

Letter from the Editor

Since assuming the Editorship of *Central European History* (*CEH*) in the summer of 2014, I have had the unenviable task of commissioning half a dozen memorials to recently deceased scholars, among them some of the giants of our field. Three have already appeared in honor of Jonathan Osmond, Gerhard A. Ritter, and Hans-Ulrich Wehler. Two will appear in upcoming issues, for Hans Mommsen and Carl Schorske, and one appears in this issue: **George Williamson’s worthy tribute to Peter Gay**, who died in the spring of 2015. There is an old saying that death comes in threes. Sometimes it comes in sixes—or twos, as it did in 1990, when Timothy Mason and Detlev Peukert died within months of each other. Regardless, the passing of all these scholars marks a major rupture, as well as a great personal and professional loss for the historical *Zunft*.

In one of his final books, *My German Question: Growing Up in Nazi Berlin* (1998), Peter Gay memorably recounted both his coming of age in the German capital in the shadow of National Socialism, and his subsequent emigration to the United States after “Crystal Night.” It is a fortuitous, if ironic, coincidence that a memorial for Gay appears in the first issue of Vol. 49 of *CEH*, given its striking **new cover—another “daily painting” by the Berlin-based artist, Edward Gordon**. This one portrays one of Berlin’s most famous landmarks, the *Französischer Dom* located on the *Gendarmenmarkt* in the center of the city. The “cathedral” was erected in the early eighteenth century for the French Huguenot community that had recently fled France for religious sanctuary in the Prussian capital—the same capital from which Peter Gay and his family would, as German Jews, flee for racist and pseudo-religious reasons almost two and a half centuries later. The tense refugee situation in Europe at the moment makes the cover even more timely, of course.

Along with a new cover, *CEH* warmly welcomes three **new members to the Board of Editors**: Will Gray of Purdue University, Larry Wolff of New York University, and Benjamin Ziemann of the University of Sheffield in the United Kingdom, an addition that bolsters our editorial presence overseas. Their expertise on twentieth-century Germany and on the Habsburg lands nicely complements the existing strengths of the current Board. As I noted in a recent review article, one of the main challenges that *CEH* has faced in recent years is attracting submissions on the period before the rise of National Socialism, as well as on Central Europe outside of Germany proper (*Kleindeutschland*)*. That is one reason why the current issue is especially noteworthy: all the articles focus on the period before 1930, including one that deals with the Habsburg Empire during the early nineteenth century: Scott Berg’s “**The Lord Has Done Great Things for Us: The 1817 Reformation Celebrations and the End of the Counter-Reformation in the Habsburg Lands**,” which—with an eye to the upcoming five-hundredth anniversary in 2017—looks at the way in which the tricentennial of Martin Luther’s Ninety-five theses was commemorated in the Danubian Monarchy. This was the first time that an ecumenical

*Andrew I. Port, “Central European History since 1989: Historiographical Trends and Post-Wende ‘Turns,’” *Central European History* (June 2015): 238–48. This review essay was inspired by David G. Blackbourn, “Honey, I Shrank German History,” in *German Studies Association Newsletter* 38, no. 2 (Winter 2013–14): 44–53.

spirit characterized the celebrations—an unexpected twist, given Austria’s close association with the Counter-Reformation. Yet, Berg argues, it was precisely the “infamous censorship regime” of the “notoriously conservative” Habsburg Empire that paradoxically contributed to the ecumenical nature of the festivities, which authorities used to call attention to their “newfound policies of religious toleration.”

Berg’s contribution confirms the recent scholarly move away from an emphasis on continuing confessional strife in nineteenth-century Europe, a post-revisionist response to claims that religious tensions, especially between Catholics and Protestants, remained rife—despite the secularization that had, in the wake of the Enlightenment, supposedly led to a decline in popular religious enthusiasm. The persistence of confessional strife is the topic of Patrick Milton’s **“The Early Eighteenth-Century German Confessional Crisis: The Juridification of Religious Conflict in the Reconfessionalized Politics of the Holy Roman Empire,”** which looks at a regional religious dispute between Catholic and Protestant princes that took place in the Palatinate roughly a century before the events explored in Scott Berg’s article. What a difference a century makes! Whereas Berg focuses on growing religious harmony, Milton draws attention to the serious tensions that had continued to characterize the relationship a hundred years earlier between the Habsburg emperor, on the one hand, and powerful Protestant territorial states in northern Germany, on the other. Milton is especially interested in the judicial, political, and diplomatic mechanisms used to regulate and defuse religious conflict, which clearly remained intense—despite the calming effect that the 1648 Peace of Westphalia had supposedly had on religious passions. The extent to which religious and confessional strife continued in the wake of Westphalia and, later, the Enlightenment is thus a common theme in both articles—even if the authors reach differing conclusions about these different periods. Along with the memorial to Peter Gay and the new cover of *CEH*, they are connected in another way, of course: by the attention they draw to the primarily negative (but also sometimes positive) experiences of religious minorities in early modern and modern Central Europe.

Edward Ross Dickinson’s article, **“Complexity, Contingency, and Coherence in the History of Sexuality in Modern Germany: Some Theoretical and Interpretive Reflections,”** focuses on tensions as well, but of a different kind: sexual, not religious, ones. This important theoretical intervention in the historiography of sexuality calls into question the binary model that scholars have developed to describe modern German debates over sexual politics—a model that focuses on the tension between “repressive/regulatory” and “progressive/emancipatory” elements in such discussions during the period roughly from 1880 to 1930. With an eye to the postmodern, theoretical musings of Michel Foucault and Niklaus Luhmann, Dickinson proposes instead a “trivalent” model in which three “loose, sexual-political groupings” contested the nature and meaning of sexuality in ways that had important repercussions for the rise and fall of different political regimes in Germany over the course of the twentieth century. Dickinson also makes a strong theoretical case for “taking complexity seriously,” i.e., for accepting, in the words of one anonymous reader, “the haphazard nature of historical narratives rather than try[ing] to find a unitary coherence” in the past.

As Editor of *CEH*, I am especially pleased that this issue also contains an article on the medieval period, which has been sorely underrepresented in the journal over the past half century. In **“Uses of the Past in Twelfth-Century Germany: The Case of the Middle High German *Kaiserchronik*,”** Mark Chinca and Christopher Young look at a

major medieval chronicle that offers, in their words, a “grand narrative of the reigns of thirty-six Roman and nineteen German emperors over a timespan of twelve centuries.” The *Kaiserchronik* is a vital work for understanding how secular and ecclesiastical elites perceived history in general, and the Roman past in particular, in twelfth-century Germany, and its study represents an important enrichment of existing scholarship exploring emergent national identity on the part of medieval secular and ecclesiastical elites. The two authors, based at the University of Cambridge, are currently working on a new edition of the text—the first since the nineteenth century—with the support of a substantial five-year grant from the United Kingdom’s Arts and Humanities Research Council. Upon completion, the project will provide access, for the first time, to a synoptic view of the work’s three versions, as well as a parallel translation of the original version, on the basis of the latest philological findings.

What I personally find so important about this project is its pedagogical promise. The new edition will not only provide students and teachers with various points of comparison—e.g., with serious contemporaneous historiography such as Otto of Freising or “serious entertainment” of a historical nature, such as Geoffrey of Monmouth and Godfrey of Viterbo—but also give those without the requisite linguistic capabilities access to an important document that opens up new vistas on German and northwest European history writing during the medieval period. Aided by an extensive introduction and notes to the edition, students and scholars of the Middle Ages will be able to appreciate how history and notions of history were shaped at the time by (and should be understood in the context of) literature and vernacular writing. It is thus especially fortuitous that the full, multivolume philological edition will be accompanied by an inexpensive student edition intended for classroom use; in addition, scholars and students will have open access to all the manuscripts (with transcriptions) at the University of Heidelberg’s library website. In short, the project serves an important pedagogical purpose while bringing together literary and historical studies in fruitful ways that could very well serve as a model for future endeavors of an interdisciplinary nature.

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