

## PREFACE

---

The feature articles in this issue of the *Bulletin* reflect both long-standing interests of the GHI and new directions in its research program. German-Jewish history and German migration to North America were the subjects of several of the earliest conferences the GHI organized. Two new collaborative initiatives give renewed prominence to these fields. The first joint lecture organized by the Leo Baeck Institute and the GHI served as the occasion for two penetrating assessments of contemporary studies of Jewish life in Germany. In her lecture “Reflecting on the Past, Envisioning the Future,” Liliane Weissberg sets recent German fascination with Judaism and the Jewish past within a tradition of scholarship initiated by Moses Mendelssohn. Jeffrey Peck, in his comment on Weissberg’s survey, calls attention to the central role of recent immigration in transforming the Jewish community in Germany, and suggests ways in which global migration is transforming notions of identity.

Migration and identity in an earlier era was the subject of the first Edmund Spevack Memorial Lecture, sponsored by the GHI and Harvard University. Speaking at Harvard’s Adams House, where Spevack (1963–2001) had resided as an undergraduate, Kathleen Neils Conzen examined the shaping of a distinctive German Catholic “ethno-religious subculture” in the United States during the nineteenth century. Conzen’s lecture was a fitting tribute to a scholar whose too brief career was devoted to explicating the reciprocal influences Germany and the United States have exercised upon one another over the past two centuries; the GHI is pleased to publish the lecture here for a broader audience.

The essays by Denis Cosgrove and Karen Till, originally presented at a symposium on the “spatial turn” in history, reflect the GHI’s engagement with the history of the environment. Historians have come to recognize the importance of conceptions and perceptions of space in humanity’s interactions with its surroundings. They have been guided in no small part by their colleagues in the field of geography. Geographers have taken a variety of approaches to exploring the experience of space, as the two essays published here demonstrate. Cosgrove ranges widely in both time and space in tracing changes in the meanings of the terms “landscape” and *Landschaft* and the shifting relationships between the two. Till, by contrast, focuses on one city and a relatively short period of time—Berlin in the decade and a half since German unification—to analyze the interconnections between place and memory.

A special feature of this issue of the *Bulletin* is the thought-provoking discussion of globalization and its critics that Harold James presented at the GHI when he accepted the first Helmut Schmidt Prize in German-American Economic History. The prize was established by the German business community in the United States in cooperation with the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany. As Knut Borchardt of the University of Munich noted in his laudation, James shares with the prize's namesake a great sensitivity to the connections between political and economic weakness. That sensitivity is evident in James's many writings on the history of modern Germany and of the international economy, and it is manifest, too, in his consideration here of political circumstances and economic vulnerability in the wake of the September 11 terror attacks.

In the "GHI Research" section of this issue of the *Bulletin*, we report on two recently launched projects. A group of two dozen German and American scholars will be joining forces under the aegis of the GHI's "Competing Modernities" initiative to explore a century of relentless change in Germany and the United States. Whether as rivals, enemies, or partners, the two countries have displayed a fascinating mix of deep-rooted similarities and fundamental differences since taking their places as major political and economic powers on the international stage after around 1870. The participants in "Competing Modernities" will work in pairs, each of which will examine a broad aspect of the two nations' histories in order to produce a systematic comparison of national histories that will shed light on what might be considered most characteristic of each. The GHI is grateful to the Robert Bosch Foundation for a generous grant that has made this project possible. We would also like to thank the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation) for its support of the study "National Disasters in Transatlantic Perspective: River Floods in German and U.S. History." Taking a single form of natural disaster as its focus, this project will examine the social responses to emergency situations in the two countries and the development of a distinctive "culture of catastrophe" in each.

News of the GHI and its staff usually appears in the final pages of the *Bulletin*, but two related news items deserve special mention. As this issue was about to go to press, two GHI research fellows were honored for their outstanding scholarly achievements by Germany's leading historical association, the Verband der Historiker und Historikerinnen Deutschlands, at its annual meeting. Simone Lässig was awarded one of the Verband's biennial prizes for the two best *Habilitationsschriften* in the field of history for her study *Jüdische Wege ins Bürgertum: Kulturelles Kapital und sozialer Aufstieg im 19. Jahrhundert* (Jewish Paths to the Middle Class: Cultural Capital and Social Advancement in the Nineteenth Century).

Astrid M. Eckert received the Verband's biennial Hedwig Hintze Prize for the best history dissertation for her *Kampf um die Akten: Die Westalliierten und die Rückgabe von deutschem Archivgut nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg* (The Battle for the Files: The Western Allies and the Return of German Archives after the Second World War). My GHI colleagues and I join in congratulating Simone and Astrid for this well-deserved recognition.

*Christof Mauch*  
Director