

Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel and the German Internee Experience at Fort Oglethorpe, 1917-19

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The *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* was a literary magazine created by German and German-American prisoners who were interned at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, during World War I. Many societal and political concerns led the federal government to incarcerate civilian enemy aliens during the war, but their experience has not been heavily studied. Although scholars have used the *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* as a primary resource for research about this era, there has not been an analysis of this source for its own worth. A careful examination of this rare publication shows the struggles and frustrations of these prisoners in their own words and provides a fascinating view of life in an American internment camp during World War I. Living in wood barracks in a barren tree-less camp surrounded by barbed-wire, the men struggled to rise above the overwhelming boredom, homesickness, and uncertainty incarceration forced on them.

With the start of World War I in Europe in August 1914, the United States began to detain Germans under the mandates of the Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907. These agreements were non-binding but formal international treaties on the rules of war and the rights and obligations of neutral countries.¹ The Hague

¹Lillian Goldman Law Library, "The Laws of War," in *The Avalon Project Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*, available at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/lawwar.asp.

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Conventions prohibited the use of harbors in neutral countries by hostile forces. Thus, when British and Japanese warships forced German naval ships into American ports, the US was obligated to keep the German flag vessels in American waters. These included the cruiser *SMS Geier*, and the passenger liners *Kronprinz Wilhelm* and *Prinz Eitel Friedrich*, which had been converted into auxiliary cruisers.² Their crews remained on the ships until the start of American involvement in the war. When Germany and the United States broke off relations in February 1917, the crews from the German naval ships were removed to internment camps within the US. Once the United States declared war on April 6, 1917, these internees officially became prisoners of war. These 1,356 men came under the jurisdiction of the War Department.³

The start of the war in 1914 also found a number of German cargo and luxury passenger liners in US harbors. Although these ships were free to leave, the crews chose to stay in American waters rather than risk capture by the British navy. These merchant mariners were civilians, and were free to live aboard the ships or to find apartments and work in town. When the US declared war, the crews from the cargo and cruise ships were rounded up and sent to internment camps. Originally about eighteen hundred men belonged in this category. Later, at least five hundred more in similar circumstances from countries like Panama and the Philippines were interned. Because they were civilians, these internees did not have the protection of prisoner-of-war status, and were overseen by the Labor Department.⁴

A third group of men targeted for incarceration were civilian enemy aliens. Millions of immigrants came to the US between the Civil War and the start of World War I. Germans were the single largest ethnic group, with two hundred fifty thousand

²Department of the Navy – Naval History and Heritage Command, “Schurz,” in the *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, available at <http://www.history.navy.mil/danfs/s7/schurz.htm>; Department of the Navy – Naval History and Heritage Command, “Kronprinz Wilhelm,” in the *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, available at <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-civil/civsh-k/krpz-wil.htm>; Department of the Navy – Naval History and Heritage Command, “Prinz Eitel Friedrich,” in the *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, available at <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/sh-civil/civsh-p/prinz-ef.htm>.

³William B. Glidden, “Internment Camps in America, 1917-1920,” *Military Affairs* 37, no. 4 (December 1973): 137.

⁴*Ibid.*

ports.⁸ In this atmosphere, after the United States officially joined the war, the federal government passed a series of wartime acts. The Espionage Act of June 1917 criminalized sharing any information that could be used to interfere with US military operations or to aid the enemy in any way. The Sedition Act of April 1918 amended the Espionage Act and made it illegal to speak out against or cast the government in a negative light. Under these acts anyone could be arrested if reasonable cause were found to suspect they might aid the enemy. Evidence of reasonable cause consisted not only of supplying information or money to the enemy, but also of simply speaking negatively about the US. Such speech might embolden others or cause fewer war bonds to be sold. Attorney General Thomas W. Gregory extended federal authority to a volunteer citizen's network, the American Protective League (APL), formed to uncover and report disloyalty. The Justice Department had been compiling a list of potential suspects since 1916. These included members of the radical Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the Socialist Party, members of anti-war groups, and members of pro-German groups and clubs. In all, sixty-three hundred Germans and German Americans were arrested under presidential warrant and the Justice Department interned twenty-three hundred.⁹ While some internees may have helped Germany financially or with information, others simply held positions of prominence or power. At Fort Oglethorpe civilian internees included businessmen, journalists, academics, and artists. Ernst Fritz Kuhn was an influential banker and E. Karl Victor was a leading tobacco merchant; both were considered too wealthy and influential to remain at large. Jonathan Zenneck, a radio specialist who had installed the Telefunken wireless transmitter at Sayville, Long Island, was considered too skilled to remain free. Count Albrecht Montgelas was the former editor of the *San Francisco Examiner* and the *Chicago Examiner*. Dr. Karl Oscar Bertling held a master's degree from Harvard

⁸Ibid., 189.

⁹Gerald H. Davis, "'Orgelsdorf': A World War I Internment Camp in America," *Yearbook of German-American Studies* 26 (1991): 251-52; Robert C. Doyle, "Over There and Over Here: Enemy Prisoners of War and Prisoners of State in the Great War," in *The Enemy in Our Hands: America's Treatment of Prisoners of War From the Revolution to the War on Terror* (Lexington, KY, 2010), 174; Ellis, "German-Americans in World War I," 195; Glidden, "Internment Camps," 137.

war, while the adjutant general provided general supervision. Inspector general staff visited the camps approximately every six months to report back to the adjutant general on conditions.¹¹

Several outside groups monitored the well-being of the internees. The US followed the provisions of the Hague Conventions carefully so that American prisoners of war would be similarly well treated. The Swiss government at Berne conducted negotiations on the administration of prisoners and disputes between the United States and Germany throughout the war. The Swiss legation handled German interests in the United States and served as the international oversight group for the POWs and internees. The legation made in-person inspections and reported on the camps. They also received prisoner complaints about treatment and conditions. Some prisoners also received money for their care through the Swiss Legation.¹²

The internment camp at Fort Oglethorpe, located near the Tennessee-Georgia border just south of Chattanooga, Tennessee, was a huge field enclosed by two parallel ten-foot-high barbed wire fences. Machine guns were mounted on towers outside the fence. Searchlights constantly panned and illuminated the perimeter at night. The 1919 annual report from the War Department noted thirty-six hundred internees at Fort Oglethorpe. Daily routine governed camp life. A bugle call woke internees at 5:45 a.m., followed by a roll call. Meals followed regular hours. Lights out was at 10:00 p.m. The compound was divided into camps A, B, and C; barbed wire separated each camp. A gate between camps A and B stood open during the day but was closed at 5:30 p.m. One prisoner described Camp A as "hermetically sealed" (*hermethisch verschlossen*) at night.¹³ To attend an evening's entertainment in Camp B, prisoners from Camp A were escorted under guard to Camp B and back. The men from Camp C were confined at all times.

Camp A, nicknamed the "Millionaires' Camp," housed approximately ninety internees who paid for their own care, either with personal funds or with monies received from sponsors. This

¹¹Davis, "Orgelsdorf," 252-53; Glidden, "Internment Camps," 139; William B. Glidden, "Casualties of Caution: Alien Enemies in America, 1917-1919" (PhD. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1970), 318-19.

¹²Davis, "Orgelsdorf," 256; Glidden, *Casualties of Caution*, 318-19.

¹³Erich Franke, "Amerikana: Erinnerungen von Erich Franke," p. 7, Akte R 67/ 533, Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde.

of my friends who had lived formerly only among their own set claimed that it was the most interesting time of their lives."¹⁶

Camp C was a punishment barracks for those who tried to escape or caused unrest. These men were given half-rations. Some may have been sent there as punishment for not working outside the camp, or for refusing mandatory camp duties. Many of these troublemakers belonged to the IWW. Seaman Franke described this camp as a "Special Stockade" for "very difficult lads" (*ganz schwere Jungens*) who had caused trouble for themselves through mutiny or other delinquency.¹⁷

Prisoners were allowed to write two, two-page letters per month and one card each week, not to exceed two hundred words. On top of these strict limits, all communication passed through a censor, which the prisoners found maddening. Letters deemed unacceptable were returned for rewriting. Those that made it through were redacted with black ink or actually cut up. Prisoners considered the censorship imbecilic, unreasonably rigorous, and a constant aggravation. The censor himself was hated. Biologist Goldschmidt described him as "one of the ugliest fellows I have ever met. A teacher of German in some college, dry and pedantic to the bone, this man considered his office a means of inflicting mental torture on the prisoners." The prisoners also complained that the censor unnecessarily held incoming and outgoing mail for weeks.¹⁸

Prisoners were susceptible to what was termed "Barbed Wire Disease." This recognized mental illness manifested itself in loss of interest, suspicion, delusions of persecution, hysteria, and raving. Erich Posselt later wrote about it in an article for the *American Mercury*, claiming that "dozens and dozens of men" had to be transferred to St. Elizabeth's Asylum for the Insane in Washington, and alluding to some suicides. Other symptoms he described included growing weird facial hair, spreading false rumors, and compulsive hammering.¹⁹ Barbed Wire Disease was generally believed to be exacerbated by persistent boredom, and

¹⁶Goldschmidt, *Ivory Tower*, 175.

¹⁷Davis, "Orgelsdorf," 254-55; Franke, "Amerikana," 7.

¹⁸Goldschmidt, *Ivory Tower*, 177; Posselt, "Prisoner of War," 317-18.

¹⁹Posselt, "Prisoner of War," 319.

a barracks into an activity room, described as "huge," with a stage, library, billiards table, and a piano. They also offered movies twice a week.²⁴ To combat boredom and stress, the men at Fort Oglethorpe organized an astounding number of activities. They created soccer and volleyball fields and men spent many hours playing sports. For a while, men were allowed to tend small gardens for flowers and salad greens. They built ship models and carved wood scraps. Many drew, painted, and wrote.²⁵

The United States had interned an entire German army band from the German colony of Tsingtao, including their instruments and scores. When other skilled musicians among the internees were added to this band the camp found itself with a "full fledged symphony orchestra," often conducted by the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra's Ernst Kunwald. At one concert, most memorable and extraordinary by multiple accounts, two to three thousand prisoners gathered in the mess hall to hear Beethoven's *Eroica* symphony directed by Dr. Karl Muck, formerly of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.²⁶

Prisoners organized a camp university; Wilhelm Steinforth served as the rector of "Oglethorpe University."²⁷ At the elementary level prisoners studied English, commercial letter writing, bookkeeping, and shorthand. Language classes were popular. Prisoners learned Spanish and Russian from a businessman, Hebrew and Swahili from a former missionary to Africa, Sanskrit and Hindu from a professor of Indology, and Chinese and Japanese from an engineer who had studied these languages as a hobby. Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Engineering, and European and American history were offered by professionals in their fields. Biologist Goldschmidt taught a class for four hundred men. The relief committee in New York provided language textbooks. Other classes, however, lacked books due to a military rule that mandated that prisoners could only receive books directly from the publisher, which was cost-prohibitive.²⁸

Some prisoners also created a literary magazine called the *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel*. Fort Oglethorpe was apparently the only one of the four American camps to produce a literary magazine

²⁴Glidden, "Internment Camps," 138; Goldschmidt, *Ivory Tower*, 176.

²⁵Goldschmidt, *Ivory Tower*, 177.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 176; Posselt, "Prisoner of War," 317.

²⁷"Lagerangelegenheiten," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* 10 (1919).

²⁸Goldschmidt, *Ivory Tower*, 176-77.

boosted morale, reported news from the outside world and from within the camps, offered a forum for prisoners to express their feelings on being imprisoned, and provided an occupation for those writing the articles or printing the paper. Some papers, such as the *Stobsiade* from Stobs Camp near Hawick, Scotland, even had regular subscribers back home in Germany; prisoners sent copies home to their families as part of their correspondence. For some prisoners, sharing the paper seems to have been a way of sharing their experiences and perhaps of reassuring their families that they were doing well.³³

While many of these papers are known in World War I studies, the *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* produced at Fort Oglethorpe has received little academic attention, perhaps because its subjects were not soldiers, but merchant seamen, intellectuals, and other German civilians who were in America when the United States joined the war. Relatively few copies of the paper survive today in a handful of American and German institutions. Internee writer Erich Posselt claimed that when the prisoners were finally released they were not allowed to take copies of the magazine with them. He smuggled his copies out in a false-bottomed suitcase. Whatever the cause for its relative obscurity, it is not listed in any of the standard bibliographies of *Gefangenenzeitungen* from this time.³⁴

The name *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* was something of a play on words, and embodies the tongue-in-cheek tone of much of its content. Orgelsdorf was the deprecating term that the internees used to refer to Fort Oglethorpe, and they called themselves *Orgelsdorfer*. *Eulenspiegel* is a similarly complex term. It refers to Till Eulenspiegel, the archetypal trickster character of German literature who played practical jokes in order to expose human shortcomings. He was often used for satirical effect and the producers of the *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* certainly took his philosophy to heart, using the newspaper to poke fun at each other, their guards, the United States, and even Germany. The cover image reflects the literal translation of *Eulenspiegel*: it shows an owl (*Eule*) holding a mirror (*Spiegel*) sitting on

³³Friedrich Strüne to his Family, October 29, 1917, Friedrich Strüne Papers, 1917-18, MSS 219, Special Collections Research Center, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

³⁴Posselt, "Prisoner of War," 320; Richard Hellmann and Kurt Palm, *Die deutschen Feldzeitungen* (Freiburg i. Br.: Verlag der Fr. Wagner'schen Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1918, 92-96.

In many ways, this publication defies labels. Goldschmidt described it in his memoirs as a literary magazine started by a group of young artists. Like a literary magazine, it featured poems, stories, articles about music, humorous anecdotes, and artwork. But like a newspaper, it also covered camp news, upcoming events, reviews of camp concerts, and results from camp sporting events. There was no war news, though internees were permitted to receive outside newspapers. Posselt, once a "young Bohemian" writer, was the publisher of the magazine and one of its many authors. Well-known German novelist Hanns Heinz Ewers was the editor.³⁶

Ten editions of the paper were printed between October 1918 and May 1919. Each edition consisted of approximately thirty pages, with a run of usually one hundred copies. It was sold for ten cents by barracks chiefs and in the canteen; hand-colored issues sold for fifty cents.³⁷ Proceeds of the paper went first to cover production expenses. Then, according to the first article of *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel*, profits were distributed—at the discretion of the editor—to the needy inhabitants of the camp. Posselt stated in his memoirs that profits from the paper were divided among the owner of the press, the printers, and the editor. Possibly some combination of the two outcomes occurred.³⁸

Before each issue reached the press, a copy was handed to the censor. Writers indulged in numerous jokes at his expense. According to Goldschmidt: "A favorite game was to inject some political joke into a poem in such a form that the censor did not understand it and passed it." The editorial columns printed occasional hints that certain issues or articles had been particularly closely scrutinized.³⁹

The quality of the printing and the publisher's own descriptions make it clear that improvisation played a big part in the production process. An internee brought the printing press and original rollers to the camp. Other supplies may have been obtained through the camp canteen. The paper used was known as Kraft or sulfite paper, strengthened by cooking wood pulp in

³⁶Goldschmidt, *Ivory Tower*, 177.

³⁷*Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* 1, 3, and 10 (1918-19).

³⁸Der Herausgeber, "Ein erstes Wort," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* 1 (1918); Posselt, "Prisoner of War," 320.

³⁹Goldschmidt, *Ivory Tower*, 177; "Lagerangelegenheiten," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* 9 (1919).

Am Setzkasten.



Holzschnitt von A. Schneider.

"Am Setzkasten" (At the type case). From *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel*, no. 9 (1919). Image courtesy of Morris Library's Special Collections Research Center, Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

Most illustrations in the *Eulenspiegel* were woodcuts, though some later issues also used linoleum cuts. *Die Druckerei* describes the artist's tools as primitive, but says nothing more about how the

reporting, and served as a vehicle to express the prisoners' feelings about their situation. Erich Posselt's "Momentaufnahmen" (Snapshots) describes peaceful moments at night filled with longing for freedom, and alludes to Barbed Wire Disease. He describes the well-educated men who occupy themselves with various hobbies such as furniture-making, concluding that those with hobbies are the lucky ones, as the rest are doomed to mental stagnation. Georg Wild's "Rio Grande de Orgelsdorf" relates the discovery of a river in the middle of camp (the main street flooded regularly) and compares its topology to other rivers, pointing out that the same forces that created the Grand Canyon were at work here.⁴⁶ Max von Recklinghausen's "Unsere Kunst-und Kunst-Gewerbe-Ausstellung" (Our Arts and Crafts Exhibition) explains the arts and crafts activities in Fort Oglethorpe, pointing out that many inmates had never had the opportunity to try their hand at creative expression before. He defends art as anything in which fantasy is given free rein, whether in painting, drawing, wood or metal working. He also asks for submissions to an exhibition that will be held in January 1919.⁴⁷

Perhaps the bitterest social commentary appeared in the final issue of *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* in May 1919, when spirits were low because the men had not yet been released even though armistice had been declared. Willy Bezcocka's "Drombilder" (Visions) captures their frustrations, questioning whether life still existed outside the walls as Bezcocka laments the delay in their release. Another piece from the same issue, "Für unsere Bücherwürmer" (For Our Bookworms), discourages too much reading because it dulls the senses that are intended to experience the world. Reading makes one forget to seek out one's own adventures, an ironic admonition to men who had no opportunity for adventure within the confines of the camp.⁴⁸

No event in camp life inspired more response from the paper's editors than the influenza epidemic that raged in the autumn of 1918. Two prisoner accounts claim that more than

⁴⁶Erich Posselt, "Momentaufnahmen," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* 5 (1918); Georg Wild, "Rio Grande de Orgelsdorf," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* Neujahr (1919).

⁴⁷M. v. Recklinghausen, "Unsere Kunst-und Kunst-Gewerbe-Ausstellung," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* Weihnacht (1918).

⁴⁸Willy Bezcocka, "Drombilder," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* 10 (1919); St. (pseud.), "Für unsere Bücherwürmer," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* 10 (1919).

These "Lieber Eulenspiegel" columns were clearly a place for the editors to vent some of their frustrations about their living conditions. Frequent digs at the censor included one column in which the writer described letters received from a friend. The friend constantly misspelled "censor" as "sensor" because he associated it with the word "sensitive." Some incidents in camp apparently deserved multiple comments, including several jokes at the expense of a guard who did not know who Johann Sebastian Bach was.⁵² The editors also allowed humor directed at themselves. Issue three included a humorous piece by Willy Bliemchen entitled "Lieber Herr Redakdeer!" (Dear Mr. Editor!). Written as a letter to the editor by someone whose submissions had been rejected, he presents some new short but dreadful poems and ditties about the personalities in camp to whet the editor's appetite for more.⁵³

Many of the articles about daily life involved satire or self-deprecating humor. In "Lager-Insassen" (Camp Inmates), Erich Posselt describes certain "types" of camp inhabitants. The first is the *Faustball* (fistball) player, who takes great pride in playing well but eventually gives up playing altogether because he will never make the rest of the players into true sportsmen. The second is the *Mitarbeiter* (colleague or collaborator) who writes poems and prose for publication. When his works are not published he claims not to care, but then is observed to air his justified anger at the idiotic editor who would not publish him in verse.⁵⁴

Another recurring humor column was entitled "Xenien" (Epigrams). These were bits of dialogue held between various tropes, such as "Rumors of Peace," "Freedom," "Biology," "Music," "Ship's Captain" and "Censor," clearly written to satirize aspects of the prisoners' incarceration. Some of the tropes were camp-specific, such as "Camp University," "Tsingtauer Orchestra," "Barbed Wire," "Camp A," and "Camp B."⁵⁵

Longer poems also included humorous ditties and satire about life in camp. Hans Stengel's "Schelmenlied" (Rogues'

⁵²Fritz-Konrad mit 'nem Bindestrich, "Lieber Eulenspiegel!" *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* Hot Springs (1919); "Lieber Eulenspiegel!" *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* 9 (1919).

⁵³Willy Bliemchen, "Lieber Herr Redakdeer!" *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* 3 (1918).

⁵⁴Fistball, a volleyball-like game, http://www.usfistball.com/media/USFA_Brochure.pdf (accessed September 8, 2011); Erich Posselt, "Lager-Insassen," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* Hot Springs (1919).

⁵⁵"Xenien," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* 1 & 2 (1918).

injury, the high point of the first concert under this conductor was Beethoven's *Third Symphony*—"Unsere Eroica!" (Our *Eroica*).⁵⁸

Some poems referenced traditional German folktales and stories. Several of the more humorous poems made use of the character Till Eulenspiegel ("Schelmenlied" by Hans Stengel and "Hei lewet noch!" by Walter Eberhard Gumpold). "Okt. 1918" by Hanns Heinz Ewers is a brief retelling in verse of King Gunther and Siegfried, characters from the German epic poem the *Nibelungenlied*, which made use of German folklore and mythology and came to represent German national identity.⁵⁹ It was most famously adapted by Richard Wagner in his Ring Cycle opera.

References to the United States tended to be unflattering at best. "Amerikana" was a series of articles written by Albrecht Montgelas in which he makes frequent disparaging remarks about the lowbrow nature of American culture while discussing the history of painting and art in America. From frequent comments made in the editorial notes, it is clear that this series of articles in particular had a hard time making it past the censor.⁶⁰

Comments on the war were veiled, probably because of the censor, but these did not necessarily express prisoners' belief that Germany would or should win the war. Instead, these remarks reflected their awareness that their countrymen were dying far away and their feelings of helplessness at not being able to assist in any way. Otto Schaefer's poem "Zuspruch" (Advice) exhorts the reader to remember that when the fighting and murder finally end, strength and pure hearts will be needed to help heal the wounds. The refrain of the poem is "look to the East!" (*blickt nach Osten!*), presumably meaning towards Germany. Albrecht Montgelas's poem in the following issue, "Mahnung!" (Admonition), takes exception to this advice. Montgelas argues that they cannot erase the atrocities of war just by looking to the East, nor can they ever truly know what their compatriots are

⁵⁸Otto Schaefer, "Das Strassburger Münster und der Cölner Dom: Warum sind sie deutsch?" *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* 4 (1918); "The Trustees of the Boston Symphony Orchestra Announce....," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* 2 (1918).

⁵⁹Hans Stengel, "Schelmenlied," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* 1 (1918); Walter Eberhard Gumpold, "Hei lewet noch!" *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* 3 (1918); Hanns Heinz Ewers, "Okt. 1918," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* 1 (1918).

⁶⁰Albrecht Montgelas, "Amerikana," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* 1, 4, 5, and Neujahr (1918-19); "Lieber Eulenspiegel," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* 2 (1918); "Redaktionelles," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* 3 (1918).

Other expressions of homesickness focused more on families and loved ones. Erich Posselt's "Ein Brief" (A Letter) describes a rainy day in camp spent thinking of the woman he loves and all the things he would like to do with her, such as going to concerts and museums. "An die Ferne" (At a Distance) is another Posselt poem, one that relates his longing for the woman he loves. Even though they are now farther apart than they have ever been before, she feels closer to him as he thinks of her in the stillness of the night.⁶⁵

Christmas naturally exacerbated homesickness most acutely. Posselt's "Im Gefangenenlager" (In the Prison Camp) depicts a Christmas with strangers while being haunted by lingering melancholy for loved ones far away. Wilhelm Steinforth's "Fünf Weihnachten" (Five Christmases) recounts five different Christmas celebrations during World War I, one on the battlefield, some in different prison camps or detention facilities, and the last in Fort Oglethorpe. He expresses his intense longing for his homeland, especially at Christmastime, and looks to the future now that the war is over.⁶⁶

Another theme that emerges in the poetry is the powerlessness and insignificance many of the prisoners felt in the face of their imprisonment, the war, and the path that fate seemed to have set for them. The word for fate or destiny (*Schicksal*) appears over and over throughout the paper. B. Nientiedt's "Farbenrätsel" (Color Riddle) presents everything in the world as colorless, while his "Wellenrätsel" (Waves Riddle) portrays people as small and insignificant and questions whether a mere human could have brought about the destruction and horror of war. "What are you, o little human, in the dance of the waves? / A puny barge that will soon be smashed." (*Was bist du, o Menschlein, im Tanze der Wellen? / Ein winziger Kahn und wirst bald zerschellen.*) He denies that one acts according to one's own will, as a higher power sends the waves, and we are merely puppets. Some poems take the feelings of insignificance to a cosmic level. Fritz Waern's "Ich" (I) exposes the hubris of thinking we are equal to God when death reduces us all to nothing in the end.⁶⁷

⁶⁵Erich Posselt, "Ein Brief," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* 2 (1918); Posselt, "An die Ferne," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* 1 (1918).

⁶⁶Erich Posselt, "Im Gefangenenlager," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* Weihnacht (1918); Wilhelm Steinforth, "Fünf Weihnachten," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* Neujahr (1919).

⁶⁷B. Nientiedt, "Farbenrätsel," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* 1 (1918); Nientiedt, "Wellenrätsel," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* 3 (1918); Fritz Waern, "Ich," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* 2 (1918).

men standing quietly outside the shack where Kunwald played the piano every day, and states that the listeners came away with more hope for the future. Kunwald also held a discussion group on Sunday evenings on the music of the masters, particularly Germans such as Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, and Schubert: "German music—German thinking—German perception!" (*Deutsche Musik—Deutsches Denken—Deutsches Empfinden!*)⁷¹

While providing commentary on their living conditions, the *Eulenspiegel* also strove to simply entertain or distract the reader from the monotony of his surroundings. R. Goldschmidt's "Allerlei Reisebekanntschaften" (Sundry Traveling Acquaintances) is a series of funny and not very flattering stories about his fellow passengers on a steamship in the Indian Ocean. "Das groessere Meer" (The Great Sea) is Ernst Fritz Kuhn's translation of a fable by Kahlil Gibran. Captain L.C.'s "Eine schaurige Christnacht" (An Eerie Christmas Night) is a Christmas ghost story set on a ship.⁷²

Poetry spanned a variety of forms, from free verse to ditties and even formal sonnets, such as R. Goldschmidt's "Aus einen Zyklus 'Tropische Sonnette'" (From a Series of 'Tropical Sonnets'). Some, such as "Mein Freund, der Hund" (My Friend, the Dog) by J. Preleuthner, were written in a dialect that looks provincial but featured metaphors as sophisticated as anything written in formal German.⁷³ "Die letzte Stunde: ein Seemannsgarn" (The Last Hour: a Sailor's Yarn) by Asbach uralt (Asbach the Ancient) describes several prisoners gathering around a stove on winter nights and listening to an aged sea captain tell stories of seafaring and ship wrecks, even though none of them believe his tales. He then retells a story in which a ship is saved because a boy laughs at the thought of the captain drowning with a runny nose.⁷⁴

Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel was only one of many methods employed at Fort Oglethorpe to occupy and entertain the prisoners,

⁷¹O. S. (Otto Schaefer?), "Ernst Kunwald," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* 5 (1918).

⁷²R. Goldschmidt, "Allerlei Reisebekanntschaften," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* 9, Neujahr and Hot Springs (1919); Ernst Fritz Kuhn, trans., "Das Groessere Meer," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* 9 (1919); Capt. L.C., "Eine schaurige Christnacht," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* Weihnacht (1918).

⁷³R. Goldschmidt, "Aus einen Zyklus 'Tropische Sonnette,'" *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* Weihnacht (1918); J. Preleuthner, "Mein Freund, der Hund," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* Neujahr (1919).

⁷⁴Asbach uralt (pseud.), "Die letzte Stunde: ein Seemannsgarn," *Orgelsdorfer Eulenspiegel* Hot Springs (1919).