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American Periodicals: A Journal of History & Criticism, Volume 19,
Number 1, 2009, pp. 21-48 (Article)

Published by The Ohio State University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/amp.0.0016>



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THE POLITICS OF HUMOR: MAX COHNHEIM'S *COLUMBIA* (1863–1873), A GERMAN NEWSPAPER IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL

Vanessa Steinroetter

When a new German newspaper was launched in Washington, D.C. in 1863, the German-speaking community must have thought it barely worth a second glance. Too many previous attempts at permanently establishing a press organ for the German population in the nation's capital had failed, too many dailies and weeklies had come and gone, to make this new *Columbia* seem the proverbial exception to the rule.¹ Max Cohnheim, the editor of this new weekly paper, was very much aware of the difficulties he would face in trying to convince potential subscribers to invest in what seemed to them a doomed venture. Instead of the usual editorial address to the readers and mission statement in the first issue of the *Columbia*, readers found “Washingtoner Plaudereien” (“Washington Conversations”), an imagined conversation between the editor and several German citizens of Washington:

“Yet another new newspaper! I’m sure that’ll be around for a long time!” Says one; “what,” says the other, “he is bold enough to start a new paper here in Washington City, where so many unfortunate attempts have already been made!”—Never mind! Calm down, gentlemen! Buy our paper, or don’t buy it. Just as you will not succeed in halting the course of the Earth, you won’t stop us from sending our “Columbia” out into the world, “trotz alledem und alledem,” as Freiligrath says.²

In their invocation of failed previous papers, these comments seem a humorous echo of Werner Koch, the former editor of the weekly *Washingtoner Intelligenzblatt* (1859–1863), who complained about the unwillingness he encountered during his initial efforts to enlarge his

subscription list among the Germans in the city. He wrote, "[I was told] that they did not want to subscribe to a paper that—just like they had seen happen three or four times before—would probably, like its predecessors, not last longer than a few months."³ The fact that the *Intelligenzblatt* went on to survive for several years in spite of this lack of trust was a point of great satisfaction to its editor. And yet, even though it held out longer than other local German newspapers before, it too proved to be only a passing phenomenon.⁴

Given this gloomy outlook, it is quite surprising that the *Columbia* became popular enough to exist for a whole decade, longer than any German-language periodical in the capital before. According to the editor, it was so popular that many other German newspapers in America reprinted its humorous pieces. Under Max Cohnheim's editorship (1863–1867), the *Columbia* "became without doubt the most colorful German language paper ever published in Washington," as historian Klaus Wust writes.⁵ It is even more surprising, however, that the *Columbia*, launched in the middle of the Civil War and in the nation's capital, avoided most direct discussion of politics or military maneuvers. Though the city swarmed with soldiers, freed and runaway slaves, and politicians of all stripes, this local German paper focused on humorous articles, serial literature, satirical sketches, and human interest stories, with casual references to important names and events. For the most part, the paper talked about politics indirectly—through sarcasm, fiction, editorial columns—rather than in direct political reporting. Some serial fiction, for instance, was set in post-revolutionary Germany, with references to the reactionary government in power. In addition, many of the parodies and humorous columns referred to well-known politicians, generals, or events in German, American, and German-American politics, such as the entries in the mock "supplement to the Brockhaus encyclopedia" that defined a "Yankee" as a "German living in the United States who is ashamed of his home country," or the satiric poem bidding "eagles, dollars, quarters, cents" a "good night," since they are no longer needed, resting in peace even if Wall Street should "crash."⁶ Other humorous writing in the *Columbia* was restricted to comical scenes of domestic life, usually involving shrewish wives and hen-pecked husbands. But, with few exceptions, none of the entries provided direct political commentary or criticism.

It would be wrong to attribute this arguably evasive stance to a lack of interest in America's war on the part of the German readership. Many newspapers in Germany, for instance, such as the preeminent *Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung*, employed war correspondents because of public demand for coverage of the war.⁷ Rather, it appears as though Max Cohnheim found a unique niche for his newspaper, perfectly attuned to the opportunities created by the incredible transformation of Washington during the Civil War. Given that there were

already two big German dailies in the larger area that provided the German community with news stories, Cohnheim could fill his weekly with little sketches, poems, and letters by fictional characters that presupposed familiarity with the names of politicians and military leaders, but that made their points humorously, veiling any form of criticism as entertainment.

The fact that the *Columbia* became so successful reveals as much about the tastes of the local German reading public as it does about contemporary trends in literature and culture on both sides of the Atlantic. By incorporating models from a popular Berlin magazine, read by many Germans outside of the capital as well, it brought Washington Germans a familiar form of entertainment that connected them to the cultural environment they left behind after emigrating. The *Columbia* reworked these borrowed features to suit the interests of Germans living in America rather than in their home country, appealing to the common experience of its readers as immigrants. The humorous tone was also a welcome change from the traditional news reporting and political moralizing readers encountered in other German language publications in the District of Columbia. This local niche publication even caught the attention of readers in other cities and parts of the country, especially when local conflicts reflected problems or dilemmas that affected other German-American communities across the nation, or, of course, if some of the local players involved were members of the national government. When the internal cohesion of the Washington Germans was at risk, for instance, the local scene became a microcosm of the national, where tensions ran deep along partisan lines.

Max Cohnheim was certainly in the right place at the right time. Washington's booming economy during the Civil War ensured that the editor could count on a steady income from the advertisements that merchants and business owners placed in his paper, and the constant influx of soldiers, traveling through the city or arriving in need of medical assistance, greatly increased his potential readership. Large contingents of the Union army passed through or resided in Washington, temporarily raising the number of residents in the District of Columbia from 75,000 to 132,000, and many of them were composed of German immigrants.⁸ Any German language publication of reasonable quality and appeal should have flourished. And yet, there was more to the *Columbia*'s success than mere opportunity. What did Cohnheim do differently than his predecessors? He certainly gives us no immediate clue in the "Washington Conversations" of the first issue. "*De mortui nil nise bene*," he writes, preferring discrete silence over an analysis of the errors committed by other editors before him.⁹ Werner Koch had been less reluctant to examine potential obstacles, and in the first issue of the *Intelligenzblatt* he had identified strong competition from the two big German dailies from nearby Baltimore as one of them. He explicitly

said that the failure of previous German newspapers could not have been due to the lack of interest or mental capabilities of the Washington Germans. Two years later, however, embittered by the failure of his short-lived German daily, the *Tägliche Metropole* (1860–1861), he changed his mind, blaming the current German community's indifference towards the success or failure of a German newspaper for the disappointing course of events. This amounted to a thinly veiled attack on the loyalty—or lack thereof—of his fellow German Americans towards the local ethnic community. Whether this reason, along with the abovementioned competition, can fully account for the failure of Koch's journalistic ventures in Washington is hard to determine. What seems clear, though, is that Max Cohnheim's *Columbia* opted for a radically different form of newspaper, one unlike any previous periodical within Washington's German community.

The *Columbia* emulated such weekly publications as the Sunday edition of the large New Yorker *Abend-Zeitung*, the so-called *Atlantische Blätter* und New Yorker *Kladderadatsch*, which derived its name from Berlin's famous satirical paper *Kladderadatsch* (see Figure 1)—both of which provided the *Columbia* with the occasional article or sketch. It borrowed some national/international models and molded them to the particular local market.¹⁰ For example, it took the famous dialogues between the fictional characters Schulze and Müller, which were a staple of every issue of the *Kladderadatsch*, and adapted their content to suit the interests of German-American readers. These dialogues were, like the originals, written in Berlin dialect, and in a very casual tone, which often seemed incongruous with the grave political issues—generally taken from German foreign and domestic politics of the time—that the two characters would discuss, adding to the humor of the situation. Since Cohnheim's readers were interested as much in American as in European politics, the Schulze and Müller dialogues in the *Columbia* would, for instance, comment on the military campaigns of Generals Grant and McClellan, or on the political decisions of President Johnson.¹¹ Such regular features made reference to shared cultural traditions, since they required knowledge not only of the Berlin dialect and the city's famous subversive wit known as "Berliner Schnauze," but also of American politicians and generals, even if only by name.¹² The Schulze/Müller dialogues, then, in a German-American newspaper like the *Columbia*, reinforced ties to its readers' native culture by borrowing a successful model from a German periodical, while also integrating elements of the new home country into the humorous exchanges between the two characters.

The *Columbia* focused on serial literature, as well as on satirical writing, and addressed politics within that frame. In choosing to follow such examples, Cohnheim was catering to an interest in humorous or satirical publications prevalent among many Europeans of the mid- and late nineteenth century, including Germans. Nineteenth-century



Figure 1. The front page of the famous satirical journal *Kladderadatsch*, first published in Berlin in 1848. The subtitle reads "Organ by and for Loafers." Courtesy of the University of Heidelberg Library.

Europe saw the rise of magazines devoted to political satire and humorous anecdotes, such as *Le Charivari* in Paris (1832–1937), *Punch* in London (1841–2002), and *Kladderadatsch* (1848–1944) in Berlin. These magazines appealed to the interests of the middle classes by commenting on important political and social issues of the time in entertaining ways, and by mocking politicians, the clergy, and other

authority figures, thus channeling bourgeois anxieties about elite classes and the power they exerted into amusement at the ridiculous depictions. After censorship of the press was abolished in Germany in 1854, many small satirical magazines appeared, testifying to the public's interest in humorous writing and social criticism through satire, both as a vent for frustrations with the political and social status quo and as a source of entertainment. Many publications in nineteenth-century Germany adopted a satirical or humorous style in an attempt to circumvent censorship and other repercussions. In nineteenth-century America, however, there was no immediate threat to newspapers from the government, though angry mobs could certainly exert pressure on the publishers. The guise of providing pure entertainment without explicit political designs, then, could still be useful to editors such as Cohnheim, especially in politically turbulent times. Furthermore, the popularity of political satire and humor in German magazines and newspapers throughout much of the nineteenth century promised him a good model that he could adapt to the interests of the Washington Germans with reasonable hopes of success.

Satirical and humorous writing are often distinguished by the aggressiveness and divisiveness of their tone. The former, typical in the nineteenth century of radical print publications especially from the left, is generally considered "confrontational or violently subversive" in its tone and intent, while the latter is mostly "whimsical and charming social satire," the conciliatory and optimistic tone typical of respectable Victorian journals like *Punch*.¹³ More often than not, however, the boundaries between satire and humorous writing are fluid, and publications such as the *Columbia* occupied the middle ground between the two categories, with contributions that clearly engaged with political issues and depended on the political literacy of their readership for full comprehension on the one hand, and humorous depictions of social types and domestic scenes on the other.

Given its popularity in Germany, it is not surprising that the German satirical periodical eventually found its way to the United States in the wake of mass immigration in the 1850s. Later, the fact that the first successful American humor magazine, *Puck*, launched in 1871, published both an English and a German language version each week would testify to the enduring popularity of humorous magazines and newspapers among Germans and German Americans. Here, then, was a promising field of journalism for those eager to distinguish themselves from more traditional newspapers and journals.

When Max Cohnheim, a Jewish Forty-Eighter, arrived in New York, he already had some experience with political satire and humor, having co-authored a few pamphlets and contributions to periodicals in Germany before the Revolution of 1848.¹⁴ Cohnheim wrote plays for the German-American stage as well, which were occasionally produced by the St. Charles Theater of New York during the 1850s. Later,

he served as an officer in the Union army during the Civil War.¹⁵ After his move to Washington, D.C. in 1863, he launched the *Columbia*, taking advantage of his fellow Germans' interest in satire, and also of the lack of humorous German language publications available to a growing readership. He also gave occasional "humorous lectures" in the *Turn-Halle*, the assembly hall of the gymnast association, which he advertised in his newspaper.¹⁶

The *Columbia* was, chronologically speaking, the successor of the *Washingtoner Intelligenzblatt*. Just like the earlier publication, it was published each Saturday. After the failure of Werner Koch's papers, Cohnheim printed his paper in his predecessor's office and advertised Koch's printing services in the *Columbia*. It is hard, however, to imagine two newspapers more different than Cohnheim's weekly and the *Intelligenzblatt*. As indicated in the *Columbia*'s original subtitle, "Entertainment Paper for the City of Washington and the Surrounding Area" (see Figure 2), it was indeed a publication primarily concerned with entertaining and amusing its readership, though with a humor that engaged with politics and social values as well. Where the *Intelligenzblatt* prided itself on the discussion of important political questions in both Europe and America, the *Columbia* eschewed all direct discussion of "serious" topics, including the war that was being fought and that was changing the very city in which it was published. As the editor of the *Columbia* suggests in the first issue, the newly-formed German opera and its first performance of "Der Freischütz" were of much greater interest than political matters or the advance of General Lee's army.¹⁷ Although the editor emphasized the entertainment value of his newspaper—a strategy to fulfill a niche—in actual practice he still offered political and social commentary, albeit in a veiled form at times.

With his talent for humorous and satirical columns, Cohnheim easily increased his readership over the years. In the fourth issue of the paper, he even wrote that the growing popularity of the *Columbia* enabled him to expand his paper. And indeed, the first issue of January 1864 was printed on four large pages, with five columns each (see Figure 3), replacing the eight smaller, three-column pages of the first few months. For four years, the *Columbia* thrived, giving Max Cohnheim the confidence to quit his position in the Department of the Treasury in 1867, a decision that he soon regretted. According to Klaus Wust, "[n]ot only did many Germans leave Washington soon after the war to join the renewed migration to the West but also local business experienced a recession which was reflected in a sharp reduction of the *Columbia* revenue."¹⁸ Gradually, Cohnheim was taking heavy financial losses, and he decided to hand the newspaper over to Werner Koch, leaving Washington for San Francisco later in 1867. Nevertheless, he did not give up journalism, and became the editor of several German language newspapers in California. From 1868–1870, he was



Figure 2. The front page of the first issue of the *Columbia*, 17 October 1863. Height: 49 cm (19.3 inches). Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

the editor and part-proprietor of the San Francisco *Abend-Post* (1860–1903), and from 1870–1871 co-editor of a Sunday paper called the *Sonntags-Gast*. Eventually, he moved back east, to Newark, New Jersey, where he passed away in 1896.

The *Columbia*, meanwhile, continued with Werner Koch as its main editor, and although Koch altered the paper's content, he retained a loyal readership that appreciated his approach to journalism. As Klaus Wust explains, after Cohnheim's editorship, "the newspaper now returned to the policy which Koch had outlined in 1859. Faithfully, the *Columbia* recorded the events of the following years. The establishment of the Territorial Government in Washington on February 21, 1871 brought about a sudden interest in local politics." After the energetic and tumultuous years of the Civil War, the spirit of the time seemed to favor Koch's style over Cohnheim's. Without Cohnheim's talent and a style that stood out among the traditional news items and direct political commentary found in most German-American newspaper of the time, however, the *Columbia* would have never established itself in Washington, and the nation's capital would have lacked a permanent German newspaper for years to come.

This somewhat unusual choice in content and style becomes clearer when we analyze the local German community that formed the target audience for Cohnheim and previous German editors. The general situation of the Germans in Washington, D.C. was in many ways an unusual one, since, like all residents of the District of Columbia, they were denied the right to vote in presidential elections, send representatives to state legislatures or Congress, or run for such political offices themselves. They were effectively barred from many opportunities to shape directly the nation's future, spectators rather than participants in the political scene of their adopted fatherland. Federal law set the term of residence required for naturalization at five years, after which they were at least able to vote in municipal elections. Washington's German community was rather small compared to that of larger cities in the United States, such as New York, Chicago, and Baltimore. In the second half of the nineteenth century, for instance, Germans represented one tenth of the population in the District of Columbia, while Chicago and Baltimore had 25 % or more Germans.¹⁹ As Francine Curro Cary points out, immigration to Washington, D.C. was not characterized by some of the main features of the immigrant experience in industrial centers of the country: "Without industry the capital drew a larger percentage of skilled and entrepreneurial immigrants than other U.S. cities, and its foreign-born populations were smaller."²⁰

The main attraction that the capital city held for migrants, American or foreign-born, was the presence of the U.S. government. As mentioned earlier, Max Cohnheim himself held a position in the Treasury Department after his service in the Union army, which also

indicates that he must have had a good command of English.²¹ As Mona E. Dingle and others have speculated, Washington's Germans in general would have had more cause to adapt to American culture than their compatriots in the larger ethnic enclaves: "The [German] community's relatively small size and the absence of either a large concentrated German enclave—as in Baltimore—or a large industrial laboring class—as in Chicago—probably hastened adaptation for Washington's German immigrants."²² Many of the European immigrants who came to Washington, D.C. in the mid-1800s became entrepreneurs, setting up their own store, brewery, or printing office (e.g. Werner Koch), which further increased the tendency toward assimilation, given the need to learn English in order to attract customers from outside of the ethnic community. As historians Hasia R. Diner and Steven J. Diner point out, "[t]o conduct business, one had to know English and to understand American ways to a greater degree than one did to operate a sewing machine in a factory."²³

Compared to earlier German newspapers in Washington, D.C., the *Columbia* seemed more willing to incorporate English words and aspects of American culture, sporting not only an English name, but featuring special satirical sketches around Thanksgiving and Valentine's Day. Quite a few advertisements featured a blend of German and English, with attention-grabbing key words such as "Boarding-Haus" or "Stiefel- und Schuh-Store" printed in large bold type above a short description of the business in German. The second issue featured a humorous column called "Charly, the Little American, or: the Art of Learning English for 5 Cents a Week." It consisted of a list of translated phrases that were mainly amusing because the words were either literal translations from the German or hybrid creations that were correct neither in German nor English, such as: "Haben Sie schon Ihr Frühstück eingenommen?—Have you already your early-piece captured?"²⁴ This was exactly the type of joke that would appeal to German-American readers, who knew both languages well enough to appreciate the outrageousness of "Charly's" language.

Rather than lecture his readers on the role that they, as both representatives of Germany and citizens of the United States, should play in American politics (as Werner Koch had done), Cohnheim appealed to a part of the German-American identity that was grounded in lived experience rather than in abstract ideals. This experience was, of course, shared not only by the local German community, but by German Americans across the country, connecting the Washington Germans to a larger cultural community. Living in an environment that was more or less bilingual, German-Americans were bound to understand this parody of the unsuccessfully assimilated German American, and to appreciate the potential for humor in this situation. It invited them to laugh at themselves or at others they might know that spoke like "Charly," encouraging a feeling of community. As a parody

of a certain social type, though, namely that of the ignorant German who believes that he is speaking correct English but is really embarrassing himself, this little piece of humorous writing became a way of engaging in social critique while still providing "entertainment." Rather than feature articles and texts exclusively in German, the editor of the *Columbia* accepted the fact that English was an important part of his readers' daily lives and used it to his advantage.

The name of Cohnheim's paper was not its only concession to the host country. Many of the literary works published in the *Columbia*, which were, after all, one of its major attractions in the eyes of the readers, featured the note "Aus dem Englischen" or "Aus dem Amerikanischen" ("Translated from English/American") below their title. The fifth issue, for example, featured a short story simply called "Die Brüder" ("The Brothers"), which was introduced as "A Hospital Story from the Present War. A Free Translation from English for the 'Columbia.'" ²⁵ Though the author was not credited, it was in fact Louisa May Alcott, whose short story "The Brothers" had been published in the *Atlantic Monthly* that same month, and was now reprinted in German in Cohnheim's *Columbia*. ²⁶ A story about two brothers divided by hatred for each other, one the son of a plantation owner and an African slave, the other his legitimate son, "The Brothers" depicts the dehumanizing influence of slavery on individuals, even those united by familial ties. Presented with the chance to kill his brother Ned in a Northern hospital, Robert, the fugitive slave or "contraband," is deterred from his plan by the nurse Miss Dane, who appeals to Robert's faint hope of obtaining information on his wife Lucy, whom Ned had taken from him. The two fated brothers finally do kill each other, when, fighting for opposite sides, they clash in the battle between Confederate troops and the Massachusetts Fifty-Fourth regiment of colored volunteers at Fort Wagner. In its emphasis on the victimization of slave families at the hands of cruel Southern masters, and on the redemption of the tried fugitive slave, essentially honorable and heroic but driven to violence out of desperation, Alcott's story presents a clear abolitionist theme in a form that would appeal to the emotions of Cohnheim's readers, regardless of political affiliation. Though a considerable part of Washington's German community favored Democratic politics, they generally did so out of economic interests or in response to the repressive or nativist tendencies they perceived among U.S. Republicans, not because they sought to advance the cause of slavery. ²⁷ Unlike Southern "fire-eaters," such readers would have probably recognized the tragic aspect of the story. Supporters of the Republican Party, of course, such as the editor of the *Columbia* himself, would have felt confirmed in their beliefs and political goals. Publishing a short story with abolitionist themes was, at any rate, less controversial or provocative than publishing an outspoken attack on slaveholders or Democrats seeking a compromise

with the South. After all, one must not forget that pro-Democrat opinions among Washington's Germans and among German Americans in other cities as well, were far from uncommon. This might also account for the fact that, although Cohnheim occasionally published satirical songs and humorous poems at the expense of the "Copperheads," he never voiced his personal political opinions aggressively. As William Beschke, an author and contributor to the *National Era*, pointed out in an article titled "Defence of the Germans" and addressed to Horace Greeley, "[t]o write and to publish a paper against Slavery is, for many obvious reasons, easier and less dangerous in Boston and New York or Philadelphia, than in Baltimore and Washington; easier and less dangerous in these latter cities, than it would be in Richmond, Charleston, Savannah, Mobile, and New Orleans, in the midst of a slaveholding population."²⁸

In one of its issues, the *Columbia* featured an excerpt from the writing of another well-known American woman in one of its issues, Fanny Fern, whose humorous "A Chapter on Doctors" appeared in the German newspaper in 1863.²⁹ In her usual mixture of comical exaggeration and shrewd insight into human nature, the popular columnist and author mentions such colorful specimens as the "exclusive doctor," vain, pompous, and more concerned about comfort and appearance than about his patients; the "famous surgeon," who sizes every patient up as potential material for his surgical knife; or the drunk, red-nosed doctor who spends most of his time at the local pub. This form of humor fit in well with other texts featured in Cohnheim's paper. As mentioned earlier, the *Columbia* itself delighted in depicting stereotypical individuals, most commonly abusive wives and absurd husbands or suitors.

Many of the *Columbia*'s other English sources are harder to identify. For instance, the first issue featured a story titled "Ranny's Adventure. A Picture from American Life," the fifth one the "Experience of a Secret Police Officer in Alexandria. A Free Translation from English for the 'Columbia,'" and a May 1866 issue contained the story of a provincial actress, "Coralie Walton, (A Story Taken from Real Life.) Translated from English by A. v. Winterfeld," which was based on a chapter from George Vandenhoff's *Leaves from an Actor's Notebook* (1860).³⁰

The literary component of the *Columbia*, however, was not only made up of American texts translated into German. There were also translations of texts originally published in French, such as the anti-Catholic account "Der Verfluchte" (originally "Le Maudit," or "The Accursed One," 1864) by the French abbot Jean Hyppolyte Michon. The majority of the literary contributions, though, were in German. Cohnheim did, after all, want to cater to his readers' need for keeping alive their emotional and cultural ties to Germany. Novellas and novels that had been popular successes in Germany constituted the largest

source of literary material for Cohnheim's newspaper. Adolf Zeising's novel *Hausse und Baisse* (1863–64), for instance, was one of the first longer works to be reprinted in the *Columbia*, beginning with the fourth issue.³¹ The novel follows the life of a young German lawyer, who is torn between his love for the daughter of a rich, conservative nobleman and his idealistic dreams of standing up to the reactionary government and bringing liberty and justice to the German people. Mirroring the author's own life, the protagonist's career and financial prospects are ruined when he chooses to stay true to his principles rather than conform to the government's demands. The sentimental plot and republican undertones of Zeising's novel made this piece an excellent choice for Cohnheim's paper, ensuring the interest and approval of German readers who, in many cases, had left their country after running afoul of the German government themselves. Many readers would have seen the connection between the values embodied by the hero of this novel and those that were shared by many Americans in the North, such as personal independence, the unity of the nation, and freedom from oppression. The abuse of power and cold-heartedness of the aristocracy and upper classes represented in the German story invited direct comparisons to popular Northern stereotypes of Southern aristocrats and slaveholders. As Bruce Levine notes, these parallels between the ideals of the German revolutionaries from 1848 and of Republican supporters of the Union cause during the American Civil War were keenly felt by many German Americans, especially the Forty-Eighters and the intellectual elite, but also by common people. As Levine writes about the Republican victory of the 1860 elections, "[o]ne veteran of the defeated German democratic struggle now observed with satisfaction, 'The spirit of 1848 is once more in the air.'"³²

Beate Hinrichs believes that the serialized fiction published in nineteenth-century German-American periodicals was generally written by well-known authors from their old home because they surpassed any German-American author in numbers and in quality.³³ Literature by German authors served as a cultural link to the native country and as a way to create a sense of community identity among the German Americans of Washington, D.C. through references to a shared cultural heritage. The importance of literature for a weekly newspaper's financial success in both Germany and America should not be underestimated. Often, the latest installment of a novel or novella, featured on the front page of the paper, would be reason enough for a reader to buy it or subscribe to it, just as in other American periodicals (especially, according to popular opinion among editors at the time, if this reader was a woman). Serialized fiction in newspapers was so popular that, as Hinrichs writes, even papers with a socialist agenda, such as the *Chicagoer Arbeiterzeitung*, were forced to incorporate it if they wanted to sell their issues, which presented

them with the problem that the main body of German novellas and novels available at the time propagated or drew on bourgeois values. "If we had our say in this matter," wrote the editors, "we would omit novels from our daily entirely, but we are forced to observe a general practice of German newspapers, and also to cater to the need of our female readership for products of the imagination."³⁴ The German fiction that Cohnheim selected for his weekly mainly comprised novellas that had recently been printed in periodicals in Germany. Examples include D. Plank's "Die Kugel des Irländers," E. Streben's "Die Nebelwitwe," and F. L. Reimar's (the pseudonym of writer Friedrich Rückert) "Auf der Klippe."³⁵ There were also several short pieces by popular travel writer Eduard Schmidt-Weißenfels, including one, for instance, about prison life in Paris and another about love affairs during the time of the French Revolution.³⁶

As the editor of the *Columbia*, Cohnheim seemed to place more emphasis on art, humor, and literature than on politics, which gives rise to the question of whether it was this strategy that ensured his paper's popular success outside of the local periodical market as well.³⁷ It is interesting to note that the subtitle in the masthead changed from "Entertainment Paper for the City of Washington and the Surrounding Area" to simply "Weekly Entertainment Paper" ("Wöchentliches Unterhaltungsblatt") when Cohnheim opted for the new format and design in January 1864 (Figure 3). It was now a German paper that aspired to having trans-regional appeal, though the redesign still included the feature column that honored its local roots, a section called "Local Matters" ("Lokales"). In spite of its lighthearted tone—or maybe because this tone allowed it to do so in a less immediately confrontational way—the *Columbia* did take up some of the more serious questions of the day, such as Copperhead agitation against Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War, the perceived failures of Andrew Johnson's presidency, or the presidential elections of 1864. Satirical sketches, spoof letters, and articles in the paper often dealt with subject matter taken from contemporary American politics and from military campaigns in the current War. The third issue, for instance, featured a rhymed poem mocking "The Copperhead's Lament," and the fourth issue contained a "Contemporary Version of the Lord's Prayer for Devout Patriots," addressing "Father Abraham, who art in the White House," and encouraging him to "preserve [his] honorable name" against all attacks by political opponents. Another issue, from May 1866, contained a letter by a fictional tailor from Berlin to President Johnson, written in the same Berlin dialect as many of the other humorous sketches in the *Columbia*.³⁸ In this letter, the tailor humbly asks Johnson to refrain from using foul language in political meetings, and from changing his beliefs and allegiances with each new opportunity. In both of these instances, it is the juxtaposition of two incongruous topics or individuals that creates the comical effect. It is



Figure 3. The first issue of the *Columbia* after its change of format, 2 January 1864. The newspaper now featured four larger pages with five columns of text, and a more elaborate masthead. Height: 59 cm (23.2 inches). Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

impossible, however, to attribute any specific political message to the writer or editor.

Aside from these indirect comments on current events and politicians, there were occasional articles or notices that assumed a more serious tone. During the 1864 election campaign of Lincoln and Johnson, for example, several issues featured the image of a bald eagle with the American flag in its talons, with the following message printed beneath it: "For President: Abraham Lincoln of Illinois. For Vice-President: Andrew Johnson of Tennessee." Cohnheim later commented on this deviation from the normal content of his paper, stating:

When we founded the 'Columbia,' we did not plan to give the paper a political coloring, but to provide only entertaining material. Since then, however, times have become so serious that we were not able to reconcile our duty as a loyal citizen with an attitude of silence towards the burning questions of the day.³⁹

During the weeks immediately preceding the election, the second page of the *Columbia* often reprinted political articles from other German newspapers, such as Karl Heinzen's "Pionier." When, in April 1865, Abraham Lincoln was assassinated, Cohnheim removed all humorous material from his paper for two weeks, explaining that he thought it out of place to joke or write about trivial matters when such a great statesman had died. For a few weeks afterwards, all four pages of the *Columbia* were framed by a thick black border. These consecutive issues still presented the latest installment of a serialized work of fiction, and the second page the usual anecdotes and human-interest stories. On the third page, however, where the humorous pieces usually appeared, readers only found articles related to the late president's death, in which Abraham Lincoln was portrayed as a true man of the people, a fellow citizen to all Washingtonians, German-American or otherwise:

It is only slowly that one can accustom oneself to the thought that he, who interacted with the people directly on a daily basis, who had a friendly word for everyone who approached him, who shared our burdens and our amusements, who thought himself safe in the midst of his fellow citizens, should no longer be. Gradually, though, our consciousness recognizes that the inevitable must be accepted, and that the only thing left to do now is to pay to the departed the highest respects that can be paid to a mortal man.⁴⁰

It is in these issues that the political leanings of the editor become especially apparent. Though his paper was never officially affiliated with



Figure 4. One of the rare instances in which the *Columbia* commented directly on major developments of the Civil War. The text below the illustration reads: "Great Victory. Just now, official news has reached us here that the largest part of Lee's army with Ewell, Kershaw, Custis Lee, Button and other generals has been captured, and that Grant now expects that Lee will be forced to surrender with his entire army." (8 April 1865). Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

any party, Cohnheim was a staunch Republican. There were a few other exceptions to Cohnheim's general rule of avoiding direct political commentary, such as a few celebratory notes on great military victories for the Union (see Figure 4), but even then, fictional and humorous pieces predominated. By contrast, Werner Koch seemed to have been much more aware of the representational role his newspaper played in giving the Germans of the American capital a public voice. Hazel Dicken-Garcia has identified this concern with the responsibility of the editor towards the readership he is representing as one of the issues preoccupying American press criticism between 1850 and 1889.⁴¹ This concern becomes obvious when we examine his position in a controversy with his predecessor Alfred Schücking, former editor of the weekly *Washingtoner Anzeiger* (1858–1859), whose list of subscribers Koch inherited when Schücking had to cease publication of his newspaper because of other obligations. This controversy began with the publication of an unassuming editorial notice, simply titled "A Correction," in the *Washingtoner Intelligenzblatt*, which aimed to

[C]orrect the facts contained in a paragraph about the 'Homestead Bill,' featured in the thirteenth issue of the 'Washingtoner Anzeiger,' and to point out that the local German population is not only far from sharing the view and attitude expressed in this paragraph, but rather responds to it in the opposite way, with the most ardent indignation.⁴²

Schücking had called the Homestead Bill "the dishonorable hell machine of the Republicans and the entire opposition, devised in order

to explode the President [James Buchanan] and the Democratic Party,” while Koch saw it as one of the few legislative measures not created by demagogues but arising out of the will of the people itself.⁴³ According to Koch, there was no political measure “better understood, more urgently wished for, and more highly regarded by the German readership than the ‘Homestead Bill,’” whereas Schücking had claimed that the majority of the Germans were prevented from appreciating the full significance of the legislative measure by their naïve idealism. Koch, thus, charged Schücking with misrepresenting the beliefs of Washington’s German community by substituting a minority view entertained by the editor himself for the predominant one. Referring to the editors of other German newspapers that exchanged articles with the *Intelligenzblatt*, Koch maintains that it is

[O]ur right and our duty to ensure that the opinions of the readers among whom we live and for whom we write shall not be represented incorrectly to outsiders. For we consider a newspaper not merely a business, purely a speculation, but impose certain moral responsibilities towards its readership on it, which should never be neglected or violated. [...] No newspaper writer has the right to write what he wants and how he wants, with his readers paying the price for it, but has to take public opinion into consideration.⁴⁴

The comment implying that Schücking had financial interests rather than the ideal of editorial integrity in mind was a jab aimed at his public reputation and credibility among his readers. It provided Koch with a negative foil against which he could construct his own public image as the editor of a new local newspaper. Koch had explicitly made it a goal of the *Intelligenzblatt* to serve Washington’s Germans “by elevating them, in the eyes of the natives, to that position of respect and recognition that they can rightfully expect as a nation and as individuals,” and to address important political events and debates both abroad and in the United States.⁴⁵ With these goals in mind, he could not help but be aware of the consequences and responsibilities entailed in the journalistic (mis)representation of the specific ethnic community he served.⁴⁶ Max Cohnheim, however, avoided these pitfalls by printing satirical sketches, humorous articles, and works of fiction that had the potential to appeal to the interests of any reader familiar with current political debates and aspects of the German-American experience. Satire and humor based on political and social criticism are inherently political themselves, but they allow for a much more popular delivery of arguments than traditional news reporting or political lecturing. It is easier to express inconvenient truths if they are channeled through illiterate, pompous, or otherwise absurd characters. It is also, however, much easier to dismiss them. If an argument

in favor of women's suffrage is made, for instance, by the uneducated and ridiculous Eulalia Schnoddrig, another one of the fictional characters that made regular appearances in the columns of the *Columbia*, readers may either choose to find wisdom in the words of a fool, or to dismiss it as the deluded position of an unsympathetic character.⁴⁷ Or, perhaps, they may simply laugh because they know somebody like Mrs. Schnoddrig from their own lives. The ambiguity of the political positions behind such humorous writing served Max Cohnheim well, even though, as we will see, he did not ultimately escape accusations of having insulted the President. But the witty, absurd, and comical characters that populated the pages of the *Columbia* also engaged his readers in the current political debates of the time, while ostensibly merely entertaining them.

It does seem quite startling that a newspaper founded during the Civil War should avoid explicit mention or discussion of military matters other than in humorous form, especially since life in the capital was transformed by the War. The *Columbia* did not even print lists of fallen soldiers, German or American. Perhaps this silence on the subject can be attributed to the fact that there was already a German weekly called *Militärgazette* "for German-Americans in [the] Union Army stationed in or near Washington," founded in 1862 and edited by Louis Schade, a German-born journalist and lawyer.⁴⁸ Also, the English language dailies of the area, such as the *Daily National Intelligencer* and the *Daily Morning Chronicle*, provided the latest and most relevant coverage of the War, rendering it unnecessary for the *Columbia* to exert great effort in this regard. As mentioned earlier, given the large number of Germans in Washington who were employed by the American government or operated their own business, it seems likely that at least the local readers of the *Columbia* would have been fluent enough in English to access this information through these and other English language newspapers.

Although the *Columbia* avoided direct engagement with American politics, or so at least Cohnheim claimed in the introductory editorial, it could not avoid controversy completely. In March 1866, after two and a half years of popular success, an event occurred that proved that the editor had made some enemies, and that the words he published in his so-called "entertainment paper" were taken quite seriously by some of his readers. Cohnheim, a federal employee at the Treasury Department, was accused of publicly insulting President Andrew Johnson and posting radical opinions against him in his newspaper. What made the situation even harder to bear for the editor, however, was the fact that the informant had been a German. Cohnheim's sense of betrayal was so great that he decided to breach the boundaries between the private and the professional and to address the issue in an editorial article. Thus, on March 3, following the usual two pages of literary installments and human-interest stories, such as

the latest installment of Edmund Hoefler's novella "Der Freihof" on page one, and articles on "An Execution at Sea" and "Games of Makololo Children" on page two, readers were presented with an editorial addressed to them. In this address, after summarizing his position on political writing in his newspaper, Cohnheim states the following:

We have occasionally dealt with political questions, but only in the humorous part of our paper, without ever entertaining the thought that our harmless jokes could provoke the anger of people who, at the time that we were defending the candidate Johnson, were busy attacking him in a way that brought to mind the dictionary of swearwords of the Berliner fishwives.

The unbelievable, however, has happened. Like a bolt from the blue we received the news that a German (!!) had denounced us to the Treasury Department, claiming that we had insulted the President Andrew Johnson, whom we had helped to elect.⁴⁹

This issue was then taken up in two more editorials. On March 31, 1866, Cohnheim publicly revealed the name of the person who had apparently informed on him. It was none other than Louis Schade, one-time editor of several German newspapers in Washington and lawyer, (in)famous for his unsuccessful defense of the Swiss-born Captain Henry Wirz, who was tried and later executed for war crimes against Union soldiers in the Andersonville prisoner of war camp. In Washington, D.C., Schade worked first for the Smithsonian Institution and later for the Census Bureau and State Department.⁵⁰ His name was well-known, even outside of the capital city. Schade had also tried his hand at starting a German newspaper in Washington, D.C., but had met with no lasting success.⁵¹ No statements by Schade himself are reprinted in the *Columbia*, but by bringing his name into what was turning into a scandal that even attracted the interest of German-American communities in New York, who had heard of it through the Washington correspondents of the larger newspapers, Cohnheim involved him in a public battle of words. The notoriety of the Wirz trial certainly added to the interest that readers from outside of the German Washington community had in the argument between Cohnheim and Schade, but it was also a good example of how a local issue could attain trans-regional significance. Local tensions and strife between Washington's Germans often reflected larger issues that German-American communities in other places had to grapple with as well, such as whether to take part in partisan American politics or to assume an outsider's position. Such conflicts may have been acted out on the local stage and discussed in a weekly Washington paper such as the *Columbia*, but, in their national implications, they were of interest to Germans outside of Washington as well.

One of the points of contention in this debate with Schade was the question of whether Cohnheim had been fired from his government position or had resigned willingly, and the editor of the *Columbia* firmly maintained that he had chosen to leave after being warned that the President and the auditors would find some excuse for firing him anyway. In the third and last editorial on the issue, appropriately titled "My Last Word" ("Mein letztes Wort," April 7), Cohnheim responded to a personal statement that Schade had apparently published, to inform the public of his position, though it is not clear where this statement appeared. This document contained a long list of insults against the *Columbia* and its editor, not the least of which referred to the publication of "childish nonsense that is supposed to be funny." Cohnheim also points out that the New Yorker *Abend-Zeitung*, a large German daily, not only commented on the controversy, but criticized Schade for making unprofessional arguments. Cohnheim, however, did not shy away from jabs at his opponent either, comparing Schade's behavior in the debate to his failure as a defense attorney in the Wirz case, thereby implying that he lacked essential rhetorical and intellectual skill. Furthermore, in retaliation for insulting the *Columbia*, Cohnheim calls Schade a "literary amateur, who has already ruined so many papers." Judging from this third editorial statement, Schade must have accused the *Columbia* of insulting or attacking the German organizations of the "Schützenverein" and the "Deutsche Gesellschaft."⁵² Considering the great importance of these associations for German-American community life in the nineteenth century, it would inevitably cast a negative light on Cohnheim if readers really believed that he had turned against them.

What was at stake in this reciprocal slander campaign was not only Max Cohnheim's job, but also the internal cohesion of the local Germans as an ethnic group. The editorials in the *Columbia* framed the controversy in terms that implied a lack of loyalty towards the German-American community on the part of Schade, specifically towards fellow Germans in Washington, and even a rejection of his cultural heritage. That this was a rather low blow based on a double standard becomes apparent when we consider that support of other American politicians, most notably Abraham Lincoln, was never framed as an act of disloyalty by the *Columbia*, and was in fact often encouraged. Cohnheim, however, a supporter of radical Republicanism, resented Schade's allegiance to the Johnson administration, which had been rapidly losing support from the Republicans throughout 1866 because of President Johnson's persistent unwillingness to extend civil rights to former slaves. Thus, he employed language intended to mobilize the indignation of his German-American readership in these editorials, turning a conflict between supporters of different American parties into a matter of loyalty towards one's ethnic background. From Cohnheim's perspective, Schade had also interfered

with the freedom of the press. Given the ideological background that many of the Forty-Eighters (including both Schade and Cohnheim) brought with them to the United States, the values of freedom of thought and speech, including freedom of the press, ranked highly in the opinions of many German-Americans in the 1850s and 1860s. Thus, any indication that somebody might have actively gone against these values and principles was a grave accusation.

It seems almost ironical that Werner Koch, who openly discussed and judged political decisions of the day, should have faced less severe consequences than the humorist Cohnheim. True, Koch did make a few enemies, and both the *Intelligenzblatt* and the *Tägliche Metropole* printed some personal attacks and justifications on behalf of the editor. But in the case of the *Metropole*, for instance, Koch merely responded to the nay-sayings of certain “whiners” and “idle babblers,” who had apparently been badmouthing the publishers of the new German daily behind their backs.⁵³ Like Cohnheim, he interpreted and presented this as an act of disloyalty within the German community, blaming it on what he identified as a negative national trait, namely the tendency to gossip, criticize, and condemn “anything great or beautiful” to failure even before it was fully realized.⁵⁴ He never, though, experienced any vicious personal attacks such as the one perpetrated on Cohnheim’s name during his editorship.

Little is known about how English-speaking American readers reacted to a paper like the *Columbia*. There was certainly no lack of discussion, in mid-nineteenth-century American periodicals, about the German press in America and the role it did or should play in politics and public discourse.⁵⁵ Americans were aware of the power many large German newspapers had over the opinions of their readers, and some feared a potential abuse of this power. Periodicals like the *Christian Examiner* and the *North American Review*, though not explicitly nativist, voiced opinions that saw German-American culture—as represented by the press—as a possible threat to values identified as “American,” such as industry, strength of moral character, or temperance. Writing in 1851, a contributor to the *Christian Examiner* named S. Osgood, claims that, on the one hand, “The Germans, indeed, are superior to the Americans in a love of the beautiful arts that give society so much of its ornament.” On the other hand, however, “nothing is more conspicuous in their newspapers than the habit of ridiculing the money-getting habits of Americans,” who, however, “will, in the long run, have the best of the joke.”⁵⁶ To Americans who experienced misgivings about German interference in national politics, and who agreed with the *New York Times*’ comment that certain radical groups agitating against temperance movements were “trespassing too far on the forbearance and the courtesy of our citizens,” Cohnheim’s “entertainment” paper might have seemed less threatening than those German papers advocating direct political action.⁵⁷ In emphasizing art,

literature, and humor, the *Columbia* might have also appealed to those American contemporaries who saw the Germans' love of music and fine arts, and their sociability, as positive characteristics that Americans would do well to take more seriously. According to popular contemporary stereotypes of the two cultures, Germans had much to learn from Americans about moral integrity, while Americans, especially the somber and industrious 'Yankee,' could benefit from German geniality and appreciation of art and music. This view of intercultural relations emphasized compatibility, but also rendered the Germans less threatening to social and political order by focusing only on their cultural heritage as a primary identity marker.⁵⁸

American readers unfamiliar with the subversive wit of many popular nineteenth-century German satirical publications such as the *Kladderadatsch*—which often faced the very real threat of censorship for ridiculing those in office—may have seen nothing more in the weekly than the "Unterhaltungsblatt" Cohnheim claimed to be publishing. But to those who possessed the political and cultural literacy to understand the points made in the sketches, spoof proceedings, mock encyclopedia entries, and satirical poems, this German paper from Washington presented political commentary in a refreshingly unconventional and clever way. Satire and humor as veiled political commentary enabled the *Columbia* to entertain its readers while engaging with current events and issues from both American and European politics. By adopting journalistic models from a popular German satirical magazine and adapting the content to the interests of Germans living in America, Cohnheim's paper succeeded in appealing to experiences and a cultural heritage shared not only by the Washington Germans but by German-speaking Americans beyond the local community.

NOTES

I wish to thank Susan Belasco and Kenneth M. Price for offering helpful criticism and valuable comments on drafts of this article, as well as the anonymous reviewers for their suggestions.

¹ The only issues of the *Columbia* currently available are from 1863–1866, stored on microfilm at the Library of Congress. Cohnheim was the editor of the newspaper from 1863–1867, but the *Columbia* continued to be published until 1873, when Werner Koch merged the weekly paper with Philip L. Schriftgiesser's *Täglicher Washingtoner Anzeiger* to form the new *Washingtoner Journal* (1873–2002).

² „Schon wieder eine neue Zeitung! Wird auch lange existiren!“ Sagt der Eine; „was,“ sagt der Andere, „der hat den Muth, hier in Washington City ein neues ‚Paper zu starten,? wo schon so viele unglückliche Versuche gemacht worden sind!“—*Never mind!* Beruhigen Sie sich, meine Herren! Halten Sie unser Blatt, oder halten Sie es nicht. Ebenso wenig, wie es Ihnen gelingen wird, den Lauf der Erde aufzuhalten, werden Sie uns abhalten, „trotz alledem und alledem,“ wie Freiligrath sagt, unsere „Columbia“ in die Welt zu schicken“ (*Washingtoner Plaudereien*, *Columbia*, October 17, 1863).

All translations from German to English are my own. I have aimed to stay as close as possible to the original except in cases where a literal translation would have been too awkward and un-idiomatic.

³ "An unsere Leser," *Washingtoner Intelligenzblatt*, March 17, 1860.

⁴ Cf. Friedrich Schmidt's *National-Demokrat*, which John Greenleaf Whittier called an "elegant sheet" (*National Era*, July 28, 1853), Adolf Schücking's *Washingtoner Anzeiger* (1858–1859) or Julius Ende's *Washington Wochenblatt* (1856–1858).

⁵ Klaus Wust, "German Immigrants and Their Newspapers in the District of Columbia," *Report (Society of the History of the Germans in Maryland)* 30 (1959): 49. As Wust points out, "Cohnheim began with 200 subscribers, four months later he reported 800 and by 1865 this number had doubled. German newspapers all over the country reprinted some of his editorials, many of which were written with vinegar rather than ink. He attacked everything that seemed conventional to him."

⁶ "Y. Yankee, nennt man, wenn ein Deutscher sich in Amerika seines Vaterlandes schämt." From: "Supplement zu dem Brockhaus'schen Conversations-Lexikon," *Columbia*, August 6, 1864. The poem "Gute Nacht" is signed "W.B." and appeared in the *Columbia* on July 30, 1864. It was probably occasioned by the low value of US money in 1864 due to inflation during the Civil War.

⁷ See, for example, Maria Wagner, "The Representation of America in German Newspapers Before and During the Civil War," in *America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred-Year History*, ed. Frank Trommler and Joseph McVeigh (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 321–30.

⁸ Carl Abbott, "Dimensions of Regional Change in Washington, D.C.," *The American Historical Report* 95 (1990): 1375. Bruce Levine estimates that "some 200,000 (or roughly one-tenth) of those who served in the Union army during the war were German-born, and 36,000 of these soldiers served in all-German units under German commanders" (*The Spirit of 1848: German Immigrants, Labor Conflict, and the Coming of the Civil War* [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992], 256).

⁹ The Latin phrase "de mortui nihil nise bene" is commonly understood to mean "Of the dead, speak no evil." Max Cohnheim implies that he thinks it wrong to defame or criticize the editors and newspapers that have come and gone before the launch of the *Columbia*. The quote is from "Washingtoner Plaudereien."

¹⁰ The original *Kladderadatsch* (1848–1944) was a weekly satirical journal published in Berlin that enjoyed great popular success. The first issue appeared on May 7, 1848, when censorship was lifted, and the 4000 copies printed that day sold out immediately. *Kladderadatsch* has been digitized by the University of Heidelberg and is now available at <http://www.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/helios/digi/kladderadatsch.html> (last accessed August 2008). The Sunday edition of the *New-Yorker Abend-Zeitung* (1855–1874) was called *Atlantische Blätter Und New Yorker Kladderadatsch* (1850–1879). For an instance in which the *Columbia* borrowed a humorous piece of writing from the *Kladderadatsch*, see the satirical poem "Die feindlichen Brüder," May 5, 1866.

¹¹ See, for example, the dialogue between Schulze and Müller in the issue from April 14, 1866, which mentions Generals Grant and McClellan, as well as Jefferson Davis.

¹² On Berlin's tradition of cabaret, wit, and political humor, see, for example, Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 30–35.

¹³ This distinction is drawn by Marcus Wood in *Radical Satire and Print Culture 1790–1822* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994) and usefully applied to a discussion of *Punch* magazine by Richard Noakes in "Punch and Comic Journalism in Mid-Victorian Britain," in *Science in the Nineteenth-Century Periodical*, ed. Geoffrey Cantor, Gowan Dawson, Graeme Gooday, Richard Noakes, Sally Shuttleworth, and Jonathan R Topham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 91–122. Klaus Schulz uses similar characterizations of satire and humor in *Kladderadatsch: Ein bürgerliches Witzblatt von der Märzrevolution bis zum Nationalsozialismus 1848–1944* (Bochum: Studienverlag Dr. N. Brockmeyer, 1975).

¹⁴ The name "Forty-Eighters," coined in reference to the year of 1848, the year of the failed German Revolution, refers to a set of German immigrants who, facing imprisonment and other repercussions for their participation in the Revolution, fled their home country and immigrated to America, Australia, and several Latin American countries. Many of these immigrants were wealthy and well-educated, characteristics that set them apart from the bulk of other German immigrants to America in the nineteenth century, who came from peasant or working-class backgrounds. Most of the Forty-Eighters continued their involvement in politics in their new home country, affiliating themselves with a political party, assuming a public voice through journalistic activity, or even fighting for the Union in the Civil War.

Max Cohnheim co-authored the pamphlet "Die konstitutionellen Zehn Gebote: den Männern aus dem Volke gewidmet" ("The Constitutional Ten Commandments: Dedicated to the Men of the People") with Adolph Reich and Friedrich Schiller, and was co-editor of the apparently short-lived *Der Satyr: Blatt für offene Meinung und freies Wort* ("The Satyr: Paper for Open Expression of Opinions and Free Speech"), both published in Berlin by A. Bertz in 1848.

¹⁵ Carl Wittke, *Refugees of Revolution: The German Forty-Eighters in America* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1952), 87–88, 224, 288. As Wittke writes, "Most of [Max Cohnheim's] plays were undistinguished, but his propaganda play, *Fürsten zum Land hinaus, oder die Schul'ist aus*, was especially interesting because several scenes were laid in the Shakespeare Hotel, rendezvous of refugees, and portrayed the final triumph of republicanism in Germany." During the Civil War, Cohnheim was the first lieutenant of company F of the 41st New York Infantry Regiment, the so-called "De Kalb Regiment," which was composed entirely of German Americans. The exact dates of Cohnheim's service are not known, but are approximately 1861–1862/63. Between 1861 and 1862, the 41st New York Infantry Regiment was primarily engaged with the defense of Washington, D.C.

¹⁶ For an example of one of these advertisements, see *Columbia*, February 20, 1865.

¹⁷ "Washingtoner Plaudereien". Contrast with this the following comment by the editor of the *Intelligenzblatt* under the title of "No Politics, Please": "[...] Nothing, to be sure, could be more incorrect than the application of this saying to the tone and direction of a newspaper; for how such a paper, if it did not have a purely literary, abstractly scientific or maybe religious tendency, should be able to make itself useful without considering that which is understood as 'politics,' is beyond us" ("Nur keine Politik," *Washingtoner Intelligenzblatt*, April 23, 1859).

¹⁸ Wust, "German Immigrants and Their Newspapers," 50.

¹⁹ Mona E. Dingle, "Gemeinschaft und Gemütlichkeit: German-American Community and Culture, 1850–1920," in *Washington Odyssey: A Multicultural History of the Nation's Capital*, ed. Francine Curro Cary (Washington: Smithsonian, 1996), 113.

²⁰ Francine Curro Cary, "Introduction," in *Washington Odyssey*, xvi.

²¹ The exact nature and dates of his employment are not known.

²² Dingle, "Gemeinschaft und Gemütlichkeit," 113.

²³ Hasia R. Diner and Steven J. Diner, "Washington's Jewish Community: Separate But Not Apart," in *Washington Odyssey*, 135–36.

²⁴ "Charly, der kleine Amerikaner oder: die Kunst, für 5 Cents per Woche englisch zu lernen," *Columbia*, October 24, 1863.

²⁵ "Die Brüder—Eine Hospitalgeschichte aus dem gegenwärtigen Kriege. Frei nach dem Englischen für die 'Columbia,'" *Columbia*, November 14, 1863. The translation of "The Brothers" into German was probably done without the knowledge and permission of the author and has not been previously noted in scholarly work on Louisa May Alcott.

²⁶ Alcott republished "The Brothers" six years later as "My Contraband, or, The Brothers," in *Hospital Sketches and Camp and Fireside Stories* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1869). For excellent critical studies of the short story see Sarah Elbert, *Louisa May Alcott on Race, Sex, and Slavery* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997), 69–86, and Betsy Klimasmith, "Slave, Master, Mistress, Slave: Genre and Interracial Desire in Louisa May Alcott's Fiction," *American Transcendental Quarterly* 11 (1997): 115–35. I

am indebted to Professor Daniel Shealy for these recommendations and for his commentary on the discovery of the translation.

²⁷ For a careful evaluation of German-American voting behavior that does not view German voters as a homogeneous group but takes into account class differences among them, see Levine, 248–53.

²⁸ William Beschke, "Defence of the Germans," *National Era*, January 17, 1856. Beschke makes this observation in the context of a criticism Horace Greeley had apparently voiced about the *Turn-Zeitung*, the official national newspaper of all German gymnast societies in America. Because the *Turn-Zeitung* represented German-American Turner in the North as well as in the South, it had to be careful about publishing abolitionist statements, which could compromise the personal safety of Southern gymnasts.

²⁹ "Ein Kapitel über Doktoren," *Columbia*, December 26, 1863.

³⁰ "Ranny's Abenteuer. Amerikanisches Lebensbild," *Columbia*, October 17, 1863; "Erlebnis eines Geheim-Polizisten in Alexandria," *Columbia*, November 14, 1863; "Coralie Walton (Eine Geschichte aus dem wirklichen Leben.)," *Columbia*, May 19, 1866. The latter story continues throughout the following issues, up to the last available issue, dated June 2, 1866.

³¹ Adolph Zeising (1810–1876) was a German scientist, scholar and writer, whose career and financial security were jeopardized by his support of republican principles during the German Revolution of 1848. In the 1840s, he published political poems that were highly critical of Germany's current government, and participated in a number of subversive activities that earned him the distrust of many conservative politicians. After the failure of the Revolution, Zeising had to resign from his position as a secondary-school teacher, eventually relocating to Munich, where he became part of the literary circle known as the "Crocodiles" (die "Krokodile"). His financial situation would be precarious until his death in 1876. Zeising is probably most famous for his work on the pseudo-mathematical concept of the golden number (*Der Goldene Schnitt*, 1854). See Bernd G. Ulbrich, "Dokumente und Anmerkungen zur Lebensgeschichte von Adolf Zeising," *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Anhaltische Landeskunde* 14 (2005): 148–67. For the most recent book-length study of the author's life and work, see Roger Herz-Fischler, *Adolph Zeising, 1810–1876: The Life and Work of a German Intellectual* (Ottawa: Mzinhi-gan Publishers, 2004).

³² Bruce Levine, "Immigrants, Class, and Politics: German-American Working People and the Fight Against Slavery," in *The German Forty-Eighters in the United States*, ed. Charlotte L. Brancaforte (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), 134–35.

³³ "[...] blieben andererseits auch die deutschamerikanischen Schriftsteller an Zahl und Qualität hinter ihren deutschen Kollegen weit zurück." Beate Hinrichs, *Deutschamerikanische Presse zwischen Tradition und Anpassung: Die Illinois Staatszeitung und Chicagoer Arbeiterzeitung 1879–1890* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1989), 141.

³⁴ "Wenn es uns nachginge, würden wir Romane gänzlich aus dem Tageblatt weglassen; aber wir sind gezwungen, einem allgemeinen Gebrauch deutscher Zeitungen Rechnung zu tragen und auch das Bedürfnis der Frauenwelt nach Produktionen der Phantasie zu befriedigen" (*Chicagoer Arbeiterzeitung*, 5 May 1890, quoted in Hinrichs, 137).

³⁵ "Die Kugel des Irländers" appeared during the third year of the *Columbia's* publication, in issues 1–6, "Die Nebelwitwe" in issues 6–15, and "Auf der Klippe" in issues 27–31. The novellas by Plank and Streben were published in the third volume of *Hausblätter* (1865), a quarterly magazine published in Stuttgart, Germany, that featured short fiction and was edited by E. Hoefer and F. Hackländer. Reimar's story appeared in the fourth volume of the same year.

³⁶ "Herzensgeschichten unter der Revolution," *Columbia*, April 7, 1866.

³⁷ See, for example, his editorial address "Washingtoner Plaudereien."

³⁸ "Vierter Schreibebrief des Schneidermeisters Willem Schultze, an den Präsidenten Johnson," *Columbia*, May 5, 1866.

³⁹ "Als wir die 'Columbia' gründeten, beabsichtigten wir nicht, derselbigen eine politische Färbung zu geben, sondern nur Unterhaltungsstoff zu liefern. Seitdem aber

nahm die Zeit einen so ernsten Charakter an, daß wir es mit der Pflicht eines loyalen Bürgers nicht vereinbaren konnten, bezüglich der brennenden Fragen des Tages eine stumme Rolle zu spielen." ("An unsere Leser," *Columbia*, March 3, 1866.)

⁴⁰ "Langsam nur gewöhnt man sich an den Gedanken, daß der nicht mehr sei, der täglich unmittelbar mit dem Volke verkehrt hatte, der ein freundliches Wort für Jeden gehabt, der sich ihm genähert, der unsere Plagen, unsere Vergnügungen getheilt, der sich sicher geglaubt im Schoße seiner Mitbürger, allmählich aber reift das Bewußtsein, daß das Unvermeidliche getragen werden müsse und daß es jetzt nur noch gelte dem Dahingegangenen die höchsten Ehrenbezeugungen zu erzeigen, die einem Sterblichen am Grabe erwiesen werden können" ("Die besondere Theilnahme der deutschen Bürger von Washington, Alexandria und Georgetown," *Columbia*, April 22, 1865).

⁴¹ See: Hazel Dicken-Garcia, *Journalistic Standards in Nineteenth-Century America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 206–208.

⁴² "Wir erachten als unsere Pflicht zur Kenntnisnahme derjenigen Redaktionen, mit denen wir in Wechsel stehen, die thatsächliche Berichtigung über einen in No. 13 des „Washingtoner Anzeigers“ enthaltenen Paragraphen über die „Heimstätte Bill“ zu bringen, daß die in demselben ausgedrückte Ansicht und Gesinnung von der hiesigen deutschen Bevölkerung nicht allein nicht getheilt wurde, sondern im Gegentheil die lebhafteste Indignation hervorgerufen hat. [...] Zur Ehre der Deutschen Washingtons sei es gesagt, daß sie frei sind von jeglicher Servilität gegen die herrschende Gewalt" ("Eine Berichtigung," *Washingtoner Intelligenzblatt*, April 9, 1859).

⁴³ The Homestead Bill, designed to encourage settlement of the western territories, proposed that the government grant 160 acres of public land to each settler for a nominal fee. In 1859, President Buchanan, who generally inclined towards Southern views on slavery and other burning issues of the time, vetoed an earlier version of the bill, which was especially popular with northern politicians. The bill was eventually passed by Congress in 1862.

⁴⁴ "[...] unser Recht oder unsere Pflicht, darauf zu achten, daß die Gesinnungen desjenigen Publikums unter dem wir leben und für das wir schreiben nach außen hin nicht in einer unrichtigen Weise ausgedrückt werden. Wir betrachten nämlich eine Zeitung nicht bloß als ein Geschäft, als eine pure Spekulation, sondern legen ihr gewisse moralische Verpflichtungen ihrem Publikum gegenüber auf, die sie niemals außer acht lassen oder verletzen sollte. [...] Kein Zeitungsschreiber hat das Recht auf Kosten des ihn umgebenden Publikums was er will, und wie er es will zu schreiben, sondern hat der öffentlichen Meinung Rechnung zu tragen" (*Washingtoner Intelligenzblatt*, April 9, 1859).

⁴⁵ "Unser Standpunkt," *Washingtoner Intelligenzblatt*, April 2, 1859.

⁴⁶ As Hazel Dicken-Garcia describes, Lambert Wilmer, the author of *Our Press Gang* (1860), had similar worries, fearing that the American press "made the 'intellectual character of the American people much less respectable' than it merited 'in the eyes of other nations.'" (168).

⁴⁷ "Janz erjebenste Petition der Frau Eulalia Schnoddrig um't alljemeene Stimmrecht," *Columbia*, February 10, 1866.

⁴⁸ Karl John Richard Arndt and May E. Olson, *German-American Newspapers and Periodicals, 1732–1955; History and Bibliography* (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1965), 15. Arndt and Olson only give 1862 as the publication date and state that there is "no copy found."

⁴⁹ "An unsere Leser," *Columbia*, March 3, 1866. "Nur in dem humoristischen Theile unseres Blattes beschäftigten wir uns hie und da mit den politischen Fragen, ohne daran zu denken, daß unsere harmlosen Witze den Zorn von Leuten erregen könnten, welche zur Zeit als wir den Candidaten Johnson vertheidigten, denselben in einer Weise angriffen, die uns an das Schimpfwörterbuch der Berliner Fischweiber erinnerten. Das Unglaubliche aber ist geschehen. Wie ein Blitz aus heiterem Himmel traf uns vor einigen Tagen die Nachricht, daß ein Deutscher (!!) uns im Schatzamte denuncirt habe, Se. Majestät, den Präsidenten Andrew Johnson, denselben Johnson, welchen wir erwählen halfen, beleidigt zu haben."

⁵⁰ A. E. Zucker, "Biographical Dictionary of the Forty-Eighters," in *The Forty-Eighters: Political Refugees of the German Revolution of 1848*, ed. A. E. Zucker (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), 336. As Zucker points out, "A real Forty-Eighter deed on the part of Schade was in 1865 his undertaking the defense of Captain Wirz, the superintendent of Andersonville Prison where many Union soldiers had suffered terribly; the manner in which Wirz was tried in the midst of aroused public opinion is now considered not to have been in conformity with justice, but Schade did all in his power to secure a fair trial for the hated man."

⁵¹ He eventually did achieve journalistic success as the editor of the *Washington Sentinel*, an English language newspaper.

⁵² When the political refugees of the German Revolution immigrated to the United States, they soon organized gymnast ("Turner"), marksmanship ("Schützen"), and other societies in their new home as a means of establishing a German communal identity and of preserving part of their cultural background. For a very insightful analysis of the cultural significance of such associations, see Kathleen Neils Conzen, "Ethnicity as Festive Culture: Nineteenth-Century German America on Parade," in *The Invention of Ethnicity*, ed. Werner Sollors (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 44–76.

⁵³ *Tägliche Metropole* 12, October 15, 1860.

⁵⁴ *Tägliche Metropole* 12, October 15, 1860.

⁵⁵ For example, see "Character of the German American Press," *New York Times*, January 11, 1859; "Politics of the German-American Press" in the *National Era*, February 28, 1856.

⁵⁶ S. Osgood, "The German in America," *Christian Examiner and Religious Miscellany*, November, 1851. "S. Osgood" probably refers to the Unitarian minister and editor Samuel Osgood (1812–1880), who also translated several religious books from the German and contributed articles to well-known American magazines such as *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* and the *North American Review*.

⁵⁷ "Character of the German American Press."

⁵⁸ See also J. J. Lalor, "The Germans in the West," *Atlantic Monthly* 32 (1873): 459–70. Lalor predicts, for instance, that "The German will affect the American community in two ways: by his blood and by his ideas. The resultant will be neither 'Yankee' nor German; it will be American. The German character—there are enough of the nation among us to do it—will complement the American, and of all characters it is in some respects the one most able to do it. The American is too much taken up with the pursuit of gain: an infusion of German blood will have the effect of making him less so, but, at the same time perhaps, more saving; less abstemious in the matter of wine and beer, if this could be considered desirable, more so in that of brandy and whiskey; less given to commercial speculation, fonder of music and the drama, of flowers and of nature" (469).