

GENDERING MODERN GERMAN HISTORY: REWRITINGS OF THE MAINSTREAM

Conference at the Munk Centre for International Studies at the University of Toronto, March 21, 2003. Conveners: Karen Hagemann (University of Toronto/Technical University of Berlin), Christine von Oertzen (GHI). Co-organized by the Joint Initiative in German and European Studies at the Munk Centre for International Studies and the GHI-Washington. Co-sponsored by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the GHI-Washington, and the University of Toronto. Participants: Ann Taylor Allen (University of Louisville), Maria B. Baader (University of Toronto), Doris Bergen (University of Notre Dame), Kathleen Canning (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor), Jane Caplan (Bryn Mawr College), Roger Chickering (Georgetown University), Belinda Davis (Rutgers University), Margit Eichler (University of Toronto), Geoff Eley (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor), Atina Grossmann (The Cooper Union, New York City), Young-Sun Hong (SUNY, Stony Brook), Marion Kaplan (New York University), Wiebke Kolbe (University of Bielefeld), Claudia Koonz (Duke University), Thomas Kühne (University of Konstanz), Thomas Lindenberger (Center for Contemporary History, Potsdam), Michael Marrus (School of Graduate Studies, University of Toronto), Mary Jo Maynes (University of Minnesota), Robert Moeller (University of California, Irvine), Merith Niehuss (University of the Bundeswehr, Munich) Ronald W. Pruessen (University of Toronto), Jean Quataert (SUNY, Binghamton), Till van Rahden (University of Chicago/University of Cologne), James Retallack (University of Toronto), Carola Sachse (Max Planck Institute for the History of the Sciences), Edith Saurer (University of Vienna), Angelika Schaser (University of Hamburg), Susan Solomon (Munk Centre for International Studies, University of Toronto), Hanna Schissler (University of Hannover), Irmgard Steinisch (York University), Richard Wetzell (GHI).

Writing on the history of women has undergone remarkable expansion and change since it began in the late 1960s. Not only have the questions become more varied and complex; there has also been an increasing emphasis on writing the history of women as part of a broader history of gender, pushing forward the move from traditional political history to social and cultural history. To what extent have studies on women and gender influenced our knowledge of German history in general? What are the differences between North America and Germany in this respect?

This conference brought together distinguished scholars from Canada, Germany, the United States, and the United Kingdom to reflect

on the state of historiography on gender in German history. Each of the eleven panels consisted of a main speaker and a commentator. In order to promote a lively exchange across the "Atlantic divide," each panel paired German and American presenters. The speakers covered a broad range of fields in German history.

Geoff Eley opened the first panel, speaking on nation, national identity, and collective memory. Eley noted that female voices were marginalized in the nineteenth-century public sphere, because German nation building created particular obstacles to the development of a strong women's suffrage movement, such as strong anti-Catholicism, anti-feminism, and anti-Semitism. But in contrast to their English counterparts, German women in his view also failed to develop a radical feminism, so that in Germany, a gendered analysis of nation-making had to broaden its focus far beyond the merely political. Eley's presentation was challenged by numerous participants for its narrow definition of politics. Commentator Angelika Schaser (University of Hamburg) pointed out the irony that Eley, who played a prominent role in challenging the thesis of a German *Sonderweg*, emphasized German peculiarities in the case of gender and nation-building.

Likewise, Thomas Kühne's presentation on the state, parties, and politics was criticized for its narrow understanding of gender as a concept and category of historical research. On the one hand, Kühne pledged to "bring the state back in" to the historical analysis of gender. On the other, he contended that in many areas of politics and the state, gender played little or no role. Instead of focusing on gender-based power relations, he suggested focusing on the state as a masculine world held together by male bonds. In his comment, James Retallack acknowledged the challenge of integrating gender in the historical analysis of the state, but he also referred to well-known historiographical work that had successfully met this challenge. Several participants, most prominently among them Jean Quataert, questioned the extent to which Kühne had moved away from traditional "mainstream" political history.

Karen Hagemann provided the audience with an overview on gender, military, and war in German historiography. She noted that German military history belonged to the fields that until most recently resisted taking gender into account. Recent works, among them her own, have changed this picture. In particular, studies on masculinity have broadened our understanding of the interrelation between warfare, identity, and society. Roger Chickering expressed his appreciation of these findings; however, he was less optimistic than Hagemann about the innovative impact that recent studies on gender, masculinity, and the military had on mainstream military history. In his view, the overwhelming ma-

majority of military historians in Germany and the United States failed to address the challenge of a gendered analysis in their field.

Belinda Davis discussed the outcomes of three decades of research on protest and social movements in German history that correspond with international findings. Female political activists and their activism seem more successful when they address conventional "women's" issues within conservative networks; in the transition from protest to power, women tend to "disappear" from the political platform unless they pursue "women's issues." Once protest movements gain influence and establish a standing, women tend to lose status within these movements. Davis maintained that despite their merits, most studies of gender in protest and social movements did not result in methodological or theoretical innovation. Nor did they stay true to the original principle of women's history: serving political aims. Approvingly, Thomas Lindenberger pleaded for the inclusion of microhistories of the everyday as in the study of "history from below," an approach that has proved open to the feminist challenge.

Edith Saurer examined the impact of gender research in the areas of religion and ethnicity. Important studies have shed light on the denominational women's movement and emancipation, on the feminization of religion since the late eighteenth century, and on the ambiguities of women's place within organized religions. Saurer stated, however, that studies on religion and gender in early modern times have not only been far more numerous but also more attentive to methodological and theoretical innovation. She especially encouraged scholars of modern German history to focus more closely on the gendered language of religion, for example in women's religious writings. Ann Taylor Allen supported this plea by adding that the history of organized religion in modern times has for too long been ignored by gender historians because it was considered "anti-emancipatory." Marion Kaplan emphasized that religion provided more than just a study of beliefs. "Behavior" and "belonging" also had to be taken into account, whereby the research on religion would become a complex task as well as a useful tool to further explore the gendered dimensions of social and cultural history.

Maria Baader presented an excellent account of the state-of-the-art of German-Jewish history. The historiography on Jews in Germany has only recently attracted greater interest on the part of non-Jewish German historians. Baader stressed that in contrast to any other field of German historiography, studies on women and gender have found their way into the mainstream of German-Jewish and German "general" history. Gender played a pioneering role in German-Jewish social history, namely through Marion Kaplan's pathbreaking studies on German-Jewish middle-class women, which in turn made considerable inroads into Ger-

man national narratives. In Baader's view, younger German scholars of both sexes seem to integrate the category of gender into their work with ease, and, as Till van Rahden pointed out, major publication series and journals devoted to German Jewish Studies publish more essays on gender than most of the leading German history journals.

In contrast to Baader's optimistic account, Doris Bergen stated the opposite for the use of gender as an analytical category in most studies of the Holocaust. Even though it is widely agreed that Nazi Germany was a "male state" explicitly organized along gender lines, gender has barely found its way into mainstream analysis, either in Germany or in the United States. Important and innovative work on topics like the interrelations between fascisms and sexualities or on the gendered reevaluation of the categories "perpetrator," "bystander," and "victim" is flourishing in niches. Bergen presented a striking example of how the analysis of gender can deepen our understanding about the inconsistencies within Nazi ascriptions of racial or ethnic classifications and thus reshape the perception of Nazi Germany. When during the war years courts had to decide whether or not to grant the status "*Volksdeutscher*," they often referred to fitness for duty, to reproductive capacities, or to household skills instead of emphasizing racial criteria.

Kathleen Canning traced the chronological relationship between gender, class, citizenship, and the welfare state in Anglo-Saxon historical writing during the last four decades, and she compared this development with the changes in German historiography. She reminded the audience that in England and the United States, the feminist focus on women and gender emerged from the field of labor history, which in turn had a crucial impact of the so-called "demise" of class as an undisputed category in social history. The focus of studies on labor and gender widened to a whole range of areas such as welfare, state and social policies, social hygiene, production and consumption, body history, and citizenship. The study of gender clearly fostered mainstream knowledge about the welfare state, but Canning argued for moving beyond this stage. She suggested further historicizing citizenship by viewing it as a multidimensional discursive practice that includes individual experience. The subjectivity of citizenship should be moved to the center stage of historical research to understand more about social interactions and the dynamics of the shaping and the limits of the welfare state.

Merith Niehuss provided the audience with reflections on gender, the family, and consumption. She argued that over the last decades, a growing number of studies have concentrated on the gendered impacts of labor market policies, on the discourses of the male breadwinner and the female housewife model, as well as on women's experiences of family- and work-related labors. For future research, Niehuss made suggestions

as to how historians might further engage in interdisciplinary approaches. For example, she felt that statistics were neglected in recent historical research. Also, disciplines like psychology and sociology provided tools to better understand processes of decision-making in areas like employment, population politics, and household management. Robert Moeller (who was unable to deliver his comment in person; instead it was read by Robin Ostow from the University of Toronto) replied to Niehuss's account that all history should begin at home, i.e. with individual stories and issues relevant to personal experience. His statement was in some ways echoed by the audience, which was reluctant to accept Niehuss's quantitative approach. Instead, discussants urged the forum to consider carefully the differences in the notion of "family." On the one hand, it should be regarded as a subject for historical research. On the other hand, it had to be historicized as a concept that helped shape norms, which in turn marginalized alternative forms of cohabitation.

In the last session of the conference, Atina Grossmann presented a thorough and amusing analysis of the role of gender in the history of bodies, sexualities, and reproduction. Grossmann reaffirmed calls made earlier in the conference to implement concepts of subjectivity, experience, and everyday life, also in order to reexamine current assumptions of periodization. In particular, liberating and repressive tendencies during the Weimar period needed to be reconsidered, as well as continuities and discontinuities after 1933. Wiebke Kolbe added approvingly that work was also left to be done for the nineteenth century and on the conceptualization of men's bodies.

Hanna Schissler and Jane Caplan wrapped up the discussions that had unfolded during three days of intense debate. They both returned to the overarching question of this workshop: whether or not gender history has found its way into the mainstream of "universal" German history. Both of them agreed that this question marked an "Atlantic divide" between the academic cultures in Germany and North America. History-writing on women and gender started a decade earlier in the United States, where feminist historians faced fewer institutional barriers than in Germany. Also, master narratives were less powerful in the decentralized and culturally diverse American educational system. As a result, American gender historians were among the first to begin to question the mainstream in many areas of German historiography, and, as the conference in Toronto showed, they oppose the model of "mainstreaming" gender history.

Kathleen Canning rejected taking the mainstream as a means for measuring the success of gender history, for this would certainly limit innovative potential and prevent scholars from asking important questions and developing interdisciplinary approaches. Atina Grossmann

provided personal recollections to avoid an overly pessimistic view. She drew attention to the fact that in the United States, gender historians had moved from the margins into good positions: informal meetings had grown into powerful networks, which was particularly true of the German Women's History Group in New York. Younger historians also challenged the view of those who believed they had been left on the margins. They considered the presenters at this workshop as representing the mainstream of German gender history.

Christine von Oertzen