

UNIVERSITY WISCONSIN-EAU CLAIRE

THE SILENT PROFESSOR: THE STORY OF WILHELM
LEHMANN (1802-1882)

OR

NATIONALISM ON THE RUN: THE EXPERIENCE OF GERMAN
IMMIGRANTS' IDENTITY FORMATION

FOR PRESENTATION TO HISTORY 489
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

BY

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ABSTRACT

My research will focus on William Lehmann (1802-1881), a German immigrant from the Prussian territory in present day Westphalia. He immigrated due to political pressure from the government, though arrived in America virtually unknown, continuing his life as a professor. He initially taught in colleges in Pennsylvania and Georgia, after which he made his way to Dodge County in Wisconsin, where his family resided thereafter. His arrival and experiences raise questions on the education systems in America, as well as in Germany, in addition to questions of cultural reception. Though his national recognition is almost non-existent, I would like to attempt to show that his impact on German reception in America is under-appreciated. To help form the discussion on his impact in America, I will use the experiences of Francis Lieber and Charles Follen. Both individuals immigrated during the same period as Lehmann, though upon their arrival, achieved a position in society that is well known still today. All three men, Lehmann, Lieber, and Follen have similar educational backgrounds, having studied at universities in Germany. They were all forced to leave Germany due to political turmoil as a result of the fall of Napoleon. They all three made their way to America, whereupon they became involved in academia. My questions will involve the differences and similarities related to these three individuals in hopes to better understand German immigration and cultural reception of Germans in America. I would also like to look into their stories in hopes of telling a more complete story of the political refugee prior to the revolutions of 1848.

As it is the distinguishing happiness of free governments, that civil order should be the result of choice, and not necessity, and the common wishes of the people become the laws of the land, their prosperity and even existence, very much depends upon suitably forming the minds and morals of their citizens. Where the minds of the people in general are viciously disposed and unprincipled and their conduct disorderly, a free government will be attended with greater confusions, and with evils more horrid than the wild uncultivated state of nature: It can only be happy where the public principles and opinions are properly directed, and their manners regulated.¹

The above quotation was taken from the charter of the University of Georgia, and is relevant for two reasons. The first reason is that the primary subject of this essay, Wilhelm Lehmann, was a professor there for twelve years, after emigrating from Germany to America, in which time he adapted and refined his identity in a unique way. The second reason is that the contents of the quotation stimulate an idea about government responsibility towards the education and culture of its citizens. As the charter begins, it states that the production of a free and suitable government is based on “forming the minds and morals of their citizens”. This idea is to be further expanded upon throughout the essay as the lives of three men, Francis Lieber, Karl Follen and Wilhelm Lehmann, are examined in relation to their identity in Germany and America and the change that occurred due to this immigration. Each man was born and educated in Germany and each man immigrated to America between the years 1820 and 1829. To get a sense as to their reasons for immigrating an

¹*University of Georgia Charter, (1785)*, eds. Richard Hofstadter and Wilson Smith, *American Higher Education: A Documentary History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 150-151.

understanding of not only the confusing sense of identity, but also the political situation after the Napoleonic wars. The idea of the *Kulturnation* will be used to examine how the identities of these three men are unique to this time period and to the generally accepted view of German immigration as a scholarly topic.

To expand on the idea of these men's identities as it relates to the *Kulturnation*, one must first understand what the idea of the *Kulturnation* is. The idea of a *Kulturnation* can be best found in the views of men like Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Johann Christoph Friedrich Schiller and Johann Gottfried Herder. These men are vastly important in the development of German as a literary language and in doing so produced ideas about what being German meant. Politically, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, there was no political entity of "Germany". The land we now know as Germany was a collection of states both large and small that were loosely united under the failing leadership of the Holy Roman Empire. During this time the inability of the Holy Roman Empire to effectively unite the various states resulted in a mixed sense of identity. Because there was no German state, no one living during that time period could claim to be German. The situation was exacerbated further by individual states and their governmental structure. A large state such as Prussia was more effective in cultivating a sense of Prussian identity among its citizens because of its more powerful army and bureaucracy. Smaller less powerful states were unable to fund such cohesive state agencies and therefore lacked such a strong sense of identity bound to a political entity. These varying degrees of

identity were unified only in one aspect, that being a common language. The significance of the language as a basis for culture was a key concept to those men who elaborated on the idea of a *Kulturnation*.

For men like Goethe, Schiller and Herder the political unification could only come about through the immergence of a standard German culture. This culture would unify the people, thus naturally unifying the whole German speaking element in Europe.² These philosophers and writers were insistent that the importance of a literary tradition in Germany was fundamental in its advancement to a political recognizable entity. The *Kulturnation* then, is the thought that to build a unified state, there must first be a strong literary tradition which is formed by intellectual exploration and the educational advancement of the people. Because the idea of a *Kulturnation* was formed during the late eighteenth century, the relevance to the three men seems hard to grasp. All three men were children when the idea of the *Kulturnation* had been assimilated and a new generation of poets and nationalists were forming their own ideas of German nationalism in a Hegelian fashion. The situations were different, but both elicited similar feelings. During the late eighteenth century, nationalism was inspired out of fear of French influence through physical and intellectual invasion. The men who called for the unity believed the only way to repel the French would be to unify Germany both politically and culturally. The men called for this unity after the fall of Napoleon in 1815 were living in a similar political structure, but the terms and possibilities of what could come from unification had changed.

² James Sheehan, *German History: 1770-1866* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 161.

The German political landscape immediately following the fall of Napoleon was the antithesis of what the charter of the University of Georgia recommends for successful and happy citizens. The Congress of Vienna followed after Napoleon's defeat, and the sense of confusion only increased. The two major powers at the Congress were Prussia and Austria, both of which were vying for a controlling interest in the shattered remains of the German speaking countries that lay outside their influence. As the Congress progressed it was clear by many that the path ahead was not one of progress but one of restoration of the earlier absolutist governments. There were some who felt this path was taking a course that was disastrous. The possibility to form something great and unified was present, but the ministers and diplomats at the Congress were ignoring the possibilities. Even the various German soldiers, upon returning from defending "Germany" from the French invasion asked where the Germany they fought for was.³

The most vocal group among those hoping for a more liberal form of government was the students and professors at the German universities. Many professors and students who were outspoken critics of the current status and hoped for liberal outcome demonstrated in large groups, most notably the Wartburg Festival in 1817, and student organizations like the *Burschenschaften*. These groups were calling for unity and were continually ignored as mere protestors by the governments. This changed in March of 1819, when Karl Sand murdered the Prussian state backed dramatist August von Kotzebue. Sand was a

³ Ibid., 405.

member of a fringe student radical group led by Karl Follen, and the murder was meant to exemplify how disagreement with their radical beliefs would be tolerated. The fallout of this action resulted in harsh restrictions on both universities and the press known as the Karlsbad Decrees⁴. These decrees were a severe limitation on the freedoms of the press and the universities. The decrees restricted what could be taught, written, said, and published in the universities, “Governments should ensure that no teacher misused his authority ‘by spreading harmful ideas which would subvert public peace and order and undermine the foundations of the existing states’.”⁵ This resulted in a backlash from both students and professors who comprised a spectrum of ideas about German unity and how it should be achieved.

It is from this amalgamation of reaction and provocation that comprised a unique, but admittedly small number of immigrants to the United States.⁶ These immigrants, as members of the educated middle class, were persecuted so severely their options were either staying in Germany and risk imprisonment, or fleeing to a different country to maintain their freedom and work on the basic tenets of the *Kulturnation*.

During the early nineteenth century, each man came to America to find a better life for themselves. This article will attempt to show that these three men valued the ideas of the *Kulturnation*, which allowed them to find a stronger sense

⁴ Ibid., 407.

⁵ Ibid., 408.

⁶ United States Census Bureau. *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970*. Washington D.C.: United States Census Bureau, 1973.

of identity in the United States. Each man's letters and writings will be looked at for evidence of language that supports this idea. For Lieber and Follen, the evidence is much easier to acquire, as they were prolific writers while in America. For Lehmann, the task is much more difficult. The collection of letters that reveals his life is found in family papers that have been disregarded up until now. The time and place of his existence make his letters essential to this study. The inconsistencies in frequency however, lead to important unanswered questions, which shall be presented later in the paper. The letters written in Germany were also most likely censored by Lehmann to avoid direct governmental harassment, so the information presented is skewed by Lehmann for his own protection. Despite the absence of solid material, there are still vital clues that can lead to understanding who he is and how his identity changed over time.

In addition to attempting to prove their adherence to an idea of a *Kultur* nation, this paper will also serve as a bridge between works already in the field. Many works on nationality and cultural identity have thus far dealt with primarily an identity while in Germany or America. The study of how the identity changes from Germany to America is a topic that has gotten little attention in the works regarding immigration and acculturation.⁷ This study will

⁷ For further reading see *German-American Immigration and Ethnicity in Comparative Perspective*, eds. Walter D. Kamphoefner and Wolfgang Helbich, (Madison WI: Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies), 2004; *Wisconsin German Land and Life*, eds. Heike Bungert, Cora Lee Kluge and Robert C. Ostergren, (Madison WI: Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies), 2006; La Vern J. Rippley, *The Immigrant Experience in Wisconsin*, (Boston, MA: Twayne), 1985; Aaron Spencer Fogleman *Hopeful Journeys: German Immigration, settlement, and Political Culture in Colonial America, 1717-1775*, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press), 1996; *Europeans on the Move: Studies on European Migration, 1500-1800*, ed. Nicholas P. Canny, (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New

focus on the change of identities, starting with Francis Lieber and Karl Follen and ending with Wilhelm Lehman in an attempt to give the reader a more solid understanding how political activists during this time incorporated the idea of *Kulturnation* into their identity. To end with the unknown Lehmann will prepare the reader for the less concrete reconstruction provided here due to the inconsistencies in his letters.

The importance of Francis Lieber in American history is quite clear. Upon arriving in America, he set to work fulfilling his idea of a *Kulturnation*. Francis Lieber's perception of nationalism is clearer to determine than Wilhelm Lehmann's, and the alteration of his sense of self is as well. A collection of letters, compiled and edited by Thomas Sergeant Perry provides an excellent resource in the examination of Lieber's life. Before Lieber came to America he was involved in the ardent push to repel Napoleon from German soil. Two of his older brothers were involved in the conflict against Napoleon prior to his exile in Elba. Lieber was at that time too young to assist directly in any war effort, but his will to resist French influence was clear.⁸ When Napoleon escaped from Elba, Lieber, then 15 was allowed to join the army to fight against the French. What follows in the Perry book is a rather romanticized version of his experience during the last battles against the French, but contains a very helpful chronology nonetheless.

It was a natural consequence of the battles he heard of from his brothers

York: Oxford University Press), 1994;

⁸ Thomas Sergeant Perry, *The Life and Letters of Francis Lieber*, (Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1882), 6.

and the ones he experienced that he be drawn to the ideas of Friedrich Ludwig Jahn.⁹ He became active with the gymnastics movement very early on in 1811.¹⁰ The ideology of Jahn and the direct experience of the fighting the French resulted in the solidification of Lieber's radicalization. After the murder of Kotzebue, as part of the Karlsbad Decrees, the Prussian government ordered all of the gymnastics grounds closed. The government viewed these locales as hotbeds for radical student behavior which threatened their governance. It was after the closing of the *Turnen* grounds that Lieber, along with Jahn, was arrested. Upon being arrested, his papers were seized, in which contained a journal entry, "All day murder lazy."¹¹ This shocked the authorities in the Prussian government and prompted them to bar Lieber from Prussian universities.

As he attempted to reinvest himself within the German academic sphere, he became interested in a movement of liberal German students to help with the cause in Greece, which, at that time was trying to win independence from the Ottoman Empire. These revolutionaries were attracted to the spirit of the revolution and the idea of a smaller, vulnerable state throwing off the yoke of oppression set upon it by a large empire. The parallel between the war of Greek independence and the German student movement should be obvious, and shows an important ideological link between Lieber and Lehmann, which will be further discussed later. Lehmann's experience in the Tyrol region of Austria indicated

⁹ Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, also known as *Turnvater Jahn* was a German nationalist who founded the *Burschenschaften* movement which was centered around physical activity as an integral part of attaining a unified independent German state.

¹⁰ Perry, *Life and Letters*, 26.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 29 (meant to confer his inactivity during that day).

his ability to perceive a more global common cause. Lieber's enthusiasm to help Greece indicates this ability as well. Lieber's experience in Greece was as typical as a revolution should be, devoid of any organization. Lieber and his fellow German volunteers traveled through Greece attempting to assist the war effort to no avail. Upon departing Greece, he traveled to Italy. His inability to reenter German territory at this point was due to his hasty departure, which now left him without a proper passport.¹² In Italy he was able to make the acquaintance of the Prussian representative in Rome, Barthold Georg Niebuhr. Niebuhr was a Prussian bureaucrat who had previously worked as the Prussian court historiographer. The allegiance to the Prussian state was undeniable and his effect on a disillusioned Lieber was equally undeniable. In a letter to a relation, Niebuhr describes Lieber as, "...one of the youths of the noble period of 1813 (when he served in the army and was wounded) who lost themselves in visions. The elements of which they drew from their own hearts; and in this terrible contrast between his experience and all that he had imagined-all that impelled him into distant lands-has broken his heart."¹³ From this excerpt it is indicated that Niebuhr saw Lieber as a disillusioned youth who intended no harm, but was a product of the tumultuous environment of the Napoleonic Wars. He stated in another letter that:

A young man of such warm feelings must be convinced of this truth, before you can attempt to prove to him that the evil which prevails so widely could not be found among the rules unless it existed in the multitude, that

¹² Ibid., 42.

¹³ Ibid., 43-44.

change of form can bring no deliverance unless the individual can first be improved.¹⁴

Niebuhr indicated a belief that there was a combined German identity and that identity is shared between both rulers and peasants. This portrays his position as a bureaucrat who found his place through a meritocracy rather than through aristocratic lineage. This belief however did not extend so far left as to accept the reversal of the current system of government. Niebuhr's allegiance to the Prussian government and its bureaucracy was directly connected to the stress placed on merit, rather than birth. This philosophy was expounded upon Lieber for almost a year before he left the care of Niebuhr and returned to Germany.

This experience was important in Lieber's development because it seemed to soften the revolutionary zeal he held as a younger man. It is now a question as to whether Lieber did in fact evolve into a more conservative man with the help of Niebuhr, or if he reassessed his passions to place intellectual pursuits ahead of patriotism, which would allow him to adhere more closely to the ideas of the *Kultur*. With his new connections to the highest echelons of the Prussian government, which included the King of Prussia, Lieber was able to attempt a new life within German academia. Due to the effective pursuit of the Prussian bureaucracy, his past followed him closer than he would have hoped. Not even his connections in the upper levels Prussian bureaucracy could have saved him from being persecuted again and taken to Köpenick, late in 1824. This is a very interesting development in Lieber's life as this was the same exact time period

¹⁴ Ibid., 44.

that Lehmann was held at Köpenick. The possibility that the two were acquainted is great. This physical acquaintance is important because it would have reinforced the ideological bond between the two men. It should not be accepted, however, that they shared a similar path. The difference between the two men lay in their connections within the government. In 1825, at the behest of Niebuhr, Lieber was released, whereas Lehmann remained. Both of their lifestyles within the confines of prison appeared to be similar, Lieber has recounted his dedication to such authors as Goethe while languishing in prison and most undoubtedly reexamined his priorities.¹⁵ After his release from prison, he returned to the appeal process to allow him back into the lifestyle of a German intellectual. This lifestyle though was far different than the previous one, and is best described in a letter from a friend, “He...had become very different than in his *Turner* days. To be sure even then he used to write poetry; but his patriotic, gymnastic and semi-religious ideas had been succeeded by more serious intellectual interests.”¹⁶ His world view was changed in such a way to warrant a respect for the government which had previously restricted his beliefs. He seems to have learned to work within the system and be content with a peaceful career investigating his intellectual interests, thus departing from revolutionary methods of his goals of a German nation, and instead focused on his involvement in pursuit of the *Kulturnation*. This process kept him in a state of limbo, which speaks to the expanse and ineffectiveness of the Prussian bureaucracy.

¹⁵ Ibid., 59.

¹⁶ Ibid., 61.

Determined to do something with his life, rather than be pulled through the seemingly endless intricacies of Prussian bureaucracy, he resolved to leave the country. His travels led him first to England and finally to America in 1827.

His letters to his relations which explained his decision to immigrate are an interesting picture into his idea of self and his development within his country of birth and his sense of self. He is convinced of the superiority of American style government which would allow him to pursue new ideas which have become too modern for the antiquated systems of Europe to incorporate.¹⁷ His ambivalence towards American culture was over shadowed by his belief that intellectual contributions to society can be fostered best by a government that allows such a culture to prosper, as in the idea of the *Kulturnation*. This is no more apparent than in his magnum opus, the *Encyclopedia Americana*, first published in 1829. This book, which was modeled after the German *Conversation-Lexikon*, was meant to provide the reader a general knowledge of that which was considered important during the times. His belief of a well-informed society is seen best in his introduction to the 7th edition of the encyclopedia:

If the present work shall conduce to the diffusion of knowledge to this fortunate country, whose happiness is founded on its liberty, and whose liberty is to be preserved only widely-spread information; if it shall contribute to make known what has been done or thought, attained or suffered, by other portions of the human family; if it shall contribute to enlarge our views, and to destroy prejudices, to animate youth to a perseverance in virtue and to the pursuit of true glory, by exhibiting to them, on the one hand, the fearless votary of truth and patriotism, and, on the

¹⁷ Ibid., 70.

other, the real character of men whose perverted talents, however splendid, cannot redeem them from the severe but just sentence of impartial history; I shall receive the most gratifying reward for the many laborious days which have been devoted to the present undertaking.¹⁸

The connection in this small quote to his past is extremely telling in many aspects. He referred to a “diffusion of knowledge” which he expected would liberate society from the confines of a constricting government. He explained that this is the case within the United States, and perhaps a failure of German culture. The language within his preface is also quite reminiscent to the language used during his student movement days. The ideas of virtue, glory, truth and patriotism were not exclusive to his sentiments of American cultural society, but were instilled in him by the leaders of the radical revolutions when he was a student. The interesting link is associated with his identity in relation to the “us versus them” mentality. While in Germany he was a student of the purist ideas emoted by Jahn. He was safely within the boundaries of “Us” while scorning the influences of “Them”, or the French. When immigrated, he switched sides and became a “Them” but did not lose sight of what it meant to be “Us” This switch of roles points to his apparent rejection of the idea of the idea of “Us versus Them”¹⁹ he extolled these sentiments in his phrase, “...if it shall contribute to enlarge our views and destroy prejudices...I shall receive the most gratifying

¹⁸ Francis Lieber ed. *The Encyclopedia Americana* 7th ed., (Boston: B.B. Mussey and Co., 1851), viii.

¹⁹ For further reading on immigration theory see *Theories of migration* ed. Robin Cohen, (Cheltenham, UK: E. Elgar, 1996); Patrick Manning, *Migration in World History*, (New York: Routledge, 2005); and David Eltis *Coerced and Free Migration: Global Perspectives*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002).

reward.” It is evident that he views the dissemination of knowledge throughout the people as a benefactor towards the destruction of the evils found in society. Such strong views on knowledge and education are in line with his gradual acculturation in America.

This rejection of his old teachings and his adoption of more wide spread principles can be seen as a coming of age within his new intellectual environment, or as an expansion onto his previous convictions. If he was to reject all that he had learned, the themes of virtue and patriotism would not be prevalent twenty four years after his immigration. Nor would he so vehemently connect his great work with that of its German counterpart. By doing that, he reinforces the equality of German intellectualism with that of American intellectualism, which seems to endorse an idea of a common notion of human culture, free from oppression. Though by immigrating he gave up on a once passionate ideal of a German nation, and hoped to involve himself within the circles of culture fostered by a more liberal form of government. His experience within Germany and America typifies an archetypal German intellectual immigrant who reacted to the government control by seeking an outlet within less restrictive surroundings. This reinforces the idea that their priority was not governmental reform so much as it was a search for intellectual and cultural freedom.

His earlier realization of priorities was instrumental in his adaptation of his radical ideals. The decision to remain as adamant about his beliefs as Follen

would have complicated his life to the point of insignificance, “You should be clear that the moment you decide to attend a university all of Germany is open to you.”²⁰ The importance of German universities and education was never stressed more. This is apparent not only in the primacy placed in the education system, but also the with the student movement itself. In other countries the revolutions that caused governmental change came from adults who’s desire was to better the life that they already lead. Both the American and French revolutions were products of both an uneducated and educated amalgamation working towards the reinvention of their government. In Germany, the fact that the nucleus of the radical movement to reinvent the government was the university community is an important testament. As Lieber stated at the Convention of Literary and Scientific Gentleman in the City of New York in 1830:

What however has given such excellence to the German Universities? What maintains such a truly scientific spirit among their Professors? I answer-the scientific spirit of the whole nation; a consequence of its entire want of a public political life, the destruction of its political existence as a nation for centuries, and the liberty of thinking produced by the reformation; in one word it is a consequence of the fact that German’s life is entirely within him; a good bought dearly enough.²¹

His belief that the importance of education lies within the average German’s self as a product of their history is an important theme which should warrant some attention. The freedom of the German academic realm allowed the students to feel a sense of freedom with contradicted the sense of freedom restricted by the

²⁰ Sheehan, *German History*, 406.

²¹ Hofstadter and Smith, *American Higher Education*, 299.

government. This discordance led not only to a mixed sense of identity, but to a sense of resentment for the lesser of the two worlds. The three men under study exemplify both a mixed sense of identity and resentment for that which restricts their ability to grow in an environment they find suitable. They all were members of a thriving German academic world in which they were allowed to study as they pleased and advance the channels of knowledge they found most beneficial, but were not content to be assigned a position in Germany. They longed to change their surroundings to increase the respect for German culture. This longing was dangerous to the fragile state of politics, which led each man to an involvement with the Prussian authorities. Such an involvement is no more extreme than in the story of Karl Follen.

Karl Follen's life can be considered a magnification of the lives of both Lieber and Lehmann. Whereas Lieber and Lehmann eventually realized that their desire to pursue intellectual avenues within Germany would require certain cooperation and respect for the government, Follen didn't believe this at all. Much like Lieber, Follen's life was shaped directly by the wars with France during the late 18th early 19th centuries. Growing up in Hesse-Darmstadt, Follen's family lived within the path of the invading French army. This required them to experience the full effect of Napoleon, as the territory was turned into French territory during the Napoleonic Wars. The feeling of hatred towards such an imposing force was felt by nearly every citizen. For a child during this period of time, the experience must have been overwhelming, and indeed this proved true

for Follen. When he came of an appropriate age he enlisted to help fight the French, and though didn't experience a significantly intense battle, his time with the army was enough to change his world view.²² This alteration of perception resulted in a general dissatisfaction with the status of the German political environment. In accordance with a wider thought, Follen found the fractious, yet autarkic states of Germany to serve their intended purposes very poorly. The idea of the radicals, as stated above, was that a united national Germany would benefit its constituents the best and allow German culture to flourish. As a direct recipient of the changes brought about by the Napoleonic Wars, Follen took these ideas to heart. Upon returning from his duty in the army, he involved himself in his academic interests at the University of Giessen. The combination of being at a university and his already zealous patriotic ideals pushed Follen to the far left of the political spectrum. He became involved in the *Landsmanschaften* group at the University of Giessen quickly after his enrollment. The *Landsmanschaften* were fraternities found on most German university campuses that were based on reinforcing regional identities. It was a way for students from a similar geographical region to find each other and maintain strong bonds through close association. Follen's association with this group was short lived for several reasons. Firstly, the apolitical nature of the *Landsmanschaften* groups did little to advance the causes that Follen found most important. Secondly, Follen's belief in a united German nation was contradictory to the disjointed atmosphere found

²²Edmund Spivack, *Charles Follen's Search for Nationality and Freedom: Germany and America 1796-1840*,(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 19.

in the *Landsmanschaften*. The appeal of the newly formed *Burschenschaften*, which were appearing on many German university campuses, satisfied the desires of Follen's revolutionary zeal for the time being. The strict lifestyle and focus on academic pursuits appealed to Follen's dry, goal-intent nature. His involvement at the university in Giessen prior to his transfer to Jena was a mark of a committed individual. He found every possible outlet to allow maximum expression of his radical liberal views. As a member of the political reading society on campus, in addition to the *Burschenschaften*, Follen soon became dissatisfied with his perceived judgment of the political nature of the reading society and therefore resolved to establish his own society.²³ This society, known as the "Blacks", was the beginning of Follen's interest in creating groups that had the intent of influencing not only the nationalism debates at the university, but as well as debates within the larger German circles. The tone of this group was, in addition to being radical and patriotic, highly religious. Follen's interest in religion is an important aspect of his development both in Germany and America. In Germany, his respect for Lutheranism and Martin Luther was great. The often romanticized accounts of Luther's rejection of Papal authority found their way into the rhetoric of Follen's radical nationalism ideals. It was incorporated easily into his ideas of German unity. As he wrote on the *Burschenschaften* movement, "Die Liebe, die uns All' in Gott Verbündet, Als Gottes Stimm' im Menschen wie im Volke."²⁴ He posits that God and the Christian religion was the saving grace

²³ Ibid., 24.

²⁴ Eliza Lee Cabot Follen *The Life of Charles Follen*, (Boston: Thomas H. Webb and Co., 1844),

of German unity due to its internal nature within each German. His wife, within her biographical text on Follen accurately explains his passion, “It was indeed true, that his faith set no limit to the almost miraculous power of a great principle, fearlessly adhered to, even by a single individual.”²⁵ Through her biased opinion of her husband’s zeal, it is an accurate remark to depict the belief in the extreme power that religion held as an agent for change in Germany. This strong religiosity did not abate upon Follen’s arrival in America either.

The importance of religion should be discussed, as it plays an interesting role within each story. Each man is propelled by some aspect of religion. Lehmann is a devout student of theology and longs to advance his studies even during his imprisonment. Follen was convinced that a strict Christian lifestyle would be best suited in his pursuit of radical liberal goals. Follen eventually became a preacher in America, and an ardent anti-slavery proponent. Lieber is probably the least religious out of all three of the men, though that is not to say he is devoid of religious sentiment. Having been a fervent following of Jahn, the acceptance of Jahn’s teachings can be assumed. As Jahn stated:

The feel of eternity accompanies the individual throughout his life. There is immortality of the soul. Man is more than an animal, and better than a beast, Religion should not be tolerated simply as a pious child’s play. The church is not over the state, nor is it under it, nor is it nearby; it is inside the state. I remain true to the German Church, into which I was born and in which I was raised; love for Fatherland honors the belief of the fathers.²⁶

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²⁵ Ibid., 34.

²⁶ Friedrich Ludwig Jahn in Louis Snyder, *Documents of German History*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press: 1958), 139.

The belief of Jahn that religion is a cohesive element within the formation of a German society was expressed to his students. As he stated, religion was a serious matter that was instrumental in the creation of a German nation and a sense of German identity. As mentioned above, Lieber's beliefs on this matter can safely be assumed to be in sync with Jahn's.

With such religious fever present in all three men, it appears that it was not a force compelling them to leave Germany. As Reinhard Doerries states, "Personal religion, indeed, may be of even greater importance to the life of the individual than other intangible factors because it is concerned with the *telos*, the ultimate human uncertainty about the end of life,"²⁷ Though this claim certainly holds true for many immigrants of the time, the leading desire of immigration between these three men and perhaps a majority of intellectual political refugees of this time was the desire to develop a culture of intellectualism apart from government restraint. This idea will remain a prominent aspect as the paper now refocuses its examination the final, but most important member of this study. Wilhelm Lehmann, as an unknown immigrant, is the most difficult to examine. His letters, as stated above, are censored and incomplete, leaving wide room for interpretation. What follows here is a brief description of his life as a university student in Germany and a professor in America. The most difficult part of this section is the often confusing language that is used by Lehmann in his letters. Such language can be ascribed to either translation or vernacular, both of which

²⁷ German-American: Immigration and Ethnicity in Comparative Perspective, eds. Wolfgang Helbich and Walter D. Kamphoefner, Immigrants and the Church: German Americans in Comparative Perspective (Madison WI, Max Kade Institute:1997), 4-5.

are difficult to solve. The two previous men who were discussed were meant to provide a sort of boundary for Lehmann's life story. Since he is unknown, it is harder to even ascertain mere biographical information from the letters. The addition of two other German immigrants with similar stories is in a hope to provide the reader with a clearer picture of Germany and America during the early nineteenth century as well as the type of intellectual Germans who found success in America

Wilhelm Lehmann was born in 1802 in Ostönnen, Westphalia Germany. Ostönnen was a small community, and still is by today's standards. The earliest letters in the collection repeatedly mention the burden of going to the next town to receive their mail, as the postal carriage did not go directly into Ostönnen. The letters begin with the courtship of Wilhelm's parents, Wilhelm and Dorothea. From these letters, it is gathered that the two are cousins, though Dorothea does not live in Ostönnen. Their courtship is a fascinating portrayal of young love, played through the poetic style of the times, and would be excellent material for just such a project. A gap in the letters between the couple's courting and the next letter suggests that the couple had married and Dorothea gave birth to Wilhelm the junior. The letters resume with Wilhelm the junior describing life at his *Gymnasium* in Lennep, which is southwest of Ostönnen. His life at the boarding school was relatively unmarked by turmoil, however he does mention an outing where he visits a castle that is being repaired by Prussian soldiers from the effects of the Napoleonic wars. Aside from this, there seems to be very little

politically that young Wilhelm had to deal with while away at school. The letters continue until he reached the University of Bonn in 1819, when his story becomes more interesting and relevant to the questions at hand.

He began his university career with much fervor, and attended classes by such well known figures as Arndt and von Schlegel. These men, it will be seen may have had an important influence on his thinking both in Germany and America. With his first letter he mentions joining a regional student association:

In the space of a year, I hope, the loose ties of the General Students' Association will dissolve and the student associations with local affiliations gather their sons more closely together. The Westphalians from Halle, Göttingen and Berlin hold together well; there are some very educated and upright people among them, and I have therefore formed a close association with them and have hobnobbed with all of them. The members of the Student's association before whom the ideal of unity hovers, and which remains an ideal only, want therefore to suppress such associations and look upon the cohesiveness of the "Sons of Guestphalia" with ire.²⁸

From this excerpt, it can be assumed that he was involved in a *Landsmanschaften* fraternity. These fraternities were the primary student fraternities at universities prior to the integration of the *Burschenschaften*. The *Landsmanschaften* were intent on keeping an old order of regional fraternities intact, and disliked the *Burschenschaften* movement that stressed a kind of pan-German cohesiveness. His membership could suggest he found more comfort in a sense of self through a regionalized categorization, thus assigning his identity as a regional identity. He seems to feel disconnected to a sense of all encompassing German-ness and

²⁸ Wilhelm Lehmann, Bonn to Dorothea Lehmann, Ostönnen, 25 November 1819, Lehmann Family Papers. Trans. Mary Flick, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison Wisconsin.

through his membership in a regional group, rejects an identity as entirely German.²⁹

In subsequent letters he retold his life as a student at Bonn to his parents. Here he joyfully invoked the Rhine as a distinguishing characteristic. He remained faithfully enamored by the defining feature of Westphalia despite his removal to a different city. He described the Rhine valley in spring in such enthusiastic terms; one can hardly doubt his infatuation of it. Later, after settling in America he described his house and the grounds with much passion. This seems telling of affection for a geographic home, more so than a political home. His sense of being a German could be argued as being more physical rather than spiritual.

During his second semester at Bonn he mentions the removal of Ernst Moritz Arndt from his teaching position there, and complained to his parents of the cause of Arndt's removal, "In Berlin they have ascertained new demagogic impulses."³⁰ Here he recognized the political superiority of the Prussian state, most likely because it related directly to him through the removal of someone he interacted with. Because of the power of the Prussian government, his sense of who he is further expanded beyond a mere physicality. His distaste for the Prussian government is clear, and can only increase his animosity towards being a spiritual German.

From his harsh writings about the Prussian government and the hints he

²⁹ Sheehan, *German History*, 418.

³⁰ Wilhelm Lehmann, Bonn to Dorothea Lehmann, Ostönnen 25 November 1820, Lehmann Family Papers.

leaves about his sense of self identification, the fact that he seems to be involved in some radical student activity is not surprising. His initial response to the direct affect felt from the Prussian government in the removal of Arndt, and his regional sense of self pushed him to view the Prussian government as an oppressor. His desires to become involved in a radical organization grew as the year progressed. He asked his parents to send him cloth so he can have a pair of pants made in “our three colors.”³¹ These three colors, it should be mentioned were not the typical gold, red and black, but rather green, white and black, the colors of his fraternity, the *Guestphalians*. The *Guestphalians* were, and still are, a student organization similar to a fraternity or sorority, that at the time was very much a typical student group who enjoyed dueling with swords and reinforcing a sense of regional identity on campus.³² Their involvement in Bonn hints heavily at their political leanings as a radical student organization. It would seem that Lehmann embraced this portion of the student movement in Bonn and was turning into a proper revolutionary. It was not long after he came to Bonn that he rethought his position and decided that such a hotbed of student activity could be detrimental. He removes himself to Tübingen in order to:

“...devote myself to scholarship, free from all which encumbers me here. I feel a compulsion to delve thoroughly into my studies and an unquenched longing to master theology in its deepest aspects.”³³

This is an important step in Lehmann’s life. His passion for being a student

³¹ Ibid.

³² <http://www.corps-guestphalia.de/> (accessed 05-08-2008)

³³ Wilhelm Lehmann, Bonn to Dorothea Lehmann, Ostönnen 1 February 1821, Lehmann Family Papers.

radical was superseded by his desire to involve himself totally with academic pursuits. He seemed to reject the more tangible tenets of student life, and wished to embrace the more intangible aspects of intellectual life. That is not to say he did not feel strongly towards the ideas of nationalism still.

Lehmann was, as it appears, so involved in the student movement at Bonn, that there was a great possibility that he would be targeted by authorities. His relocation could have been in order to avoid any further negative interaction with the police or the “council” as he termed it. This possibility is probably the most rational, due to his eventual imprisonment in 1825. Within the span of 3 months, his attitudes changed dramatically. In November, 1820, he lauded the actions of his fellow *Guestphalians*. Between November 1820 and February 1821, something happened to alert the young man of the danger involved with that lifestyle, and prompted the beginning of a change in identity.

By the time he reached Tübingen, it was autumn. He mentioned in his first letter from Tübingen that he heard an orchestra that is, “suppose to be one of the best in Germany.”³⁴ That is the first mention of the word “Germany” in his letters. Lehmann most likely used it to encompass the German speaking lands. This shouldn't be taken as too important, as he merely assigns the identity to an orchestra, and the extent of “Germany” is far from known in this context. The idea that he refers to an artistic endeavor like music as being German reiterates the main ideas of the *Kulturnation*, in that he believes of a culture that is German,

³⁴ Wilhelm Lehmann, Bonn to Dorothea Lehmann, Ostönnen 1 November 1821, Lehmann Family Papers.

rather than regional or local. He believed in the importance of such elements of culture, and showed this by invoking the idea of a pan-German entity which exists at the time primarily through a bond of language, which could show the importance he gives to such a bond. If he assumes a Germany to consist of a language bond, his sense of identity towards it is further clarified. His idea could find a parallel with Arndt in his poem, "Where is the German Fatherland" written in 1813:

Where is the German's Fatherland?
Then name, oh, name the mighty land!
Wherever is heard the German tongue,
And German hymns to God are sung,
This is the land, they Hermann's land;
This, German, is they fatherland.³⁵

Arndt asserts that a tangible sense of being German can be found in speaking German. The language was of special importance, not only as a distinguisher, but also as a bond. German intellectuals were able to communicate their thoughts to each other and the literary public with German. For them, this sense of German was especially important. Their ideas of nationalism could be read and understood in German, and therefore held greater value in the discussion of German nationalism. The ability to communicate in German also reinforced the stress placed on a higher culture that was based in the German language, such as music. For Lehmann the idea of language is important, though we cannot assume he shares the strong feelings of Arndt entirely.

While traveling, he described his experience with parallels that cannot be

³⁵ Ernst Moritz Arndt, *Where is the German's Fatherland?* in Louis Snyder, Documents of German History, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1958.), 144.

ignored. They contain statements of affection for causes outside of Germany, which indicate an expanded world view. In a letter dated April 19th, 1822 while traveling through Bavaria and Austria, he prefaced his description of the land with, “I am now in the splendid Tyrol and among the upright folk for which I have long had a great predilection.”³⁶ The history of Tyrol can elicit many parallels to the ideals held by student activists such as Lehmann. The lands of Tyrol were acquired by the Austrian monarchy in the 14th century and were held for hundreds of years following the acquisition.³⁷ The struggle of identity within the Tyrol region was a constant source of tension between the inhabitants and the Austrian monarchy. The tensions rose dramatically during the 18th century due to the adoption of enlightened monarchical practices within the Austrian regime.³⁸ The language used to define the area of Tyrol was identical to that of the student movement’s language of Germany. Nation and Fatherland were common words used in the debates that arose from the struggle to culturally enmesh the inhabitants of Tyrol into a greater Austrian monarchy. For Lehmann, it is clear he understood the similarities of their struggles and was reverent to the cause. He even stopped at the household of the deceased leader of the Tyrolean struggle for freedom.³⁹

³⁶ Wilhelm Lehmann, Innsbruck, to Dorothea Lehmann, Ostönnen, 19 April 1822, Lehmann Family Papers.

³⁷ Gunther F. Eyck, *Loyal Rebels: Andreas Hofer and the Tyrolean uprising of 1809*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986), 17.

³⁸ Laurence Cole, “Nation, Anti-Enlightenment, and Religious Revival in Austria: Tyrol in the 1790’s” *The Historical Journal* 43 (2000): 477.

³⁹ Wilhelm Lehmann, Brandgold Austria, to Dorothea Lehmann, Ostönnen, 21 April 1822, Lehmann Family Papers.

This is an important step in gaining insight into his world-view and sense of identity. He was appreciative of other struggles outside of his own which signifies a deep rooted belief in ideals, not merely a desire to improve his own circumstances in Germany. The willingness to acknowledge common cause is a theme for political refugees during this time. As it will be shown with the other two men, Lehmann is committed more to the principles of cultural and intellectual freedom. His appreciation of the Tyrolean attitudes towards foreign oppressors is expressed thusly, "...We found an ardent hatred of the Austrians who, as thanks for the Tyroleans' service in the imperial army and their bravery, have so grievously crushed the freedom of the Tyroleans. This is, thank God, the general opinion of this noble, mistreated people, of which we found evidence everywhere."⁴⁰ It may be assumed that he feels a sense of belonging and satisfaction to those who only wish to pursue their desired culture and intellectual capacity.

His life continued in a relatively unmarked manner until the year 1824. In that year, on March 19th, his father passed away from an illness that was alluded to in an earlier letter to Lehmann which described their experience at a spa town. Three weeks after his father died, Wilhelm was arrested at his mother's house in Ostönnen. He was taken to Berlin where he maintained a very positive attitude about the proceedings about to befall him. It becomes clear that he was not a suspect of great importance as the authorities in Berlin seemed to deprive him of very little, "I was brought here to the city prison, received a good room and all

⁴⁰ Wilhelm Lehmann to Dorothea Lehmann 19 April, 1822.

that I required. And I am still here and am quite well. I lack nothing but exercise in the fresh air...I may receive as many books as I wish to read...Thus I have read only Jean Paul,⁴¹ Herder and Goethe.” The authorities denied him little, except what can be interpreted as the minor inconvenience of imprisonment.⁴² Such an existence could only magnify his political beliefs while he sat in his prison cell contemplating the ideas. A foreshadow to his eventual escape might be found in a quote from Herder, “History shows that every dominant *Volk* has ruled not only with weapons, but with intelligence, art, and a fully developed language.”⁴³ His time in prison was spent trying to complete his schooling and engaging in the ideas that appealed to his sense of self, while entirely committing himself to his intellectual passions, despite his physical limitations.

By May, Lehmann is taken to Köpenick, a small town southeast of Berlin. According to his letter, “I was brought here to Köpenick from Berlin, where the rest of those placed under arrest have long been.”⁴⁴ His tone within the letter remains positive, as he is allowed much freedom within the confines of his prison, which is described as a castle on an island. He talks of returning home soon to finish his exams and complete his schooling, though he states, “Thus, the fulfillment of our hopes depends only upon my return, and we must not doubt that this will come about very soon, although I cannot yet ascertain the time of the

⁴¹ Jean Paul or Johann Paul Friedrich Richter (1763-1825) was a writer who helped actuate the idea of German as a literary language.

⁴² Wilhelm Lehmann, Berlin, to Dorothea Lehmann, Ostönnen, 23 April 1824, Lehmann Family Papers.

⁴³ Sheehan, *German History*, 202.

⁴⁴ Wilhelm Lehmann, Köpenick, to Dorothea Lehmann, Ostönnen, 26 May 1824, Lehmann Family Papers.

same.”⁴⁵ The next letter is dated December 17th, 1825 from Jülich, a small town on the western edge of West Prussia, near the border with France, and is over a year and a half later than his previous letter. Within this gap of time it is quite apparent that much has happened in his life. Perhaps a trial and some sort of conviction, as he was removed from quite comfortable situations. The letter from Jülich is brief and ominous in tone. It would almost seem that at this point, Lehmann is unsure of his future and wishes to convey a sense of calm amongst his family members. Another important note in this letter is to whom it is addressed to. This is the first letter that is addressed to his sister and her husband, as his mother has passed away while he was away in Prison. The change in locations and correspondence indicate a much altered change in views. In Berlin he was near the seat of the Prussian government, and could not help but feel a part of it, having been physically placed there. Removal to Jülich shifts his perspective, as he is taken farther away from the seat of power, which may have caused a further deterioration in disrespect for Prussian authority so far from its center of power. This can be seen in the number of documented cases of violence between civilians and Prussian troops before 1848, which grew increasingly during the period between 1815 and 1848.⁴⁶ By writing to his sister, who he most likely does not view in a superior fashion, as he would have his mother, he must come to terms with some feeling of complete independence. This independence

⁴⁵ Wilhelm Lehmann, Jülich to Matthias Hölterhoff, Ostönnen 17 Decemeber 1825, Lehmann Family Papers.

⁴⁶ James Brophy, “Violence Between Civilians and State Authorities in the Prussian Rhineland, 1830-1846.” German History, 22 (Feb. 2004) 3.

is quite possibly the driving force to escape prison.

Eight months lapse between his admittance into a prison in Jülich and his next correspondence to his sister. He writes from London, giving a brief mention of his escape from Germany, “I am greatly surprised that Schütte⁴⁷ disapproved of our escape, although he is the only one I have heard this from; out of all of us who were imprisoned, perhaps no one than he so completely misjudged his situation.”⁴⁸

He briefly refers to his escape from Germany again, when in America, “Blessed be the hour in which I swam across the citadel moat!”⁴⁹ His brevity on the topic suggests a desire to move past the event and begin his life again. In the letter he explains his decision to leave Europe and create a new life for himself in North America. He includes in his explanation, “I do not regret having spent my life up until now in more academic and idealistic activities, since the subjective utility that accompanies education will always remain, my entire being is now driven towards a purely practical endeavor.”⁵⁰ He explicitly stated his desire to focus on a more productive aspect of intellectual pursuit and he stated he willingly gave up the behavior of his youth, which for the intent of this paper can be described as idealistic activism. His desire led him first to London, where he remained for over a month to secure passage to North America. His initial

⁴⁷Schütte has only been described as a friend from his days in Tübingen, little else is known of him.

⁴⁸ Wilhelm Lehmann, London, to Julia Hölterhoff, Ostönnen 1 October 1826, Lehmann Family Papers.

⁴⁹ Wilhelm Lehmann, Albany, to Julia Hölterhoff, Ostönnen, 8 April 1828, Lehmann Family Papers.

⁵⁰ Wilhelm Lehmann, London, to Julia Hölterhoff, Ostönnen 29 August 1826, Lehmann Family Papers.

intention was to depart for Buenos Aires, being at the time another popular destination for German immigrants. Lehmann was persuaded against Buenos Aires, “According to all that I have heard, I can almost not fail to obtain a preaching or teaching position there [America], since with each New Year new academic institutes are founded there and teachers from Germany are especially prized.”⁵¹ His desire to involve himself in the academics of either country is apparent in his expression of priorities. Rather than confine himself to the seemingly impossible task of reforming Germany to attain the ideas of the *Kulturnation*, he believed his desire to realize the *Kulturnation* would be attained through unadulterated academic involvement in a different country.

His first letter in America to his sister was a very positive one. He was quite excited to be in America, and proud of his ability to have and form new connections. His sense of identity was being expanded in such a dramatic way that it is evident that he was unable to firmly allow himself to be persuaded by all that America has to offer, “I am still attached with my whole heart to our beloved Germany, and have not given up the hope of bringing the last years of my life peacefully to a close there, after so much turmoil.”⁵² Lehmann’s idea that America is a temporary state of exile does not abate readily, which shows he still has some sense of being German. I use the term German in this instance due to the fact that now he is outside of Germany, his identification as a Westphalian or Ostönnenian seems irrelevant. Even though he has moved to find a life that offers

⁵¹ Wilhelm Lehmann, London, to Julia Hölterhoff, Ostönnen 22 September 1826, Lehmann Family Papers.

⁵² Wilhelm Lehmann, New York City to Julia Hölterhoff, Ostönnen, 23 November 1826.

him more intellectual freedom, his passion for Germany as the land of his birth never recedes.

His account of his first winter in New York describes his attempts at learning English and his search for job aspects in the area. His primary desire is to preach, as he states, “Thummel and I in order to visit the president of our synod, Dr. Weckerhagen, in Vermont so that we might obtain a license to preach and then to take up our positions.”⁵³ His desire to remain within the intellectual realm of society is not stated as such, most likely because of the mixed culture that existed in Germany. In Germany, the position of preacher was considered an intellectual endeavor equivalent to that of a professor. In America, the emergence of two slightly more distinct categories results in separate spheres of cultural life, making for a more concerted decision. Lehmann’s inability to find a position in the religious sphere of American society pushed him into the academic realm quite easily. He remained in Albany for about two years, giving lessons on an informal basis and unaffiliated with any institution. His students were composed of upper middle class members of Albany society, and, “My students in the German language are all doctors and men who occupy the most distinguished professorships in the universities of our state.”⁵⁴

The fascination with German intellectual culture was a growing movement during the early 19th century in America. Many scholars in America, having

⁵³ Wilhelm Lehmann, Albany to Julia Hölterhoff, Ostönnen 1 December 1827, Lehmann Family Papers.

⁵⁴ Wilhelm Lehmann, Albany to Julia Hölterhoff, Ostönnen 8 April 1828, Lehmann Family Papers.

traveled to Germany to sample the style of university culture, were amazed at the positive differences between the two countries academic systems. This difference was identifiable in the style of “college” in Europe and in America. As many scholars from both areas noticed, the American higher education was more similar to a European high school than a university.⁵⁵ The dissemination of the knowledge of German books and writings was due to the interest expressed by the recipients of this culture, such as George Ticknor.⁵⁶ This phenomenon, it can be argued, was largely the product of Karl Follen’s arrival in America and the powerful connections he had within New England society, as was discussed early.⁵⁷ The fascination with modern languages, namely French and German, was a growing movement within the intellectual circles of many universities and towns. The German education process heavily stressed the need to learn multiple languages. When Lehmann was away at boarding school he took Greek, Latin and Hebrew, all to prepare him to become a successful theology student at a university. His travels during his student years also granted him the ability to learn French and Italian. Despite the fact that theology was not his chosen field in America, the knowledge of three “ancient” languages and three “modern” languages, left him in a highly sought position within the spheres of high-culture during the early nineteenth century in America.

⁵⁵ Richard Hofstadter, *Academic Freedom in the Age of the College*, (New York: Columbia University Press: 1955), 224.

⁵⁶ Ticknor was an affluent academic who traveled extensively throughout Europe in hopes of bringing back helpful ideas to infuse the American universities with a more productive nature. For more information see, David B. Tyack, *George Ticknor and the Boston Brahmins*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967); George Ticknor, *Life, Letters, and Journals of George Ticknor*, (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1876).

⁵⁷ Spevack *Charles Follen*, 138.

The winter of 1828 brought upon Lehmann a bout of sickness that incapacitated him for many months. In spite of his recovering illness he was invited to Pittsfield where he would become a member of a language department.⁵⁸ He finally acquired a job and began his career in America. It is also from this same letter we see evidence of his fondness for America, "...here in a free country where everything is going well and where I am respected and esteemed by my fellow citizens."⁵⁹ His next letter portrays a very firm stance, based in a practical position for his favorable opinion of America:

I am quite pleased with life as a teacher and have decided to devote my life to it; a teacher who possesses sound knowledge of classical languages and is at the same time sufficiently conversant in English in order to make his presentations in it is a man whose fortune is assured in America, more so than in Germany where the number of scholars is legion. I am therefore little inclined to accept some small post in Prussia granted to me by the government.⁶⁰

It is now more than apparent that he was quite taken with life in America for several reasons. His depicts the German academic sphere as a competitive arena governed over directly by the Prussian government, reinforcing the idea of limited intellectual freedom. The sheer number of scholars and professor in Germany would limit his chances at gaining a suitable position. In America, his background knowledge is enough to secure him desirable positions within academic institutions.

⁵⁸ It is never mentioned in the letters which institution he is to join, though it quite possibly Williams College which was established in 1793. Though it is located in Williamstown some 20 miles north of Pittsfield, Lehmann describes being able to see Pittsfield from the south. The possibility of a now non-existent institution is also viable.

⁵⁹ Wilhelm to Julia, 8 April 1828.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

It is during his time at Pittsfield that his language of Germany shifts slightly. Perhaps his elation brought from his currently lifestyle allows him to remember Germany in a kinder respect. He constantly refers to Germany as his “Fatherland” in wistful words describing his want to see his family. He remains poignant about the political situation which would hinder an entirely peaceful trip to Germany possible, but harsh language that is prevalent later, is a rare occurrence during this time. After a year of living and teaching in Pittsfield he reflects on his time in America and his desire to return to Germany, “All of my thoughts and feelings are rooted in German soil, and through long and various associations my native land has become all the more dear to me as a result of this, for me, beneficial separation.”⁶¹ It is still evident he views his time in America as temporary and that he will one day return to Germany, which suggests that he considers himself German, but not to the extent he would sacrifice everything for that cause. His cause is intellectual freedom, which he has found in America.

Throughout his initial experience of the northeast his fondness for America grows. His ability to find such quick work is the product of a growth of universities and colleges within America during this time period. The period was defined by the desire not only to rapidly expand the number of universities, but as well as to enhance the teaching to become a global competitor in the fierce world of academics. The United States at this time was also searching for a sense of identity, though it would be relatively easier than assigning a German identity.

⁶¹ Wilhelm Lehmann, Pittsfield to Julia Hölderhoff, Cologne, 10 December 1830, Lehmann Family Papers.

This sense of self was agitated by the North-South divide.⁶² It is precisely into the rivalry that Lehmann falls. After working short and disconnected jobs in the New England, Lehmann receives several offers from southern states, who at this time are desperately trying to foster their own identity:

[A] Major fear was that a student who went to college would probably forfeit respect upon his return to his home state. Instead of depending on distance colleges who's political and social climate was so different from that of the southern states,...the region could create a responsible local leadership by bringing to it the best teachers and curricula in the arts and sciences.⁶³

At this point in his life, Lehmann is anxious to see as much of the founding nation as possible.⁶⁴ He readily accepts a position on the faculty at the University of Georgia which he also terms as Franklin College. The pay is substantial and he finds himself very comfortable in the Georgia. It is here he solidifies his identification as a scholar and intellectual and truly appreciates the lifestyle America affords its intellectuals.

After he became settled in Georgia, his sister and brother-in-law visit America in the spring of 1832. The status of his sister's family is becomes quite evident at this point, as they are able, not only to leave Germany for an extended time, but can afford four months of travel. In the fall of 1832, the Hölterhoffs (Julia and Matthias) had to leave from America and return from Germany with no reasons given as to their premature departure. It is such an odd experience

⁶² John Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 42-43.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 50.

⁶⁴ Wilhelm Lehmann, Athens to Julia Hölterhoff, Cologne, 18 March, 1832, Lehmann Family Papers.

that his sister and brother-in-law would come all the way from Germany, which despite the rapidly advancing methods of travel, was still a considerable task, and not see Wilhelm, to whom they corresponds to most enthusiastically.

After several years of residing in Georgia, Lehmann established a decent household and is acculturating himself quite easily to not only American customs but southern customs as well. The description of his house and his lands surrounding are reminiscent of his descriptions of the university and homes in Germany. He details his produce that is to be grown there also includes a description of the help, “I have hired two strong Negroes and a Negress, in addition to which we have a German boy with us who is very capable at helping with the work.”⁶⁵ It is telling of his acclimation to American culture that he employed the use of slaves, despite his earlier European liberal sentiments. In a letter later that year, Lehmann describes in more detail his lands and the house they live in with the addition, “We have been fortunate in having especially faithful and industrious Negroes who understand how to work in the fields and in the home and who appear to be quite happy with us... [And] for whom we have built a special house, for it is not the southern custom for blacks to live under the same roof with whites.”⁶⁶ From this later letter it is clear he has no issue with the segregation of the two races, but that is similar to the radical Germans and their views towards Jews during this time. The teaching he received by Arndt can only be assumed to have been influenced by Arndt’s

⁶⁵ Wilhelm Lehmann, Athens to Julia Hölterhoff 1835, Lehmann Family Papers.

⁶⁶ Wilhelm Lehmann, Athens to Julia Hölterhoff, Cologne, 12 April 1835, Lehmann Family Papers.

strictly Christian-dominated sense of nationalism.

By 1836, the talk of his returning to Germany reappeared in letters sent to his family. He mentions to Julia, “Although my situation is very pleasant, I am still overwhelmed by a great longing to visit my old fatherland once again. Were I certain that the crafty Prussian government would not play a nasty trick on me.”⁶⁷ The description of the Prussian government as “crafty” and the idea that it would play a trick on him is a telling idea as to how he views the operations of the Prussian government. He seems to have no hope in the effective reliability of the government. That is not to say that his experience would automatically warrant a distrust of the government. This cynicism may be a product of his now seemingly secure surroundings and the benefits that they have offered him as an intellectual in America. He seems to, by this point in his life, accept the fact that he was a radical student in Germany and he was persecuted by the government. It is not clear if he believes that the Prussian government at the time of his arrest was acting in accordance to their laws and being just in the procedure. From his vague description of his escape and experience in German prison, it can be gathered that there was a certain degree of dishonesty in his case on the part of the Prussian authorities, which is not surprising. This would be in accordance then with his later views of a crafty government, apt to play tricks.

By 1838, Lehmann was the father of two children, a boy and a girl and was still employed at the University of Georgia. His wife has also survived both

⁶⁷ Wilhelm Lehmann, Athens to Julia Hölterhoff, Cologne, 1836, Lehmann Family Papers.

pregnancies and is in a healthy state. Out of urging from his sister or perhaps his own musing, he tells Julia:

I feel a strong urge to greet once more the beloved realm of my fatherland, and there are few things on this earth which promise me such great pleasure. Yet to move to Germany with my family seems too inadvisable; my wife is afraid of a journey by sea...And should I pluck my dear children from the free flourishing land of their birth in order to transplant them into sheer despotism! Should we give the Prussian senators and staff preference over our justifiably esteemed constitution?⁶⁸

Lehmann is convinced now of the American style government and its ability to give perhaps a better life for his children than he experienced. It seems as though he also understands that Germany and his life there is special for him, not for his wife and children who know nothing of the language and who would be unreceptive to the places and experiences that Lehmann holds dear. This realization seems an important step in Lehmann's acculturation process, as it roots him deeper into the American way of life, and reinforces the idea that he is an intellectual above all else, rather than a German patriot who would give everything to secure his rights in Germany.

Two years later in 1840, Lehmann again contemplates traveling to Germany on an extended visit. He mentions that the Prussian King, Frederick William IV had succeeded his father Frederick William III, who had died in 1840. Whereas Frederick William III had at his disposal such advisors as Hardenburg who worked out the details at the Vienna Congress, Frederick

⁶⁸ Wilhelm Lehmann, Athens to Julia Hölderhoff, Cologne 9 October 1838, Lehmann Family Papers.

William IV issued the same power, without such advisors. In describing his thoughts to the change of kings, Lehmann accurately tells his sister, “The King is dead, to be sure, but changes in Prussian politics will only occur with great difficulty and amnesty is certainly out of the question.”⁶⁹ His skepticism over the change in policy is well founded and not entirely surprising as he has maintained a cynical view of Prussia since his departure. Though two years later in 1842, he received a pardon to travel to Prussia:

His Majesty the King have, with respect to the petition for pardon submitted to His Highness on September 20th of last year, graciously granted by royal decree on the 10th of this month a pardon for the sentence imposed by the Royal Supreme Court in Breslau in the year 1826 due to participation in political organizations, of which you hereby notified.⁷⁰

Through his own efforts or by efforts of those still within the country, the permission travel to Prussia once again was granted. From this letter only it is unclear as to what his sentence was to render him unable to return to the country under punishment of possible imprisonment. This does however allow him to travel to Germany and visit his family and bring his wife and children. The relationship that the children developed with their relations in Germany were lasting enough to impact the rest of their lives, as later letters indicate a strong line of communication. The fact that Lehmann willingly returns to America after having visited Germany is testament to his desire to remain in a political

⁶⁹ Wilhelm Lehmann, Athens to Julia Hölterhoff, Cologne 5 August 1840, Lehmann Family Papers.

⁷⁰ Justice Ministry Journal No. IV 264, Berlin to Wilhelm Lehmann, Athens, 13 January 1842, Lehmann Family Papers.

atmosphere that caters to his intellectual desires. The joy of reuniting was, however, marred shortly after by Lehmann's dismissal from the faculty at the University of Georgia. It was a necessity out of lack of funds and the University was no longer able to pay Lehmann.⁷¹ It is because of this that Lehmann moves to Wisconsin to reestablish himself and his family.

His migration to Wisconsin is seemingly a natural choice at this time. Wisconsin was on the verge of statehood, and therefore at one of the most western portions of American civilization. The fallout from the extreme political turmoil in Germany prompted thousands of Germans to immigrate to America and settle where they were able to get cheap land. Lehmann merely followed the pattern and moved with his family to Dodge County, which is northeast of Madison. He purchased 32 acres of land on which he would begin farming. The transition from being involved in the intellectual realm of university life to farming is an odd one to figure out. His expectation of America was originally one where he would be able to pursue his intellectual and cultural interests freely. He accomplished this to be sure, but by the time he moved to Wisconsin he was 45, and could have obtained a teaching position elsewhere in the country simply with his knowledge of languages. Two ideas remain at the forefront of explanation. The first being that in his world view 45 years old is quite aged, his father was 52 when he passed away and his mother only 53. This wasn't uncommon during this time period to die during what we now refer to as middle-

⁷¹ Extract from the minutes of the board of Trustees of the University of Georgia, in Session 3 August 1842, Lehmann Family Papers.

age. He very well is assuming he won't exist very long in this lifestyle. This may be a nice place to retire and live out the rest of his life, which he may assume to be relatively short. The other explanation could be a general dissatisfaction with Germans during this time period resulted in his inability to secure an academic post. The massive influx of Germans into America due to the political turmoil resulted in thousands of primarily peasant class Germans arriving into the country. They quickly consumed many lower level positions within the cities, generating a sense of xenophobia amongst many urban workers who felt threatened by the foreign competition. The Germans who didn't remain in an urban setting, and there were many, removed themselves to where they could farm and recreate their values, "Germans valued geographical stability and expected to pass their work and society on the next generation. Their perception of agriculture revolved around a sense of permanence."⁷² It is quite clear from earlier explanations and his forthcoming explanations of his land that he takes a great deal of pride in its cultivation and aesthetics. One of the primary differences between Lehmann and the other Germans who immigrated to Wisconsin at this time is Lehmann has been in the country for 20 years, has learned the language to a point of fluency we can assume and has made enough money to move and remain comfortable. His financial situation is also secured by the inferred wealth of his sister and her husband, of whom he occasionally

⁷² Gutmann et al. "German-Origin Settlement and Agricultural Land Use in the Twentieth Century Great Plains" in German American: Immigration and Ethnicity in Comparative Perspective ed. Wolfgang Helbich and Walter D. Kamphoefner (Madison: Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies, 2004). 140.

writes to for relatively large sums of money. It is gathered that they readily comply, leaving Lehmann with a near inexhaustible line of credit in his favor. This advantage left Lehmann able to participate more readily within the community if he was so inclined, as he did not have to concentrate on providing minimal sustenance for his family as the other immigrants during that time period did.

After his move to Wisconsin, letters from Lehmann become dramatically fewer. It is only assumed that the laborious nature of farming takes away time from the detailed and more poetic activities, such as letter writing. It is also a minute hypothesis on my part to connect an earlier incidence of frostbite he acquired during one of his first winters in America to a slower and more painful farming experience. He describes in the letter the reoccurring pain during cold months that are rather bothersome.⁷³

Lehmann's life continues relatively unmarked during the beginning years of his life as a farmer. His sister writes of the situation in Europe during the revolutions of 1848 with seemingly neutral accuracy. Her position, however, seems to lie with a moderate liberal stance, as she refers to many "agitators" who disrupt what she describes as proper progress. She mentions also she is quite for the liberation of Poland as its own state, and her thrill with some of the temporary progress that the interim governments of the revolution were able to achieve.⁷⁴

⁷³ Wilhelm Lehmann, Albany to Julia Hölterhoff Cologne 1 December 1827, Lehmann Family Papers.

⁷⁴ Julia Hölterhoff, Cologne to Wilhelm Lehmann Hustisford 8 April 1847, Lehmann Family Papers.

Lehmann's response to these happenings is short and predictable and he laments, "I hope the time is no longer far off when the wretched monarchy and all that is connected with it will be destroyed at the roots, since there is already mischief afoot in Vienna and Berlin."⁷⁵ His cynicism and skepticism remain for the governments of Germany, but missing with this biting response to the political situation is his common desire to return to the land of his birth. His 20 years experience in America or his change from urban to rural may be the cause of this absent lamentation.

As 1848 and the results of the political turmoil continue, news from his sister becomes more stressing. Living in Cologne during this time appears to be a center for activity, as his sister's house is seized for national purposes, which may influence how his sister views the situation, "We must first have a constitutional monarch in order to prepare us for a republic. The people must first acquire a respect for the law."⁷⁶ In a later letter she explains to Lehmann, "But, dear Wilhelm, as enthusiastic as I am about a republic, it is still not for us. One sees with horror the demoralization; it was not a struggle for freedom. It was communism with showed itself in its most terrible aberrations."⁷⁷ His sister is very sound in the belief of steady progress, not rapid revolution. This is typical of a German weary of the chaos presented by the violence of the French revolution, and with a living memory of what occurred during the Napoleonic

⁷⁵ Wilhelm Lehmann, Hustisford to Julia Hölterhoff Cologne 27 April 1848, Lehmann Family Papers.

⁷⁶ Julia Hölterhoff to Wilhelm Lehmann Hustisford 1849, Lehmann Family Papers.

⁷⁷ Julia Hölterhoff, Honnef to Wilhelm Lehmann Hustisford 3 July 1849, Lehmann Family Papers.

Wars. By 1850 Julia's explanation of the political situation grows far darker:

Our political situation is worse than anyone could have suspected. The princes appear to want to force everything back onto its old course again, and one cannot read the newspapers without indignation, how once concession after another is again wrung from the people. It is unbelievable how the men in the ministries close their eyes so completely to the mood of the people. What colossal preparations have been made in Prussia since this autumn in order to stand up to Austria's arrogance, and now all the sacrifices made for the peoples' happiness are in vain; Prussia has come to an agreement with deceitful Austria in order to root out all constitution impulses, I fear, however, that a terrible punishment will be meted out, for the people cannot quietly bear these decrees for long, For even the quietest of men are indigent and the king will find security only in the army when things start up again; we stand as if upon a mine and only a spark is required before we fly into the air. And how splendid the outcome could have been had the princes only learned that they are there for the sake of the people, but now it is merely wretched entertainment; we are all ill at ease in these unhappy times.⁷⁸

This lengthy excerpt is quite self-explanatory and is an excellent indicator of the mood of the public during those times. Julia's position in society allows her not only financial freedom to have access to certain lines of communication, but also a level of awareness not found in certain sects of society of that time. The next letter sent from Germany is from Lehmann's brother-in-law Matthias Hölterhoff, in which he mentions his duty to attend a meeting of the Upper-House of parliament despite the Junker party, "It is to be sure an inconceivable type of office, for one can accomplish nothing because the Junker party again has the upper hand."⁷⁹ His elevated position is quite clearly affirmed, though his distaste

⁷⁸ Julia Hölterhoff, Bonn to Wilhelm Lehmann Hustisford 29 December 1850, Lehmann Family Papers.

⁷⁹ Matthias Hölterhoff Honneff to Wilhelm Lehmann Hustisford 26 April 1851, Lehmann Family Papers.

for the Junkers is evident, allowing for his liberal sentiments to be made clear. It can be assumed through the discourse of his wife that he favors a more moderate approach to a republican government, rather than such chaos that appeared during the earlier revolutions in 1848. A letter from Julia in 1852 darkens the oblique political outlook within Germany:

...I cannot remain quiet at the actions of the conservatives; this reactionary, revolutionary party is so much in the majority that the upright liberals are always defeated. The right consists of Junkers, who do not wish to lose their privileges, and officials-a fine society. They were given a scare in the year 1848 and are now seeking vengeance, in that they are gain taking away all of the rights that were given to the people. You can imagine that they are well-regarded from above. We are now living in much worse times than before 1848.⁸⁰

Again, the excerpt is relatively self-explanatory, but its clarity in explanation is an excellent picture into the life of what can be assumed as an upper-middle class family. As the political situation in Germany spirals to new lows, talk within the letters to Lehmann become scarcer. In July 1852, Julia mentions excessive rate of emigration from Germany, “There are villages in Hesse and Nassau which are quite empty.”⁸¹ The emigration from Germany to countries overseas was at a peak during the years between 1850 and 1854 with some 728,000 persons leaving Germany in that four year span.⁸² It is no wonder that Julia marks such drastic changes in the demographic landscape in western Prussia.

A rare letter from Lehmann in late 1852 gives some detail as to his

⁸⁰ Julia Hölterhoff, Berlin to Wilhelm Lehmann Hustisford 20 March 1852, Lehmann Family Papers.

⁸¹ Julia Hölterhoff, Honnef to Wilhelm Lehmann Hustisford 4 July 1852, Lehmann Family Papers.

⁸² Sheehan, *German History*, 462.

political ideas in America. He mentions the elections of 1852 and the contest for the Wisconsin state legislature. He was “done an honor” by having his name placed on the ballot for the state legislature by the Whig party. Though he lost the election, as apparently most Whigs did during this election, his surprise at how respectful the entire population was of the election was remarkable, “Immediately after the election as if by magic, peace and quiet returned as though nothing had happened. This unqualified submission of all parties to the legally expressed will of the majority is truly a great phenomenon and proof that our free constitution rest on solid ground.”⁸³ His expression “unqualified submission” seems to indicate he felt the race unequal in some aspect, but was perhaps so moved at the respect for a rule of law that that idea alone soothed any agitation he experience over the results. His awe in the respect for order is very indicative of his desire to pursue his goals peacefully. In this situation he is more concerned with how the law is respected than the actual outcome of the election. It is exactly with this order that he was able to pursue his intellectual curiosities in ways that were impossible in Germany.

The letters continue for some many years, but the relevance to the questions at hand is dubious. The infrequency of Lehmann’s correspondence can most accurately be attributed to several factors. His age, having been born in 1802, he is in his early sixties by the time of the Civil War is a detail that should not be forgotten. His farm seems to consume an immense amount of time,

⁸³ Wilhelm Lehmann, Husisford to Julia Hölterhoff Cologne, 8 December 1852, Lehmann Family Papers.

considering he has some 32 acres of land to cultivate on a yearly basis. His children are also growing up and are able to correspond to their relations in Germany, and by the time of the Civil War, enlist. His youngest son, Julius is killed near the end of the war from wounds, which, to be sure, has no positive effect on Lehmann. The decline of written material from Lehmann alone is unfortunate in light of the immense political occurrences within Germany, as well as in America. He mentions nothing of his views on the Civil War, though it can reliably be deduced he is an advocate of the Union cause, despite his 15 some years in the south.

The production of this paper was a constant struggle to sift away the seemingly mundane aspects of life, both at home and abroad and arrive at the desired element. That desired element is the language that fosters a sense of self and nurtures identity. Such an element can be found easily in the themes of nationalism during the early part of the 19th century. The writings of the better known German intellectuals have been read and written and rewritten extensively, providing for a sound basis of general knowledge on the topic. The writings of lesser known, or in this case, entirely unknown writers who experienced identical hardships and similar cultural receptions are not contradictory to the earlier writings, but work as reinforcement to the general theme. This theme is one that depicts a refugee who flees out of fear of imprisonment or worse, and seeks not only physical freedom in America but a cultural and intellectual freedom to express their views in the safety of a

republican form of government, this in comparison to those who stayed and fought the governments until they died. The reception of these men can be seen as a watershed in the history of American academic progression. They introduced not only German culture, but a sense of reassurance that despite America's young government, its perception abroad is a positive one, drawing scholars to it. Unlike the later German immigrants who came seeking the tangible benefits of land, these few intellectuals care more for the free expression of ideas. These were the ideas that were repressed in their native land, and never had the chance to be debated and discussed, to enhance them. It is ultimately the desire of every person with an intellectual passion to see their ideas flourish in a manner most beneficial to the enhancement of culture. The idea that such passions are forgotten in the musty trunks in the attic is a disservice to not only the originators of the ideas, but to the modern scholars who wish to resurrect such debates for the benefit of modern society.

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