

SIXTEENTH ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM OF THE FRIENDS OF THE GHI AND AWARD OF THE FRITZ STERN DISSERTATION PRIZE

Symposium at the GHI, November 16, 2007. Conveners: David Blackburn (Vice-Chairman, Friends of the GHI) and Anke Ortlepp (GHI). Participants: Monica Black (Furman University), Winson Chu (University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee), Sabine Höhler (GHI).

The Friends of the German Historical Institute convened in Washington on November 16, 2007, for their sixteenth annual symposium, chaired by David Blackburn. The morning session featured the awarding of the Fritz Stern Dissertation Prize, which has been awarded for eight years for the two best dissertations in German history at a North American university. The morning began with a moment of silence in memory of Gerald D. Feldman, the chairman of the Friends of the GHI, who passed away late last year. This year's prizes were awarded to Monica Black, who earned her doctorate at the University of Virginia under the supervision of Alon Confino, for her dissertation "The Meaning of Death and the Making of Three Berlins: A History, 1933–1961," and to Winson Chu, who earned his doctorate at the University of California at Berkeley under the supervision of John Connelly, for his dissertation "German Political Organizations and Regional Particularisms in Interwar Poland (1918–1939)." Fritz Stern attended the award ceremony and gave a comment. The Prize Committee was composed of Norman J. W. Goda (Ohio University), Astrid M. Eckert (Emory University), and George S. Williamson (University of Alabama). Articles by the two prize winners that offer overviews of their dissertations can be found in the "Stern Prize" section of this *Bulletin*.

The committee's citation for Monica Black read: "In a sophisticated cultural history Monica Black has written herself into the historiography of death and burial. She has wrested the topic from graveyard enthusiasts and placed it squarely into twentieth-century German history. Black shows that ways of remembering the dead in Berlin under the Nazis and then under divided communist and democratic rule defined how Berliners viewed themselves as Germans and how, by negative example, they defined others less civilized than they, from slave laborers to those on the other side of the Cold War divide. Black's sources are broad and include every conceivable archive in Berlin down to *Kreisarchive* and *Bezirksämter* as well as obscure pamphlets and journals. By reconceiving death and the representation of the dead, Dr. Black shows how Berliners displayed changing values across three political systems."

The committee's citation for Winson Chu read: "Winson Chu has written a new and innovative political history of the German minority in Poland. His theoretical argument is that the very conception of a national minority is misleading, still carrying the mark of interwar *völkisch* thought. By studying German communities from Poznan to the Ukraine, Chu shows that the minority had its own internal hierarchy, that it was riddled with infighting, and that it held differing agendas concerning Germanness on the one hand and reactions to the Polish state on the other. National cohesion within the minority was problematic from the start, and contrary to common belief, Germans in Poland never became a more unified minority during the interwar years. Instead they grew more regionally distinct. Through the use of fifteen archives in Germany and Poland and through broad rethinking of key concepts from 'nation' to 'region,' Chu has written a history that reveals the limits of national solidarity as well as these terms themselves."

In the afternoon, Sabine Höhler, Visiting Research Fellow in Environmental History, delivered a lecture titled "'Spaceship Earth': Envisioning Human Habitats in the Environmental Age," which is printed in this issue of the *Bulletin*.

Richard F. Wetzell (GHI)