Introduction

Locating Saxony in the Landscape of German Regional History

James Retallack

I Principal Themes

On 28 May 1916, an Australian woman stranded in Leipzig wrote that the local people had grown worried about their crops. "Saxony is an unlucky spot," wrote Caroline Ethel Cooper; "if it rains anywhere, it hails here, or if it is dry in Prussia, Saxony has a drought!"[1] Making such comparisons is certainly one way of locating Saxony in Germany's regional landscape. A different take on what made Saxony unique was offered half a century earlier by Wilhelm Liebknecht when he described a fellow-traveler in the early Social Democratic movement. "For the first time in Germany," wrote Liebknecht, "I encountered in Christian Hadlich a type of man whom I subsequently met often in the *Erzgebirge* and the Vogtland: from lively brown eyes shone understanding and kindheartedness; the body [was] weakened … by hunger and deprivation, [but] the face conveyed painful experience, deep reflection, and the profound consciousness of human misery."[2] A third way of differentiating Saxons from other Germans, as described in more than one essay in this collection, was simpler still: to insult, denounce, or shoot at Prussians whenever the opportunity arose.

Each of these three observations on the problem of locating Saxony in German history draws attention to a major theme of this book. Before proceeding to examine these themes, we might pause to locate Saxony within Germany in a more literal sense. The maps included in this volume provide a starting point. In the course of the histories narrated here, the Kingdom of Saxony (*Königreich Sachsen*) became a Free State (*Freistaat Sachsen*). Throughout this period the state measured roughly 15,000 sq. km. In 1834 Saxony was home to approximately 1.6 million inhabitants. By 1871 that figure had risen to almost 2.6 million, making Saxony the third-largest federal state in the German Empire behind Prussia (with a population of 24.7 million) and Bavaria (pop. 4.9 million). In 1910, among a total German population of just under 65 million, Saxony numbered 4.8 million souls, very roughly equivalent to the population of today's Denmark, Finland, or Scotland. Even in the mid-nineteenth century, industrialization and urbanization were relatively far advanced: Saxony had by far the highest concentration of people of all German states (excluding the city states), and one of the highest concentrations in Europe.[3]

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[1] *Behind the Lines. One Woman's War 1914-18. The Letters of Caroline Ethel Cooper*, ed. and intro. by Decie Denholm (Sydney and London, 1982), 141.

[2] Wilhelm Liebknecht, *Erinnerungen eines Soldaten der Revolution* (Berlin, 1976), 323-4, cited in Hartmut Zwahr, *Revolutionen in Sachsen. Beiträge zur Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte* (Weimar, Cologne, and Vienna, 1996), 268.

[3] In 1871 the number of inhabitants per sq. km. in Saxony was 171; in 1910 that figure had risen to about 321. The corresponding averages for Germany were 75.9 and 120.0. In 1910 Saxony exceeded even the Rhineland's population density of 264. Figures have been rounded from data found in Thomas Klein, *Grundriß zur deutschen*

By 1910, only 27 percent of Saxons lived in communities of fewer than 2,000 inhabitants, compared to the German average of 40 percent. Correspondingly, almost three of every four Saxons lived in large cities (those with 20,000 or more inhabitants), whereas the German average was about one in two.

Of this volume's three central themes, the first concerns the way regions are discovered, constructed, forgotten, and remade in history. On the one hand this theme allows the authors to go beyond a metaphoric use of culture, so common these days in professional and public discourse, to speak of culture in the sense of symbolic representations that shaped and were shaped by social and political conditions. Discussing culture in a regional setting provides a means to gather together ideas about identities, mentalities, and loyalties without implying that there is something parochial about this exercise. Discussing culture in this way also allows the authors to explore how local, regional, and national cultures commingle, diverge, and influence each other. On the other hand, historians too often fail to note that a region's history is rooted, deeply rooted, in a matrix of direct spatial relationships, and that those relationships change over time. E.P. Thompson reminded us that "class" does not simply exist: class happens. But regions also "happen," though not always in a manner of their inhabitants' own choosing. Cooper's references to hail and drought invite us to take the "geography" in "historical geography" seriously—to take account, that is, of really existing physical boundaries and events that define regions, even as we also explore topographies of power, climates of opinion, and winds of change. To be sure, historians are increasingly aware that different historical environments allow regions to be "remembered" and "imagined" in particular ways. Yet mental maps and physical boundaries are most significant when they come together, for then they delimit particular ways of seeing and horizons of understanding. As Celia Applegate put it recently, historians need to consider "why people loved and hated the regional places in which they found themselves, why they worked to strengthen them, hastened to escape them, praised them, poured invective upon them, thought about them all the time, ignored them completely, and yet for all that dwelt many days of their lives within the 'networks of experience' that these regions sustained."[4]

The second theme is echoed in the observations of both Cooper and Liebknecht. It can be reduced to an interpretive couplet that is as provocative as it is untenable: the SID thesis—"Saxony is different"—and its obvious antithesis, SIS: "Saxony is the same."[5] To some observers, the history of Saxony is of special interest because it undermines the uniformity of German history. It disproves previous assumptions about what was going on at the "center," and yet it reveals dimensions of German history that no other region can. Thus Saxony may be particularly revealing because it has represented, at various points in its history, a worst-case scenario and the best of all possible worlds. Other observers, however, tend to ask whether Saxony is broadly representative, perhaps even typical, of developments that happened

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Verwaltungsgeschichte 1815-1945, Reihe B, vol. 14, *Sachsen* (Marburg, 1982); and Gerd Hohorst, Jürgen Kocka, and Gerhard A. Ritter, *Sozialgeschichtliches Arbeitsbuch*, vol. 2, *Materialien zur Statistik des Kaiserreichs 1870-1914*, 2nd ed. (Munich, 1978).

[4] I wish here to express my gratitude to Celia Applegate, Roger Chickering, Jennifer Jenkins, Jacques Kornberg, Christoph Nonn, and Bernd Weisbrod for making their prepared commentaries on the Toronto conference papers available to me. My argument draws heavily upon their insights. Nonetheless, in the interests of space, I have pared the following references to a bare minimum by simply naming the commentator in question.

[5] Bernd Weisbrod.

everywhere in Germany. Liebknecht's description adds a human dimension to these questions. It prompts the reader to ask whether there was in fact something uniquely "Saxon" about the bitter experiences etched into his colleague's face. Were these qualities encountered more frequently in the southwestern corner of Saxony than elsewhere? What sorts of analyses can be built on the tension between the diversity of Saxon society and whatever ideas of Saxonness or Germanness may have united it?

Third, what are we to make of Saxons' renowned antipathy to their Prussian neighbors? Such antipathy was always conditioned by the way Saxons appraised the future prospects of the federal ideal. Federalism in German history has always been a contentious issue, but rarely has it been explored in cultural terms. To what extent was the Saxons' *cultural* sense of belonging together—their "*landsmannschaftliches Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl*"—congruent with their social, economic, and political integration into a national community? When they perceived that such congruency was growing, did they also believe that industrialization, democratization, and parliamentarization on a national scale were hastening the erosion of local and regional identities? Or is it possible that an optimistic outlook was enhanced by the persistence of such identities? Here it is not necessary to dress Saxons in white and Prussians in black to explore the cultural relevance of a sense of place, or what has been termed *symbolische Ortsbezogenheit*.[6] As the contributions to this volume demonstrate, historians are already thinking in conceptually innovative ways about overcoming a Prussocentric depiction of German history. Taken as a whole, these essays deviate substantially from a view of Bismarck's national state as the sole, inevitable, or actual outcome of German unification. This view has been under attack for at least twenty years,[7] but it certainly has not disappeared from standard textbook accounts. Moreover, if it is vital to see that a Prussianized Germany emerging from 1870/71 wasn't necessarily the way things had to turn out, it is even more important to recognize that a Prussianized Germany wasn't *in fact* the way things turned out either. In this sense too, more attention to German histories (in the plural) is called for. For example, Celia Applegate's and Siegfried Weichlein's contributions to this volume provide salutary reminders that pride in German unification after 1871 looked very different depending where you were in the *Kaiserreich* (and how you got there).

These, then, are the three areas of historical scholarship to which these essays seek to contribute. They explore the theory and practice of writing regional history in Germany today, charting new terrain for empirical work in the future. They reflect on the degree to which the history of one region, any region, can reconceptualize fundamental assumptions about larger (national) patterns. And they remind us that Prussia was not Germany and Germany was not Prussia. Overall, these essays suggest that greater attention to regional identities, mentalities, and ways of life enriches our understanding on many other fronts. By taking the long view of Saxon history, while placing this history in the context of several key themes of modern German historiography (examined further in Part IV of this introduction), these essays argue that beliefs, idioms, and symbolic representations generated on the local and regional level really did matter—in their own right and for the nation as a whole. By engaging with what Applegate has

[6] Bernd Weisbrod.

[7] For example, in James J. Sheehan, "What is German History? Reflections on the Role of the *Nation* in German History and Historiography," *Journal of Modern History* 53 (1981): 1-23; see further the résumé provided in James Retallack, *Germany in the Age of Kaiser Wilhelm II* (Basingstoke, London, and New York, 1996).

termed the "placeness" of places, historians can uncover crucial constitutive elements in the mental and moral geography of all Germans.

II A Saxon "Moment" in German Historiography

In answering the question: Why Saxony?, one runs the risk of claiming that one German history is more significant than all the other German histories. Still: is Saxony important in its own right, or isn't it? If the goal of recapturing elements of diversity and contingency in modern German history is patently a long-term project, Saxony is certainly not the only German region that deserves attention. The preceding section has argued that "region" itself, rather than the history of any one territory, provides the conceptual matrix onto which issues of power, identity, and solidarity can be projected. Hence the title of this volume suggests an undertaking not dissimilar to those attempted by such books as *The Holocaust in History*, *Faith in History*, and *Women in History*. Moreover, juxtaposing region and nation uncovers a complex, shifting, malleable relationship that has waited too long to be problematized and rethought by scholars. To prompt exactly this kind of reflection is the primary goal of this volume.

Nevertheless, Saxony provides a clear territorial focus and a firm foundation that scholars can use to draw comparisons outward. Moreover, for practical reasons and at particular moments of history, some regions appear more suitable than others as a vehicle to permit reconsideration of larger problems. Such reasons include a growing body of scholarship in one particular area, which often produces empirical work of such density that a stock-taking is called for. Saxon historians are unquestionably far ahead of their colleagues in the four other new federal states in reconsidering the contours of their own regional history. Other reasons include the opening up of new archives and a growing intensification of debate among native and international scholars. Here too, Saxon historians and archivists are clearly in the vanguard. These considerations underscore the special timeliness of bringing scholarship on Saxony to the attention of an English-language audience. This introduction is not the place to explain *en detail* why Saxony has been the focus of so much scholarly writing in the 1990s; I have addressed these questions elsewhere.[8] A brief synopsis may nonetheless help explain why Saxon history currently provides such fertile ground for historical spade-work on a number of fronts.

First, due to the repressive regime in the former German Democratic Republic and lack of access to the archives in eastern Germany, Saxon history for many years remained *terra incognita* to most (though certainly not all) western scholars. Since German unification in 1990, outstanding work on Saxony has been pouring out of publishing houses at a remarkable rate, fueled by vibrant institutes of historical research at the universities of Leipzig, Dresden, and

[8] James Retallack, "Politische Kultur, Wahlkultur, Regionalgeschichte: Methodologische Überlegungen am Beispiel Sachsens und des Reiches," in *Modernisierung und Region im wilhelminischen Deutschland. Wahlen, Wahlrecht und Politische Kultur*, ed. Simone Lässig, Karl Heinrich Pohl, and James Retallack, 2nd rev. ed. (Bielefeld, 1998), 15-38; idem, "Politische Kultur in der Region," in *Politische Kultur in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Werner Bramke and Thomas Adam (Leipzig, 1999), xx-xx; and idem, "Society and Politics in Saxony in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Reflections on Recent Research," *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 38 (1998): 396-457.

Chemnitz.[9] Yet very little of this scholarship is currently available in English. This volume brings these new findings to Anglo-American audiences for the first time, demonstrating their diversity and their depth. Thus one finds contributions from newly-minted Ph.D.s and from senior scholars in the field; essays derived from recent work in Saxony's local archives and "think-pieces" written from greater geographical and thematic distance; and differing perspectives offered by scholars in Canada, the United States, Great Britain, and both western and eastern Germany.

Second, many questions about political modernization in Germany have been explored for Prussian territory or the historically more accessible areas of Baden, Württemberg, Bavaria, and the Rhineland. As a consequence, Thomas Kühne has noted that this "western bias" may give rise to a "democratic bias."[10] This volume redirects scholarly attention toward persistent traditions of authoritarian rule in central Germany before 1933. Saxony does not fit neatly within the common east-west and north-south paradigms of German historiography. The oft-cited distinctions between French-influenced political cultures in southwestern Germany and Prussian authoritarian traditions in the north and east must be demonstrated, not just asserted, for the kingdom that straddled the Elbe River. Just as the choice of Berlin rather than Bonn as the capital of a united Germany inevitably pulls the political center of gravity eastward, this volume seeks to demonstrate how the history of one eastern region might contribute to the task of reassessing Germany's larger past.

Third, as one of Germany's most industrialized regions even in the 1830s, Saxony became the seedbed of German socialism. For understandable reasons, research on pre-1933 Saxony has tended to focus on the Social Democratic Party (less so on trade unions and other elements of the labor movement). The essays by Thomas Adam, Brett Fairbairn, and Karsten Rudolph, among others, suggest that the history of Social Democracy will surely remain one starting point for future research on the Saxon party system. But for too long, the Saxon SPD has been studied in isolation. Thus it was not until the very recent appearance of a volume on working-class women in nineteenth-century Saxony that a gendered perspective on Saxon industrialization was developed systematically, despite the early and important work on Saxon home weavers provided by Jean Quataert.[11] Historians have also been conspicuous in their failure to explore how Social Democrats, liberals, conservatives, and antisemites all competed for the allegiance of the disaffected *Mittelstand* in Saxony. A number of the essays in this volume therefore seek to embed the history of Saxon socialism in a broader picture of social, cultural, and political change.

Fourth, histories of bourgeois politics and histories of liberal politics provide good examples of how innovative studies of one region can help formulate new questions about other regions.

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[9] See the indispensable guide by Karsten Rudolph and Iris Weuster, *Bibliographie zur Geschichte der Demokratiebewegung in Mitteldeutschland (1789-1933)* (Weimar, Cologne, and Vienna, 1997); further references are found in Retallack, "Society and Politics in Saxony."

[10] Thomas Kühne, "Historische Wahlforschung in der Erweiterung," in *Modernisierung und Region*, ed. Lässig, Pohl, and Retallack, 39-67, here 47; see also Kühne's reflections on the marked gender bias still evident in recent electoral and political analyses of German history.

[11] Susanne Schötz, ed., *Frauenalltag in Leipzig. Weibliche Lebenszusammenhänge im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Weimar, Cologne, and Vienna, 1997); Jean 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): 91-124.

New work on the Saxon *Bürgertum* has begun to bring its multiple, shifting political allegiances into focus. To be sure, many questions remain unanswered about how middle-class Saxons viewed their social, economic, cultural, and political status in Saxony and in the Reich. Yet a start has been made in exploring why Saxon burghers sometimes followed radical movements and why, at other times, they fought to assert their independence from extremists of both the Left and the Right. A number of essays in this volume push these investigations forward, sometimes with surprising results.

Fifth, inhabitants of today's Saxony are keenly interested in their own history. Not unlike other eastern Germans, they are still struggling to identify what is distinctive about a regional heritage that remains open to multiple readings. Efforts to resurrect a positive historical identity are themselves part of a historical debate in Germany that during the chancellorship of Helmut Kohl politicized the quest for national identity and threatened to reassert a meta-narrative of German exceptionalism. This tension within German historiography was recently described as the tension between a German past that was so "violently diverse," and its historical narrative, which has so far been "utterly homogenous."[12] By showcasing cutting-edge research, but also by providing broader reflection, this volume may speak to those Germans (and others) who know little about Saxony but who seek to understand how struggles for cultural identity and political pluralism in the past inform similar struggles in the present.

Pulling together the strands of this argument, what are the major findings of these essays, and what specific issues impart a sense of direction and novelty to recent Saxon research? Taking up the volume's first theme—the constructedness of regional identity—certainly the essays collected in Part I suggest that Saxons have been anything but unique in using the idea of "region" as a filter to discover, cultivate, or act upon specific identities and ways of seeing. Yet the essays in Parts II through IV identify many ways in which milieu behavior, political mentalities, and conceptions of the future did indeed evolve differently in Saxony. Saxons, for example, may initially have been as eager as Württembergers[13] or *Pfälzer*[14] to preserve their *Heimat* within the emerging German nation. By 1900, however, radical nationalism was more strongly entrenched in the mental maps of Saxon burghers than was any distinguishing sense of "Saxonness." Together with a pronounced fear of socialism (discussed further below), this mental orientation appears to have contributed to a relative hostility toward political reform, at least among Saxony's bourgeoisie. This hostility must not be exaggerated, as the essays by Pohl and Nonn suggest. Nevertheless, much of the recent literature on Saxony between 1900 and 1933 has stressed the underlying structural factors that consistently doomed efforts to break with an authoritarian past. The "left-wing republic project" that was tried in Saxony in the early 1920s is one among many unsuccessful attempts to overcome authoritarian traditions in the state.

With an eye to exploring these two issues—regional identity and the challenge of undertaking timely reform—historians have recently focused on the role of suffrage reform and other "fairness issues" in conditioning Saxon political culture over the long term. More than one essay

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[12] Michael Geyer and Konrad H. Jarausch, "Great Men and Postmodern Ruptures: Overcoming the 'Belatedness' of German Historiography," *German Studies Review* 18 (1995): 253-73, here 267.

[13] Alon Confino, *The Nation as Local Metaphor. Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871-1918* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1997).

[14] Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford, 1990).

here considers the efforts of Saxon elites to disenfranchise or otherwise silence the political representatives of the "dangerous classes" at crucial turning-points in German history. Karl Heinrich Pohl and Páll Björnsson consider municipal suffrage laws as a means to demonstrate how a conservative elite in Dresden and a liberal one in Leipzig each proved able to block the integration of political outsiders into the political community.

What are we to make of the second theme: the opposition between the "Saxony is different" thesis (SID) and "Saxony is the same" (SID)? It is the *tension* between these alternatives, rather than any urge to opt for one thesis over the other, that currently drives Saxon historical writing. Historians will likely continue to direct their attention to the ways in which Saxony served as a "pioneer." And rightly so. Saxon history includes too many unprecedented political experiments to allow historians to ignore the singularity of events there. Brett Fairbairn notes in his contribution that Saxony seems to have led the way as Germany's first socialist state, its first anti-socialist state, and its first post-socialist state. As Fairbairn notes, however, Saxony does not fit as comfortably into any of these roles as we once thought—just as it fits poorly into the classic paradigm of modernization theory. Quite the contrary: Saxon history frequently demonstrates the precariousness of regional innovation in the face of national trends. For example, Saxony abolished the death penalty in the mid-nineteenth century, only to be forced to accede to its reintroduction under the North German Confederation. Conversely, whereas the general trend among German states was to liberalize and widen the suffrage for *Landtag* elections, Saxony answered Kaiser Wilhelm II's call for a reactionary suffrage law in 1896 when it reverted from a relatively broad suffrage to a restrictive three-class one. Such examples reveal that democratization did not proceed in lockstep with other aspects of modernization, but could actually be slowed down, stopped, or reversed.

Demonstrating the way in which this and related trends were accelerated, retarded, or redirected by regional factors is arguably where Saxon historians are contributing most to a rethinking of general explanations based on national patterns. A number of essays in this collection suggest how conflicting notions of regional identity, disputes over political sovereignty, and challenges arising from military defeat combined in Saxony to produce political blueprints whose novelty and variety force historians to see greater contingency within the national pattern. It should come as little surprise that the problems and promise of the age of mass politics should first have been recognized by contemporaries as particularly acute in the state where Social Democracy was farthest advanced and yet where entrenched elites provided to be particularly unaccommodating in the face of struggles for political emancipation.

Overall one finds more examples of the "worst-case scenario" than "the best of all possible worlds" in current writing on Saxony. Saxon statesmen generally score poor marks in reacting to political challenges with flexibility or generosity (although the conclusions presented here by Neemann and Krug point in the opposite direction). Moreover, if Saxon statesmen too seldom learned from past mistakes, a majority of Saxon burghers appears to have condoned the antiliberal, antidemocratic, and antisocialist policies undertaken by their leaders. Some readers may conclude from this that Saxons generally got the governments they deserved. Whatever assessment is reached, there seems ample evidence that Saxony was indeed a crucial testing ground (*Experimentierfeld*), and functioned as a special kind of mirror (*Brennspiegel*), for problems and conflicts found in less attenuated form elsewhere in Germany.

As to the volume's third major theme, a focus on Saxon history self-evidently undermines Prussocentric views of the German *Kaiserreich*. We have already noted that a sense of "Germanness" depended very much on where one lived in the empire. It was a function of whether one tended to see a good fit among local, regional, and national allegiances. And it was conditioned by one's conception of Germany's "national mission" both before and after 1871. Nevertheless, most attempts to postulate a "third" Saxon way, falling somewhere between Prussian reaction and southwest German liberalism, have proved dissatisfying. Although Saxon peculiarities continue to fuel arguments about the balance of progressive and reactionary forces in Germany as a whole, Saxony's "pioneering" role can be interpreted in very different ways. Christoph Nonn has written that social protest in Saxony, often based on the defence of consumer interests in the face of high meat prices, was already far-advanced by 1906: "The recipe for success, used in the last years before World War One by Social Democrats in Prussia and the Reich to pit consumer protest against conservative political structures, was perfected first by Social Democrats in Saxony."[15] Conversely, Lapp has argued that Saxony in 1923 lived up to its reputation as pioneer in quite a different manner: it provided an "early example" of "the extent to which conservative bourgeois politicians were willing to sacrifice democratic institutions in the interests of a militant anti-Socialism."[16]

The usefulness of non-Prussian perspectives is particularly evident as historians press ahead with their research on the Saxon *Bürgertum*. The essays collected here suggest that Saxony remains a useful "laboratory" in which to explore such concepts as *Bürgerlichkeit*, *Bürgerstolz*, and *Verbürgerlichung*. Yet such investigations, too, yield ambiguous conclusions. Historians recognize that the economic and cultural hegemony of the Saxon bourgeoisie on the eve of 1914 was virtually uncontested.[17] But in times of crisis, liberal burghers in Saxony were also conspicuously prone to relinquish their claim to political leadership to their long-time rivals in the conservative camp. Saxon burghers were particularly sensitive to the geopolitical dangers inherent in their state's position in *Mitteleuropa*. The convergence of east-west and north-sought axes contributed to Saxons' ambivalent feelings on such issues as free trade, in- and out-migration, the place of ethnic minorities in society, and the perennial problem of *Groß-* or *Kleindeutschland*. Moreover, the preponderance of small producers and small workshops heightened the fears of many middle-class Saxons that they faced a special threat from organized labor. As it happens, recent research has suggested that the preponderance of small industrial units in Saxony was more typical of the German norm than we once thought.[18] Nonetheless, Benjamin Lapp, Claus-Christian Szejnmann, and Sean Dobson have argued—in each case with

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[15] Christoph Nonn, "Arbeiter, Bürger, und 'Agrarier': Stadt-Land-Gegensatz und Klassenkonflikt im Wilhelminischen Deutschland am Beispiel des Königreichs Sachsen," in *Demokratie und Emanzipation zwischen Saale und Elbe. Beiträge zur Geschichte der sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterbewegung bis 1933*, ed. Helga Grebing, Hans Mommsen, and Karsten Rudolph (Essen, 1993), 101-13, here 106.

[16] Benjamin Lapp, *Revolution from the Right. Politics, Class, and the Rise of Nazism in Saxony, 1919-1933* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ, 1997), 77.

[17] The cultural orientations of Saxon burghers will be highlighted in essays by Robert Beachy, H Glenn Penny III, and Marline Otte in *Saxon Signposts*, ed. James Retallack, forthcoming as a special issue of *German History* 17, no. 4 (1999).

[18] Gary Herrigel, *Industrial Constructions: The Sources of German Industrial Power* (Cambridge, 1996); Herrigal draws frequently on Saxon circumstances to support his thesis, as does Frank B. Tipton, Jr. in *Regional Variations in the Economic Development of Germany During the Nineteenth Century* (Middletown, CT, 1976).

due consideration of local variations—that these components of bourgeois *Angst* underpinned "the poverty of civic discourse" among Saxon burghers. This in turn allowed cynicism and self-interest to masquerade as ideology and undermine concern for the common good. More specifically, the perception that *Grenzland Sachsen* was situated precariously on the periphery of Germany, combined with real evidence of their susceptibility to economic dislocation and loss of social status, appears to have pushed Saxon burghers in the direction of radical nationalism. Nevertheless, because similar anxieties afflicted other Germans too, much more work is required before this hypothesis can be accepted as an explanation for why such the Pan-German League and other radical nationalist groups experienced such success in recruiting members in Saxony. Wherever readers come down on these and related questions, it can hardly be disputed that the density of work now available on Saxony will continue to broaden the analytical terrain on which future questions about the German *Bürgertum* are posed.

If there is one area of debate among German historians where Saxony figures more prominently than any other, it is surely the alleged polarization between the socialist and nationalist camps (*Lager*). According to the prevailing view, because the Saxon population was overwhelmingly Lutheran, no Catholic "camp" existed in the state to mitigate extreme political conflict between these two opposing camps. In fact, however, there is considerable evidence suggesting that the "unbridgeable" gulf between socialist and nationalist forces in Saxony was much less clear-cut than previously imagined. Historians of Saxony have not met with unqualified success when they have attempted to explain such conflicts exclusively in terms of milieus, cleavages, or camps. Even Saxons who feared the "red menace" seem to have followed an uncertain, shifting political compass, and they often traversed the middle ground between these opposing camps. This middle ground has been identified as a "gray zone" (also described as a "transitory zone" or as bountiful "hunting grounds") between the two camps, evident in the 1920s but extending as far back to the 1860s and 1870s. Hence the pronounced political ambivalence of Saxony's Protestant middle classes suggests that they hold clues to explain how similar groups elsewhere in Germany lost their political anchor during the 1920s. The strength and the virulence of right-wing *Mittelstandspolitik* and radical antisemitism in the state have yet to be the subject of sustained historical analysis, even though they have obvious relevance to long-standing questions about the rise of Nazism.

This alleged polarization between socialists and anti-socialists in Saxony runs like a red thread through recent Saxon historiography, and certainly cannot be dismissed as *passé*. Yet it may be prudent to conceive of such polarization more broadly, to consider how struggles for emancipation, democracy, and social fairness unfolded in the face of Saxon authoritarianism. Here it may actually matter little whether one conceives of such polarization as dividing classes, milieus, or camps: polarization itself is the bigger story. Although the essayists in this volume differ in their analysis of the causes and consequences of this polarization, they agree that Saxon history from the 1860s to the 1920s reveals in particularly striking fashion the early contours of a conflict between Left and Right that afflicted Germany as a whole shortly before 1933. There is arguably no better laboratory than Saxony in which to test provocative but still unproven theories about the division of German political society into two hostile camps on the eve of the Nazi seizure of power.

In the final analysis, it would be hard to deny that the increasingly nuanced way in which basic questions about the course of modern German history are being posed by Saxon historians

are yielding increasingly tentative and ambivalent answers. Historians who ask the big question—Why Saxony?—have generally done a better job establishing the legitimacy of the regional perspective itself than they have in identifying specific ways in which Saxon history forces us to reassess national paradigms. Today, historians of Saxony are contributing decisively to the revision of a model that gave too much weight to Imperial Germany's imperviousness to reform both from below and from above. Yet they also stress the need for further research on the persistence of authoritarian habits of mind. They offer convincing reasons why historians need to pay greater attention to the diversity of German blueprints for reform, and they are attuned to the contingency of struggles for liberty, democracy, social fairness, and regional identity. Yet they are less sanguine than, say, historians of southwest Germany that reformist impulses in the *Kaiserreich* might have triumphed without the interruption of the First World War. In short: one sees on the horizon no synthesis, no overarching explanation of where either Saxony or Germany was headed in the early twentieth century. For this reason alone, we should welcome signs that new approaches and new themes are being taken up by a younger generation of scholars.

III "Doing" Regional History Today

This volume is not merely a collection of conference papers; it is a true collaborative effort. From the very beginning, the aim was to publish a coherent body of work to reflect the state of the art in one particular field of German regional history, and yet also to make available to non-specialists methodological and theoretical reflections of a more general nature. Each of these essays was drafted in their present length and with the full scholarly apparatus prior to a conference held in Toronto in September 1998. Happily, because this volume went to press eight weeks after the conference, contributors were able to refine their arguments in the light of points raised by their peers. Whereas there is no opportunity to reflect the full diversity of views put forward during the conference or to publish the prepared commentaries on the papers, lest an already long book grow even longer, it is possible to identify a few key areas where some consensus emerged from the Toronto discussions. Isaiah Berlin might almost have been describe-ing one such area of agreement when he warned against a "naïve craving for unity and symmetry at the expense of experience." Although Berlin made this observation in the context of the Germans' "hangover" after revolution and unification in 1989/90, elsewhere he advocated "allowing curiosity into the airless chamber of fixed certainty."[19] That curiosity was evident on the floor of the Toronto conference, as was a strong resistance to any "craving for symmetry." Nevertheless, such resistance has its positive and negative aspects.

On the positive side, scholars sustain this resistance by using a wide range of analytical tools to work their way through, around, and within regional histories. Only rarely do they still fall into the trap of identifying too closely with their favorite *Ländl* or of believing that the region they study constitutes historical "reality" itself. Compared to the state of the art, say, thirty years ago, the practice of "doing" regional history in the 1990s is much more methodologically self-conscious. Nevertheless, Celia Applegate has noted that there is "something both liberating *and* demoralizing about our current suspicion of allegedly overdeterministic explanations of change and its organizing categories." To be sure, the anti-explanatory mode currently prevalent among

[19] Cited in a retrospective on Berlin's life published by William Thorsell in *The Globe and Mail* (Toronto), 15 Nov. 1997; see also Michael Ignatieff, *Isaiah Berlin: A Life* (Toronto, 1998).

scholars seems to demand a certain degree of critical distancing both from our method of historical investigation (regional history) and from the object of study itself (the region). But this pose of ironic detachment can be overdone, in the manner of an awkward personal encounter: "let me introduce you to my spouse, but I'm not really committed to this relationship and it could well turn out to be something entirely different than a marriage and it's certainly in flux and under negotiation and filled with other possibilities and contingently related to all the other things going on in my life, and I wouldn't wish to suggest that there is some normative value adhering to this particular relationship…."[20]

What might take the place of these normative values? At the risk of sampling too selectively from the plenary debates, four central issues seemed to attract the most attention in Toronto. The first concerned the lack of reflection with which historians still approach the concept of "region" itself. The second concerned the need for historians always to be concerned with change over time. The third concerned the way we gather together, and analyze together, the different sorts of mental maps that determine people's actions, including most conspicuously geographic maps, imaginative maps, and maps of experience. And the fourth concerned the use and abuse of modernization as a unifying concept to explore or explain historical change.

Taking up the first of these issues, certainly historians of Germany have too rarely reflected on the constructed nature of regions and regional identities. This deficit shows signs of shrinking, as the essays in Part I of this volume demonstrate. That is not to say, however, that historians should not be even more explicit about how they use "region" as a geographical limitation, as a framing device, for their own research. For example, the notion of "exceptionalism," identified earlier in this introduction, is too often dismissed as a remnant of an out-of-date style of regional history known as *Landesgeschichte*. Perhaps there are still too many good exceptionalists among us, each one imagining that his or her own unit of study—a single city, a province, a region—represents the paradigmatic case of this syndrome or that trend. Hamburg, the Rhineland, and Bavaria might be cited as examples here as readily as Saxony. Both in the past and in the study of the past, exceptionalism too often hardens into a myth that powerfully influences the way local and regional histories are conceptualized and narrated in the present. The relatively unreflective ways in which historians endorse the "production" of regions may become political projects of their own.[21] Whereas the methods of local and regional history are used to travel new paths, often we end up at the old destinations (including, significantly, restatements of modernization theory "writ small").

Second, what are we to make of demands that regional historians devote more attention to change over time? Here too, the essays in this volume offer hints as to how this might be done. One can look at people on the move, as Helmut Walser Smith advocates, and consider migration as a factor reflecting the connections between identity and geography. One might consider how the "nuts and bolts" of regional consciousness—church or military institutions, dialects, networks of family connections, and myriad other cultural practices—are "set in motion" by challenges to the status quo. When did contemporaries reflect on their particular era as perpetuating or overcoming something special in their lives, and when did they focus on the arrival of something better in the future? Do historians accurately capture this sense of change over time

[20] Celia Applegate.
[21] Jennifer Jenkins.

when they write, for example, about a "post-revolutionary" epoch or a "pre-emancipatory" stage of development? Are we sufficiently aware of contemporaries' perceptions when we denote certain political movements as "rising," when we say others are in danger of "disappearing" from history, and when we find liberals trying to seize a "second chance"?

Such considerations can be couched in less abstract terms. For example, suffrage laws and railway maps, drawn and redrawn over the years, illustrate the way things have already evolved in the past; but they also capture potential sources of legitimacy or profit in the future. The main point is that a sense of place usually evolves in tandem with a sense of time. However, a sense of time is rarely included among the "modern" ways of seeing that regional historians consider. When do identities remain rooted, and when do they change at a recognizably accelerating pace? At what rate do spatial memories fade away? What is their relationship to the perceived "newness" of places and groups in which displaced persons find themselves? Ironically, such questions about change over time actually de-emphasize the priority historians have placed on the region-nation polarity as a process; they tend to reconceptualize it as a tension, one with many more layers and interpretations than we once imagined.

Historians, then, may be well advised to ask not "What is a region?" but what sets of practices define a sense of place? What identities adhere to "region," and what experiences constitute it? In considering these shifting practices, identities, and experiences, we risk losing track of the specificities of place—this is the third issue raised in the Toronto discussions. Many of the papers in this volume could be more explicit about the physical, social, and political boundaries within which their analyses are situated. Yet by discussing the importance of neighborhood boundaries, of states' territorial sovereignty, or of networks of transportation and communication, many contributions do take a first step toward the better integration of mental and physical topography—that is, toward a better understanding of the symbolic *and* the geographic "placeness" of place. That understanding in turn will help historians explore further what Applegate termed the "discernible patterns, identifiable limits, commonalities of experience—mental, physical, social, political—and even trends that at least felt inexorable at the time, even if they may not have been so."

Fourth, the methodological distancing noted earlier has contributed to a marked difference of opinion among scholars about the applicability of modernization as a central concept in the genre of regional history. The liabilities of modernization theory in its extreme form have always been particularly clear to local and regional historians—no less clear, in fact, than to practitioners of microhistory and *Alltagsgeschichte*.[22] For too long, regions were studied exclusively as the sites of resistance to modernity and nationalism, as the bastions of parochial outlooks and particularist navel-gazing. Too often one encountered the narcissism of small differences, and too often a strict polarity intruded where none actually existed in the past. But as Richard J. Evans has suggested, moving beyond the "generalizing social-science approach to the past" allows us to sidestep the teleologies that tend to wipe out "the cultural distance between the past and the present, losing the strangeness and individuality of the past in the process." Bringing the region "back in" restores one small part of that fascinating, frustrating strangeness of the past. Another

[22] "The study of a small community, a single riot, a discrete event, a particular text, a historical family, a personal relationship, or an ordinary individual can often tell us more about the past than the wide-ranging teleologies of the 1960s and 1970s, from Marxism to modernization theory, ever managed to do." Richard J. Evans, *Rituals of Retribution: Capital Punishment in Germany 1600-1987* (Oxford, 1996), ix, and for the passage below.

part may be recaptured via Applegate's idea of the "mediated nation." The idea of mediation might be used by historians trying to understand how the "filters" of localism and regionalism conditioned ordinary Germans' perception of the nation. On the one hand, the nation could not unproblematically be balanced, harmonized, or reconciled with the local except via the mediation of the region. On the other hand, mediation also suggests a way of linking everyday routines of politics (the micro) to larger plays of power (the macro).

Few papers in this volume deploy a concept of modernization that sees parochial remnants receding on all fronts in the face of modernity. To the contrary, many of them would agree with the practice of placing "modernization" always in inverted commas, to keep at bay what Roger Chickering described as "a floating, illusionary, elusive telos." Yet Chickering's own work on Freiburg during the First World War illustrates that local and regional history are the natural allies of total history, that is, a history encompassing as many aspects of the past as possible. Hence: Why not retain the more convincing and heuristically useful *elements* of the modernization concept and dispense only with the prideful claim to explain how modernity—as a whole—"happened"? Why not strive to avoid the pitfalls of middle-class, cultural, and national reductionism but nonetheless seek to write *histoire totale*? And why not continue to study such self-evidently important issues as class formation, political renewal, the uneven distribution of power, the overcoming of social inequality, and—of perennial importance—the failure of liberal democracy in Germany before 1945?

These are just a few of the keys that are generally included among what Geoff Eley has called the "connotative continuum of 'bourgeoisie = liberalism = democracy.'"[23] This is the continuum of classic modernization theory. Yet at the regional level—perhaps nowhere more obviously than at the regional level—this "implied causal chain" remains just that: implied, not proven. Modernization theory tended to render regions as a convenient black box. Everything that did not square with the straight path toward economic, social and political modernity could be explained as coming out of that black box; or rather, everything that did not fit could be explained away *into* it.[24] But we should never forget that mere interdependence among the social and cultural components of political democratization should not be taken as tending inevitably toward a "good fit." To choose to explore these issues is not to lock oneself into the iron cage of modernization theory or to accept rigid patterns of development from which no person or region or collectivity shall stray.[25] Rather, it is to suggest that questions of power and domination, patterns of social upheaval and economic development, and problems of social inequality were indeed important in German history. Concepts of structured change—like the concepts of political mobilization, participation, activization, pillarization, polarization, integration, and nationalization—these concepts must be used flexibly; they must be used contingently; but they

[23] Geoff Eley, "German History and the Contradictions of Modernity: The Bourgeoisie, the State, and the Mastery of Reform," in *Society, Culture, and the State in Germany, 1870*-1933, ed. idem (Ann Arbor, MI, 1995), 67-103, here 87.

[24] Christoph Nonn.

[25] Celia Applegate.

can be used nevertheless.[26] Similarly, constructs of identity, if they are used as a heuristic tool, may be more or less useful; but the extent of their usefulness has to be proven.[27]

Arguably, one can discern in this volume more than a mere vestige of those polarities (modern, not-modern) that have always underpinned the modernization concept. One might consider the contending positions advocated by Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl and Gustav Freytag, where one thinker emphatically embraced precisely what the other condemned. Which city was more “modern,” Dresden or Munich? Was Saxony more “progressive” than other states in the way it reformed its suffrage laws or tolerated consumer co-operatives? How might “modernization, National-Liberal style,” have served as a blueprint for the Reich? Did the Weimar Republic slip off the rails in Saxony first? Is there something peculiarly “localizing” about political violence (or memories of violence)?

Some readers may conclude that the trail-markers first laid down so long ago by the advocates of modernization theory are still pushing regional historians of Germany toward depicting a surprisingly familiar, well-trodden path. Yet the will to resist such pressure is surely growing. Historians are answering the call to put the telos of modernization at arm’s length by explaining the erosion *and* persistence of traditional ways of seeing. In these essays the forces of modernity are sought at levels other than the national one. National aggregates, national averages, and the apparent homogeneity of long trends—what Charles Tilly playfully described as “big structures, large processes, [and] huge comparisons”[28]—yield pride of place to local and regional particularities, to discrete events, to sudden turning points, and to the actions of individuals whose role on the national stage was unexceptional.[29]

In the process of such investigations, we find that contemporaries’ attempts to hasten the arrival of “the modern” cannot neatly be placed in opposition to attempts to preserve tradition. Both projects jumble and jostle together, in effect decoupling the experience, consciousness, and identity of individuals and groups from a teleology of progress. On the one hand, this jostling makes it more difficult for historians to dress “national” modernizers alone as the protagonists of German history. It reminds us that those Germans whom David Blackbourn recently called the “martinets of modernity” were not assured of victory in their smaller homelands.[30] And it helps us avoid the trap of linear thinking: by discarding the notion of a special German path (*Sonderweg*) in the singular, we can more easily avoid both the Scylla of sentimentality and the Charybdis of censure. On the other hand, this approach yields a more “humanist” style of history, based on the idea of the individual as an active subject, and on the idea of history as fractured, contradictory, and open to multiple readings. In these ways it may, indeed, still prove possible to

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[26] Celia Applegate.

[27] Christoph Nonn formulated this idea in especially pointed form. All such constructs of identity have a “hard core beneath a soft and changing surface,” he observed, adding: “That core may not be as hard as steel and unchangeable, but it is hard nevertheless.”

[28] Charles Tilly, *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons* (New York, 1984).

[29] Cf. Peter Steinbach, “Deutungsmuster der historischen Modernisierungstheorie für die Analyse westeuropäischer Wahlen,” in *Vergleichende europäische Wahlgeschichte*, ed. Otto Büsch and Peter Steinbach (Berlin, 1982), 158-246; and Thomas Mergel, “Geht es weiterhin voran? Die Modernisierungtheorie auf dem Weg zu einer Theorie der Moderne,” in *Geschichte zwischen Kultur und Gesellschaft*, ed. idem and Thomas Welskopp (Munich, 1997), S. 203-32.

[30] David Blackbourn, *Marpingen: Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Bismarckian Germany* (Oxford, 1993), 14.

explore modernization's diverse forms, its reversible patterns, its constituent dilemmas, and its surface textures—if necessary, all without using the dreaded "m"-word.

In the end, the most any editor can hope is that his contributors will be judged as working hard at writing the kind of histories that are methodologically self-conscious, inventive, and demanding, but also respectful of the historical record. In seeking to bridge the rather unfruitful divides between empiricism and theory, between solid, careful history and the search for new avenues to insight, this collection tries to demonstrate that regional approaches can reveal the richness of Germany's multiple histories in new ways, as though one were observing them through telephoto and wide-angle lenses at the same time.

IV Structure of the Volume

Why are the individual essays grouped as they are? Without attempting to render the collection all things to all people, the balance of American, Canadian, and German perspectives is not accidental. First, a rough chronological progression underlies the sequence of papers. No claim can be made that this volume provides a unified, comprehensive history of Saxony between 1830 and 1918. Nevertheless, for members of the Saxon general public and other non-specialist readers, a new window is opened on the broad sweep of Saxon history. Then individual papers were grouped around specific issues—ones that have achieved special resonance in Saxon history *and* in German historiography. As it happens, it did not take much effort to discover a multitude of such issues; the difficulty arose in choosing among them. Lastly, the provocative "think-piece" essays in Part 5 were meant to emphasize the open-endedness of current thinking about German regional history – exactly the kind of thinking that this volume is meant to facilitate.

Both Hartmut Zwahr's Foreword and this Introduction have alluded to certain criteria that one might use to embed Saxony within German history. The essays that follow suggest many more. A number of these derive from growing scholarly interest in political culture. There is some truth in Max Kaase's famous quip that the task of defining political culture is comparable to the attempt to nail a pudding against the wall.[31] Yet when we speak of political culture (or the culture of politics), we signal an interest in the social-psychological ambiance of a system of rule, the relationship between the state and its citizens, and countless other assumptions, usually unarticulated, that members of a given polity take for granted. Many of the contributors use "region" as a variable to explore exactly these kinds of relationships and assumptions. Here they follow the lead of Karl Rohe, who has shown the way in deploying the concept of *regional* political cultures flexibly: as a means to explore "politically relevant cultural peculiarities which have developed over time, whether on the level of 'world views' and mentalities, on the level of commonalties of thought, speech, sentiment, or behavior, [or] on the level of symbols and explicit ideologies."[32]

Culture is central to this volume in other ways. More than one essay considers the regional and national contours of the German reading public. Others examine liberal and monarchical

[31] See Eva Kolinsky and John Gaffney, "Introduction," in *Political Culture in France and Germany*, ed. idem (London and New York, 1991), 1-12, and for the following.

[32] Karl Rohe, "Regionale (politische) Kultur: Ein sinnvolles Konzept für die Wahl- und Parteienforschung?," in *Parteien und regionale politische Traditionen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, ed. Dieter Oberndörfer and Karl Schmitt (Berlin, 1991), 17-37, here 21.

attempts to exert hegemony over festival culture and public spaces. Still others explore Social Democratic cultural associations and sports clubs, or the cultural *Habitus* of Jews. In each of these cases, a discussion of culture is central to the task of examining the multiple layerings that make up individual and group identities. Culture, indeed, may provide the best key to explain why scholarly attention has recently shifted away from the kind of regional history that privileged structure and typology, toward one that increasingly emphasizes agency, perception, experience, mentalities, and language.

The essays in Part 2 demonstrate how the issue of emancipation still provides a useful vehicle for investigations that seek to transcend the traditional social, cultural, and political divides in Saxon and German historiography. Emancipation is seen to have engaged the attention of Germany's middle classes in many different ways, ranging from liberal parliamentarians' formal efforts to enhance the power of parliaments to a variety of public campaigns rooted in the idea of "self-help." Simone Lässig's extended chronological sweep encompasses almost a century in the history of Jewish emancipation. At the same time it provides a compelling example of how comparative historical analysis based on regional case studies can be pursued. In two other important ways Lässig sets the stage for the contributions that follow. On the one hand she emphasizes key connections between the processes of Jewish emancipation and cultural embourgeoisement in nineteenth-century Germany. On the other hand, Lässig successfully calls into doubt the long-term success of German Jews, together with their liberal supporters, in overturning the legacy of suspicion and animosity inherited from previous centuries. The specifically German model of "conditional" emancipation "from above," which registered such notable success in Anhalt-Dessau, proved much more problematic in the Kingdom of Saxony, where state policies of conditional emancipation perpetuated the notion that Jews were persons of "lesser rights" (and hence of "lesser worth").[33] Whatever rights they received were up to the discretion of the state, and even those rights were subject to being revoked. Although it does not fall within the scope of her study, the pioneering role of Saxony's antisemites from the 1870s onward already looms in the distance.

The contributions by Andreas Neemann and Christian Jansen provide another way of conceiving the expansion of the German public sphere at mid-century. One common denominator between these studies is that they bring the reader down to the level of individual personalities and concrete legislative issues, even while considering people and events in the larger context of German political development. The 1850s and 1860s have been a black hole in German historiography for so long that Jansen and Neemann barely scratch the surface of the important issues that merit consideration. Of these issues, the most important is the alleged "taming" of the bourgeoisie's will to power in the wake of 1848. As each of these authors demonstrates, even revolutionary failure did not prevent the emergence of entrenched ideas about the central role of political parties in the public's consciousness during the 1850s: after popular successes in political mobilization in 1848/49, there was simply no turning back.

Looking next to the essays collected in Part 3, Karsten Rudolph argues that the "disappearance" of a political party—in this case the Saxon People's Party—has obscured not only established narratives, but potential ones as well. Those narratives, he argues, feed into political trajectories that do not necessarily point toward the Nazi seizure of power in 1933.

[33] Jacques Kornberg.

Thomas Adam, too, shows that Leipzig's socialist milieu does not fit our assumptions about what such a milieu is supposed to be. How proletarian was the Social Democratic milieu, he asks? Not very, or at least not in the way that we are accustomed to seeing it. Hence, argues Thomas, we should not be surprised that Leipzig's Social Democrats made their "own" kind of revolution in 1918. A common thread running through these contributions is the sustained effort to join questions about the changing nature of politics—the relationships between parties and parliaments, between popular discontent and its organized articulation, and between state and society—with questions concerning regional and local identity. We discover that in both the public sphere and the region, political identities are fragile and easily torn. This may be particularly the case with respect to Saxon and German liberalism, but there is no reason why gendered conceptions of the "new man" or specifically bourgeois forms of civic activism—to take just two examples—need be limited to the analysis of liberalism alone. Part 3 is rounded out by my own contribution, which uses a comparative approach to chronicle and analyse the dovetailing of Conservative and antisemitic forces on the Right in two of Imperial Germany's larger *Bundesstaaten*.

Despite underscoring the ambiguous nature of the emerging antagonism between conservatives and socialists, the essays in Part 4 direct attention to those who were so often caught in the middle—the liberals. Here the contributors see much more than just the hint of a new "dawn" of liberalism in the era of nation-building. This in itself is a marked inversion of accepted interpretations that until very recently have tended to see the demise of German liberalism, if not already in 1866, certainly by 1878/79. Looking to the backlog of reformist measures that were introduced in the essays by Jansen and Neemann, and yet looking forward to the disintegration of a political consensus among Protestant middle-class Germans after 1900, these authors do not relegate cultural considerations to the sidelines. A number of the seek to discover how Saxons perceived their "frontiers of sovereignty" in these tumultuous decades. Others suggest how imagined political communities competed for hegemony over less-imagined ones. They do so by focusing on an era when perceptions of the available models for democratic reform may have been in greater flux than at any point in German history before 1945.

Juxtaposing the essays by Karl Heinrich Pohl and Christoph Nonn, there is no question that the political trajectory of German liberalism between 1900 and 1908 remains contentious. Otte's contribution confirms this view and offers some hypotheses about its long-range implications in the arena of popular culture. Yet scholarly opinion about these historical trajectories has not hardened into opposing fronts. Pohl's contribution to this volume tends to reposition, rather than reaffirm, his conclusion (elaborated elsewhere) that municipal politics provided ample scope for the unfolding of German liberalism in the late imperial period. Dresden's underperforming liberals score poor marks in comparison with their counterparts in Munich. For the first time, however, Pohl has provided the larger context of Saxony's political culture that is necessary to judge the dismal showing of Dresden's liberal elites. Marline Otte in turn explore the battles waged by another group – circus directors – trying to establish local control over the symbols of German national culture in much different ways than liberals did. Such battles have previously received scrutiny mainly in their national contexts, for example in Roger Chickering's

pathbreaking cultural study of the Pan-German League.[34] Otte tackles a more circumscribed topic, exploring the world of popular culture through her study of the Sarrasani circus in Dresden. Yet as with Pohl's analysis, we see that cultural battles, in their myriad forms and functions, were fought on local terrain at least as often and at least as intensely as they were fought nationally or internationally. Culture was both dispensed and received in accordance with local traditions and practices, though – as Otte emphasizes – both processes were also characterised by uncertainties about how a hierarchy of identities associated with 'place' might be reconciled in the minds of an emerging national public.

Wartime struggles to avoid economic and social collapse on the one hand, and to preserve a measure of Saxon independence on the other, are examined by Christoph Nonn. To good effect, Nonn carefully avoids the "might have beens, should have beens" of German history. Instead he proceeds like a detective, slowly uncovering the limited, hesitant steps taken by Saxony's National Liberal leaders in October 1918 to test the viability of a democratic parliamentary system. Into those already troubled waters Rudolf Heinze and his comrades dipped their toes with at least as much trepidation as did the Saxon statesmen who agreed to a sudden widening of the suffrage in 1868. This particular experiment in democracy was cut short by events in the second week of November 1918. Even so, it is impossible to overlook the degree to which both Pohl and Nonn emphasize the open-endedness, the real promise, of Saxon liberalism in the final years of the Second Reich.

Finally, Part 5 provides four viewpoints on the methodologies and theories that inform the writing of regional history today. In the opening essay, Celia Applegate demonstrates that the practice of regional history has offered an important handhold on the slippery face of German national identity, not only in the 1990s but also in the nineteenth century. No single map, no unitary vision of social change, emerges from her analysis. Even though Riehl and Freytag agree on many of the basic dynamics at work in the Germany evolving before their eyes, stark oppositions can be traced in these men's thinking. One pole was situated in the region and the locality, the other in the nation-state. Nevertheless, the valences attached to these polarities, though very different, mirrored each other to a remarkable degree. As the modernization debate itself demonstrates, those valences have proved to be as durable as they are controversial.

Another self-reflective map is proposed by Thomas Kühne in his wide-ranging effort to "imagine" and to "construct" regions in new ways. Like Applegate, Kühne is able to problematize the simple dualisms of modernization theory. Drawing on the work of Heinrich Lübbe, he reminds us of a dominant motif in regional historiography: "The 'paths' of the *Heimat* movement and of regionalism do not lead away from modernity, but rather to its very core, for they are both intimately connected to that inherently negative dimension of modernity that corresponds to the concept of 'alienation.'" Yet Kühne also notes that to invoke "the region" is often in practice to criticize the concept of modernization without substituting something new in its place. To avoid stepping into the same trap, Kühne proposes various remedies. Highlighting the cognitive-emotional component in modern regional historiography, Kühne advocates greater attention to what German political scientists have previously discussed in the context of regional political cultures. Although a national identity may become a social and cultural "skin" that

[34] Roger Chickering, *We Men Who Feel Most German. A Cultural Study of the Pan-German League, 1886-1914* (Boston, 1984); for a rare Saxon example, see Katrin Keller and Hans-Dieter Schmid (eds.), *Vom Kult zur Kulisse. Das Völkerschlachtdenkmal als Gegenstand der Geschichtskultur* (Leipzig, 1995).

individuals, after a certain age, cannot easily shed, it is rarely a homogenous one. On the one hand, it is conditioned by a number of objective "thresholds" with which individuals confront the outside world. On the other hand, a larger political community is almost never homogenous, but is fractured by sub-national, ethnic, linguistic, regional, religious, or socio-economic identities. The question then becomes one of determining, where possible, whether these cleavages reinforce or cross-cut each other in certain individuals and groups.[35] To imagine that they reinforce each other exclusively, suggests Kühne, is to enter (and never escape) the "mythical world" of regional political cultures—to entrap oneself in a cultural and conceptual cage.

Helmut Walser Smith asks how we as historians might recapture the feel for the specificity and the variety of lives lived both "locally" and "on the move." His answer counsels us to abjure a spurious search for authenticity in local history if that search is meant only to serve larger, aggregating narratives. Smith is not overly concerned with the geographical scale that historians use, as long as they understand that neither its boundaries nor its internal structures are fixed and immutable. To the historian of Saxony, Smith offers no clear guideline as to which boundaries are relevant and how they change over time. But his aim is clearly not to do so. Instead, as he writes early on in his piece, the map he has in mind is "without a utopian moment." Subsequently he develops the argument that "approaches to local history … are not primarily about getting to the essence of local and regional identities"; rather, they are about destabilizing these identities.

In the volume's last essay, Thomas Mergel considers the spatial rootedness of collective identities. He, too, advocates more critical reflection about how milieus are mapped. Yet to a greater degree than the other contributions in Part 5, Mergel asks us to consider how three specific milieus—the Catholic milieu, the working-class milieu, and the middle-class milieu—each coalesced historically in ways that defy the "region-to-nation" progression discussed earlier. Explicitly dedicated to exploring the tension between regional socialization and the formation of national milieus, Mergel's essay successfully revives the issue of territoriality as a long-neglected component of the concept of socio-moral milieus. Decrying the fashionable practice of applying the label "milieu" even to units of analysis as small as friendship circles, Mergel reminds us that socio-moral milieus always derive a large part of their legitimacy by politicizing certain loyalties. He then illustrates how the "mass" political movements of the late-nineteenth century always relied on their ability to make national idioms and identities seem utterly familiar. (Germans have even devised a noun to describe this feeling of *Zuhause*.)

Like Hartmut Zwahr's foreword, this introduction has attempted only to set the table for what follows. It has not tried to conceal the fact that each section of the menu is limited in its offerings. Certainly the bounty still available in Saxon archives promises more varied fare in the future. In the meantime we can proceed to the main course.

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[35] See Dirk Berg-Schlosser and Ralf Rytlewski, "Political Culture in Germany: A Paradigmatic Case," in *Political Culture in Germany*, ed. idem (Basingstoke and London, 1993), 3-12, here 6.