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ARTICLES

AN EMPIRE OF SHAMING: LAUGHTER AS IDENTITY POLITICS IN NAZI GERMANY

MARTINA KESSEL

In 1933, members of the Berlin SA arrested Hans Weinmann and his friend Horst Rosenzweig, two German-Jewish men whom they accused of distributing illegal leaflets. The SA celebrated the arrest by staging a derisive sketch in which they cast the detainees in major roles. They hung up a portrait of Friedrich Ebert, the Social Democratic first president of the Weimar Republic, in front of which Weinmann had to say a few words in Hebrew. He was forced to bow to a row of SA men, introducing himself with the words 'the Jew Weinmann, circumcised'. Before and after, he had to sing a song in which he described himself as 'sad': 'My greatest luck is now in sight: The Nazis caught me in the night. Why am I so sad, why feel such awful sorrow, when I might well be dead tomorrow!' Both were forced to dance what the SA called a 'Negertanz' ('negro dance') to duly selected music. Finally, the SA shaved the men's heads, and when Weinmann began bleeding Rosenzweig had to lick the blood from his friend's head.¹

In their ritual of humiliation, the SA carefully chose each element for its symbolic meaning. At the same time, they asserted their position of power through a deeply interpersonal structure in which the prisoners had to act out the inferior position they were pushed into

This is the lightly revised text of my Gerda Henkel Lecture, held at the GHIL on 26 November 2020. All translations are my own unless stated otherwise.

¹ Wiener Library, 048-EA-0523, Ref. P.II.C., NO. 607, 4-5; quotations from the English translation available online at [<https://www.testifyingtothetruth.co.uk/viewer/fulltext/104819/en/>], accessed 8 June 2021. Martina Kessel, *Gewalt und Gelächter: 'Deutschsein' 1914-1945* (Stuttgart, 2019), 221-2.

according to their captors' desires. The SA men used the typical triad of what they considered enemy references – social democracy, Blackness, Jewishness – and forced their victims to inscribe themselves into each feature of Otherness: talking to a symbol of democracy in a language defined as non-German, dancing to a tune framed as Black, pointing out the fact of their circumcision, and finally having to embody the stereotype of the bloodthirsty Jew. The prisoners had to act out with their bodies that they were now 'sad' Jewish losers, so to speak, who had been overcome by cheerful non-Jewish victors. As their only permitted form of expression, this denied them the chance to interpret their fates themselves. The SA directed and watched this performance of imagined identities. By hurting and mocking their victims, they positioned themselves as German, and therefore distinct from these Others.

Such derisive laughter echoed through Nazi Germany. It was a structural feature, not an incidental one. Research on humour in National Socialism has so far often focused on its vast and multifaceted presence in the media.² However, a recurring experience for those hunted down as non-German was to be laughed at even as they were driven out, tortured, or killed.³ But why? Humiliation and derision were not functionally necessary for persecution and genocide. Yet contemporaries ridiculed and mocked those they persecuted in so many theatrical and ostentatious acts of humiliation that they turned German society not only into a genocidal culture, but into an empire of shaming.

Mockery, I argue, had a systematic meaning: non-Jewish Germans created and acted out imagined identities while investing them with a particular reading of history.⁴ In other words, contemporaries brought

² Christian Adam, *Lesen unter Hitler: Autoren, Bestseller, Leser im Dritten Reich* (Berlin, 2010), 159–74; Patrick Merziger, *Nationalsozialistische Satire und 'Deutscher Humor': Politische Bedeutung und Öffentlichkeit populärer Unterhaltung 1931–1945* (Stuttgart, 2010). Merziger's key thesis that satire disappeared during National Socialism is to my mind unconvincing as he excludes any anti-Jewish satire.

³ Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, 2 vols. (London, 1997–2007), vol. ii: *The Years of Extermination* (2007) describes many instances.

⁴ See Alon Confino, *A World without Jews: The Nazi Imagination from Persecution to Genocide* (New Haven, 2014), for a fascinating analysis of the importance of narratives of history.

their understanding of history and identity—defined as German—to life through derisive laughter and degrading violence. They gave expression to their distorted version of German history and their own self-understanding as hurt, humiliated victims, and they used their position of power to invert that imaginary historical narrative and make it a reality. Furthermore, by enacting their power through theatrical forms of mockery, they inscribed themselves into a specific notion of Germanness with a particularly high social status—namely the persona of the ‘artist-soldier’.⁵

Accordingly, I do not so much analyse antisemitism in Germany as trace how contemporaries defined their Germanness as non-Jewish. This approach makes anti-Jewish impulses visible not only as Othering practices designed to reduce fellow Germans to mere Jewish stereotypes, but as part of the formation of the self as German. In recent decades we have learnt much about people’s motives and contexts for participating in the Shoah and the multiple ways in which non-Jewish Germans produced a so-called *Volksgemeinschaft*, or ‘people’s community’, creating time and again a boundary between those who were accepted as German and those who were not.⁶ But we could more strongly foreground the production and affirmation of an exclusionary self as the basis of an exclusionary society. Weinmann and Rosenzweig’s humiliating performance highlighted the relational dimension of identity formation. The SA literally walked them through elements they considered meaningful for projecting identities, turning hateful stereotyping into visible and audible display. By producing a supposedly negative mirror image through the cruel abasement of their prisoners, they positioned themselves as German in the sense of non-Jewish.

To be sure, no single interpretive framework suffices to explain why millions of Germans produced a genocidal culture that practised systemic violence. Structures, circumstances, individual

⁵ Martina Kessel, *Langeweile: Zum Umgang mit Zeit und Gefühlen in Deutschland vom späten 18. zum frühen 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 2001), esp. 321–30.

⁶ Susanne C. Knittel and Zachary J. Goldberg (eds.), *The Routledge International Handbook of Perpetrator Studies* (London, 2020). For debates on the *Volksgemeinschaft*, see Martina Steber and Bernhard Gotto (eds.), *Visions of Community in Nazi Germany: Social Engineering and Private Lives* (Oxford, 2014).

dispositions, and different motives played their part in making many actively pursue Nazism as an opportunity, while others joined in reluctantly.⁷ But constructing the self as non-Jewish meant finding the reason for participation within oneself. David Theo Goldberg has argued in a different context that the modern state was based not only on exclusion, but on the internalization of exclusion.⁸ For German history, I emphasize that the self-definition of Germanness as non-Jewish (or non-Muslim or non-Black) was present as a potentiality from the late eighteenth century. It did not determine German history, but it did not disappear either and could therefore be appropriated and radicalized into an exclusionary self-understanding. For non-Jewish Germans, it became central during those periods we usually call democratization, when Jewish Germans achieved greater participation or normative equality in political, legal, social, and cultural terms. Gentile Germans activated the modern, essentializing notion of Germanness as non-Jewish when they could no longer see any difference in rights and habitus between Jewish and Christian Germans. This happened in Imperial Germany, as Uffa Jensen has shown, and even more radically in the Weimar Republic.⁹ Humiliation was a way to live out, manufacture, and experience the self as an internal category of difference. In this sense, shaming was a deeply modern practice, making and marking an exclusionary understanding of identity that could be set in opposition to a democracy that had at least the potential to leave the self as a hierarchy behind.

Furthermore, using laughter as a lens to study Nazi Germany accentuates the importance of symbolic violence in the development of German genocidal culture. The SA's construction of interpersonal relations was typical, and it produced a social fabric that both facilitated

⁷ Mary Fulbrook, 'The Making and Un-Making of Perpetrators: Patterns of Involvement in Nazi Persecution 1', in Knittel and Goldberg (eds.), *Routledge International Handbook of Perpetrator Studies*, 25–36, at 26. For the systemic character of violence, see Mary Fulbrook, 'Private Lives, Public Faces', in Elizabeth Harvey et al. (eds.), *Private Life and Privacy in Nazi Germany* (Cambridge, 2019), 55–80, at 59–61.

⁸ David Theo Goldberg, *The Racial State* (London, 2002), 2.

⁹ Uffa Jensen, *Gebildete Doppelgänger: Bürgerliche Juden und Protestanten im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 2005); Kessel, *Gewalt und Gelächter*, 99–111.

genocidal radicalization and later shaped the very methods of mass murder. Symbolic violence also involved many more people than the genocide itself, with participants and onlookers creating public spaces of shared knowledge and possibly showing their support for persecution.¹⁰

In this article, I will demonstrate how laughter functioned as identity politics by looking at two dimensions that are hard to separate: first, laughter as a narrative concept, constructing a specific meaning of history and identity; and second, laughter as a practice and a recurring way for non-Jewish contemporaries to shape self and society through performative derision. Both the narrative concept and the theatrical performance point to the meanings non-Jewish Germans inscribed into the Holocaust, and these were crucial. Contemporaries rewrote the destruction of human lives into something else entirely—namely into a means of producing a modern society which they projected as the pinnacle of progressiveness. By enacting the exclusionary notion of Germanness through humiliation and violence, they defined themselves as creators of a new world.¹¹

Laughter as a Narrative Concept

That laughter as a concept came to define self and history was due to its semantic development in Germany. From the late eighteenth century, German intellectuals established an imagined binary pitting what they called German humour against an irony which, depending on circumstance, they classified as Jewish or French, or associated

¹⁰ Kim Wünschmann, *Before Auschwitz: Jewish Prisoners in the Prewar Concentration Camps* (Cambridge, Mass., 2015), 207–8; Paul Levine, ‘On-Lookers’, in Peter Hayes and John K. Roth (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies* (Oxford, 2010), 156–69, at 158.

¹¹ See Peter Fritzsche and Jochen Hellbeck, ‘The New Man in Stalinist Russia and Nazi Germany’, in Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick (eds.), *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared* (Cambridge, 2009), 302–41, at 303, for the argument that exclusionary notions of identity were as modern as the liberal self. I argue that the liberal self was also a potential category of difference, making it easy for National Socialists to radicalize its exclusionary force. See also Confino, *World without Jews*.

with some other perceived antagonist. They associated the notion of humour with the willingness to produce a German nation, while dismissing irony as undue criticism, hostile, and non-German.¹² Consequently, the discursive binary of laughter became a vehicle for identity politics. Those who wanted to deny Jewish Germans their German identity could inscribe them with allegedly evil, non-German laughter, translating the religious difference between Christianity and Judaism into a supposedly essential difference between Germanness and Jewishness. In this sense, laughter had nothing to do with comedy. The trope served instead as a 'matrix of the imaginary',¹³ bundling a whole set of invented binaries such as warrior versus pacifist and loyal versus treacherous that served to define human beings as either German or non-German. The seemingly harmless semantics of humour could thus turn toxic, signalling exclusion from the very idea of Germanness.

The meanings laughter acquired in the Nazi period were all present during the First World War as a potential waiting to be appropriated and transformed. In October 1914, the antisemitic agitator Theodor Fritsch aggressively put these ideas into practice. He attacked Jewish Germans as 'die lachenden Dritten'—'laughing third agents'—who did not belong to any identity or society, but transgressed all boundaries to profit at the expense of others and then crow over their own success.¹⁴ That last point was central: by misrepresenting Jews as both transgressive and mocking bodies, Fritsch painted them not just as profiteers, but also as seeking to ridicule and shame those whom they exploited. Thus the trope of laughter centred on the idea of shaming or being shamed.

¹² Jefferson Chase, *Inciting Laughter: The Development of 'Jewish Humor' in 19th Century German Culture* (Berlin, 2000).

¹³ Jacques Sémélin, 'Elemente einer Grammatik des Massakers', *Mittelweg* 36, 15/6 (2006/2007), 18–40, at 39.

¹⁴ Theodor Fritsch, 'Burgfrieden', *Hammer: Blätter für deutschen Sinn* (1 Oct. 1914), 505–10, at 506. Cf. Elisabeth Albanis, *German-Jewish Cultural Identity from 1900 to the Aftermath of the First World War* (Tübingen, 2002), 37. On the figure of 'the third', see Zachary Sng, 'Figure³: The Metaphor between Virtue and Vice', in Ian Cooper, Ekkehard Knörer, and Bernhard Malkmus (eds.), *Third Agents: Secret Protagonists of the Modern Imagination* (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2008), 60–76.

To be sure, humour in everyday life, the media, and other public debates served many purposes in the First World War, from expressing reservations or criticism to coping with the horrors of war. But the proponents of victory at all costs extensively evoked the discursive binary to exhort the German people to keep fighting. Joke books, semi-official trench journals, and official spokesmen alike urged soldiers to keep going by insinuating that the Entente would mock and belittle them as unmanly if they ever gave up. They equally denigrated the desire for peace as a supposedly Jewish trait.¹⁵ Such voices emotionalized the debate about war aims and political choices and took it far beyond political differences, framing both a negotiated peace and a military defeat not only as an utter loss of German power, but as shamefully and humiliatingly undermining a purportedly fixed German identity.

In the Weimar Republic, those who hated defeat, revolution, and democracy used laughter as a narrative concept to describe German history as a story of hurt bodies and shamed feelings. The defamation of Weimar democracy as an allegedly Jewish republic painted all republicans as Jewish in the sense of non-German, while violence against Jewish Germans became a constant after 1918.¹⁶ In addition, supporters of the republic were charged with mocking the hapless Germans. When the socialist Kurt Eisner, Minister President of Bavaria from November 1918 until his murder in February 1919, demanded that Germany should acknowledge its responsibility for starting the war—a highly sensitive issue—the Munich-based journal *Simplicissimus* accused him of inviting the Entente's 'Schadenfreude'.¹⁷ Given the broader understanding of laughter as denoting identity, the journal also defined the German-Jewish politician and intellectual Eisner as non-German, thereby shifting politics into the realm of identity.

The criticism of Eisner reflects general trends in the Weimar Republic. It has often been demonstrated that political debates in the 1920s

¹⁵ For the various meanings of humour in the First World War see Kessel, *Gewalt und Gelächter*, 22–30; for direct attacks on Jewish Germans using the trope of laughter see *ibid.* 84–93.

¹⁶ Cornelia Hecht, *Deutsche Juden und Antisemitismus in der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn, 2003).

¹⁷ *Simplicissimus*, 17 Dec. 1918, 475.

circled not only around how to do democracy, but whether to have democracy at all.¹⁸ Yet the republic's opponents went even further. Because they resented democracy's inclusive potential, they translated the discussion over political systems into a conflict about which form of government was adequate for their exclusionary idea of German-ness. In the process, they not only intertwined political debates with identity, but also practised politics as identity politics. They achieved this by shifting attention from political issues to personalities, painting political opponents and Jewish Germans as non-Germans who by definition would not act in German interests, but would hurt German identity. Two other tropes connected with accusations of mockery show how evocatively these imagined groups were marked as transgressing bodies who allegedly humiliated and hurt German-ness. Even outside right-wing circles, the Versailles Treaty and French occupation were delegitimized as a 'rape', picking up on how the Entente had criticized German war politics in 1914–18 and turning the politico-legal act of the treaty into an illegal, hurtful, and shaming practice that violated German boundaries and bodies.¹⁹ Extending the metaphor, opponents of democracy described politicians who were willing to negotiate internally and externally as *Zuhälter* (pimps), thus depicting them as figures who forced Germany to prostitute itself to its enemies and thereby wilfully injured and heaped shame upon all Germans.²⁰

¹⁸ On the pervasive desire for strong leadership see Dirk Schumann, 'Political Violence, Contested Public Space, and Reasserted Masculinity in Weimar Germany', in Kathleen Canning, Kerstin Barndt, and Kristin McGuire (eds.), *Weimar Publics/Weimar Subjects: Rethinking the Political Culture of Germany in the 1920s* (New York, 2010), 236–53.

¹⁹ On this and what follows see Martina Kessel, 'Demokratie als *Grenzverletzung*: Geschlecht als symbolisches System in der Weimarer Republik', in Gabriele Metzler and Dirk Schumann (eds.), *Geschlechter(un)ordnung und Politik in der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn, 2016), 81–108, at 85–92. See also Sandra Maß, *Weisse Helden, schwarze Krieger: Zur Geschichte kolonialer Männlichkeit in Deutschland 1918–1964* (Cologne, 2006), 105–28.

²⁰ Kessel, *Gewalt und Gelächter*, 103–4; for the time after 1933 see *ibid.* 172. Hitler used the word 'Zuhälter' extensively; see e.g. Adolf Hitler, *Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen, 1925–1933*, ed. by Institut für Zeitgeschichte, 6 vols. (Munich, 1992–2003), i. 171. For his description of the Versailles Treaty as 'militärische Entmannung' (military emasculation) see *ibid.* 250.

Research on hate speech suggests that violence as a political tool can be more easily justified by its instigators when they insist that they need to avenge a great wrong, instead of only seeking to discredit their opponents' political goals.²¹ Misrepresenting republicans as hurting and humiliating the German body politic served this purpose. The evocative imagery of democratic and Jewish Germans as hurtful, shaming figures presented the body they were allegedly hurting and shaming as non-Jewish, suggesting that it was German by definition.²² These tropes turned proponents of peaceful negotiation both at home and abroad into perpetrators against German identity at the very moment when democracy formally allowed all political parties, Jewish Germans, and women to participate in shaping the present and the future, thereby seemingly leveling former status hierarchies. By defining republican and Jewish Germans as perpetrators, Weimar's opponents painted democracy not only as a bad political system, but as a space that allowed German-ness to be shamed, hurt, and ridiculed – a process they alleged could only be ended by abolishing the republic. By projecting Weimar as non-German, anti-republicans pitted their exclusionary idea of self against democracy.

These were the narratives that National Socialists drew upon when they reorganized in 1925. By structuring their political offers through the trope of laughter, they too presented their own experience as a story of hurt bodies and shamed feelings. But they radicalized it into a sequence of projected events that they implied would inevitably unfold unless they stopped it by force. In his so-called foundational speeches in 1925, Hitler presented a three-step version of history which he promised to overturn. The Nazis' opponents, so he claimed, had first tried to silence them, then ridiculed them, and finally resorted to

²¹ Christine M. Lillie et al., 'Propaganda, Empathy, and Support for Inter-group Violence: The Moral Psychology of International Speech Crimes', March 18, 2015, online at [<http://bit.ly/1EjV8rA>], accessed 11 June 2021.

²² On the importance of hurting others in order to feel powerful see Heinrich Popitz, *Phänomene der Macht*, 2nd edn. (Tübingen, 1992). See also Kessel, *Gewalt und Gelächter*, 65-77, on how spatial and bodily transgression in the First World War was perceived as justified when seen as German, and as unjustified when defined as non-German.

violence because they could not stop them otherwise.²³ After that, the three steps of silencing, mockery, and violent assault served as a blueprint for their attack on democracy.

Reading National Socialist politics through the lens of laughter reveals how systematically the Nazis talked about identity. Political demands and promises were couched in the language of laughter, which was intended and understood to distinguish the German from the non-German. These semantics added a dramaturgical arc of tension to a programme that was eclectic except for its clear and continued insistence on an exclusionary identity, its deliberate misreading of political differences as attempts to shame those deemed to be true Germans, and its glorification of the Nazi movement as rising triumphantly against all odds. In September 1928, Hitler ended an appeal to NSDAP members with the threatening words: 'I expect each member of the party to fulfil their supreme duty so that at some point in future the enemies of our people will stop laughing.'²⁴ Likewise, in August 1930, when Hitler promised an integrative society to everyone who followed him, he claimed the future would belong to the man who 'laughingly defines himself as a German and no longer as a worker or as middle class'.²⁵ In his dramatic 1932 election campaign he brought up the trope at every one of the nearly 150 locations he visited, having crafted it into the emotive, rhythmic slogan 'verlacht, verhöhnt, verspottet'—'laughed at, mocked, and ridiculed'. In the face of this supposed adversity, he added, the German people would rise victoriously.²⁶

Even when Nazi speakers toned down anti-Jewish attacks in the early 1930s so as not to repel possible voters, their use of laughter as a trope still told attentive listeners whom they had singled out as the ultimate enemy. In November 1928 Hitler attacked 'the Jew' as 'standing smilingly' behind democrats and communists, waiting for them to destroy Germany so he could take over.²⁷ In March 1929 he followed this up with even harsher and more graphic images, describing 'Jews' as 'rolling with laughter at the stupidity' of those who did not realize that they were aiming not for equality, but for dominance over

²³ Hitler, *Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen*, i. 112.

²⁴ *Ibid.* iii/1. 114.

²⁵ *Ibid.* iii/3. 322.

²⁶ *Ibid.* v/1. 83, 134–5, 139, 266.

²⁷ *Ibid.* iii/1. 275.

‘Germans’.²⁸ The speakers merely needed to point to an imagined victorious laugh to get their message across.

By discursively linking both democracy and communism with Jewishness, National Socialists reinforced their identity politics. Discrediting both the Entente and domestic political alternatives to a victorious peace by framing them as Jewish had already been popular during the First World War.²⁹ Since the mid 1920s, the identification of all options other than National Socialism as Jewish turned political choices into an either-or decision of identity, with Germanness understood to be non-Jewish. Accordingly, democrats, communists, and anybody else resistant to Nazism were defined not only as political traitors, but as traitors against identity – as people who supposedly turned themselves into Jews through their behaviour. Of course, nobody was being victimized in the way that the Nazis claimed. The narrative of victimhood became attractive in Germany as a way to avoid debating German responsibility for starting and losing the First World War, and was intensified by the National Socialists. And in order to position themselves as victims, they needed antagonists, whom they constructed accordingly.³⁰ By systematically reversing the roles of victim and perpetrator in the 1920s and early 1930s, they narrowed down political options to a binary choice between supporting the allegedly shameful, non-German system of the Weimar Republic, or opposing it.³¹ This reversal served to justify persecution and expansion at all times, adding a force of spite to the demand to fight the Othered.³² The effectiveness of this fusion between National Socialism and the notion of Germanness as non-Jewish was demonstrated even by opponents of Nazism. When liberals outlined

²⁸ Ibid. iii/2. 59.

²⁹ Kessel, *Gewalt und Gelächter*, 86–7.

³⁰ Martina Kessel, ‘Race and Humor in Nazi Germany’, in Devin O. Pendas, Mark Roseman, and Richard F. Wetzell (eds.), *Beyond the Racial State: Rethinking Nazi Germany* (Cambridge, 2017), 380–401, at 382.

³¹ On the Weimar Republic in general see Rüdiger Graf, ‘Either-Or: The Narrative of “Crisis” in Weimar Germany and in Historiography’, *Central European History*, 43/4 (2010), 592–615.

³² Doris L. Bergen, ‘Instrumentalization of *Volksdeutschen* in German Propaganda in 1939: Replacing/Erasing Poles, Jews, and Other Victims’, *German Studies Review*, 31/3 (2008), 447–70.

political alternatives, they hastened to add that they themselves were not Jewish, confirming how quickly all opposition came to be translated into Jewishness in the sense of not accepted as German.³³

During the Weimar Republic, and with an increasingly triumphant tone, the National Socialists coupled their reversal of victim and perpetrator roles with the second binary storyline of winners and losers. The undeserving winners of 1918, so the dichotomous narrative went, would, as mocking perpetrators, forcibly turn the National Socialists into victims and (temporary) losers of the contemporary moment. After 1933, the Nazis changed this binary of winners and losers by celebrating their victory.³⁴ The scene described at the beginning of this article offers a case in point for how the SA orchestrated this shifted hierarchy of imagined identities. Their self-defined victim status, however, remained a key component of German society after 1933, and was maintained by attacking Jews as perpetrators.³⁵

In Nazi Germany, the binary of German humour versus Jewish laughter came to fruition as an alleged marker of identity. It not only travelled through the media, but was used by violent organizations and individual Germans alike, who celebrated their new power by turning the trope into a derisive performance.³⁶ Survivors' accounts tell us how the Gestapo accused the persecuted directly of laughing in order to paint them as guilty. During the November Pogrom in 1938, the Gestapo banned the Central-Verein (formerly the Central-Verein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens), one of the last Jewish organizations still in operation, albeit in much reduced and controlled form. Hans Oppenheimer, who worked for its journal, was present when the secret police shut down the Berlin office. He fled Germany immediately afterwards and wrote down his experiences a few days later. In his account, he emphasized the absence of physical violence,

³³ Eric Kurlander, "'Neither Jews nor Anti-Semites': The Liberal Answer to Hitler's Jewish Question", in id., *Living with Hitler: Liberal Democrats in the Third Reich* (New Haven, 2009), 152–93.

³⁴ Kessel, *Gewalt und Gelächter*, 138–40.

³⁵ Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, Mass., 2008).

³⁶ Kessel, *Gewalt und Gelächter*, ch. iv. On intentional misreadings of Jewish self-irony as 'true self-allegations' see Louis Kaplan, *At Wit's End: The Deadly Discourse on the Jewish Joke* (New York, 2020), 153–81.

but quoted the few phrases the Gestapo had uttered, such as ‘You’ll see what happens next’, demonstrating their superior knowledge,³⁷ or ‘You’ll stop laughing soon enough’. In brackets, Oppenheimer added, ‘(Of course, nobody had laughed)’, emphasizing that the construction bore no relation to people’s actual behaviour.³⁸

In his oft-quoted speech from January 1939, Hitler combined the imagined roles of victim and victor in characteristic fashion. He justified German aggression by alleging that Jews were about to start another world war and promised that they would then be eradicated from the earth. He also said something he kept repeating until about 1943—namely that his promise to solve the so-called Jewish problem had been mocked loudest of all by the Jewish people before 1933—and he added: ‘I believe that this once resounding laughter has by now died in the throats of all Jews in Germany.’³⁹ Hans Frank, the Governor-General of the occupied part of Poland during the Holocaust, excelled in this dialogical derision that produced knowledge and power. In August 1943, during the so-called Aktion Reinhardt, he gave a speech at a Nazi rally in Lviv. First, he described the genocide by saying that they had used a lot of ‘insect powder’ to cleanse the occupied territory and make it habitable for German people. He then observed that none of the thousands upon thousands of Jews formerly living there were still around, before turning to his audience and asking them in conspiratorial tones: ‘You didn’t do anything bad to them, did you?’ The transcript notes that these remarks caused great amusement among his listeners.⁴⁰

This continuity in the semantics of laughter does not mean that the National Socialists had been planning the Holocaust since the 1920s. Rather, they drew on narratives long established in German culture to essentialize imagined identities as German or non-German, to reverse the roles of victim and perpetrator, and to sidestep democratic

³⁷ Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination*, emphasizes this difference in knowledge as a key structure of persecution.

³⁸ Ben Barkow, Raphael Gross, and Michael Lenarz (eds.), *Novemberpogrom 1938: Die Augenzeugenberichte der Wiener Library*, London (Frankfurt am Main, 2008), 113.

³⁹ Max Domarus (ed.), *Hitler: Reden und Proklamationen 1932–1945*, 4 vols. (Munich, 1965), ii/1. 1058.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Dieter Schenk, *Hans Frank: Hitler’s Kronjurist und Generalgouverneur* (Frankfurt am Main, 2006), 313.

argument. By deriding the persecuted as sneering perpetrators, they positioned themselves as victims in order to justify all kinds of violence, and then radicalized that violence into the mark of a supposed winner. Endless repetition established a set of discursive tropes that could be drawn upon without needing to unpack their meaning in so many words. What made them effective, though, was the willingness of innumerable Germans to turn them into social practices, ensuring that communication with the persecuted took place primarily through symbolic or physical violence.

Laughter as a Practice: Performing Imagined Identities

As Hans Frank demonstrated, laughter as a narrative also functioned as a performative and dialogical tool. Hitler invited listeners to laugh along by breaking off mid-sentence after making a derisive remark, while the audience's appreciative sniggering signalled agreement and spared him from having to explain the regime's decisions any further.⁴¹ Victor Klemperer noted that attentive listeners had realized this long before the National Socialists came to power, so that after 1933 they did not expect the leadership to keep the population informed of their plans and decision-making.⁴² Instead, activists adopted mockery as an interactive production of power, displaying knowledge of what was happening in general or more specific terms. Two women who participated in the Germanization of occupied Poland were 'bursting with laughter' (as one of them wrote in a letter home) when a policeman they knew explained to a Jewish woman whose furniture they had taken that they were only 'borrowing' it.⁴³ When a man deported from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz asked a guard when he would see

⁴¹ Kessel, *Gewalt und Gelächter*, 126–47.

⁴² Cf. Christoph Sauer, 'Rede als Erzeugung von Komplizentum: Hitler und die öffentliche Erwähnung der Judenvernichtung', in Josef Kopperschmidt (ed.), *Hitler als Redner* (Tübingen 2003), 413–40, at 420.

⁴³ Quoted in Elizabeth Harvey, "'Wir kamen in vollkommenes Neugebiet rein.'": Der "Einsatz" von Mitgliedern nationalsozialistischer Frauenorganisationen im besetzten Polen', in Marita Krauss (ed.), *Sie waren dabei: Mitläuferinnen, Nutznießerinnen, Täterinnen im Nationalsozialismus* (Göttingen, 2008), 83–102, at 93.

his wife and daughter again, from whom he had been separated upon arrival, the guard laughingly told him he should watch the smoke of a particular chimney.⁴⁴

Many mocking performances stood out due to their theatricality.⁴⁵ After the establishment of the concentration camps, SS guards enacted their power through sarcastic sketches, presenting themselves as the best personnel for a career in the new corridors of power.⁴⁶ Maximilian Reich, a journalist deported from Vienna to Buchenwald and Dachau in 1938, described how the SS applauded each other for coming up with new ways of demonstrating to the prisoners that they had lost their agency.⁴⁷ In the occupied territories, and particularly in Eastern Europe, German soldiers and personnel forced Jewish civilians to dance, sing, and soil themselves according to German desires. In the process, the perpetrators also strengthened their group cohesion.⁴⁸

Thus the specific form the violence took was important. Beyond demonstrating career suitability and group cohesion, the theatricality can also be understood in the light of yet another element of German culture that I have conceptualized as the idea of the 'artist-soldier'—a persona fusing intellectual or artistic prowess, political acumen, and the willingness to fight when necessary. When the Old Reich imploded in the 1800s, it was supposed that this figure had failed to emerge, but in 1870–71 Bismarck and army chief Moltke were praised as educated artist-soldiers or artist-politicians for having forged a German nation through the art of war against France. After unification, being seen as an artist-soldier offered the highest symbolic status in German culture. Men did not have to be politicians, soldiers, or artists, but needed to be perceived as fighting for Germany in whatever form, as possessing the

⁴⁴ Wiener Library, 059-EA-1345, P.III.h. No. 554 (Theresienstadt), 27, Vally Fink (Prague), from Theresienstadt to London.

⁴⁵ Peter Loewenberg, 'The Kristallnacht as a Public Degradation Ritual', *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 32/1 (1987), 309–23.

⁴⁶ Christopher Dillon, *Dachau and the SS: A Schooling in Violence* (Oxford, 2015), 133.

⁴⁷ Maximilian Reich, 'Mörderschule', in id. and Emilie Reich, *Zweier Zeugen Mund: Verschollene Manuskripte aus 1938. Wien – Dachau – Buchenwald*, ed. by Henriette Mandl (Vienna, 2007), 35–243, at 216.

⁴⁸ Thomas Kühne, *Belonging and Genocide: Hitler's Community, 1918–1945* (New Haven, 2010), 102.

credentials for political action (this was a masculinized and masculinizing notion), and as appreciating art that was defined as German.⁴⁹

Until the 1920s, this imaginary notion was politically open and claimed across the political spectrum. But it remained the preserve of socially elitist White men with a Christian background, who jockeyed for position and kept the status for themselves. Here again, the First World War proved to be an important turning point on two counts. First, the Jewish middle classes had embodied this ideal persona long before 1914 in terms of education and art; but when German-Jewish men fought in the First World War, they added the missing ‘soldier’ element by fighting and laying down their lives. One could say that they entered not only society and politics on a normatively equal footing, but also did so inwardly in terms of the most esteemed ideal of identity, whose status they claimed for themselves.⁵⁰ Second, those who refused to accept defeat in 1918 defined the Versailles Treaty as an attack not only on German power, but also on this understanding of identity. During the negotiations at Versailles over reductions to the German commercial fleet in 1919—and remember that Germany had been the second-biggest global economic player behind the USA before 1914—*Simplicissimus* published a cartoon of a fat and derisive Uncle Sam talking down to a sad half-soldier, half-Deutscher Michel: ‘So, now you’ve lost your trade fleet too. Now you can go back to being the land of poets and thinkers.’⁵¹ While German-Jewish men were laying claim to the most prestigious ideal of Germanness, the Entente was depicted as seeking not only to crush German power, but also to destroy the very identity that—for *Simplicissimus* at least—had finally been attained by the entire nation through the war.

In the Weimar Republic, National Socialists also adopted and adapted this persona.⁵² They restricted its political applicability

⁴⁹ Kessel, *Langeweile*, 321–30; ead., *Gewalt und Gelächter*, 16–17, 39–55, 120–1.

⁵⁰ To my mind, the infamous *Judenählung* (‘Jew count’) in 1916 was an attempt to withhold this status from them by discrediting them as shirkers; see Kessel, *Gewalt und Gelächter*, 52–5.

⁵¹ *Simplicissimus*, 25 Feb. 1919, 605.

⁵² Birgit Schwarz, *Geniewahn: Hitler und die Kunst* (Vienna, 2009), and Wolfram Pyta, *Hitler: Der Künstler als Politiker und Feldherr. Eine Herrschaftsanalyse* (Munich, 2015), focus on Hitler and do not discuss these changes.

solely to themselves by throwing it open socially.⁵³ They offered anybody a symbolic share in the ideal provided they went along with Nazi politics—be they agrarian countryside dwellers, old elites, academics, white- or blue-collar workers, or even women if they remained in an appropriate position or participated through relations with men. Hitler’s supporters and ghostwriters depicted him as the greatest artist-soldier ever by presenting him as one born to the role. In the process they removed the need for formal education while still honouring it, thus bypassing the old, conservative elites. National Socialists also radicalized what they called the art of politics, treating not only war, but also all anti-democratic, anti-Left, and anti-Jewish violence as forms of ‘art’ that helped mould the Nazi identity and the society it was embedded in. They drew on the imaginary of the great artist who could only be great if he followed his intuition regardless of rules—least of all democratic ones. By enacting this imaginary through politics and violence, they translated humiliating and murderous politics into what they saw as creative and productive behaviour, thus manufacturing their own self through violence against those defined as non-German.

Performances of the non-Jewish self as an ‘artist of violence’ took many forms, but often involved staging the disempowerment of the Jewish self. The relational, interpersonal, and public character of these productions was remarkable, revealing a desire to hurt the bodies and souls of those hunted down, and creating non-Jewish power by sharing knowledge about how it was achieved. In pillory processions, Jewish and Gentile Germans were forced to sing self-derogatory verses accusing themselves of engaging in illicit sexual relations.⁵⁴ Elsewhere, non-Jewish Germans symbolically appropriated the bodies of the persecuted, staging themselves as ‘winners’ by acting out the fate of the ‘loser’. Carnival parades were a case in point. These regionally highly important and ritualized forms of public entertainment underwent intensive expansion after 1933 for reasons connected to

⁵³ On this and what follows see Kessel, *Gewalt und Gelächter*, 128–32. These ideas can also be traced in Georg Schott, *Das Volksbuch vom Hitler* (Munich, 1924), who saw himself as Hitler’s first biographer.

⁵⁴ Michael Wildt, *Volksgemeinschaft als Selbstermächtigung: Gewalt gegen Juden in der deutschen Provinz 1919 bis 1939* (Hamburg, 2007), 232–4, 248, 365–7.

both economics and tourism.⁵⁵ At the same time, the parades became a public stage on which to perform non-Jewish self-empowerment. They reflected each major phase of persecution in visible and audible forms of public shaming. Carnival floats in Cologne, Düsseldorf, Mainz, Nuremberg, and Singen featured live tableaux that re-enacted how German Jews were forced to emigrate, had their property taken away, and were disenfranchised.⁵⁶

A central topic was forced emigration, with local carnival associations, schools, and elites impersonating those whom they forced to leave. In 1934, in the southern German town of Singen, the local association of bar owners and the local shooting club took part in the carnival parade with a float carrying a sign that read 'From Berlin to Palestine' on its side, with smiling women and men looking out of its windows.⁵⁷ In the 1938 parade, a group of adults on foot carried suitcases, and a caption on a contemporary photograph states that 'the last' would now leave. To mark themselves as Jewish, the actors wore papier-mâché false noses, which were available to buy in all sizes.⁵⁸ Exclusion was inscribed not only into entertainment, but also into a consumer culture that was geared towards specific desires.

The expropriation of German-Jewish property was also re-enacted publicly. In Schwabach, a town south of Nuremberg, David Bleicher and Moritz Rosenstein were forced to give up their business in 1935. A few months later their loss was staged by a float in the parade of 1936 entitled 'Firmenwechsel', meaning 'change of firm', but also 'change of

⁵⁵ E.g. through subsidized bus tours and cheap tickets; see Laura Engelskircher, *Karneval im Dritten Reich am Beispiel der Städte Speyer und Mainz* (Speyer, 2010), esp. 44–6, 65–6, 74. Marcus Leifeld, *Der Kölner Karneval in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus: Vom regionalen Volksfest zum Propagandainstrument der NS-Volksgemeinschaft* (Cologne, 2015).

⁵⁶ Live tableaux were an important feature in German culture, also to stage democracy in the Weimar Republic. Manuela Achilles, 'With a Passion for Reason: Celebrating the Constitution in Weimar Germany', *Central European History*, 43/4 (2010), 666–89.

⁵⁷ Stadtarchiv Singen, 432, Archiv der Poppele-Zunft 1863 e.V., photograph 'Von Berlin nach Palästina', Fastnachtsumzug 1934. For an analysis of carnival see also Kessel, 'Race and Humor', 391–3.

⁵⁸ Stadtarchiv 432, Archiv der Poppele-Zunft 1863 e.V., photograph 'Die Libanontiroler hauen ab', Fastnachtsumzug 1938.

ownership'.⁵⁹ The name 'David Bleichstein' was emblazoned on the top and sides of the float, corrupting the two names into one and thus implying that all Jews were interchangeable. With one of the male actors wearing a long black coat, a black hat, a fake long beard, and fake sidelocks, and another in modest clothing like that of a street vendor, the actors transformed German businessmen into Eastern European orthodox Jews and peddlers. At the same time, the perpetrators of such symbolic violence literally hid inside the stereotypical clothing that misrepresented the persecuted, thereby marking only the victims as actors.

The participants in these parades demonstrated what it meant to be German: they brought Jews back in distorted form into a public sphere that the excluded could no longer define on their own terms. Furthermore, the demeaning costumes donned by the actors turned baseless allegations into a tangible spectacle and thereby 'proved' them. Carnival participants visualized the standard charge that German Jews were merely hiding their real Jewishness under a superficial veneer. When Jewish Germans self-defined as German, they were accused of hiding illegitimately behind a mask and committing a crime of identity. When carnival actors stepped in and out of their disguises, they translated anti-Jewish allegations from media sign systems into lived experience and asserted themselves bodily as masters over a difference they were unable to prove.

A brochure for the Munich parade in 1935 (which featured a tank) spelled out explicitly how such self-empowerment could be read as part of the persona of the artist-soldier. The anonymous author started by asking the rhetorical question of whether it was counter-intuitive to see soldiers and jokers side by side, only to affirm emphatically that German society would not be fully integrated until nobody in this 'cheerful society' could tell soldiers and jokers apart, and until those who fought and those who provided entertainment became one.⁶⁰ Shaming the persecuted worked as an identity practice, proving one's Germanness by dominating the Othered at will and demonstrating who enjoyed the power of definition.

⁵⁹ Stadtarchiv Schwabach, Foto 809 B, photographer Käte Schönberger.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Carl Dietmar and Marcus Leifeld, *Alaaf und Heil Hitler: Karneval im Dritten Reich* (Munich, 2010), 156.

The carnival floats also reinforced that bodies not only represent social order, but are the site of the ultimate experience of symbolic structures.⁶¹ In a yearly ritual entertainment that was relished by participants and spectators, activists clad their own bodies in mocking attire to define Jewish Germans as non-German. Furthermore, the parades provided a public space that made ritualized degradation effective. Laughter was and is a powerful means to confirm ascriptions and make them stick. But whether spectators laughed along or not, they lent weight to symbolic violence through their very presence and their gaze.⁶² At the very least, they created a space from which alternative voices were excluded.⁶³ Furthermore, the participants created 'eine Zeit ohne Beispiel', as Goebbels called National Socialism—'a time with no precedent or comparison'.⁶⁴ By acting as what they perceived to be Jewish losers, they positioned themselves as German winners. By doing so theatrically, they inscribed themselves into the symbiosis of the artist-soldier.

Humiliating acts only broadened in scope and brutality after 1938; they did not change in character. Self-referential justifications became even more pronounced during the Shoah, when Goebbels ordered that those being killed were to be portrayed ever more ruthlessly as guilty in order to make sense of the killing.⁶⁵ As more and more non-Jewish Germans wielded immediate power over human beings they defined as non-German, both at the front and in the camps, so there were more and more instances in which they forced the persecuted to embody and thereby 'prove' that they were perpetrators.

During the pogrom of 1938, for example, it was mostly educated middle-class men who were deported to Dachau or Buchenwald. When prisoners managed to discuss literature or philosophy among

⁶¹ Eric Santner, 'Mein ganz privates Deutschland: Daniel Paul Schrebers geheime Geschichte der Moderne', in Jörg Huber and Alois Martin Müller (eds.), *Die Wiederkehr des Anderen* (Basel, 1996), 169–96, at 188.

⁶² Hannes Kuch and Steffen K. Herrmann, 'Symbolische Verletzbarkeit and sprachliche Gewalt', in eid. and Sybille Krämer (eds.), *Verletzende Worte: Die Grammatik sprachlicher Missachtung* (Bielefeld, 2007), 179–210, 203.

⁶³ Leifeld, *Kölner Karneval*, 23.

⁶⁴ Joseph Goebbels, *Die Zeit ohne Beispiel: Reden und Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1939/40/41*, 4th edn. (Munich, 1942).

⁶⁵ Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination*, 476–9.

themselves, they were able to act like the male *Bildungsbürger* (educated citizens) they were; yet when guards found out, they forced them to fight and physically injure each other, symbolically transforming them from Germans into Jewish perpetrators even against their own kind.⁶⁶ The taunts heard by Central-Verein members in Berlin in 1938 were radicalized by camp guards into utterances like ‘Why are you laughing so dirtily, you swine?’ In response, prisoners knew they had to keep silent – though their silence did not guarantee their survival either.⁶⁷

The oft-discussed binary of purity versus dirt implied by the guard’s use of the word ‘swine’ was another means to turn an imagined boundary into a visible and felt difference. According to Mary Douglas, dirt does not signify disorder in a society that uses it to structure identities and sociality. Rather, in such a context the idea of dirt symbolizes the very ability to control what is represented as dangerous by means of the metaphor. But to achieve the feeling of control, both ends of the binary need to be deployed again and again.⁶⁸ The more dangerous the Other is made to appear, the more gratifying the process of creating what is called order becomes for those who dismiss others as dirt. In other words, the greater the perceived danger, the greater the satisfaction in being able to submerge an identity marked as dangerous under real or imagined filth.⁶⁹

Again, Germans in power combined actively soiling the people and places they overpowered with forcing those they persecuted to dirty themselves. During the occupation of Eastern Europe they systematically destroyed Jewish monuments and sites of memory, including cemeteries, and associated those they persecuted with the taboo of dirt. They turned the grave of a famous zaddik in Ciechanów in Poland into a public latrine,⁷⁰ imbuing the last resting place of a leading Jewish figure with a humiliating meaning. In the camps they went a step further: they forced the inmates to soil themselves and others.

⁶⁶ Reich, ‘Mörderschule’, 140.

⁶⁷ Ibid. 148.

⁶⁸ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London, 1984), 161–2.

⁶⁹ Sng, ‘Figure’, 63, 66–8.

⁷⁰ Thomas Rahe, *‘Höre Israel’: Jüdische Religiosität in nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern* (Göttingen, 1999), 41.

According to Pelagia Lewinska, a Polish resistance fighter, the latrines in Auschwitz were constructed in a way that made it almost impossible not to do so.⁷¹ Summing up her twenty months in Auschwitz as ‘mud’, Lewinska realized that the dirt had a purpose and a meaning for the perpetrators. In terms typical of survivors’ accounts, she noted that the SS ‘with their well-cultivated sense of humour’ pushed women deeper into the dirt whom they saw moving slowly or with difficulty. According to her, the SS turned each human being into a ‘ridiculous monster of mud’, so that the inmates themselves could barely look at each other without revulsion.⁷² The guards’ behaviour should not be defined as dehumanization. It rather reflected their desire to exercise power over human beings whom they could force time and again to literally disappear under dirt and excrement – to break their prisoners’ sense of self and laugh at them from a position of supremacy.⁷³ It has often been discussed how prisoners tried as best they could to keep themselves clean and helped each other to do so as a key practice of retaining agency and their sense of self. Lewinska and a friend also vowed that they would not let each other die in the mud.⁷⁴

Other guards used spatial boundaries to act out their narratives of identity. Charlotte Delbo, a French writer and member of the French resistance after 1941, was deported in 1942 to Ravensbrück and Auschwitz-Birkenau. In her post-war recollections she described how SS men in Auschwitz-Birkenau drew lines that prisoners were forbidden to cross.⁷⁵ Then they would throw a cigarette over the line,

⁷¹ Pelagia Lewinska, ‘Twenty Months at Auschwitz: New York 1968’, in Carol Rittner and John K. Roth (eds.), *Different Voices: Women and the Holocaust* (New York, 1993), 85–98, at 87.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Johannes Lang, ‘Questioning Dehumanization: Intersubjective Dimensions of Violence in the Nazi Concentration and Death Camps’, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 24/2 (2010), 225–46.

⁷⁴ Lewinska, ‘Twenty Months’, 87.

⁷⁵ For a discussion of space both as a means of torture and as demonstrating the agency of the persecuted see Christiane Heß, *Ein/gezeichnet: Zeichnungen und Zeitzeugenschaft aus den Lagern Ravensbrück und Neuengamme* (forthcoming). See also Dominique Schröder, ‘Niemand ist fähig, das alles in Worten auszudrücken’: *Tagebuchschreiben in nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern 1939–1945* (Göttingen, 2020).

demand that a prisoner fetch it back, and shoot them the second they crossed the line. Finally, Delbo added, the SS would laugh as they checked whether their 'game' was dead.⁷⁶ In other camps, guards cruelly staged Jewish religion as the pathway to death. Above the gas chamber complex in Treblinka they hung up a star of David, and in front of one entrance they installed a parochet with an inscription stating that this was 'the Lord's gate' through which all the righteous should pass.⁷⁷ In this way they turned the sacred symbols of the Jewish religion into symbols of death in order to strike a final emotional blow before killing their victims.

In violent sketches, the SS forced prisoners to 'transgress' by crossing into forbidden territory and then cast them as losers of history and identity. By forcing the persecuted to embody the role of perpetrator, Germans were able to assume that role themselves without self-defining as such.⁷⁸ By directing a theatre of murder, they staged themselves as violent artist-soldiers, creating a new form of sociality by overpowering and destroying human beings. Time and again their shaming reproduced the binary reversal of meaning in which life for non-Jewish Germans meant death for Jews. SS Sturmbannführer Bruno Müller led the Sonderkommando 11b, one of the mobile death squads operating in occupied Eastern Europe. Before shooting a woman and her 3-year-old child in August 1941, Müller pronounced, 'You have to die so that we can live'.⁷⁹ The victims of persecution underwent deep humiliation as a separate and additional layer of torture. Many of them recognized how non-Jewish Germans inscribed their power to hurt into the traditional values of German culture and used them as categories of difference, since their meaning depended on whether somebody was accepted as German or not. For camp inmates, the promise of freedom by complying with cultural norms only signalled death. Indeed, one prisoner in Sachsenhausen

⁷⁶ Charlotte Delbo, *Auschwitz and After* (New Haven, 1995), 68–9.

⁷⁷ Rahe, 'Höre Israel', 44–5.

⁷⁸ Kessel, 'Race and Humor', 397.

⁷⁹ Quoted in Klaus-Michael Mallmann, Volker Rieß, and Wolfram Pyta (eds.), *Deutscher Osten 1939–1945: Der Weltanschauungskrieg in Photos und Texten* (Darmstadt, 2003), 153. On the binary reversal of meanings see Boaz Neumann, *Die Weltanschauung des Nazismus: Raum–Körper–Sprache* (Göttingen, 2010).

completed the contemptuous phrase *Arbeit macht frei* ('Work sets you free') with the words 'Yes, in crematorium no. 3'.⁸⁰

*Laughter in Nazi Germany: Identity Construction
through the Power to Hurt*

Practices of humiliation are not unique to Nazi Germany, but the meaning they created and conveyed during Nazism was specifically German. In mocking the persecuted, some non-Jewish Germans positioned themselves as winners of history and identity. Others claimed to be artist-soldiers, bringing this long-established persona to fruition by ignoring any boundaries for violence, thus creating a new society by degrading and destroying human beings. Mockery was not an afterthought, but a core structure of exclusion and killing—a means for perpetrators to invoke their reading of history and identity in order to avoid having to justify their actions.

The storyline they invoked—an imagined narrative of hurt and humiliation that they now sought to invert—relied on their defining Germanness, and thus the modern self, as a category of difference. Participants organized the genocidal culture as an endless web of intersubjective relations, no matter how brief their involvement or whether they did any more than just watch what happened or laugh along. Their relationships of humiliation were designed to hurt their victims bodily, cognitively, and emotionally before killing them. Those affected, in turn, had to find the strength to bear this additional pain, including the sounds of a laughter I cannot even attempt to make heard in its cruel power.

The question why Jewish Germans were identified as the greatest threat to Germanness can only be answered if we read modern German history as a history of imagined identities and realize that the notion of the modern self as German was constructed as a category of potentially exclusionary difference. The definition of Germanness as non-Jewish had been present since the 1800s, but did not previously

⁸⁰ Quoted in Nicole Warmbold, *Lagersprache: Zur Sprache der Opfer in den Konzentrationslagern Sachsenhausen, Dachau, Buchenwald* (Bremen, 2008), 270.

dominate politics. Yet it was never abandoned either. Opponents of the processes of democratization that took place from the late nineteenth century, especially in the Weimar Republic, pitted their hierarchical notion of identity against equal rights and democracy. They undermined the understanding of politics as the democratic and peaceful negotiation of conflicting interests geared toward compromise, as the Weimar Republic allowed and called for. They achieved this by doing politics as identity politics and by foregrounding the essentialist definition of Germanness as non-Jewish as the guiding principle for producing one's identity, all in the context of an exclusionary society which they defined as the height of modernity.

Accordingly, these violent and degrading practices were deeply modern, and the form they were given mattered. Conceptualizing the German self as a category of difference was a modern practice. Therefore, modern society in general is to my mind constitutively based on inclusion and exclusion, or at least on inclusion and hierarchy. Historical actors could decide either to reduce hierarchies, or to radicalize hierarchy into exclusion. Everything was possible. Whoever disliked equality for Jewish Germans could draw on the notion of Germanness as non-Jewish to undercut a democratization based on human rights and respect. Framing the reversal of victim and perpetrator roles in terms of humiliated and hurt bodies gave an additional and decisive impulse to act against those projected as non-German perpetrators. The radicalization after 1933 became possible because there were always enough people who desired to belong by wielding power over those whom they defined as not belonging. In the process, they positioned their notion of identity as a key structure of the modern world.

To be sure, for the many actors who tried to make Weimar democracy work, Nazism was reactionary, destroying respect and human rights along with democracy. But National Socialists themselves claimed to be modern as well, drawing on the trope of laughter as well as the imagined identity of an ideal persona with immense symbolic status in German society. They understood themselves as modern not by creating a new world-view, but by offering an opportunity for people to share in an imaginary identity previously treated as exclusive. They were successful not least because many of those who accepted Weimar democracy in formal terms still shared

the understanding that Germanness was non-Jewish, even if they did not take it to its deadly conclusion. This also means that the idea of identity politics should not only be applied to marginalized groups seeking acceptance, but to groups in power who define democracy as a threat to their entrenched position and the privileges that come with it.⁸¹ After 1918, too many people resented the idea that democracy could dispense with identity beyond citizenship, while insisting on being totally distinct from Jews.

Those Germans who became Nazis played that to their advantage. They centred the demand that people prove their own worth as Germans by demonstrating how they were not Jewish. They attracted people from different classes and milieux by creating a malleable and conflicting programme of many interests, all of which were based on this core principle. National Socialism offered a new status—a notion of Germanness with the highest symbolic value—as a trophy for anyone who helped create a society fit for such an identity. But they never defined social or political structures beyond saying that these would be for Germans only, because identity politics was their lifeline—a lifeline defined by death. Those who bought into this ideology defined the Shoah as their greatest *Leistung*, or ‘success’, and for this reason invested their leaders with charisma regardless of military defeats. To my mind, this explains why even in the last days of the war, non-Jewish civilians continued to drive the few victims who managed to escape the death marches back into the hands of the SS.⁸² They did this not so much because these survivors were witnesses to the Shoah, but simply because they were survivors. For those who saw the Shoah as the ultimate *Leistung*, the greatest achievement and promise fulfilled by and for an identity defined as German, one surviving Jew was one too many.

⁸¹ On the USA in recent decades see Ezra Klein, *Why We're Polarized* (New York, 2020).

⁸² Linda C. DeMeritt, ‘Representations of History: The *Mühlviertler Hasenjagd* as Word and Image’, *Modern Austrian Literature*, 32/4 (1999), 134–45.

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THE REALM OF CLOACINA? EXCREMENT IN LONDON'S EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY WASTE REGIME

FRANZISKA NEUMANN

Human excrement was one of the major waste materials in early modern towns and cities. At a conservative estimate, the average adult in the early modern period produced at least 50 grams of faeces per day; London, with a population of 750,000 by the mid eighteenth century, had to dispose of around 37.5 tons every day.¹

Given the sheer quantity, it is unsurprising that eighteenth-century London was often imagined as a gigantic sewer. In his poem 'A Description of a City Shower' (1710), Jonathan Swift describes a downpour on London's streets. Instead of cleansing the city, the rain draws all the filth of urban life, including its waste and excrement, from the drains and latrines and into the daylight. By the poem's conclusion, no one can withstand the torrent of city waste: 'Now from all Parts the swelling Kennels flow, / And bear their Trophies with them as they go: / Filth of all Hues and Odours, seem to tell; / What Street they sail'd from, by their Sight and Smell.'² In the early eighteenth century, the image of London as a great sewer was highly popular, aided by numerous authors including Jonathan Swift, Daniel Defoe, John Gay, and Samuel Johnson. London was the city of art, culture, and trade, but it was also the stinking realm of the goddess Cloacina.³

Trans. by Angela Davies (GHIL). Proofread by Matthew James Appleby.

¹ These calculations are based on Barbara Rouse, 'Nuisance Neighbours and Persistent Polluters: The Urban Code of Behaviour in Late Medieval London', in Andrew Brown and Jan Dumolyn (eds.), *Medieval Urban Culture* (Turnhout, 2017), 75–92. In the following, 'London' refers mainly to the administrative level of the City of London.

² Jonathan Swift, *The Works of J.S., D.D., D.S.P.D.*, 4 vols. (Dublin, 1735), ii. 39–42, at 41–2. For a classic account of this see Brendan O. Hehir, 'Meaning of Swift's "Description of a City Shower"', *English Literary History*, 27/3 (1960), 194–207.

³ Jens Martin Gurr, 'Worshipping Cloacina in the Eighteenth Century: Functions of Scatology in Swift, Pope, Gay, and Sterne', in Stefan Horlacher, Stefan Glomb, and Lars Heiler (eds.), *Taboo and Transgression in British Literature from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York, 2010), 117–34.

In terms of methodology, this provides us with an interesting starting point. There is an unclear relationship between the popular contemporary topos of the dirty city and the everyday task of dealing with excrement as urban waste. This question also leads to a conceptual issue. On the one hand, defecation is a fact of life. Humans produce excrement with specific physical and chemical qualities, the disposal of which is an age-old problem of waste and sewage management.⁴ On the other, excrement is symbolically charged and associated with taboos and ideas of impurity.⁵ As a result, the historiography of excrement tends to emphasize either its material or its symbolic qualities: we find either histories of (mostly urban) sewage management, or of excrement in a scatological context.⁶ The intellectual starting point of this article, however, is what this means for an investigation of excrement as part of the urban experience. This draws on the everyday physical circumstances of dealing with human waste, as well as on various symbolic interpretations often conveyed in print media. In other words, how can we bridge the gap between materialistic and cultural historical perspectives – that is, between excrement as matter and as a symbol?⁷ In this article, these will not be treated

⁴ Wolfgang Bischof and Wilhelm Hosang, *Abwassertechnik*, 10th edn. (Stuttgart, 1993).

⁵ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London, 1966), ch. 2: 'Secular Defilement', 30–41. On the symbolic charge of dirt see also Ben Campkin, 'Introduction', in id. and Rosie Cox (eds.), *Dirt: New Geographies of Cleanliness and Contamination* (London, 2007), 63–7.

⁶ This approach has mostly been taken by literary scholars. See e.g. Peter J. Smith (ed.), *Between Two Stools: Scatology and its Representations in English Literature, Chaucer to Swift* (Manchester, 2012); Sophie Gee, *Making Waste: Leftovers and the Eighteenth-Century Imagination* (Princeton, 2010); Jeff Persels and Russell Ganim (eds.), *Fecal Matters in Early Modern Literature and Art: Studies in Scatology* (Aldershot, 2004).

⁷ Andreas Reckwitz argues for the materialization of the cultural in his 'Die Materialisierung der Kultur', in Friederike Elias et al. (eds.), *Praxeologie: Beiträge zur interdisziplinären Reichweite praxistheoretischer Ansätze in den Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften* (Berlin, 2014), 13–25. A similar approach is taken by Mark Jenner, 'Sawney's Seat : The Social Imaginary of the London Bog-House c.1660–c.1800', in Rebecca Anne Barr, Sylvie Kleiman-Lafon, and Sophie Vasset (eds.), *Bellies, Bowels and Entrails in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester, 2018), 101–27.

as oppositional but as forming part of urban waste regimes. We will see that excrement was, in fact, both matter and symbol. It was part of everyday experience and a logistical challenge— a marker for the city’s political and social order, as well as for urban coexistence. I will argue that it was as a result of the interplay of these two aspects that a dedicated excremental waste regime was established in London. The city’s waste regime gives us a new perspective on the challenges of urban coexistence in eighteenth-century London.

I will start by examining waste as a concept and introducing the notion of a waste regime. In the second section, I will focus on excrement as a waste product in eighteenth-century London and look at how it was dealt with by London’s waste management infrastructure. The third section will investigate the function of scatology in discourses in the print media. To conclude, I will bring materialistic and cultural aspects together, examining how both formed the basis of London’s excremental waste regime.

Excrement, Waste, and Waste Regimes

We must begin by establishing whether excrement can, in fact, be classified as waste. As always, this depends on the definition. If we define waste following the Basel Convention (1989) as ‘substances or objects which are disposed of or are intended to be disposed of, or are required to be disposed of by the provisions of national law’, then excrement is waste material.⁸ The definition of waste is in the eye of the beholder, a fact which also applies in principle to excrement. Waste is defined not by the material and its intrinsic qualities, but by the reasons for and manner of its disposal. From this perspective, waste is primarily a social construct.

This definition, however, lacks a certain conceptual clarity. On the one hand, nothing is waste in and of itself: norms, value attributions, and disposal practices turn certain substances into waste.

⁸ Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, Art. 2, Para. 1, at [<https://www.basel.int/Portals/4/Basel%20Convention/docs/text/BaselConventionText-e.pdf>], accessed 15 July 2021.

Yet some materials are more likely than others to become waste. Few substances show this as clearly as excrement, where there is a pressing need for disposal. Waste has a material dimension that cannot be interpreted merely as a social construct. The well-known smell of rotten eggs, given off by the release of hydrogen sulphide (H_2S) from excrement, generally causes people to take action to remove the smell or its source. Some people may be more sensitive to the smell of human faeces than others, although it generally results in individuals wanting to remove themselves or the material as quickly as possible — more so than a broken plate, for example.

However plausible the notion of a social construct, these are specific waste materials with qualities which impact on our perception of waste and how it should be dealt with.⁹ These effects come from the materials themselves; as a result, it may be possible to speak of their ‘agency’. Waste materials are a nuisance; they contaminate or pollute, posing a danger to the environment and to the health of humans and animals. Waste cannot, of course, be considered a conscious and deliberate actor, but looking at waste shows that it may be useful to define the concept of ‘agency’ more broadly. In engagement with Bruno Latour, Vinciane Despret stresses the nuances of the concept of agency: ‘[Agency] . . . appears clearly as the capacity not only to make others do things, but to incite, inspire, or ask them to do things.’¹⁰ Consequently, the focus shifts to what Despret calls ‘inter-agency’. This is not about describing individual actions on the part of things or animals as ‘agency’. Rather, “‘agenting” (as well as “acting”) is a relational verb that connects and articulates narratives (and needs “articulations”), beings of different species, things, and contexts’.¹¹

⁹ On the relationship between materiality and waste from an archaeological perspective see Daniel Sosna and Lenka Brunclíková, ‘Introduction’, in eid. (eds.), *Archaeologies of Waste: Encounters with the Unwanted* (Oxford, 2017), 1–13.

¹⁰ Vinciane Despret, ‘From Secret Agents to Interagency’, *History and Theory*, 52/4 (2013), 29–44, at 40. An interesting transfer of Despret’s concept of ‘inter-agency’ to various human and non-human actors can be found in Juliane Schiel, Isabelle Schürch, and Aline Steinbrecher, ‘Von Sklaven, Pferden und Hunden: Dialog über den Nutzen aktueller Agency-Debatten für die Sozialgeschichte’, *Schweizerisches Jahrbuch für Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte*, 32 (2017), 17–48, at 20–2.

¹¹ Despret, ‘From Secret Agents to Interagency’, 44.

Waste can encourage people to do things or behave in a particular way. At the same time, the contours of interagency between actors and materials are not entirely defined by the materiality of a particular substance, but also by norms, values, and attitudes.¹²

Zsuzsa Gille's term 'waste regime' provides a conceptual framework for this interplay between interagency, values, norms, and practices.¹³ She argues that waste is reflected in historically variable 'social patterns of the social nature of waste',¹⁴ which, in turn, are tied to contemporary knowledge systems and, above all, 'social institutions'. 'Social institutions determine what wastes and not just what resources are considered valuable by society, and these institutions regulate the production and distribution of waste in tangible ways.'¹⁵ At the same time, Gille argues that waste should not be seen exclusively as a social construct, but that the agency of materials should also be taken into account as an essential component of waste regimes.¹⁶ As such, a number of factors come into focus—namely, historic specificities, the direct and indirect interplay of materials, actors, and institutions, as well as knowledge systems, perceptions, and normative frameworks.

In the following, I understand a waste regime as a structure shaped by the interplay of various elements. These elements themselves, as well as their interactions, vary historically. At the centre of every waste regime is the material-specific interagency between waste and actors. This may assume quite different contours. In the case of excrement, it may be the smell; in the case of ash, dustiness; and so on. The discursive interpretations and practices that develop out of the specific material-human interagency are also variable; they reflect the specific waste regime tied to that particular material. Whether the

¹² Ibid. 40. Similarly Heike Weber, 'Zur Materialität von Müll: Abfall aus stoffgeschichtlicher Perspektive', *Blätter für Technikgeschichte*, 77 (2015), 75–100, at 75. Verena Winiwarter provides a good conceptual overview in her 'Eine kurze Geschichte des Abfalls', *Wissenschaft und Umwelt Interdisziplinär*, 5 (2002), 5–14.

¹³ Zsuzsa Gille, *From the Cult of Waste to the Trash Heap of History: The Politics of Waste in Socialist and Postsocialist Hungary* (Bloomington, Ind., 2007), 11–35.

¹⁴ Ibid. 34.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Zsuzsa Gille, 'Actor Networks, Modes of Production, and Waste Regimes: Reassembling the Macro-Social', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 42/5 (2010), 1049–64, at 1051.

stench of excrement is perceived 'only' as a nuisance or as a health threat is related to contemporary knowledge systems and social ideas of order.¹⁷ This means that while the interagency is shaped by material qualities, its effects and consequences are culturally specific and highly variable; they produce waste regimes that change in response to specific waste materials. With this, we have a new perspective on the question raised at the beginning of this article—namely, the relationship between excrement as a waste material and as a symbol. Both aspects, although not directly connected, are elements in an excremental waste regime specific to London.

The concept of waste regimes can be used to uncover the mechanisms that allow particular materials, culturally linked with specific institutions, discourses, and practices, to become waste within a certain framework. In addition, it draws our attention to the fact that at different times and in different spaces, there were different regimes for dealing with waste. This makes it possible to conceive of a comparative history of waste in a synchronic and diachronic perspective. With this, a number of key questions arise: what materials were usually seen as waste in a specific setting within a city or a region? What were the contours of the interagency between materials and actors? Which institutions and actors influenced how waste was treated? What practices were associated with specific waste materials, and what norms, values, ideas of order, and systems of knowledge shaped the treatment of waste? Underpinning this article is the idea that a historically specific waste regime emerges only as a result of the specific interplay between these elements. This will be explored in greater detail below, where one waste material—human excrement—will be taken as a case study.

¹⁷ The fact that 'sewer gas' (hydrogen sulphide) not only presented an olfactory problem but could also pose a health risk was discussed in the nineteenth century, when sewers were built and the water closet was introduced more widely. See Michelle Allen, *Cleansing the City: Sanitary Geographies in Victorian London* (Athens, OH, 2008), 40–3.

Excrement as Waste in the City

Londoners had a number of possibilities when relieving themselves in town or at home.¹⁸ Until the nineteenth century, they typically used a latrine, also known as a privy, jericho, boghouse, necessary house, house of easement, or house of office.¹⁹ Latrines were either in the house or in the backyard and mostly took the form of a simple shed over a bricked-in pit – the so-called cesspool or cesspit, privy midden, or privy vault. Although there had been water closets since the late sixteenth century, until the last third of the eighteenth century these were expensive, custom-built products reserved largely for the nobility.²⁰ Most of the population used simple latrines or privies. These could be reserved

¹⁸ The best introduction to the topic from a technical history perspective is David J. Eveleigh, *Bogs, Baths and Basins: The Story of Domestic Sanitation* (Stroud, 2006), esp. 1–17. On London’s sanitary infrastructure in the Middle Ages see Ernest L. Sabine, ‘City Cleaning in Mediaeval London’, *Speculum*, 12/1 (1937), 19–43; id., ‘Latrines and Cesspools of Mediaeval London’, *Speculum*, 9/3 (1934), 303–21; and Rouse, ‘Nuisance Neighbours’. For the nineteenth century see Lee Jackson, *Dirty Old London: The Victorian Fight against Filth* (New Haven, 2014), 46–68. Carole Rawcliffe provides a wider view of English towns in her *Urban Bodies: Communal Health in Late Medieval English Towns and Cities* (Woodbridge, 2013), esp. 127–40; see also Dolly Jørgensen, ‘“All Good Rule of the Citee”: Sanitation and Civic Government in England, 1400–1600’, *Journal of Urban History*, 36/3 (2010), 300–15; Leona J. Skelton, *Sanitation in Urban Britain, 1560–1700* (Abingdon, 2016), esp. 27–33; ead., ‘Beadles, Dughills and Noisome Excrements: Regulating the Environment in Seventeenth-Century Carlisle’, *International Journal of Regional and Local History*, 9/1 (2014), 44–62; and Richard D. Oram, ‘Waste Management and Peri-Urban Agriculture in the Early Modern Scottish Burgh’, *Agricultural History Review*, 59/1 (2011), 1–17. With a focus on the nineteenth century see Joel A. Tarr, *The Search for the Ultimate Sink: Urban Pollution in Historical Perspective* (Akron, OH, 1996); Martin V. Melosi, *The Sanitary City: Urban Infrastructure in America from Colonial Times to the Present* (Baltimore, 2000); Donald Reid, *Paris Sewers and Sewermen: Realities and Representations* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991); and Christopher Hamlin, ‘Providence and Putrefaction: Victorian Sanitarians and the Natural Theology of Health and Disease’, *Victorian Studies*, 28/3 (1985), 381–411, at 382–3.

¹⁹ Good overviews are given by Danielle Bobker, *The Closet: the Eighteenth-Century Architecture of Intimacy* (Princeton, 2020), 76–88 and Eveleigh, *Bogs, Baths and Basins*, 1–17.

²⁰ Eveleigh, *Bogs, Baths and Basins*, 18–42.

for the use of one household or, when located in the backyard or courtyard, for that of the neighbourhood.²¹ Chamber pots were also used. These were available in different shapes and materials, ranging from elaborate porcelain or ceramic models to 'stools of easement' (a padded chair construction with a built-in chamber pot), plain earthenware pots, or simple buckets.²² Chamber pots were often kept hidden under the bed but could also be used in company. In 1784, François de La Rochefoucauld, a young French nobleman visiting a family in Suffolk, was surprised to find a row of chamber pots lined up on a sideboard. It was common, he wrote, to relieve oneself in company: 'one has no kind of concealment and the practice strikes me as most indecent.'²³

The contents of a chamber pot were not always disposed of by those who used them. Instead, it traditionally fell to the maid to empty and clean them. The typical maid in London was young, between 15 and 29 years old, and did not come from London, but left her home to work in town for a few years before getting married.²⁴ Taking the parish of St Martin-in-the-Fields as an example, David A. Kent has shown that keeping a maid was not the exclusive privilege of wealthy families, but widespread among the lower social and economic classes. Labour was cheap: in the middle of the eighteenth century the majority of the female domestic workers in this parish earned less than five pounds a year.²⁵ One major difference between wealthy and less wealthy households lay in the type of work that was expected of servants. While wealthy households had different staff for different jobs, less well-off houses employed a servant as a maid for all tasks, including emptying the chamber pots. The contents of the pots mostly ended up in the privies.

²¹ Jackson, *Dirty Old London*, 156.

²² Eveleigh, *Bogs, Baths and Basins*, 2-3.

²³ François de la Rochefoucauld, *A Frenchman in England, 1784: Being the Mélanges Sur L'Angleterre of François de la Rochefoucauld*, ed. Jean Marchand, trans. S. C. Roberts (Cambridge, 1933), 32.

²⁴ On this see Peter Earle, 'The Female Labour Market in London in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries', *Economic History Review*, 42/3 (1989), 328-53, at 333-45.

²⁵ David A. Kent, 'Ubiquitous but Invisible: Female Domestic Servants in Mid-Eighteenth Century London', *History Workshop Journal*, 28/1 (1989), 111-28, at 118.

As previously mentioned, latrines in backyards or courtyards could be reserved for a single household or for the use of the neighbourhood. Witness testimony to the Central Criminal Court, the Old Bailey, are an excellent source on the history of London's privies; through them, we can see that there was a 'common necessary house' for the convenience of the residents of Old Round-Court on the Strand. Although the majority of residents had a key, the privy was most often left unlocked.²⁶ There are, however, frequent references to locks and bolts in connection with garden privies in the Old Bailey's proceedings; these suggest that access may have been restricted.²⁷

Laura Gowing has shown that alleys, courtyards, and neighbourhoods were to some extent regarded as 'personal territory' in premodern towns and, like thresholds and balconies, were seen as an extension of the domestic sphere.²⁸ Neighbours therefore paid attention to who was loitering in their courtyards. In 1722, Elizabeth Williams was accused of stealing a brass pot with a lid from the laundry room of a Mrs Hawthorn.²⁹ When asked by Mrs Hawthorn what she was doing in the courtyard, Williams said she was looking for the necessary house. Phillip Walker, who was accused of stealing some linen in 1717, used the same pretext.³⁰ Both were acquitted.

²⁶ 'For the Conveniency of the People that live in Old Round-Court in the Strand, there is a common necessary House; which, tho' most of the Neighbours have a Key to, yet is often left unlock'd.' See Old Bailey Proceedings Online [www.oldbaileyonline.org, version 6.0, 17 Apr. 2011], henceforth OBP, 22 Feb. 1738, trial of Samuel Taylor, John Berry (t17380222-5), accessed 15 July 2021.

²⁷ On the significance of lockable rooms in the domestic sphere, see Amanda Vickery, 'An Englishman's Home is His Castle? Thresholds, Boundaries and Privacies in the Eighteenth-Century London House', *Past & Present*, 199 (2008), 147-73, at 160-3. On the subject of latrines at the Old Bailey see also Jenner, 'Sawney's Seat', 105-7.

²⁸ Laura Gowing, "'The freedom of the streets": Women and Social Space, 1560-1640', in Mark S. R. Jenner and Paul Griffiths (eds.), *Londinopolis: Essays in the Cultural and Social History of Early Modern London* (Manchester, 2000), 130-51, at 136. On this see Danielle van den Heuvel's excellent overview of the relationship between space, city, and gender in her 'Gender in the Streets of the Premodern City', *Journal of Urban History*, 45/4 (2019), 693-710, esp. 700.

²⁹ OBP, 5 Dec. 1722, trial of Elizabeth Williams (t17221205-7).

³⁰ OBP, 27 Feb. 1717, trial of Phillip Walker (t17170227-9).

Looking for the privy was, it seems, an accepted way of legitimizing one's presence in a liminal space like a courtyard.

Of course, Londoners could always relieve themselves on the street or in empty alleyways, although as we will see later, this was regarded by contemporaries as a problem. Visitors and local residents, however, did not have to expose themselves in public. Various 'public' facilities were open to all. There is evidence of endowments for the upkeep of public latrines since the Middle Ages, some of which were enormous.³¹ The most impressive was probably Whittington's Longhouse, with 128 seats and separate provision for men and women.³² Sir John Philipot's Longhouse was supported by a similar endowment. Both latrines were still maintained by the City's wards in the eighteenth century, though with difficulty. For decades, the annual wardmote presentments contained complaints about the ruinous state of the remaining latrines, as well as requests for financial support to provide lighting.³³ These requests routinely fell on deaf ears.

Both because of their condition and their generally secluded locations, public latrines were often seen as sites of immorality. In December 1739, John Hassell from Ludgate Hill complained that the latrines near Fleet Market were regularly visited by 'Whores Rogues and Sodomites', and could therefore hardly be used by shoppers at the market.³⁴ The necessary houses had been erected on the eastern side of the Fleet Ditch in August 1737 for the benefit of Fleet Market and were criticized soon after their opening. Originally conceived as a unisex facility, directions were given as early as October 1737 for a screen to be built between the seats. As the City Markets Committee considered them indispensable for the market, a sign was put up in response to Hassell's complaint, dividing the privies by sex. Posts were positioned

³¹ Jackson, *Dirty Old London*, 155; Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, 142-7.

³² P. E. Jones, 'Whittington's Longhouse: Four Fifteenth Century London Plans', *London Topographical Record*, 23 (1972), 27-34; Rawcliffe, *Urban Bodies*, 142. On London's public latrines in the Middle Ages see Sabine, 'Latrines and Cesspools'.

³³ See London Metropolitan Archive (henceforth LMA) COL/AD/04/029, Wardmote Presentments Queenhithe, 1730, 1731, 1734, 1735, 1744, 1745, and 1750.

³⁴ LMA COL/CC/MRK/01/002, Court of Common Council, Markets Committee Journal 1737-1743, fos. 285-6.

so that coaches could no longer stop directly in front of them, making it more difficult to use the latrines for prostitution.³⁵

Here we see that there were not only public latrines, run communally and open to all, but that markets, taverns, and theatres also provided similar facilities for visitors. With the zeal of a detective, Michael Burden investigates how opera and theatre audiences relieved themselves in the eighteenth century.³⁶ This was an important question, given that performances could last for up to six hours. Over the course of the century private facilities were increasingly made available for actors and backstage staff inside the theatre buildings, but members of the audience were obliged to relieve themselves during the interval in common houses of easement surrounding the theatre.³⁷ Markets and taverns often had privies in the cellar or in the yard, otherwise providing 'pissing posts' to encourage urination in a designated area.³⁸ Thus Londoners had various places for relieving themselves: the street (though this was seen as problematic at the time); private facilities with restricted access; and public, communally financed ones.

Privies, however, were a temporary store for waste products, as in most cases a visit to the latrine was just the start of a complex cycle of materials.³⁹ Most toilets were built over cesspits or privy vaults lined with brick walls.⁴⁰ These allowed liquids to soak into the ground, while solids collected on the floor of the pit. When the vault

³⁵ Ibid. fos. 300–1.

³⁶ Michael Burden, 'Pots, Privies and WCs: Crapping at the Opera in London before 1830', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 23/1–2 (2011), 27–50.

³⁷ Ibid. 43–4.

³⁸ Tiffany Stern, *Documents of Performance in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2009), 50.

³⁹ On the relationship between material cycles and the city, using the example of Paris in the nineteenth century, see Sabine Barles, 'A Metabolic Approach to the City: Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Paris', in Bill Luckin, Geneviève Massard-Guilbaud, and Dieter Schott (eds.), *Resources of the City: Contributions to an Environmental History of Modern Europe* (Aldershot, 2005), 28–47.

⁴⁰ On the construction of these, see Roos van Oosten, 'The Dutch Great Stink: The End of the Cesspit Era in the Pre-Industrial Towns of Leiden and Haarlem', *European Journal of Archaeology*, 19/4 (2016), 704–27.

was full, it had to be emptied out by nightmen.⁴¹ In the worst cases the excrement could form a waterproof film, causing the cesspit to overflow. This is presumably what happened in October 1660 to Samuel Pepys, who provides a great deal of information about toilet issues in general. While visiting his cellar, he stepped into a heap of excrement that had washed out of his neighbour's, with whom he shared a cesspit.⁴²

In principle, the removal of household waste was a communal responsibility. In London it was financed by a tax—the so-called 'scavenger rate'.⁴³ Licences were granted annually to private waste contractors, known as rakers, who employed dustmen.⁴⁴ Between two and four times a week, they collected waste from their assigned quarter and took it to one of London's four official waste disposal sites. This infrastructure, however, covered only household waste, excluding both commercial waste and human excrement.⁴⁵ Residents

⁴¹ Similar constructions were to be found in Haarlem and Leiden; see Roos van Oosten, 'Nightman's Muck, Gong Farmer's Treasure: Local Differences in the Clearing-Out of Cesspits in the Low Countries, 1600–1900', in Sosna and Brunclíková (eds.), *Archaeologies of Waste*, 41–56, esp. 44–9; and Roos van Oosten and Sanne T. D. Muurling, 'Smelly Business: De clustering en concentratie van vieze en stinkende beroepen in Leiden in 1581', *Holland: Historisch tijdschrift*, 51/3 (2019), 128–32, esp. 129.

⁴² '[A]nd going down into my cellar to look I stepped into a great heap of . . . by which I found that Mr. Turner's house of office is full and comes into my cellar, which do trouble me, but I shall have it helped.' *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, 20 Oct. 1660 [<https://www.pepysdiary.com/diary/1660/10/20/>], accessed 15 July 2021.

⁴³ Sabine, 'City Cleaning', 22; Rosemary Weinstein, 'New Urban Demands in Early Modern London', *Medical History*, 35/S11, *Living and Dying in London* (1991), 29–40, at 30; Mark Jenner, "'Another epocha'? Hartlib, John Lanyon and the Improvement of London in the 1650s', in Mark Greengrass, Michael Leslie, and Timothy Raylor (eds.), *Samuel Hartlib and Universal Reformation: Studies in Intellectual Communication* (Cambridge, 1994), 343–56, at 343–50.

⁴⁴ Weinstein, 'New Urban Demands', at 30–1; Brian Maidment, *Dusty Bob: A Cultural History of Dustmen, 1780–1870* (Manchester, 2007), at 1–36.

⁴⁵ 'Nor shall any person or persons whatsoever, cast, lay, or leave in any of the said Streets, Lanes, Alleys, common Courts, or Court-yards, any Seacole-ashes, Oyster-shells, bones, horns, tops of Turneps or Carrets, the shells or husks of any Peas or Beans, nor any dead Dogs or Cats,

therefore had to maintain their toilets themselves; they also turned to commercial contractors, the nightmen, who were only allowed to work between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m., hence the name.⁴⁶

Nightmen were specialized entrepreneurs who advertised their trade accordingly. William James from Newington Butts, for example, promised to empty cesspits 'in the most cleanly and expeditious manner, and also at the lowest price'.⁴⁷ Charles Harper, by contrast, boasted in 1753 of being the patentholder of 'machines for night-work in general' and presented the advantages of his nightcart in a public demonstration.⁴⁸ Lastly, C. Potter publicized his services as a nightman and rubbish-carter in the *Daily Advertiser* in 1783.⁴⁹ This shows that nightmen competed with each other and tried to expand their clientele by advertising. The fact that nightmen were also rubbish-carters was by no means unusual and shows that the trade involved logistical challenges. Some specialized in different waste materials that were not covered by the scavenger tax.

Until well into the nineteenth century, nightmen emptied privies at night using simple buckets and carts.⁵⁰ The contents of cesspits, known as nightsoil, were usually taken to East London. It is not clear whether there was a single large collection area or several smaller ones. Colloquially, an area between the Thames, Hangman's Acre, and White Chapel Street was known as Turdman's Hole or Turdman's

offall of Beasts, nor any other carion or putrid matter or thing, nor any Ordure or Excrements of Mankind or Beast, nor any manner of Rubbish.' Court of Common Council, *Act of Common-Councell made the eleventh day of September, in the yeare of our Lord 1655. For the better avoiding and prevention of annoyances within the city of London, and liberties of the same* (London, 1655), 7.

⁴⁶ 1771, Public Act, 11 George III, c. 29, City of London, 75.

⁴⁷ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 22 June 1780, no. 16025.

⁴⁸ Charles Harper, in *Hackney-Road, next door to the wheeler's-shop, near Shoreditch-Church; the first inventor of machines for night-work in general, takes this opportunity to acquaint the publick, as there hath been much fraud committed by nightmen charging three tuns and carrying away but two. Therefore to avoid such impositions I have, note, on each of my carriages, the measure they carry away* (London, 1753?).

⁴⁹ *Daily Advertiser*, 10 Aug. 1783, no. 17228.

⁵⁰ Eveleigh, *Bogs, Baths and Basins*, 12-13. Roos van Oosten describes a similar procedure in the Netherlands, 'Nightman's Muck', 44-5.

Field.⁵¹ ‘Turdman’ was a humorous way of referring to the nightman. In 1797 a ‘nightman ground’ near the ducking pond was rented for twenty-one years in the same area; in May 1733 the *London Evening Post* reported an attack which had taken place on a night field between Ratcliff and Whitechapel.⁵²

The area around Whitechapel was located outside the City of London, meaning the stench of the excrement was less problematic for City residents. The area was also used to store other sorts of waste. Turdman’s Field was in the immediate vicinity of one of the official waste disposal sites of the City of London, Mile Green, as well as Whitechapel Mount, an iconic, eighteenth-century rubbish mound. Not only was its location favourable, but the surrounding area was largely agricultural, making it easier to reuse the dung or excrement as fertilizer. Presumably the nightsoil was left on the night field for some time and, having been mixed with other dung and ashes, sold to local farmers as fertilizer.

The transport of human excrement through urban areas was overseen within the City of London by the Commissioners of Sewers.⁵³ The Commissioners were responsible for cleaning, lighting, and paving the streets of the City, as well as for maintaining its water infrastructure. Issues relating to waste and sewage fell under their jurisdiction. The Commissioners had to ensure that both the residents and waste disposal workers followed the rules. They tried to circumvent complaints by drawing up clear instructions about the times when excrement could be transported through the urban area, as well as places where unloading was not permitted. Under no circumstances could excrement be introduced into the city’s water

⁵¹ ‘Turdman’s Hole’, ‘Tom Turd’s Field’, and ‘Tom Turdman’s Hole’ also appear frequently as locations in the Old Bailey Proceedings, for example: ‘On the King’s Birth-day, which was the Day after my Lord Mayor’s Day, we all went to the House of Mrs. Dick’s in the Back Lane in White-Chappel, going towards Stepney Fields; there we staid drinking till past seven at Night, and then to Tom-Turd-Man’s Hole in White-Chappel Fields, where we saw the Prosecutor coming along’, OBP, 4 Dec. 1734, trial of James Casey, William Beesly (t17341204-10).

⁵² LMA M/93/321. *London Evening-Post*, 1–3 May 1733, no. 846.

⁵³ For an introduction to the history of the Commissioners of Sewers see Weinstein, ‘New Urban Demands’, 29–40.

system; nor could the city's streets or waste depots be used to dispose of excrement. Protecting London's water infrastructure was one of the Commissioners' central concerns, so maintaining and cleaning the city's drains and sewers was one of their main occupations. They took action against illegal latrines whose contents emptied into the city's drains, and prosecuted nightmen who disposed of sewage on the streets or in drains.⁵⁴ In 1720, for example, Daniel Bautier was fined one pound for permitting his employees to openly dispose of nightsoil on Bassinghall Street.⁵⁵ In 1721, David Meredith from Broadstreet St Giles complained about a nightman who had tipped sewage into the drains, and in 1745 a nightman was cautioned because his employees had not properly secured their cart on the way to Whitechapel Mount, meaning that their load spilled onto the street.⁵⁶

If we look at the circulation of materials associated with excrement from the perspective of the Commissioners, the system functioned well in the main, aside from occasional complaints about illegal dumping of faeces. These occasional complaints, however, raise a methodological problem. Do these individual cases indicate that the system worked, or were they the tip of an iceberg of unrecorded offences?

Leona Skelton interprets complaints about the illegal disposal of excrement in seventeenth-century Edinburgh as an indication of urban ideas of order and the limits of socially accepted behaviour.⁵⁷ I would assess complaints made to the Commissioners similarly. Residents and Commissioners were equally sensitive in their reaction to excrement disposed of illegally. While the Commissioners were concerned to protect the City's water infrastructure, residents generally complained if the nightmen disposed of excrement on the streets. Both indicate that this sort of behaviour was not accepted as normal. We must assume, however, that conflict between neighbours about

⁵⁴ Similarly Mark Jenner, "'Nauceious and Abominable'? Pollution, Plague, and Poetics in John Gay's *Trivia*", in Clare Brant and Susan E. Whyman (eds.), *Walking the Streets of Eighteenth-Century London: John Gay's 'Trivia' (1716)*, (Oxford, 2009), 90–100, at 93–4.

⁵⁵ LMA CLA/006/AD/03/006, 7 Oct. 1720, fo. 95.

⁵⁶ LMA CLA/006/AD/03/006, 12 May 1721, fo. 158; CLA/006/AD/03/013, 17 Jan. 1745, fo. 227b.

⁵⁷ Skelton, *Sanitation in Urban Britain*, 3.

excrement was usually dealt with at a lower level and probably never recorded.

Against the background of this complex excremental infrastructure, Jonathan Swift's imagination of London as a gigantic sewer, quoted at the beginning of this article, seems at least a little exaggerated. Discourses in the print media should not be taken as an accurate depiction of reality; they must first be examined for what they were – namely, a particular way of talking about excrement. At the same time, they were playing with references to everyday experiences and, in the long run, shaped the way in which excretion in public and in private spaces was perceived. Although there was no direct causal connection between these discourses and specific experiences in everyday life, they created a framework of interpretation within which excrement was rooted. In the long term, the way excrement could be talked about, as well as notions of order associated with faeces, could have had an impact on the way they were dealt with from day to day. As a result, it is important to take excrement seriously both as a practical problem and a discursive phenomenon.

Representations in Print Media

Swift was by no means the only person to imagine London as a sewer.⁵⁸ In 1716, John Gay, an acquaintance of Swift's, used the motif of the city as a sewer in his *Trivia, or the Art of Walking the Streets of London*. His excremental vision of London was developed over some 1,300 verses and expanded further in the 1720 version. For Gay, London was the realm of the goddess Cloacina 'whose sable streams beneath the City glide'. From a liaison with the scavenger, the street sweeper, she gives birth to both a child and a new class: the poor, born in the filth of the city's drains.⁵⁹

Michael Gassenmeier has shown that literature about London at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth century was

⁵⁸ Gurr, 'Worshipping Cloacina'; Gee, *Making Waste*, 101–20; Michael Gassenmeier, *Londondichtung als Politik: Texte und Kontexte der 'City Poetry' von der Restauration bis zum Ende der Walpole-Ära* (Tübingen, 1989), 63–93.

⁵⁹ John Gay, *Trivia: Or, the Art of Walking the Streets of London*. By Mr. Gay, 3rd edn., 3 vols. (London, 1730), ii. 115.

highly politicized. After the Glorious Revolution, he says, there was a flood of Whiggish panegyrics on London, such as *Augustus Triumphans* (1707) by the 'city poet' Elkanah Settle. This is a work in which London was celebrated as the cultural centre of the world—as a city of trade, civilization, and politeness.⁶⁰ These themes were picked up by authors such as Swift and Gay, who were close to the Tories, and turned on their heads. London was only superficially a city of culture and civilization, they claimed. It showed its true face in the dirt. Poems such as *Trivia* and 'A Description of a City Shower' should be understood as mock panegyrics in the context of the political upheavals of the early eighteenth century.⁶¹ Excrement was a symbol of the fact that behind London's apparently beautiful appearance and Whiggish city narratives lay an abyss—a Cloaca Maxima. With this in mind, we should perhaps not take these sorts of excremental city descriptions too literally as accounts of actual experience.⁶² These eighteenth-century scatological satires by Swift and Gay should be read against the background of a metropolis in a process of change, not least in the wide field of politics.⁶³

After the Great Fire of 1666, the City of London was both rebuilt and reimagined.⁶⁴ It was intended to become a metropolis where trade flourished—the epitome of English civilization and culture. The dirty old labyrinthine streets, courts, and houses of the Tudor period were replaced by the architectural visions of James Gibbs and Christopher Wren. The free passage of people and goods through the streets, along with paved, clean paths and watercourses, were an important element of this new idea of urbanity.⁶⁵

London was both a myth and a city in transition, growing rapidly. At around 1700 its population was approximately 500,000; by the end of the century, it numbered almost one million.⁶⁶ By comparison, the

⁶⁰ Gassenmeier, *Londondichtung als Politik*, 202.

⁶¹ How much this was also a commentary on contemporary philosophical discussions of humans as 'rational animals', 'men of sympathy', or 'men of feeling', is shown by Gurr, 'Worshipping Cloacina', 129–30.

⁶² Similarly Jenner, 'Nauceious and Abominable', 90.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 94–8.

⁶⁴ Jerry White, *A Great and Monstrous Thing: London in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 2012), 4.

⁶⁵ Jenner, 'Nauceious and Abominable', 97.

⁶⁶ White, *A Great and Monstrous Thing*, 3.

second biggest city in England around 1700 was Bristol, with a population of 20,000. As quoted in Sophie Gee, the rubbish produced by premodern cities (ashes, leftover food, slaughterhouse waste, and not least human and animal excrement) was, in Mary Douglas's words, 'matter out of place', and stood out in this gleaming new representation of London even more than it had in previous centuries.⁶⁷ With this newly imagined London, the yardsticks by which rubbish and dirt were measured also changed.

This becomes even clearer if we look beyond descriptions of London. Scatological texts were fashionable in the eighteenth century:⁶⁸ titles range from 'Meditations on a T[ur]d, Wrote in a Place of Ease' (1726) to the hugely popular 'The Benefit of Farting Explained' (1722).⁶⁹ Excrement, though repulsive, sparked a curious interest. Above all, its symbolic power as a link between nature and culture was a source of fascination. Through the medium of excrement, the human condition in general could be addressed. Anyone who spoke about excrement was implicitly also speaking about the relationship between nature and culture, the body and the mind.

Jonathan Swift's poem 'The Lady's Dressing Room' of 1732 is a famous example.⁷⁰ The protagonist, Strephon, is in love. Unobserved, he dares to glance into the dressing room of his adored, divine, and pure Celia.⁷¹ What follows is an account of his deep and lasting shock at the extent of the dirt, the evidence of physicality,

⁶⁷ Gee, *Making Waste*, 102.

⁶⁸ Vic Gatrell, *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London* (London, 2006), 187–8.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ Jonathan Swift, 'The Lady's Dressing Room', in *The Poems of Jonathan Swift*, ed. Harold Williams, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1937), iii. 524–30.

⁷¹ The many interpretations of this poem cannot be appropriately stated here. See e.g. Donald T. Siebert, 'Swift's *Fiat Odor*: The Excremental Re-Vision', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 19/1 (1985), 21–38; Norman O. Brown, 'The Excremental Vision', in Robert A. Greenberg and William Bowman Piper (eds.), *The Writings of Jonathan Swift: Authoritative Texts, Backgrounds, Criticism* (New York, 1973), 611–30; Douglas Calhoun, 'Swift's The Lady's Dressing Room', *Discourse*, 13/4 (1970), 493–9; Louise K. Barnett, 'The Mysterious Narrator: Another Look at The Lady's Dressing Room', *Concerning Poetry*, 9 (1976), 29–32; and Laura Baudot, 'What Not to Avoid in Swift's "The Lady's Dressing Room"', *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 49/3 (2009), 637–66.

and the stench that he finds there. Strephon's discovery climaxes as he approaches a cabinet, behind whose tidily closed doors Celia's chamber pot awaits him: 'The vapors flew from out the vent, / But Strephon cautious never meant / The bottom of the pan to grope, / And foul his hands in search of Hope.' His expedition into Celia's chamber teaches Strephon the sad truth: 'Oh Celia, Celia, Celia shits!'⁷² Like London's elegant facade, female decency, in the end, is only appearance and deception.

The relationship between the body, excreta, and gender in the urban environment was the subject of intense interest in the eighteenth-century print media. Isaac Cruikshank's caricature *Indecency* (1799), in which he depicts a provocatively dressed woman relieving herself in Broadstreet St Giles, is especially telling.⁷³ The imagery leaves no doubt as to what the woman's profession was. Broadstreet St Giles was notorious at the time for street prostitution; the caricature features a small poster for Dr Leake's pills against venereal disease.⁷⁴ The prostitute is using the public space instead of the domestic sphere to relieve herself. She is neither embarrassed nor discreet; instead, she is in open dialogue with the observer: 'what are you staring at?' *The Inside of the Lady's Garden at Vauxhall* is similarly polemical. The women's acts of excretion are contrasted with their external appearance, and here, too, the public sphere, gender, and physicality are linked with frivolity and sexual permissiveness: lying on the floor we see another leaflet for Dr Leake's pills.⁷⁵

Caricatures such as these play with taboos in that, contrary to any notion of female decency, the private business of excretion takes place in a public or semi-public space. Swift's Strephon goes a step further. Even hidden away in a cabinet in the private sphere of a lady's dressing room, female excreta trigger an excremental horror.

⁷² Swift, 'The Lady's Dressing Room', 528.

⁷³ Isaac Cruikshank, *Indecency* / I.Ck., London: S. W. Fores, 16 Apr. 1799, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540, USA [<https://lcn.loc.gov/2003652525>], accessed 15 July 2021.

⁷⁴ Cindy McCreery, *The Satirical Gaze: Prints of Women in Late Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 2004), 70-1.

⁷⁵ *The Inside of the Lady's Garden at Vauxhall*, 1788, British Museum, Museum Number 1935,0522.4.37.

From this point of view, however, there seems to be no appropriate place for Celia's excretions. Given all this, the advertisement which T. Clark, nightman and carman, placed in *Parker's General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer* in May 1783 hardly comes as a surprise: he promises to empty latrines with the 'greatest decency'.⁷⁶

During the eighteenth century, more fundamental questions about the relationship between city, body, and mind, as well as the public and the private sphere, were discussed through the theme of excrement. The spectrum of positions taken was wide, ranging from Swift's rather cynical observations about the fundamental corruption of the human body to more balanced considerations of the relationship between nature, culture, and shame. In *A Philosophical Dialogue Concerning Decency* (1751), for example, the anonymous author muses about the relationship between shame, excreta, and decency while on a walk with two companions, Philoprepon and Eutrapelus.⁷⁷

The author's shame at relieving himself by the side of the road—'for I hate to do such things in publick'—provides the starting point for more fundamental reflections about excretions.⁷⁸ Are decency and shame in relation to bodily excreta natural or cultural feelings, learned through customs and manners? Eutrapelus is doubtful about the existence of a natural feeling of shame. Otherwise, how could different countries have developed different customs in relation, for example, to sexuality, clothing, and going to the toilet? Whereas women in Holland quite naturally shared latrines with men, English women were embarrassed at this natural process even in the private sphere of the home: 'as if it was in itself shameful to do even in private, what nature absolutely requires at certain seasons to be done.'⁷⁹ Given this, he suggests, it is doubtful that we are dealing with a natural decency. Only the search for suitable vessels, he argued, was a natural impulse owing to the stench of faeces: 'because it may be call'd

⁷⁶ *Parker's General Advertiser and Morning Intelligencer*, 31 May 1783, no. 2049.

⁷⁷ Anon., *A Philosophical Dialogue Concerning Decency. To which is added a critical and historical dissertation on places of retirement for necessary occasions, together with an account of the vessels and utensils in use amongst the ancients, being a lecture read before a society of learned antiquaries / By the author of the Dissertation on barley wine* (London, 1751). On this see also Bobker, *The Closet*, 97–100.

⁷⁸ Anon., *A Philosophical Dialogue*, 3.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 10.

a natural desire that, what is offensive to ourselves, may be removed, or put at a distance from us.⁸⁰

Philoprepon, by contrast, places the 'toilet' question into a larger context relating to civilization, arguing that there are countries in which women serve up children at feasts, which is equally unnatural and against 'the dictates of nature';⁸¹ 'and therefore such nations have been always esteem'd brutal and savage by others, who were more civiliz'd.'⁸² Hence urinating or defecating in public is 'contrary to nature and reason . . . in as much as it is contrary to nature and reason to expose our secret parts in publick view'.⁸³ Against this background, he draws up a model of how different cultures deal with excrement and places them in a hierarchy of civilization: on the one side there are 'all the polite and well-bred people in the world. On the other side are some barbarous, rude nations, or some contemptible, impudent, unmannerly philosophers.'⁸⁴ At the end, the anonymous author tries to find a compromise, suggesting that probably everyone would agree that decency is 'agreeable to nature'.⁸⁵ As both Philoprepon and Eutrapelus see the need to dispose of excrement as natural, he closes the topic with a disquisition on latrines and chamber pots in historical perspective.

This dialogue throws light on the relationship between the body, nature, and culture.⁸⁶ Here too, the toilet question becomes a question of gender, but unlike Swift and Cruikshank in their caricatures, the anonymous author applies it to men and women equally. Although it starts with the author's shame, the difference between the sexes is emphasized: 'as of the two sexes the female certainly is the more

⁸⁰ Ibid. 12.

⁸¹ Ibid. 15.

⁸² Ibid. 17.

⁸³ Ibid. 18.

⁸⁴ Ibid. 21.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ The author is here taking a humorous perspective on a topic that was hotly debated in the eighteenth century—namely, the question of the relationship between nature and civilization. In the eighteenth century 'nature' became a varied and unfocused but fashionable concept used equally by optimists of progress and cultural pessimists. On this see Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, *Europa im Jahrhundert der Aufklärung* (Stuttgart, 2000), 176–7. In their scatological satires, Swift and Pope positioned themselves within discussions about the relationship between the body and civilization. On this see Gurr, 'Worshipping Cloacina', 126–9.

proud.⁸⁷ The problem of interagency between people and materials is also addressed here in all its complexity. The three protagonists of the *Dialogue Concerning Decency* agree that despite their differences, all cultures have one thing in common: a basic need to dispose of excrement because of the stench. Their opinions differ as to how this is to be done, as well as about the norms, values, and attitudes which are linked to this impulse.

It is not clear whether decency in relation to excretion is an expression of civilization and, as a consequence, of a model of civilizational progress, as Philoprepon claims, or if it is a reflection of cultural diversity, as claimed by Eutrapelus. That decency is 'agreeable to nature' offers a compromise, but the reader is left with the impression that the author agrees with Eutrapelus' doubts as to notions of natural decency.

From a different angle, we find familiar references to shame, disgust, and decency in economic discourses on the use of excrement. In 1758, in his *Compleat Body of Husbandry*, Thomas Hale wrote that human excrement and urine were suitable as fertilizer, though with limits: 'As to its use . . . there is something so distasteful, not to say shocking, in the thought.'⁸⁸ The positive qualities of human excreta as fertilizers were contrasted with the disgust of consumers. He notes that while English farmers used them as fertilizer, they tended to keep quiet about it: 'This is a practice every where carry'd on clandestinely, for nobody would care to buy that farmer's corn.'⁸⁹ It was not only consumers, he points out, but also the workers who suffered from this sort of fertilizer, because for all its richness, it is 'a filthy one . . . and, of all others, the most offensive to the servants spreading it, as well as the thoughts of those who are fed upon'.⁹⁰

In his first volume of 1758, Hale expressed reservations about excrement, but by the fourth volume of 1759 he was much more forthright about its positive qualities.⁹¹ He explained that fertilizer prepared from excrement in the correct mix did not smell very different from fertilizer derived from animal dung; he added that there was no obstacle

⁸⁷ Anon., *A Philosophical Dialogue*, 13.

⁸⁸ Thomas Hale, *A Compleat Body of Husbandry: Containing, Rules for Performing, in the Most Profitable Manner, the Whole Business of the Farmer and Country Gentleman*, 4 vols. (London, 1758-9), i. 158-9.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.* iv. 272-4.

to using it on fruit trees because the type of fertilizer used had no impact on the taste of the food produced. As London generated such huge amounts of potential fertilizer, he went on, it would be wasteful not to use it. Here, too, London is presented as a Cloaca Maxima, but in contrast to Swift and Gay, Hale saw it as a gigantic and under-used reservoir of fertilizer. In the nineteenth century, this argument was taken up mainly by prominent chemists such as Justus Liebig. In Paris, it was put into practice in early industrial plants producing poudrette.⁹²

It should be clear by now that excrement was rooted in various political, social, and economic discourses, its connotations depending on location and perspective. The spectrum ranged from poking fun at Whiggish panegyrics on London, to treatises on the relationship between gender and physicality, to the economic potential of excrement. In any case, we have seen that it is unwise to attempt to draw conclusions about actual conditions in London from these discourses. What was the relationship between varying discourses in print media and the everyday experiences of Londoners? In order to answer this question, I will examine both as elements of an excremental waste regime.

Early Modern Excremental Waste Regimes

The interagency between humans and excrement, defined largely by its smell, was at the heart of the excremental waste regime. Excrement was regarded as a foul-smelling nuisance in urban areas. For this reason, various methods were developed to keep contact between people and faeces to a minimum, whether by having maids empty chamber pots regularly or by putting privies in backyards so that the stored excrement was spatially separated from the living areas of the

⁹² On this see Erland Mårwald, 'Everything Circulates: Agricultural Chemistry and Recycling Theories in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century', *Environment and History*, 8/1 (2002), 65–84; Christopher Hamlin, 'The City as a Chemical System? The Chemist as Urban Environmental Professional in France and Britain, 1780–1880', *Journal of Urban History*, 33/5 (2007), 702–28; and Barles, 'Metabolic Approach'.

house. At the same time, the stench of excrement evoked both disgust and laughter in the print media.

As a result of this interagency, a specific excremental waste regime was established for London. From an institutional point of view, two features emerged that were typical of how London dealt with waste. First, the establishment of the Commissioners of Sewers in the City of London created an overarching authority responsible for organizing and controlling the circulation of waste in the urban area. Their tasks included, but were not limited to, protecting the city's water and traffic infrastructure from being contaminated with excrement, punishing illegal attempts to dispose of waste, and, finally, ensuring the removal of faeces from the city.

Second, there was a waste economy in the form of the nightmen, who turned a profit by emptying latrines and distributing nightsoil to the surrounding farmers. The nightmen were by no means the only ones to make a profit from waste. By the eighteenth century, London had an elaborate, market-like waste economy which also dealt with other waste materials such as ash. There were many competing waste contractors in London who drew profits from recycling waste in the context of urban material cycles. Ash, for example, could be used to produce fertilizer as well as bricks. The material cycles associated with waste connected London with its hinterland and, especially in the nineteenth century, with other areas of England and the wider world.⁹³

In the urban context excrement not only posed a sensory, logistical, and economic challenge, but was also a symbolic marker for a city's ideas of order. Although going to the toilet was an everyday experience, the demographic, political, and architectural changes in the city from the last third of the seventeenth century meant that it was increasingly seen as a problem. This, in turn, was embedded in larger discussions about the relations between nature and culture, the body, gender, and the urban sphere. These discussions were not limited to London, but they were especially intense there. In many respects, the eighteenth century was a period of transition for London.

My intention here is not to construct a direct, causal connection between the discourse in the print media and everyday experience.

⁹³ As a result, in the nineteenth century, dung barges shipped London nightsoil to farms in Hertfordshire und Hampshire. Eveleigh, *Bogs, Baths and Basins*, 13.

New interpretations in print did not simply translate into the lived experience of all city dwellers. The issue of female decency, for example, was discussed mainly in relation to middle-class women. It is not clear whether Anne Wright, a servant who, according to testimony at the Old Bailey in 1726, emptied Mr Martin's chamber pot at 7 a.m. and rinsed it with warm water, was also plagued by feelings of shame.⁹⁴ The feminine decency called for in print media was, in the first instance, the decency of the middle-class woman.

How much private space a house had for these activities was not least a question of prosperity.⁹⁵ Where several people shared a small room, contact between the sexes and bodily wastes increased. According to her testimony to the Old Bailey in 1740, Ann Vawdrey, who held a social gathering in her room, gave her chamber pot to John Foster without hesitation, and does not seem to have been embarrassed by the presence of a urinating man.⁹⁶ If satirical accounts such as Swift's 'The Lady's Dressing Room' and the observations in the *Dialogue Concerning Decency* started a discussion about decency, this did not necessarily have any immediate effects.

The concept of a waste regime allows us to draw links between the spectrum of everyday experience and discourses and ideas of order without, however, assuming a direct causal influence. 'Waste regime' is a descriptive category that helps us to link the multitude of elements that have historically shaped the way waste materials are dealt with and perceived. Depending on the material and its characteristics, a waste regime can take on very different outlines: waste materials can be moist, sticky, dusty, or bulky; they can stink or make people sick. The physical materiality of matter challenges people to behave with it, or towards it, in certain ways. The materiality of waste is, according to Vincianne Despret, the starting point for a specific human-substance interagency, though its shape is historically variable.

This becomes particularly clear when we look at the transformation of London's excremental waste regime in the nineteenth century. Water closets, previously found only rarely on country estates, became

⁹⁴ OBP, 26 May 1762, trial of Jane Sibson (t17620526-18).

⁹⁵ Van den Heuvel, 'Gender in the Streets', 699.

⁹⁶ OBP, 9 July 1740, trial of John Foster (t17400709-32).

a more common urban phenomenon.⁹⁷ However, the widespread use of water closets led to an overloading of the established cesspool system and an increased discharge of sewage into the Thames. Ultimately, this resulted in the Great Stink of 1858. The stench of the polluted Thames provided the necessary momentum for long-debated projects involving the construction of a connected sewerage system finally to begin.⁹⁸ Simultaneously, knowledge about the health risks of sewage changed in the aftermath of the two great cholera epidemics in the mid nineteenth century. With the construction of sewers in the nineteenth century, new sewage and excrement-related subjects emerged in the public consciousness. In the English media, the dangers of 'sewer gas', toxic hydrogen sulphide, were widely discussed as a new threat. As Michelle Allen shows, at the heart of these debates were not just the potential health or environmental risks of connected sewer systems, but the invisible and excremental link between rich and poor created by sewers: 'The problem with the sewer was that it threatened to erode social distinctions, to thrust everyone into the primordial muck.'⁹⁹ As this brief overview shows, the handling and perception of excrement changed on the infrastructural level as well as on the level of practices, social concepts of order, and knowledge systems.

It is apparent that both the perception and handling of waste are shaped by cultural values, codes, and knowledge systems. Accordingly, we must assume a historically variable interagency between people and matter, which in turn provides essential impulses for the formation of a dominant waste regime. This is about the possibility of describing and relating different elements that shape the handling of waste materials from a historical perspective. This perspective has two advantages: on the one hand, the study of waste regimes allows for a comparative view of waste in both a diachronic and a synchronic perspective. It enables us to examine similarities and differences in the way waste is dealt with at different times and in different regions. Secondly, due to the variety of elements associated with waste regimes, they offer a unique view on the dynamics of urban coexistence. From this perspective, waste can serve as an exploratory tool to approach

⁹⁷ Eveleigh, *Bogs, Baths and Basins*, 115–37.

⁹⁸ Jackson, *Dirty Old London*, 69–104.

⁹⁹ Allen, *Cleansing the City*, 40.

the challenges and problems of everyday life in the city. The investigation of urban excremental waste regimes not only provides a new historical perspective on excrement and defecation as basic conditions of human life, but can also serve as a way of approaching the conditions governing human coexistence in urban settings.

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REVIEW ARTICLES

DEMOCRACY IN GERMANY: WAY OF LIFE, PATH TO (AUTO)WESTERNIZATION, AND GLOBAL POLITICAL PHENOMENON

MATTHEW STIBBE

TILL VAN RAHDEN, *Demokratie: Eine gefährdete Lebensform* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2019), 196 pp. ISBN 978 3 593 51134 4. €24.95

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I

In his debut novel *The Last Man in Europe*, Dennis Glover pictures an encounter between the English writer George Orwell, by then acutely unwell with tuberculosis, and the chest surgeon Bruce Dick, 'a thickest Scotsman in his mid-forties'. It is January 1948 and the setting is the Hairmyres Hospital in Lanarkshire, near Glasgow:

In his day Dick must have resembled a boxer, but his muscles had now begun their inevitable gravitational descent, like a tightly packed sack of potatoes shaken about in a bouncing cart. He had heard somewhere the man was a Catholic and had fought with the Francoists in Spain, but he couldn't be certain that was true. Anyway, even if he had been a fascist at some stage, there was something about him that was appealing: a gruff pragmatism mixed with an obvious independence

of mind that suggested one could have a decent conversation with him, as long as one wasn't on the operating table.¹

This imagined account is worth citing not only because it makes for good historical fiction. It also encapsulates much of what Till van Rahden, author of the first of three books under review here, means when he talks of the need to understand democracy in its post-1945 (West) German, European, and international forms not as a means of legitimizing authority, but as a *Lebensform* or 'way of life'. Later in the novel, Orwell tells Dick that the book he is currently writing concerns 'democracy, a full belly, the freedom to think and say as you like, the laws of logic, the countryside, the right to love others and not to live alone but in a family . . . human things'.² For the author of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the anti-totalitarian spirit meant more than just opposition to extremism. It demanded room to breathe, a culture of genuine debate rather than posturing, and a disciplined focus on the concrete and the real.

Like Orwell, van Rahden understands democracy as something more rooted in manners (*moeurs*) than in institutions, forms of governance, and organized political movements. This was an insight already developed by Enlightenment thinkers in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but became more significant against the violent background of the 1930s and 1940s. Manners must be cultivated – that is, they have to be propagated in tangible ways – but they do not require a common set of morals or political principles. Instead, what matters is how differences of opinion are handled, whether these differences concern private morals, questions of public policy, or conflicting material interests.

As van Rahden argues, post-1945 West Germany offers a good case study of how democracies rebuilt themselves 'in the shadow of violence' (p. 46; all translations by reviewer). The Bonn Republic's famed political stability under Adenauer and his successors was more than just a matter of subduing political passions and investing more authority in the office of Federal Chancellor. Rather, van Rahden demonstrates how new ideas about gender, family, and community in the late 1950s and early 1960s helped to give solid form and content to what was otherwise the 'hollow' (*inhaltsleer*) approach to democracy identified by many

¹ Dennis Glover, *The Last Man in Europe: A Novel* (Carlton, Vic., 2017), 212.

² *Ibid.* 219–20.

anti-Nazis returning from exile to the FRG. Over time, he argues, and in a quiet, unceremonious way, West German citizens (unknowingly) seized upon the academic and SPD politician Carlo Schmid's later definition of democracy as 'the window into humanizing the state' (p. 38). The book provides an in-depth look at two compelling examples of this.

The first is the legal ruling made by the Federal Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe in July 1959 which declared clauses 1628 and 1629 of the June 1957 *Gesetz über die Gleichberechtigung von Mann und Frau auf dem Gebiet des bürgerlichen Rechts* (Law on Equal Rights for Men and Women in Civil Law) to be incompatible with the principles of equality laid down in the 1949 Basic Law. These two clauses gave the father the final say over how a child should be educated, and the right to act as the child's sole legal guardian in criminal and civil proceedings. By upholding equality of status for mothers, the Court ended the centuries-old privileging of patriarchal rights in family decision-making and upheld the constitutional rights of all citizens in face of an unjust piece of government legislation. Significantly, the ruling was made by Erna Scheffler, appointed in 1951 as the only female Constitutional Justice alongside fifteen men.

One interpretation of this decision is that it demonstrates the importance of the separation of powers between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. Yet van Rahden also finds significance in the widespread societal support for Scheffler's ruling, including among men of all shades of opinion, conservative women, and even lay Catholic organizations. The *Deutscher Juristinnenbund* (German Association of Women Lawyers), which took the case to the Constitutional Court, won the argument not only because the 1957 law violated constitutional rights laid down in the Basic Law, but because of growing acceptance in West German society that democracy, as a way of life, had to begin in the home. Equality was now reconciled with respect for gender difference in a way that quietly broke with both the conservative teachings of the Church and the Nazis' stark privileging of fatherhood over motherhood in the interests of race purity.³

³ On the Nazi 'cult of fatherhood and masculinity' as one of the cornerstones of the 'escalation of racism' in the 1930s and early 1940s see Gisela Bock, 'Equality and Difference in National Socialist Racism', in Joan Wallach Scott (ed.), *Feminism and History* (Oxford, 1996), 267–90, at 281.

The second case van Rahden examines is the decision made in the 1960s by the local council in the Hessian city of Offenbach to build an indoor swimming pool for low-price use by all members of the community. Like public libraries, he argues, public swimming baths are an important space for the cultivation of democracy as a *Lebensform*. Quoting from a 1932 newspaper article by the cultural critic Siegfried Kracauer, he notes that citizens, when swimming together, spontaneously encounter each other as social equals deserving of mutual respect for their humanity, dignity, and health needs. In 1992, however, the swimming pool was sold to private contractors, who decided that the city's needs were better served through its conversion into a hotel-cum-restaurant catering to different gastronomic tastes (and different-sized pockets). An amenity that had once strengthened the community now served more abstract principles like economic efficiency (*Leistung*) and consumer choice, both of which — when imposed upon a late twentieth and early twenty-first century urban landscape — end in spatial separation, loss of civic-mindedness (*Bürgersinn*), and a turn to the kind of identity politics that can divide families and neighbourhoods as well as entire societies.

What are the broader implications of van Rahden's findings? First, he shows that the main threat to democracy lies in the growing 'infirmity of public spaces' (p. 136), a trend which began in the 1980s and 1990s and continues into the present. Supporters of civic renewal now have to operate in a communal environment racked by three decades of privatization and forced acclimatization to the rules of the market, and thus progressively less suited to the promotion of 'democratic spaces' ('demokratische Erfahrungsräume'; pp. 139–40). Van Rahden contrasts this with the widespread societal rejection of the argument made by some Marxist radicals in 1968 that the family was 'the workshop of capitalist ideology' (p. 116). Here, the experience of the 1959 Constitutional Court ruling, together with shifts towards redefining the modern, nuclear family as a space where citizens could develop freely, equally, and with a respect for difference, made such left-authoritarian ideas appear incompatible with post-war understandings of democracy as a way of life.

Second, van Rahden's findings lead him to rethink the conventional periodization of recent German history. In particular, he questions the

idea of a “second founding” of the Federal Republic in the late 1960s and early 1970s’ (p. 103), arguing instead that West Germany was already moving away from authoritarian-restorative family policies and towards greater democratic experimentation from the mid 1950s onwards. This is an important corrective to those, like Dagmar Herzog, who have emphasized the overriding cultural and sexual conservatism of the Adenauer era and its immediate aftermath.⁴ On the other hand, van Rahden also suggests that Germany remained a post-war society, living with the trauma of violence and genocide, until well into the 1990s. Possibly he has in mind Green Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer’s famous justification of German participation in the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999 with the memorable phrase ‘Never Again Auschwitz!’ This marked the Federal Republic’s transformation into a ‘normal’ democracy which now felt able to let go of the old mantra ‘Never Again War!’ in the greater interest of genocide prevention and deterrence.

Van Rahden does not directly reference Fischer’s speech. But like it or not, it was only by engaging in a self-willed act of violence within the unique historical circumstances of a humanitarian mission sponsored by a centre-left ‘Red-Green’ Federal government that Germany finally, albeit controversially and perhaps only partially, escaped the shadow of the Second World War.⁵ Up until that point, democracy as a way of life and an international good had been considered by most Germans to be incompatible with asymmetrical bombing offensives conducted from the skies. This was a national viewpoint derived from concrete historical experiences of Germany’s ‘crisis years’ from 1942 to 1948,⁶ but also a mid to late twentieth-century political sensibility that was given enduring literary expression in Orwell’s

⁴ See Dagmar Herzog, *Sex after Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Princeton, 2005).

⁵ On the wider background to Fischer’s March 1999 speech to the Green Party conference in Bielefeld justifying German involvement in the Kosovo campaign—a move which he also described in an interview with *Der Spiegel* in April 1999 as marking not war but a defensive battle for ‘human rights, freedom, and democracy’—see Ulrich Herbert, *Geschichte Deutschlands im 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 2014), 1220–31.

⁶ Elizabeth D. Heineman, ‘The Hour of the Woman: Memories of Germany’s “Crisis Years” and West German National Identity’, *American Historical Review*, 101/2 (1996), 354–95.

Nineteen Eighty-Four. For this reason, 1999 – the year that marked the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Federal Republic – also deserves greater recognition in contemporary history and the history of mentalities as the end of the German post-war era and the beginning of something new: the post-post-war era.

II

Moving on, the fictitious but historically based dialogue between Orwell and his surgeon in Glover's *The Last Man in Europe* also has a bearing on the second book under review, Martin Conway's account of democracy in Western Europe from 1945 to 1968. At one point, their conversation goes as follows:

'They tell me you were in Spain, Mr Dick, on Franco's side.'

'I was younger then.'

'How do you feel about it *now*?'

'Well, I never thought it would lead to Hitler and the war we've just had, if that's what you mean. I did it for Catholic reasons, you see, not political ones. Anyway, I was a doctor. I didn't go to kill anyone.'

'I did, with a grenade. Are you still? Catholic, I mean?'

'Not as much. The war! Are you still a socialist?'

'More so. Although in a different way. I'm less naive too . . .'⁷

Conway's book seeks to rewrite the history of Western Europe in the first two and a half decades after the Second World War as an underrated age of democratization. Democracy was not invented during this period, but it reached a new 'level of maturity' (p. 269) and critical self-awareness in response to the ideological extremes of the 1920s and 1930s and the violence of Hitler's New Order across the Continent in the early 1940s. Three ingredients went into this surprise renaissance of democracy: 'economic prosperity' for families and individuals; trust generated by 'effective governmental action'; and 'social compromise', particularly between former political enemies in the Catholic, liberal, and social democratic camps (p. 1).

⁷ Glover, *The Last Man*, 219.

In Conway's own words, once the armed struggle of different anti-fascist resistance groups ended in liberation from Axis occupation in 1943–45, 'democracy . . . became less a matter of victory or defeat than a process of continuous negotiation' and 'incremental normalization' (pp. 11, 37). Post-war Western European politicians sought not only to repair the past, but to build a new tomorrow – albeit gradually and cautiously rather than in the great leaps forward advocated by Stalin and the 'little Stalins' on the opposite side of the Iron Curtain. Overall, regime change happened in only two West-aligned European countries between 1945 and 1968: France in 1958 and Greece in 1967. Otherwise, democracy went hand in hand with state-led but popularly acclaimed stabilization.

Conway has relatively little to say about the military junta that ruled Greece from 1967 to 1974, but devotes a great deal of attention to de Gaulle. He casts the French general as a political pragmatist, reminding readers of his words in August 1944 when he issued a decree in Paris proclaiming the 're-establishment of republican legality' ('le rétablissement de la légalité républicaine', p. 37). What happened in May 1958 was based on a similar approach: formal constitutional structures were altered to shift power from Parliament to the Presidency, but without changing the pluralist ethos of post-war French democracy or its roots in compromise between rival political movements. De Gaulle acted to create the Fifth Republic during a state of emergency in which the polarizing effects of the Algerian conflict threatened to enter the domestic political arena and generate civil war. But in the end, French democracy – including the 'familiar rituals of republicanism' (p. 75) – survived the crisis of 1958, just as it withstood further crises in 1961 (in Algeria) and 1968 (at home).

Conway's other great interest in the book is in the centre-right, Christian democratic parties of the post-war era, which, with one or two exceptions, dominated coalition governments at national level across Western Europe in the 1950s and 1960s. But here his arguments are less convincing. For one thing, his preoccupation with explaining de Gaulle's actions in 1958 means that he misses an opportunity to discuss the lesser known origins of the *Notstandsgesetze* (Emergency Acts) in West Germany. Although only passed by the Bundestag after much heated controversy in May 1968 under the specific historical

circumstances of the grand coalition government, the planning for these emergency laws started in the 1950s during a period of Christian Democrat ascendancy. Furthermore, when the laws were eventually passed through the co-option of the Social Democrats, they did undermine trust, at least initially, in the authority of the state and its commitment to pluralism.⁸ This in spite of the fact that—as so often in the consensus-driven Western Europe of the late 1950s and 1960s—the two biggest parties had ‘agreed to agree’.⁹

Equally unconvincing is Conway’s argument that Christian Democrat-oriented intellectuals helped to build an embryonic Continental identity that delimited itself as much from British and American political models as it did from Soviet-style communism. The ethos of compromise and coalition-building, for instance, supposedly drew attention to the ‘differentness of British democracy’, which was rooted in the ‘Westminster model’ of adversarial politics (pp. 23, 80). But this seems to be a rather trivial point when set against the enormous contribution that British and American political theorists and public intellectuals made to European-wide understandings of the twentieth-century ‘authoritarian impulse’ and how to oppose it. Here one could refer not only to Orwell, but also to a diverse group of thinkers who had fled Continental Europe in the 1930s and early 1940s, including Hannah Arendt, Ernst Fraenkel, Erich Fromm, Arthur Koestler, Raphael Lemkin, Karl Popper, Max Horkheimer, and Theodor Adorno (to name but a few).

Admittedly, Conway mentions nearly all these figures, but does so rather fleetingly. At the beginning of the book he foregrounds the French political philosopher Raymond Aron (who himself spent time in Germany in the early 1930s and London in the early 1940s) and pays particular attention to a speech he made in West Berlin in June 1960 at a conference of the (CIA-funded) Congress for Cultural Freedom. Yet the optimism that Aron expressed in this address was based on his belief in a growing convergence between Western Europe and other parts of ‘the West’ since 1945, including ‘some of

⁸ Martin Diebel, *‘Die Stunde der Exekutive’: Das Bundesinnenministerium und die Notstandsgesetze 1949–1968* (Göttingen, 2019).

⁹ Anne Applebaum, *Twilight of Democracy: The Failure of Politics and the Parting of Friends* (London, 2020), 120.

the new[ly independent] states of Asia and Africa, the United States, Australia and New Zealand'. All of them now at least had the potential to enter the exalted group of *démocraties stabilisées* (democracies rendered secure through a strong claim to popular legitimacy, the marginalization of extremist parties, and a track record of effective governance), even if some still fell short in practice. The auspicious advance of democracy, he argued, meant that an analysis of political institutions based on the 'old states of Europe' alone 'would from this time forth be incomplete' ('serait désormais fragmentaire').¹⁰

Given all this, Conway is on much safer ground when he defines Western Europe in the 1960s not as a distinct region enjoying its own particular 'democratic age', but as a transnational space and meeting point which, through fifteen years of internal and cross-border migration, civic engagement, and cultural exchange, was slowly becoming many different democratic worlds shrunk into one. This was a process that relied as much on virtual or long-distance encounters as on face-to-face, local, or community ones, although the latter were important. More than anything else it reflected the growing – and internationalizing – impact of the 'direct media of film and television' on political and social life (p. 280).

Alongside France, the Benelux countries, and Scandinavia, West Germany was one of the major Continental European centres of this long-term trend towards democratization, political stabilization, and unity through diversity, having been influenced profoundly by it, but also increasingly contributing to it.¹¹ Examples might include the lively debates and intelligent compromises that preceded the passing of the *Notstandsgesetze* in May 1968 and the politically astute decision *not* to apply these laws in the face of the exceptional challenge posed by domestic terrorism in the 1970s. Both developments, it goes without saying, took place in the shadow of 1945 and the important social, cultural, and political changes that had taken place since then, both in the FRG and globally.

¹⁰ Raymond Aron, 'Les institutions politiques de l'occident dans le monde du XXe siècle', in id. and François Bondy (eds.), *La démocratie à l'épreuve du XXe siècle: Colloques de Berlin* (Paris, 1960), 11–42, at 12.

¹¹ As also shown by, among others, Timothy Scott Brown, *West Germany and the Global Sixties: The Anti-Authoritarian Revolt, 1962–1978* (Cambridge, 2013).

III

In Conway's reading of the twentieth century, the year 1989 stands out as far more exceptional than 1945—a brief moment in time when the triumph of liberal democracy ceased to be cast in national, regional, and period-specific ways and appeared to be global, universal, and even permanent. He is right in the sense that 1989 itself now belongs to history rather than to a 'continuous present'. As Anne Applebaum has also argued in her recent book on the 'angry politics' of the years 2015–18, the sudden rise of illiberal strongman regimes and political movements in parts of Eastern Europe do not represent a 'hangover from 1989' or a 'regional failure to grapple with the legacy of the [authoritarian, non-democratic] past'.¹² Rather, it is something that has 'arisen more recently' and is present in 'some parts of the Western world' too.¹³ By contrast, the European Union's survival of a number of intense political storms—from the worldwide financial crash of 2007–8 through to the refugee and migrant crisis of 2015–16, the long-drawn-out negotiations with the UK over the terms of Brexit, and the global pandemic of 2020–21—seems to indicate that the 'hangover' from the twentieth century is still very present on the Continent today, especially among those countries directly affected by the Second World War.

Where does this leave Germany and the legacy of 1945 and 1989 for its development as a democratic nation, particularly against the background of the growing threat of right-wing extremism at home and internationally? Hedwig Richter provides a rather different answer to that offered in what is now the standard account by Heinrich August Winkler.¹⁴ In her view, for over two hundred years Germany has played an active part in the 'benchmark project that is democracy', helping to drive it forward 'in tandem with modernity and notions of human dignity' (p. 10). The German nation did not need to walk a long, circuitous road before it came to embrace Western ideals wholeheartedly in the late twentieth century; rather, in the modern

¹² Applebaum, *Twilight of Democracy*, 55, 108.

¹³ *Ibid.* 58.

¹⁴ Heinrich August Winkler, *Der lange Weg nach Westen*, 2 vols. (Munich, 2000); appearing in English as *Germany: The Long Road West*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 2006–7).

era, democracy was—with the obvious and important exception of the years 1933–45—a ‘German affair’ as well as a global one.

One of Richter’s central themes is the importance of educational, health, and social reforms—promoted largely by elites in Germany and elsewhere since 1800—over violent revolution. Reform, she argues, was the typical way in which elites ‘educated themselves’ to become good citizens and democrats (p. 44). By contrast, violent revolutions remained ‘the exception’ (p. 34). Indeed, like Simon Schama writing on late eighteenth-century France, Richter sees the shocking events of 1789–94 (and later, of 1848–49 in Central Europe, 1871 in Paris, and 1917–20 in Russia and Germany) as anomalous ‘interruption[s]’ to progress and modernity rather than as a ‘catalyst’ to a better world.¹⁵

For Richter, this view of Germany’s self-generated and globally interconnected path to democracy is instructive because it draws our attention to previously overlooked moments of reform, including the period around the year 1900. However, it might equally be argued that she relies on too narrow a conception of revolutions. In her account, these are typically blood-spattered and overbearing events, disrespectful of the bodily autonomy and individual worth of all and inimical to women’s rights in particular. Marie Juchacz, the first elected woman deputy to address the Weimar National Assembly on 19 February 1919 and a member of the SPD (not, as Richter mistakenly claims, the USPD; p. 196), understood things differently. True, she was careful in her speech to assert that the November Revolution was now over and that a welcome return to normality had been sealed by the convening of the National Assembly and the re-establishment of the separation of powers between executive, legislature, and law courts. But she was equally at pains to stress that the granting of female suffrage, by decree of the Council of People’s Deputies on 12 November 1918, was the correction of a long-standing natural injustice against women.

To Juchacz, in other words, the German Revolution of 1918–19 was indeed exceptional in national terms. However, this was not because it broke with the reformist impulses of 1900. Rather, it was

¹⁵ Simon Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (London, 1989), 184.

because it brought about something that was self-evidently in line with the essential – that is, non-negotiable – requirements of democratic citizenship that a century or more of well-intentioned and influential advocates in Prussia and other German states had failed absolutely and on all levels to achieve: namely, equality of voting rights for both sexes. Of course, Richter is right that a revolution was not needed to create a social state in Germany; elements of this were already in place in the Bismarckian and Wilhelmine eras, to the benefit of (non-enfranchised) women as well as wage-earning men. However, to quote the radical Dutch Patriot draft manifesto from 1785, the *Leids Ontwerp*, ‘the Sovereign is none other than the vote of the people’.¹⁶ And without the vote, women were not truly equal as citizens.

A second of Richter’s themes is the significance of understandings of the body to the development of democracy. A body that is respected as human is also entitled to be free and autonomous – not only in the negative sense of not being enslaved, tortured, made vulnerable to specific kinds of socially discriminatory punishments (‘ständisch differenzierte Strafen’, p. 75), or threatened with arbitrary detention, but in the positive sense of enjoying the right to health, happiness, personal security, and parity of (self-)esteem. We can see continuities here from the year 1800 onwards, including the contributions of German physicians such as August Hirsch (1817–94) and Max von Pettenkofer (1818–1901) to international sanitary protection work, and of the Berlin-based sex reformers Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935) and Helene Stöcker (1869–1943) to the field of minority rights and the protection of single mothers. All the above campaigners helped pave the way for the founding principles of the World Health Organization, which came into force in April 1948:

Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 249.

The health of all peoples is fundamental to the attainment of peace and security and is dependent upon the fullest co-operation of individuals and States.

The achievement of any State in the promotion and protection of health is of value to all.¹⁷

More recently, we can find echoes of these principles in Angela Merkel's New Year's Eve address to the German nation as Federal Chancellor on 31 December 2020. Here she noted that a hitherto unknown virus had invaded 'our' bodies and hit the core of what it means to be human: close contact with others, the ability to hug, and the right to celebrate and mourn together. Those who spread stories that the virus does not exist, she continued, were not only telling lies but were adding to the pain felt by fellow citizens who had lost loved ones or who were dealing with the physical and mental impact of Covid-related illness. Above all, she added, conspiracy theorists are dangerous cynics who lack the kind of fellow-feeling (*Mitmenschlichkeit*) necessary for Germany and the rest of the world to get through the pandemic together. Later in her address she noted with pride that scientists from sixty different nations had worked on developing the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine as a German-American co-production, led in the FRG by a firm co-founded in Mainz by the German-Turkish husband-and-wife team Uğur Şahin and Özlem Türeci. For her, this was proof that 'progress stems from the common strength to be found in diversity'.¹⁸

Richter's main point is the remarkable resilience of democracy, especially given the 'catastrophic starting point' for its renewal in 1945 (p. 252). Like Merkel, she also celebrates democracy's ability since 1945 to develop in harmony as a German and international phenomenon, and to offset rising inequalities of income and wealth at the domestic and global levels since the 1970s through social reforms and respect for bodily integrity. But is its survival really

¹⁷ Constitution of the World Health Organization, adopted 1946, effective from 1948, at [https://www.who.int/governance/eb/who_constitution_en.pdf], accessed 30 Apr. 2021.

¹⁸ 'Neujahrsansprache der Bundeskanzlerin', 31 Dec. 2020, at [<https://www.bundesregierung.de/breg-de/mediathek/videos/merkel-neujahrsansprache-2020-1833774>], accessed 30 Apr. 2021.

guaranteed in the twenty-first century? How can it protect itself against the populist appeal of conspiracy theories that undermine trust in voting systems or permit ridicule of ‘experts’ and elected politicians? How can it confront the anger that is more easily assuaged through reference to the machinations of ‘evil’ foreign powers than to the role of accident or human complexity? How can it combat terrorism and political extremism, deadly viruses spread by human contact, the illegal trafficking of migrants and would-be asylum-seekers, or the climate crisis without impinging on the right ‘to secure and govern our own bodies’ as autonomous actors (p. 322)? And is there any more that it can do to offset what Applebaum describes as the ‘jangling, dissonant sound of modern politics’—the cacophony of different voices ‘all shouting at the same time’ which, in the age of social and digital media, has so ‘unnerved that part of the population that prefers unity and homogeneity’.¹⁹

To triumph, democracy must be bodily in the sense that it founds its abstract claims to justice, equality, and solidarity on the tangible basis of respect for difference and diversity. Here Richter is absolutely right. But it must be more than that: a way of life rooted in the desire to join people together through the cultivation of mutual recognition and bonds of trust. It is about creating spaces and filling them with educational, health, and social care opportunities for all, not just about establishing constitutional lines that cannot be crossed and individual freedoms that ought not to be restricted (except during exceptional, state-of-emergency situations). In this sense, 1945 was just a beginning—and we still have a long and fragile path to follow.

¹⁹ Applebaum, *Twilight of Democracy*, 117, 187.

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**RETHINKING LOCALITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE:
CONTRIBUTIONS TO EAST-WEST
GERMAN HISTORY**

FRANK KELL

ANDREW DEMSHUK, *Bowling for Communism: Urban Ingenuity at the End of East Germany* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2020), 272 pp. ISBN 978 1 501 75168 4. \$39.95

MARCEL THOMAS, *Local Lives, Parallel Histories: Villagers and Everyday Life in the Divided Germany*, Studies in German History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 320 pp. ISBN 978 0 198 85614 6. £65.00

‘Place as metaphor suggests groundedness from below, and a flexible and porous boundary around it, without closing out the extra-local, all the way to the global.’¹ As a restricted spatial category understood in relational terms, locality is shaped by translocal and other social relationships and interpretations. Local units are spaces of action and organization that are furnished with meaning by actors. Locality is thus not solely a product of its dichotomous correspondence with the global;² rather, it is people who make the local into their own personal life-worlds – be they rural, urban, hybrid, or otherwise defined – by negotiating the specific local meaning of large-scale transformation processes on the ground.

The renegotiation of the local amid the upheavals of post-war East German and East-West German history has been addressed by two new publications: Andrew Demshuk’s study of ‘urban ingenuity’ in late socialist Leipzig, and Marcel Thomas’s Ph.D. thesis on comparative local history in divided Germany. Both studies are examples of social history ‘from below’, taking a local perspective rooted in the history of everyday life and adopting an empirical approach that

Trans. by Jozef van der Voort (GHIL)

¹ Arif Dirlik, ‘Globalization, Indigenism, Social Movements, and the Politics of Place’, *Localities*, 1 (2011), 47–90, at 57.

² Angelika Epple, ‘Lokalität und die Dimensionen des Globalen: Eine Frage der Relationen’, *Historische Anthropologie*, 21/1 (2013), 4–25.

combines sources from local archives with oral histories. I will begin by introducing each book in turn before comparing them in light of the question: to what extent can the provincialization of East-West German contemporary history and the concept of locality help deepen our understanding of the socio-historical transformations that took place after 1945 in both rural and urban areas?

In his 2020 monograph *Bowling for Communism: Urban Ingenuity at the End of East Germany*, Andrew Demshuk addresses the still-thorny issue in GDR historiography of the relationship between state and society, especially during the era of late socialism. Demshuk takes as his case study the city of Leipzig during the 1980s, and in doing so builds on existing research that uses the GDR's second-largest city as a means to explore the negotiation of space and local power under state socialism.³ Demshuk examines how various local actors attempted to 'save their city' in the face of both the increasingly dramatic deterioration of Leipzig's inner-city housing and infrastructure, and the conditions brought about by central planning and the shortage economy. He organizes his study around the planning, construction, and opening of the Bowlingtreff—a sport and leisure facility with a bowling alley, a gym, pool tables, Poly-Play arcade game machines, restaurants, and cafés that was built between 1984 and 1987 in a former electrical substation on Wilhelm-Leuschner-Platz in the city centre. A new, postmodern entrance building was also added. In total, the conversion works required over 40,000 hours of volunteer labour, and the facility remained in operation until 1997. The remarkable thing about the Bowlingtreff is that it was planned without any formal approval from the central government in East Berlin and built largely outside official procurement procedures. Demshuk interprets this so-called *Schwarzbau*,⁴ or illicit building, as an uncompromising riposte by urban actors to both the heavy restrictions placed on urban development in the late GDR and the general sense that the city was falling into dilapidation while 'Berlin' stood idly by. He also sees it

³ Christian Rau, *Stadtverwaltung im Staatssozialismus: Kommunalpolitik und Wohnungswesen in der DDR am Beispiel Leipzigs (1957–1989)* (Stuttgart, 2017).

⁴ Where this essay uses the prefix *Schwarz-* to denote illegal or illicit practices, it does so to reflect historical usage in the GDR, which predates the current debate over whether this idiom has acquired racist connotations in modern Germany.

as a means of appropriating a Western culture of consumption and leisure. Buildings like the Bowlingtreff were possible because local politicians, city planners, architects, residents, and volunteers formed an alliance that operated within the constraints of the official regime, but also practised ‘urban ingenuity’ by working beyond its narrow confines for the benefit of the actors’ local area (*Heimat*): the city of Leipzig.

Demshuk arranges his source material to support his main argument, in which he examines various historical constellations of urban ingenuity in Leipzig. His first chapter focuses on private attempts by the city’s residents to stem the decline of their immediate surroundings and improve their living conditions. First, he examines the grievances (*Eingaben*) addressed to officials of the ruling Socialist Unity Party (the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, or SED) regarding poor living conditions, shortages of materials, and neglected maintenance. He then goes on to look at restoration work carried out independently on residential and community buildings—often with the support of informal bartering networks—as well as illegal activities such as the theft of materials and equipment or illicit house occupations (*Schwarzwohnen*).⁵

The second and third chapters discuss a group of reform-minded architects in Leipzig who drew up urban development plans to preserve the historic character of the city centre by making light-touch, modernizing interventions and filling vacant plots. This approach was successfully implemented in only a handful of projects, however, as the limited resources available from the relevant local agencies mainly went into building prefabricated *Plattenbauten*. In spite of economic and political realities—or perhaps even because of them—in the late 1980s these actors tried to showcase their ambitious design proposals for the city centre by means of an international architectural competition; yet their visionary ideas were dismissed by Leipzig residents as ‘castles in the sky’. Demshuk then presents a successful alternative model in his detailed fourth chapter on Leipzig’s *Schwarzbauten*. Alongside the aforementioned Bowlingtreff, these include the student club in the Moritzbastei, which was developed in the 1970s by a group

⁵ See also the special issue of the *German Historical Institute London Bulletin*, 43/1 (2021) on ‘Living through the *Wende*: Housing and the Home c.1989’.

of volunteers, as well as several smaller private projects to build leisure facilities outside the city centre. Nonetheless, Demshuk concludes that even these few successful attempts to 'save the city' merely papered over the fundamental problems of urban decay, housing shortages, and the structural weaknesses of the planned economy. His fifth chapter therefore stresses the importance of urban decline as a factor in the Leipzig protests that began in autumn 1989.

Our scene now shifts to Neukirch in der Lausitz, near Dresden, which lies around 265 miles as the crow flies from Ebersbach an der Fils, outside Stuttgart. These two villages, which had followed similar economic and socio-structural patterns of development after industrializing in the late nineteenth century, unsurprisingly embarked on divergent trajectories under the two different social systems post 1945. Ebersbach benefited strongly from West German economic growth, achieved town status in 1975, was modernized into a commuter settlement, and today has over 15,000 inhabitants. Meanwhile, Neukirch was reformed into a socialist village and initially underwent a slower process of change which accelerated in the wake of the late socialist economic crisis and the sweeping structural changes that took place in East Germany after 1989/90, leading—as in many East German settlements—to demographic and infrastructural decline. Today, this municipality in Saxony is home to an ageing population of around 5,000 people. The inhabitants of Neukirch and Ebersbach have probably never heard of each other, let alone visited their respective towns; yet Marcel Thomas's Ph.D. thesis, published in 2020 under the title *Local Lives, Parallel Histories: Villagers and Everyday Life in the Divided Germany*, seeks to bring the two into dialogue by tracing their 'parallel' post-war histories, and is well worth reading.

Thomas asks how 'large-scale transformation processes' (p. 13) after 1945 were experienced, negotiated, and interpreted in each of these local contexts. He recounts the post-war histories of Neukirch and Ebersbach primarily through the memories of everyday life, interpretations of the present day, and understandings of history held by residents of the two towns ('ordinary Germans'; p. 4), and in the process reveals that the inhabitants did not construe their local lives as stories of opposed systems, following the logic of the Cold War. Instead—and herein lies the parallel between the two towns—they understood themselves through

a narrative of two autochthonous communities that defied externally imposed conditions and took independent action to safeguard the progress of their rural localities in pragmatic and largely unpolitical ways. 'What makes their histories "parallel" is that individuals who lived hundreds of kilometres apart in similar ways localized the diverging modernization processes which transformed their lives in the divided nation' (p. 276). Rural localities, Thomas argues, 'were not mere backdrops to the emergence of two very different societies, but key arenas in which change was mediated' (p. 16). In other words, his study adopts a comparative approach rooted in the everyday history of the local in order to contribute to a broader post-war East-West German shared history—one with a social history slant—that builds on the detailed existing picture of East-West differences by documenting connections and appropriations between the two systems.⁶

Thomas's study is divided into six chapters, each of which examines an aspect of the parallel histories of Neukirch and Ebersbach in closer detail, presenting findings from each case study in turn before drawing succinct conclusions from them. Chapters one and two address the changing discourse around rurality and community, which were discussed in new terms amid the political and economic transformations of the countryside post 1945, as well as during debates over the perceived backwardness of rural locations that also took place in Neukirch and Ebersbach. In both localities, Thomas notes, the mania for social planning and modernization that characterized the first three post-war decades initially led people to reject notions of traditional rurality; yet from the late 1970s, under the influence of economic crisis, stagnation, and mounting scepticism at the idea of progress, there was a return to tradition—for instance through positive associations with the notion of *Heimat*, or 'homeland'. Yet the redefined social relationships and ideas of solidarity within each village remained ambivalent. The increasing need for privacy and personal autonomy led residents to actively renounce the practices of communal life as soon as they could (this happened more quickly in Ebersbach than in Neukirch); yet they also engaged in nostalgic

⁶ Frank Bösch, 'Geteilt und verbunden: Perspektiven auf die deutsche Geschichte seit den 1970er Jahren', in id. (ed.), *Geteilte Geschichte: Ost- und Westdeutschland, 1970–2000* (Göttingen, 2015), 7–37.

reminiscence over those same practices and lamented their disappearance. In chapter six, Thomas returns to residents' understandings of history from the 1970s onwards – specifically in relation to the changes in their localities after 1945 – by examining local historiography in chronicles, calendars, commemorative publications, and so on. Here, he persuasively demonstrates that these appropriations of the past do not merely express wistful memories of vanished life-worlds, but are also attempts to control the accelerating process of change by creating localized meanings.

Questions of local identity and belonging also shaped local responses to new arrivals, as Thomas shows in chapter three. Long-standing locals in Ebersbach and Neukirch attempted in similar ways to marginalize refugees, foreign workers (*Gastarbeiter* and *Vertragsarbeiter*), and newcomers from urban areas by excluding them spatially and by claiming the sole right of interpretation over 'their' locality through narratives of local homogeneity. These discourses of self-understanding also permeated mutual perceptions of the divided Germany, which were defined by a 'parallel process of othering and estrangement' (p. 164), as Thomas argues in chapter four. While the residents of Neukirch increasingly imagined West Germany as an idealized alternative to their day-to-day struggle with the shortage economy and as a cultural benchmark for their expectations of their own future – something that Thomas demonstrates primarily with reference to the many imaginative attempts by Neukirch's inhabitants to receive Western television – the people of Ebersbach tended to ascribe less importance to 'the national question' and 'the East' in their self-understanding during the decades following the war. At most, these ideas provided reassurance over Ebersbach's own successful development, as Thomas shows by pointing to the strong image of the 'backward' East in the town's public memory.

Chapter five examines political changes on the local level from the late 1960s onwards, along with the renegotiation of legitimacy and participation. Thomas argues that in both states, the local became an arena in which new forms of participation were established from below within the confines of the different political systems – a phenomenon that Thomas calls 'give-and-take politics' in the chapter title. In Neukirch, he points to the local activism and volunteer work that went

into establishing a recreation area, as well as self-sufficiency strategies and grievances submitted by way of protest during the 1980s, while in Ebersbach he describes a citizens' initiative to found a youth centre and a creative protest against poor road safety.

With their focus on the 'self-organizing society', Demshuk and Thomas form part of a recent trend in GDR social history – one that does not simply see the relationship between the dictatorial state and social thought and activity in the late GDR as indicative of a society that was subject, in Jürgen Kocka's formulation, to *Durchherrsung* (the permeation of authority),⁷ but instead searches for sites of political and cultural participation within official structures.⁸ From this perspective, which builds on reflections regarding *Herrschaft als soziale Praxis* (domination as a social practice)⁹ and the 'participatory dictatorship',¹⁰ local power is understood as a field of interaction and negotiation between private, individual motives, communal relationship networks, and the dictates of the socialist political and ideological system – a constellation of 'small worlds' in which various actors developed their own attributions of meaning. And in Demshuk's and Thomas's case studies, the meaning produced by the various actors is the local itself. 'Although officials professed that the people were working with them as a sign of belief in the system, in reality the people came, not for communism, but for the sake of Leipzig and their urban community' (Demshuk, pp. 5–6; see also Thomas, pp. 197–205). For active residents on both sides of the German and the rural-urban divides, civic life was focused on one's *Heimatort*, or home turf, and on improving local living conditions. To this end, they engaged in a 'mutually beneficial trade-off' (Thomas, p. 232) with state actors who

⁷ Jürgen Kocka, 'Eine durchherrschte Gesellschaft', in id., Hartmut Kaelble, and Hartmut Zwahr (eds.), *Sozialgeschichte der DDR* (Stuttgart, 1994), 547–53.

⁸ Jörg Ganzenmüller and Bertram Triebel (eds.), *Gesellschaft als staatliche Veranstaltung? Orte politischer und kultureller Partizipation in der DDR* (forthcoming).

⁹ Alf Lüdtke, 'Einleitung: Herrschaft als soziale Praxis', in id. (ed.), *Herrschaft als soziale Praxis: Historische und sozial-anthropologische Studien* (Göttingen, 1991), 9–63; Thomas Lindenberger, 'Die Diktatur der Grenzen: Zur Einleitung', in id. (ed.), *Herrschaft und Eigen-Sinn in der Diktatur: Studien zur Gesellschaftsgeschichte der DDR* (Cologne, 1999), 13–35.

¹⁰ Mary Fulbrook, *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker* (New Haven, 2005).

themselves hoped to gain legitimacy. The different limits of the two political systems ensured that the increased demand for more responsive politics in both East and West Germany during the 1960s and 1970s gave rise to historically unique local structures of participation in each state. Civic life in Leipzig and Neukirch flourished more in the context of state-sponsored participatory programmes, and only ever in local or individual contexts, while in intellectual terms it was imbued with links to communal labour and folk regionalisms that were designed to bring tradition into harmony with radical transformation.¹¹ In the West German Ebersbach, by contrast, the people's growing desire for participation was channelled into interest groups and public debate, and thus into the broader institutional fabric of representative democracy.

Both studies make a particularly valuable contribution to political and cultural history in the East-West German context by showing, in persuasive empirical terms, that there was a rupture in the citizen-state relationship in the GDR during the 1980s, so that the people's high expectations of the 'welfare dictatorship',¹² which had been nurtured by the regime itself, were profoundly disappointed, and their confidence in the state's will and capacity to act was eroded (Thomas, pp. 216–23; Demshuk, pp. 149–70). When symbolic ordering principles and historical semantics lose legitimacy, the fundamental assumptions underpinning them come into view, and this erosion of trust in the state during the late GDR reveals a statist, yet community-oriented and locally focused understanding of society—one that was characteristic of East German industrial modernity as a whole. The historical context for this politico-ideological formation strikes me as important for achieving a clearer understanding of the 'social fractures', as Steffen Mau puts it, of the era of transformation in East Germany after this consensus came to an abrupt end in 1989/90.¹³

¹¹ Jan Palmowski, *Inventing a Socialist Nation: Heimat and the Politics of Everyday Life in the GDR, 1945–1990* (Cambridge, 2009).

¹² Konrad Jarausch, 'Care and Coercion: The GDR as Welfare Dictatorship', in id. (ed.), *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*, trans. by Eve Duffy (New York, 1999), 47–69.

¹³ Steffen Mau, *Lütten Klein: Leben in der ostdeutschen Transformationsgesellschaft* (Berlin, 2019), 13–18, 244–9.

On the level of social history, changes to political cultures of participation in local contexts open a promising field of investigation that is broad in spatial terms and spans the junctures of history.¹⁴ In his conclusion, Thomas merely hints that ‘parallel histories of responses to change in East and West Germany were part of a broader European history’ (p. 278), while Demshuk repeatedly refers to ‘high modernism’ (especially in chapter two) as the dominant current in post-1945 urban planning in both East and West Germany, the ‘lifeless aesthetic results’ (p. 57) of which formed the main target of his actors’ engagement. He also draws occasional comparisons with historical architectural developments in other European cities such as Wrocław and Frankfurt am Main, though he does not expand these into broader socio-historical parallels. Future research could build on Demshuk’s and Thomas’s findings by focusing more closely on the connections between sweeping structural changes and shifts in cultural values—for example by conducting an asynchronous comparison of de-industrialization in local work cultures in the UK and East Germany, as Lutz Raphael has suggested.¹⁵ This could form just one part of a comparative experiential history of European societies in the second half of the twentieth century—one that would take specific regional developments and variations into account.

One key consideration when describing transnational transformation processes is the fact that they are locally embedded. Conversely, we often only develop an initial impression of these processes via individual actions, to which relevant meanings are ascribed. Marcel Thomas and Andrew Demshuk offer stimulating analyses based on empirically rich case studies that will be of interest to scholars of East-West German histories and the transformation of rural and urban spaces alike.

¹⁴ Christina Morina, ‘Geteilte Bilanz: Überlegungen zu einer politischen Kulturgeschichte Deutschlands seit den 1980er Jahren’, in Markus Böick, Constantin Goschler, and Ralph Jessen (eds.), *Jahrbuch Deutsche Einheit 2020* (Berlin, 2020), 145–68.

¹⁵ Lutz Raphael, *Jenseits von Kohle und Stahl: Eine Gesellschaftsgeschichte Westeuropas nach dem Boom* (Berlin, 2019), 18, 327–8, 353.

RETHINKING LOCALITY

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BOOK REVIEWS

ANDREAS FAHRMEIR (ed.), *Deutschland: Globalgeschichte einer Nation* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2020), 936 pp. ISBN 978 3 406 75619 1. €39.95

This is an impossible book to review. It consists of 177 short essays by 172 historians. It ranges from the prehistoric (*Homo heidelbergensis*, c.400,000 years ago) to 2020 (the Covid-19 pandemic and the new Berlin airport). Many subjects and types of historical writing are represented.

The book is divided into six chronologically ordered sections. Most essays are identified by a year and subject—for example, ‘1454’ is about Gutenberg and the European innovation of printing. This apparent precision can be misleading, as the year in question is often chosen to signify the start of a longer process. Thus the essay ‘789’, on the beginnings of German-language literature, refers to the dating of a list of German words probably used to help novices learn to read the Bible in Latin. The essay then goes on to consider German-language texts until well into the thirteenth century.

The first section—‘Avant la lettre’—contains seven essays from ‘400,000 BCE’ to ‘540 CE’. The medieval section (‘700’ to ‘1462’) has seventeen ‘year’ essays and four on regions (Poland, Bohemia, Italy, and Burgundy). The early modern section (‘1502’ to ‘1784’) consists of twenty-four essays, one of them on a region (Alsace). The long nineteenth century (‘1792’ to ‘1911’) comprises forty-one ‘year’ essays, plus one on Austria. The fifth section covers the era of the world wars (‘1913’ to ‘1949’) in forty essays. The final section (‘1950’ to ‘2020’) has forty-three essays. The editor writes a short introduction to each section. Apart from the usual notes on contributors and indexes of persons and facts, there is a useful list of place names, registering the point that these change over time.

Andreas Fahrmeir seeks thematic unity by asking each author to focus on the relationship between Germany and global history. This task is more precisely specified as considering how a German event

has a global impact, or how a global event has a German impact. In addition to such connected history, some authors focus on comparative history with Germany as one case. The closer we get to our globalized present, the greater the tendency to write transnational history which merges rather than distinguishes between the German and the global. These are not mutually exclusive approaches, but one or another shapes the individual essays. Fahrmeir disavows originality for this book, referring to some earlier publications as models. Especially relevant appears to be *Histoire mondiale de la France*, edited by Patrick Boucheron.¹

The intellectual challenges are considerable and change over time. For the first section, as the title 'Avant la lettre' makes clear, there is no contemporary meaning to the terms 'Germany' and 'world'. Certainly this is the case for prehistoric Heidelberg Man, skeletons of people who died violently around 5000 BCE in 'Swabia', and a bronze disc depicting the heavens found in Saxony-Anhalt and dated about 1700 BCE. One might question the relevance of the section title to the next essay on the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest of 9 CE. The Roman sources on this destruction of three legions use the words 'Germania' and 'Germani' to label where this battle took place and to name the victors. However, the inhabitants of that region would never have used these Latin terms themselves. Uwe Walther also questions the argument, sketched out about a century later by Tacitus, that this battle signalled the end of Roman imperial ambitions in 'Germany'. Tacitus' portrayal of the 'Germans' as a distinct society, culture, and ethnicity was invoked centuries later to support nationalist historical accounts of the event.

From the medieval period notions of German and Germany multiply and become more prominent, as shown by essays on subjects such as Charlemagne and the origins of German-language literature. Essays on the Crusades and embassies to and from Charlemagne relate Germany to the world beyond. However, while this section has four 'region' essays on Poland, Bohemia, Italy, and Burgundy, it does not have one on Germany.

¹ Patrick Boucheron (ed.), *Histoire mondiale de la France* (Paris, 2016), now available in English as Patrick Boucheron and Stéphane Gerson (eds.), *France in the World: A New Global History* (New York, 2019).

By the late medieval period there is an abundant discourse indicating distinctions and connections between Germany and the world—so much so that some essays do not see the need to make explicit the conceptual nature of such distinctions and connections. Albrecht Dürer ('1505') was a German artist who travelled widely and had a 'global' reputation. Johannes Gutenberg ('1454') was a German printer and his innovation quickly transformed communications across Europe. It would appear that all one needs to do is narrate the essentials of these particular biographies.

However, this can involve a problematic jump from individual Germans to Germany. To take a later example about which I know more, Claudia Schnurmann's fascinating essay ('1825') on three Hamburg merchant brothers, the Oppenheimers, details how they made successful careers in South America and the Caribbean. The global aspect is clear: the brothers intermarried with Spanish-origin settler elites, moved into banking, plantation agriculture, and slave trading, and extended their dealings into the USA. Clearly they were German. However, German nationalists at the time criticized Hamburg as *ein Stück Englands*—a piece of England. The brothers looked 'out' to the world rather than 'in' to Germany. Their facility in English and Spanish was more important for their business careers than their native German. Still, the distinction between the national and the global becomes more explicit from the late eighteenth century, first and foremost in such cultural spheres as literature and education. The Oppenheimers, though global political and economic actors, sent their children home for schooling—something improbable just a century earlier.

The subsequent growth of nationalism—framed also as political and economic ideologies—and then the formation of a German nation-state in 1871 fused different national notions in particular ways, equating Germany as one state and body of citizens with Germany as one society and one culture, then going on to show how Germans thus understood engaged in various relationships (conflict, co-operation, and exchange) with the world. As indicated with the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest, such notions were projected upon earlier times, marginalizing other meanings. The historiographical shifts involved are considered in various stimulating essays.

For example, Steffen Patzold on feudalism ('700') notes that this began as a temporal concept with Europe-wide application. Nineteenth-century historiography projected upon it a German meaning. Late twentieth-century historiography has subjected that national perspective to sustained criticism. Many other essays critique such projections of national(ist) historiography, as upon the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest or Luther and the 'German' Reformation. Contributors face the challenge of taking on board the changing nature of historical writing as well as presenting a particular account of a past event.

Taking up this challenge means that many of the essays on the pre-nationalist period seek to display the changing and different meanings of Germany and the world. The notion of the world becomes clearer from the late fifteenth century with the discovery of the 'new' world to set against the 'old' one. 'Germany', however, lacks stable and linked political, economic, and cultural meanings until much later. This has implications for how we understand individual 'Germans'. Johann Sebastian Bach in his own time was not regarded as a German composer; indeed, there was no notion of German music to set against those of Italian and French music. The essay by Barbara Beuys on Maria Merian ('1689'), who travelled to South America and published a major study on its caterpillars, is as much about Merian the Calvinist and the importance of her stay in Amsterdam before going out to the new Dutch territory of Surinam, as it is about Merian the German. How far the same point can be made for Germans treated as groups is interesting to consider. Early German emigration to North America, for example, might better be described as Protestant than German, with shared religion proving crucial for relationships with English, Scottish, Welsh, and Dutch settlers.

This starts to change as concepts of German and Germany are elaborated and set against those of the world. One perspective is to see the world as active and Germany as passive. This was obvious for the Thirty Years War as foreign armies (including that of the Habsburgs) devastated the German lands. This theme is reflected later in essays such as that by Michael Stolleis on the introduction of the French civil code – named after Napoleon – into German states. Some

Germans rejected this as a foreign imposition, but others welcomed the chance to emulate a more modern and rational world.

Increasingly such connections and their different valuations become central. By the mid nineteenth century Germany is presented more and more as the potential and then the actual active agent—one which takes what it wants from the world and improves upon it. By 1900 the Germany/world distinction is very clear and the accent is firmly on German agency. Many of the essays now deal with topics involving Germans moving beyond Germany and imposing themselves upon the world (mass emigration, colonial projects, German advances in Europe from 1914 to 1918, Nazism and German expansion and destruction). At other times the balance reverses as the world moves into Germany (post-1918 defeat, Allied occupation from 1945, Marshall Plan, the Cold War division of the world and of Germany).

After 1945, and especially after reunification in 1991, many essays tend to be about Germans or Germany as one aspect of a global process (world economic crises, World Cup football successes, Germany in the European Union, refugee crises, the current pandemic). Other essays compare how Germany and other countries deal with issues—for example, the differences between France and Germany on the appropriate economic and fiscal policies to pursue in the European Union. These transnational and comparative historical approaches are usually fascinating and informative but often lack the illuminating focus provided by the editor's guideline of connecting a German to a global moment, sometimes revising what has usually been told as a German story.

Thus the essay '1909' by Margit Szöllösi-Janze on Fritz Haber and his invention of synthetic ammonia cleverly unpacks the global dimensions of what is frequently presented as an achievement of German science and genius, showing how Haber shared more general concerns about feeding Europeans in the future and drew upon international science networks. Frank Uekötter ('2011') traces the connection between the nuclear accident at Fukushima and the specifically German way, both before and after that incident, of moving against and then away from nuclear energy generation.

In the space available I can mention only a handful of the essays. Furthermore, one can think of many other relevant topics. Indeed, so

vast are the possibilities that any set of contributions must appear as an arbitrary selection. As it is, Fahrmeir is to be congratulated on the quality and quantity of contributions commissioned.

I began by observing that my task is an impossible one. It is also an impossible book to read, if by that we mean starting at the beginning and proceeding on to the end. (Only a dutiful reviewer would do such a thing!) Rather it is a book into which one should dip. Readers might find most stimulating the essays on subjects about which they know the least, especially as authors must spend some of their scarce words on background information before providing a short riff on the Germany/global theme. I would also suggest reading together essays on different periods which explore similar kinds of history – political, economic, literary, or military. This would show how change over time transforms what we mean by ‘state’, ‘music’, or ‘travel’, as well as by ‘Germany’ and ‘world’. For example, it is salutary to compare Michael Stolleis on the imposition of the *Code Napoléon* with Dieter Grimm’s essay on the ways newly independent states have drawn inspiration from the current German constitution (‘Basic Law’) and constitutional court. Used in such ways, the book will provide the reader with endlessly stimulating information and perspectives.

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PHYLLIS G. JESTICE, *Imperial Ladies of the Ottonian Dynasty: Women and Rule in Tenth-Century Germany, Queenship and Power* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), xi + 300 pp. ISBN 978 3 319 77305 6. €103.99 (hardcover)

The Ottonian empresses Adelaide of Burgundy and Theophanu have always been the focus of scholarly attention, but the long-standing default view of them as exceptional figures is a key reason why the study of female rulers has been far narrower in scope than is strictly necessary, given the available sources.¹ As shown by publications such as Claudia Zey's 2015 edited volume of papers from a conference organized by the Konstanzer Arbeitskreis für mittelalterliche Geschichte on 'powerful women', the debate on this subject has been gathering pace for some time now across Europe.² This means that Phyllis G. Jestice's study takes its place in what is now a broad field of research. Furthermore, in asking how the two empresses were able to wield power so effectively, it achieves a deeper understanding of this supposedly traditional and timeworn topic.

The book's clever structure plays a large part in this. Instead of a chronological narrative, Jestice opts to begin by examining the conditions underpinning Adelaide and Theophanu's hugely successful regency on behalf of the young Otto III between 984 and 994. It should be noted that some of Jestice's positions are not firmly grounded in comparative analysis. This is particularly true of her somewhat sweeping assertions that kings and emperors put more trust in their kinswomen than in bishops (p. 3), and that queens were the key advisors to their royal husbands (p. 10). Nonetheless, her basic argument – that the Ottonian rulers assiduously cultivated the status of their wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters and put both material and immaterial resources at their disposal because they could fundamentally count

Trans. by Jozef van der Voort (GHIL)

¹ Standard English names have been used for the historical figures mentioned in this review, but it should be noted that Jestice's study tends to favour the original German names – e.g. 'Adelheid' for 'Adelaide'.

² Claudia Zey (ed.), *Mächtige Frauen? Königinnen und Fürstinnen im europäischen Mittelalter (11.–14. Jahrhundert)* (Ostfildern, 2015).

on their loyalty, given how interwoven these women's lives were with the success or failure of the ruling dynasty—is convincing. So is her judgement that the writings of Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim represent a valuable source on certain aspects of the historical events through which Adelaide lived, on her freedom to make decisions and take action, and on contemporary views of female participation in the exercise of power.

By expanding the scope of her study to include typical features of monarchical rule in the context of an open constitution, as well as by showing an interest in the perception of women in contemporary sources that moves beyond an exclusive focus on statements about Theophanu and Adelaide, Jestic definitively reveals the inadequacy of older, psychologizing assumptions about the two empresses' personal characters as factors in the success of their regency. Instead, Jestic argues, it was the respect, prestige, and trust that these rulers acquired as a result of their wealth, their influence on the king, and their sacred status as anointed queens that laid the foundations for them to take on a leadership role and acquit themselves in it when called upon to do so—for instance, after the premature death of Otto II in 983.

The introduction thus focuses on Otto's demise and the coronation of his 3-year-old son Otto III in Aachen as the immediate cause and starting point of the empresses' regency. The following seven chapters then examine the conditions that enabled Adelaide and Theophanu to fend off Henry the Quarrelsome's designs on the throne in June 984 and to rule successfully until Otto III came of age in 994 and assumed power in his own right.

Chapter two presents a broad overview of contemporary perceptions and assessments of women, painting a nuanced picture. Thietmar of Merseburg's chronicle mentions more than eighty women and often places them at the centre of events—a finding that decisively relativizes the Ottonian empresses' supposed special status as 'strong women'. Likewise, the other sources Jestic examines reveal nothing in the way of general misogyny and instead pass judgement on specific individuals. Physical strength aside, women possessed the same positive attributes as men and thus occupied a recognized and valued position in Ottonian society.

Chapter three shows that their wives being of equal or possibly even higher rank lent the Ottonian emperors additional prestige and was to an extent a crucial factor in their recognition by the nobility. The growing status of their royal consorts – from Hatheburg of Merseburg, Matilda of Ringelheim, and Eadgyth of England to Adelaide and Theophanu – reflects the rise of the Ottonian dynasty through increasingly prestigious marriages. Adelaide's Burgundian relatives and her claim to the throne of the *Regnum Italiae* enhanced Otto I's standing within the Empire. Unlike Adelaide, the Anglo-Saxon Eadgyth and the Byzantine Theophanu did not initially have any kinship networks within their husbands' dominions – but that also meant they had no 'natural' enemies either.

In chapter four, we learn that the wealth these queens brought to their marriages and the rich endowments they obtained through their *Morgengaben* – the marital gifts they received from their husbands – also allowed the two empresses to take a prominent role in the exercise of power during the minority of Otto III. Their resources vastly outstripped not only the wealth of other women in the royal family, but also that of many other magnates. Jestic shows how the empresses were evidently able to exploit their titles independently as well as jointly with their husbands (and later their sons). They also had courts of their own and demonstrated their power by making generous gifts, much as male rulers did. They were thus in a position to act not only as partners to their husbands, but also as imperial regents when required to do so after the premature death of Otto II.

In chapter five, Jestic reveals how the rite of unction during the coronation ceremony, which is documented for Adelaide and Theophanu and which Eadgyth is also likely to have undergone, gave these women an elevated status in Ottonian society that was respected even after the deaths of their husbands. Various references scattered throughout the historical record show the extent to which ritualized honours publicly reinforced the queens' special status, while visual depictions portray them as equal in rank to their husbands.

Chapter six presents piety as 'the one instrument of successful rule where the women had a distinct advantage over the male members of their family' (p. 132). In particular, the numerous Ottonian convents

and the privileges associated with the office of canoness—namely, the rights to own property, keep servants, travel freely, and not take perpetual vows—allowed these women to make piety a facet of their royal status, as in the cases of Matilda of Ringelheim and Cunigunde of Luxembourg. That their rank was acknowledged even inside convent walls was a matter of course; objections to this practice would only be raised in the eleventh century as a result of ecclesiastical and monastic reforms. While Thietmar of Merseburg depicts women in general as a kind of pious moral conscience for their husbands, for royal women it was a binding obligation to ensure the ritual memorialization of their family.

Starting from the observation that the queens played a particularly prominent role in bestowing royal favours, chapter seven asks how they interacted with kinship and patronage networks in order to secure their loyalty. Friendship and kinship often smoothed the path to power—a path that the Ottonian women walked alongside their husbands, but also independently of them. That queens would intervene on behalf of relatives, friends, and supporters appears to have been virtually institutionalized, and as such offered a foundation for them to build their own networks and cultivate loyalty in a mechanism of mutual obligation that was even used by the ‘foreign’ queens Eadgyth and Theophanu.

Chapter eight shows that the queens’ roles on the political stage depended partly on their husbands and partly on their ability to bear children, as they could continue to exert political influence through their offspring even after their husbands had died. The title of *consors imperii*, which became a standard designation in Italy during the late Carolingian period and was introduced to the Ottonian Empire by Adelaide, says as little about the actual involvement of women in the wielding of power as it does about the idea of the consort as a special partner to her husband. Yet a comparison with the male holders of the title reveals that its real substance consisted in the authority it granted to depute for the monarch—for instance by presiding over assemblies (as Adelaide, the Abbess Matilda, and various West Frankish queens are documented to have done), or by commanding troops (as in the case of Cunigunde). It also bestowed the right to conduct peace negotiations and to advise the king.

Chapter nine deals with Henry the Quarrelsome's defeat in the dispute over Otto III's regency in 984, which Jestice rightly sees as the clearest evidence for Theophanu's authority. Theophanu's ability to hold her own here reflects the significance of the factors underpinning the Ottonian queens' power and prestige that Jestice examined in earlier chapters, which proved sufficient to overcome even the reservations people might have held towards this 'Greek' empress. Jestice is equally justified in departing from previous research to emphasize that Adelaide was Theophanu's key ally, and she convincingly relativizes the importance of passages in Odilo of Cluny's *Epitaphium Adelaideae* that have often been cited as evidence of a rivalry between Theophanu and her mother-in-law. Likewise, she argues just as persuasively that the empresses did not leave Pavia only on receiving word of Henry the Quarrelsome's Easter festivities in Quedlinburg, but in fact did so on their own initiative.

In chapter ten we see that Theophanu's and Adelaide's ability to operate successfully as regents – without being described as such in contemporary sources, incidentally – was a logical consequence of their earlier standing during the reigns of Otto I and Otto II. During the peaceful decade of their regency, the two empresses exercised power just as men did: they established and renewed personal ties and friendships, negotiated peace treaties, bestowed favours, and exploited their symbolic capital. They had evidently conducted themselves in much the same way while their husbands were still alive, and in that sense they were fully equipped to assume all duties of government – with the sole difference that they did not lead their armies personally into battle as the emperors did.

Jestice is reluctant to comment on whether this constituted a specifically 'female' style of government (p. 269); however, the empresses' focus on memorialization, their personal learning, and not least the expectations and competencies attached to their roles as spouses and mothers were all distinct features of their rule. In relation to Jestice's frequent references to circumstances in the Carolingian period as a means of circumscribing the Ottonian era, it should be noted that her study overlooks relevant scholarship by Martina Hartmann, while her use of the term 'German reich' for the Ottonian Empire is somewhat confounding, at least to German readers. Likewise, her rather

pessimistic closing assessment of the situation of Ottonian women in the face of the (supposedly) diminishing importance of female rulers in the eleventh century is not necessarily justified, as the prominent position assumed by the Ottonian empresses was in part a product of the exceptional circumstances ensuing from the minority of Otto III, and from his and Henry II's deaths without issue. It was precisely these disjunctures in the line of succession that made the royal women so visible, and also resulted in both Cunigunde and Gisela of Swabia gaining new roles within their existing personal networks. However, these comments should not detract from the importance of this book. Not all of its conclusions are groundbreaking, of course, but its strength lies not in its painstaking examination of minutiae, but in the fact that it brings together many disparate findings about queenship, drawing comparisons with circumstances during the Carolingian period and across Western Europe. In this way, Jestic succeeds in producing not just a penetrating, persuasive, and in certain respects innovative interpretation of the Ottonian crisis of 984, but also an impressive survey of female rule.

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PETER HESS, *Resisting Pluralization and Globalization in German Culture, 1490–1540: Visions of a Nation in Decline* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), ix + 389 pp. ISBN 978 3 110 67462 0. £86.50

In 2018, the German Arabist Thomas Bauer published a book in which he argues that our modern society is increasingly rejecting ambiguity and striving for clear-cut meanings.¹ In his view, the opponents of ambiguity who accept only one truth are advancing in many areas of society – in politics as well as in culture and the economy. Peter Hess picks up this critical diagnosis of our times and uses it to describe German society between 1490 and 1540 in a similar way. Like the present, he argues, these fifty years on the cusp between the Middle Ages and the early modern period in Germany were a time when the processes of pluralization and secularization gave rise to counter-movements seeking clarity, certainty, and purity. Hess understands ‘pluralization’ as the result of Europe’s expansion, bringing an enlargement of the European world-view. And for him ‘secularization’ refers to the loss of significance of church institutions in the lives of most people. As a literary scholar, Hess draws on a wealth of literary texts of very different genres – from poetry and prose narratives to panegyrics, sermons, travel reports, and tracts.

The first part – ‘A World in Decline: Anxieties about Social and Political Order’ – looks at the disintegration of the political, social, and moral order that many writers perceived in the world around them. According to Hess, a conservative view of social and political developments was a general characteristic of literature in this period of transition. Social revolutionary views, by contrast, were hardly represented. Individual chapters in this section explore the concept of *Gute Policey* – ‘a term referring to laws, ordinances, and regulations issued by authorities to establish and enforce social norms, to achieve communal order, and to enhance the common good’ (p. 28) – and case studies of a number of writers, such as Sebastian Brant. The author looks in detail at *Till Eulenspiegel*, a chapbook that was first published

Trans. by Angela Davies (GHIL)

¹ Thomas Bauer, *Die Vereindeutigung der Welt: Über den Verlust an Mehrdeutigkeit und Vielfalt* (Ditzingen, 2018).

in Strasbourg in 1510 or 1511. In this collection of loosely connected adventures, the titular protagonist is unwilling to fit into any social order and repeatedly undermines such order through his shameless pranks. He does this by, among other things, using the German language in a way that excludes any dynamic or interpretive openness and reducing words to their literal meanings, leading to misunderstandings and the breaking of taboos. In later works, Till Eulenspiegel is presented as a harmless rogue, but Hess interprets the Till of the original version as a negative and frightening figure who was intended to make the instability of the social order clear to contemporaries.

Part two—‘Staying Home: Resistance to Expanding Spatial Horizons’—deals with European expansion and reactions to it. In a number of chapters, the expeditions which Europeans undertook to Asia, Africa, and America are described, along with their representations in literature and cartography. Hess’s main interest, however, is reserved for the negative and critical reactions of German writers. Sebastian Brant and his *Das Narrenschiff* (‘Ship of Fools’, first published in 1495) again play a prominent part. Although he made occasional positive statements, Brant was in general critical of the voyages of discovery. ‘I do not hold to be wise at all the one who uses all his sense and industriousness to explore all cities and lands’, he wrote in chapter sixty-six of his moral satire, which became the most successful German-language book published before the Reformation. The chapter was illustrated with the famous depiction of a cosmographer in a fool’s costume measuring the world with a compass. In this second part of his study, Hess also discusses other authors and works such as Hans Sachs and the anonymous *Fortunatus* in order to exemplify his main argument: ‘Travel, discovery, and generally the expansion of the spatial realm represented a destabilization and disruption of the social, political, and moral order’ (p. 191).

Finally, the third part—‘Globalization and the Nationalistic Backlash in Germany’—looks at the reactions of writers to the processes of economic entanglement in the late medieval and the early modern world. Hess begins this section by reflecting on the concept of ‘globalization’ and asks whether it adequately reflects the contemporary processes of integration. His main interest, however, is to make clear the various authors’ hostility towards all forms of global

networking and their cultural impact on Germany. A central theme in this is the widespread antipathy towards international trade and merchants, who were accused of charging excessively high interest rates, exercising a monopoly, profiteering, speculating, and trading with fake goods. These accusations had a long tradition reaching back into the Middle Ages, and around 1500, during the period under investigation, they reinforced a nationalistic and xenophobic backlash against foreign influence. In the eyes of the chroniclers, writers, and preachers of the time, the result was to weaken both Germany, which lost its wealth, and its inhabitants, who were turned into immoral and weakly creatures by the luxurious temptations of foreign trade. Instead of encouraging the country to open up economically and culturally, many writers promoted a backward-looking nostalgic project—one that envisaged a strong, independent German nation which drew on its own traditions of the past.

Hess has written a compact and stimulating book with a clear argument, supported by a colourful corpus of writers and works. The book is especially interesting because it takes part in a critical debate on globalization. In recent decades, historiography has frequently presented the increasing interconnection of the world as something positive and liberating, at least as far as Europe and Europeans are concerned. In recent years, however, this liberal and multicultural interpretation of globalization has increasingly been called into question by nationalist and populist reactions to the global erosion of boundaries. In the age of globalization, society is no longer politically divided between left and right. As Charles Maier established as early as 1997, today's most important political division is 'between two de facto coalitions: call them the party of globalization and the party of territoriality'.² This is why books like that written by Hess are important—to show the tensions between opening up and closing down in the past. The economic interconnection of the world has always involved winners and losers.

Whether the period investigated here—from 1490 to 1540—is different from others in this respect, and whether the book's argument

² Charles S. Maier, 'The New Political Divide', *Project Syndicate* (3 July 1997), online at [<https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/the-new-political-divide>], accessed 15 July 2021.

will persuade every reader, are different matters. The reception of Thomas Bauer's work cited above has also been ambivalent. Many reviewers found his argument about the increasing rejection of ambiguities in the present stimulating, but considered its empirical demonstration lacking. I had a similar experience when reading the book under review here. Hess delivers an important and conceptually stimulating contribution to the debate on (anti-)globalization and its perception in the premodern past. But I doubt whether, during the fifty years from 1490 to 1540, the conservative voices alone set the tone in the tense relationship between globalists and regionalists in Germany. This does not, however, detract from the significance of this book for our common reflections on the interlinking of the world – including its economic, political, ecological, and cultural consequences.

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LEIGH T. I. PENMAN, *The Lost History of Cosmopolitanism: The Early Modern Origins of the Intellectual Ideal* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 216 pp. ISBN 978 1 350 15696 8. £85.00

Certain Enlightened philosophers are usually credited with the invention of the idea or ideal of cosmopolitanism. The concept is seen as based essentially on natural equality, morality, freedom, and universal rationality, because these not only enabled global communication with the aim of making progress in civilization, but also sought to create appropriate political conditions, or even enforced their adoption. Approaches predating the Enlightenment, however, are hardly noticed, or are dismissed as insignificant precursors. This volume by Leigh Penman, an Australian scholar of early modern religious and intellectual history, by contrast, combines a more open definition of the term 'cosmopolitanism' with a broader history of the idea. First, he suggests, we should not conceive of it as a central category that has either attracted to itself all the concepts and insights circulating around it, or even absorbed them. Instead, we should speak of a broad 'cosmopolitan vocabulary' (p. 3 *passim*). Second, this group of ideas, he claims, did not initially serve to overcome difference or diversity, but on the contrary helped them to delineate and establish themselves. Third, he goes on, against this background the familiar modern, Enlightened conceptualization of 'cosmopolitanism' can be understood more historically and distinctly as something rather abstract, but also intentionally secular.

After positioning his approach mainly within the Anglo-American academic debate, which I will not go into further here, Penman embarks on a comparative assessment of the writers who first deployed – or redeployed (see Penman's brief references to various precursors from Antiquity) – cosmopolitan concepts and arguments in the early modern period – namely, Guillaume Postel (*De la République des Turcs*, 1560) and John Dee (*Monas hieroglyphica*, 1564, among other works). Penman comes to the conclusion that both drew on a cosmopolitan vocabulary with teleological, even apocalyptic overtones in order 'to designate their self-understanding as prophets, linking it to ideas of

Trans. by Angela Davies (GHIL)

heavenly citizenship and the maligned *peregrinus*, to highlight their own special status', as well as to exert their respective versions of political influence—French Catholic or English Reformed—'through the postulation of visions of universal Christian empire' (p. 35). At the end of the chapter we find a brief mention that these two pioneers were followed by other, even more humanistic authors.

The account that follows draws primarily on more practical discourses related to the geographical, cartographic, and cosmographic exploration of the world in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Penman places them firmly into the context of the Christian, political cosmopolitanisms elaborated in the preceding chapter. It is worth noting the significance that Penman ascribes to the admixture of 'metaphors of exile, strangerhood and pilgrimage in devotional works, and even in books issued in the utopian genre' (p. 62). Penman sees the connections and perspectival reversals of the previously elaborated approaches as having taken place (sometimes in parallel, sometimes consecutively) within the horizons of confessionalization and fundamentally confessionalized politics—a process he calls 'cosmopolitan inversion' (pp. 65–85). We see first Protestant, then also Rosicrucian and common Christian ideals not of secular citizens of the world, but of 'citizens of heaven (*Himmelsbürger*)' (p. 83), in many cases accelerated by experiences of confessional war.

In the following period, this particular combination of a worldly, middle-class and a Christian perspective acquired protean and fluid, but always fragmentary contents. All that was left for well-known Enlightened philosophers to do was to fit all these tesserae together into their own, necessarily more abstract, systems. This came at the cost of more explicitly and specifically religious elements, and was more or less clearly modelled on a (worldly) urban pattern. Thus the bourgeois in the modern sense was achieved. Yet even in this phase, a uniform understanding of the concept of cosmopolitanism did not emerge, nor was it seen in a completely positive light. Rather, we must note that the philosophers tried 'to appropriate the word cosmopolite as a synonym for a secular "philosopher"' (p. 128)—that is, to monopolize the term for themselves in an intellectual and moral sense. The epilogue then merely hints at the fact that such attempts to appropriate and instrumentalize a category that is not strictly defined, but remains

relatively open, still have a part to play in the current debate about regionalism, nationalism, and post-nationalism.

Penman's carefully crafted study offers important insights into the early history of a guiding concept that is highly controversial in the modern and postmodern eras. It puts the concept's religious (and pseudo-religious) elements and implications back into the spotlight, while making the deeply European, Western character of the dominant understanding of the concept clear without embarking on a post-colonial debate, let alone paying homage to a naive post-colonialism. Instead, it conveys critical knowledge in the tried and tested classical way by soberly attempting to capture and illuminate its subject's historical depth and range.

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CHRISTOPH KETTERER, *To Meddle with Matters of State: Political Sermons in England, c.1660–c.1700*, The Early Modern World: Texts and Studies, 2 (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2020), 400 pp. ISBN 978 3 847 11077 4. €55.00

We are living in a golden age of sermon studies. Since the late 1980s, Lori Anne Ferrell, Peter McCullough, Mary Morrissey, Arnold Hunt, and many other scholars have added enormously to our understanding of the variety, subtlety, and prominence of sermons in early modern England. What used to be studied primarily as a branch of English literature concerned with issues of prose style has blossomed into a highly diverse field. We are much more sensitive than we were to issues of context, tropes, emotional overtones, divergences between spoken and printed sermons, and encoded political messages and counsel. Historians of print have noted how central sermons were to the economy of the early modern publishing world. Significant studies have been devoted to sermons preached to mark particular events, dates in the liturgical calendar, and significant aspects of socio-political life—whether ‘Black Bartholomew’s Day’ (1662), the anniversary of the regicide, or sermons at court, Paul’s Cross, or the assizes. Much has been learned since what in retrospect we can see was a major turning point: the publication in 2000 of Ferrell and McCullough’s edited collection *The English Sermon Revised*. Interested students now benefit from an Oxford Handbook devoted to the early modern sermon. Specialist scholars can rummage in major editions of the sermons of Lancelot Andrewes and John Donne. Nevertheless, some eras have fared better than others when it comes to dedicated studies. The Jacobethan years have tended to predominate; the later Stuart period—in keeping with its wider relative neglect—has received much less attention, at least until the Williamite invasion and the 1690s, when Tony Claydon and others have illuminated the ‘godly revolution’ and the reformation of manners that was so much invoked thereafter. Christoph Ketterer’s volume should therefore receive a warm welcome, adding, as it does, significant heft to the relatively limited prior coverage of the reigns of Charles II and James II.

To Meddle with Matters of State is a very detailed and extensive work, as might be expected from a revised doctoral thesis. The first

130 pages are taken up with problem statements, ‘conceptual approaches’, and various aspects of ‘experiencing sermons’ across the period. For newcomers to the burgeoning field of sermon studies, Ketterer’s account valuably summarizes and synthesizes a great deal of scholarship, very clearly delineating the current state of play. Thereafter, the discussion is organized into two chapters covering the early and later parts of Charles II’s reign, and then a long chapter on the highly contested world of James II’s regime. Although the book’s title suggests an end point of *c.*1700, in reality the Revolution of 1688/9 marks the terminus for discussion. A fifty-page bibliography testifies to Ketterer’s diligence – although this may be supplemented with the excellent developing online resource *Gateway to Early Modern Manuscript Sermons (GEMMS)*.¹

Ketterer positions himself within the mainstream of current studies. He approaches sermons ‘as sources *sui generis* requiring due attention not only to the preacher’s words but also to the material surroundings, the reactions of audiences, and in general those aspects that may be called the “performative” dimension of sermons’ (p. 14). He acknowledges that ‘political sermon’ is a partly tautological phrase, bearing in mind the close links between the temporal and the spiritual in an early modern ‘confessional state’. And he is at pains for his particular period to stress the ‘multiconfessional environment’ (p. 26) within which preachers’ political contributions need to be assessed. Slightly more problematic are his choices of source base. Ketterer acknowledges that most of the sermons he uses are printed ones and that this could cause some methodological problems, but is rather blithe about their extent. In some ways more seriously, he also chooses to pursue a relatively narrow sense of which sermons matter for his politically focused study: ‘The royal court with the Chapel Royal, the Houses of Parliament, and the capital constituted the national nexus of political power’ (p. 43). An intensely London-centric account ensues. This is not to deny the merits of what *is* covered; it is particularly helpful to have serious space devoted to Catholic court preaching.

The chronological chapters afford Ketterer the opportunity to undertake sequences of close readings of particular sermons, linked

¹ At [<https://gemmsorig.usask.ca/>], accessed 30 June 2021.

by their preoccupation with particular issues and events. As he notes, the early Carolean regime was particularly exercised by the need to try to control prominent pulpits due to the general perception that Puritans had successfully used them to subvert order in the run-up to the civil wars. *Directions concerning Preachers* were duly issued in 1662, ordering '[t]hat no Preachers in their Sermons presume to meddle with matters of State, to mould new Governments, or take upon them to declare, limit or bound out the Power and Authority of Sovereign Princes, or to state and determine the differences between Princes and the People' (p. 134). This was, of course, easier to order than actually to achieve, and delightful ironies emerged. Ketterer argues that Bishop Gilbert Sheldon successfully organized a metropolitan preaching campaign to thwart Charles II's plans for religious indulgence. The pulpits thus continued to undermine the Supreme Governor of the Church, albeit in novel ways. Many preachers are shown offering messages that implicitly hedged in the royal supremacy, delimiting the king's authority as he was neither ordained nor consecrated. As Ketterer notes, 'The royal supremacy, at times, could almost feel conditional on it being used only as Anglicans deemed fit' (p. 199). He argues for an increasing 'moral turn' in court sermons during the 1670s, partly as a matter of ecclesiological positioning: 'In highlighting the importance of personal reformation and piety, the Church of England was attempting to portray itself as the middle ground between both Dissent and Roman Catholicism' (p. 218). Little of this will be surprising to Restoration specialists, but there is a good deal of detailed, fine-filigree material on the variety and competing nature of sermons preached and agendas outlined from the pulpit in the Chapel Royal. Substantial discussion is also devoted to particular types of sermon, particularly those preached on the anniversaries of the regicide (adding to Andrew Lacey's work) and the Gunpowder Plot.

The most interesting part of the book, though, is the discussion of preaching at the court of James II. Partly this is a matter of bulk: a previously under-discussed topic receives very full treatment (around eighty-five pages). This provides the necessary space to tease out numerous themes and influences. Ketterer makes appropriate use of Simon Thurley's work on the architecture and design of spaces

at court to emphasize James's withdrawal from the previous Chapel Royal into a lavish new Catholic equivalent in Whitehall. Here Catholic preachers 'participated in the construction of a vision of James's kingship' (p. 258). This leant heavily on Salesian ideas, channelled via the Benedictines, with a stress on the need for aristocratic elites to act piously at court. Steven Pincus is taken to task for his 'superficial' (p. 267) readings of Catholic sermons. His eagerness to position sermons within an interpretive framework dominated by Gallicanism is challenged, with Ketterer stressing the 'English' character of much of the preaching. Priests linked James to pre-Reformation models of English kingship (for instance, Edward the Confessor) and to Henry VIII as part of a wider effort to make England a *Roman Catholic* elect nation. From this point of view, Catholic preachers are shown turning the tables on their confessional opponents and drawing connections between the established Church of England and Pharisees—a self-interested, privileged caste lacking in true zeal. Ketterer also shows the extent to which Anglican preachers pushed back against such arguments. A renewed emphasis on the need to offer good counsel to the monarch allowed preachers in effect to limit a Catholic ruler's ability to provide relief for his co-religionists. Preachers rejected notions of the Church of England being an Erastian edifice, stressing instead that 'The heart and soul of the Church of England was . . . the community of the Anglican bishops' (p. 336).

After such detailed coverage of particular periods, points, and preachers, the conclusion to the book feels relatively perfunctory. More could have been done to live up to the purported date span of the volume and to link pre- and post-Glorious Revolution events and trends. Partly one suspects that this became a matter of available space: Ketterer's close readings of large numbers of sermons inevitably consume a lot of words. Such readings are often acute and valuable, but cumulatively there is a danger of repetition and of straining readers' patience (much like overlong sermons at court). The English version of the main text could have been much more rigorously proofread, with far too many strange sentence constructions surviving into print and typographical errors slipping through the net: 'speficially'; 'imponderabilia'; 'publically'; 'nonconformsadditional'; 'transsubstation'; 'reign in'; or 'in this vain', to name but a few. Anthony

Wood is consistently referred to as Abraham, whilst Vavasor Powell is twice called Valvasor. More importantly, it is a shame that the index to the book is so feeble; just four short columns for a text of this length seriously undermines its value for scholars looking to follow up on particular people or issues. Nevertheless, it is right to end on a positive note when reviewing a substantial and well-researched first book. Christoph Ketterer has produced a significant scholarly resource, and one that enriches our ever-growing sense of 'the politics of religion' in Restoration England.

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JÜRGEN OVERHOFF, *Johann Bernhard Basedow (1724–1790): Aufklärer, Pädagoge, Menschenfreund. Eine Biografie*, Hamburgische Lebensbilder, 25 (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2020), 200 pp. ISBN 978 3 835 33619 3. €16.00

ROBERT B. LOUDEN, *Johann Bernhard Basedow and the Transformation of Modern Education: Educational Reform in the German Enlightenment* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 240 pp. ISBN 978 1 350 16366 9. £76.50

The year 2020 saw the publication of two monographs about the life and work of one of the most important and influential pedagogues and educational writers of the Enlightenment, Johann Bernhard Basedow (1724–90). The studies by Jürgen Overhoff and Robert E. Louden deal competently with Basedow's biography and fill gaps in our knowledge of his oeuvre. Overhoff presents the first biography in German for almost a hundred years, while Louden's work is the first ever English monograph and the product of thirty years studying the educational career and writings of Basedow, who came to Louden's attention when he began translating Kant's *Essays Regarding the Philanthropinum* (Louden, p. 2). Hence the book has a noticeable focus on Kant, providing an interesting perspective that excellently complements Overhoff's study. Not only is Louden's the first English monograph on Basedow, but none of his books have been translated into English (Louden, p. 1). As Overhoff emphasizes, Basedow – a native of Hamburg – was strongly influenced by British educational writers and philosophers, which gives particular value to Louden's work. John Locke in particular was central (Overhoff, pp. 62–6; Louden pp. 58–9). Locke's modern vision of joyful learning ('fröhlicher Unterricht', Overhoff, p. 63; Louden p. 58) left a lasting impression on the young Basedow, and his educational pamphlet *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693; translated as *Herrn Johann Lockes Unterricht von der Erziehung der Kinder*, 1708) was especially important reading for him. Later on, as headmaster of the Philanthropinum in Dessau, Basedow enthusiastically followed the adoption of the US Declaration of Independence, which he praised as exemplary in his magnum opus *Elementarwerk* (Overhoff, p. 135). Overhoff's carefully researched study, which is based on well selected source material, presents on

its final pages an American hymn book compiled by Basedow towards the end of his life. It was put together at the request of German Americans from Philadelphia, who maintained a frequent correspondence with Basedow. *Einer Philadelphischen Gesellschaft Gesangbuch für Christen und philosophische Christengenossen* was published in 1784. With this work, Basedow aimed, like many of his contemporaries, to encourage American non-denominational Christians to disassociate themselves from the clergy which was still dominant in Europe (Overhoff, p. 141).

But this is only one of the many topics discussed by Overhoff. Over the course of almost 200 pages he presents an entertaining and well informed profile of the man, the pedagogue, the philosopher, and the scholar Basedow, situating him amid the developments, debates, and discourses of his time—both pedagogical and otherwise—and elaborating on his actually quite modern way of thinking. Overhoff is not just an expert on the eighteenth century, but also a brilliant narrator. His writing is colourful, knowledgeable, and exciting. With its combination of in-depth background knowledge and unobtrusively deployed anecdotes, it is hard to put this book down and not read it in one go. One wonderful and illustrative anecdote describes how, during a cure in Bad Ems where he met Goethe and Lavater, the 50-year-old Basedow decided to learn to swim—initially with the help of an English cork jacket, though he was soon able to dispense with it (Overhoff, p. 22). This shows Basedow's life-long curiosity and eagerness to learn, which saved him from despair after disappointments and setbacks. There were quite a few of these in Basedow's life, which was lived in many locations. As a mobile scholar and intellectual, he appears quite modern. After a childhood in Hamburg shaped by the unhappy marriage of his parents (Louden, p. 33) and schooldays spent at the Johanneum, the city's Latin school, the gifted and ambitious Basedow studied theology and philosophy at the renowned Leipzig University. With its trade fair, Leipzig was known as the marketplace of Europe. In this city on the Pleiße river he made the acquaintance of Christian Fürchtegott Gellert und Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, two of the leading literary figures in German cultural life, and attended Christian August Crusius's lectures on logic and epistemology. Both Overhoff and Louden describe these acquaintances and experiences

as formative for Basedow's intellectual outlook (Overhoff, pp. 48–50; Loudon, pp. 45–53).

Theology, ethics, and pedagogy formed the basis of Basedow's non-denominational views on religious tolerance and philanthropy (Overhoff, pp. 43–58; Loudon pp. 46–52). As Loudon aptly writes, 'Basedow's future path begins to look clearer: he wants to become a teacher, but a teacher who also uses "the best possible knowledge of the sciences belonging to morals and theology"' (Loudon, p. 52). Basedow soon had the opportunity to explore this approach in practice as private tutor to Josias von Qualen in Borghorst near Kiel. Overhoff and Loudon show that 'Basedow's experience as a private tutor at the von Qualen family home was extremely enjoyable as well as fruitful' (Loudon, p. 53), and that at this time 'Basedow's pedagogy involves an ingenious mix of writing and foreign-language skill development with practical life skills training' (Loudon, p. 59). Both authors also impressively outline how this fresh and modern approach fitted in with novel educational concepts of the period, such as the reforms initiated by Frederick V of Denmark, a patron of the arts and the sciences. Among the scholars and writers supported by the king was the poet Klopstock, who was in regular contact with Basedow after the latter's appointment as professor at the Sorø Academy. Here, Basedow refined his advocacy for religious tolerance and modernized school education, which led to his first major publication *Practische Philosophie* (1758). Many further writings followed from the pen of this extraordinarily industrious author. Loudon analyses Basedow's publications in great detail, often referring to Overhoff's earlier studies. Accordingly, two chapters in Loudon's monograph are named after the two most influential books by Basedow: *Methodenbuch* (1770) and *Elementarwerk* (1774). The former text was the basis for the latter, in which Basedow expressed his thoughts with a combination of text and images. The work consists of one volume with ninety-six illustrations by the famous engraver Daniel Chodowiecki and two extensive volumes of commentaries. Topics discussed include basic questions of education and chapters on the human being, logic, religion and ethics, professions and social classes, human history, and natural history.

Loudon aims to give a voice to Basedow as an 'original and independent thinker' (Loudon, p. 2) and succeeds in this, quoting many

times from Basedow's notes and treatises. The main achievement of Loudén's book is to translate the sources, making Basedow's views accessible to an English-speaking readership. This adds an essential chapter to the history of Anglo-American pedagogy, in which Basedow has hitherto barely featured.

Reading the two books, an image emerges of a fascinating personality whose ideas anticipate modernity. One also realizes why Basedow got into more and more trouble during his career—first in Sorø and also later in Altona, where he taught at the Gymnasium Christianeum. There he was exposed to accusations and attacks by the Lutheran orthodox clergy in the wake of a review by Lessing in the *Literaturbriefe*. Lessing had revealed that Basedow's educational method was not compatible with orthodox Lutheranism, with disastrous consequences for Basedow, who subsequently left Altona (Overhoff, pp. 92–109; Loudén, pp. 79–94).

Basedow found respite when he was offered a position in the principality of Anhalt-Dessau, where he founded the Philanthropinum, a model school of the Enlightenment. Both authors discuss this phase in detail, drawing the reader's attention once more to the original and innovative approach of Basedow's pedagogy. After leaving Dessau, Basedow settled in Magdeburg as a teacher at a school for young girls. During this last decade of his life he remained a prolific author, writing a further twenty-two books (Loudén, pp. 167–74).

However, Basedow was not an uncontroversial figure in Enlightenment circles, and this aspect of his career could have been given more emphasis in both monographs. Cases in point include his dispute over miracles with Lavater, or remarks by Johann Georg Sulzer—like Basedow a teacher, practical reformer, and author of educational treatises—who called Basedow a 'charlatan' in letters to Johann Jakob Bodmer. It would also be interesting to see how colleagues and protégés of Basedow like Karl Friedrich Bahrdt continued his ideas in their own projects, albeit not always successfully. But these are follow-up discussions for which both books provide a very good basis.

Overhoff's and Loudén's studies are well illustrated and each feature Basedow's grave in Magdeburg as the last figure. The gravestone was reconstructed in 2015 and has been accessible to the public ever since (Overhoff, pp. 156–7; Loudén, p. 176). As is evident from both

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books, Basedow's work merits a permanent place in current debates on education. Both titles are strongly recommended. They are not just a pleasure to read, but undoubtedly offer plenty of inspiration for future research.

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TOBIAS DELFS, *Die Dänisch-Englisch-Hallesche Indienmission des späten 18. Jahrhunderts: Alltag, Lebenswelt und Devianz, Beiträge zur Europäischen Überseegeschichte*, 112 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2020), 286 pp. ISBN 978 3 515 12867 4. €54.00

Recent years have seen an increased interest in the history of Protestantism in early modern South-East Asia and the involvement of Germans in European colonialism in the Indian Ocean world. Tobias Delfs contributes to this growing body of scholarship with a social study of the Danish-English-Halle Mission (DEHM) and the Moravian Church (*Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine*) in the Bay of Bengal in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Rather than looking at the religious activities of the missions, he lays bare their social environments in Europe and in India and illuminates the local challenges that led to behaviour that deviated from the expectations of the missionary headquarters in Europe.

The book under review is a slightly revised version of Delfs's doctoral dissertation completed at the University of Zurich in 2017. Moving away from older scholarship praising the work of the DEHM missionaries, Delfs's monograph focuses on the problems the missionaries faced in India, which included disease, mental health challenges, financial strains, and alcoholism. The book argues that the missionaries developed individual solutions to these challenges that were tailored to the missionary environment, and which differed from the values and morals of the mission headquarters in Europe. As a result, the missionaries maintained different perceptions from their superiors in Europe regarding what constituted appropriate behaviour. Besides the monitoring from Halle, the missionaries also assessed each other's behaviour, as well as that of other European residents and the indigenous population. In judging the actions of others, the missionaries initially held onto the Pietist and class norms they knew from Europe, but they had to adapt and reinvent these norms to adequately address the specific situation of their colonial milieu.

Delfs concentrates on the period from 1777, when responsibility for the Danish colonies was transferred from the Danish East India Company to the Danish state, to 1813, when British missionary societies became active in India. He draws upon unpublished letters from

the archives of the Francke Foundations and the Moravian Church, reports on the Halle mission from Copenhagen, the better known published *Hallesche Berichte*, and contemporary eighteenth- and nineteenth-century accounts. The result is a well researched work tailored to multiple audiences. The book's primary focus is on deviant behaviour (in the sociological sense) in the DEHM and the Moravian missionary societies, but it also presents a social history of the wider European presence in India. Delfs looks beyond the boundaries of nations to paint a hybrid landscape of missionaries, indigenous converts, trading companies, and European inhabitants.

The book first outlines the European background of the missionaries, their training and ordination, and the Francke Foundations' expectations of their conduct while on mission. The next chapter is devoted to the colonial environment in India and the role of the missionaries' families. Delfs then delves deeper into individual experiences of health, death, and deviant behaviour among the missionaries. Particularly illuminating are his speculations on the possible suicides of the DEHM minister Lambert Christian Früchtenicht (pp. 176–95) and the Herrnhut missionary Christian Renatus Beck (pp. 195–208). The final chapter assesses the judicial systems in the missionary environment, as well as the missionaries' business activities and the behaviour of the missionized population.

The study encompasses deviance from religious convention as well as from organizational, legal, and class norms. The most common form of deviant behaviour identified by Delfs is found in the economic activities of the missionaries. Rising living costs in particular forced some ministers to take on sidelines to keep themselves and the mission financially secure. While ministers who produced and sold alcohol clearly violated Pietist norms, it was less obvious whether activities such as collecting flora and fauna constituted acceptable behaviour. Missionaries who traded in natural objects filled the *Hallesche Berichte* with their botanical and zoological observations to attract readers and encourage donations. Collecting curiosities could thus be beneficial for the mission, but also sapped the missionaries' capacity for carrying out their religious work and made them susceptible to accusations of greed and financial gain (pp. 228–30). While the Francke Foundations endeavoured to filter out economically

motivated applicants, Delfs demonstrates that the ministers were not driven by religious zeal alone, but frequently had commercial motives for joining the missions. Clergymen who could not secure a post in Europe hoped that a short but lucrative stint in India would pave the way for a comfortable life upon their return. In reality, missionary life proved a financial struggle rather than an economic opportunity, which encouraged the clergymen to depart from the code of conduct imposed by the missionary organization.

One of the major insights is that nearly all missionaries in the DEHM and the Moravian Church were criticized for their economic activities to a greater or lesser degree. The missionary headquarters in Europe and other ministers on site usually tolerated financial activities as long as they lay within the bounds of accountability and propriety, as with the business ventures of Johann Philipp Fabricius, which helped to keep the mission financially afloat. Fabricius only received harsh criticism when he started to mismanage his finances and fell into debt (p. 256). Another common form of deviance related to drunkenness. While Pietists in Europe generally disapproved of alcohol, moderate consumption was believed to contribute to the general health of Europeans living in South Asia, especially when drinking water was unsafe. A few ministers, as well as several Indian employees of the DEHM, however, became alcoholics in India and the headquarters of both the DEHM and the Moravian mission had to issue instructions against the consumption of large quantities of spirits.

However, Delfs's study is more than a history of missionary deviance and provides valuable insights into the ministers' social environment, including their families, local indigenous groups, and other European inhabitants. The missionaries interacted with the Danish, English, and Dutch colonial administrations in their vicinity, and these contacts varied from co-operation to competition. The missionaries of the DEHM modelled their contact with other European inhabitants along the class lines they were accustomed to in Europe, but at times abandoned the boundaries of class, especially when associating with other Germans, to whom they showed a preference (pp. 104-5). With few exceptions, the missionaries married women of European descent, whether born in India or in Europe. They did not choose Indian or mixed European-Indian spouses, unlike the Europeans among whom

they lived. Delfs's analysis of the way missionaries shaped their social environment provides useful comparative examples for the history of family and the European presence in colonial India.

There are a few elements that could have been optimized. The introduction, conclusion, and blurb suggest that the book focuses on deviant behaviour within the DEHM, but the author also explores themes such as disease, mortality, and the colonial justice systems at length without adequately clarifying their connection to deviance. Did the higher chance of death in colonial society, for instance, lead to an erosion of morals in the mission? To what extent did nonconformist behaviour in the missions become known among the general public in Europe when problems were addressed locally, and did this degeneration contribute to the dwindling number of European benefactors to the missions? These connections could have been made more explicit.

One of the book's strengths is that it includes the lesser-studied Moravian mission in Bengal and draws on a range of previously unknown manuscript sources. Unfortunately the Moravians do not feature as prominently in the book as their Hallensian counterparts, as Delfs argues that the DEHM was more influential in India (p. 12). The Moravians feature neither in the book's title nor in the blurb, which is a missed opportunity to bring these new findings to the attention of ecclesiastical historians.

The book also has more potential to contribute to research on the European presence in India than it currently claims. The author frequently cites further reading in the footnotes, where he could instead have highlighted his book's new insights against this established literature. The central argument could also have been stated more assertively in the main body of the text; instead, the narrative detail is allowed to overtake the argument at times. The book, therefore, would have benefited from a more consistent authoritative tone, which the author convincingly displays in the conclusion. A map of India showing sites of missionary activity and nearby cities would have been useful too.

Overall, this book is a welcome addition for historians of the Danish-English-Halle and Moravian missions and offers a commendable analysis of deviance within the world of these missionary societies. The book is also a valuable comparative work for historians

in adjacent fields, such as Protestant missionary history more generally, and for scholars interested in the social dimensions of European colonialism in India. Historians of the Danish, English, and Dutch East India Companies will benefit from the sections on the interaction between the missionaries and European company personnel. This book therefore offers a starting point for further comparative research on the social history of the DEHM and Moravian missions.

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MARTIN KÄMPCHEN, *Indo-German Exchanges in Education: Rabindranath Tagore Meets Paul and Edith Geheeb* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2020), 216 pp. ISBN 978 0 190 12627 8. £41.99

Indo-German connected histories have received renewed attention in recent years. Martin Kämpchen is one of the pioneering scholars who have long worked to prepare the ground for more recent explorations. His research work, particularly on Rabindranath Tagore, German history, and the German imagination, remains inspiring.¹ Now, years of his research on exchanges of ideas between Indian and German intellectuals—particularly in the realm of education—have been made available to a broader audience through the book under review.

As the title suggests, the book is about exchanges in education between Rabindranath Tagore in Shantiniketan and Paul and Edith Geheeb's schools in Germany and Switzerland. Let us start with the conceptual apparatus before getting into the rich empirical material. Kämpchen uses the category of exchange to map these histories, whereas others have used connected, comparative, and entangled approaches. This emphasis on exchange is an important reminder to think about the politics of entanglement and the question of equivalence. Exchange raises questions of asymmetry, but also provides a basis on which to think about mutual dialogue and interchange. This allows us to move beyond Europe to the colony and to explore the role of not just Germans, but also Indians in the making of these histories.

Education is particularly fertile ground for thinking about Indo-German exchanges under British colonialism. Moving beyond colonial hegemonic discourse on English education, alternative education projects in the wake of the Swadeshi movement in Bengal, the pan-Islamist Khilafat movement, and Gandhian mass nationalism in colonial India offer another counter-narrative in the history of education. The outcome of these exchanges in colonial India was not just an inward turn to religious and nationalist certainties, but also to global cosmopolitanism—particularly a turn to the alternative offered

¹ Martin Kämpchen, *Rabindranath Tagore and Germany: A Documentation* (Kolkata, 1991); id., *Rabindranath Tagore in Germany: Four Responses to a Cultural Icon* (Shimla, 1999); id., *Dialog der Kulturen: Eine interreligiöse Perspektive aus Indien* (Nordhausen, 2008).

by European and especially German educational ideals and practices. This was evident in Tagore's educational projects at Visva-Bharati University, Zakir Husain's leadership of Jamia Milia Islamia, and the Gandhian Wardha Scheme of Basic Education, all of which engaged deeply with debates and educational ideas in Germany. The reimagining of education was crucial not only to anti-colonialist politics, but also to visions of decolonization in colonial and post-colonial India.

Over the course of three dense chapters, Kämpchen's book explores the history of the connections, exchanges, and entanglements between Germany and India. He focuses on the famous German educationists Paul and Edith Geheeb and on Indian educationists, of whom 'spiritual comrade' Rabindranath Tagore was the most famous, but certainly not the only one. In this history, Tagore's Brahmacharya Ashram in Shantiniketan, Visva-Bharati, the Odenwaldschule in Germany, and the later Ecole d'humanité in Switzerland were connected through educational ideals, experiments, and visions of creating a 'school of mankind', which are discussed in chapters one and two. We are also introduced to other understudied but critical intercultural individuals: Aurobindo Bose, who played an essential role in forging these connections; Kaushal Bhargava; Anath Nath Basu; Shrimati Hutheesing; Saumyendranath Tagore; and V. N. Sharma. There were also connections between Germany and the Ramakrishna Mission through Swami Yatiswarananda at Belur Math. Chapter three documents contacts with the Ramakrishna Mission and Aurobindo Bose's influence in Germany and Switzerland, giving insights into themes, concepts, and the 'affinity of their educational visions' (p. 2). The book also highlights links with the New Education Fellowship started by Beatrice Ensor, which brought together German and Indian educationists. Thus Indo-German connections were part of a more significant global history of educational exchanges.

Chapter two provides a comparative analysis of the educational philosophies and ideals of the Oldenwaldschule, the Ecole d'humanité, and Shantiniketan. These institutions shared a vision of the 'school of mankind' based on fostering 'the natural progress of a child' rather than on discipline, control, and domination through the institution of the school (p. 82). An affinity emerged regarding the roles of nature, religion, and the teacher in this shared educational vision; however,

Kämpchen also analyses the differences and limitations, highlighting how the socio-economic dimension shaped educational ideals and practices—most notably through the theme of manual labour, which was sublimated into the discourse of service (*seva*) in the Indian context (p. 105). This offers a starting point for understanding the politics of religion, class, and caste and for discussing the history and the politics of education in India, and is a theme that needs to be explored further.

Kämpchen pays particular attention to the history of not just the leading men, but also the women working behind or alongside them. In chapter three, Edith Geheeb emerges as a remarkable and complex individual living in the shadows and working tirelessly for her husband Paul—though she got her due recognition when another famous woman, Indira Gandhi, identified her talent and put her in charge of educating her young sons Sanjay and Rajiv at the Ecole d'humanité during a visit to Switzerland in 1953. Edith Geheeb and Indira Gandhi formed a friendship based on trust and respect shared through a correspondence that lasted the rest of their lives. The book analyses rare letters and photographs, and offers many great insights into Edith Geheeb's visit to India in 1965–66, as well as her observations of personal and public histories during a turbulent year of Indian history.

The book also traces the origins of these Indo-German connections in colonial and post-colonial contexts, as well as in inter-war and post-Nazi Germany. The histories of colonialism, fascism, and post-colonialism are therefore the key historical movements in which we must situate this book. Kämpchen has carried out meticulous research and translation work, drawing on archives in German, Bengali, and English. This is well represented in the book, with very relevant and useful references provided in the footnotes and appendices. Thus the book provides a useful guide to hitherto underexplored sources, especially personal letters exchanged between the Geheebes and their Indian correspondents. I was particularly struck by the salience of personal letters as public documents which provide an interesting 'affective' archive for writing not just shared histories, but also emotional accounts of private life stages marked by personal trauma, happiness, betrayal, reconciliation, and hope. I believe this sustained focus on genres of 'affective' archives—especially letters—will receive further attention in future works on Indo-German connected histories.

Kämpchen's book is full of research insights that only come with years of experience. However, it would have benefited from engaging with recent historiography beyond the history of education in Bengal in order to situate the topic in a larger global history framework. Even within the Indian context, a comparison with educational experiments at Jamia Milia Islamia would have provided interesting insights. Moreover, the question of Indian agency in this exchange needs further elaboration in terms of exploring the personal papers and writings of Indian educationists. I suppose the problem is a methodological one when studying Indo-German entanglements more broadly. How does one find a balance in evaluating intellectual exchanges? These are seldom equal, so the challenge is to reflect the politics of exchange while understanding how people and ideas come together and metamorphose, despite their differences.

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MONICA BLACK, *A Demon-Haunted Land: Witches, Wonder Doctors, and the Ghosts of the Past in Post-WWII Germany* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2020), 352 pp. ISBN 978 1 250 22567 2. \$29.99

On 27 May 1947, Edna Wearmouth wrote a letter home from the British Zone of occupied Germany. That day, she had visited Hanover for the first time and could not quite believe her eyes at the scale of destruction: 'just the skeletons of fine and beautiful buildings remain and everywhere these huge piles of rubble. Like a great dead city full of ghosts.'¹ This was, of course, a figure of speech, but as Monica Black's latest work *A Demon-Haunted Land* shows, in the aftermath of an annihilationist war, genocide, and racial dictatorship, Germany was indeed haunted by spectres of the recent past. *A Demon-Haunted Land* offers readers an engaging, eye-opening picture of life under the surface of German society in the aftermath of the Second World War. For some, Black argues, only the logic of witchcraft, mystical healing, and apparitions of catastrophe could make sense of the destruction that lay before them.

The study adds to our understanding of how individuals, institutions, and society as a whole came to terms with the events of 1933–1945. The pioneering work of Norbert Frei (amongst others) exposed Konrad Adenauer's *Vergangenheitspolitik*, which saw the Federal Republic seeking amnesties and integration for many of those associated with the Nazi regime.² It has also been convincingly shown how Germany and Europe experienced something of a 'memory freeze' in the immediate post-war period.³ This was, in broad terms, a time when forgetting the atrocities and crimes of the war, skirting the tricky questions of guilt and complicity, allowed fractured communities to function. But the lived experiences of this process, especially amongst non-elites, are much more elusive. For victims, perpetrators, and bystanders alike, traumatic memories could not simply be erased. So how exactly did individuals come to terms with the past in a society focused

¹ Edna Wearmouth to her father, 17 May 1947, Herford, Private Papers of Miss E. Wearmouth, Documents 5413, Imperial War Museum Archive.

² Norbert Frei, *Vergangenheitspolitik: Die Anfänge der Bundesrepublik und die NS-Vergangenheit* (Munich, 1996).

³ István Deák, Jan Gross, and Tony Judt (eds.), *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and its Aftermath* (Princeton, 2000).

so emphatically on the future? In *A Demon-Haunted Land*, Monica Black sheds light on this subject thanks to an unexpected focus of enquiry: paranormal prognostications, witches, and wonder doctors.

In early 1949, as the four-power occupation was coming to an end, 'a wave of urgent, new rumors of cosmic violence and earthly calamity' emerged across western Germany (p. 35). In newspapers and by word of mouth, whispers of catastrophe and existential danger spread through society. It was widely predicted, we learn, that the world would end on 17 March. But while such apocalyptic prognostications never came to pass, March 1949 was indeed consequential, at least in the context of Black's study. In the Westphalian town of Herford, a young boy named Dieter Hülsmann who was bedridden and unable to stand on his own received a visit from a curious stranger. Within an hour, young Dieter had regained feeling in his legs and the next day emerged from his bed, hesitantly taking his first steps in months. Over the following fortnight, his condition improved yet further. The boy's interlocutor was Bruno Gröning, soon to be known as the 'Messiah of Herford' or simply the *Wunderdokter*.

News of the 'Miracle of Herford', and of a mysterious healer, spread far and wide. It was not long before the Hülsmann villa, where Gröning had taken up residence, was inundated with pilgrims from not only the surrounding area, but right across the country. That summer, thousands of cure-seekers came to Herford in the hope that the *Wunderdokter* might relieve them of their own maladies and misfortunes. He would address large crowds from a balcony, handing out pictures of himself and balls of tinfoil containing his hair or nail clippings. These peculiar relics were said to emit mystical curative energies. The story took West Germany by storm and was covered in the national press: in July, *Der Spiegel* even featured Gröning on its front cover, looking ponderously into the distance surrounded by images of grief-stricken Germans.

In the first six chapters we follow the travails of the *Wunderdokter*, from his run-in with the British occupation authorities in Herford and subsequent move to Munich, to the growing assortment of hangers-on that helped craft this spectacle of supernatural healing. Black interrogates the potential root causes of the assorted illnesses and injuries afflicting the many thousands who sought the assistance of the *Wunderdokter*, which in many instances he seems to have cured. These

individual maladies were, Black argues, physical embodiments of psychological trauma linked in some way to anxieties over the past—to guilt and fear of damnation. These conclusions remain somewhat speculative, but the book is more convincing in its account of the Bruno Gröning phenomenon and his emergence as a public figure in West Germany. The mass hysteria that surrounded the *Wunderdoktor* and his mystical healing is interpreted, with some justification, as a symptom of individual and collective attempts to come to terms with the past.

In the next two chapters, *A Demon-Haunted Land* turns its attention to a more general phenomenon: that of ghostly apparitions and witch trials. There was a significant uptick in the number of witchcraft accusations in West Germany during the 1950s, something that—like the superstition surrounding Gröning—Black suggests was tied to re-cremations about the country's past and ultimately an expression of a wounded society. In support of this argument, much of the focus is on Schleswig-Holstein, an area that not only played host to an exceptional number of such witchcraft trials in the post-war period, but had also been a hotbed of Nazism and a site of mass relocation during the refugee crisis of the late 1940s. Through a number of case studies, Black shows how accusations of witchcraft were often a means of settling scores with former political enemies or suspect personages. The result was various defamation and fraud trials brought against supposed *Hexenbanner*, or witch banishers. It is a compelling narrative, given the disruption to the social fabric that had taken place in the previous decade: even as West German society was choosing to look forwards, in small towns and villages across this 'demon-haunted land' memories of interpersonal guilt and victimhood remained.

The penultimate chapter of the book looks at the story of Johann Kruse, who in the 1950s became a prominent campaigner against witchcraft. In chronicling his efforts to counter the tide of accusations and mystical practices, Black sets the groundwork for the final chapter, in which we return to the story of Bruno Gröning and specifically his 1957 trial. The 'Messiah of Herford' was charged with violating a ban on lay healers and with negligent homicide following the death of a 17-year-old suffering from tuberculosis who had dispensed with medical treatment in favour of a miracle cure. Gröning was acquitted of the more serious charge and within two years had himself died of stomach

cancer. It was, according to Black, the end of an era: 'one of the most prominent manifestations of the post-war era – of the agony of defeat, of social turmoil and spiritual sickness – was gone'.

It is a shame that the second part of Black's study is so curtailed; the story of Bruno Gröning takes up almost two-thirds of the book, leaving little room for a detailed interrogation of witchcraft in West Germany. This is on the one hand understandable, given that the story of the *Wunderdoktor* is so unique and, at this point, relatively unexplored in an academic context. It is also likely a reflection of the challenges facing any historian while studying these sorts of phenomena. As Black writes, 'most of the sources we have available to study these matters are limited in various ways. They are often fragmentary, diffuse, and episodic. There is no archive for fears of spiritual punishment the way there are archives of social movements or political parties or government bureaucracies' (p. 149). Yet the asymmetry of *A Demon-Haunted Land's* focus does leave the reader wondering quite how conclusive this study can claim to be.

There is also a more fundamental question raised by Black's attempt to frame the history of lay healing and witchcraft within the context of West Germany's culture of remembrance. This approach is only partly persuasive, as one wonders if these events might also be fruitfully considered in relation to the political and economic power dynamics of post-war German society. For example, were some accusations of witchcraft purely for monetary reward or to settle petty grievances? Did some lay healers, including Gröning himself, hope to establish positions of cultural influence? We may wonder too whether, for some, dedication to the supernatural was less about the past and more a response to the upheaval and alienation that resulted from occupation and the 'economic miracle'. Was it perhaps a sense of active participation in a movement and a share in the power of 'knowing the truth' that made the supernatural so appealing? These questions go largely unanswered in *A Demon-Haunted Land*, which would have benefited from a more thorough interrogation of the individual motivations of those who felt the appeal of mysticism and superstition.

Finally, and not unrelatedly, there is the question of why these events began in 1949 and, notably, not 1945. One wonders whether this was a quirk of historical timing. Or did the military occupation act as

some sort of psychic block on society, leaving no space for witch doctors and lay healers to emerge until later? In Black's reading, the 'Allied-superintended confrontation with mass murder' was a vital constituent in creating the disjunctures of society that preceded the emergence of mysticism (p. 16). Yet the details here remain relatively opaque. If, as Black suggests, the iniquities of denazification were part of why the recent past was so troublesome, it might have been profitable to assess how this varied across the four zones of occupation, given that French, British, American, and Soviet approaches were all so different. One also wonders whether it was more than simply coincidence that the two major sites of interest in Black's study—Herford and Schleswig-Holstein—both came under British control at the end of the war.

But these queries do not entirely erase the book's achievements. There is no doubt that *A Demon-Haunted Land* makes a novel contribution to the historiography of post-war Germany. Its original base of source material, while not without its flaws, reveals new insights about 'coming to terms with the past'. For many thousands of Germans in the late 1940s, it does seem as if mysticism and superstition were indeed an important means of making sense of the trauma of recent events. This conclusion prompts avenues of further study. We must wonder whether similar phenomena have been witnessed in other post-conflict societies—in Germany itself after the First World War perhaps, or in the former Yugoslavia following the conflicts of the 1990s. While societies have their own specific cultures of remembrance, there is cause for speculating whether there may be a more general trend to explore here.

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JOACHIM SCHLÖR, *Escaping Nazi Germany: One Woman's Emigration from Heilbronn to England* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 272 pp. ISBN 978 1 350 15412 4. £85.00

I have to start this review with a disclaimer: I am not in any way related to Alice Schwab, whose story of emigration from Nazi Germany to England is at the centre of the book reviewed here. Nevertheless, the vivid description of her life made her seem familiar to me by the time I had finished reading. The book tells the story of the emigration of Liesel Rosenthal, who later called herself Alice Rosenthal and whose married name was Schwab. Liesel, daughter of a local wine merchant, was born in Heilbronn in 1915 and escaped Nazi Germany for England in 1937. Working first as a domestic servant and then for Marks & Spencer, she managed to bring her younger brother and her parents over to England as well.

Joachim Schlör, Professor of Modern Jewish/Non-Jewish Relations at the University of Southampton, had the good fortune that Julia Neuberger,¹ Alice Schwab's daughter, granted him access to the extensive collection of personal letters she inherited from her mother. Alice collected and kept many of the letters she received during the turbulent times of her emigration (roughly between 1937 and 1947). As is often the case, however, her own letters are missing. It is Schlör's great achievement that he manages to convey an impression of Alice, her personality, and her choices in this difficult period of her life despite the lack of her own voice in the source material. He does this by not glossing over the apparent gaps and openly acknowledging the contradictions between different documents. He complements the autobiographical sources with archival material, further biographical material, and interviews with Alice's friends and acquaintances. This results in a tone that is sometimes very personal, which might surprise readers expecting a purely academic book. But he never drifts off into speculation or pathos, and the insight into the author's reasoning

¹ Julia Neuberger, DBE, is an influential public figure in the UK. A member of the House of Lords, she was Britain's second female rabbi and the first to lead her own congregation. She has held many positions in the public sector, especially the National Health Service, and in numerous voluntary organizations.

allows the reader to develop a close but deeply reflective connection with the main protagonists.

In recent years, a few comparable autobiographical studies have been published that are similarly written in a style appealing to both an academic and a wider, interested audience.² As Lars Fischer has already pointed out in his review of the German edition of this book, one might ask: why another one?³ An answer might be that this is a story of an emigrant's fate that is typical, yet also very individual. Moreover, there are a number of reasons that make *Escaping Nazi Germany* absolutely worthwhile reading.

The first of these is the personality of Liesel Rosenthal/Alice Schwab herself. Detailed biographical insights into the life of an 'ordinary' woman living outside the norms of what was traditionally expected of a Jewish middle-class girl are rare. Alice's story is one of emancipation as much as of emigration. Trained as a bookseller, she was a free-spirited and liberated woman for her time, and maintained contact with a wide group of intellectual friends in Germany, Britain, and worldwide via letters. The extent of her network is best seen in the extensive index of names provided at the end of the book. Especially interesting is her love life. Relationships with various partners – some married – before her happy marriage to Walter Schwab repeatedly led to conflicts with her parents, especially her mother. Her parents wanted her to marry, and their hopes for new prospects of emigration through marriage took her as far as India, where she was to marry a German-Jewish entrepreneur. Much to her parents' anger and dismay, she rejected this type of quasi-arranged marriage.

² Working on Jewish emigration to South Africa, I can recommend two books that take a similar approach. Both also analyse individual collections of letters and share a more personal tone. See Steven Robins, *Letters of Stone: From Nazi Germany to South Africa* (Cape Town, 2016) and Shirli Gilbert, *From Things Lost: Forgotten Letters and the Legacy of the Holocaust* (Detroit, 2017). Similar, but more on the popular history spectrum and focusing on letters and the theft of intellectual property by the Nazi regime, is Karina Urbach, *Das Buch Alice: Wie die Nazis das Kochbuch meiner Großmutter raubten* (Berlin, 2020).

³ Review by Lars Fischer of Joachim Schlör, 'Liesel, it's time for you to leave.' *Von Heilbronn nach England: Die Flucht der Familie Rosenthal vor der nationalsozialistischen Verfolgung* (Heilbronn, 2015), in *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 68/2 (2017), 436–8, at 436.

In the long run it was precisely her unconventional and wide group of friends and contacts – above all with the Jewish Refugees Committee in Woburn House, London, where her future mother-in-law Anna Schwab held an important position – that enabled her to bring her brother and her parents to England, thus saving them from persecution in Nazi Germany.

The conflicts with her parents are the second thing that sets Schlör's book apart from others. At one point he even wonders why Alice kept their letters to her, some of which are so full of criticism and reproach that they make the reader feel uncomfortable even many years later. Schlör notes that there has been increasing interest in conflicts and estrangements in family and friendship circles in migration studies (pp. 42 ff.). These were as much part of the experience of emigration as more personal struggles with loss, identity, and integration. In my own research on emigration from Nazi Germany to South Africa I have come across many newspaper articles addressing problems and conflicts between older and younger generations of emigrants. However, the personal aspect and the emotions coming to the fore in the letters from Alice's parents add yet another layer, and provide a painfully clear illustration of the emotional experience of emigration.

In the later chapters dealing with the time after the Second World War the focus of the book moves away from the network of letters and friends around Liesel Rosenthal/Alice Schwab and her family. The new centre of the narrative is a place: the city of Heilbronn, where both Alice Schwab and Joachim Schlör were born. This book is the translation of an earlier German version that was published in co-operation with the Heilbronn City Archive.⁴ Schlör traces the relationship between 'Heilbronn timers' and the city's former citizens who were forcefully expelled by the Nazis and investigates their perceptions of each other. How did the refugees see their former hometown and its inhabitants, and what kind of relationship was the municipality aiming for? The very diverse and deeply moving personal statements dive deep into questions of belonging, *Heimat*/home, and remembrance. Thanks to various dedicated individuals both within the administration and among the city's population, Heilbronn confronted its past earlier

⁴ Ibid.

than other German cities and managed to establish close contacts with refugees around the globe. For example, Alice's parents, Ludwig and Hermine Rosenthal, corresponded with Heilbronn's mayor from as early as 1950. The municipality's efforts to reach out to emigrants culminated in a series of group visits by former 'Heilbronnians' in the 1980s – certainly not organized with entirely altruistic motives. However, the divisions created by having to leave one's home could never fully be closed, as demonstrated by various ambiguous and deeply moving statements by people who took part in these visits, and by Alice Schwab's reluctance to return to her birthplace. Schlör's insights into this process of gradual, cautious, and never complete rapprochement are highly interesting. These developments do not yet form part of the public culture of remembrance, at least not in Germany – but they should. Schlör documents both the negative aspects of the process (the bureaucracy, uncooperativeness, and unwillingness that left the Rosenthal family without fair restitution or compensation for their property) and the positive sides (the possibility of exchange and gradual rapprochement). This broad understanding of the experience of emigration and its effects on emigrants over a lifetime, on their new homes and their places of origin, is one of the best aspects of the book.

Schlör is also well versed in recent developments in the field of migration studies in general and Jewish refugee studies in particular. He uses some of the newer approaches in his book, such as the 'mechanics of flight and emigration',⁵ and the aspect of materiality. In the author's own words, he 'treats emigration and immigration as cultural practice and performance and gives an interdisciplinary view of the transitions and distances inherent in migration processes' (p. 5). For example, he devotes significant sections to Alice's mother's worries about their belongings, which are at first sight typical of a 'Swabian housewife'. Her preoccupation with things that in hindsight appear very mundane, like furniture or bed-linen, may seem superficial. Yet for many refugees, their personal belongings – shipped to their new homes in large containers known as 'lifts' – were of great importance for their identity, which had been questioned by the experience of being forced to leave their home countries. Drawing on Hermine Rosenthal's letters

⁵ Ibid. 437.

to her daughter, Schlör convincingly shows the strengths of this focus on the material aspects of emigration.

The same holds true for the ‘mechanics of emigration’. This term refers to the complicated procedures involved in organizing emigration, both in Germany and in the destination country. Seemingly never-ending trips to embassies, town halls, and, in London, the Jewish Refugees Committee at Woburn House; the booking of tickets; and the compiling of lists for customs were pressing demands that shaped the refugees’ experience of emigration. Again, Schlör is in the privileged position of being able to show both sides: the experience of the Rosenthal parents in Germany and Alice’s involvement with Woburn House.

However, these two aspects also show that the first part of the book could have benefited from a little more abstraction, linking Alice’s personal story and experience to broader developments. This is done in the second half of the book, which allows for more generalizations. It would also have been interesting to follow up the aspect of ‘materiality’ for the period after the Second World War, especially given Schlör’s personal connection with Alice’s daughter. What happened to the ‘emigrated’ items and what meaning do they hold for the family and Alice’s descendants today?

To some degree, I also missed longer quotations from the German source material. The footnotes contain a few, giving a better impression of the individual tone of the letters, which is extremely difficult to translate. Readers with a knowledge of German should therefore consider reading the German version. Nevertheless, the uniqueness of the material and quality of writing outweigh this by far, and the English translation gives a wider audience the chance to read a book that is both academically and emotionally compelling.

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DORA OSBORNE, *What Remains: The Post-Holocaust Archive in German Memory Culture, Dialogue and Disjunction: Studies in Jewish German Literature, Culture, and Thought* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2020), 238 pp. ISBN 978 1 640 14052 3. £75.00

Today, around seventy-five years after the end of the Second World War, there are few living eyewitnesses left to speak of National Socialism and the Holocaust, and those who remain will not live for much longer. Against this background, Dora Osborne notes an increasing focus on archives in the memory culture of the 'Berlin Republic'—that is, of Germany from the early 1990s onwards—as younger generations rely more and more on externalized, material forms of memory, giving rise to an archival turn.

Osborne uses a broad definition of the archive that includes both 'the material remnants of the past and the structures and spaces that house them'. In her view, the archive in this broad sense serves to bridge the gap between the present day and the Nazi era—though it should be noted that this is true of all historical archives—and 'to materialize, visualize, and narrativize the . . . work of memory' (p. 1).

Osborne's case studies include memorials, documentary films and theatre, and prose texts; however, she does not explain what prompted her to choose the specific artistic and literary works she examines, even though it would add to our understanding of them if we knew whether they were especially controversial or resonant. All the same, Osborne's sharp analysis of different media and genres does allow her to trace the archival turn in memory culture and to tease out its typical features and implications.

The first chapter sets out the theoretical framework underpinning her study. Here, Osborne focuses on the archive both as an immaterial concept and trope and as a physical, material structure in order to explore its significance in the remembrance and commemoration of Nazi violence, especially of the Holocaust. Her 'archivology' (p. 18) draws on the ideas of a range of theorists, including Pierre Nora, Aleida Assmann, Jacques Derrida, Achille Mbembe, Sigmund Freud, Michel Foucault, and Georges Didi-Huberman. Building on these, she

Trans. by Jozef van der Voort (GHIL)

shows how memory functions are ascribed to the archive. While archives documenting National Socialism and the Holocaust represent an important historical resource, Osborne argues, it is also important not to lose sight of their earlier function as tools and repositories of political power. After all, as physical locations and classifications of material, archives are built in the name of the ruling class, making them instruments of its power and authority. In essence, the information they preserve and pass down tells us *about* people, but is not provided *by* those people themselves. And because the archive is also the a priori structure of a Foucauldian discursive practice, Osborne reasons, it determines how we will speak about the past in future.

In this theoretical first chapter, then, the author establishes her key concept of the 'post-Holocaust archive', although she unfortunately fails to provide a concise definition. Nonetheless, it is clear what the term denotes. Osborne stresses the importance of eyewitness accounts in the post-Holocaust archive, since these offer a counter-narrative to the archives of the governing regime. Yet she focuses on precisely those relics that the victims and survivors of the Holocaust had no influence over, arguing that it is these which shape our knowledge of the Nazi era. At the same time, she notes that the 'archive after Auschwitz' is characterized by exclusion, persecution, and loss, and is also 'haunted by archives of excess preserved in spite of all and after all at the sites of mass destruction' (p. 29). This observation forms the cornerstone of Osborne's study, which 'is concerned with precisely this contradiction and shows how subsequent generations turn to these bureaucratic traces as that which is most readily available, even though the traces can only reinscribe and never compensate for destruction' (p. 33).

Osborne's analysis begins with a number of post-1990 art projects related to memory culture. These include Renata Stih and Frieder Schnock's *Orte des Erinnerns* ('Places of Remembrance'); Jochen Gerz's *2146 Steine – Mahnmal gegen Rassismus* ('2146 Stones – Memorial against Racism'); Horst Hoheisel's *Zermahlene Geschichte* ('Crushed History'); and Sigrid Sigurdsson's *Braunschweig – Eine Stadt in Deutschland erinnert sich* ('Braunschweig – A City in Germany Remembers'). In Osborne's view, what these projects have in common is that they all feature archival elements; however, instead of merely using archives

as resources, the artists and everyone involved in the project face up to and reflect on the gaps in the surviving evidence relating to the Holocaust. Osborne sees this as indicative of ‘a shift from “archive-as-source” to the “archive-as-subject”’ (p. 84).

In the following chapter, Osborne examines how the archival turn is reflected in documentary film-making using the case studies *2 oder 3 Dinge, die ich von ihm weiß* (‘2 or 3 Things I Know About Him’, 2005); *Winterkinder: Die schweigende Generation* (‘Winter Children: The Silent Generation’, 2005); *Menschliches Versagen* (‘Human Failure’, 2008); and the documentary plays *Hans Schleif: Eine Spurensuche* (‘Hans Schleif: A Search for Evidence’) and *Stolpersteine Staatstheater* (‘State Theatre Stumbling Blocks’), both first performed in 2015. She is able to weave synopses into her analysis in such a way that even readers unfamiliar with these works can follow her argument, and she is equally successful in capturing both broad outlines and crucial details.

Osborne identifies a few shared perspectives among dramatists and film-makers alike. First, both groups take as their subject matter the entanglements between the families of perpetrators and the Nazi era, which extend even up to the present day. The documentaries follow their protagonists as they use archives to research their ancestors’ Nazi past, but also show their access to those archives to be highly restricted, leading Osborne to conclude that ‘the patriarchal logic of the archive constrains what can be said in the name of the (grand)father’ (p. 127). Second, a number of documentaries focus on official persecution of the Jewish population, and in view of the Nazi policies of Aryanization and *Gleichschaltung* (the Nazi term for the coordinated establishment of totalitarian control over German society), Osborne argues, they reveal that violence is inscribed in the archives. As such, they also question the prominence of the received history of National Socialism in contemporary memory culture.

In the last chapter of her book, Osborne offers against-the-grain readings of four very different prose works published during the 2010s. While Ursula Krechel’s *Landgericht* (‘District Court’) combines documentary material with fiction and Iris Hanika’s *Das Eigentliche* (‘The Actual’) is a fictional satire, Katja Petrowskaja’s *Vielleicht Esther* (‘Maybe Esther’) and Per Leo’s *Flut und Boden* (‘Flood and Soil’) investigate the histories of the authors’ own families. Over the course

of her analysis, Osborne establishes that all four authors explicitly refer to archives as material spaces, structures, and repositories of knowledge and reflect on how they relate ethically and politically to memory culture. However, each individual author ascribes a different set of functions and implications to the archive. Krechel sees working in and with archives as a gesture of remembrance, but also views archives themselves as places of power; Hanika conceives of archival work as symptomatic of a pathological attachment to the Nazi era; Petrowskaja contemplates the ways in which her narrative is shaped by the availability or absence of archival resources; while Leo shows that Nazi archives and oversimplified historiography—including family history—are unable to deliver new insights, resulting in a need to bring in other sources.

Unfortunately, Osborne does not clearly outline the analytical methodology she applies to her heterogeneous source material; however, we can see the general shape of her approach from her reading of the artist Gunter Demnig's *Stolpersteine* ('Stumbling Blocks') project, which she examines in particular detail. These square brass memorial panels, which Demnig has been installing in pavements across Europe since the 1990s, serve to decentralize remembrance and focus it on the fates of individuals. Osborne documents the project's development over the decades, showing us that initially there was no research involved; after a time, however, individuals and groups arranging for *Stolpersteine* to be laid began to undertake independent archival research, and also to go beyond conventional archives by involving Holocaust survivors and people who had come into contact with the victims in question. Nor does Osborne neglect to point out the ambivalent aspects of the project, noting that in many cases, researchers came to identify with the people whose lives they were investigating. She also claims that amateur researchers failed to critically interrogate the sources they used, thereby unthinkingly reproducing the bureaucratic structures used by the Nazis to persecute and murder people—although she does not provide any evidence to support this assertion. Osborne rightly criticizes the way that complex life stories are compressed into the predefined format of the *Stolperstein*, thus reducing them to restricted narratives of victimhood. And she goes on to apply the same critical attitude to

the public reception of the *Stolpersteine* project, which has often taken on a voyeuristic aspect characterized by a sense of taking pleasure in new discoveries. The *Stolpersteine* project enjoys a great deal of public recognition in Germany and has assumed a degree of authority that Osborne attributes in part to the archival work underpinning it, which lends authenticity to the individual memorials and offers proof of the 'remembrance work' undertaken for the project.

The example of the *Stolpersteine* is typical of Osborne's detailed analysis of structures, contexts, and content throughout the book. Furthermore, her chapters on art projects, prose, and documentary film and theatre begin not only with theoretical reflections on the relevant media and genres, but also with brief outlines of their predecessors in (Federal) German memory culture, thus satisfying historians seeking to learn more about the broader historical contexts of these cultural productions.

As Osborne herself concludes (drawing on Michel Foucault, one of the book's diverse and credibly compiled list of theoretical reference points), the archive is the a priori structure of a discursive practice, in that it determines how we eventually come to speak about the past. This is true of the archive in both the broader sense of discourse theory and in the narrower institutional sense. And especially with regard to the latter, this observation has profound consequences for the memory culture and politics of the future. When there are no longer any eyewitnesses left to tell us of their experiences under National Socialism and during the Holocaust, it will fall to those who are active in the field of memory culture to engage more sensitively and circumspectly than ever with 'what remains' and to search for archival material that documents the recollections of those eyewitnesses, given that such material has certainly been preserved by archives and other cultural institutions. And as a means of increasing the sensitivity of one's own engagement, this volume makes for worthwhile reading.

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CONFERENCE REPORT

The Politics of Old Age: Old People and Ageing in British and European History (Middle Ages to the Present). Conference organized by the German Association for British Studies (Arbeitskreis Großbritannienforschung, AGF) in co-operation with the German Historical Institute London and Sorbonne University Faculty of Arts and Humanities, held online on 7 and 8 May 2021. Conveners: Professor Frédérique Lachaud (Sorbonne), Dr Wencke Meteling (Philipps University of Marburg/AGF), and Dr Jenny Pleinen (GHIL).

The conference took a comparative and diachronic approach in order to understand the place of old age in politics, as well as the evolution of political discourses on ageing. As Frédérique Lachaud (Sorbonne) argued in her opening remarks, recent debates on global warming and Brexit have put a spotlight on the disproportionate political power of elderly voters, who make choices for the wider population. Thus the discourse on the aged and politics has widened beyond the usual topoi: the economic insecurity of the elderly, the financial burdens of geriatric care, and fears of shrinking economic innovation due to an ageing population. Citing examples from medieval scholarly manuscripts, treatises, and speculum literature, Lachaud showed that divisive controversies over old age and power go back at least to the early Middle Ages. She then contrasted these early debates with the contentious negotiations during the 1980s and 1990s about the productivity required of retirees, at a time when the neo-liberal paradigm of so-called 'active ageing' began to replace post-war notions of well deserved retirement or *Ruhestand* (French: *état de repos*) throughout Western Europe.

In her keynote lecture, Pat Thane (King's College London) gave an overview of representations of old age in twentieth-century Britain, noting that a problematic old age was long perceived as a condition of the poor, and that stereotypical perceptions and age discrimination persisted until at least 2010. The elderly were largely seen as male, frail, and

less deserving of the National Health Service's treatment than younger cohorts. State pensions were lower than in Germany, and the provision of social care for the fourth age was a problem not tackled by successive governments. Although from the 1950s onwards social scientists such as Peter Townsend and Michael Young exposed the plight of the elderly poor and did much to highlight the hidden contributions of the old to the national economy and intergenerational welfare, political discrimination continued. The stark inequalities between different subgroups of seniors – rich and poor, men and women, the fit and the frail – were further exacerbated by the turn of public debate towards 'active and productive ageing' at the end of the twentieth century.

The first section of the conference was dedicated to medieval attitudes towards the elderly. Amelia Jennie Kennedy (Yale University) examined how Cistercian monastic communities in thirteenth-century Europe dealt with older abbots and abbatial retirement. While ageing abbots in the twelfth century often faced pressure to remain in office, their counterparts in the thirteenth century were encouraged to step down if they developed an age-related illness or disability. This shift in attitude resulted from the growing bureaucratization of the Cistercian order, particularly the growth of the Cistercian general chapter and increasing emphasis on regular attendance at chapter meetings. Drawing on general chapter statutes c.1180–1300 and the *Liber formularius*, an abbatial manual produced in the thirteenth century, Kennedy also showed that 'retired' abbots were expected to maintain some form of productivity – for example by engaging in scholarly pursuits. Elisa Mantiene (University of Lorraine) followed with a paper on elderly abbots in English Benedictine monasteries in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Taking the example of three abbots of St Albans (Thomas de la Mare, John Moot, and John Whethamstede), she stressed that domestic chronicles presented old age mainly as an asset because experience and maturity grew with age. When an abbot was absent or incapacitated, large houses were run by numerous monastic officials under the supervision of the prior. But while the administration of the community and their lands would carry on, increasing illness and senility brought difficulties in regard to the position of the monastery in public life.

The second session looked at examples from Venice and Slovenia between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries. Christian Alexander

Neumann (German Historical Institute Rome) discussed attitudes towards ageing doges in the early modern Republic of Venice. Treatises on the Venetian constitution mainly conveyed a positive image of old age. Increased wisdom, prudence, and long experience made older candidates better suited to hold political power than young men who threatened the stability of the state. By the fourteenth century, the election of old men to the office of doge was well established. Many of the election criteria could only be achieved at an advanced age, such as wealth, a long *cursus honorum*, proven loyalty to the republic, and experience. But Neumann then presented the case of Doge Agostino Barbarigo (born 1419, reigned 1486–1501) who during his last years was much criticized because of his age, ‘monarchical’ behaviour, and frequent political and military failures. Neumann concluded that positive and negative stereotypes of old age were available and that both were used in contemporary debates, depending on political expediency.

Nataša Henig Mišič (Institute of Contemporary History, Ljubljana) approached the topic from an economic perspective. She examined how the Carniolan Savings Bank – the first, central financial institution in the Slovenian territory, founded in 1820 and based in Ljubljana – contributed to the politics of old age in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in this Austrian part of the Habsburg Empire. From 1889 onwards the Carniolan Savings Bank developed special accounts for workers and employees which paid out pensions after the age of 70. These funds were meant to help overcome the hardships of old age and to encourage the lower classes to save money. They were popular with servants and workers, as archival records show.

The third session focused on images of ageing during the twentieth century in Germany and the Soviet Union. Alissa Klots (University of Pittsburgh) explored the role of retirees in the post-Stalinist Soviet Union, arguing that so far historians have interpreted the period mainly through a youth-centred generational lens while overlooking the political agency of the elderly. Yet the active role of the old went well beyond the ageing leaders of the Communist party. The introduction of universal pensions from age 55 (women) and 60 (men) created pensioners as a distinct social group and an ‘entitlement community’. Of all social groups, retirees were most likely to volunteer or join public organizations such as people’s guards or women’s and pensioners’ soviets.

While the agenda of such organizations was defined by the authorities, their policies were often appropriated by the (overwhelmingly retired) subjects whom the state sought to mobilize. Older people saw public volunteering as a way of living under the rules of the system and deriving satisfaction from it. This fitted in with Soviet scholarship, which had emphasized ideas of active and useful ageing since the 1940s, and with the public veneration of the cohorts born around the turn of the century as 'Lenin's generation'. As 'old Bolsheviks', these retirees felt entitled to feed their visions of the right path to Communism into their volunteering activities.

Lastly, Benjamin Glöckler (University of Freiburg) contrasted images of ageing in two magazines published by West and East German welfare organizations during the 1960s and 1970s. Comparing the Arbeiterwohlfahrt's *Sozialprisma* magazine with the Volkssolidarität's *Volkshelfer*, he stated that while everyday activities in social clubs for the elderly were more or less similar, attitudes towards ageing differed starkly. In the socialist East, the values of solidarity and labour were used to stage older citizens as a productive, active, and useful part of society. In the West, in contrast, *Sozialprisma* presented largely isolated, devalued, and suffering elderly people threatened by poverty and loneliness. Old age was shown as a precarious stage of life and clearly delineated from adulthood in the Federal Republic of Germany, while in the GDR adults and the elderly were held up as a team working in solidarity towards a common identity.

On both conference days, lively discussions centred on comparisons across geographical and chronological boundaries, and on the need to advance our understanding of ageing by focusing on intersections of difference. Historiographic narratives were criticized for their overwhelming focus on youth, or on successive political generations of the young. The difference between the third and fourth ages, the genesis of the paradigm of active ageing, the role of social scientists in influencing public images of ageing, and questions of intergenerational justice were also brought into focus, highlighting that much remains to be explored in this field of research.

NOTICEBOARD

Scholarships Awarded by the German Historical Institute London

Each year the GHIL awards a number of research scholarships to German postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers to enable them to carry out research in Britain. The scholarships are generally awarded for a period of up to six months depending on the requirements of the research project. Scholarships are advertised on [www.hsozkult.de] and the GHIL's website. Applications should include a CV, educational background, list of publications (where appropriate), and an outline of the project, along with a supervisor's reference confirming the relevance of the proposed archival research. Please address applications to Dr Stephan Bruhn, German Historical Institute London, 17 Bloomsbury Square, London WC1A 2NJ, or send them by email to stipendium@ghil.ac.uk. **Please note that due to the United Kingdom leaving the EU, new regulations for research stays apply. Please check the scholarship guidelines for further information.** If you have any questions, please contact Dr Stephan Bruhn. German scholars present their projects and the initial results of their research at the GHIL Colloquium before or after their stay in Britain. In the first round of allocations for 2021 the following scholarships were awarded for research on British history, German history, and Anglo-German relations:

Jonas Bechtold (Bonn): Englische Reichstagspolitik im 16. Jahrhundert
Christina Bröker (Regensburg): Grim Look and Teeth-Gnashing: Conditions of Constructing John and Henry III's (Emotional) Behaviour in Chronicles and Letters (1199–1272)

Chantal Bsdurrek (Düsseldorf): Das Kameradschaftsverständnis britischer Soldaten der Westfront 1914–1938

Martin Christ (Erfurt): Die Macht über die Toten: Urbane Begräbnisstätten in London und München, ca. 1550–1870

Lukas Herde (Berlin): Lifelong Sex and Healthy Ageing: Representations of Sexuality, Intimacy, and the Body in Later Life on British and French Television and the Web, c.1970–2010

Haureh Hussein (Trier): Global Entanglements between Māori and New Bedford Whaling Families (1790–1840)

Christian Schuster (Dresden): Die ‘englische Kolonie’ in Sachsen und die Sachsen in London: Sozialstruktur – Kontakt – Konflikte

Richard Winkler (Essen): Loyale Rebellen: Adlige Rebellionen und Konzeptionen idealer Königsherrschaft (ca. 1386–1486)

Forthcoming Workshops and Conferences

Please consult the website for updates on forthcoming conferences and dates, as these may be subject to change owing to Covid-19-related restrictions.

Hidden Economies of Slavery. International workshop to be held at the German Historical Institute London, 10–11 December 2021 (hybrid format). Conveners: Felix Brahm (GHIL) and Melina Teubner (University of Bern)

In many cases, abolition did not bring an end to slavery. Local economies often continued to rely on slavery, and new forms of unfree labour were invented that involved new places and peoples. Often, private as well as state actors continued to invest in or operate ventures based on slavery, though less openly. This workshop will address the still under-researched phenomenon of ‘second slavery’ in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It has two main directions of inquiry: first, it will explore the reconfiguration of local and regional economies of slavery following formal abolition. How did existing structures and systems of dependency feed into the maintenance of slavery, and how did these also change over time, not least through the agency of enslaved people? Here, the workshop is particularly interested in micro-economies – focal points of economic activity – and how they relate to other places and larger-scale processes. Second, the workshop will ask why the phenomenon of ‘second slavery’ was less

debated by contemporaries and how it became less visible to them. How did the actors involved conceal their business, what strategies were applied to legitimize new forms of unfree labour, and why did public attention fade, or focus on certain regions and selected forms of slavery? Confirmed keynote speakers are Felicitas Becker (Ghent University) and Daniel Rood (University of Georgia).

The History of Medialization and Empowerment: The Intersection of Women's Rights, Activism, and the Media. Final Meeting of the International Standing Working Group on Medialization and Empowerment, 20–22 January 2022. Conference hosted by the German Historical Institute London (hybrid format) with accompanying virtual exhibition.

This conference is the culmination of a three-year project examining the networks, interconnections, and dependencies of women's rights and the media throughout the long twentieth century. Focusing on the history of feminism(s) as a lens into changing practices and ideas of women's emancipation, this conference calls on participants to reconsider the role of the media in shaping, constituting, and directing discussions and attitudes towards gender roles and women's rights internationally.

The virtual exhibition 'Forms, Voices, Networks: Feminism and the Media' will be launched with two online panels: one on feminism and photography at 1 p.m. GMT on 23 November 2021, and one on the politics of recognition at 5:30 p.m. GMT on 15 December 2021. This exhibition aims to shed light on under-researched connections between the twentieth-century growth of mass media and women's rights protests in a transnational context. Through a series of key case studies, it illustrates how feminists have mobilized and negotiated media to advance women's rights and contest gender stereotypes, while also attending to the ambivalent, changeable, and potentially contradictory nature of women's relation to the media across different time periods and contexts.

Science, Knowledge, and the Legacy of Empire. The Thyssen Lecture Series to be held at the German Historical Institute London, 2022–2025. Organized by the GHIL and the Fritz Thyssen Foundation.

The GHIL is proud to announce a new collaborative lecture series with the Fritz Thyssen Foundation on Science, Knowledge, and the Legacy of Empire. The series consists of two lectures a year, in May and October, which will be delivered by distinguished international scholars. Initially given at Bloomsbury Square, each lecture will be repeated at a British university outside Greater London. The series is planned to run for four years, starting in May 2022, and the first speaker is Arjun Appadurai, Goddard Professor of Media, Culture, and Communication and Senior Fellow at the Institute for Public Knowledge at New York University.

The imperial and colonial contexts in which modern science and scholarship came of age haunt us to this day. Be it the origins of museum collections, the Eurocentrism of history textbooks and academic curricula, or the lack of minority ethnic university staff, the shadows of an imperial past loom large. This lecture series will engage with the field of ‘science and empire’ and the analytical category of ‘colonial knowledge’. Postcolonial studies has long identified ‘colonial knowledge’ as a hegemonic tool of empire-building. Drawing on this conceptual frame, but also questioning it, we at the GHIL see the production and circulation of knowledge in colonial settings as an unsettled and fractious process that challenged and destabilized colonial state power as often as it supported it. We are interested in examining the relationship between localized sites of knowledge production and wider, inter-imperial, and potentially global networks of circulation. We ask how such forms of circulation affected the nature of knowledge thus produced and the power relationships that have long informed our understanding of colonial knowledge and structures of domination and subordination. Most importantly, we are keen to explore the afterlife of colonial knowledge and imperial science in recent, twenty-first century history in Britain, Germany, and beyond. How do imperial legacies shape present-day academia and knowledge production? How are the colonial past, and obligations arising from it, debated today? How do these figure in memory cultures, and

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what role do they play in political relations within Europe, and in Europe's relations with the non-European world?

First Lecture: Arjun Appadurai, Goddard Professor of Media, Culture, and Communication and Senior Fellow at the Institute for Public Knowledge at New York University, 'Colonial Rule and Indian National Geography', 9 May 2022 at the GHIL and 10 May 2022 at the University of Warwick.

This lecture explores the long-term colonial sources of the idea of India as a national geographical object. The making of a sovereign territory, which is today a central part of the Hindutva idea of India's sacred soil, has a long history which will be examined by analysing three phenomena: 1) certain key texts of British cartography in nineteenth-century India; 2) the practical production of connectivity across the national space through the building of the Indian railways, starting in the 1840s; and 3) the historicizing of this geography by Jawaharlal Nehru in *The Discovery of India*, published in 1946. Together, these three lenses offer a colonial genealogy of India's national geography.

Please check our website for updates on the Thyssen Lectures: [<https://www.ghil.ac.uk/events/all-events>]

A sortable list of titles acquired by the GHIL Library in recent months is available at:

https://www2.ghil.ac.uk/catalogue2/recent_acquisitions.php

For an up-to-date list of the GHIL's publications see our website:

<https://www.ghil.ac.uk/publications>