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# Popular Presentations of History in the Nineteenth Century: The Example of *Die Gartenlaube*

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## The Nineteenth Century as the Century of History

The nineteenth century has many names: the century of the bourgeoisie, the century of nations, the century of industrialization, and the century of natural science and technology.<sup>1</sup> However, it might just as well be called the century of history. From the late eighteenth century on, the engagement with the past, and particularly with 'patriotic' history (*vaterländischer Geschichte*), was an important means of shaping individual and collective identity. After the collapse of the *Alte Reich* (the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation) in 1803–1806, and following the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the German states in their new patchwork arrangement placed an emphasis on history and on the construction of the single state's historical tradition. This served the purpose of securing the old and new population's attachment to the readjusted political system and of constructing a patriotic and national identity.<sup>2</sup> Yet, next to the German states of the first half of the nineteenth century and the newly unified Germany of the *Kaiserreich* (German Empire) of 1871 onwards, the national movement, newly emerging political movements such as liberalism and the women's movement, and an aspiring bourgeoisie also drew their legitimacy from history and made politics by means of history.

The end of the eighteenth century was marked by the experience of radical, unprecedented and unforeseeable changes. Thorough uncertainty brought about by the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, the collapse of the *Alte Reich* (the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation) in 1803–1806, as well as the territorial reorganization of the world of German states, meshed with emerging economic, social and mental changes such as industrialization, transportation and communication revolutions and the implementation of a secularized world view. These cataclysmic transformations gave rise to a new



perception of history. The so-far unquestioned perspective on history as something static, as an everlasting recurrence of some deathless kind of human behaviour, had become obsolete. The historical constellation promoted a divergence between the realm of experience and the horizon of expectations (Koselleck 1989: 349–75). History now became conceived of as a process and, thus, as something unique and changeable. In the course of the nineteenth century, historicism – the demonstration of the historical genesis of societal, political and mental phenomena – turned into a central paradigm of world interpretation and also determined the kind of thinking practised in the humanities and early social sciences. Thus, history took on new meaning in the decades around 1800: now its task was to explain each historical period's unique nature and the present's historicity as well as to help endure the future's open character. At the same time, however, its old functions of moral, religious, and political instruction remained.

Consequently, by the beginning of the nineteenth century historical developments had produced a demand for orientation through history which increasingly materialized in multiple civil and state initiatives for researching and mediating history. The establishment and expansion of academic historical science is just one component of this larger development. If history thus gained increasing importance in the nineteenth century, how exactly did it reach the members of society? What kinds of popular presentations of history existed at that time? Through what media did people learn about the historical past? What historical periods or issues were particularly attractive to them?

Very much like today, history was felt to be much too important to be left exclusively to academic historians. Following on from this insight, this chapter offers an investigation of nineteenth-century popular presentations of history. For my present purposes, the term 'popular presentations of history' refers to accounts in written, visual and audiovisual form which convey information about the historical past in a way that is attractive and accessible to a broad audience.<sup>3</sup> My aim is to provide a first outline of the topic since investigations into the popular culture of history and syntheses of a comprehensive culture of history in the nineteenth century are still to be accomplished. As early as 1977, Rudolf Vierhaus claimed that researching the history of historiography must exceed 'what has been common practice so far' and move beyond traditional academic historiography by looking at the presentation of history in schools, museums and popular historical literature as well as by investigating 'historical awareness, its political and social function' (Vierhaus 1977: 111). Yet existing work on historical culture is mostly of a more theoretical nature and geared to the traditional mediators of history and high culture. For the most part, the hitherto existing history of historiography has concentrated on academic historiography established in the universities without looking into possible interdependencies between this and popular forms of (re)presentation.<sup>4</sup>

In what follows, I start out with a cursory overview of the various institutions and media through which history was researched and conveyed in the



nineteenth century. Secondly, I look at historical presentations in the context of the family journal *Die Gartenlaube*, a highly popular periodical which commenced publication in the mid nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup> I will conclude with a few arguments about the characteristics of popular presentations of history in the nineteenth century.

## Forms of Appropriating History in the Nineteenth Century: An Overview

### *The Church, Schools and Universities*

The attempt to gain knowledge about the past is closely related to the history of education and the media, but also to the history of religion and to intellectual history. In the early nineteenth century, the first, and in many cases only, encounter with history experienced by the lower social classes was their acquaintance with biblical history, provided by both the Church and elementary schools (*Volksschulen*). Here, history was not taught as a discrete subject but communicated via religious or reading lessons. As a discrete subject, history was established in elementary school in the second part of the nineteenth century (Pandel 1997: 526–27). At that point in time, lessons about the historical past were thought to support a nationally oriented and patriotic education (Kuhlemann 1991: 206). In higher boys' schools (*höhere Knabenschulen*) and gymnasiums, history made its first appearance in the teaching of old languages (particularly Greek and Latin). However, discrete history lessons also entered the curriculum in the first part of the century. As the syllabuses reveal, history teaching was frequently combined with geographical instruction. In terms of quantity, history lessons held a rather modest share of the overall teaching load and comprised two to three (at the most) hours of instruction per week (Schneider 1997: 495–501). Partly pressed by Wilhelm II, the school reforms of the 1890s were designed to place an emphasis on German modern history and on conveying a national, monarchical and anti-socialist attitude. Yet, this focus on shaping the 'correct' political attitude through history was also met by resistance by the school administrations; also, the first annual convention of the *Deutsche Historikertag* (Society of German Historians) passed a note of protest against the reform in 1893 (Albizetti and Lundgreen 1991: 260–61).

In universities, history was also taught only to a moderate extent until the mid century. Up to that point, a given university was usually endowed with just one history chair. Lectures were predominantly held for students of law and theology in their *Grundstudium* (the phase of basic studies) when they were obliged to visit a lecture on world history for two semesters. With its focus on working with historical sources and the creation of new insights, modern historical science necessarily implied specialization. Accompanied by rather fierce conflicts (see Paetschek 2002: 41–44, 55–57),<sup>6</sup> its broader



institutionalization took place after 1850. Accordingly, academic history won its proper student clientele only in the second half of the nineteenth century when an increasing demand for teachers turned Schools of Philosophy (*Philosophische Fakultäten*) into institutions for the education of teachers. Simultaneously, classical philology was removed from the curricula of higher schools in favour of the so-called 'realities' (*Realien*), which included history along with modern languages and sciences. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, historical science's increasing specialization and scientism also did away with its former status as part and parcel of a general academic education which also meant that it lost a great deal of its attractiveness to students of other disciplines.

### *Museums, Historical Associations, Edition Projects*

The task of mediating and researching history was not restricted to schools and universities as public institutions of learning. In response to the unsettling upheavals of the years around 1800, representatives of both the bourgeoisie and nobility began to collect historical artefacts and sources and founded the first historical museums. A well-known example is Hans von Aufseß who collected sources on the history of the *Alte Reich* and on 'patriotic archaeology' (*Vaterländische Altertumskunde*) from 1820 (Hakelberg 2004). His initiative ultimately led to the foundation of the German National Museum in Nuremberg. Another aristocratic initiative, this time by Freiherr von Stein, led to the establishment of the *German Historical Society* (*Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde*) and the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* (MGH), a major project for editing the most important sources on the German Middle Ages (Fuhrmann 1996a: 11–28). Pushed by German high nobility, the project was ultimately financed by the states of the German Confederation (*Deutscher Bund*).

From the second half of the eighteenth century, bourgeois reading clubs and patriotic societies dedicated to serving the public good grappled with historical issues. The 1820s and 1830s saw the emergence of numerous regional history and antiquity associations. By 1860, there were about sixty societies of this kind (Kunz 2000: 59), and by 1900 their number had risen to about 150. These organizations conducted research on the history of their particular regional environment. By offering access to history they functioned as mediators of history, first to broader parts of the upper classes – the nobility, clergy, senior officials and high-school professors (*Gymnasiallehrer*) – and, later on, to ordinary elementary-school teachers (*Volksschullehrer*), small merchants and individual bourgeois women. By the end of the nineteenth century, these civic initiatives partly interlocked with others run by the state (Speitkamp 1996). Evidence for this is provided by the establishment of the historical commissions (*Historische Kommissionen*) from the 1890s onwards. Simultaneously, these associations also established links to the *Heimatschutzbewegung* – i.e. the movement for the preservation of the 'homeland', its countryside and culture –



and initiated the establishment of the *Denkmalschutzbewegung* – the movement for the preservation of historical monuments.

### *Visual and Animated History*

There were also different visual and even 'living', animated types of historical appropriation – for example, in the form of monuments, history paintings, panoramas or dioramas, and the re-enactment of historical scenes via historical festivities (Hartmann 1976), pageants, living images (*lebende Bilder*) and through theatre plays and operas. Thus, for example, guilds and heralds in historical costumes made their appearance at the national feast (*Nationalfest*) in Nuremberg which was celebrated from 1825 onward. The idea behind this event was to provide a point of contact with the town's past as a free, imperial city. As one contemporary observer noted in 1833, 'figures from a previous world moved through the city in measured, ceremonial succession' so that people 'couldn't help but feel their minds returned to that romantic time' (Bauer 2006: 63). Through visual display, such pageants were able to reach broad strata of the population beyond the educated classes.

Sustained by the liberal and the national movement, and also partly supported by the single states' rulers, historical celebrations and commemorations emerged as distinctive types of historical recollection from the 1830s onward. Frequently in combination with the inauguration of a memorial, merited bourgeois heroes of the 'cultural nation' (*Kulturnation*) were honoured on these occasions. Thus, Nuremberg celebrated a Dürer festival in 1828, followed by a Gutenberg festival in Mainz in 1837 and a Schiller festival in Stuttgart in 1839. Apart from this, there was also the practice of commemorating important war events of the more recent past, such as the Battle of Leipzig (1813). Monuments were now erected not only to rulers, pictured on horseback, but also for bourgeois men who had rendered outstanding services to the *Kulturnation* (Nipperdey 1968). Thus, such memorials popularized the recollection of the bourgeoisie's historical achievements. Frequently, the implementation of major national memorials dragged on for quite some time. For example, the construction of the Hermann monument (*Hermannsdenkmal*) in the Teutoburg Forest began in 1838, but its inauguration was celebrated only in 1875 after interminable financial problems were finally overcome (Tacke 1995; Ritzmann 2006: 193–229). However, the (mediated) discussions about these memorials, the foundation of associations dedicated to their construction, drawn-out fundraising campaigns and splendidly staged inaugurations reached a broader public and popularized the historical events, or personalities commemorated.

Information about history was also conveyed through commercial events, such as the presentation of historical sheets of pictures (*Bilderbögen*) at fairs. Looking back on his adolescence, Theodor Fontane (1819–1898) noted that his



knowledge of the Greek war of independence in the 1820s or of the affiliated Russo–Turkish war of 1828/9 was gleaned from the images provided by a show which he visited at a fair. The images of these *Bilderbögen* were so strongly imprinted on his memory that ‘in spite of all their crudeness and triviality or, perhaps, due to this, they did their part’ so that he felt better informed about ‘persons, battles, and heroic deeds of that period than the majority’ of his contemporaries (Kraul 1982: 44). Apart from these images, Fontane’s perception of history was also shaped by historical anecdotes picked up from journals and magazines which his father conveyed to him. According to Fontane, these two instructors taught him more about history than ‘all teachers in secondary school and the gymnasium taken together’ (ibid.).

The panoramas which became both extremely popular and economically successful between 1880 and 1900 were a modern continuation of the *Bilderbögen* shown at fairs and, in part, also of the historical and ethnological presentations found at world exhibitions (Weidauer 1996). Set up in purpose-built pavilions of about forty metres in diameter and fourteen metres in height, these elaborate painted panoramas particularly featured recent national battles and European contemporary history. Their sudden disappearance at the end of the nineteenth century is probably due to the rise of the cinema and other innovative forms of entertainment.

### *History in the Book Market*

The communication and reading revolution of the first half of the nineteenth century (Nipperdey 1983: 587–94) – exemplified by the rise of literacy, the increased production of less expensive books and journals brought about by the invention of the rapid printing press, and the implementation of new distribution channels such as commercial lending libraries, bourgeois reading halls and the book hawking trade – increased the production and circulation of historical reading material. Inspired by the model of Sir Walter Scott, historical novels in particular became bestsellers throughout Europe from the end of the eighteenth century onward (Reitemeier 2001; Potthast 2007). This particular type of historical fiction endowed with historical information inspired a more thorough historical interest in many readers. This is evidenced by the example of Leopold von Ranke who is said to have found his way to studying history by reading Scott’s novels.

If we look at non-fiction books, history (as a market segment) accounted for about 5 per cent of the overall book market in the second half of the nineteenth century (Nissen 2009). This matches the market share presently held by historical books in the market for specialized books. Between 1849 and 1914, historical works made up between about 3 and 5 per cent of lending libraries’ total stock. In comparison to German academic historiography, which was decidedly protestant and national-liberal or national-conservative, popular



presentations of history provided a much broader and more pluralistic view of history, both politically and in terms of subject-matter (Langewiesche 2008d: 88). According to the social, political and religious fragmentation of German society during the *Kaiserreich*, different social groups read quite different history books. Historical works with a decidedly socialist, Catholic or Jewish perspective were frequently found among the bestsellers.<sup>7</sup> Also, general or world histories authored by the enlightened historians of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century consistently held top positions – in spite of the establishment of an approved national historiography in the universities from the 1850s onwards.<sup>8</sup> Even more surprisingly, in an age of accelerated nationalism, not only works on German history but also on French and British history became historical bestsellers.<sup>9</sup> What is also remarkable is that the field of cultural history, neglected by academic history, enjoyed great popularity.<sup>10</sup>

‘Popular’ history books were primarily written by clergymen, teachers and members of the military – and, incidentally, also by an impressive number of revolutionaries from 1848 (Nissen 2009). However, there were relatively few women among these authors, figures like Fanny Arndt or Lina Morgenstern being exceptions. Women, it seems, preferred to write historical novels rather than specialized history books. Before 1880, university professors featured more frequently as authors of popular histories, among them von Rotteck, von Raumer, Schlosser and von Ranke. After 1880, however, there seems to have been a break in this regard. This suggests that the then ongoing professionalization of academic historiography meant that academic historians’ works were no longer accessible to the broader educated public. The historians recalled by the history of historiography as particularly influential were often considerably less successful regarding the broader educated readership. Leopold von Ranke is a rare exception here, though to some extent this also holds true for Johann Georg Droysen and Theodor Mommsen.<sup>11</sup>

However, popular historiography’s success in the book market should not blind us to the fact that the readership of books constituted only a small segment of the overall population. As we will see below, a much wider audience was reached by illustrated journals such as *Die Gartenlaube*. As I will argue, many of the above mentioned characteristics of popular historiography in the book market in the second half of the nineteenth century also apply to the presentation of history in contemporary family journals.

As these briefly touched on examples of the appropriation of history demonstrate, the nineteenth century saw the gradual emergence of an enormously diverse and both politically and commercially successful historical culture which not only reached the higher levels of the nobility and bourgeoisie but also the petite bourgeoisie and, if only to a marginal extent, the strata below the middle classes as well as people of all genders and confessions.



## Popular Presentations of History in *Die Gartenlaube*

Founded in 1853 by the former revolutionary Ernst Keil in Leipzig, *Die Gartenlaube* was both the most successful and most popular German family magazine of the second half of the nineteenth century; it is referred to as the first periodic mass press publication (Belgum 1998: 187). One of the trademark characteristics of this weekly were its numerous elaborate illustrations. By the 1870s, it had reached a print run of about 385,000 copies. This means that *Die Gartenlaube* presumably reached an audience of up to two million male and female recipients. By comparison, most of the major newspapers of the time had a print run of just 4,000 copies (ibid.: 11–27). Based on a liberal programme and endowed with the impetus of enlightened ideas and education, the journal strove for the implementation of the civil rights of both the individual and the nation-state. *Die Gartenlaube* popularized the nation and, thus, contributed to so-called ‘internal nation building’ (*innere Nationsbildung*) as well as to the emergence of a national communicative space (Koch 2003; Zamseil 2007).

*Die Gartenlaube* can be conceived of as a vehicle for the popular (re)presentation of history. Its primary goal was ‘to entertain and to teach in an entertaining way’ which also included the realm of history. Thus, the first issue stated that ‘through genuine, well-written narratives, we want to introduce you to the history of the human heart and of peoples, to the struggles of human passions and of past times’.<sup>12</sup> About half of the articles in *Die Gartenlaube* were fiction, with the other half covering what we now call factual issues: the natural sciences, medicine, economic issues, travel descriptions, mixed news and historical contributions. As a review of the volumes of 1861 and 1898 reveals, historical contributions made up about 18 to 20 per cent of the journal’s topical content.<sup>13</sup> Thus, history comprised the largest category among factual issues and was much more in evidence in family magazines than in the book market, where history comprised only 5 per cent of overall production. In *Die Gartenlaube*, history was preferably negotiated through biographies of historical figures (about 11 per cent), while more general political and cultural contributions and articles on cultural history made up about 8 per cent.

Designed to draw in subscribers, *Die Gartenlaube*’s advertisements primarily focused on the serialized novels that were published by the magazine. However, they also drew on the historical issues covered by the journal. For example, the advertisement for the 1899 volume contained a preview of Adalbert Stifter’s *Nachsommer* as well as upcoming articles on ship collisions, the issue of apparent death, and castles in the Harz region. Also, it contained teasing headlines from its historical contributions; for example, ‘Schill and His Officers’ (concerning the 1809 *franc tireurs*), ‘Truth and Tell Tale about the Paris Bastille’ and ‘German Expatriates of 1848 in the United States’.<sup>14</sup> This suggests that the historical contributions not only pursued the political goal of a national *Volksbildung* – education of the general public – but also it seems that the subject matter was selected for both its entertainment and sales value.



The periodical's historical contributions were sometimes authored by permanent members of the editorial staff, journalists such as F. Hoffmann, who wrote suitable contributions on contemporary political history when occasion was provided by an anniversary. Alternatively, historical writers successfully established in the popular book market also published articles in *Die Gartenlaube*. Examples include the cultural historians Johannes Scherr, Karl Biedermann and Rudolf von Gottschall. Thus, the popular presentations of history in the family magazine clearly overlapped with those found in the book market and in lending libraries. In contrast to this, there seem to have been no crossover between the journal's historical accounts and coeval academic historiography. According to my provisional investigations, academics who held a chair in history were not among the journal's contributors. Moreover, there are hardly any references to books, vitae or public appearances of well-known academic historians; in the rare case of such a reference it is conveyed in the form of a short note. The only academic historians to whom the journal dedicated a more detailed and substantial article were Leopold von Ranke and Theodor Mommsen. Yet, even this exception adhered to the rationale of popular presentations in that both articles were published on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of their doctorates.<sup>15</sup>

Recent historical work on *Die Gartenlaube* stresses the journal's important contribution to nation building, its liberal potential undervalued by former research and its significance in the process of negotiating a modern identity by coping with the insecurity and conflicts experienced in the process of modernization (Belgum 1998: 188). In this respect, it was particularly *Die Gartenlaube*'s historical contributions that served the purpose of shaping a national and modern identity. For the time being, we can conclude that in *Die Gartenlaube* history stood for the popularization of the nation, for suspenseful and touching entertainment, and for instructive enlightenment. Moreover, it served as a means of modern identity formation. What, then, were the historical issues and periods covered by the journal and how were they depicted? The following represents the results of an initial analysis of the journal's historically oriented contributions.<sup>16</sup>

### *Contemporary History*

Most strikingly, the majority of contributions is devoted to the history of the preceding one hundred years; that is, to recent and contemporary history.<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, one column in the annual index of contents is headed 'Descriptive and Historical Articles/Matters of Contemporary History (*Beschreibende und geschichtliche Aufsätze/Zeitgeschichtliches*).<sup>18</sup> It was predominantly historical facts and events pertaining to what Jan Assmann has called 'communicative memory' (Assmann 1995a: 125–33) that were at the centre of *Die Gartenlaube*'s historical coverage. Communicative memory covers the last three generations and a time span of about eighty to one hundred years. It is marked by more informal



structures and oral communication, and overlaps in various ways with familial memory. As part of the culture of remembrance, communicative memory has a major significance for identity formation, both with regard to the individual person and to social groups. This also implies its significance in the formation of nations and political movements.

In *Die Gartenlaube's* historical articles, the focus is on three contemporary historical events: the Napoleonic Wars, especially the so-called Wars of Liberation (1813/14); the Revolution of 1848/9; and, from the 1870s and 1880s onwards, the Franco–German War of 1870/71.<sup>19</sup> In the light of the journal's nationalist programme, it is not surprising that major space and attention was devoted to the Napoleonic Wars and, in the last decades before the turn of the century, the Franco–German War. However, what is striking is the consistent recollection of the 1848 Revolution. These historical events were an important part of German nation building, not least because all three were warlike occurrences in which family history, the history of the nation and world history converged. Moreover, the wars were excellently suited to personalizing, dramatizing and emotionalizing historical depictions and, thus, to a representational aesthetics which characterizes popular forms up to this day. Readers' individual access to these historical events was facilitated both through family members' involvement in them and via identification with well-known heroes and heroines – such as the stubborn officer Schill and his franc-tireurs and the young heroine Eleonore Prochaska.<sup>20</sup> These and others were model achievers in, as the magazine puts it, Germany's 'most arduous years' – that is, between 1809 and 1814.<sup>21</sup>

By recollecting these events, *Die Gartenlaube* also established a dialogue with its readership. Not least because the journal dealt with contemporary historical issues, this led to the active involvement of the journal's readership. Thus, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Frankfurt parliament (*Paulskirchenparlament*), the journal published the following call for participation: 'However, we gladly take up a proposal which originated in the circle of our readers and hereby cordially request that all "veterans of the *Paulskirche*" who are still alive may soon delight us by sending us a short sign of life so that it will be possible for us to assess their total number'.<sup>22</sup> The names of those still alive were published along with their portraits later in the year.<sup>23</sup>

In addition to noting *Die Gartenlaube's* clear focus on national contemporary history, we should not overlook the journal's policy of depicting national events in their concrete regional specificity. Moreover, the German states and regions also provided a self-evident issue which was dealt with by the journal. What recent research now refers to as the 'federal nation' (Langewiesche 2000: 55–79; Langewiesche and Schmidt 2000) also crops up in *Die Gartenlaube's* historical contributions: the concept of the nation was made acceptable and comprehensible particularly by its regional wrapping, and by synthesizing both a broader and narrower sense of nation (*engeres und weiteres Vaterland*), as this was termed in contemporary parlance.



It should be noted that the journal also directed the attention of its readership to contemporary historical events outside the German territories – particularly in contributions addressing the French Revolution, the Crimean War (1853–1856) and the Russo–Turkish War (1877/8) – but also to the national histories of other European states.<sup>24</sup> While contemporary history was clearly tailored in a national way, it was by no means narrowly confined to national events. The journal practised a surprisingly broad, European and almost ‘global’ approach to history even though non-European history was preferably presented in terms of cultural history, and engagement with American, Chinese, Arabic or African history tended to be based on the overseas actions of German minorities. The depiction of non-German and non-European territories, especially in the context of cultural historical contributions, nurtured a contemporary longing for the exotic and the fabulous, even though they also revealed the transnational and global entanglements of the late *Kaiserreich*.

### *The Ancient World and the Middle Ages*

It is striking that there is a scarcity of articles in *Die Gartenlaube* on the ancient world and the Middle Ages in comparison to those on the contemporary period. Yet, when the focus is on them, depictions tend to be endowed with lavish and decontextualized visualizations which serve the purpose of myth-making.

This scarcity is arguably due to the fact that ancient history was less suited to supporting the formation of national identity in the second part of the nineteenth century which may account for its minor presence in the journal. Another reason may have been that the journal’s broader petit bourgeois clientele did not possess prior knowledge of ancient history – in contrast to the bourgeois class endowed with a higher education and acquainted with classical philological studies. An exception to this concerns events and personalities of antiquity which could be related to Germanic history (Belgum 1998: 172–76). This applies, for example, to contributions dedicated to Hermann resp. Arminius. Yet, the mythification and monumentalization of such figures was not accomplished through the written text, but exclusively through marginally comments and large and lavishly designed illustrations. The most striking characteristic of this ‘mythic monumentalism’ (ibid.: 174) was its decontextualized nature. The illustrations picked up national stereotypes and popularized a mythical national past. Thus, for example, the conflict between Kriemhild and Brunhilde in the Song of the Nibelungs, the return of the Germans from the battle in the Teutoburg Forest or the capture of Hermann’s wife Thusnelda by Germanicus were presented in broadsheet, full-page pictures.

Topics of medieval history had a somewhat stronger presence in the journal, even though they were again scarcely contextualized and articles employed monumental illustrations of ‘great individuals’ that caught the eye. Furthermore, the journal also featured more unspecific scenes taken from cultural history



which can be viewed as a tribute to a more simple, romantic era of national life.<sup>25</sup> Apart from attention devoted to singular heroic figures – such as Luther, Frederick the Great, the Fugger family, heroes from the Peasants' War (1524–1526) or the Thirty Years War (1618–1648) such as Konrad Wiederhold – the early modern period was covered more strongly through social and cultural topics which provided an occasion for their association with problems of contemporary society by means of critical retrospection.

### *The Functions of History*

In line with an enlightened tradition, the usefulness of historical contributions was very much an issue in *Die Gartenlaube*. This 'usefulness' included the promotion of national identity, the shaping of a modern, bourgeois mentality, a critical assessment of politics and society and – last but not least – entertainment value.

History was viewed as a means for criticizing the existing political and social status quo and for assessing one's position in the present. This was particularly apparent in contributions on cultural history. Unresolved contemporary problems – such as uncompensated orientation needs (Kocka 1990: 427–43) – often provided the peg for such a contribution. Thus, the first episode of the eight-part series 'Images of Cultural History' (*Culturgeschichtliche Bilder*) by Karl Biedermann, which started in 1854,<sup>26</sup> states that the observation of cultural history is unlikely to produce the kind of immediate usefulness provided by the observation of nature and the laws deduced from it. Yet, the author argues that the observation of cultural history is equally instructive in many respects even though it does not provide direct instructions for action. According to Biedermann, engagement with historical progress in commerce, science, art and technology reveals 'the potential of the human mind ... and, thus, incites us to such a suitable use, to the diligent development of our manifold mental dispositions and abilities'. At the same time, cultural history is said to teach 'modesty by pointing out how earlier generations also conceived of themselves as having arrived at a high level of perfection which, in part, was actually true, although they were outdistanced by far by their offspring'.<sup>27</sup> Thus, the author tells his readers that they must assume their collective fate to be a similar one in the future. Cultural history is characterized as something which can stave off despair when much in the present is not as one would like it, since it teaches the lesson that in former, sometimes not-too-distant, times such circumstances have been by far more unsatisfying and much has improved since. This legitimates the hope that circumstances will become even better and more satisfying in the future. However, cultural history is also seen to correct erroneous assessments by historical comparison. Briefly put: engagement with history indirectly stimulates new ideas, constitutes faith in progress while at the same time it teaches humility and qualifies current problems or puts them in a new perspective.



For the most part, the contributions on cultural history start from contemporary problems. For example, an 1854 article addresses the 'now dominant issue of price increase' (*Theure Zeiten*) and introduces the notion that in the past bread used to be cheaper and the middle classes used to be better off.<sup>28</sup> Generally speaking, the historical reflections of the author then deconstruct such a notion by criticizing the false idealization of the past and, instead, stressing the progress accomplished or producing a qualifying result. Thus, an 1898 article on servants in the sixteenth century offers a differentiated argument concerning complaints about bad servants and deconstructs the notion that things had been much better in the past.<sup>29</sup> The notion is refuted by recourse to historical sources: a councillor's book of economic accounts exhibited at the Germanic National Museum and to the so-called 'Devil's Theatre' (*Teufelstheater*) of 1587. The article suggests that complaints about servants survived the centuries as a quasi 'extrahistorical', anthropological attribute and supports this by making the observation that there is a general preference for complaints over compliments: good servants are less commented on than bad ones. Furthermore, it is argued that there are only a few sources which provide access to the servants' own perspectives which might present a rather different picture. This example illustrates the function of popular historical depictions of this kind, which provide orientation with regard to everyday problems and current social issues, looking at them from a different perspective.

It is the cultural and social historical contributions in particular which take up issues of everyday history frequently coded as female even in our time: the household, beauty, consumption, fashion, lifestyle and so on.<sup>30</sup> All in all, *Die Gartenlaube* covers both a colourful and broad spectrum of issues of everyday life. Topics such as the history of beer or the history of male hair or beard styles and practices of shaving<sup>31</sup> indicate that the journal nurtured the cultural historical interest of a male readership and that the practice of gendering issues – for example, making political history 'male' and cultural history 'female' – was present while also being disrupted. This also applies to incidents when political and national history are depicted in terms of female protagonists – women rulers, freedom fighters and, of course, by the mother who sacrifices herself for the nation – which ensures the inclusion of a female readership.<sup>32</sup>

### *Commemoration and Remembrance*

Anniversaries and jubilees functioned as major points of reference for *Die Gartenlaube's* popular depictions of history. Similar to present-day practice, articles tended to be published some time in advance of the actual event. This kind of media coverage was thus designed to draw the national audience's attention to the actual event and to provide an informed interpretive framework for its reception. This kind of celebratory practice of particular anniversaries and



jubilees ensured, their periodic recurrence, their consolidation and their transmission through established social practice.

As we know from the work of Winfried Müller and Arndt Brendecke, the beginnings of the jubilee tradition go back to medieval religious and ecclesiastical traditions (Brendecke 2005: 61–83; Müller 2005: 29–44). This particularly relates to the introduction of the first Holy Year and the pontiff's granting of full indulgence and remission for all sins to the faithful who, having repented and confessed, visited the basilicas of the Apostles Peter and Paul in 1300. At that time, the intention was for this practice to be repeated every hundredth year in the future. Later on, this expanded to include indulgence decreed every fiftieth and, finally, every twenty-fifth year. Humanism linked this tradition with ancient traditions of secular celebrations so that the end of the sixteenth century saw the emergence of a secular Protestant jubilee culture, first practised at the universities and eventually adopted by Protestant rulers. From the nineteenth century on, the jubilee tradition was increasingly taken up by the bourgeoisie and expanded to political and cultural as well as to personal jubilees.

Recent research by Aleida Assmann and Heinz Schlaffer, for example, considers anniversaries or jubilees as 'memorials in time' (A. Assmann 2005: 313). As representatives of periodic time, anniversaries are situated between linear and ephemeral historical time and the kind of cyclical time attached to myth and nature which symbolizes the eternal return of the same. According to Aleida Assmann, the increasing acceleration of linear time is inextricably related to a growing significance of periodic time with its firmly recurring points of reference. For a certain point in time, anniversaries extract the non-recurring from linear order, allow for periodic remembrance, convey orientation and offer opportunities for a staging of collectivity. They are 'memory activists' (Carol Gluck), authorities for activating collective memory. Depending on temporal circumstances, such activations either facilitate new interpretations of actual historical events or make for their further consolidation as myth. Anniversaries stabilize recollection through repetition, offering a formation of meaning and a future-directed promise of action.

Returning to *Die Gartenlaube*, anniversaries, regardless of their particular rhythm or periodization, were consistently and almost excessively used for presenting historical issues. For example, the year 1863 initially offered an opportunity to look back at the *Befreiungskrieg*, the wars of liberation against Napoleon (1813/14), which took place fifty years earlier, but also featured several articles on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the 1848 Revolution.<sup>33</sup> Anniversaries were covered by comprehensive or short articles or by full-page, elaborate illustrations. With regard to the latter, good examples include an illustration published in September 1898 in remembrance of the 1848 street fighting in Frankfurt.<sup>34</sup> In 1894, a full-page drawing of the arrival of Abbess Irmingard in Frauenchiemsee appeared on the occasion of the event's millennium, thus indirectly pointing to an alleged thousand-year-old German heritage.<sup>35</sup> Equally popular were historical articles composed as multipart mini-



series which covered a jubilee topic. A good example is a series called 'From the Times of Arduous Adversity' ('*Aus den Zeiten der schweren Noth*') which was published over several years and depicted the heroic deeds of well-known and not so well-known people during the Napoleonic Wars. The series featured the escalade of the *Crimmatische Thor* in Leipzig as well as the fates of a shepherd, a second lieutenant, a book-seller and a peasant of that time.<sup>36</sup>

The year 1898 brought about the fiftieth anniversary of the 1848 Revolution and saw the publication of an eight-part series authored by Johannes Proell, lavishly illustrated with 105 drawings and entitled 'How the First German Parliament Came into Being' ('*Wie das erste deutsche Parlament entstand*').<sup>37</sup> It was proudly announced that the series was partly based on so-far unconsidered sources. Part one was published in the first January issue of 1898, a few months before the event's actual anniversary in March.

Also popular was the depiction of an anniversary that spoke to particular current events, using historical analogy to illustrate the concrete political function of history. Thus, an article published in 1864 criticized the contemporary political situation by comparing the lack of rights found in an assembly of delegates who convened in Frankfurt on 21 December of that year with the far-reaching authorization of the parliament which had met in the Frankfurt Paulskirche fifteen years earlier.<sup>38</sup> The recourse to contemporary history was thus used to critically hold up a mirror to the present political situation. However, such recourse could also celebrate past successes in an affirmative way and, by doing so, consolidate the status quo.

*Die Gartenlaube* also reported on public commemorations occasioned by anniversaries; for example, the construction of a memorial or the inauguration of a monument, on a wreath-laying ceremony or a commemorative speech.<sup>39</sup> The meaning of the event in terms of memory culture was thus once more consolidated via the interconnection of different media; for example, when a commemoration was taken up by the press or when popular historical bestsellers (such as the works of Wilhelm Zimmermann or Johannes Scherr) were reviewed in *Die Gartenlaube*.<sup>40</sup>

## Results and Outlook

As the analysis of popular depictions of history in books and the family journal *Die Gartenlaube* demonstrate, the concepts and narratives of history which circulated in Germany in the second half of the nineteenth century were much more pluralistic – politically, confessionally and topically, but also in national terms via the integration of regional, national and world histories – than a focus on academic historiography of that period would suggest. From the point of view of popular historiography, German society looks much more pluralistic and open, even though social and cultural difference can also be traced in popular historiography.



Popular historical depictions definitely contain innovative approaches. Examples include cultural history and the world histories published around 1900 which, in part, pursued transdisciplinary approaches. However, popular historiography itself did not provide a methodological formulation or reflection on these approaches.<sup>41</sup> What also stands out is the strong reference for contemporary history and the affirmative character of discussions. These features result in a reductionism which foregrounds the topical facets of history prevailing in the respective period's functional memory. This already indicates academic historiography's important and indispensable function beyond the discipline's instructional tasks. These functions include the methodological reflection of the discipline's own actions and an engagement with issues less relevant to a given time's prevalent issues and preferred historical periods.

What seems to me to be significant about *Die Gartenlaube* is the journal's decided focus on contemporary history. This finding has its parallel in the dominance of contemporary history in popular presentations of history today – as can be seen, for example, in film and on television. We might conclude that in modern times the period enclosed in communicative memory and the time span covered by all living human beings in a given moment forms functional memory's 'natural' centre. Constituting such a centre also fulfils the function of providing intergenerational coherence. Apart from this, it is the mythical incipencies (located either in antiquity or the Middle Ages) that inspire historical interest and determine the need for orientation while the 'in-between ages' recede against this. Exceptions to this trend are events or persons from such 'in-between ages' passed on through anniversaries, or fictional presentations in plays, novels and films, and thus enshrined in cultural memory on an intermediate to long-term basis.

There is currently a lack of empirical research on popular depictions of history and the diverse segments of nineteenth-century historical culture. Such research could provide stimuli for a renewed history of historiography. Also, such analytical work on historical culture could reveal much about the mindset of the nineteenth century. Finally, it could contribute to our discipline's self-reflection and to determining our present position as historians. The popular presentations of history, many of which drew on 'scientific' ways of proceeding and on methodological comprehensibility, partly took up new issues beyond academic historiography. There is considerable evidence substantiating the argument that in the humanities, these popular presentations constituted an innate, original form of knowledge production, rather than one deduced from academic historiography. This means that for the humanities in the nineteenth century, much more so than for the natural sciences, we may have to assume the existence of a discrete form of knowledge production outside academic institutions.



## Notes

1. I want to thank Gabriele Kreutzner for translating this chapter as well as for her helpful and inspiring discussions.
2. This is demonstrated particularly well by the example of Ludwig I and Bavaria's historical politics. The Bavarian monarch supported research on Bavarian history and financed the construction of patriotic and national monuments. He encouraged the building of the 'Hall of Fame' ('*Ruhmeshalle*') 1853 in Munich, designed as a memorial to Bavarian figures of all times. Also, he inspired the construction of the Walhalla Hall of Fame and Honour (1842), designed as a collective memorial to the most dignified and famous German men and women of all times. Thus, he was able to skilfully link the shaping of a patriotic identity in new parts of Bavaria to a national identity politics which both aimed at strengthening Bavarian patriotism and consolidating the Wittelsbach dynasty.
3. The term popular 'presentations' is chosen in order to convey the notion that many of the depictions received by a mass audience were endowed with decidedly visual and performative traits; see, e.g., panoramas, pageants or the numerous historical illustrations found in family journals.
4. See also the remarks concerning the state of research on the subject of popular history in the introduction to this volume.
5. My study focuses on the period 1853–1900 (vols. 1–48) of this journal, published in Berlin by Scherl.
6. There were protests by representatives of the disciplines of theology and law when modern history professors refused to teach established lectures on universal history. This conventional form of history lecture, which offered a compilation of older historical works, not only failed to conform to the new professional and scientific standards of modern historiography, it also failed to meet the profession's national sense of mission. On the other hand, the new, more specialized lectures no longer met the educational ambitions of theologians and jurists whose interest was in a broader overview of history.
7. In the socialist milieu, history books which were critical of the Church as well as works dedicated to the history of revolutionary upheavals were very popular. See, e.g., the history of the Peasant War (*Geschichte des großen Bauernkrieges*) by the historian Wilhelm Zimmermann (1841–43) and the history of the 1848 Revolution by Wilhelm Blos (1893), a leading social democrat. With 47,000 copies sold, Blos's work was the most successful socialist history book until the First World War. While fiercely criticized by the Protestant expert league (and widely read by Catholics), Johannes Janssen's history of the German people since the end of the Middle Ages (*Geschichte des deutschen Volkes seit dem Ausgang des Mittelalters*, 1876–94) was one of the bestselling books on German history in the second half of the nineteenth century.
8. Thus, Karl von Rotteck's *Allgemeine Geschichte vom Anfang der historischen Kenntniss bis auf unsere Zeiten* (1812–27) saw twenty-five editions by the end of the nineteenth century and sold more than 100,000 copies. For the success of the new 'world histories' around 1900, see also Hartmut Bergenthum's contribution to this volume.
9. E.g., Thomas Babington Macaulay's *History of England* in four volumes was a historical bestseller, published in several German editions from 1849 onwards (Macaulay 1763–83); the same applies to Henry Thomas Buckle's *History of Civilization in England*, first published in Germany in 1857. See Langewiesche (2008d: 87–88) and Nissen (2009).



10. This included books like Heinrich Riehl's natural history of the German people (*Naturgeschichte des deutschen Volkes*, 1851–55), Johannes Scherr's history of German culture and custom (*Geschichte der deutschen Kultur und Sitte*, 1852–53) and Gustav Freytag's 'pictures from the German past' (*Bilder aus der deutschen Vergangenheit*, 1859–67).
11. It was particularly the earlier works and the biographical studies that were successful: see, e.g., Droysen's *Geschichte Alexander des Großen* (1833) or overviews characterized by their strong references to the present like, for example, Mommsen's *Römische Geschichte* (1851). See also Lamprecht's *Deutsche Geschichte* (1891–1909) which, even though it was controversial within the circles of academic historians, sold comparatively well. The same applies to Treitschke's *Deutsche Geschichte im 19. Jahrhundert* (1879–94). However, in quantitative terms, it could not match the older enlightenment histories' success or the reception granted to the Catholic and Socialist historians.
12. 'An unsere Freunde und Leser', *Die Gartenlaube* (1853: x).
13. Further statistical analysis is still to be undertaken. My present data base is a first sample which counted the number of titles on various historical subjects published in *Die Gartenlaube* in the columns 'Biographien und Charakteristiken'; 'Beschreibende und geschichtliche Aufsätze, Zeitgeschichtliches, Vermischtes'; and 'Blätter und Blüten'. For an overview on the journal's content, see also Hofmann and Schmitt (1978[1903]) and Estermann (1995). Alexander Gall, who has analysed the visual content of articles on natural science and technology in *Die Gartenlaube*, took a 5 per cent control sample for selected years (1892, 1897, 1902) and evaluated the respective surface ratios of text, drawings, and photography according to content-related aspects. According to this sample, about 50 per cent of the available space in *Die Gartenlaube* fell on literature and about 9 to 13 per cent on history. For the most part, historical contributions form the biggest functional group, ranking above medicine (about 2 to 4 per cent) and geography (about 3 per cent). Only the categories *Verschiedenes* (miscellaneous) and *Gesellschaft* (society) which might also include historical contributions (particularly on contemporary history) hold about the same share or even exceed the history category.
14. *Die Gartenlaube* (1898: 893).
15. See *Eine goldene Hochzeit mit der Wissenschaft* (*Die Gartenlaube*, 1867: 100) on Ranke, and *Ein Gedenkblatt zu seinem 50jährigen Doktorjubiläum* (*Die Gartenlaube*, 1893: 747) on Mommsen.
16. The following points should be read as initial findings which need to be substantiated by further research. The coverage of history in *Die Gartenlaube* has not been systematically analysed so far and this still constitutes a desideratum. Belgum (1998) has focused on the presentation of Germanic history, and particularly on its visual representation.
17. This assessment is based on the evaluation of *Die Gartenlaube's Inhaltsanalytische Bibliographie* for the years 1853–1880 (based on Estermann 1995), content analysis of the years 1861 and 1898, and on Hofmann and Schmitt (1978[1903]). A more detailed statistical and qualitative evaluation of the historical articles in *Die Gartenlaube* is yet to be accomplished.
18. See the contents of *Die Gartenlaube* (1898).
19. For recollection of the Napoleonic Wars, see Planert (2007); on the Franco–German War, see Becker (2001); and on the 1848/49 Revolution, see Siemann (1998). None of these works on nineteenth-century memory culture drew on *Die Gartenlaube*.
20. See, e.g., the article 'Ein deutsches Heldenmädchen', *Die Gartenlaube* (1863: 596–600).



21. See also the series 'Aus den Zeiten der schweren Noth', *Die Gartenlaube* (1863: Nr. 3, Nr. 8. Nr. 9).
22. 'Wir folgen aber gern der Anregung aus dem Kreise unserer Leser und lassen hiermit an alle noch am Leben befindlichen "Veteranen der Paulskirche" die herzliche Bitte ergehen, uns durch ein kurzes Lebenszeichen baldigst erfreuen zu wollen, damit eine genaue Feststellung ihrer Zahl möglich werde' (*Die Gartenlaube* 1898: 35).
23. *Die Gartenlaube* (1898: 317).
24. Here priority was given to France, Austria, Britain and Russia, but also to historical articles about Belgium, Spain, Italy, Serbia and Greece.
25. See, e.g., the illustrations for 'Auf einer alten Handelsstraße in den Alpen' (*Die Gartenlaube* 1884: 77) and drawings such as 'Aus einer altdeutschen Stadt' or 'Sängers Werbung' (Belgium 1998: 172).
26. The series started with the first article on 'Theure Zeiten' (*Die Gartenlaube* 1854: 377–80). A footnote referred to Biedermann's (1969[1854]) then recently published book.
27. *Die Gartenlaube* (1854: 377).
28. *Die Gartenlaube* (1854: 378). A similar approach is taken in the next article in this series, devoted to the supposedly increasing phenomenon of begging and to greater altruism in the past. The article concludes: 'And yet in general nothing is more inaccurate than degrading the present and praising a former, supposedly better, time' (*Die Gartenlaube* 1854: 446).
29. 'Die Dienstboten vor dreihundert Jahren', *Die Gartenlaube* (1898: 749–50).
30. On cultural history in *Die Gartenlaube*, see the titles listed in Estermann (1995: 277–88). For example, the ten-part series by F. Helbig, 'Deutsches Frauenleben im Mittelalter. Eine culturhistorische Studie' (*Die Gartenlaube* 1878: 444–46, 509–11, 610–12, 710–12, 774–76; 1879: 30–34, 102–4, 217–19); 'Damentoilette sonst und jetzt' (*Die Gartenlaube* 1855: 590); 'Die geschichtliche Wandlung der deutschen Frauenmoden' (*Die Gartenlaube* 1880: 803, 819); 'Urbilder unserer Frauenmode' (*Die Gartenlaube* 1867: 726–27); 'Die Wäsche sonst und jetzt' (*Die Gartenlaube* 1878: 278–79); 'Aus der Geschichte des Traurings' (*Die Gartenlaube* 1876: 439–41); and 'Das Wasserglas. Eine geschichtliche, technisch-chemische und volkswirtschaftliche Skizze' (*Die Gartenlaube* 1857: 198–200, 278–80).
31. See, e.g., 'Rasieren. Alles hat seine Wissenschaft (Alte und neue Art das Rasiermesser abzuziehen)' (*Die Gartenlaube* 1864: 686–87); 'Die Geschichte des Bieres' (*Die Gartenlaube* 1855: 604–605); 'Ein Geheimniß im Bierreiche. Culturhistorische Skizze' (*Die Gartenlaube* 1872: 96–99); and 'Leute bei der Spritze. Alte und neue Feuerwehr' (*Die Gartenlaube* 1864: 732–34).
32. See, e.g., 'Die Damen auf dem Wiener Kongreß' (*Die Gartenlaube* 1880: 401, 431); 'Frauen als Entdeckungsreisende und Geographen' (*Die Gartenlaube* 1880: 163, 259); 'Frauen der französischen Revolution' (*Die Gartenlaube* 1875: 26).
33. See, e.g., the series 'Aus den Zeiten schwerer Noth' (*Die Gartenlaube* 1863), the articles dedicated to recollections of the Battle of Leipzig (*Die Gartenlaube* 1863: 672, 688) and the articles on the heroic girl Eleonore Prochaska (*Die Gartenlaube* 1863: 596–600). In remembrance of 1848/49, articles on 'Kinkels Befreiung' (*Die Gartenlaube* 1863: 194), on Gustav Struve (*Die Gartenlaube* 1863: 208) and a relatively long article by Moritz Hartmann on the last days of the German parliament (*Die Gartenlaube* 1863: 40–44) were published in 1863.
34. *Die Gartenlaube* (1898: 613).



35. *Die Gartenlaube* (1894: 192–93).
36. On the escalade, see *Die Gartenlaube* (1862: 649–54); on the different fates, see *Die Gartenlaube* (1861: 500–504).
37. *Die Gartenlaube* (1898: 9–12, 44–47, 72–76, 104–10, 139–43, 168–74, 208–14, 254–57).
38. *Die Gartenlaube* (1864: 93–96).
39. See, e.g., the reference to the commemoration which took place from 16 to 20 October 1863 on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Leipzig (*Die Gartenlaube* 1863: 596). See also the report on the history of the monument in Altona in memory of the Schleswig–Holstein War (1848), the monument's inauguration and the reference to a public act of remembrance both in Altona and in Kiel in March 1898 on the occasion of the event's fiftieth anniversary (*Die Gartenlaube* 1898: 275–76).
40. See, e.g., several enthusiastic reviews and articles on Wilhelm Zimmermann's history of the Peasant War ('Ein Geschichtsschreiber der Wahrheit', *Die Gartenlaube* 1869: 292–94; also 1877: 799–800); on Johannes Scherr (*Die Gartenlaube* 1886: 877); and on Gustav Freytag (*Die Gartenlaube* 1886: 514).
41. See also Nissen (2009).