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Margaret Lavinia Anderson, Review of: Dominik Geppert and Robert Gerwarth, eds., *Wilhelmine Germany and Edwardian Britain. Essays on Cultural Affinity* (The German Historical Institute London and Oxford University Press: Oxford and New York, 2008), published in *The British Scholar* III/1 (Sep. 2010): 166-69.

Shortly thereafter, the periodical was renamed, *Britain and the World: Historical Journal of the British Scholar Society*. Or perhaps it simply disappeared from the face of the earth altogether.

In 1906 the press of Britain (and Germany) made merry over the adventures of an unemployed German drifter who had dressed up in pieces of officers' uniforms and spent a happy day ordering around soldiers, dismissing their sergeant, commandeering carriages, arresting city officials, and confiscating more than 4,000 marks from municipal funds before disappearing. Although neither the celebrated Captain of Köpenick, nor the conclusions people drew about Germany's alleged reverence for uniforms, is mentioned in this volume, Jan Rüger gives us the upper-crust British variant, just four years later, when Virginia Stephan (soon to be Woolf) and five friends, wearing false beards and brown face powder, turbans and robes, passed themselves off as the prince of Abyssinia and his entourage to the commander of the Dreadnaught, flagship of the home fleet. They were received with full royal honors. What should they know of Germany who only Germans know?

To examine Edwardian Britain and Wilhelmine Germany in tandem, as this rich collection shows, opens windows into both histories closed to those who work in just one. The authors operate in a variety of registers. Marc Schalenberg probes E.M. Forster's Howard's End, whose Schlegel sisters and wry narrator offer a gentle take on the ways the "German" was viewed from the other shore. Sabine Freitag and Franz Lorenz Müller, looking at penology and the press, respectively, paint a darker picture. Humanitarian British arguments for the preventive incarceration of habitual offenders, Freitag argues, were (mis-)used by German jurists with other goals. Müller's survey of the German press on Britain's constitutional crisis of 1909-1911 oddly

undercuts his own picture (drawn not from the British press but from Fritz Fischer, Volker Berghahn, and the young Hans-Ulrich Wehler) of a Germany in such disarray that "by 1908-9 it was well-nigh impossible for the Reich to be governed effectively," since he finds that, amid much headshaking about Britain's troubles, German opinion expressed "considerable contentment with the Reich's political system."

In Geoff Eley's and Jean Quataert's meaty essays on women's movements, it is comparison that brings central issues into relief. Jan Rüger too finds "important Anglo-German differences that would remain hidden were we to limit ourselves to the transnational [as opposed to a comparative] perspective." Analyzing the mammoth sea spectacles each country staged to celebrate their respective navies, Rüger finds it "remarkable" that in German, but not in British, audiences women were seated separately; that German ceremonies foregrounded the monarch, while British symbolism depicted crown, government, and parliament sharing power.

Other essays track the "transfer" (and transformation) of cultural products: sport, in Christiane Eisenberg's piece; technical education, in Oliver Grant's. Sometimes what traveled was human. Thomas Weber discovers the sons of British and German elites hobnobbing at each other's universities. Matthew Jefferies traces the rise and fall of modernism in Britain through the career of a German-Jewish refugee, (Sir) Nikolaus Pevsner, whose surname became a synecdoche for the 46-volume Buildings of England and whose obiter dicta on all things architectural inspired reverence and parody – until his authority was toppled in the 1960s by the Berlin-born Stefan Muthesius. Muthesius's famous uncle, Hermann, had spent his formative years in London. Much influenced by William Morris, in Germany he helped inspire Pevsner's vision of a democratized high culture. Jefferies's study offers surprises on several levels, not least a letter of May 1933, in which Pevsner expressed support for the Nazi regime that would soon

expel him: "God knows what's coming. But whatever, I have to hope from my whole heart that the new state will last."

A leitmotiv of this volume is the "growing antagonism" between the two countries "that culminated in a war," for which Paul Kennedy's Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, published in 1980 and reissued six times, is cited repeatedly. The editors concede that their "central challenge" is to resolve the "paradox" of growing hostility with the cultural affinities demonstrated by their contributors; to integrate the latter into the "master narrative" of the former. Their solution is to suggest that affinity and antagonism are "opposite sides of the same coin."

Strong support for their argument is provided by Sven Oliver Müller who shows British admiration for "German" music turning to envy, culminating in musical nationalism and calls for a "native" British music. Müller uncovers some very unkind comments about Schoenberg and the Viennese school and concludes that cultural contact had ended in a "musical clash of civilizations. [...] conflict and hatred." A look beyond the concert hall might have softened this picture, for the 1899 translations by Robert Bridges, future poet laureate, of German church music and lyrics were rapidly becoming some of the best loved hymns in the Anglican repertoire. Given that Schoenberg remains very much a minority taste even today, how dispositive are such sniffings for the British response to music from Germany?

The premise of Anglo-German antagonism (often coupled, as Jose Harris reminds us, with a view of German development as flawed, even pathological) has a distinguished pedigree, going back to 1924 with Raymond Sontag's dissertation, and 1931, with Pauline Anderson's, both published in 1938 and then reissued, Sontag's more than once. German deficiencies and Anglo-German antagonism are presented full bore in John Röhl's account of the parlous relations

between Edward VII and his nephew Wilhelm II, the latter described by Röhl as a "danger to world peace," although "[I]t was of course to be another six years before Moltke and the Kaiser, [...] put their crazed notion of how to begin a war into practice." Colleagues needing to spice up their lectures will welcome this treasure trove of quotations from each sovereign (and Princess Vicky), but one wonders whether Wilhelm, and perhaps also Edward, may not have said equally nasty things about other royals – Franz Ferdinand, Belgium's Leopold II, Nicholas II. And did British public opinion, apparently so critical of Germany, give a pass to Russia's wave of pogroms (1903 - 1906) or its relentless encroachments into Persia's "neutral zone," in violation of the Anglo-Russian convention of 1907? Such questions point to a problem inherent in all histories of bi-lateral relationships. As John MacKenzie notes in his assessment of empire and popular culture, cartoons depicting "an aggressive and crooked Britain, personified in the figures of Queen Victoria and Joseph Chamberlain," so common in German papers, "were almost ubiquitous in France, Belgium, and the Netherlands."

Several authors undermine both the picture of pathology peculiar to Germany and that of a growing antagonism. MacKenzie (who has his own bone to pick with Bernard Porter, for the British exceptionalism he finds in Reluctant Imperialists) observes that "the start of an aggressive naval propaganda" began with the Royal Naval Exhibition in Chelsea in 1891. (This is seven years before German efforts to become a contender.) As for the weakness of the peace movement in Germany: "it has to be said that it was not particularly strong in Britain either." And whatever the feeling between the two nations at home, MacKenzie finds that in the colonies, their representatives cooperated. Mining the two presses' handling of their own and each other's colonial scandals, Frank Bösch shows that well-known atrocities did not prevent H. M. Stanley from remaining a popular figure in England (elected to parliament in 1895), and when things got

too hot for Carl Peters in Germany after British papers exposed his murders, he simply moved to London, where he founded another colonial company. "Germany's image as a brutal colonial power" preceded World War I, Bösch finds in this exemplary study, but atrocities and mass killings committed in the course of colonial wars "did not provoke widespread indignation" in either land.

Dominik Geppert even tries to convince us that Lord Northcliffe was not the warmonger we had supposed. Northcliffe's stance towards Germany was that of any opportunistic businessman; the Daily Mail followed the public mood. The argument is made with great good sense – but who was responsible for the public mood? Only Jose Harris challenges the premise of Anglo-German antagonism directly. In her stimulating examination of both legal cultures, a piece that might well be titled "Against Anachronism," she makes a powerful case for thinking that, at least in legal circles, the picture of Anglo-German antagonism was a product of the war itself.

As David Blackburn in his elegant summation notes, not without a raised eyebrow: "we are all cultural historians now." Cultural history, these articles make clear, is now the flag that gets any ship, whatever its cargo, into port. But I cannot help noting that, as was the case when the flag of social history ruled the waves, the port itself is usually a political one. Why is it that political history, practiced everywhere, remains (here with honorable exceptions) in the closet, still the love that dare not speak its name?

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