

YOUNG SCHOLARS FORUM 2007

BEYOND THE NATION: U.S. HISTORY IN TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Seminar at the University of Texas, Arlington, March 29–April 1, 2007. Co-sponsored by the GHI, the University of Texas, Arlington, and the Dallas Goethe Center. Conveners: Thomas Adam (University of Texas, Arlington), Uwe Lübken (GHI). Faculty mentors: Steven Hoelscher (University of Texas, Austin), Walter Kamphoefner (Texas A&M University), Sonya Michel (University of Maryland).

For the second time, the German Historical Institute's Young Scholars Forum took place at the University of Texas in Arlington. It brought together seventeen advanced doctoral students and recent Ph.D.s for two days of lively discussion in a stimulating atmosphere.

This year's topic, transnational aspects of US history, proved to be as challenging as it was fruitful. Instead of looking at the interrelationship between societies and cultures from the viewpoint of the nation-state, transnational analyses emphasize the myriad of connections, entanglements, and transfers that link certain elements of one society and culture to that of others.

Unsurprisingly, several papers dealt with various histories of migration, ethnicity, and identity, a field that already explored transnationalism decades before the term came into existence. Christine Hartig looked at the history of German-Jewish children who were sent to the United States before and during World War II in order to save them from persecution and, ultimately, annihilation by National Socialist Germany. These children were torn between the hopes of the families they had to leave behind, the demands of their foster parents and homes, and their own expectations. They not only had to adjust to a new language and new customs, but they also found themselves exposed to different concepts of childhood and parenthood in Germany and the United States. In her paper on migration and consular officials in the Habsburg Empire and the United States, Nicole M. Phelps showed how the process of mass migration transformed the traditional concept of territorial sovereignty. Challenged by multiple new problems, both states reacted by expanding their respective consular services, and they increasingly claimed jurisdiction over "their" citizens abroad, thus strengthening a new, body-based concept of sovereignty.

Birte Timm and Ely Janis both clarified the importance of transnational connections and entanglements in fostering nationalism and national identities, especially in those cases where a nation-state was supposed to be carved out of the realm of an empire. While Timm looked at the reciprocal influences between the ongoing black freedom struggle in the United States and the Jamaican movement for independence, with a special focus on the New York-based Jamaica Progressive League, Janis highlighted the financial and political support of Irish America for the fight against British rule in Ireland as exemplified by Charles Stewart Parnell's 1880 American tour. On his three-month trip, Parnell tried to mobilize public opinion and raise money for famine relief in order to change the Irish land system. In Jamaica as well as in Ireland, transnational ties to the respective ethnic groups in the United States were instrumental in shaping anti-imperialist nationalism. Thus it was not just coincidence, as Birte Timm mentioned during the discussion of her paper, that Eileen Curran had been invited to give a speech at a public meeting of the Jamaica Progressive League in 1937 on "how Irish-Americans fought for Irish freedom."

Three papers dealt with transnational aspects of the history of science and education. Christie Hanzlik-Green described the intensified international exchange of educational knowledge, policies, and techniques in the mid-nineteenth century, which resulted to a large degree from the common challenges of industrialization and urbanization. Markus Lang portrayed the life and scientific career of Karl Loewenstein, a Jewish-German legal scholar turned political scientist once he came to the United States. Katja Naumann analyzed processes of transnationalization in American higher education from 1918 to 1968. During this period, she argued, history teaching in undergraduate as well as graduate courses underwent profound changes. Paralleling the rise of the United States to world power status and the increasing experience of globalization, the geographical scope of history teaching was broadened, starting with the coverage of new geographical areas after World War I, the increasing importance of "Western Civilization" as a unit of analysis, and, finally, the introduction of World or Global History courses.

Perceptions, discourses, and representations in their various forms also easily cross national boundaries and must be seen as an important part of transnational history. This was clearly demonstrated by two papers on rather diverse topics. While Jeff Stone investigated how maps by American national news journals such as *Time*, *US News and World Report*, or *Newsweek* shaped and transformed the way Germany was represented during World War II and the early Cold War, Christina Oppel looked at texts by African-American intellectuals dealing with Nazi Germany.

Dwelling on Paul Gilroy's concept of the Black Atlantic, she interpreted these writings, of which W.E.B. Du Bois's accounts of his visit to Berlin in 1936 is the most famous, not only as reflections of racist Nazi policy, but also as a discourse on racial politics in the United States.

It became evident during the course of the seminar that non-state actors play an important role in transnational history. This is the case regardless of whether these are organizations or individuals. Daniel Roger Maul's contribution portrayed the life and career of one such individual, David Abner Morse, a lawyer, New Deal politician, and for twenty-two years director general of the International Labor Organization (ILO). Several papers emphasized the importance of transnational networks. Jonathan Gantt, for example, pointed out that Irish terrorists were using transatlantic connections to finance their activities, both to procure arms and for operational planning. By similar means, but with rather different intentions, transnational and transatlantic networks were active in order to promote the rescue and resuscitation of victims of drowning and similar accidents, as Amanda Moniz made clear. After the first Society for the Recovery of the Drowned had been founded in Amsterdam in 1767, Humane Societies sprang up in many cities in the North Atlantic region. Over philanthropic and medical networks, information on innovations in life-saving techniques was shared and knowledge about the rescue and resuscitation of accident victims was exchanged across the ocean. The question was raised in the ensuing debate, however, of whether there could have been transnational forces at work before the concept of the nation became so powerful in the nineteenth century.

During the discussion of Derek Catsam's paper on bus boycotts in the United States and South Africa, the question evolved of whether comparative history was or was not a transnational approach. Does the analysis of symmetrical developments and similar events in different countries constitute a departure from a nation-centered perspective? Or does the fact that the unit of analysis is still the nation-state foster and reify, rather than challenge, the concept of the nation?

Philanthropy is another field of activity that has always had strong transnational elements, as Katharina Rietzler made clear in her paper on the Rockefeller and Carnegie Foundations' support for the study of international relations in Weimar Germany. She argued, however, that the transnational, national, and international should not be regarded as separate spheres, and held that nation-states may disrupt, change, or encourage transnational relations. German government officials, for instance, tried to manipulate the workings as well as the results of the foundations' work in Germany in order to secure their own policy aims.

The intricate relationship between nationalism and transnationalism was also pointed out by Joel Lewis in his paper on the discourse of antifascist youth during the 1930s. Focusing on the Spanish Civil War, the Young Communist Leagues (YCL) in the United States and Great Britain shied away from the strict internationalism of communist youth's Leninist generation, adopting a flexible nationalism that allowed them to incorporate national symbols and traditions into their propaganda. Thus instead of portraying the lives of Liebknecht, Luxemburg, and Lenin over and over again or glorifying the Russian Revolution, young communists in the United States "Americanized" Popular Front propaganda and relied increasingly on the legacies of George Washington, Thomas Paine, and, most of all, Abraham Lincoln.

Ralf Richter described another, rather peculiar kind of knowledge transfer: the widespread imitation and copying of American products by the German machine tool industry. Richter portrayed in detail how German entrepreneurs read American product catalogs and journals (one company subscribed to over sixty international technical and trade journals, and went so far as to employ a translator), exchanged American patents and drawings among themselves, and regularly visited fairs and exhibitions. Some German companies even hired American experts for their factories and sent employees to the United States to study the American facilities on the spot. Sometimes, even the layout of a whole factory was reproduced in Germany. Richter also expressed the view, however, that copying as a specific kind of transnational technology transfer should not simply be dismissed as dull rebuilding, since the machines were often changed, were suited to specific tasks, and reengineered during the process.

Economic aspects also loomed large in Abou Bamba's paper on the circulation of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) model in the United States, France, and the Ivory Coast. Bamba used a triangular approach to explain how and why the TVA model of regional development became so successful in many parts of the world long after its reputation in the United States had faded. Bamba follows one trajectory from the Tennessee Valley, where the model originated, to the Rhone in southwest France and, later on, to the Ivory Coast, where, ironically, TVA-style regional planning in the Bandama Valley was supported by the French as a means to stem US influence in Francophone Africa. Transnationalism, Bamba concluded, should be seen not only as a historiographical category but also as a truly historical force. Indeed, that conclusion could serve as a summary of this year's Young Scholars Forum as a whole.

Uwe Lübken

Participants and Their Topics

ABOU BAMBA (Georgia State University, Atlanta), *“Branchements Transatlantiques”: The Circulation of the “TVA Model” in the United States, France, and the Ivory Coast*

DEREK CATSAM (University of Texas of the Permian Basin, Odessa, TX), *From Alexandra to Montgomery and Back: Bus Boycotts in the US and South Africa and Prospects for Comparative History*

JONATHAN GANTT (University of South Carolina), *Irish and British Terrorism in the Atlantic Community, 1919–1921*

CHRISTIE HANZLIK-GREEN (University of Wisconsin, Madison), *The Educational Network: Scholarly Exchange in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*

CHRISTINE HARTIG (Max-Planck-Institut zur Erforschung multireligiöser und multiethnischer Gesellschaften/University of Erfurt), *Immigration of German-Jewish Children During World War II—Ideas of Family, Childhood, and Parenthood Between Expected Continuity and the Pressure of New Demands*

ELY JANIS (Boston College), *Anointing the “Uncrowned King of Ireland”: Charles Stewart Parnell’s 1880 American Tour and the Creation of a Transatlantic Land League Movement*

MARKUS LANG (University of Jena), *False Friends—German and American Jurisprudence and Political Science, 1920–1950*

JOEL LEWIS (Central Michigan University), *Lincoln, Lenin, and Spain: The Transnational Discourse of Antifascist Youth*

DANIEL ROGER MAUL (University of Munich), *Modernization, Democracy, and Social Justice in the American Century: The Life of David A. Morse (1906–1990)*

AMANDA B. MONIZ (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor), *Cosmopolitanism and the Transformation of Early American Philanthropy*

KATJA NAUMANN (University of Leipzig), *Transnationalization and Experiences of Globality in Higher Education: History Teaching and Research in the US from 1918 to 1968*

CHRISTINA OPPEL (University of Münster/Seton Hall), *Representations of Germany in African-American “Texts”—The Third Reich and Beyond*

NICOLE M. PHELPS (University of Minnesota, Minneapolis), *Migration, Consular Officials, and Sovereignty: The Habsburg Empire and the United States, 1880–1914*

RALF RICHTER (University of Bielefeld), *The Global Village of the Machine Tool Industry—The United States and Germany, 1870–1933*

KATHARINA RIETZLER (University College, London), *Philanthropy, Peace Research, and Revisionist Politics: Rockefeller and Carnegie Support for the Study of International Relations in Weimar Germany*

JEFF STONE (University of Texas, Arlington), *The Image of Germany in American News Maps from World War II to 1955*

BIRTE TIMM (University of Erfurt), *Migration and Identity Construction of Jamaican Immigrants in New York: The "Jamaica Progressive League" in New York and Kingston, 1936–1962*