



Jürgen Fohrmann, Helmut J. Schneider. *1848 und das Versprechen der Moderne.*
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New Historiographies of Discourse

1848 und das Versprechen der Moderne (1848 and the Promise of the Modern) offers ten contributions plus an introduction, the proceedings of a conference held between July 1-3, 1999 at the University of Bonn. It is a commonplace to complain that conference proceedings offer incomplete pictures of the problematics they address, that the essays in them are uneven. This volume belies that assumption because of the various essays' careful attention to methodology, integrating textual and cultural studies in ways that should be taken as exemplary.

The key question for all contributors is historiographic: what does it mean to declare a historical moment the beginning of a modern era? The introduction sets out the contributors' premise: a commitment to reading the 1848 revolutions as the start of the "modern," defined variously. That starting point aims to counter the common historical accusation that 1848 did not accomplish much for the German people. Thus the editors propose that, whether or not change did happen empirically, many projects leading to modernization were launched using the image or figure of 1848 as their purported origins. Such changes of discourse (*Diskurswechsel*) document how historical time and the space of the nation were reconfigured in declaring new beginnings (p. 10). Through the change of mental reference points, new trajectories for the development of the nation were launched, defining the projects for the new, post-revolution generations. In this sense, 1848 can be seen as setting into place a new conceptual opposition between past and future and redefining how generations

had to think of each other. The studies comprising the volume take up this challenge of tracing how the new metaphor of 1848 was deployed to redirect political and social forces.

The exemplary, well-documented first essay by Rainer Kolk, "Futurisierung einer geschichtsphilosophischen Konstellation," traces the discourse around the idea of youth. Starting with Rousseau's *Émile*, eighteenth-century pedagogy posited a convergence between education and cultural criticism. Kolk traces how the idea of youth (not just generation change) was used to argue for education as a kind of second birth, as part of a social developmental process (p. 18). In the nineteenth century, this image of youth and education became associated with social differentiation and modernization, recasting youth as a force in history, a philosophical image persisting up to the First World War.

Kerstin StÄ½ssell's discussion of *Gegenwartsliteratur* shows how a particular concept grounds a distinctive notion of the modern. "Contemporary literature" tacitly or overtly claims to intervene in the present in a certain way, including the "domestication" (the making natural and necessary) of the idea that making the future requires an intervention. To make this case, the essay analyzes a number of texts, most notably Karl Ferdinand Gutzkow's novels, *Ritter vom Geiste* (1850-51) and *Roman des Nebenseinanders*, and Robert Prutz's 1859 *Deutsche Literatur der Gegenwart*, which then are compared with Richard Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*. All emerge as symptomatic of

the *Nachmärz*, of reunification Germany, including representations of various 1848 experiences (such as Wagner's in Dresden). The essay thus explains how literary history works in the era, emerging as a kind of scientific communication that seemed to guarantee the emergence of a "modern" nation.

The volume's third essay, "Dichter in der Paulskirche," takes on another facet of 1848's image. Norbert Oellers takes on the myth of the *Paulskirche* and the Frankfurt Parliament, questioning the assumption that it was the parliament of intellectuals. He concentrates on the forty-three delegates who might loosely count as authors and characterizes their politics as they run along a scale from left to right, not at all on the same part of the political spectrum. He thus provides important thumbnail biographies of the players that show the gaps between the publicity and the actual issues at play in Frankfurt.

The next two essays take up Marxist-economic thought in different ways. First, Volker Kaiser deconstructs Marx's *Achtzehnter Brumaire* to see how the text deployed images of revolution. Following in the footsteps of Benjamin and Derrida, he traces how the rhetoric of that revolution relates to Hegel's reconceptualization and critique of the historical process. In a similar vein, Fritz Breithaupt discusses "Homo Oeconomicus" (p. 85), the ties posited between economics and the modern person, as a master discourse of modernization. Here, he shows how metaphors drawn from interest, currency, and capital correlate with notions of social currency and capital. His principle example is Gustav Freytag's *Soll und Haben*, but in his discussion of a range of texts (including Gottfried Keller, Eduard Beneke's psychology, Marx, and Georg Weerth), he reveals how the tropes embody the period's fetishes about psychological value.

Two further essays tie social types into the modernization of social processes. Jürgen Fohrmann, in "Die Erfindung des Intellektuellen," follows the new social type of the "intellectual" as the era's creation: "die In-

stitutionalisierung einer medialen Zirkulationssphäre, in der professionelle Agenten die Funktion operativer Wahrheitsvermittlung übernehmen" (p. 12). Professionals (Simmel is his prototype) achieve their cachet and power because their existence creates two cultures (inside and outside of a guild), giving them control of the circulation and value of knowledge. That is, the discourse of science creates professionals who master institutional discourses to wield its power. Kenneth S. Calhoun pursues a similar logic to argue how modernity's rationalization and acceleration of knowledge production go hand in hand with national and imperial myths, as a counterpoint to Romanticism. His examples include Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Wilkie Collins's *Moonstone*, and a story by Johann Peter Hebel (p. 138).

The position of Germany's Jews lies at the core of essays by Bernd Fischer and Jeffrey Grossmann. Fischer discusses "Jüdische Emanzipation und deutsche Nation: Von Mendelssohn zu Auerbach" in order to trace how the Jews needed to redefine themselves in the era. In contrast, Jeffrey Grossmann traces how the study of Yiddish in the nineteenth century was brought under ever greater state control, a control gradually extended to other groups (e.g. Roma and Sinti).

The volume's final essay, by Barbara Hahn, moves to other postwar eras—the 1920s and 1950s—to address their feminisms. Taking Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) as her point of departure, she shows the varying kinds of social work done in Germany by the word "Frau."

The story of 1848 is not to be found in this volume, but it does offer a fine set of approaches to the archive of stereotypes and discourses that grew up around that mythical year for various purposes. In this sense, the volume is a small triumph—a must for any research library, and a text that anyone purported to do German cultural studies needs to take seriously as a primer on historiographic method.

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