

## GERMAN HISTORY, 1890–1930 ELEVENTH TRANSATLANTIC DOCTORAL SEMINAR IN GERMAN HISTORY

Seminar at the GHI and Georgetown University, April 13–16, 2005. Co-sponsored by the GHI and the BMW Center for German and European Studies, Georgetown University. Conveners: Roger Chickering (Georgetown University) and Richard F. Wetzell (GHI). Faculty Mentors: Rüdiger vom Bruch (Humboldt University), Edward Ross Dickinson (University of Cincinnati), Martina Kessel (University of Bielefeld), Suzanne Marchand (Louisiana State University).

Participants: Simone Ameskamp (Georgetown University), Eva Bischoff (University of Munich), Matthew Brown (Washington University), Jürgen Denzel (University of Freiburg), Olaf Hartung (University of Kiel), Heather Jones (Trinity College, Dublin), Stephanie Kleiner (University of Konstanz), Jonathan Koehler (University of Rochester), Christopher König (Theological University Kampen, Netherlands), Martin Lücke (University of Bielefeld), Marti Lybeck (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor), Michael O'Sullivan (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), Daniel Siemens (Humboldt University, Berlin), Lisa Todd (University of Toronto), Sven Trösch (University of Cologne), Katja Zelljadt (Harvard University).

The eleventh Transatlantic Doctoral Seminar brought together sixteen doctoral students from Europe and North America to discuss their dissertation projects on German history in the period 1890 to 1930. The first panel examined two different aspects of popular culture and politics in the *Kaiserreich* and Austria. Jürgen Denzel's paper "Fussball und Militär im Kaiserreich" argued that the increasing popularity of soccer in Imperial Germany owed much to the promotion of the sport by the military. On the one hand, the military supported the activities of bourgeois soccer clubs in order to immunize working class youth against the leisure-time offerings of social-democratic organizations. On the other hand, the incorporation of soccer into military training created more demand for soccer clubs. The increasing role of sports in military training, Denzel suggested, can be seen as a sign of modernization and liberalization. Jonathan Koehler's paper examined the Austrian Social Democratic Party's use of street demonstrations and political protest in Vienna between 1890 and 1907. He argued that the party fashioned Austrian Social Democracy as the "modern religion of the masses" by using Catholic religious language to mobilize workers according to an idea of civic participation, which rejected previous claims that liberalism had made upon private life.

The second panel featured two papers on issues of gender. Marti Lybeck's paper "Are These Women? Gender and Sexuality in Representation of Women Students in Zurich in the Late Nineteenth Century" used autobiographical texts by women students as well as novels of ideas featuring women students to investigate the role of same-sex relations in each. Although sexological discourses were becoming known to a broad public sphere at this time, the concept of homosexuality was marginal to an intensive discussion of heterosexuality and absent from the conceptions of women students. The relatively conservative framework of *Bildungsbürgertum*, Lybeck argued, provided a basis for women students to engage in new forms of sociability and to develop a variety of close relations, often with both sexes, under the flexible rubric of friendship. Sven Trösch's paper "Der gekaufte Mann: Männlichkeit und Konsum in Herrenmodezeitschriften der Weimarer Republik" asked in what ways consumption helped to construct masculinity. Through an examination of three male fashion magazines Trösch was able to trace the formation of a civilian, consumerist and fashion-conscious form of masculinity in the course of the 1920s and 1930s, which was especially appealing to big-city white-collar workers.

The third panel dealt with sexuality and violence during the First World War. Lisa Todd's paper "'Almost All Loose Women Are Infected': The Campaign to Combat Sexual Promiscuity in World War I Germany" discussed the changing nature of sexual relations on the German World War I home front, the heightened legal control of "promiscuous" women and public spaces, and the continuing debates on immorality in order to illustrate how the myriad responses to these challenges were symptomatic of a much larger wartime concern—the effect of "total war" on the future health of German society. Heather Jones's paper "The Spring Reprisals of 1917: Prisoners of War and the Violence of the Western Front" considered how particular cycles of violence operated during the First World War by looking in detail at reprisals against French and British prisoners held by the German army in spring 1917. These reprisals occurred as retaliation for mistreatment of German prisoners by the French. Such cycles of violence, Jones contended, significantly altered contemporary opinions regarding the permissible boundaries of prisoner treatment and military behavior.

Moving beyond the war years, the fourth panel, too, was devoted to sexuality, violence, and crime. Martin Lücke's paper "Markt, Macht, Männlichkeit: Mann-männliche Prostitution in Deutschland im Kaiserreich und in der Weimarer Republik" asked in what ways gender codes influenced the debates over male-male prostitution in Imperial and Weimar Germany. Lücke used Robert W. Connell's concept of "hegemonic masculinity" as a heuristic device, which he applied to three levels of

analysis: the construction of homosexual clients and male prostitutes in the sexological literature; debates over the legality or criminality of male-male prostitution; and aspects of the social interaction between male prostitutes and their homosexual clients. Daniel Siemens's paper "Inszenierung und Emotionalisierung: Sensationsprozesse der Zwischenkriegszeit in Chicago und Berlin" explored the role of court reporting by looking at two sensational 1920s trials that took place in Berlin and Chicago. His analysis showed that the newspapers' presentation of the trials contained a strong emotional component. In both cases, the newspapers interpreted the crimes in question as "typical of the times" and thus gave them a meaning that drew readers in. The reporting appealed to "society's innovative potential" to reflect on itself critically and thus to renew urban society. The transnational perspective, Siemens argued, reveals "local moral orders" of the modern metropolis.

The fifth panel extended the discussion of violence and death to the topics of cannibalism and cremation. Eva Bischoff's paper "Wahrheit und Verfahren: Ethnologisches und kriminologisches Wissen vom Kannibalismus" analyzed trials of supposed cannibals in German East Africa in 1908/09 and in Germany between 1922 and 1931. By examining professional publications as well as medico-psychiatric expert witness testimony she sought to show how the trials constructed and maintained a cannibalistic "Other" through "plays of truth." The paper aimed to reconstruct the interconnections between ethnologic and criminological knowledge in order to demonstrate its "effectiveness" in producing and reproducing identity and alterity. Simone Ameskamp's paper "The Meaning of Death and Life: Cremation in Imperial and Weimar Germany" argued that the fiery images that members of the cremation movement used around the turn of the twentieth century indicated a shift in attitudes toward mortality: The traditional notion of death as sleep faded, while cyclical ideas of an accelerated return to the origins came to the fore. Employing organic metaphors, cremationists conceived of life as a constant transformation. They regarded death as a form of homecoming and dying as the separation of the immortal soul or spirit from the physical body. Dynamic and cyclical images evoked a sense of eternity and thereby dampened the fear of death.

The sixth panel was devoted to the theme of history and memory. Katja Zelljadt's paper "*Alt-Berlin*: Deciphering a *lieu de mémoire* of Imperial Germany" argued that around 1900 *Alt-Berlin* became increasingly popular as a catchphrase for all things urban and historical in the capital. In her discussion of the three realms in which *Alt-Berlin* appeared during the Imperial period—theater, exhibits, and photography—Zelljadt analyzed the meanings behind each form of *Alt-Berlin* and revealed how historical consciousness functioned as an essential element in Berlin's

Wilhelmine era. Olaf Hartung's paper "Museumsgründungen zwischen Historismus und Moderne: Formen bürgerlicher Geschichtskultur in Zeiten gesellschaftlichen Umbruchs" examined three examples of a new breed of museum: Nuremberg's transport museum, Dresden's Hygiene Museum, and Bochum's Mining Museum. The exhibits mounted by the railroad officials, doctors, and mining engineers who founded these museums were primarily cultural-historical. Therefore, when historicism entered a crisis during the Weimar years, so did these exhibits. That this crisis was largely due to their problematic historiographical assumptions was lost on those who ran these museums. Instead of revisiting these assumptions, they simply reduced the historical dimension of their exhibits.

The seventh panel dealt with the role of religion. Christopher König's paper "'Germanisierung des Christentums': Nationalreligiöse Vorstellungen im deutschen Protestantismus und der völkischen Bewegung" examined attempts to create a German national religion. König used the cases of Wilhelm Schwaner, the founder of the *Volkserzieherbewegung*, and Arthur Bonus, who coined the phrase "Germanisierung des Christentums," to argue that such figures regarded religious renewal as the precondition for a "German rebirth." This religious renewal should not be understood as an *Ersatzreligion* but as a search for a genuine religion. Michael O'Sullivan's paper "Roots of Renewal: The Role of Gender in Catholic Religious Revival, 1918–1933" used an analysis of gender to suggest an alternative interpretation of the religious decline and revival of Catholic life in western Germany during the Weimar Republic. Instead of searching for the decline of religion in the modern world, O'Sullivan explored how Catholics found new ways to understand their religious traditions after war and revolution made older approaches less meaningful. In particular, the paper demonstrated how new articulations of Catholic masculinity and appeals to women as maternal guardians of Catholic religious life and morality motivated young men and mothers to undertake a religious awakening in the early 1930s.

The final panel was devoted to cultural and intellectual history. Stephanie Kleiner's paper "Inszenierung der Macht—Macht der Inszenierung: Oper und Festspiele als Medien politischer Repräsentation, 1890–1930" examined the role of opera as a medium of political *Sinnstiftung* in the political festival culture of the period 1890 to 1930. Her analysis addressed institutional as well as discursive and performative aspects so as to understand opera as a musical-dramatic genre and the opera house as a place of gathering and entertainment. Matthew Brown's paper "Retrieving the Past: Cassirer, Heidegger, and the Legacies of German Culture, 1916–1925," which focused on the development of Cassirer's philosophical project from the First World War through the 1920s, argued that the salient differences between Cassirer and Heidegger lay in their

competing interpretations of Western thought and German culture, pitting Cassirer's retrieval of the German humanist tradition against Heidegger's vision of a religiously oriented heritage with roots in Romanticism.

Even more than in the previous year's seminar, the prominence of cultural history—especially work on gender, sexuality, and deviance—among the seminar's papers was striking. But while most papers focused on cultural history, almost all of them sought to place their topics in the larger contexts of political, social or military history. The work in cultural history was fueled by a profusion of sources, ranging from fashion magazines to expert witness testimony in criminal trials. The focus on cultural history also meant that the caesuras of political history marking this period, especially the First World War, did not play much of a role in most of the papers. While this left some participants wondering whether the influence of the war had been understated, others argued that it was important to let cultural history find its own chronology and trajectory. Equally noteworthy was the absence of the rise of Nazism from almost all of the papers. This, too, was regarded as a sign that cultural history was emancipating itself from political history. The papers' move away from familiar political reference points was not accompanied by a turn to new master narratives or theoretical paradigms. Instead, skepticism (and eclecticism) regarding theory and master narratives reigned at the seminar, as concepts such as modernity, modernization, crisis, hegemonic masculinity, and political religion were subjected to vigorous critical scrutiny. As far as themes were concerned, the "Verwissenschaftlichung des Sozialen" and the increasing role of experts were certainly prominent concerns in many of the papers. But the papers and discussions did not advance the Foucauldian argument that individuals were becoming increasingly subject to a medico-legal knowledge-power complex. Instead, many papers suggested that social processes of control and exclusion were in many respects counterbalanced by the erosion of boundaries (between normal and abnormal; men and women) that had some liberating effects for individuals. While some participants wondered if the papers had paid sufficient attention to the question of power, almost everyone agreed that the papers had provided a highly differentiated picture of *Kaiserreich* and Weimar society and culture, one that eschewed easy generalizations in favor of demonstrating the complexity of social phenomena such as gender relations, deviance, violence, memory, and religion.

*Richard F. Wetzell*