

## REVIEW ARTICLE

### Recent Work on German National Identity: Regional? Imperial? Gendered? Imaginary?

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Es kennzeichnet die Deutschen, dass bei ihnen  
die Frage, "was ist Deutsch?" niemals ausstirbt.  
*Nietzsche*

*A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat.* By Celia Applegate. Berkeley: University of California Press. 1990. Pp xi + 293. \$45.00. ISBN 0-520-06394-5.

*Music and German National Identity.* Edited by Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2002. Pp. x + 319. \$45.00. ISBN 0-226-021-300.

*The Nation as Local Metaphor: Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871-1918.* By Alon Confino. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. 1997. Pp. 280. \$65.00. ISBN 0-807-823-597.

*Körper der Nation: Habitusformierung und die Politik des Turnens, 1860-1890.* By Svenja Goltermann. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. 1998. Pp. 360. EUR 42.00. ISBN 3-525-35789-3.

As is true for almost everything I have published, this essay was much improved through its presentation to the New York German Women's History Study Group, whose members read an earlier draft carefully, and offered numerous suggestions and criticisms. My particular thanks go this time to Marion Kaplan, as well.

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*Fatherlands: State-Building and Nationhood in Nineteenth-Century Germany.* By Abigail Green. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2001. Pp. 386. \$45.50. ISBN 0-521-7931-30.

*Staging Philanthropy: Patriotic Women and the National Imagination in Dynastic Germany, 1813–1916.* By Jean Quataert. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. 2001. Pp. xiv + 319. \$70.00. ISBN 0-472-11171-X.

*Denkmal im sozialen Raum: Nationale Symbole in Deutschland und Frankreich im 19. Jahrhundert.* By Charlotte Tacke. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. 1995. Pp. 408. EUR 36.00. ISBN 3-525-35771-0.

*Political Poetry in Periodicals and the Shaping of German National Consciousness.* By Lorie A. Vanchena. New York: Peter Lang. 2000. Pp. x + 290. \$56.95. ISBN 0-820-445479.

In the final scene of Heinrich Mann's *Der Untertan*, a bevy of local dignitaries and bourgeois patriots gather to unveil a statue of Wilhelm I in the town's park. The local organized workers' groups have been coopted by the promise of a new union hall, and they allow the proceedings to go unchallenged; the protagonist of the novel, Diederich Hessling, is to receive the Order of Wilhelm as a reward for his part in organizing the statue's construction. Just as the Oberpräsident is about to give the command that the statue be uncovered, however, the heavens open, rain pours down in sheets, and lightning falls all around the plaza where the statue stands. The patriotic audience scatters quickly; the officers in the tent erected for the occasion are in such haste that they use their swords to cut openings for themselves in the side of the tent. Hessling takes shelter under the lectern, from which he had just delivered an address on Wilhelm I. A soldier finds him there and thrusts the medal at Hessling, saying, "Da hamse 'n Willemsorden." Hessling runs off quickly as well, and the statue of the German Empire's founder is left alone to survey an empty plaza.

This essay examines some of the many publications that have appeared in the last decade or so about the construction not merely of nationalist monuments, but of German national identity in a broader sense. Germans' national identity is, of course, still a work in progress; its negotiation began during the

Enlightenment and continued through the Kaiserreich and beyond. Most of the studies discussed here belong to the growing field of “cultural” nationalist history (as opposed to earlier work on nationalism that often took its themes and methods from either political history or *Ideengeschichte*), and many of them focus in particular on the construction of German identity during the imperial period. Most of the markers proposed since the Enlightenment to define “Germanness” are cultural — language, lifestyle, mentality — and such cultural markers (and hence cultural approaches to nationalism) have gained heightened importance and interest in Germany since 1990.

*Die Wende*, and the fall of the Soviet Union, led to the emigration of hundreds of thousands of “German” *Aussiedler* to Germany; under the country’s 1913 citizenship law, such immigrants had strong claims to German passports. Yet, although their legal claims to citizenship were not usually in doubt, Germans in Germany reacted with dismay when confronted with the reality of the *Aussiedler*: whatever Germanness was, some skeptics concluded, not all the *Aussiedler* possessed it. Many of them simply did not meet the cultural standards of Germanness that were widely shared in the Federal Republic. Although historians of nationalism across Europe have undergone a “cultural turn” during the last fifteen years, in Germany such a turn was no doubt reinforced by the intensified debates that the *Aussiedler* and *die Wende* produced over what constituted Germanness.

Almost all of the work reviewed here was also invariably influenced by Benedict Anderson’s now canonical *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, to which most historians of German national identity and nationalism have turned since 1990.<sup>1</sup> A traditional political historian, surveying the substantial amount of ink spilled over the “imagined” construct of the German nation, might come to wish that nineteenth-century Germans had not been quite so imaginative. Previous work tended to focus on nationalism as a political movement, or on the concept of nationality as merely one part of a process of modernization. Anderson’s book helped inspire a turn to the cultural, as German historians set to work after 1990 to examine the ways in which Germans “imagined” Germanness. The focus was now less on political movements or parties and more on the internal experience of national belonging, as expressed in everyday life or within a particular locality. Alon Confino, who has produced one of the more important works in this genre, *The Nation as Local Metaphor*, articulated the goal of many of these authors when he wrote that historians still did not know “how people internalize the abstract world of the nation to create an imagined community . . . we still await a study

1. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, (revised ed. New York, 1991).

that explores the process — social, political, and cultural — by which people come to imagine a distinct nation . . . [and] devise a common denominator between their intimate, immediate, and real local place, and the distant, abstract, and not-less-real national world” (p. 4).

This shift in focus has led historians of national identity away from the dichotomy of race vs. culture (Germans as defined as a group with common descent, or as one that shared a particular language and culture) that often structured older discussions of German identity. The newer work is also generally less focused on questions of class structure than are earlier studies. Instead, some of the best recent research usefully both complicates and enriches our understanding of German identity by bringing in an awareness of other factors that helped shaped notions of Germanness: region, locality, the importance of monarchs or regional rulers, gender, or cultural forms such as monuments and classical *Lieder*.

Some recent works focus on how German national identity was constructed using the most traditional forms of cultural production or performance: music, poetry, monuments, or other public art. Lorie Vanchena’s survey of nationalist poetry published in dozens of local and regional journals or newspapers between 1840 and 1871 traces the emergence and reworking of standard metaphors and tropes, which a surprising variety of local authors used to express national identity.<sup>2</sup> The contributors to Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter’s *Music and German National Identity* trace the process whereby musicologists, writers, conductors, bureaucrats, and musical amateurs helped to consolidate German national culture during the nineteenth century by establishing the predominance of German and Austrian composers in the classical musical world. German musicologists and performers persuasively claimed for Germans the sobriquet of “the people of music,” establishing German classical music as the “universal” musical standard against which other national repertoires were measured. Music scholars and publishers produced extensive critical editions of the compositions of “German masters” for a broad bourgeois public, even reclaiming one composer — Handel — who had become English. At the same time the growing interest in folk music among scholars and nationalists was sending “generations of patriotic German intellectuals on *Volk*-fishing expeditions in countryside and library” (p. 11).

2. Vanchena’s book also discusses the creation and popularization of better-known poems and songs, such as “*Die Wacht am Rhein*.” Her analytical framework could be more sophisticated, but her study includes one extremely attractive feature: an attached CD that includes the texts of hundreds of these songs and poems in their entirety, with a detailed and clever set of indexes designed to be used to search these texts by author, content, metaphor, location, etc. The CD alone will justify the purchase price for many university libraries, since it provides an extremely useful set of primary sources, which could be used in teaching.

Applegate and Potter note, however, that “for all its nationalistic bombast, Imperial Germany operated from the start with a deficit of national symbols [e.g., a national anthem or flag]” (p. 16). The imperial government could not use many important patriotic music pieces, because this music celebrated a broader cultural German nation and not the more geographically limited political nation established in 1871. It was hard to make sense of the German musical heritage, when Mozart’s, Schubert’s, and other masters’ origins were located in Austria. Applegate and Potter conclude that, in fact,

a notable feature of music and German national identity after 1871 was the continuity of established ways of talking and thinking about German music across what one might expect to be a great and momentous divide. . . . The cultural nation that discussions of German music have done so much to consolidate was not reconfigured by political unification, just as its consolidation had not been precluded by the political fragmentation before 1871 . . . [German-speakers across Central Europe] felt ownership of the German musical heritage that both transcended political borders and was capable of assimilating [non-German ethnic traditions] (p. 16).

So at least in the world of music, German identity after 1871 continued to be *grossdeutsch*, and based on an understanding of Germany as a nation defined more by culture than by political boundaries.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, however, understandings of what the German musical canon included (and excluded) were complicated by the question of whether German Jewish composers were sufficiently “German” to qualify. This anthology includes a chapter by Thomas Grey on the history of Wagner’s *Die Meistersinger*, which offers a careful and nuanced discussion of the development of anti-Semitic or nationalist themes in Wagnerian productions. But at the same time, Potter and Applegate make it clear that the German musical public and the world of German composers, conductors, and musicians also included many German Jews (such as Mendelssohn, Mahler, and Meyerbeer); Felix Mendelssohn, in particular, was quite active in consolidating and promoting a German musical canon.

Public art could help represent or express a particular, often mythic collective memory in order to build a national community. Charlotte Tacke, in *Denkmal im sozialen Raum*, examines how some nationalists sought to make good the

3. The imperial government was not able to make use of songs that came from the “wrong” class, as well as those from the wrong side of the German-Austrian border. Vernon Lidtke’s research on songs that were popular among the working class during the imperial period shows that workers’ songs were sometimes “patriotic” (in a broad sense) but also espoused values of democracy and equality that put them at odds with the government. Such songs were also excluded from official usage or acknowledgement. See Vernon Lidtke, *The Alternative Culture: Socialist Labor in Imperial Germany* (Oxford, 1985), 124–27.

deficit in national symbols through the construction of monuments. Built during the Kaiserreich to honor the Germanic tribal leader called Arminius, the *Hermannsdenkmal* was a monument used to commemorate the joint victory of Germanic tribes over Roman forces in the Teutoburg Forest in 9 A.D. Tacke has given us a first-rate comparative study, which juxtaposes the history, financing, design, and symbolism of the *Hermannsdenkmal* (along with its subsequent use as the centerpiece for festive nationalist celebrations) with the monuments constructed during the same period in France to honor Arminius's French counterpart, the ancient Gallic warrior Vercingetorix.

Tacke finds many similarities in the story of how these monuments were constructed: in the bourgeois social profile of the organizations that built them; in the regionally-based networks that were used to collect donations; and in the nationalist festivities held at the monuments in both countries. Each monument also represented a mythology of national identity that defined itself through opposition to the other. In France, Vercingetorix's military defeat represented the Gauls' embrace of Roman civilization, marking the birth of a uniquely French civilization. The defeat of the Roman legions by the Germanic tribes under Arminius, on the other hand, was seen by the French as a crucial watershed that led to Germany's inherent barbarism and wildness. Germans viewed this event quite differently, of course. To them, the *Hermannsdenkmal* celebrated an ancient victory that presaged the unification of Germany under Wilhelm I. In this mythology, the monument posited "the unity of the German people as a continuing cultural unity. German culture, German language, German history, and German customs were defended [by Arminius] and repeatedly by later rulers against foreign cultural influences, [and this victory] defined the German nation both historically and territorially" (Tacke, p. 36). The defeat of Vercingetorix was also seen in Germany as a turning point, but one that resulted in the Gauls' corruption by mixing their bloodlines and cultures with those of Rome and producing an inferior hybrid. Thus, in both Germany and France, "national myths were part of a system which used dichotomy [and opposition] to define both [one's own] national identity, and that of the Other" (p. 294).

Besides cultural forms like music and public art, another approach used successfully by some of these historians is to examine how national identity was constructed using provincial cultures, symbols, and identities. Celia Applegate's *A Nation of Provincials* — a study that has had a considerable impact among historians of cultural nationalism — was the first work to examine the relationship between regional and national identities. Alon Confino's study uses the same entry, while the recent monographs by Abigail Green and Jean Quataert also focus on regional institutions and symbols to examine the creation of national loyalties. These monographs discuss how national identity could be articulated by means of local veterans' stories (retold at anniversary banquets), represented by local dynastic figures, or celebrated by local initiatives on Sedan Day, which

commemorated the decisive battle of the Franco-Prussian War. All of these studies underline how regional identities could become a bridge to imagining or celebrating the national community, while they also (outside of Prussia) simultaneously defended regional autonomy against an encroaching, Prussian-dominated imperial state.

Confino's book is largely based on research in imperial Württemberg; it uses this locale to examine the relationship between the nation and "the *Heimat*." He first discusses attempts of local nationalists to create Sedan Day as a holiday that would celebrate and unify the national community. Sedan Day — which the Emperor never accepted as the national holiday — benefited from liberal nationalists' promotion, but never really took hold as a popular holiday. Confino argues that the day failed to catch on because its symbolism and enactment was exclusionary, celebrating a national identity that was linked to Protestantism and, moreover, strongly associated with the bourgeoisie and Prussian hegemony. Confino then turns to the success of *Heimat* iconography and cultural activity, which grew rapidly after 1880: the foundation of *Heimat* museums, *Heimat* associations, *Trachtenvereine*, and the creation of art and postcards that celebrated the multitudinous *Heimats* of Imperial Germany. Confino argues that *Heimat* symbolism became truly popular because it was inclusionary and also "empty" in a way that made it possible to project onto it; in artistic depictions, he demonstrates, the *Heimats* were almost interchangeable, blurring together. Thus, almost anyone and everyone could identify with such a nonspecific icon.<sup>4</sup>

Applegate's monograph gives a colorful, richly detailed portrait of the local understanding and appreciation of the *Heimat* in one region (the Pfalz), and examines how the *Heimat* was expressed or celebrated there within a variety of cultural, sport, and other local and provincial associations. Confino is more interested in the *Heimat* as a genre, how (like the *Hermannsdenkmal*) it was imagined as "timeless" while also being constructed in an ongoing fashion throughout the imperial period. Confino concludes that each set of *Heimat* folklore was simultaneously intrinsically local (had its own *Eigenart*), but also embodied Germanness. The *Heimat* thus became "a representation of Germany based on

4. This comment about the "empty" nature of *Heimat* iconography is strongly supported in one of the best chapters in Applegate and Potter's collection, an essay by Philip Bohlman on the history of the *Landschaftliche Volkslieder* editorial production project, a 44 volume series that focuses on the folk songs of each "German" region. Bohlman notes that although each volume was formally concerned with a very particular locality and dialect within German-speaking Europe, in practice the editors chose to present all the songs in high German, and in such a way that the various *Heimats* tend to blur together in a "timeless" iconography: "all the usual folk-song genres are present in volume after volume: songs of the homeland or *Heimat*; historical songs; songs about hunters, peasants, and soldiers; songs about the nobility and landowners; songs about monuments and memory . . . The folk songs are secure, even frozen, in a timeless, mythological world." Applegate and Potter, *Music and German National Identity*, 119–20.

the metaphor of whole and parts . . . [which meant that] Germans imagined nationhood as a form of localness” (pp. 118 and 188). The *Heimate* — each unique, but also somehow interchangeable — became the common denominator for the construction of collective memories across Germany.

Jean Quataert’s and Abigail Green’s studies both examine regional identities as well, but stress the importance of dynasties and dynastic figures as a locus for regional and national identity and loyalty. Their monographs emphasize the importance of the domesticity and life cycle events of the Hohenzollerns and of regional rulers, and public access to monarchs. German monarchs were forced to change, acknowledge, and even court the support of a conservative public. But many regional dynasties did so successfully, Quataert and Green conclude, and thus came to embody national or regional identities. Green, for example, contrasts the lukewarm acceptance of Sedan Day outside Prussia with the large popular celebrations of jubilees of popular state rulers such as Wilhelm II of Württemberg. Regional governments increasingly depended on the “draw” of a dynastic figure’s personality and the press management of individual monarchs in order to generate popular support; but regional royal figures could also become a focal point for resistance against the official cult of the nation propagated by Kaiser Wilhelm II. Green notes that unification monuments built in southern Germany rarely featured Bismarck or Wilhelm I, but rather local individuals and events, which generated “a regional reinterpretation of national political culture” (p. 320).

Abigail Green’s outstanding volume is concerned with state-building and identity in what some historians have called the “Third Germany” (Green states other than Prussia and Austria). Her book develops case studies of three *Mittelstaaten*, namely Saxony, Württemberg, and Hanover, thereby transcending the limitations inherent in analyzing a single province. Unlike many other regional studies, Green covers the entire “long” nineteenth century. Her book examines each state’s role in such processes as railroad building and economic development; the growth of the educational system and of state-supported cultural vehicles for regional identities (museums, art galleries, and local historical associations); management of the press by the state; and the role of the modernized monarch as a focus for regional loyalties and identities. For Green, the interesting question is “the relationship between nationalism and ‘pre-national’ loyalties and identities. How and why did nationhood come to be adopted as a supreme value in places like Germany, where cultural identity [as Germans] had co-existed for centuries with multiple regional, local, and religious identities” (p. 4)? And what was the linkage between non-Prussian regional loyalties and the German nation-state?

Before unification, Green finds that these *Mittelstaaten* enjoyed considerable success (some more than others) at building an identity that was based on the



regional state (or *Land*), and yet still anchored within a larger framework of cultural national identity as Germans. After unification, the success of pre-1871 state-building efforts meant that Germany developed in a federal fashion because “state [i.e., provincial] loyalties [and institutions] remained important throughout Germany” (p. 11). The fifty years of state-building activity in the non-Prussian states that preceded the wars of unification meant that a strong sense of provincial or regional patriotism persisted alongside the increase in German nationalism after 1871. “The cultures of a particular fatherland were the building blocks of a German national culture, just as the states together made up Germany” (pp. 97–98). Even the *Hermannsdenkmal*, after all, depicted Arminius as the leader of the Germanic tribes, envisioning the Germanic people as inherently constructed on a tribal or primordially federal basis. Their successes at state-building, Green concludes allowed the German regional states to resist successfully the nationalization of the railroad system after 1871, and most aspects of domestic policy, of course, were still in the hands of the *Länder*. Thus, Imperial Germany remained much more federalized in its distribution of power and jurisdictions than France or many other contemporary nations, an observation still true today.

Still, Green does recognize the advance of imperial institutions and of popular nationalism after the 1880s, which were accompanied by some declines among regional particularist parties. She argues, however, that popular nationalism and colonialism were old wine in new bottles because they recycled older understandings of Germany as a *Kulturvolk*, which transcended formal state boundaries. Thus, “unification and statehood may have transformed the nature and objectives of German nationalism, but they did not shake the fundamental understanding of what it meant to be German . . . [Outside Prussia] the underlying belief in a cultural nation that transcended political boundaries changed surprisingly little” (p. 337).

The counterpoint to colonialism, Green adds, was the simultaneous rise of a *Heimat* movement after 1880 that was engaged with a particular locality. She agrees with both Confino and Applegate that the *Heimat* movements of the Wilhelminian period helped to mediate or represent the nation for provincial Germans, but she contends that *Heimat* historians have not really noted how this movement has its roots in political particularist traditions and state-building before 1870. The *Heimat* movement was anticentralist and anti-Prussian, but Green argues that it was still compatible with broader cultural nationalist movements because an emphasis on *Heimat* fit with a notion of the nation that was based on German tribes or *Stämme*. Even colonialism, says Green, “was simply a contemporary expression of the *grossdeutsch* tradition of a cultural nation that transcended political boundaries” (p. 335).

Jean Quataert also covers the long nineteenth century with a study that, like

Green's, focuses closely on the roles of monarchs in creating group identities. *Staging Philanthropy* — finely detailed, ambitious, and theoretically sophisticated — is a study of patriotic women's philanthropic organizations that arose during the Napoleonic wars and grew explosively after 1871, particularly the Patriotic Women's Association, which became affiliated with the German Red Cross after unification. Her research integrates national developments in the world of patriotic women's charity with some regional case studies, making particular use of the records of the women's affiliate of the Red Cross in Baden. Quataert uses the work of patriotic women's charitable groups — and their interaction with state authorities, dynastic figures, and veterans' associations — to reconstruct what she calls the "patriotic public" sphere of the Kaiserreich. She argues that the patriotic public was distinct from both the bourgeois and working-class public spheres; evidently, it transcended class boundaries.

As mentioned above, almost all of the works reviewed here are strongly influenced by Benedict Anderson's study, but Quataert's research is also informed by cultural anthropology. Like Confino, she reconstructs the "performances" that drew many Germans into the patriotic public, and that helped to solidify the "imagined" patriotic national community. These performances consisted of elaborately scripted rituals and ceremonies hosted by patriotic philanthropic groups, often including carefully orchestrated and publicized visits by female royalty or leading female aristocrats. Such performances drew public attention to the work of hospitals, orphanages, and medical institutions, or dramatized the relief efforts made by the Red Cross and its dynastic patrons to help communities struck by natural disasters, or (in the case of commemorative ceremonies that honored nurses and veterans of the wars of unification) helped to construct collective, if highly gendered memories of community solidarity and sacrifice in 1870–1871.

In Quataert's view, women's patriotic philanthropic work was invariably framed as taking place under the supervision and patronage of a leading female dynastic figure, usually the regional *Landesmutter*, whose care for her people helped to modernize the image of monarchy, and to cement support for state-building under monarchical rule. Quataert argues that,

through an emerging network of institutions and organizations, dynastic philanthropic practices established common bonds that increasingly linked patriotic groups in distinct localities together over the growing swath of territory . . . The living force of dynastic state symbols was their ongoing enactment in the local routines of community relations [ceremonies, awards, banquets, visits, etc., that involved the *Landesmutter* or her aristocratic female associates] . . . Indeed, dynastic practices intertwined the soldier and the civilian volunteer in an elaborate system of honors and rewards, feasts and festivals that bound them to the state (pp. 5–6).

Quataert concludes that such performances and philanthropic institutions not only helped to constitute the patriotic public, but also eventually underwrote an emphatically Christian national German identity that long survived the collapse of the German monarchies. She speculates in her conclusion that the identities and alliances created in the Wilhelminian patriotic sphere later gave rise to the Christian Democrats and the post-1945 Christian national political sphere more generally.

Although her arguments are persuasive, Quataert could have acknowledged and discussed further the ways that regional loyalties helped to build the patriotic public sphere. Her discussion of the “rise” of the *Landesmutter* icon and its use by monarchical supporters is convincing, but she apparently regards most *Landesmütter* as interchangeable. And yet Quataert’s Baden sources clearly show that particular regional rulers and loyalties became building blocks for national identity, in the same way that Green, Confino, and Applegate highlight for other *Länder*. Quataert uses a letter from a Baden nurse who had served in the wars of unification, which thanked the local Patriotic Women’s Association for a gift that she had received at a 1911 ceremony celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the military victory. Quataert uses this letter (and other sources) to show how these ceremonies and gifts helped to solidify and express the values of the patriotic public:

It couldn’t have been more unexpected and wonderful for me as a German who also has the fortune to be a Badener (*Badisches Landeskind*) to receive the gracious keepsake. For those like me . . . whom God permitted to experience already in 1866 the blessed efforts of our deceased duke — God rest his soul — for the cause of unification, the happy memory of the German Reich always is tied up with the person of our beloved duke, Frederick I (p. 242).

But the letter, through invoking a Badenese identity and the memory of a Badenese ruler, also clearly reflects how state identity became a stepping-stone to the nation, using regional patriotism and regional monarchs.

Many of the factors used to construct German national identity were commonly found throughout Europe. The creation and negotiation of a mythic collective national memory — which is examined variously by Green, Tacke, and Quataert — was a common project among nineteenth-century European nationalists, as were newly invented holidays. But many of the works reviewed here support the argument that the concept of the German *Heimat* was unique in combining and intermingling the identities of locality, region, and nation. Apparently, such icons of locality were not nearly so intrinsic to national identity elsewhere in contemporary Europe. Green also agrees that the successful coexistence and interdependence of regional and national identities “was perhaps the most distinctive aspect of the new German nation” (p. 21). None of

these authors would deny that regional identities persisted elsewhere, too (and have enjoyed a resurgence since the foundation of the European Union). But they conclude that in Germany, the regional became somehow intrinsic to the national, which (according to Green) led to the creation and persistence of a federalist governmental structure.<sup>5</sup>

An emphasis on locality and regional identities is one way in which recent work adds new layers to our understanding of Germanness; some of these studies throw a new emphasis on gender into the mix as well. Quataert describes how women made a place for themselves within the nationalist sphere, but this is not the only way to integrate gender into discussions of national identity: masculinity is crucial to any such discussion. Indeed, some of the most successful works on nation-building and nationalism during the last ten years have focused on the relationship between notions of masculinity, citizenship, and nationality.<sup>6</sup> In Svenja Goltermann's *Körper der Nation* the body in question is, of course, a masculine one; her study revisits the *Turnvereine* of the mid- and late nineteenth century. For the gymnasts' movement, the strength of the nation was manifested in the bravery, strength, and masculine qualities of the individual gymnast's body. *Turnvereine* were a key part of the national unification movement, and have been the subject of earlier political and organizational histories of German nationalism. Goltermann focuses on the "habitus" of the *Turnvereine* (an approach pioneered by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu), a matrix of behavioral norms, concepts, and perceptions that she argues absorbed and adapted notions of unity, freedom, and masculinity, fusing them into a particular understanding of nationalism. Hers is not so much an organizational history as an analysis of the gymnasts' rhetoric and politics.

Within the world of the gymnasts' movement, Goltermann finds, the notion of "freedom" came uncoupled from its earlier association with "emancipation"

5. Leora Auslander, who is currently working on a comparative history of consumption and the role of the state in early twentieth-century Germany and France, has also noted the ways in which the *Heimat* and provincial identities are particularly intrinsic to German national identity, which she argues formed a sharp contrast to the construction of French national identity. See Auslander, "National Taste? Citizenship Law, State Form, and Everyday Aesthetics," in *The Politics of Consumption: Material Culture and Citizenship in Europe and America*, ed. Martin Daunton and Matthew Hilton (New York, 2001), 117–18. A more interesting comparison to Germany's construction of national identity might be Italy. Italy's strong regional loyalties and cultures (which to this day often supercede identification with the nation as a whole) and its late national unification would seem to make it an even more fruitful choice than France for a comparative study with Germany that focused on national vs. local or regional identities.

6. Any discussion of the history of masculinity in German culture must now include Karen Hagemann's magisterial *Habilitationsarbeit*, "Männlicher Muth und deutsche Ehre": *Nation, Krieg und Geschlecht in der Zeit der antinapoleonischen Kriege Preussens* (Paderborn, 2002). Her monograph focuses on a much earlier period than the other studies discussed here, and for that reason, I have not included it. It is indispensable, however, for any work on the history of citizenship and the nation in Germany.

and instead was linked to notions of morality, piety, and valor (as expressed, for example, in the popular gymnasts' slogan "*froh, frisch, fromm und frei*"). The notion of "unity" became associated not only with national unity but also with the idea of unifying under the leadership of both the emperor and regional dynasties. Ultimately, these developments led the movement as a whole to support more conservative political parties and organizations. Unlike earlier historians of the *Turnvereine*, Goltermann does not see 1870/71 as a watershed in terms of the growth of radical nationalism among the gymnasts. Long before the 1870s, the movement tended to define Germanness through exclusion of those perceived as Other, which fostered anti-Semitic and xenophobic attitudes among many members.

Nation-building in the Kaiserreich was an incomplete, contested project, in part because any unified, coherent set of values or icons would inevitably attract opposition from one or more political camps, and because the construction project itself was built as much on exclusion of some groups as it was upon inclusion of others. It is a historiographical cliché to observe that many nationalists attempted to build an identity for unified Germany based on exclusion of much of the population: socialists, Jews, Catholics, particularists, and workers. The more recent work reviewed here makes clear that the inclusion of other groups was also problematic. Women, for example, were presumably included in the nation even while they were excluded from any formal political participation, leading to the elaborate efforts made by elite women (and documented by Quataert) to create a gender-appropriate place within the national community. Even those from right-wing political groups who were not members of particularist parties might reject an ostensibly "patriotic" unified national identity if it contradicted regional dynastic loyalties.

National unity could be expressed at the institutional level, but even a nationality expressed through these means was incomplete and contested, and so always a work in progress. Thus, the railroad and postal systems were not merged during the imperial period, nor were the military and diplomatic corps of the various *Länder*. And although the 1913 citizenship law established a national standard for claiming citizenship, "German" passports — as opposed to Saxon or Prussian ones — were not issued until the Weimar period. Even national identity expressed in purely symbolic or emotional terms was apparently difficult to achieve: unified Germany had no national flag until 1892, and no national hymn or official national holiday until after World War I. Some symbolic projects that articulated a vision of national community were created by *Trägergruppen* during the Kaiserreich (e.g., the *Hermannsdenkmal* and the sporadic celebration of Sedan Day), but these projects were based on only a partial national consensus. The work on cultural nationalism reviewed here thus reflects not only the avenues through which national identity could be constructed, but also the limitations of such an imagined community.

But some of the works reviewed here could have underscored these limitations somewhat more, by discussing at greater length who exactly was excluded from the imagined nation, as well as who was included. Works like Tacke's, Quataert's, and Green's describe convincingly who showed up for the nationalist or regional festivals and cultural events that they studied. These books are not quite as strong, however, at uncovering who stayed away, or who was not invited at all, nor can they tell us how those who did *not* attend understood the national community and Germanness. To get a more complete picture of this process, we need to examine national identity construction as a process that simultaneously includes and excludes particular social groups. Some of these authors are aware of this, of course (particularly Confino and Goltermann), but most of the works discussed here do not stress the exclusion of part of the population from the national community imagined by the nationalists, perhaps because these authors felt that this was presented in previous work on nationalism, or was often self-evident.

But it is crucial to bear in mind that for many Germans, Germanness was constructed by defining German Jews, Catholics, and socialists as the Others, and hence as not really Germans. Helmut Walser Smith's research has examined this process, for example, in his monograph *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict*, and in the essays in the recent collection edited by Smith, *Protestants, Catholics, and Jews in Germany*.<sup>7</sup> These two works make clear not only how the construction of Germanness on the right was predicated on the exclusion of many Germans, but also point to the diverse understandings of the national community developed by "outsider" groups. Catholics and Jews did not accept such exclusionary definitions, but instead claimed a place in the imagined nation that reflected their own values. Marion Kaplan, for example, writes that German Jews often took great pride in Germany. One bourgeois German Jew recalled later about his family during the Kaiserreich that "we felt pride and respect for the Fatherland, and felt that we were respected as well . . . we sang the 'Kaiserlied' on Sedan Day . . . and our German hearts beat proudly in our German breasts when we did so."<sup>8</sup> But it is unclear whether many of those who came to the festivals at the *Hermannsdenkmal*, or who joined those *Turnervereine* that were politically conservative, or who were drawn to the visitations of the monarchs discussed by Quataert were able to embrace such an expansive approach to Germanness. More exploration of the public reception of these

7. See Helmut Walser Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict: Culture, Ideology, and Politics, 1870–1914* (Princeton, 1995) and his edited anthology, *Protestants, Catholics and Jews in Germany, 1880–1914* (New York, 2002).

8. Quoted in the chapter on Imperial Germany written by Kaplan in Marion Kaplan, ed., *Jewish Daily Life in Germany, 1650–1945* (forthcoming).

national festivals might therefore be in order (although this is admittedly very difficult to research).

There is also a gap in much of this literature — one that is almost palpable — between explaining the construction and appeal of “national identity” on the one hand, and the growth of popular nationalist groups (e.g., the Navy or Pan-German League) on the other. It may be that this connection cannot ever be completely established in a satisfying fashion. Most of these books do one of these two things much more persuasively than they do the other.

The studies that focus on components of national identity, such as the *Heimat* or regional state-building (Green’s, Confino’s, and Applegate’s work), explain the reasons why people would have identified with a particular region or dynasty, and how locality could be one component of a larger national identity. And the research that examines the social foundations of nationalist organizations (something that Quataert fleshes out very well, as did Roger Chickering in his earlier study of the Pan-German League, *We Men Who Feel Most German*) describe how people were brought to the support of the state, but does not completely explain how that identity was originally created, or later revised.<sup>9</sup>

Still, Goltermann and Quataert come closest to describing the connection between national identity and popular nationalism, although it is unclear what the popular reception of the “patriotic performances” that Quataert discusses really was. The Christian National public was more broadly-based than the philanthropic and veterans’ groups that Quataert discusses, and the somewhat speculative conclusions of her book jump from 1918 to 1948, only positing but not proving a continuity in this public. Nor does Quataert seem to doubt the fervor or sincerity of the “patriotic” public performances and visitations that she documents. Some of the ceremonies she describes sound almost stultifying, rather than inspiring, to a modern reader. There is none of the suspicion voiced by Chickering about the formalism, or the rote qualities he detected in the rituals of the Pan-German League. Green also touches only lightly on the question of popular reception of the state-building measures she examines, arguing (understandably) that the actual success of attempts to build support for the regional state or dynasty is difficult to measure.<sup>10</sup>

9. Roger Chickering, *We Men Who Feel Most German: A Cultural Study of the Pan-German League, 1866–1914* (Boston, 1984).

10. Examining popular reception of the efforts to promote loyalty to a particular regional dynasty, or the popularity of a particular monarch, would indeed be a challenge, and an interesting research topic. Popular attachment to local rulers would appear to have declined during the Kaiserreich (along with the popularity of particularist political parties), at least to judge by the rapid collapse of all these regional dynasties in November 1918. Almost no one seems to have defended them, although this might be yet another result of Germans’ widespread war-weariness and sufferings, which led to the discrediting of almost all authority figures. Regional rulers might therefore have continued to enjoy broad support in some areas up through 1914.

Most of these works are best at showing how a cultural understanding of Germanness was constructed or expressed (e.g., in music, through ritual or performance, or through the work of *Heimatvereine*); they tend to pay little attention to how Germanness was also conceived as a community of descent, as a group defined by shared ancestry. Earlier historians of nationalism, of course, had discussed this matter at some length. And yet, there must have been a substantial shift between 1871 and 1913, when the new citizenship law was enacted, a law based on a strict construction of ancestry. During this period, culturally-based notions of Germanness must have become intertwined with a heightened awareness of ancestry and lineage. Reading these studies, it is difficult to see where or how that happened.

There is no doubt, however, that the “imagined community” of Wilhelmian Germany also expanded to include a place for what were now called the *Auslandsdeutschen*. Under the new citizenship law, members of the German diaspora scattered around the globe could now claim German citizenship by proving a German lineage, even though their ancestors — in some cases — had left Central Europe centuries before. The Wilhelmian “patriotic public” founded organizations to help sustain the “Germanness” of these Germans abroad, by helping to fund their German churches and schools. Popular support for the *Auslandsdeutschen* would increase rapidly after 1918 when there was no more German Empire, but now only a diaspora. After World War I, both German nationalists and the German state mounted consistent outreach efforts aimed at ethnic Germans abroad, which also attempted to use them to aid German foreign policy.<sup>11</sup>

The organizations devoted to the *Auslandsdeutschen* shared an understanding of Germanness that combined both ancestry and culture, which explains the emphasis on supporting German religious life and education abroad. The works on culture and national identity discussed here, particularly Green’s study, certainly shed light on nationalists’ desire to preserve the culture of the *Auslandsdeutschen*. She argues persuasively that the growth of such associations (and the broader colonialist movement, with which such associations were affiliated) was the reemergence, in a new form, of the older view of Germany as a nation that transcended political borders. A far-flung *Kulturvolk*, as imagined by such Wilhelmian nationalists, could not be limited to a particular set of

11. For a discussion of the 1913 citizenship law, the varied communities of ethnic Germans abroad, and metropolitan Germans’ fascination with the *Auslandsdeutschen*, see Nancy Reagin, “German Brigadoon? Domesticity and Metropolitan Perceptions of Ethnic Germans in Eastern Europe During the Interwar Period,” paper given at conference on “The Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness,” at the Center for European Studies, New York University, 19–20 November, 1999. See also Krista O’Donnell, Renate Bridenthal, and Nancy Reagin, eds., *The Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness* (University of Michigan Press, forthcoming).



narrow political borders. Thus, as much of the work on German nationalism during this period has noted, Wilhelmian radical nationalists were often deeply critical of Germany's actual government and boundaries.

But to reduce understandings of Germanness to a simple dichotomy of ancestry vs. culture would do a disservice to the rich complexities of the "imagined" Germanness that emerge in recent historiography. Tacke comments in her conclusion that "the individual's identification with the nation is grounded in a variety of social relationships, which build bridges between the individual and the abstract idea of the nation" (p. 291). In recent historiography, Germanness indeed consists of almost an overabundance of influences or foci for loyalty or identity: the regional state; the *Heimat*; particular dynastic figures; confession; class identities and structures; tribal identity; gender; mythic history, as symbolized by such figures as Arminius; Germans as the "people of music" or culture; and the patriotic public sphere. Perhaps the "confused" nature of German identity that Nietzsche noted came not from a lack of content or criteria, but rather from a plethora of criteria — a surplus of competing identities — qualities that were sometimes compatible, but often in tension with one another. Much of the work reviewed here is very fine in terms of the scope of research and the quality of both evidence and argument displayed. But the more we know about Germanness, the more the target seems to recede away into the distance: multilayered, fragmented, containing internal contradictions. Perhaps the problem *was* that Germans had too much imagination.

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