior fertility metaphor seems all the more violent in this light. Not only is the Civil War a razing and fertilizing of the soil, but the tree which grows from that soil must be nourished, not with rainwater, but with blood. Even the natural elements must be controlled by human violence. The second implication of “Death brings freedom” relates to an afterlife, in this case, due to the imagery of mass destruction, the reader might also consider the apocalypse. The image goes far beyond an individual death for the country, “the earth will be dark with corpses.” The Civil War, for Butz, is Apocalypse; it is marked by extreme suffering, but it is necessary to bring about a new heaven and a new earth. This intertwining of Christian with military discourse serves further to unite and militarize the German-American community through common narrative and self-conception.

The identity metaphors lived and created by the German-American community were made more widespread by poetry in newspapers, but perhaps more importantly, they were common feelings among people of shared cultural experience. Otilie Assing’s critiques of nineteenth-century German-American literature still hold up today, though a closer look shows the “sentimental poetry” to contain real emotion, and the “ethnocentric slogans” to reveal a complex use of metaphor which goes well beyond what most would call a *slogan*. The examples in both cases remain problematic, but at very least, continued close reading of non-English American literature will reveal more about the creation of American culture, and it may lead us to discover “some mute inglorious Milton.”⁵¹

University of Wisconsin-Madison
Madison, Wisconsin

Notes

¹ *Genius loci*, in this essay, will refer to the “spirit of a place” not in the Roman sense, which implies a certain deity, but in a more modern sense—the particular feeling of a location as created by a physical environment.

² Carl Wittke, *Refugees of Revolution: The German Forty-Eighters in America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1952), 4.

³ Britta Behmer, “From German Cultural Criticism to Abolitionism: Otilie Assing: ‘Zealous to give vent to her gall.’” in *German? American? Literature?* ed. Winfried Fluck and Werner Sollors, *New Directions in German-American Studies*, vol. 2 (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 160.

⁴ Wittke, 3.

⁵ Adolf E. Zucker, *The Forty-Eighters: Political Refugees of the German Revolution of 1848* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950).

⁶ Cora Lee Kluge, ed., *Other Witnesses: An Anthology of Literature of the German Americans, 1850-1914* (Madison: Max Kade Institute for German American Studies, 2007).

⁷ The *Journal of American Ethnic History* recently published an issue on the German-Americans and their relations with African Americans during the mid-nineteenth century (Fall 2008).

⁸ Indeed an old hypothesis persists, that Germans turned the 1860 election in favor of Lincoln, though recent scholarship has called this into question.

⁹ Wittke, 191.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 192.

¹¹ Lorie Vanचना, *Political Poetry in Periodicals and the Shaping of German National Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century*, North American Studies in Nineteenth-Century German Literature, vol. 26 (New York: Peter Lang, 2000).

¹² Charles Wallman, *The German-Speaking 48ers: Builders of Watertown, Wisconsin* (Madison, WI: German-American Cultural Society, Inc., 1992), 1.

¹³ Carl Wittke, *The German-Language Press in America* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1957), 36.

¹⁴ Wittke, 37.

¹⁵ Wittke, 65.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁷ See page 1 of Milwaukee's *Der Volksfreund*, 9 March 1848, published by Friedrich Fratney.

¹⁸ Zucker, 270.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 75

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 76.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 78.

²² *Ibid.*, 37.

²³ For a definition of the term "Imagined Communities" see Benedict Anderson's groundbreaking monograph *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1983; rev. ed. 1991).

²⁴ See Kluge, *Other Witnesses: An Anthology of Literature of the German Americans*.

²⁵ The *Wisconsin Banner* featured another poem of homesickness in almost every issue in the early 1850s. some notable titles include "Heimathsklänge" (sounds of home), "Heimkehr" (return home), and "Das Lied der Deutschen Treue" (The song of the German loyalty).

²⁶ Kluge, 397.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 499.

²⁸ Caspar Butz, *Gedichte eines Deutsch-Amerikaners* (Chicago: Verlag Von U. Uhlenhoff & Co., 1879), 9.

²⁹ Kluge, 400.

³⁰ Butz, 9.

³¹ All translations are my own unless otherwise noted. Due to my focus on metaphor I have taken steps to create as literal a translation as possible. When I do take liberties with syntax or diction, it is meant to elucidate meaning and to avoid unintended ambiguity. Certainly these poems lose the music of their construction given my method, and perhaps another project would call for a new translation.

³² Butz, 9.

³³ Kluge, 414.

³⁴ This is not my translation; it was done by Henry E. Legler, "A Wisconsin Group of German Poets," in *German-American Literature*, ed. Don Heinrich Tolzmann (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1977), 19.

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³⁵ Wittke, 191.

³⁶ Ibid, 193.

³⁷ Behmer, 161.

³⁸ Wittke, 196.

³⁹ Zucker, 144.

⁴⁰ Zucker, 146.

⁴¹ *Puck*, 31 Aug 1881; 9, 234.

⁴² Butz, 132.

⁴³ Butz, 131.

⁴⁴ The poem has no date, but is placed in a chronologically ordered volume between a poem dated 1862 and one dated 1863.

⁴⁵ Butz, 82.

⁴⁶ Butz, 83.

⁴⁷ Butz, 83.

⁴⁸ I do not wish to discuss Butz's portrayal of African-Americans in this article simply because such a discussion deserves an article of its own. This poem, though, provides a very interesting portrayal of the slave; one might accuse Butz of dehumanization through imagery, yet the variety of comparisons and images certainly moves beyond the grotesque depiction of the slave which was common even among abolitionists. It may prove fruitful to study further Butz's depictions of African-Americans in his entire body of work. For thorough and interesting discussions of this topic, which could possibly be applied to this poem, see Sander L. Gilman's edited volume *On Blackness without Blacks: Essays on the Image of the Black in Germany*, Yale Afro-American Studies (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1982), and Heike Paul's recent book chapter "Cultural mobility between Boston and Berlin: how Germans have read and reread narratives of American slavery." This chapter can be found in Stephen Greenblatt's collection *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁴⁹ Butz, 86.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 87.

⁵¹ I refer here to Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard."

