Contesting the Past

The volumes in this series select some of the most controversial episodes in history and consider their divergent, even starkly incompatible representations. The aim is not merely to demonstrate that history is "argument without end," but to show that study even of contradictory conceptions can be fruitful: that the jettisoning of one thesis or presentation leaves behind something of value.

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"Familiar Features in an Unfamiliar Light"? Social and Cultural Perspectives

Assessing the state of Germany's electoral and parliamentary history in 1998, Thomas Kühne identified three avenues which he believed merited further exploration: the everyday experience of voters at a local or regional level; the cultural history of elections (*Wahlkultur*); and the fresh perspectives offered by gender history.[1] Kühne's desideratum, in other words, was for political history to engage with approaches that had already become well established elsewhere in the discipline and which form the main focus of this chapter. Although the history of everyday life, gender history, and cultural history are all closely related, they retain their own distinctive research methods and agendas. What they share is a desire to move beyond the top-down and generalizing approach of historical social science, with its emphasis on "big structures, large processes, huge comparisons,"[2] yet without returning to the event- and state-orientated narratives that have been so central to the writing of history for the past two hundred years. This chapter explores the impact of these so-called "poststructuralist" approaches on the study of the German Empire. Where have the new approaches come from and what kind of questions do they ask? To what extent have they succeeded in casting the Empire's "familiar features in an unfamiliar light" (Richard Evans)? In order to understand the poststructuralist challenge, however, it will

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[1] T. Kühne, "Parlamentarismusgeschichte in Deutschland," p. 335.

[2] The title of a book by Charles Tilly (New York, 1984).

first be necessary to consider some of the historical social science literature that preceded it.

Social History or the History of Society?

In the English-speaking world the term "social history" has long been identified with "history from below" or "grassroots" history, and one can certainly find examples of this in Germany too. In the mid-1970s, for instance, a group of academics based in the industrial Ruhr, including Lutz Niethammer (born 1939), Jürgen Reulecke (born 1940), and Franz-Josef Brüggemeier (born 1951), began highlighting the importance of individual agency in history. One collection edited by Niethammer even adapted Marx's famous quote as its programmatic title: "men make their own history; not in circumstances of their own choosing, but they make it themselves."[3] At around the same time, the small Peter Hammer publishing house in Wuppertal published two essay collections – *Factory, Family, Finishing Time* and *A Social History of Leisure* – which demonstrated a growing interest in British-style social history among younger historians in the Federal Republic.[4] This, however, was by no means the only strand within German social history. Some sought to follow the anthropological approach of the Swiss Rudolf Braun (born 1930), who was based in Berlin during the early 1970s;[5] while a more conservative variant was practiced in Tübingen by Karl Erich Born (1922–2000). Born's principal achievement was a huge multi-volume collection of documents on German social policy between 1867 and 1914: a fitting legacy for a historian who viewed Bismarck's social legislation with admiration.[6] For the most part, however, the version of social history that held the upper hand in late twentieth-century Germany was that developed by the school of historical social science, with its close links to sociology and economics. In his introduction to an important set of essays on *Modern German Social History* (1966), Hans-Ulrich Wehler defined it as the "history of social classes and groups, structures, and institutions."[7] Consequently, the later 1960s and 1970s saw the publication of numerous studies of industrialization, urbanization, migration, and class formation in nineteenth-century Germany, often with a strongly quantitative dimension.

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[3] Lutz Niethammer et al., eds, *Die Menschen machen ihre Geschichte nicht aus freien Stücken, aber sie machen sie selbst. Einladung zu einer Geschichte des Volkes in NRW* (Berlin and Bonn, 1984).

[4] J. Reulecke and W. Weber, eds, *Fabrik, Familie, Feierabend. Beiträge zur Geschichte des Alltags im Industriezeitalter* (Wuppertal, 1978); G. Huck, ed., *Sozialgeschichte der Freizeit. Untersuchungen zum Wandel der Alltagskultur in Deutschland* (Wuppertal, 1980).

[5] Braun's best-known work, *Industrialisierung und Volksleben* first appeared in 1960. An English translation, *Industrialisation and Everyday Life* (Cambridge, 1990) was published 30 years later.

[6] *Quellensammlung zur Geschichte der deutschen Sozialpolitik 1867–1914*, conceived by Karl Erich Born and Peter Rassow on behalf of the Historical Commission of the Academy of Sciences and Literature, Mainz. The first introductory volume appeared in 1966 and around one-half of the planned 27 volumes have since followed, mostly edited by Born, Hansjoachim Henning, and Florian Tennstedt. See also Born's *Wirtschafts- und Sozialgeschichte des Deutschen Kaiserreichs 1867/71–1914* (Wiesbaden, 1985).

The emergence of historical social science, with its new analytical methods and sharply defined concepts, marked a significant break with German historiographical traditions. As Jürgen Kocka recalled in a retrospective essay published in 2003, "social-scientific history was a field of experiment, excitement, and innovation in which many new insights were generated, old legends criticized and challenging hypotheses brought forward for further research."[8] One such hypothesis, of course, was built around the apparent disjuncture between Germany's rapid social and economic development on the one hand, and political stasis on the other. Works like Helmut Böhme's short *Introduction to the Social and Economic History of Germany* suggested that the particular way in which industrialization had occurred in Germany – on the basis of a political compromise between modern industrial and "feudal" agrarian interests – had contributed significantly to the crises of the twentieth century.[9] While it was a hypothesis predicated on modernization theory and the now unfashionable *Sonderweg* paradigm, the combination of economic success and political failure nevertheless remains central to many general accounts of German history, and not only those written in the spirit of the "new orthodoxy." At first sight there would appear to be a consensus that industrialization occurred later in Germany than in other parts of Europe, and that it was unusually dynamic and traumatic as a result. As Berghahn puts it in the opening sentences of his *Modern Germany*:

> The development of modern Germany is best understood against the background of the Industrial Revolution, which affected Central Europe with full force in the final decades of the nineteenth century. Britain had experienced the blessings and traumas of industrialization earlier and more slowly, but nowhere else in Europe did the transition from an economy based on agriculture to one dominated by industry occur with the same rapidity as in Germany.

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[7] H.-U. Wehler, ed., *Moderne deutsche Sozialgeschichte* (Cologne and Berlin, 1966), p. 9. See also J. Kocka, *Sozialgeschichte: Begriff, Entwicklung, Probleme* (Göttingen, 1977).

[8] J. Kocka, "Losses, gains and opportunities: Social history today," *Journal of Social History*, 37 (2003), p. 22.

[9] H. Böhme, *An Introduction to the Social and Economic History of Germany* (Oxford, 1978 – first published in Germany in 1968).

Later in the same volume he suggests there is "little doubt" that Germany's "extraordinarily violent course" in the twentieth century was directly linked to this rapid industrialization.[10]

In fact, the rapid and dislocating nature of German industrialization is referred to so often in the history books that it has become something of a truism. It is certainly not difficult to point to figures comparing the growth of coal or pig iron production in late nineteenth-century Germany, France, and Britain, which seem to indicate that the *Kaiserreich* was industrializing at a startling rate. As with all historical orthodoxies, however, it is a view that can be challenged. In 1983, for instance, Hartmut Kaelble used the house journal of historical social science, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, to argue that Germany's rapid industrialization was a "myth."[11] Kaelble's short but provocative essay highlighted the limited and problematic statistical evidence on which it is based. Many of the statistics used by historians, particularly for the earlier years of the Empire, are "estimates" taken from a 1965 book by Walther Hoffmann, whose accuracy has often been questioned.[12] That aside, while it is clear that the economy did grow quickly, all the relevant indices – per capita production, per capita incomes, industrial employment, female employment, demographic growth, internal migration, and urbanization – suggest that developments in Germany were not significantly out of line with those in other European countries. By the late nineteenth century, Kaelble argued, the exceptional cases were actually Britain (where the great spurt of growth had long since passed) and Sweden, where annual growth rates were nearly double those of the *Kaiserreich* between 1890 and 1910.

A different take on these issues is offered by Oliver Grant's recent study of *Migration and Inequality in Germany 1870–1913*. While he accepts the "unprecedented" scale and intensity of German industrialization – it was the first "developing economy," he suggests, and "no other European country had such a rapid transition to an urban industrial society"[13] – the problems it faced were far from unusual. By comparing Imperial Germany to today's industrializing nations, and by using concepts and tools taken from the contemporary field of development economics, Grant arrives at very different conclusions from those of Böhme or Berghahn. Where they see the *Kaiserreich* as an era of "missed opportunities" and

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[10] V. R. Berghahn, *Modern Germany. Society, Economy and Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, 1989 – first published 1982), pp. 1, 267.

[11] H. Kaelble, "Der Mythos von der rapiden Industrialisierung in Deutschland," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 9 (1983), pp. 108–18.

[12] W. G. Hoffmann, *Das Wachstum der deutschen Wirtschaft seit der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 1965).

[13] O. Grant, *Migration and Inequality in Germany 1870–1913* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 293, 353.

"skirted decisions," Grant argues that "few if any" countries have made political progress during a period of rapid industrialization. "Imperial Germany was not moving towards an internally generated catastrophe, but was a society with as good a chance of achieving full economic maturity, social modernization, and political democratization as any other. The decisive factor in the equation, which shifted German history onto a different course, was the outbreak of war in 1914," he claims. Whether one accepts this "optimistic" view or not, most would nowadays agree with Grant's observation that economic and political advance seldom go hand in hand. Contrary to the linear perspective of modernization theory, asynchronic or " 'incomplete modernization' is the normal state for an industrializing society."[14]

With regard to the timing of Germany's industrial revolution, a surprisingly wide variety of dates have been cited.[15] The fact that the first mechanized factory on German soil – Johann Brügelmann's Cromford cotton mill at Ratingen near Düsseldorf – was erected in 1784 is something of a red herring, but the genesis of Germany's industrial take-off has been located as early as 1800 (with the onset of factory production in Saxony), 1815 (in the territorial changes instituted by the Congress of Vienna), or 1834 (with the expansion of the Customs Union). In fact, the 1830s, 1840s, and 1850s all have their adherents, with many pointing to the discovery of large deposits of deep-lying bituminous coal in the Ruhr valley around 1850 as the decisive stimulus. Arguably, however, it was not until the so-called "second industrial revolution" – the rapid expansion of the electrical engineering and chemical industries in the 1890s – that the Empire really made its transition from an agrarian state (*Agrarstaat*) to an industrial state (*Industriestaat*).[16] Many historians cite the 1895 census – when the numbers employed in industry and mining overtook those in agriculture for the first time – as a decisive turning point, though the primary sector remained a significant factor in German economic and political life until well into the twentieth century. Part of the problem with this debate, as the economic historian Frank Tipton has pointed out, is that "[m]odern economies grow, change, and fluctuate, but they do not experience the sort of sudden qualitative change implied in many historians' accounts. Failure to appreciate this," he suggests, "has led to much of the confusion in the interpretation of the economic dimension of German history."[17] It is perhaps little wonder then that most social and economic historians now prefer to describe industrialization in evolutionary rather than revolutionary terms.

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[14] Ibid., p. 5.

[15] See W. G. Hoffmann, "The take-off in Germany," in W. W. Rostow, ed., *The Economics of Take-Off into Sustained Growth* (London, 1963), pp. 95–118; K. Borchardt, *The Industrial Revolution in Germany, 1700–1914* (London, 1972); W. O. Henderson, *The Rise of German Industrial Power, 1834–1914* (London, 1975); R. H. Tilly, *Vom Zollverein zum Industriestaat: Die wirtschaftlich-soziale Entwicklung Deutschlands 1834 bis 1914* (Munich, 1990); G. Hardach, "Aspekte der Industriellen Revolution," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 17 (1991), pp. 102–13.

[16] This milestone prompted much debate in Germany at the time. See K. Barkin, *The Controversy over German Industrialization, 1890–1902* (Chicago, 1970).

Another problem is the regional dimension. As Tipton, Gary Herrigel, and Hubert Kiesewetter (born 1939) have all documented, Germany's industrial development was highly uneven.[18] While Saxony, Upper Silesia, and the Ruhr were already industrialized in 1871, Mecklenburg, Pomerania, and East Prussia were most definitely not. This helps to explain why national – or in this case imperial – statistics only tell part of the story. For people living in Berlin or the Ruhr during the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries, there was certainly nothing "mythical" about the speed of industrialization or urbanization. As Tipton rightly observes, "the patterns are only obvious in retrospect, after several generations of observation and research. The experience of those who lived through these decades was not of a gradually unfolding process of growth and progress, but of instability and fluctuation."[19] This was particularly the case of the period between 1873 and 1895, which contemporaries and some later historians (see Chapter 1) characterized as a "great depression," but which now appears to have been an "optical illusion" (David Landes).

The leading sector of German industrialization was initially textiles; by the Wilhelmine era it was the electrical and chemical industries; but for the middle decades of the nineteenth century historians are divided as to whether railway construction, iron, or coal was the driving force. If this is something of a "chicken or egg" debate, a more fruitful discussion has centered on the role of big banks in the industrialization process. The famous hypothesis of the economic historian Alexander Gerschenkron (1904–78) was that as a "latecomer of the first generation" Germany could not rely on private accumulation or the stock market to provide the capital required to "catch up" with its western neighbors.[20] Thus it fell to the banks – and in particular the Empire's "universal" banks – to supply the investment necessary to acquire the best available technology in manufacturing, transport, and communication. In return for this investment they were rewarded with seats on the supervisory boards of industrial joint-stock companies. One consequence of this was that German businesses seem to have had more time to develop their products than their stock-market dependent British or American rivals: the Mannesmann seamless steel tube is a good example.[21] It also meant, however, that industry in the *Kaiserreich* became more highly concentrated than elsewhere in Europe, with the banks encouraging processes of vertical and horizontal integration, cartelization, and monopoly formation. Gerschenkron was by no means the only observer to see in Germany a particular kind of state-approved "organized capitalism" or "co-operative managerial capitalism,"[22] but his theses have demonstrated unusual staying power, continuing to generate discussion more than 40 years after their first formulation.[23]

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[17] F. B. Tipton, "The economic dimension in German history," in G. Martel, ed., *Modern Germany Reconsidered*, p. 212.

[18] F. B. Tipton in *Regional Variations in the Economic Development of Germany during the 19th Century* (Middletown, 1976); G. Herrigel, *Industrial Constructions. The Sources of German Industrial Power* (Cambridge, 1996); H. Kiesewetter, *Industrielle Revolution in Deutschland 1815–1914* (Frankfurt, 1989); H. Kiesewetter, *Region und Industrie in Europa 1815–1995* (Stuttgart, 2000).

[19] F. B. Tipton, "Technology and industrial growth," in R. Chickering, ed., *Imperial Germany*, p. 67.

[20] A. Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, MA, 1962).

Industrialization brought with it far-reaching changes in the structure and nature of German society, creating vast inequalities in health, wealth, education, and housing. Indeed, for most social historians it is the effects of industrialization, rather than the process itself, which are of primary interest.[24] Changing patterns of work, family life, and leisure – itself a product of the industrial age – accordingly feature prominently in the historiography of Imperial Germany, as do "instruments of socialization," such as schools, the army, and the church. Traditional privileges and status counted for less, money and merit for more, as Germany evolved from a corporate or estates-based society to one based on relations of class. While most historians are careful to emphasize the limits of social mobility, which was much more apparent around the middle of the social scale than at its top or bottom, they nevertheless accept that Germany was a society in "restless movement" by the end of the nineteenth century.[25] The growing complexity of the industrial economy required a

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[21] H. Pogge von Strandmann, *Unternehmenspolitik und Unternehmensführung. Der Dialog zwischen Aufsichtsrat und Vorstand bei Mannesmann, 1900–19* (Düsseldorf, 1978).

[22] The latter term is from A. D. Chandler, *Scale and Scope: the Dynamics of Industrial Capitalism* (Cambridge, MA, 1990). On the former see H. A. Winkler, ed., *Organisierter Kapitalismus: Voraussetzungen und Anfänge* (Göttingen, 1974).

[23] See C. Fohlin, *Finance Capitalism and Germany's Rise to Industrial Power* (Cambridge, 2007); also J. Edwards and S. Ogilvie, "Universal banks and German industrialization: A reappraisal," *Economic History Review*, 49 (1996), pp. 427–46.

[24] A good introduction is the collection edited by D. Langewiesche and K. Schönhoven, *Arbeiter in Deutschland. Studien zur Lebensweise der Arbeiterschaft im Zeitalter der Industrialisierung* (Paderborn, 1981).

[25] V. Berghahn, *Imperial Germany*, p. 123.

better-educated and more flexible population, but also reinforced class distinctions such as those between blue- and white-collar work, or trades and professions. As a substantial body of literature since the 1960s has documented, it was a process which produced both "winners" and "losers."

A seminal work in this field was Kocka's 1969 study of the management and administration of the giant Siemens electrical concern between 1847 and 1914.[26] With its rigorous conceptual framework and fascination for structures and processes, the book epitomized the historical social science approach for which its author quickly became a standard-bearer.[27] Strongly influenced by Marx and Weber, but also utilizing the tools of organizational sociology, Kocka examined how the firm evolved from a family business with a personal and paternal regard for its workers, to a modern bureaucracy run by salaried managers. The book was published by the Working Group for Modern Social History, established by Werner Conze and Otto Brunner in 1957. The group had been at the forefront of social history research in Germany since the early 1960s, but its output increased prodigiously in the 1970s, with more than 60 monographs and essay collections published under the banner of the "Industrial World." While it attempted to represent all strands within social history, the prominent presence of Kocka and Wehler in the Working Group ensured that practitioners of historical social science were seldom short of outlets for their work.

A clear majority of titles in the "Industrial World" series focused on aspects of working-class history. The formation of an industrial proletariat and the development of working-class organizations did not, of course, overlap neatly with the lifetime of the *Kaiserreich*: "social history has its own distinct rhythm" as Jean Quataert puts it.[28] Even so, many studies of the German working class have chosen to adopt the 1871–1918 timeframe as their own. Arguably the most important of these is *Workers in the German Empire*, a 900-page tour-de-force by Gerhard A. Ritter and Klaus Tenfelde (born 1944), published in 1992 as part of another key series,

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[26] J. Kocka, *Unternehmensverwaltung und Angestelltenschaft am Beispiel Siemens 1847–1914* (Stuttgart, 1969). In English see J. Kocka, *Industrial Culture and Bourgeois Society: Business, Labor, and Bureaucracy in Modern Germany* (New York and Oxford, 1999).

[27] Kocka's subsequent publications included a comparative study of American white-collar employees between 1890 and 1940, and an analysis of German society during the First World War. See J. Kocka, *White Collar Workers in America 1890–1940* (London and Beverley Hills, 1980 – first published in German in 1977); J. Kocka, *Facing Total War: German Society 1914–1918* (Leamington Spa, 1984 – first published in German in 1973).

[28] J. Quataert, "Demographic and social change," in R. Chickering, ed., *Imperial Germany*, p. 123.

Workers and the Labor Movement in Germany since the end of the 18th Century.[29] The 12-volume series is not yet complete, but it will eventually include four titles on the imperial era alone. The series involves contributions from many of historical social science's most prominent figures, and therefore offers a useful illustration of the strengths and weaknesses of the approach in general. The books are undoubtedly impressive pieces of scholarship, rich in tables and statistics, and with lengthy bibliographies. Great care is taken to place the social in its proper economic and political context, and to include not only industrial workers, but rural laborers, artisans, and domestic employees too. Yet this has not stopped critics from finding a variety of faults. It has been suggested, for instance, that the series perpetuates the misconception that working-class history and labor-movement history are one and the same. In fact, of course, even in the heyday of Wilhelmine Social Democracy, three-quarters of the German working class remained outside the labor movement and its sub-culture. The series has also been criticized for regarding class formation as a process caused by anonymous, abstract forces, rather than by the initiatives and experiences of real people; and for privileging class over other forms of social inequality, such as gender, ethnicity, or confession. Finally, it has been argued that the practitioners of historical social science have failed to recognize that their favored Weberian tools of analysis are better suited to the study of formal structures and organizations than to informal or symbolic systems. As one critic recently put it: "There remains a particularly entrenched way of thinking about history in Germany, a not very subtle disciplinary culture that persists in its conviction that there has to be one correct way to explore the past."[30]

Such criticisms are nothing new. Indeed, when in the 1980s, some of Germany's most prominent social historians, including Wehler, began to adopt the alternative term of *Gesellschaftsgeschichte* (the history of society or "societal history") to characterize their approach, it was partly in response to comments of this kind. The semantic shift from social history to the history of society – with the latter aspiring to embrace the four "axes" of economy, society, politics, and culture – did little, however, to placate the critics. As we saw in Chapter 1, the attacks on the "new orthodoxy" came from both the "right" and the "left": from historist

traditionalists and from social history radicals. The latter consisted primarily of British proponents of "history from below" and German supporters of *Alltagsgeschichte*, the history of everyday life. As a result, the broad church of social history experienced a great schism from which it has never fully recovered.[31] In seeking to place these historiographical trends in a wider intellectual context, Richard Evans found a useful analogy. Historical social science had offered a "modernist version of history," but like the modernist architecture of the 1960s, a history based on social-scientific concepts "neglected the human dimension and reduced the people of the past to anonymous categories."[32] Thus when many of the assumptions underpinning this modernist version of history began to break down – not least the idea of progress itself – it became "more important to reinstate subjective experience at the centre of history than to continue the futile search for a conclusively scientific explanation of the objective factors thought to have determined people's behaviour in the past." Of course, as a central figure in these developments, Evans's view was not that of a disinterested spectator, but few would dispute his observation that "[g]ender, ethnicity, generational identity, sexual orientation, all of which had been neglected by modernist historians, began to attract historical research as they became more important in the present."[33]

The View from Below: Does it Really Matter?

History from below and the history of everyday life both start from the same premise: that ordinary people are historical actors in their own right. Yet while the idea of looking at history from the perspective of the "little man" (or woman) can hardly be considered a novelty, the German concept of *Alltagsgeschichte* – with its focus on "housing and homelessness, clothing and nakedness, eating habits and hunger, people's loves and hates, their quarrels and cooperation, memories, anxieties, [and] hopes for the future"[34] – is still a comparatively recent phenomenon. It developed in the years around 1980, at a time of crisis for the German left, symbolized by the decline and fall of Helmut Schmidt's social-liberal coalition, the conservative "turn" under Helmut Kohl, and the new challenge of the Green movement. These developments had serious implications for Germany's social historians, and not only because they had benefited considerably from the years of SPD rule. With trade union membership falling, and social democratic parties seemingly in decline across Europe, it appeared as if some of the fundamental assumptions behind the trajectory of social history had been wrong. As Geoff Eley observed in 1989, *Alltagsgeschichte* was "driven less by the motivating purpose of older labor history – the belief in the forward march of the working class – than by the realization of its opposite, that by the late 1970s the march had stopped."[35]

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[29] G. A. Ritter and K. Tenfelde, *Arbeiter im Deutschen Kaiserreich: 1871 bis 1914* (Bonn, 1992), volume 5 in the series *Geschichte der Arbeiter und der Arbeiterbewegung in Deutschland seit dem Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts*. The series is published with the support of the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation: a body established in 1925 and re-founded in 1947 with close links to the SPD.

[30] E. D. Weitz, "Still two trains passing in the night? Labor and gender in German historiography," *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 63 (2003), p. 34.

[31] Even in 2003 a downbeat Kocka suggested it "may not have reached its rock-bottom yet." J. Kocka, "Losses, gains and opportunities: Social history today," p. 21.

[32] R. J. Evans, "German history – past, present and future," in G. Martel, ed., *Modern Germany Reconsidered*, pp. 244–5.

[33] Ibid., p. 244.

[34] A. Lüdtke, "Introduction. What is the history of everyday Life and who are its practitioners," in A. Lüdtke, ed., *The History of Everyday Life: Reconstituting Historical Experiences and Ways of Life* (Princeton, 1995), p. 3.

Much of the initial impetus for "the new history movement," as the German media first dubbed it, came from so-called "barefoot" historians. These were amateur or semi-professional enthusiasts active in local history projects, alternative tourism, and citizens' action groups. The inspiration for such grassroots initiatives came from a variety of sources: the British "history workshops" of the late 1960s,[36] oral history, and the "dig where you stand" movement pioneered by Sven Lindquist in Sweden; all of which sought to capture the authentic historical experience of hitherto neglected social groups.[37] Many of these initiatives adopted the rather vague term of *Alltag*, or everyday life, as a means of distinguishing themselves from the "big" history offered by both the old and the new orthodoxies, even though the term's elastic meaning was always likely to provoke debate. The sociologist Norbert Elias was one of the first to recognize its problematic nature, and in a 1984 essay entitled "Difficulties with the Everyday," Klaus Tenfelde urged historians to resist its usage, since even Bismarck had an everyday life.[38] By then, however, it was already too late: a flood of publications, ranging from photocopied brochures to lavishly-illustrated coffee table books, ensured that "the new history movement" now had a name.[39]

This populist element, together with the fact that its emergence coincided with an alleged "revival of narrative" in historical writing, fuelled the suspicions of Germany's structuralist historians, who feared for a "loss of intellectuality."[40] Initially many in the historians' guild saw the history of everyday life as a kind of "history lite," which would appeal to publishers and general readers, but lacked the scholarly rigor of historical social science. *Alltagshistoriker* were accused of "antiquarianism, conservative neo-historism, neo-romanticism and pseudo-realism,"[41] and many leading German historians found the focus on "values, beliefs, mentalities, and lifestyles," rather than "structures, class antagonisms, or economic fluctuations," a potentially dangerous one. Structuralists such as Wehler and Kocka were quick to point out that the new trends risked losing sight of history's major frameworks and processes, replacing serious analysis with trivial anecdotes and vague assertions.[42] Historians of everyday life responded by accusing historical social science of a naïve faith in progress, and a fixation on socio-economic circumstances to the neglect of actual human beings.[43] The acrimonious tone of these exchanges was perhaps understandable given what was at stake: "In emphasizing the burdens of modernization on the men, women, and children who had to endure it," Roger Chickering (born 1942) observed, "*Alltagsgeschichte* challenged the

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[35] G. Eley, "Labour history, social history, Alltagsgeschichte: Experience, culture, and the politics of the everyday – a new direction for German social history?," *Journal of Modern History*, 61 (1989), p. 341.

[36] Significantly, a history workshop was not held in Germany until 1982 and a national History Workshop Association not founded until April 1983. In the following year, a History Workshop Festival took place in Berlin. See A. McElligott, "The German history workshop festival in Berlin," *German History*, 2 (1985), pp. 21–9; also V. Böge, ed., *Geschichtswerkstätten gestern – heute – morgen. Bewegung! Stillstand. Aufbruch?* (Munich and Hamburg, 2004). A journal entitled *Geschichtswerkstatt* was launched in 1983, becoming *Werkstatt-Geschichte* in 1992.

[37] R. Fletcher, "History from below comes to Germany: The New History Movement in the Federal Republic of Germany," *Journal of Modern History*, 60 (1988), pp. 557–68. For a contemporary German account see "Ein kräftiger Schub für die Vergangenheit," *Der Spiegel*, 37 (June 6, 1983), pp. 36–42.

[38] K. Tenfelde, "Schwierigkeiten mit dem Alltag," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 10 (1984), p. 388.

[39] Good overviews of debates surrounding *Alltagsgeschichte* include G. Eley, "Labour history, social history, Alltagsgeschichte"; E. Rosenhaft, "History, anthropology, and the study of everyday life," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 29 (1987), pp. 99–105; D. Crew, "Alltagsgeschichte: A new social history from below," *Central European History*, 22 (1989), pp. 394–407; L. Niethammer, "Anmerkungen zur Alltagsgeschichte," in K. Bergmann and R. Schorken, eds., *Geschichte im Alltag – Alltag in der Geschichte* (Düsseldorf, 1982); F.-J. Brüggemeier and J. Kocka, eds., *"Geschichte von unten – Geschichte von innen": Kontroversen um die Alltagsgeschichte* (Hagen, 1985). Some important early essays by the pioneers of *Alltagsgeschichte* are available in translation in A. Lüdtke, ed., *The History of Everyday Life*. There was also a (very different) East German version of *Alltagsgeschichte*: see J. Kuczynski, *Geschichte des Alltags des deutschen Volkes*, 5 vols. (East Berlin, 1980).

[40] J. Kocka, "Zurück zur Erzählung? Plädoyer für historische Argumentation," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 10 (1984), pp. 395–408.

[41] S. Berger, *The Search for Normality*, p. 80.

[42] H.-U. Wehler, "Alltagsgeschichte: Königsweg zu neuen Ufern oder Irrgarten der Illusionen?," in *Aus der Geschichte lernen?* (Munich, 1988), pp. 130–51; J. Kocka, "Sozialgeschichte zwischen Struktur und Erfahrung. Die Herausforderung der Alltagsgeschichte," in *Geschichte und Aufklärung* (Göttingen, 1989), pp. 29–44.

[43] See, for example, H. Medick, "Missionäre im Ruderboot," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 10 (1984), pp. 295–319; available in English in A. Lüdtke, ed., *The History of Everyday Life*, pp. 41–71.

enthusiastic embrace of modernity that seemed to underlie Wehler's diagnosis of the aberrations of German history."[44]

Such criticisms diminished in the course of the 1980s and 1990s as *Alltagsgeschichte* gained an institutional foothold in German academia. Indeed, recent critiques of the approach have tended to take the opposite tack: that its works are overburdened with weighty theory, but utilize their "cryptic conceptual vocabulary to expose some pretty ordinary, unexciting truths."[45] The changed perception of *Alltagsgeschichte* was largely down to two historians from the Max-Planck-Institute for History at Göttingen: Hans Medick (born 1939) and Alf Lüdtke (born 1943). Neither Medick nor Lüdtke was a specialist on the *Kaiserreich* – the former is a historian of the Early Modern period, who made his name with a study of "proto-industrialization" in south-western Germany; while the latter's main interest lies in the working-class under Fascism[46] – but their work has come to exert an important theoretical and methodological influence on studies of the imperial era too. Almost any theoretical approach that offered something different from the then dominant Weberian paradigm has at some time been connected with *Alltagsgeschichte*, which remains "an extremely heterogeneous phenomenon."[47] E. P. Thompson's Anglo-Marxism, and especially his 1963 classic *The Making of the English Working Class* was an obvious inspiration, as was the French *Annales* school, with its focus on mentalities. The critiques of "grand narratives" offered by the likes of Michel Foucault and Jean-François Lyotard, and the social and cultural anthropology of Clifford Geertz also deserve mention. Geertz argued that "the informal logic of actual life" is best revealed through "thick description" – by immersing oneself in the actual life of the people under observation – rather than through the application of external theories, and his influence has lent an anthropological or ethnographical flavor to many of the school's key works.[48] This required casting off the scientist's "baggage of distain" (David Blackbourn) and embarking on "voyages of discovery into one's own people" (Franz-Josef Brüggemeier). Since history's anonymous victims and losers rarely left written testimonies, new ways had to be found of decoding the "visual or gesture-based 'languages' in which oppressed or marginalized groups" expressed themselves.[49] Leading practitioners of *Alltagsgeschichte* lobbied hard for the introduction of anthropological techniques into mainstream history, and concepts such as habitus, agency, process, and performance began to appear with increasing frequency in German historiography.[50] In return, one of Germany's leading ethnographers, Wolfgang Kaschuba (born 1950), was happy to traverse the disciplinary boundaries in the opposite direction.[51]

A core feature of *Alltagsgeschichte* was, and is, its decentralization of perspective. Whereas historical social science focuses on the macro level – what one might term "history on a grand scale" – *Alltagsgeschichte* pursues a form of microhistory. This approach, pioneered in the late 1970s by Italian historians such as Carlo Ginzburg and Carlo Ponti, has been condemned by its opponents as a "history of details" (*Detailgeschichte*), but is seen by its supporters as a "history of the whole in its details" (*Detailgeschichte des Ganzen*). It can demonstrate, in other words, how big structures (such as the state) and processes (such as modernization or nation-building), were formed and transformed in practice by the actions of ordinary people at a local level. Of course, social history has always used case studies to demonstrate how structures and processes impacted on particular communities – David Crew's study of the city of Bochum is a classic example[52] – but works of *Alltagsgeschichte* have gone further, suggesting that experiences at a local level were driving and shaping the larger processes; that local history was itself general history.[53] Indeed, the insistence that politics has a spatial element – that it "is not performed in the abstract, but is physically located somewhere, and this somewhere ... is constitutive of politics itself" – is, as Maureen Healy recently observed, one of the main achievements of the approach.[54] This is amply demonstrated by two recent studies of a single and hitherto obscure event: the gruesome and unsolved murder of an eighteen-year old grammar school boy in the West Prussian town of Konitz in March 1900. The way in which Ernst Winter's body was dissected and drained of blood led many in the local community to believe that his death was a Jewish ritual murder. Consequently, in an atmosphere of panic and rumor, the town's small Jewish population was harried and hounded by vigilantes, egged on by sections of the right-wing press, until the Prussian army was forced to intervene. For both Christoph Nonn (born 1964) and Helmut Walser Smith (born 1962) the case provides an opportunity to explore much larger questions about the relationship between Protestants, Catholics, and Jews in Wilhelmine Germany, and about the ways in which latent anti-Semitism could be instrumentalized for political ends.[55]

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[44] R. Chickering, "The quest for a usable German Empire," in R. Chickering, ed., *Imperial Germany*, p. 9.

[45] See, for instance, Karl Wegert's review of Lüdtke's *The History of Everyday Life* in the *Canadian Journal of History*, 31 (1996), pp. 157–60.

[46] H. Medick, *Weben und Überleben in Laichingen, 1650–1900. Lokalgeschichte als Allgemeine Geschichte* (Göttingen, 2001); A. Lüdtke, *Eigen-Sinn. Fabrikalltag, Arbeitererfahrungen und Politik vom Kaiserreich bis in den Faschismus* (Hamburg, 1993). In 1999 the two men became joint heads of the Max-Planck-Institute's Department for Historical Anthropology at the University of Erfurt.

[47] G. Eley, "Labour history, social history, Alltagsgeschichte," p. 319.

[48] C. Geertz, "Thick description: Toward an interpretative theory of culture," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York, 1973). It should be noted that *Alltagsgeschichte* was by no means the only area of history to reflect the influence of social anthropology in the late twentieth century: it can be found in women's and gender history, family history and *Volksgeschichte* too. Significantly, a new journal specifically for *History and Anthropology* was founded in the US in 1983. Germany's *Historische Anthropologie* followed ten years later.

[49] A. Lüdtke, "Introduction. What is the history of everyday life and who are its practitioners," p. 22.

[50] R. Berdahl, A. Lüdtke, and H. Medick, *Klassen und Kultur. Sozialanthropologische Perspektiven in der Geschichtsschreibung* (Bodenheim, 1982); H. Medick, "Wer sind die 'Missionäre im Ruderboot'? Oder: Kulturanthropologie und Alltagsgeschichte," in U. Becher and K. Bergmann, eds., *Geschichte – Nutzen oder Nachteil für das Leben?* (Düsseldorf, 1986), pp. 63–8.

[51] See W. Kaschuba, "Popular culture and workers' culture as symbolic orders. Comments on the debate about the history of culture and everyday life," in A. Lüdtke, ed., *The History of Everyday Life*, pp. 169–97.

[52] D. Crew, *Town in the Ruhr: A Social History of Bochum 1860–1914* (New York, 1979).

[53] H. Medick's *Weben und Überleben in Laichingen, 1650–1900* is actually sub-titled *Lokalgeschichte als Allgemeine Geschichte*.

The British historian G. M. Trevelyan (1876–1962) once famously quipped that social history was "the history of a people with the politics left out."[56] Some of its detractors have made much the same criticism of *Alltagsgeschichte*, although with little justification. Politics, and the exercise of power, is in fact central to much of the school's best work, even if it is not always readily apparent. This is because *Alltagsgeschichte* operates a broader definition of the political than the school of historical social science. Whereas the latter take a Weberian view of power, historians of everyday life are more influenced by Foucault, invoking a "multilayered social field" (Alf Lüdtke) or a "web of oppression, resistance, agreements, stagings, and rituals" (Dorothee Wierling), in which power relations are infinitely more complex.[57] According to this view, "*Alltag* is the domain in which people exercise a direct influence – via their behavior – on their immediate circumstances."[58] Power in the German Empire was thus wielded not only by rulers and employers, but by anonymous individuals such as the working-class patriarchs who "ruled" their wives and families, and by those small-scale exploiters and oppressors who can always be found within the ranks of the exploited and oppressed. Power was even generated by the actions of ordinary men and women in their homes, factories, and neighborhoods. This broader definition of politics brings with it both dangers as well as opportunities, as James Retallack points out: "if social history and political history diverge too far, if the politics of everyday life is not related to events of national significance, we may find ourselves trying to write the history of Germany's working classes 'with the SPD left out.'"[59]

This is a genuine concern, but there seems little risk of it occurring in the near future. Indeed, it is important to recognize that *Alltagsgeschichte* and historical social science have been able to find a measure of common ground in recent years. The Kassel-based research project "Lifeworlds (*Lebenswelten*) and Political Culture in the Years around 1900," with its focus on mentalities and perceptions, is a case in point. Its co-ordinators – Jens Flemming (born 1944), Klaus Saul (born 1939), and Peter-Christian Witt – may be late converts to *Alltagsgeschichte*, but they have already published some impressive work, including a valuable document collection on everyday life between 1871 and 1914.[60] In fact, all but the most doctrinaire proponents of historical social science would nowadays acknowledge that *Alltagsgeschichte* has made a positive impact on at least some aspects of Imperial Germany's history. This is perhaps most apparent in studies of working-class life, such as Brüggemeier's portrait of Ruhr miners, *Life at the Coalface*, or Lüdtke's acclaimed set of "miniatures" documenting the ways in which industrial workers were able to maintain a limited degree of self-will or obstinacy (*Eigen-Sinn*) in the most oppressive of political circumstances.[61] It is also evident in some of the many excellent accounts of life on the home-front during World War One, including studies of Hamburg, Berlin, and Vienna.[62]

Despite this, however, it would be fair to say that *Alltagsgeschichte* has so far promised more than it has delivered, with regard to the *Kaiserreich* at least. This is perhaps inevitable, given that history is more than just past experiences (more, even, than the sum total of all past experiences). The key is clearly to strike a balance. History requires both the general and the particular; the view "from above" and "from below." While it has proved a difficult balance to achieve, it is not impossible, as an innovative history of urban working-class housing by Adelheid von Saldern (born 1938) demonstrates.[63] Saldern's book contains two separate chapters for each chronological period, with one offering a conventional "top down" perspective – government policies, market shifts, reform movements – and the other attempting the altogether more challenging task of documenting workers' own perceptions of their homes and neighborhoods. Moreover, by ensuring that women's experiences are not overlooked either, Saldern's book can be considered an important contribution to gender history too.

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[54] M. Healey, "Review of German Studies Association conference 2003. Sessions 3 and 22: Revisiting alltagsgeschichte. Praxis in everyday life and the discipline of history," *H-German, H-Net Reviews*, October 2003. Online at: http://www.h-net.msu.edu/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=545.

[55] C. Nonn, *Eine Stadt sucht einen Mörder. Gerücht, Gewalt und Antisemitismus im Kaiserreich* (Göttingen, 2002); H. W. Smith, *The Butcher's Tale: Murder and Anti-Semitism in a German Town* (New York and London, 2002).

[56] G. M. Trevelyan, *English Social History. A Survey of Six Centuries: Chaucer to Queen Victoria* (Harmondsworth, 1967 – first published 1942), p. 9.

[57] D. Wierling, "A history of everyday life and gender relations: On historical and historiographical relationships," in A. Lüdtke, ed., *The History of Everyday Life*, p. 158.

[58] Ibid., p. 151.

[59] J. Retallack, "Wilhelmine Germany," in G. Martel, ed., *Modern Germany Reconsidered*, p. 47.

[60] J. Flemming, K. Saul, and P.-C. Witt, eds., *Quellen zur Alltagsgeschichte der Deutschen vom Mittelalter bis Heute*, vol. 7 (Darmstadt, 1997). A further volume for the First World War years is in preparation.

[61] A. Lüdtke *Eigen-Sinn*; F.-J. Brüggemeier, *Leben vor Ort. Ruhrbergleute und Ruhrbergbau 1889–1919* (Munich, 1984).

[62] V. Ullrich, *Kriegsalltag. Hamburg im ersten Weltkrieg* (Cologne, 1982); B. Davis, *Home Fires Burning. Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War One Berlin* (Chapel Hill and London, 2000); M. Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire. Total War and Everyday Life in World War One* (Cambridge, 2004).

Gendering the *Kaiserreich*?

Although the early protagonists of *Alltagsgeschichte* paid relatively little attention to women's historical experience, a number of feminist historians – Karin Hausen (born 1938), Regina Schulte (born 1949) and Dorothee Wierling (born 1950) – saw the history of everyday life as an ideal opportunity to establish gender as a central category of historical research.[64] While this did not happen overnight, by the late 1980s it was possible for Eley to state that there was "now a strong convergence" between *Alltagsgeschichte* and gender history.[65] Of course, women's history had been developing independently for some years before the emergence of *Alltagsgeschichte*, and had already done valuable work in recovering women's lost voices and experiences. It had also called into question history's conventional periodization, theories, and methods.[66]

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[63] A. von Saldern, *Häuserleben: Zur Geschichte städtischen Arbeiterwohnens vom Kaiserreich bis heute* (Bonn, 1995).

[64] K. Hausen, ed., *Frauen suchen ihre Geschichte. Historische Studien zum 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1983); D. Wierling, "Vom Mädchen zum Dienstmädchen. Kindliche Sozialisation und Beruf im Kaiserreich," in K. Bergmann and R. Schorken, eds., *Geschichte im Alltag – Alltag in der Geschichte*, pp. 57–87; R. Schulte, "Peasants and farmers' maids: female farm servants in Bavaria at the end of the nineteenth century," in R. J. Evans and W. R. Lee, eds., *The German Peasantry* (London, 1986), pp. 158–73.

[65] G. Eley, "Labour history, social history, alltagsgeschichte," p. 320.

[66] Most of the pioneers of women's history came from the English-speaking world, and some of the earliest work on German women was written in English too. See, for instance, R. Bridenthal and C. Koonz, eds., *Becoming Visible: Women in European History* (Boston, 1977); J. C. Fout, ed., *German Women in the Nineteenth Century: A Social History* (New York and London, 1984); B. Franzoi, *At The Very Least She Pays The Rent: Women and German*

By and large, however, this had occurred on the margins of the male-dominated historical profession. *Alltagsgeschichte*'s critical focus on the home and the workplace opened up new contexts in which to explore the historical experience of women in regular university seminars, as well as in women's groups and evening classes. Yet if this helped women's history in Germany to move closer to the historical mainstream – itself a problematic concept – it was not a development universally applauded in feminist circles. Its academic respectability was largely predicated on the transformation of women's history into "gender history": a form of history that had been developing in American universities since the mid-1970s, and was vigorously championed in landmark essays by Joan Kelly and Joan Scott.[67] The grammatical term "gender" was appropriated to highlight the socially-constructed nature of masculinity and femininity. These were not, it was suggested, objective descriptions of inherent traits, but fluid and unstable categories, "formed, negotiated and contested over time through discourse, language and social action."[68] The fear of some feminists, therefore, was that women's long-hidden history would again become submerged under a welter of works studying the social construction of masculinity, and "herstory" would be marginalized once more.[69] Such concerns are still aired from time to time, but have not been borne out in practice. Women's history has continued to thrive, both alongside and within gender history.[70] The relationship between gender as a social construct and sex as a physiological fact remains the subject of much

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Industrialization, 1871–1914 (Westport, 1985). The best overview of the subject, however, was written in German: U. Frevert's *Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation* (Oxford and New York, 1989), which appeared in a German edition in 1988. The first Chairs in Women's History at German universities were established in the mid- to late-1980s, for example at Bonn in 1986. By the mid-1990s there were some 20 in the state of North-Rhine Westphalia alone.

[67] J. Kelly, "The social relation of the sexes," in *Women, History and Theory* (London and Chicago, 1984), first published in 1976; J. W. Scott, "Gender: A useful category of historical analysis," *The American Historical Review*, 91 (1986), pp. 1053–75.

[68] L. Abrams and E. Harvey, "Introduction," in L. Abrams and E. Harvey, eds., *Gender Relations in German History. Power, Agency and Experience from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century* (London, 1996), p. 1.

[69] For the relationship between women's history and gender history see K. Hausen and H. Wunder, eds., *Frauengeschichte – Geschlechtergeschichte* (Frankfurt and New York, 1992); or C. Eifert et al, eds., *Was sind Männer, was sind Frauen? Geschlechterkonstruktion im historischen Wandel* (Frankfurt, 1995).

[70] Good recent overviews of gender history, its problems and achievements, are offered by H. Medick and A.-C. Trepp, eds., *Geschlechtergeschichte und Allgemeine Geschichte. Herausforderungen und Perspektiven* (Göttingen, 1998); B. G. Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice* (Cambridge, MA, 2000); M. E. Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender in History* (Oxford, 2001); L. L. Downs, *Writing Gender History* (London, 2004); and K. Canning, *Gender History in Practice. Historical Perspectives on Bodies, Class and Citizenship* (Ithaca, 2006).

debate – not least in the German speaking world, where no linguistic distinction exists between the two[71] – but gender has nevertheless become widely accepted as a category of historical analysis, far beyond the specific niche of feminist historiography. It is now the norm, for instance, for textbook surveys of the Empire to include at least a section on women or gender.[72] To be sure, these can sometimes smack of tokenism, but it is nevertheless clear that in the two decades since Scott's influential essay, historians have made considerable strides in developing a gendered perspective on the *Kaiserreich*.

One obvious starting point was the family – as a microcosm of society – and another was the world of work, in which gender was often a more significant factor than labor history had acknowledged.[73] Mirroring late nineteenth-century attitudes, work and domestic life have often been treated as two distinct and separate spheres, but in the 1990s historians such as Mary Jo Maynes (born 1949) and Kathleen Canning began to conceive them as part of a single experiential continuum. Maynes' comparative study of *French and German Workers' Autobiographies in the Era of Industrialization* and Canning's *Languages of Labor and Gender: Female Factory Work in Germany 1850–1914*, both combined elements of gender history, *Alltagsgeschichte*, and the new cultural history in strikingly innovative ways.[74] If Maynes' study was inevitably constrained by its

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[71] In German the word *Geschlecht* connotes both sex and gender.

[72] Berghahn's *Imperial Germany* has a chapter entitled "Women and men" (pp. 65–78), and Retallack's *Germany in the Age of Kaiser Wilhelm II* has a section on "Gender and sexuality" (pp. 61–4), although there is nothing on gender in Feuchtwanger's *Imperial Germany*, or in Seligmann and McLean's *Germany from Reich to Republic*. Interestingly, Chickering's *Historiographical Companion* opts to confront the theme "across the many chapters in which it figures centrally," rather than have a specific chapter on gender.

[73] J. Quataert, "The politics of rural industrialization: Class, gender, and collective protest in the Saxon Oberlausitz of the late nineteenth century," *Central European History*, 20 (1987), pp. 91–124; S. Meyer, "The tiresome work of conspicuous leisure: On the domestic duties of the wives of civil servants in the German Empire," in M. Boxer and J. Quataert, eds., *Connecting Spheres* (New York and Oxford, 1987), pp. 156–65; D. Wierling, *Mädchen für alles. Arbeitsalltag und Lebensgeschichte städtischer Dienstmädchen um die Jahrhundertwende* (Berlin, 1987); D. S. Linton, "Between school and marriage: Young working women as a social problem in late imperial Germany," *European History Quarterly*, 18 (1988), pp. 387–408; U. Daniel, *Arbeiterfrauen in der Kriegsgesellschaft: Beruf, Familie und Politik im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen, 1989); L. Abrams, "Martyrs or matriarchs? Working-class women's experience of marriage in Germany before the First World War, *Women's History Review*, 1 (1992), pp. 81–100; S. Schmitt, *Der Arbeiterinnenschutz im Deutschen Kaiserreich: zur Konstruktion der schutzbedürftigen Arbeiterin* (Stuttgart, 1995); C. E. Adams, *Women Clerks in Wilhelmine Germany* (Cambridge, 1998).

[74] M. J. Maynes, *Taking the Hard Road: Life Courses in French and German Workers' Autobiographies in the Era of Industrialization* (Chapel Hill, 1995); K. Canning, *Languages of Labor and Gender: Female Factory Work in Germany, 1850–1914* (Ithaca, 1996).

source material – 90 published autobiographies – Canning's book was able to utilize a much wider range of sources, including company personnel records, factory inspectors' reports, and police files. By focusing on female workers in the Rhenish-Wesphalian textile industry, the Michigan historian sought to address an area of labor history that has been generally neglected by historical social science, despite its "occasional concession to the history of experience or *Alltag*."[75] The aforementioned series on *Workers and the Labor Movement in Germany since the end of the 18th Century* was cited by Canning as an example of the way in which German historians have continued to exclude female workers, "implicitly or explicitly," from their analyses. The reason for this, she suggested, is that women are difficult to accommodate within "the decisive domain of German labor history" – class – and in particular the "levels" model of class formation favored by historical social science. Her response, informed by one of the great scholarly debates of the late twentieth century (the so-called "linguistic turn"), was that concepts such as class should not be regarded as merely reflective of social reality, but constitutive of it too. Consequently, she suggested, the careful use of discourse analysis could "retrieve" the lost voices of female workers.[76] We shall return to the "linguistic turn" later, but Canning's award-winning book certainly highlighted a growing "Atlantic divide" between English- and German-language approaches to social and cultural history.

Just as the dichotomy between the home and the workplace has been shown up as a nineteenth-century social construct, so gender historians have begun to break down the traditional distinction between "private" and "public" spheres, which was in fact "more prescriptive than descriptive" (Nancy Reagin).[77] The particular difficulties involved in assessing women's public role at a time when they were denied the vote, were explored in an important 1990s essay by Eve Rosenhaft (born 1951). The Liverpool-based historian noted that "[t]he tendency of empirical research up to now has been to establish the role of women in politics as a positively charged absence ... in order to find women in politics, historians have had to expand the definition of politics."[78] Although Rosenhaft's conclusion may have appeared somewhat downbeat – "It may well be that the best we can hope for from political history is an account that regretfully and self-consciously excludes women"[79] – her essay offered substantial evidence that women can be found in nineteenth-century German politics, provided that the different character of women's politics is recognized.

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[75] Ibid., pp. 5–6.

[76] Ibid., pp. 8–10.

[77] N. Reagin, "The imagined *Hausfrau*: National identity, domesticity, and colonialism in imperial Germany," *Journal of Modern History*, 73 (2001), p. 56.

[78] E. Rosenhaft, "Women, gender, and the limits of political history," in L. E. Jones and J. Retallack, eds., *Elections, Mass Politics and Social Change in Modern Germany*, p. 150.

Margaret Anderson's research on Imperial Germany's Catholic community, for example, has highlighted how "[w]omen and girls were active in the resistance to the *Kulturkampf*, thronging cathedral squares in demonstrations, collecting signatures on statements of solidarity, holding sit-down strikes, and at one point requiring the intervention of the army."[80] Anderson argues that "while accepting the premise that ballots were to be cast by men, the Catholic milieu insisted that politics concerned everyone."[81] Political Catholicism might not be the first place one would expect to find women's activism, but it did not appear out of the blue. In the 1840s Catholic and non-conformist women had had their own lively debates on the national question,[82] and a recent study by the American historian Michael Gross (born 1961) has offered a specific explanation for the female mobilization of the 1870s. According to Gross, the *Kulturkampf* was highly gendered from the start: in liberal discourse the Church repeatedly appeared as a meddling old woman, while the state was conceived as a vigorous young man. German liberals were, therefore, happy to support the "War against Catholicism" because the "irrational," "emotional," and "feminine," Church threatened their masculine worldview, with its neat gender-specific division into public and private spheres. "For German liberals," Gross suggests, "the women's question and the 'Catholic problem' were one and the same."[83] Given the growing numbers of female teachers, nurses, and welfare workers – not to mention nuns – within the Catholic milieu at this time, it is a plausible thesis, and one which has been supported by Derek Hastings, Geoff Eley, and others.

Of course, women's activism on behalf of the Catholic Center Party remained constrained within clear limits. In the German Empire women's inferior status was not just a matter of popular prejudice or convention, they were subordinate to men in almost every area of society: education; marriage; property; citizenship rights; and the law. Even so, one must be wary of assuming that because they were denied the vote, German women

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[79] Ibid.

[80] M. L. Anderson, *Practicing Democracy*, p. 126.

[81] At election time, for instance, it was routine for Catholic newspapers to appeal to female readers to help get out the vote. See ibid, p. 128.

[82] S. Paletschek, *Frauen und Dissens: Frauen im Deutschkatholizismus und in den freien Gemeinden, 1841–52* (Göttingen, 1989).

[83] M. B. Gross, *The War against Catholicism. Liberalism and the Anti-Catholic Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Ann Arbor, 2004), pp. 196–7.

were also denied a voice. While the language of German politics and identity remained strongly gendered throughout the nineteenth (and well into the twentieth) century, this did not mean that women were entirely absent from the public sphere. Gossip on tenement stairs and over garden fences can be seen as one way in which women regularly participated in some kind of public discourse; literature, the arts, and journalism offered opportunities for middle-class women too. It has been estimated, for instance, that around 6,000 female writers were active in Germany during the second half of the nineteenth century, and some were extremely successful.[84]

By the 1890s, moreover, women in Imperial Germany were the focus of several key debates – on the protection of female industrial workers through new social legislation; on prostitution and public health; and on their civil and legal rights – and were much more than silent bystanders. Indeed, in the public discussion of the proposed new Civil Code (*Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*) of 1896–1900, women's organizations made detailed submissions to the official drafting commission, and whipped up a storm of protests in the so-called *Frauenlandsturm* when it became apparent that women's subordinate legal status was going to be retained.[85] Moreover, though it is often claimed that women were barred by law from all political gatherings until the celebrated Imperial Law of Assembly and Association of 1908, Anderson has shown that the reality was more complex: "Women were never legally excluded from political clubs and assemblies in Württemberg, Baden, Hessen, Saxe-Meiningen, Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, the Hanse city-states, and some of the other smaller polities. After 1898 their presence was permitted in Bavaria as well," she notes, and in 1902 women were even permitted to attend election rallies in conservative Prussia: "provided that some kind of barrier – which might be no more than a line of chalk or a piece of string – segregated the sexes."[86] Although Anderson is probably guilty of exaggerating the level of female participation, the history of women in German politics is certainly no longer just a bleak compendium of patriarchy, discrimination, and subordination. The emphasis is on female agency, strategy, and empowerment: to chart how working-class women in wartime Berlin, for example, were able "as consumers, producers, reproducers, and political agents" to achieve "significant political ends";[87] or to show how female-led consumer protests – including boycotts of individual shops and tradesmen[88] – became one of the SPD's most effective political weapons.[89]

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[84] H. Scheuer, ed., *Naturalismus. Bürgerliche Dichtung und soziales Engagement* (Stuttgart, 1974), p. 136.

[85] See E. Rosenhaft, "Women, gender, and the limits of political history," p. 152. Similar protests occurred over the 1913 Citizenship Law: see E. Nathans, *The Politics of Citizenship in Germany. Ethnicity, Utility and Nationalism* (Oxford, 2004).

[86] M. L. Anderson, *Practicing Democracy*, pp. 297–8.

Such studies of women's "spontaneous" political activism have to some extent deflected interest away from Germany's organized women's movement: the largest in the world at the end of the nineteenth century, albeit one divided into bourgeois, socialist, and Jewish factions.[90] Yet even here the historiography continues to grow at an impressive rate, with works not only on the various women's organizations,[91] but also on the misogynistic backlash they provoked, and the pseudo-scientific demonization of women that developed in certain circles of German society at the end of the nineteenth century.[92] The virulent strain of anti-feminine sentiment in Wilhelmine Germany – which was as widespread among liberals as it was conservatives – may partly explain why most German women's organizations famously chose not to follow British suffragism in prioritizing the campaign for full voting rights. However, it was not simply for tactical reasons that the principal umbrella group for Germany's bourgeois women's movement – the League of German Women's Associations (*Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine*, or BDF) – instead sought political recognition on the basis of women's own unique contribution to society, through motherhood and the caring professions. Emancipation, the BDF argued, should not be confused with conformity to male standards: "motherly" policies were required to humanize the family and society at large. Although this has often led to the BDF being portrayed as a "tepid movement ... based on notions of distinct male and female values, contributions, and proper roles,"[93] many early German feminists were undoubtedly sincere in their conviction that women should be treated as equal but different. Thus while this "maternalist" approach has been portrayed as fundamentally conservative by historians such as Richard Evans and Claudia Koonz – with the latter even suggesting a line of continuity between the ideals of early German feminism and National Socialism[94] – a powerful revisionist view of the German women's movement has also developed in recent years.

Ann Taylor Allen, for instance, has highlighted significant ways in which the bourgeois women's movement of Wilhelmine Germany might even be seen as more radical than its Anglo-Saxon counterparts, pointing out that a number of contemporary feminists have also moved away from a narrow "equal rights" agenda to reassert the value of "maternal thinking."[95] Just as in the Empire, many women today "have begun creating their own space of action, places where they set the standards themselves and where they are able to develop feminine individuality, interests and talents unfettered by male competition and dominance," as Ute Frevert puts it.[96] At the same time, Elisabeth Meyer-Renschhausen has argued that women's morality campaigns at the turn of the century were far from a tame alternative to real political engagement, but a "manifestation of a genuinely feminist, woman-centred politics which challenged the social as well as the gender order."[97] Two things are undisputed: the radicalism of at least some early German feminists was undoubtedly down-played by the conservative women who wrote the first histories of the movement in the 1920s; and second, the BDF did adopt a distinctly more cautious line in the years before World War One. Ironically, as Evans has shown, it was an important emancipatory reform – the Imperial Law of Assembly and Association – that was largely responsible for the latter change. Many moderate women who had previously shied away from political campaigning joined women's associations in the aftermath of 1908, and succeeded in outvoting the radicals.[98]

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[87] B. Davis, *Home Fires Burning*, p. 3.

[88] M. L. Anderson, *Practicing Democracy*, p. 324.

[89] C. Nonn, *Verbraucherprotest und Parteiensystem im wilhelminischen Deutschland*. (Düsseldorf, 1996).

[90] The Jewish Women's Federation was a member of the bourgeois BDF, but generally pursued specifically Jewish aims. See M. A. Kaplan, *The Jewish Feminist Movement in Germany: The Campaigns of the Jüdischer Frauenbund 1904–38* (Westport, 1979).

[91] R. J. Evans, *The Feminist Movement in Germany 1894–1933*; J. Quataert, *Reluctant Feminists in German Social Democracy, 1885–1917* (Princeton, 1979); B. Greven-Aschoff, *Die bürgerliche Frauenbewegung in Deutschland 1894–1933* (Göttingen, 1981); C. Sachße, *Mütterlichkeit als Beruf: Sozialarbeit, Sozialreform und Frauenbewegung, 1871–1929* (Frankfurt, 1986); I. Stoehr, *Emanzipation zum Staat? Der Allgemeine Deutsche Frauenverein – Deutsche Staatsbürgerinnenverband, 1893–1933* (Pfaffenweiler, 1990); N. R. Reagin, *A German Women's Movement: Class and Gender in Hanover, 1880–1933* (Chapel Hill, 1995); E. R. Dickinson, "Reflections on feminism and monism in the kaiserreich, 1890–1913," *Central European History*, 34, 2 (2001), pp. 191–230.

[92] U. Planert, *Antifeminismus im Kaiserreich: Diskurs, soziale Formation und politische Mentalität* (Göttingen, 1988); M. Stibbe, "Anti-feminism, nationalism, and the German right, 1914–20: A reappraisal," *German History*, 20 (2002), pp. 185–210.

[93] J. Quataert, "Introduction 2: Writing the history of women and gender in imperial Germany," in G. Eley, ed., *Society, Culture and the State in Germany*, p. 52.

[94] C. Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics* (London, 1987).

[95] A. T. Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood in Germany* (New Brunswick, 1991), p. 244.

[96] U. Frevert, *Women in German History*, p. 2.

[97] Quoted by E. Rosenhaft, "Women in modern Germany," in G. Martel, ed., *Modern Germany Reconsidered*, p. 152.

[98] R. J. Evans, "Liberalism and society: The feminist movement and social change," in *Rethinking German History*, p. 238.

Despite the seemingly international character of the women's movement in the years around 1900 – the International Council of Women was founded in 1888, the International Women's Suffrage Alliance in 1904, the Socialist Women's International in 1907, and International Women's Day in 1910 – a particular focus of recent research has been the role of gender in nationalism. Significantly, Imperial Germany's biggest women's organization was the Patriotic Women's Association, which saw the care of wounded soldiers as its principal priority and had half a million members by 1913.[99] The theme of gender and nationalism has been the focus of a number of broad-based conceptual works and more detailed case studies in the past decade or so, although it is still very much a field in its infancy.[100] The works published so far highlight the way in which the modern nation was conceived metaphorically as a family (*Volksfamilie*), to which the utmost devotion was required. As in "real" families, there was to be a strict separation of male and female roles: this usually began with the king and queen – the "father" and "mother" of the nation – and extended down to their humblest subjects or "children," who were expected to fight and die, or to breed, care, and mourn, depending on their sex.[101] Despite the veneer of equality provided by the notion of separate and specific roles, the fact that women were not expected to serve militarily provided a useful justification for the denial of the female franchise. In the nineteenth century the "body of the nation" (*Volkskörper*) was invariably imagined as male, and explicit connections were made between national strength and masculinity. The language ("mother tongue") and iconography of nation-states were highly gendered too, as the figures of Britannia, Marianne, and Germania clearly testify. The "nationalization of the masses,"[102] which began during the constitutive phase of modern nation-states, therefore involved a nationalization of the gender order as well. Much of this may seem self-evident, but it is easy to forget that relatively recent and highly-acclaimed studies of modern nationalism, such as John Breuilly's *Nationalism and the State* or Eric Hobsbawm's *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, ignore the dimension of gender entirely.[103] For many historians of the German Empire it was only in 1990, at a conference held in Philadelphia under the programmatic title "The *Kaiserreich* in the 1990s: New Research, New Directions, New Agendas," that gender became a central focus of debate. A collection of papers from the conference was published under the editorship of Geoff Eley,[104] whose interest in gender issues had first developed in the 1980s, and led to a flurry of publications in the 1990s and 2000s.[105]

Although women were excluded from the gymnastic, shooting, and choral societies that feature so prominently in the history of early German nationalism, they still made a contribution to the "construction" of the nation. Louise Otto's pioneering General German Women's Association of 1865, for instance, was launched in Leipzig on the anniversary of the Battle of Leipzig, the so-called *Völkerschlacht* of 1813.[106] There were also "national" organizations specifically for women, such as the aforementioned Patriotic Women's Association (founded by Prussia's Queen Augusta in 1866), the German Women's Association for the Eastern Marches (1895), the German Women's Navy League (1905), and the Women's League of the German Colonial Society (1907).[107] Attention among gender historians, however, has tended to focus not on the voluntary associations and festivals associated with the male-dominated public sphere, but on a different set of symbolic practices. In a 2001 essay, for example, Nancy Reagin (born 1960) investigated "how national identity was projected into the household." Using housekeeping advice literature to chart "the emergence of collective identity among bourgeois German women" – or, in homage to Benedict Anderson, "the imagined community of German *Hausfrauen*" – she showed how a "nationalized domesticity" was formed after 1871, in "opposition to or contrast with (imagined) foreigners."[108] These foreigners were as likely to be African as British or French, for in the age of imperialism European gender norms were exported around the globe and instrumentalized in the service of colonial ambition. "Nations," in Ruth Pierson's phrase, "came to be perceived as not only gendered but also 'raced.' "[109] Colonialist discourse indulged in a "feminization of the other," and issues such as interracial marriage, miscegenation, and male sexual privilege grew in prominence.[110] Nowhere was this more apparent than in the debates provoked by the horrific actions of Imperial Germany's controversial colonial pioneer Carl Peters, who hanged one of his black African mistresses in an act of apparent sexual jealousy.[111]

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[99] See J. Quataert, *Staging Philanthropy: Patriotic Women and the National Imagination in Dynastic Germany, 1813–1916* (Ann Arbor, 2001).

[100] I. Blom, K. Hagemann, and C. Hall, eds., *Gendered Nations. Nationalisms and Gender Order in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 2000); U. Planert, ed., *Nation, Politik, Geschlecht. Frauenbewegungen und Nationalismus in der Moderne* (Frankfurt and New York, 2000); S. Küster: "Inklusion und Exklusion: Nationsbildung und Geschlecht in Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert," in D. Münkel and J. Schwarzkopf, eds., *Geschichte als Experiment. Studien zu Politik, Kultur und Alltag im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Festschrift für Adelheid von Saldern* (Frankfurt and New York, 2004).

[101] These ideas are explored by Karen Hagemann in her study of Prussia at the time of the Napoleonic Wars, *"Männlicher Muth und Teutsche Ehre": Nation, Militär und Geschlecht zur Zeit der Antinapoleonischen Kriege Preußens* (Paderborn, 2002).

[102] G. L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses* (New York, 1975); G. L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York, 1985).

[103] J. Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 2nd ed. (Manchester, 1993); E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, 1990).

[104] G. Eley, ed., *Society, Culture and the State in Germany*.

[105] Most recently: G. Eley, "Culture, nation, and gender," in I. Blom, K. Hagemann, and C. Hall, eds., *Gendered Nations*, pp. 27–40; G. Eley, "Frauen und der geschlechtsbezogene nationale Staatsbürgerstatus in Deutschland 1860–1914," in D. Münkel and J. Schwarzkopf, eds., *Geschichte als Experiment*, pp. 217–26.

[106] S. Berger, *Inventing the Nation: Germany* (London, 2004), p. 58.

[107] See R. Chickering, "'Casting their gaze more broadly': Women's patriotic activism in imperial Germany," *Past and Present*, 118 (1988), pp. 156–85; A. Schaser, "Women in a nation of men: The politics of the League of German Women's Associations (BDF) in imperial Germany, 1894–1914," in I. Blom, K. Hagemann, and C. Hall, eds., *Gendered Nations*, pp. 249–68.

From its earliest days, gender history has also shown an understandable interest in sexuality and the body, with numerous studies of contraception, abortion, rape, and prostitution. Under Imperial Germany's Criminal Code, abortion was illegal (even in the case of rape), and those found guilty of performing or assisting in such operations faced up to five years imprisonment. As Evans notes, this was typical of the era's double standard in questions of sexual morality: "according to which women were responsible for the consequences of sexual intercourse but men were not."[112] Similarly, women merely suspected of prostitution were forced to undergo a compulsory medical examination at the hands of the dreaded "Morals Police" (*Sittenpolizei*), whereas their male clients faced no such humiliation. This double standard colored much of the Civil Code; not least the section on divorce, which was only to be granted in very limited circumstances. From the mid-1980s onwards, much of the historiography in this area has been strongly influenced by the work of Foucault, who saw the body itself as a construction of discursive practice, and therefore also subject to historical change.[113] Indeed, in the wake of Foucault, a whole new sub-discipline of "body history" (*Körpergeschichte*) has developed on European and North American university campuses, with a

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[108] N. Reagin, "The imagined hausfrau, pp. 57, 68.

[109] R. R. Pierson, "Nations: Gendered, racialized, crossed with empire," in I. Blom, K. Hagemann, and C. Hall, eds., *Gendered Nations*, p. 42.

[110] L. Wildenthal, " 'She is the victor': Bourgeois women, nationalist identities, and the ideal of the independent woman farmer in German South West Africa," in G. Eley, ed., *Society, Culture and the State in Germany*, pp. 371–96; L. Wildenthal, *German Women for Empire, 1884–1945* (Durham, NC, 2001); S. Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family and Nation in Precolonial Germany 1770–1870* (Durham, NC, 1997).

[111] A. Perras, *Carl Peters and German Imperialism 1856–1918. A Political Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

[112] R. J. Evans, *The Feminist Movement in Germany*, p. 16.

[113] M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (Harmondsworth, 1978).

particular stronghold in Germany.[114] Its growing importance was recognized in a special edition of the journal *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* in the year 2000.[115] While some historians may harbor suspicions of what is undoubtedly a fashionable area of research, it is clear that many of Wilhelmine Germany's aspirations and insecurities were projected on to the body. The steely self-discipline displayed by the Empire's gymnasts, body-builders, and early naturists; the fears of physical weakness apparent in turn-of-the-century discourses on "nervousness," hygiene," and "degeneracy"; together with the social and cultural impact of mutilated soldiers returning from the trenches, have all been the subject of recent studies.[116]

Foucault's influence can also be seen in the first attempts to address the development of normative ideals of masculinity in historical perspective. Joan Scott once observed that "[p]olitical history has ... been enacted on the field of gender,"[117] yet though men have traditionally been the focus of historical research – first in the arenas of war, diplomacy, and high politics; later in trade unions and factories – the gender dimension remained largely unseen. It is only in recent years that historians have begun to look at ways in which society and its institutions gendered men as well as women. For the most part, this work has so far focused on areas of "hegemonial masculinity" – such as the military, the duel, and the national gymnastics movement – rather than on areas in which men and women interacted.[118] It is likely, however, that future studies will place a greater emphasis on the relations *between* constructions of masculinity and femininity. There have also been studies of the nascent homosexual rights movement in Wilhelmine Germany and suggestion of an alleged "crisis of masculinity" in the years around 1900, which came to a head in the bitter controversy surrounding the Kaiser's confidante Philipp Eulenburg.[119] Whether one accepts the notion of a Wilhelmine "crisis of masculinity" or not, it seems clear that established notions of a stable gender order were indeed plunged into chaos by the events of 1914–18, as revealed all too graphically in Klaus Theweleit's remarkable and compelling study of *Male Fantasies*.[120]

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[114] Good introductions to "body history" include M. Lorenz, *Leibhaftige Vergangenheit. Einführung in die Körpergeschichte* (Tübingen, 2000); C. Wischermann and S. Haas, eds., *Körper mit Geschichte* (Stuttgart, 2000); P. Sarasin, *Reizbare Maschinen. Eine Geschichte des Körpers 1765–1914* (Frankfurt, 2001).

[115] *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 26 (2000) 4, edited by U. Frevert. An English-language journal, *Body and Society*, was founded in 1995.

[116] M. Krüger, *Körperkultur und Nationsbildung: Geschichte des Turnens in der Reichsgründungsära* (Schorndorf, 1996); S. Goltermann, *Körper der Nation. Habitusformierung und die Politik des Turnens 1860–1890* (Göttingen, 1998); S. Illig, *Zwischen Körperertüchtigung und nationaler Bewegung. Turnvereine in Bayern 1860–1890* (Cologne, 1998); M. Hau, *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany. A Social History, 1890–1930* (Chicago, 2003); C. Ross, *Naked Germany. Health, Race and the Nation* (Oxford, 2005).

[117] J. W. Scott, "Gender: A useful category of historical analysis," p. 1074.

[118] K. McAleer, *Dueling. The Cult of Honor in Fin-de-Siecle Germany* (Princeton, 1994); U. Frevert, *Men of Honour* (Cambridge, 1995); U. Frevert, *A Nation in Barracks: Modern Germany, Military Conscription and Civil Society* (Oxford, 2004); T. Kühne, ed., *Männergeschichte – Geschlechtergeschichte: Männlichkeit im Wandel der Moderne* (Frankfurt, 1996); R. Schilling, *"Kriegshelden": Deutungsmuster heroischer Männlichkeit in Deutschland 1813–1945* (Paderborn, 2002).

How Do We "Read" Imperial Germany After the Cultural Turn?

The loss of faith in progress and other "grand narratives," together with the concomitant boom in identity politics during the late 1970s and early 1980s, formed the backdrop not only to the birth of *Alltagsgeschichte* and gender history, but also to the rise of "culture" as a new historical paradigm. Indeed, in a customarily vigorous broadside from 1996, Hans-Ulrich Wehler claimed that "all avant-garde scholars of *Alltagsgeschichte* in Germany have long ago switched to the new 'cultural history.'"[121] While Wehler was correct to point to the close ties between these approaches, which can and do overlap, his attempt to dismiss them as ephemeral fads was disappointingly narrow-minded. A glance at any academic publishers' current catalogue should be sufficient to prove him wrong. The much-discussed "cultural turn" in historical studies has profoundly influenced the historiography of the *Kaiserreich*. Indeed, much of the best work done on the Empire in recent times can be placed under this heading, whose definition has been disputed with almost as much vigor as that of culture itself, but which has nevertheless become indispensable to publishers and historians alike.[122]

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[119] J. C. Fout, "Sexual politics in Wilhelmine Germany: The male gender crisis, moral purity, and homophobia," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 2 (1992), pp. 388–421; E. R. Dickinson, "The men's morality movement in Germany, 1880–1914: Some reflections on sex, politics, and sexual politics," *Journal of Modern History*, 75 (2003), pp. 59–110.

[120] K. Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, 2 vols, (Cambridge, 1987–9), first published in German in 1977–8.

[121] H.-U. Wehler, "A guide to future research on the Kaiserreich?," *Central European History*, 29 (1996), p. 548.

[122] On the definition of cultural history see P. Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History* (Cambridge, 1997); P. Burke, *What is Cultural History?* (Cambridge, 2004); G. Eley, "What is cultural history?," *New German Critique* 65 (1995), pp. 19–36.

For a long time, cultural history was regarded as "a Cinderella among the disciplines, neglected by its more successful sisters."[123] In 1882 the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche had lamented: "hitherto all that has given color to existence has lacked a history: where would one find a history of love, of avarice, of envy, of conscience, of piety, of cruelty? ... The customs of the learned, of trades-people, of artists, and of mechanics – have they already found their thinkers?"[124] To its admirers, the new cultural history represented nothing less than an attempt to fill this gap: to create a history of "all that has given color to existence." Its antecedents were many and varied. Among Nietzsche's contemporaries, Jacob Burckhardt and Karl Lamprecht probably came closest to addressing the philosopher's concerns, with their interest in "the recurrent, the constant, and the typical," although both were more concerned with capturing the "spirit of an age" (*Zeitgeist*).[125] Burckhardt, like the early twentieth-century Dutch historian Johan Huizinga, focused principally on the arts and ideas, or in the latter's words: "figures, motifs, themes, symbols, concepts, ideas, styles, and sentiments."[126] Neither, however, paid much attention to the social and economic conditions that spawned them. Mid-twentieth century Marxists, such as Francis Klingender and Arnold Hauser, attempted to address this shortcoming by developing a new form of cultural history – or, more properly, a social history of culture – which considered not only the cultural superstructure, but the economic base as well. By attempting to reduce culture to a simple product of social and economic forces, however, these authors' works went too far in the other direction. After all, culture is not just "formed" by society; it is a social force in its own right. As less orthodox Marxists such as E. P. Thompson, Raymond Williams, and Eric Hobsbawm showed in the 1960s, books, buildings, and other products of material culture do not simply "illustrate" or "reflect" reality, but can constitute an active force in shaping that reality.

Dissatisfied with the rigid Marxist terminology of base and superstructure, a number of historians with an interest in culture began to move away from social history and to turn instead to anthropology. This offered what Peter Burke calls "an alternative way to link culture to society, one that did not reduce it to a reflection of society or a superstructure."[127] Anthropologists, moreover, defined the notoriously "clumpish" "c"-word in a broader, more everyday way than historians had traditionally dared. Culture was no longer just concerts and paintings, but "the whole complex of signifying practices and symbolic processes in a particular society."[128] As such it had already been embraced by the pioneers of the new discipline of cultural studies, who wanted to examine popular culture with the same seriousness and scholarly rigor as the products of "high" culture. By the early 1980s the cognoscenti were beginning to talk of a paradigm shift from the social to the cultural or, in Roger Chartier's phrase, "from the social history of culture to the cultural history of society."[129] Since French historians – and English-speaking historians of France – had been at the forefront of moves to "anthropologize" or "culturalize" history, it was no surprise that the book that came to embody the new approach, and belatedly gave it a name, emerged from a 1987 conference on "French History: Texts and Culture" at the University of California. Edited by Lynn Hunt, *The New Cultural History* was a heterogeneous collection of essays, reflecting a wide range of methodological and theoretical influences from anthropology to semiotics and poststructuralist literary theory.[130] Underpinning the whole collection was an awareness of the shortcomings of earlier approaches, a strong interest in theory, and a desire to draw attention to the multiplicity of possible historical perspectives. The goal was, in Patricia O'Brien's words, "a history of culture that can neither be reduced to the product of social and economic transformations nor return to a world of ideas cut free of them."[131] In practice this meant following the example of cultural studies in examining a very wide range of "texts" and by paying as much attention to their transmission and reception as to their creation. It also meant questioning the historian's general assumption that the social context of a particular cultural product is more "real" than the text itself. As the American intellectual historian Dominick LaCapra put it, "the context itself is a text of sorts."[132]

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[123] P. Burke, *What is Cultural History?*, p. 1.

[124] F. Nietzsche, *The Joyful Wisdom*, translated by T. Common, (New York, 1974), p. 42.

[125] Burckhardt quoted by P. Burke, *What is Cultural History?*, p. 8.

[126] Huizinga quoted by P. Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History*, p. 184.

[127] P. Burke, *What is Cultural History?*, p. 40.

The interdisciplinary spirit and theoretical verve of the new cultural history were widely praised. By encouraging historians to rethink their conceptual frameworks and revise their writing strategies the new approach certainly had an invigorating effect. Yet from the start there were also warning voices. As early as 1982, Kocka cautioned against an

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[128] T. Eagleton quoted by G. Eley, "What is Cultural History?," p. 24.

[129] Quoted in Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?*, p. 74.

[130] L. Hunt, ed., *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley, 1989).

[131] P. O'Brien, "Foucault's history of culture," in L. Hunt, *The New Cultural History*, p. 26.

[132] Quoted by L. S. Kramer, "Literature, criticism, and historical imagination," in L. Hunt, *The New Cultural History*, p. 114.

"impractical inflation" of the concept of culture,[133] which was becoming apparent in the proliferation of terms such as "gun culture," "visual culture," and even "cappuccino culture." Wehler bemoaned the new cultural history's "political abstinence" and accused it of making "the wildest generalizations about love, passion, and identity on the basis of a handful of texts."[134] "For every successful study," he suggested, "there are a dozen works that are only swimming along on the cultural tide; cultivating a modish verbiage of difference and deconstruction, discourse and identity; feeling released from the tight methodological constraints of the discipline of history and turning instead to a refined form of literary journalese."[135] Kocka and Wehler were by no means the only members of the German historians' guild to identify a lack of methodological stringency as the critical weakness of the new cultural history. Indeed, for many the term quickly became a synonym for the impressionistic and the anecdotal. Yet as Peter Jelavich – himself a leading cultural historian of Imperial Germany – pointed out in the mid-1990s, this was hard to avoid. Working in the "no-man's-land" between the humanities and the sciences, historians can often find themselves methodologically exposed, but the problem is particularly acute for cultural historians because the humanities "have traditionally focused on interpretation, on 'pure' textuality, while historians are concerned with change over time, which invariably involves contexts and causality." The only solution for the cultural historian, Jelavich suggested, was "to combine interpretation and causal explanation without collapsing the one into the other."[136]

Nowhere was the new cultural history more provocative than on the issue of language. Indeed, for some the "cultural turn" was overshadowed by an even more significant paradigm shift, which had first reared its head in the late 1960s and had returned with a vengeance in the 1980s: the so-called "linguistic turn."[137] The role of language in constituting social reality was undoubtedly one of the most difficult questions to face historians in the late twentieth century, although some aspects of its agenda were easier to accept than others. Few would nowadays dispute that history's own keywords – "class," "citizen," "nation," "state," – are cultural constructs and, therefore, inherently unstable. Similarly, few historians would deny the use of story-telling techniques, such as emplotment, in the architecture of their works. On the other hand, to dissolve history into an unending multiplicity of equally valid stories, or to argue that the past itself is merely a linguistic construction, would be regarded by most historians as a metaphor too far.[138] Whatever one's view on these thorny issues, however, it was certainly ironic that the new cultural history's engagement with the issue of language was characterized by an unusually dense or even opaque vocabulary. As Russell Jacoby observed wryly, "[t]he concentration on language and texts by the new intellectual historians ignores language and texts – their own."[139]

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[133] J. Kocka, "Klassen oder Kultur," *Merkur*, 36 (1982), pp. 955–65.

[134] H.-U. Wehler, *Historisches Denken am Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts*, pp. 57–8.

[135] Ibid., p. 66.

[136] P. Jelavich, "Method. What method? Confessions of a failed structuralist," *New German Critique*, 65 (1995), p. 76.

[137] P. Burke, *What is Cultural History?*, p. 76; G. Eley, "Is all the world text? From social history to the history of society two decades later," in T. McDonald, ed., *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences* (Ann Arbor, 1996), pp. 193–243; G. Eley, "Problems with culture: German history after the linguistic turn," *Central European History*, 31 (1998), pp. 197–227.

While an excessive use of terms such as "metaphors" and "discursive fields" may have given the unfortunate impression that history was developing into a branch of linguistics, those who hoped that the new cultural history would be revealed as a case of the emperor's new clothes were to be disappointed. Despite its initially hostile reception, the guild responded to the "challenge" of cultural history with a host of conferences, books, and journal editions; by no means wholly skeptical in tone. Even Wehler eventually acknowledged that the rise of cultural history marked a shift as significant as the turn to historical social science in the late 1960s.[140] The Bielefeld School's acceptance of cultural history may only have been partial – accepting some strands while rejecting others – but it was more than "an exercise in damage control."[141] In fact one could argue that cultural history has today become the dominant trend within the German historians' guild. Certainly, the proportion of young German historians employing its methods is broadly in line with the English-speaking world, where it acts as a welcoming umbrella under which almost any area of historical research can shelter; or, to borrow another metaphor, a black hole into which all areas of history can be sucked. As Eley has noted, "all sorts of diverse subject matters got subsumed under the rubric of social history during the 1970s, just as all sorts are being gathered beneath the banner of cultural history today."[142] These include such disparate topics as the history of travel and tourism,[143]

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[138] H. White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, 1973); R. J. Evans, *In Defence of History* (London, 1997).

[139] Quoted by R. J. Evans, ibid., p. 69.

[140] H.-U. Wehler, "Kommentar," in T. Mergel and T. Welskopp, eds., *Geschichte zwischen Kultur und Gesellschaft: Beiträge zur Theoriedebatte* (Munich, 1997), p. 351.

[141] G. Eley, "Problems with culture," p. 217.

[142] G. Eley, "Forum," *German History*, 22 (2004), p. 241.

[143] R. Koshar, *German Travel Cultures* (Oxford, 2000); A. Schmidt, *Reisen in die Moderne: Der Amerika-Diskurs des deutschen Bürgertums vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg im europäischen Vergleich* (Berlin, 1997).

sport,[144] the media,[145] knowledge and collecting (whether in museums, galleries, or zoos),[146] and of the city as a "text" or "spectacle,"[147] not to mention many other aspects of both high and popular culture.[148] The historicity of identity, taste, emotion, memory, and imagination are underlying themes in many of these works. Imagination, in particular, has provided a fashionable twist to countless book titles over the past two decades, while the current boom in memory studies will be addressed in the final section of this book.[149]

Cultural history's most important contribution to our understanding of the German Empire, however, lies elsewhere. For all its merits, the structural approach of historical social science was poorly suited to making those elusive but vital connections between the sphere of politics and culture, and this is where cultural history can demonstrate its true value. For, contrary to the opinion of dyed-in-the-wool structuralists, cultural history does not have to equate to "soft" history, privileging cultural representations at the expense of social relations. Recent works, for instance, have demonstrated how the study of iconography and symbolic practices can shed new light on "hard" political structures;[150] how the vernacular imagery of *Heimat* could act as a "metaphor" to help Germans imagine the abstract category of the nation, and reconcile their complex local, regional, and national identities;[151] and how analysis of Wilhelmine Germany's contradictory "paths to modernity" – whether in architecture and town-planning, public health and hygiene, criminology and social welfare, scientific management or the professions – can illuminate significant long-term processes within German society. Indeed, for younger historians the main attraction for studying the German Empire would currently seem to be located in this general area. If that is the case, then it is not only because of a morbid fascination with the particular way in which the German bourgeoisie "found" modernity, but also because of a recognition that cultural history – broadly defined – can "push forward and accelerate the process of opening up the political history of the *Kaiserreich* for alternative readings." Paramount among these is the recognition that modernity is not synonymous with political liberalism; that "there is no inherent reason why 'modernizing' initiatives in one area should reinforce the interests of 'modernization' in another."[152]

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[144] C. Eisenberg, *'English Sports' und deutsche Bürger. Eine Gesellschaftsgeschichte 1800–1939* (Paderborn, 1999).

[145] P. Fritzsche, *Reading Berlin 1900* (Cambridge, MA, 1996).

[146] J. J. Sheehan, *Museums in the German Art World: From the End of the Old Regime to the Rise of Modernism* (Oxford, 2000); S. Crane, *Collecting and Historical Consciousness in Early Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Ithaca, 2000); H. G. Penny, *Objects of Culture. Ethnology and Ethnographic Museums in Imperial Germany* (Chapel Hill and London, 2002).

[147] B. Ladd, *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape* (Chicago, 1997); T. Lindenberger, *Straßenpolitik: Zur Sozialgeschichte der öffentlichen Ordnung. Berlin, 1900–1914* (Berlin, 1995); W. Maderthaner and L. Musner, *Die Anarchie der Vorstadt. Das andere Wien um 1900* (Frankfurt, 1999).

[148] For "high" culture see M. Jefferies, *Imperial Culture in Germany 1871–1918* (Basingstoke, 2003); for popular culture see W. Kaschuba and K. Maase, eds., *Schund und Schönheit. Populäre Kultur um 1900* (Cologne, 2001).

[149] For example, F. Forster-Hahn, *Imagining Modern German Culture 1889–1910* (Hanover, NH, 1996), which was a work of "old" cultural history in all but name. The model for many of these titles was, of course, Benedict Anderson's seminal study of modern nationalism, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983).

[150] See J. Paulmann, *Pomp und Politik. Monarchenbegegnungen in Europa zwischen Ancien Regime und Erstem Weltkrieg* (Paderborn, 2000); S. Behrenbeck and A. Nützenadel, eds., *Inszenierungen des Nationalstaats. Politische Feiern in Italien und Deutschland seit 1860–71* (Cologne, 2000).

[151] See C. Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley and London, 1990); A. Confino, *The Nation as a Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany*

The "cultural turn" has also served to remind historians – if a reminder was needed – that German identities at the time of the *Kaiserreich* were extremely complex and diverse. Two current growth areas in the historiography can be cited by way of illustration. In the historical social science literature of the 1970s and 1980s, with its emphasis on powerful "modernizing" processes such as secularization and nation-building, there was a tendency to downplay the significance of religious confession or regional allegiance in shaping the way Germans thought about themselves. Yet both religion and region have returned with a vengeance in the post-1990 historiography. Indeed, some have even spoken of a "religious turn." While this may be unhelpful, there has certainly been no shortage of younger historians willing to follow Blackbourn, Sperber, and Nipperdey in seeking to re-establish confession as a central determinant of imperial life.[153] If the primary focus remains the interplay of religion and politics, attention no longer dwells solely on the Center Party or the Christian trade unions. Historians have become willing to engage with issues of piety and spirituality, as well as milieus and mentalities. Recent studies, for instance, have analyzed apparitions of the Virgin Mary in a Saarland village; the virulently anti-Catholic discourse of the Empire's Protestant

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and National Memory 1871–1918 (Chapel Hill and London, 1997); A. Green, *Fatherlands: State-Building and Nationhood in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Cambridge, 2001); J. Jenkins, *Provincial Modernity: Local Culture and Liberal Politics in Fin-de-Siècle Hamburg* (Ithaca, 2003); M. Umbach and B. Hüppauf, eds., *Vernacular Modernism. Heimat, Globalization, and the Built Environment* (Stanford, 2005).

[152] G. Eley and J. Retallack, "Introduction," in *Wilhelminism and its Legacies*, pp. 4–6.

[153] D. Blackbourn, *Class, Religion and Local Politics*; J. Sperber, *Popular Catholicism in Nineteenth Century Germany* (Princeton, 1984); T. Nipperdey, *Religion im Umbruch: Deutschland 1870–1918* (Munich, 1988).

League; the populist religiosity of the cult of the Sacred Heart; the ongoing debates surrounding the banning of the Jesuit Order; and the pervasive influence of a quasi-religious "longing for myth" in German culture.[154] Arguably the most important works in this field, however, are those that address confessional interaction, and in particular the three-way relationship between Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. Nowhere were these relations more complex than in areas – such as Silesia and the Ruhr – where a substantial Polish minority was also part of the mix. Here Catholics were often forced to choose between their national identity and their confessional identity. Such dilemmas were particularly fraught for Catholic workers, who could also be torn between their confession and their class.[155] While inter-confessional relations in Germany have been the subject of several extensive essay collections,[156] some of the most revealing insights have come from micro-historical studies of individual cities, such as Till van Rahden's excellent book on *Jews and other Breslauers*, or Anthony Steinhoff's study of imperial Strasbourg.[157]

As Rahden and Steinhoff would testify, a strong sense of place continued to characterize life in Germany well into the twentieth century, whatever homogenizing tendencies were generated at the imperial level. While there are exceptions – Wehler's *Gesellschaftsgeschichte* has predictably little to say on the subject – most historians today acknowledge that the Germans were "a nation of provincials" (Celia Applegate). This does not mean that the old question "Who ruled in Berlin?" has simply been replaced by "Who ruled in Munich?" Instead, as Retallack observes, historians "have begun to address problems of political consciousness and the interrelationship of local, regional, and national identities."[158]

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[154] D. Blackbourn, *The Marpingen Visions. Rationalism, Religion and the Rise of Modern Germany* (London, 1995); H. W. Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict: Culture, Ideology, Politics 1870–1914* (Princeton, 1995); M. B. Gross, *The War against Catholicism*; N. Busch, *Katholische Frömmigkeit und Moderne. Die Sozial- und Mentalitätsgeschichte des Herz-Jesu-Kultes in Deutschland zwischen Kulturkampf und Erstem Weltkrieg* (Gütersloh, 1997); A. Müller-Dreier, *Konfession in Politik, Gesellschaft und Kultur des Kaiserreichs. Der Evangelischer Bund, 1886–1914* (Paderborn, 1998); R. Healy, *The Jesuit Specter in Imperial Germany* (Boston, 2003); G. S. Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche* (Chicago, 2004).

[155] M. Bachem-Rehm, *Die katholischen Arbeitervereine im Ruhrgebiet 1870–1914: Katholisches Arbeitermilieu zwischen Tradition und Emanzipation* (Stuttgart, 2004).

[156] H. W. Smith, ed., *Protestants, Catholics, and Jews in Germany, 1800–1914* (Oxford, 2001); O. Blaschke, ed., *Konfessionen im Konflikt: Deutschland zwischen 1800 und 1970* (Göttingen, 2002).

[157] T. van Rahden, *Juden und andere Breslauer: Die Beziehungen zwischen Juden, Protestanten und Katholiken in einer deutschen Großstadt von 1860 bis 1925* (Göttingen, 2000); A. J. Steinhoff, "Religion as urban culture: A view from Strasbourg, 1870–1914," *Journal of Urban History*, 30 (2004), pp. 152–88.

[158] J. Retallack, *Germany in the Age of Kaiser Wilhelm II*, p. 111.

Indeed, one could add "imperial identities" to this list as well.[159] Historians have generally found that Germans were more successful at tackling problems at local and regional level than in the governance of the Empire. Indeed, as Richard Evans has pointed out, "[t]he national political arena was occupied by demagogy and rhetoric precisely because so many political issues vital to the interests of capital and labour were resolved at the level of the federated states."[160] It would not be an exaggeration, therefore, to claim that the cultural turn, along with other historiographical developments of the past quarter century, has forced historians to rethink the nation-state as their central unit of analysis. Certainly, much of the most important current work on the *Kaiserreich* focuses on larger or smaller contexts than the Empire itself: whether in the form of comparative transnational history, or meticulously detailed micro-history.

In 1995 Michael Geyer and Konrad Jarausch highlighted the long-standing disjunction between the "violent diversity" of German history as it was experienced, and the "utterly homogenous" way in which it was told.[161] It was an important observation, but one which had been overtaken by events: *Alltagsgeschichte*, gender history, and the cultural turn had already fractured the framework within which German history was to be examined. When the American historian Rudy Koshar used the aforementioned 1990 conference in Philadelphia to call for "new emplotments," emancipating the *Kaiserreich* from "its previously determinate or predictable relationship to Weimar, the rise of Nazism, and the Federal Republic," it was clear that much was in flux.[162] However, while the demise of the *Sonderweg* thesis and other grand narratives clearly had a liberating effect, some areas of historiography seemed more resistant to change than others. Nowhere was this more apparent than in the fields of foreign policy and military history. These were traditionally seen as the most prestigious and methodologically conservative branches of the historians' guild, and not only in Germany. How would the new historiographical pluralism impact on studies of the *Kaiserreich*'s external relations? Could the fresh perspectives of postcolonial studies, gender, or cultural history shed new light on the origins of World War One, or would the seminal catastrophe of the twentieth century remain a bastion of history in its most recognizably Rankean form? Above all, what contribution would the growing vogue for transnational history make to our understanding of Imperial Germany's place in the world? Chapter 5 will attempt to find answers to these questions.

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[159] See P. Ther, "Imperial instead of national history: Positioning modern German history on the map of European empires," in A. Miller and A. J. Rieber, eds., *Imperial Rule* (New York and Budapest, 2004), pp. 47–68.

[160] R. J. Evans, "The myth of Germany's missing revolution," in *Rethinking German History*, p. 114.

[161] M. Geyer and K. H. Jarausch, "Great men and postmodern ruptures: Overcoming the 'belatedness' of German historiography," *German Studies Review*, 18 (1995), p. 267.

[162] R. Koshar, "The *Kaiserreich*'s ruins: Hope, memory, and political culture in imperial Germany," in G. Eley, ed., *Society, Culture and the State in Germany*, pp. 487–512.