

GERMAN HISTORY IN THE SHORT NINETEENTH CENTURY, 1790–1890: TENTH TRANSATLANTIC DOCTORAL SEMINAR IN GERMAN HISTORY

Seminar at the University of Tübingen, April 28–May 1, 2004. Co-sponsored by the GHI and the BMW Center for German and European Studies, Georgetown University. Conveners: Roger Chickering (Georgetown University), Dieter Langewiesche (University of Tübingen), and Richard F. Wetzell (GHI). Faculty mentors: Margaret L. Anderson (University of California at Berkeley), Friedrich Lenger (University of Gießen), Sylvia Paletschek (University of Freiburg), James Retallack (University of Toronto).

Participants: Bernhard Altermatt (University of Freiburg, Switzerland), Antje Blumbach (University of Jena), Falk Bretschneider (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris), Amanda M. Brian (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign), Erwin Fink (University of Toronto), Thomas Haakenson (University of Minnesota), Lars Maischak (Johns Hopkins University), Heidi Mehrkens (Technical University Braunschweig), Alexander Merrow (Georgetown University), Christian Müller (University of Heidelberg), Jeanne-Marie Musto (Bryn Mawr College), Genevieve Rados (University of California at Berkeley), Manuel Richter (University of Göttingen), Anike Rössig (University of Hannover), Désirée Schauz (University of Cologne), Tobias Wüstenbecker (University of Bielefeld).

For the tenth time, the Transatlantic Doctoral Seminar in German History brought together sixteen doctoral students from North America and Germany to present and discuss their dissertation projects with one another and with faculty mentors from both sides of the Atlantic. The 2004 seminar was dedicated to German history in the “short” nineteenth century, from 1790 to 1890.

The first panel examined two aspects of German political life in the 1860s: discussions about electoral reform between 1866 and 1870 and the politics of the city-state of Bremen. Christian Müller’s paper “Das Wahlrecht als ‘Waffe’: Die Wahlrechtsdiskussionen im Norddeutschen Bund und in den Deutschen Einzelstaaten, 1866–1870” examined the role that competing conceptions of electoral law played in the formation of political parties at the national level as well as in the individual German states between 1866 and 1870. By comparing form and content of discussions of the franchise in different German states, Müller sought to show that proposals for electoral reform were used as de-ideologized “weapons” in the conflicts over domestic policy in the states. Lars Maischak’s paper

"Cosmopolitans into Nationalists: Bremen Merchants in Germany and the United States, 1850–1880" argued that the specifically transatlantic content of Hanseatic political identity was Western conservatism. Hanseats were imbued with this conservatism through two independent venues, a German academic tradition and an active involvement in U.S. politics, and arrived at their peculiar position within German politics by fusing these conservative influences with liberal ideas of free trade and corporatist convictions. As a result, Maischak concluded, the "liberal" label should be attached to Hanseatic politics only with the greatest reservations.

The second panel focused on German cultural history through studies of theater and festivals. Tobias Wüstenbecker's paper "Die Stadt als Bühne, die Bühne als Stadt: Berliner Theater, 1848–1890" examined the development of theater in Berlin in the second half of the nineteenth century from two perspectives: first, by studying the impact that theatrical entrepreneurs and state bureaucrats had on Berlin theater; and second, by analyzing the portrayal of Berlin life on the city's stages, especially in *Lokalpossen* that dealt with current issues. Wüstenbecker thus showed that theater played an important role in Berliners' coming to terms with social, political, and economic change. In her paper " 'Ein Ereignis des freien, ächten Geistes': Das Jenaer Universitätsjubiläum 1858 und die liberale Erinnerungskultur," Antje Blumbach argued that the 1858 festival celebrating the three-hundredth anniversary of the University of Jena, which took place in the reactionary period following the failure of the revolutions of 1848, served the purpose of promoting a liberal sense of identity by presenting a liberal-national memory of the history of the university of Jena that was very much geared to present concerns. The self-presentation of the university and its reception by the public and the press projected a liberal consciousness that suggested that the university's alliance with the monarchy was dependent on its protection and promotion of liberal values.

The third panel examined the representation of the nation in nineteenth-century Germany. Jeanne-Marie Musto's paper "Defining a Nation: The Politics of Medieval Architecture in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Germany" examined the construction of nationhood through architectural styles. In early nineteenth-century Germany, Musto argued, the "Byzantine" architectural style bridged the styles most weighted with pan-German significance: ancient Greek and Gothic. Found in the Rhineland, the Byzantine style was held to demonstrate the region's Germanness. By 1840, however, just as the Prussians were sponsoring the completion of the (Gothic) Cologne Cathedral, the German nationalist interpretation of the Gothic style was beginning to be challenged by independent-minded Rhinelanders and Bavarian rulers who sought to

undermine the Prussian cause. By mid-century, the Rhineland buildings were relabeled “Romanesque,” because “Byzantine” had become associated with Russia and Islam. Erwin Fink’s paper “Representing the Nation in the Regions: Contested Symbolism, Exclusion, Inclusion, and Dissent in Imperial Germany” explored the contested symbolic space that “unified Germany” occupied during the Empire’s founding and consolidating phase between 1870 and 1890 by analyzing different commemorative approaches to German unification. Fink argued that the controversial symbolic representation of the nation-state in the Sedan Day celebrations was quite ineffective for national integration. By contrast, a specifically Saxon model of accommodating parallel manifestations of regional and national symbolism as well as other personalized forms of popular commemorations proved more conducive to this goal.

The fourth panel brought together two papers about the Catholic and Jewish subcultures in nineteenth-century Germany. Anike Rössig’s paper “Spinoza und die ‘Juden im Exil’: Literatur und Kultur im Tunnel über der Spree” presented her study of the Berlin literary club “Tunnel über der Spree,” in which Jewish and non-Jewish Berliners found a forum for literary-cultural discourses that set this club apart from the rest of Berlin associational life. By examining the largely unknown and diverse literature written by members and read at the club, Rössig elucidated the cultural self-understanding of Jewish intellectuals of the *Vormärz* period, which made reference to classical culture as well as to a self-consciously Jewish intellectual tradition. Alexander Merrow’s paper “The Catholic Master Narrative: The *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 1880–1899” traced the articulation of a Catholic philosophy of history during the founding years of the Görres-Gesellschaft in the 1870s and analyzed the *Historisches Jahrbuch*, the organization’s historical journal, from 1880 to 1899. Merrow argued that a “paradigm shift” led Catholic historians to embrace the discipline’s methodological norms, but confessional differences nonetheless led to two visions of the past.

The fifth panel was devoted to the history of criminal justice. Pursuing a line of inquiry suggested by Michel Foucault, Falk Bretschneider’s paper “Besserungs-Dispositiv und Technologien des Selbst in der Gefangenschaft: Sachsen im 19. Jahrhundert” sought to return some agency to nineteenth-century prisoners. The paper’s first part examined the “Besserungs-Dispositiv” of the Saxon prison system, that is, a conception of punishment aiming at the moral improvement of the prisoners through a regime of compulsory work as well as pedagogical efforts. In the paper’s second part, Bretschneider then analyzed printed and archival sources to understand how prisoners reacted to this penal regime and to what extent they were able to give their punishment a positive meaning. Désirée Schauz’s paper “Theoretische und methodische Überlegungen zu einer

Geschichte der Straffälligenhilfe im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert" reflected on the theoretical and methodological groundwork for a history of German prisoner aid societies. Schauz favored a modified "Dispositivanalyse" that combines a differentiated analysis of discourses with an examination of the relationship of these discourses to welfare practices. By focusing on discursive negotiation, Schauz sought to challenge the often monolithic and static image of the criminal justice system.

The sixth panel dealt with the Franco-Prussian war of 1870/71. Manuel Richter's paper "Nationale Selbst- und Fremdbilder in einem Selbstzeugnis aus dem Deutsch-Französischen Krieg von 1870/71" examined the letters of a German soldier deployed in France for evidence of his national self-image and his image of the French nation. By situating the letters in their social contexts of origin, Richter was able to interpret the letters as evidence of collective processes of communication and group formation, but also of individual practices of interpretation and the formation of the self. The transformations in the soldier's perceptions of self and other, Richter argued, must be understood as a result of changes in their functional meaning within a web of social relations that were changing due to the war. In her paper "Verhaftet in der Tradition: Die Wahrnehmung von Kriegsgefangenschaft während des Deutsch-Französischen Krieges 1870/71," Heidi Mehrkens analyzed the situation of the almost 400,000 French soldiers held in German prisoner-of-war camps during this conflict. Mehrkens argued that the prisoner-of-war experience of 1870 was a transitional phenomenon. Although the very high number of prisoners of war demanded the organizational efforts typical of modern mass war, the German perception of the French POWs was still shaped by traditional national stereotypes.

The seventh panel featured two papers on the history of the body. Amanda M. Brian's paper "Body Prescriptions in School Hygiene Manuals from Late Nineteenth-Century Germany" explored the delineations of children by physical shape, development, and punishment in an idealized school environment. Brian argued that school hygiene experts sought to mold and discipline children's bodies because they were predicated on instability, which threatened to disrupt certain norms. In her paper "Healthy Choices: Food, Reform and the Market in the German Movement for Natural Health," Genevieve Rados examined the food teachings and practices of the movement for natural health (*Naturheilkunde*) in Imperial Germany in order to reveal the importance of everyday food decisions in the formation of a "modern" self-identity. Noting that the commercialization of the natural food market was promoted by the same people who taught self-empowerment and individual reform, Rados argued that the tension between empowerment and dependence was a fundamental aspect of the project of modernity.

The final panel brought together two disparate papers. Thomas O. Haakenson's paper "Optics and Subjects: The Development of Anthropology in Berlin?" sought to demonstrate that during the development of anthropology as a scientific discipline researchers were concerned not just with the physical anthropological issues of the human form but also with the human optical apparatus. Vision studies proved troubling for anthropologists because they realized that they could not depend upon their inherent optical acuity as a means of producing visual evidence. Bernhard Altermatt's paper "Mehrsprachige Staatsbildung im Zeitalter des Sprachnationalismus: Belgien und die Schweiz 1790–1890" explored how, between the late eighteenth and late nineteenth century, Switzerland and Belgium were constituted as modern nations in spite of the fact that neither one was a linguistically homogeneous territory. Both countries, Altermatt argued, developed practices of handling their multilingualism which were mainly (but not exclusively) inspired by the principle of territoriality.

The most prominent variety of history among the seminar's papers was cultural history. It should be noted, however, that many of the cultural-history papers were particularly interested in uncovering the political meanings of activities such as university festivals, theater performances, literary clubs, architectural history or Catholic historiography. Many of the seminar's papers on political history (and some of those on cultural history) focused on the topic of nation, nationalism, and nation-building, especially on the relationship between nation, region and the transnational realm. The roles of gender and religion were also important themes in many of the papers and in the discussions. Given that the seminar's advertised topic was German history from 1790 to 1890, the almost complete absence of papers dealing with the first half of the nineteenth century was remarkable. Equally noteworthy was the absence of social history, labor history, economic history, diplomatic history, and political history focusing on the state, as well as the absence of topics such as the Revolution of 1848, the *Reichsgründung* or the *Kulturkampf*. Most of the trends noted so far applied equally to the German and the North American papers, suggesting a remarkable internationalization of historical trends, at least across the Atlantic. The only major difference that was noted was that many of the German papers explicitly laid out their theoretical framework, whereas in the North American papers theory usually remained implicit in the narrative, perhaps reflecting a more skeptical view of theories in the English-speaking world. One of the mentors suggested that the turn from social to cultural history that was so evident at the seminar reflected a change in historians' political commitment: Whereas the earlier turn to social history was fueled by historians'

concern with the present-day problem of social inequality, the turn away from social history demonstrated the historical profession's retreat from such political commitments. While some of those writing cultural history would undoubtedly take exception as far as their personal political commitments are concerned, the question whether the turn toward cultural history has weakened the link between the history we write and the political problems of the present seems worth pondering.

Richard F. Wetzell