

Taken as a whole, the present book is certainly a very informative, meritorious work which sheds light on an under-researched period in the history of the Holy Roman Empire from a strictly political angle. (Cultural exchanges between Prussia and the Habsburg lands during the period under examination are not within its focus, and the theological implications of confessional dialogue are presented sometimes rather superficially.) Of course, not everything in this story is completely new, but it has not yet been told in such great detail. And unlike in the older, usually quite biased research, now it is not easy to tell anymore who is the good guy and who is the bad guy – which makes it hard for the modern reader to take sides with either the Prussian King or the Holy Roman Emperor.

On a more critical note, the book is not an easy read. It would have benefited from a clearer structure and stronger focus, and a more convincing narrative including accessible language (and fewer typos), in order to attract a readership beyond the die-hard specialist.

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## **The Dynastic Imagination: Family and Modernity in Nineteenth-Century Germany**

**By Adrian Daub. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2021. Pp. 253. Paperback \$29.00. ISBN: 978-0226737874.**

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Adrian Daub's book can at times be a frustrating read for historians expecting analysis of family history as it is generally approached in our discipline. Daub does warn readers at the outset that this is not a book about "real families," and the book's title is clear on its goal to explore dynasty as an idea, an imaginary, rather than a set of practices.

What Daub does offer is an intellectual-historical exploration of the pervasive engagement with notions of "dynasty," generally in tension with notions of "family" of a more nuclear sort, as they operate across a range of works written during the long nineteenth century. The tension between these two notions is at the heart of Daub's analysis, and of his provocative wider claim that this tension has never disappeared: "as Western societies more generally become more stratified, isn't our claim to be nondynastic a delusion? And isn't it quite possible it was never more than that?" (6)

Most of the works Daub examines were authored by German men; the usual suspects are all there, including Goethe, Hegel, Wagner, and Freud, among many others. Indeed, Daub's method itself evokes the intellectual dynasty that is Daub's own, as a scholar of European comparative literature, an analogy that Daub no doubt intended, although he does not make this positionality explicit.

Daub delves deeply into the lives and thought of his selected subjects, in chapters that range across many aspects of dynasty and family as intellectual (and political) constructs. He examines German conservative critiques of the displacement of dynastic ideals by bourgeois and individualistic notions of family during and after the French Revolution in chapter 2. Chapter 4 links Hegel with many alternative lines of descent. Directly by way of pupils and proselytizers, and less directly through the Young Hegelians, Hegel turns up as a progenitor of a diverse array of heirs and heiresses, including many early German feminist writers.

These writers are familiar to feminist historians, but Daub's analysis casts new light on them by placing them in the wider history of intellectual dynasties, even as he emphasizes their contributions to the critique of dynasty. Louise Dittmar, for example, in her attack on early modern political theory that likened the king to the father in order to justify absolutism, "proposes that monarchical rule and patriarchy within the family are cut from the same cloth, but she suggests that they are both therefore equally illegitimate." (105) The women writers included here, gathered together in this one chapter, serve as a chorus reminding readers that, despite the limits that patriarchy imposed on them, some daughters grew up to push back. Richard Wagner, who also puts in an appearance in this chapter, is the focus of chapter 5, where his legacy is complicated by Daub's interpretation; lineage, for Wagner, was sometimes determinant and sometimes quite possible to resist. Chapter 8, focused on Stefan George, offers Daub the opportunity to explore the imagination of an alternative, homosocial dynasty which had become thinkable by the late nineteenth century.

The book includes just one sustained border-crossing detour, into France, for a discussion of Émile Zola in Chapter 6. The specter of the French Revolution haunts the entire dynastic history, but in earlier chapters it appears in the form of the fears or hopes of émigrés, or of German interpreters of the Revolution's impact on family and dynasty. Only Zola is allowed directly into Daub's family portrait gallery. His inclusion is certainly appropriate, as Daub introduces Zola's novels about the Rougon-Macquart family through the lens of Mendelian genetics. This allows for an exploration of the partial displacement by genetic/biological inheritance of patrimonies of a more traditional sort. This chapter stands as another rich analysis, even if including the French writer does call attention to the otherwise restricted choice of texts examined as constitutive of the "dynastic imagination." How does language figure into the construction of intellectual dynasties?

That said, the analyses of the individual texts and thinkers that Daub interprets with the dynasty-family tension in mind are provocative and insightful. Even more, the weight of a whole gathering of texts and authors does make a bigger point, which is indeed of interest to historians of the family who pursue very different approaches, as well as to intellectual and cultural historians: the "dynastic imagination," in tension with more modern and post-Revolutionary understandings of the family, pervaded German thought and writing throughout the long nineteenth century. It was everywhere, whether as the stated object of intellectual scrutiny or, more obliquely or metaphorically, as a problem that haunted the explication of an issue seemingly far removed from it. These writers, we are persuaded, were obsessed with dynasty, either to embrace or to refute it. Moreover, they were themselves continually marked by their intellectual ancestors, and they bequeathed their dilemmas to their descendants. A common ancestor might show up in the family portrait galleries of some quite divergent intellectual or political lineages. The intellectuals under scrutiny here engage in disputes with their living colleagues; they evoke the ghosts of their intellectual ancestors, whose legacies they preserve or dissipate; they leave legacies for descendants, including present-day scholars like Adrian Daub. His analysis calls attention to the inescapability of familial and dynastic ties as intrinsic to intellectual history.

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