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# Introduction: Why Analyse Popular Historiographies?

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At this point in time, popular presentations of history are booming – not only in the Western world, but worldwide. Recent allusions to history as the ‘new gardening’ by a BBC representative<sup>1</sup> or its characterization as the ‘new cooking’ by historian Justin Champion (2008a) suggest that in Britain history-related television programmes are on their way to outdoing the highly successful gardening or cooking formats in terms of popularity. While this may be a slight exaggeration, the fact is that there has been a rising interest in history since the 1980s. From the second half of the 1990s this interest has reached an unprecedented peak (Winter 2001: 5–16; 2006: 19–39).

In Germany, this trend was first observed in relation to increasing numbers of visitors to historical exhibitions and museums (Korff 1990). Similarly, considerable public attention was paid to controversies among historical experts. For example, in the second half of the 1980s, the *Historikerstreit* – the debate about scientifically adequate perspectives on German National Socialism among German history experts – was, in part, carried out in the public media where it reached a broad audience (Augstein et al. 1987; Evans 1991; Peter 1995; Schneider 1995). In the late 1990s, the *Wehrmachtsausstellung* – the German Army exhibition focusing on the war crimes of the *Wehrmacht* committed on the eastern front during the Second World War – caused a major public debate about the role of the German army in the Second World War (Klotz 2001; Hamburger Institut für Sozialforschung 2002; Hartmann and Hürter 2005). And in 2001, a fierce discussion between ancient historians and archaeologists about Troy caused a sensation in the public (Ulf 2003; Weber 2006).

Somewhat less spectacular, yet of equal importance, has been the evolution of new historical movements ‘from below’ which emerged from the 1970s on. Examples include the *Geschichtswerkstätten* (history workshops) and women’s history groups, both of which indicate (among other things) an increasing interest both in regional history and in the history of everyday life. Initiated in



Scandinavia (*Grabe-wo-du-stehst*, Sven Lindquist) and in Great Britain (Raphael Samuel), the history workshop movement reached Germany in the early 1980s (Heer and Ullrich 1985; Böge 2004).

With the unprecedented success of the American television series *Holocaust* on German television in 1979, which was watched by 10 to 15 million people (Brandt 2003; Bösch 2007), German broadcasting and especially ZDF (a national public television broadcaster), discovered history as a *Quotenbringer* (a reliable deliverer of high ratings). Against this background, German television saw the emergence of new forms and formats for the presentation of history. From the 1980s on, and especially since the 1990s, television increasingly drew on historical subject matter for various documentary, semi-documentary and fictional formats. The period between 1995 and 2003 brought a doubling of the percentage of historical programmes presented on television; today about 5 per cent of broadcasting content is related to history (Lersch and Viehhoff 2007). On average, a history format can rely on an audience share of between 7 and 13 per cent, that is 2 to 5 million viewers (Wirtz 2008: 11). Thus, television has emerged as the *Leitmedium* – the medium in dominance with regard to historical culture. According to a representative survey in 1991, 90 per cent of Germans stated that they engage with historical issues on a regular basis and that they primarily rely on television (67 per cent) and on fictional material (38 per cent) for this purpose. In this regard, academic and other educational institutions (such as schools) involved in mediating history are of lesser importance (13 per cent) (Crivellari et al. 2004: 12).

In addition to this, the last decade saw a major boom in popular historical productions in the print media, in historical non-fiction books, in periodicals devoted to history as well as in popular magazines. For example, during the last few years most of the well-known German magazines – such as *Der Spiegel*, *Die Zeit* and *Geo* – released a specialized history format in the context of their diversified output (*Geo Epoche* since 1999; *Die Zeit Geschichte* since 2005; *Spiegel Special Geschichte* since 2007). Also, the decade saw an increase in the number of (historical) biographies and autobiographies published along with the rise of fictionalized forms, such as historical novels and historical crime fiction, in the book market. In addition, numerous historical websites on the internet, history articles on Wikipedia, CD-ROM productions as well as historical computer games attest to the phenomenon's expansion into the new digital media and to the creation of new forms of mediation.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, re-enactments and living history, which have both been known since the late nineteenth century, have mushroomed in recent years. In their recent versions, both forms involve an experimental, 'live' re-enactment of historical events or living conditions and, thus, intensify the rise of new or updated forms of mediating history (Carlson 2000; Cook 2004; Hochbruck 2006). Such forms are used for historical performances by private associations as well as by museums and theme parks. What they suggest is the possibility of experiencing the past in much more sensual ways. Similarly, TV documentaries,



such as the docudrama, offer the same kind of promise, and this has contributed to the immense popularity of historical docu-soaps such as *The 1900 House* in Great Britain and *Schwarzwaldhaus* and *Gutshaus* in Germany (Hunt 2006; Ebbrecht 2007; Müller and Schwarz 2008). Through these old and new media and formats, popular representations of history now reach a mass audience and are received by broad fractions of the population. Thus, it is legitimate to suggest that they have a much stronger impact on people's perceptions of history than academic studies.

## The History Boom: Some Background Information

This history boom can be conceived of as an integral part of, and a response to, contemporary societies' accelerating changes and to what has been called 'second modernity'.<sup>3</sup> Traditional orientations, life styles and work patterns have gone through radical changes, if not disruptions, since the last three decades of the twentieth century. National boundaries as well as the construction of nations, states and ethnicities have gone through rapid changes. The same holds true for the significance and implementation of gender, religion, class and age. An unspoken belief in progress has become obsolete and many people experience the present as a period of crisis and uncertainty. In such a situation, the turn to history can serve the function of constructing continuity, orientation and identity – be it national or regional, sub-cultural or individual. An increased level of education, greater prosperity and more leisure time has also supported this new interest in history which can be seen as a result of the emergence of modern knowledge society since the end of the nineteenth century (Szöllösi-Janze 2004: 277–312). Yet, the engagement with history, particularly through popular display formats, also satisfies the need for emotional and aesthetic experience and for adventure, for a risk-free encounter with what is strange, different or 'other' and, finally, for relaxation and diversion. Moreover, public and state organizations, social elites and political groups draw on popular forms to strategically use history for legitimizing either the status quo or political changes.

Since the emergence of modern historiography in the early nineteenth century, its increasing incomprehensibility by non-specialists has been deplored particularly in Germany. Characterized by its ever-intensified specialization, modern historiography is based on empirical sources and decidedly sets itself apart from popular representations. Thus, scientific historiography has moved away from the philosophy of history as well as from various forms of literary historiography (Hardtwig 1982, 1990f). By doing so, academic historiography has lost its 'entertainment value' and also, to some extent, its ability to deal with vital issues. Meanwhile, questions about the meaning of history have come to take a back seat in scientific accounts. The development of modern historical science in the nineteenth century saw the emergence of a paradox: the rise of



academic science, its institutionalization and specialization – which meant its moving away from ‘universal history’ (*Universalgeschichte*) to source-saturated national history – was inextricably related to the rise of the nation and of new, bourgeois elites. Thus, modern academic history owed its early and successful expansion in German universities to its legitimizing function. On the other hand, increasing ‘scientification’ and specialization, partly facilitated by the German tradition of freedom of research and teaching (*Lehr- und Forschungsfreiheit*) and the single states’ competition in the cultural sector, led to a form of academic historiography which notably forfeited much of its appeal to broader bourgeois audiences, though never completely losing it. Academic historiography additionally reinforced existing power structures and the world-view of male, bourgeois, protestant, nationally conservative elites, with the result that it did not fulfil its legitimizing function for newly emerging political forces such as the Catholic or Socialist milieu or the emerging women’s movement.

## Definitions and Interrelations

By using the term ‘popular historiography’, I refer to representations of history in written, visual, artefactual and personal forms of presentation addressing a broad, non-expert audience. Within the field of popular historiography one could further differentiate between ‘public history’ – that is, the political use of history by nations, states, institutions and political elites – and ‘popular history’ – the use of history by civil society, families, groups, commercial or private associations and individuals (Black 2005). However, this differentiation should be only conceived of as a heuristic one because both forms are often interrelated. In simple terms the relationship between popular and scientific, or non-academic and academic, representations of history can be sketched as follows:

Popular historiographies are typically characterized by mediating strategies such as reduction, narration and dramatization; they personalize, emotionalize and often scandalize their subject matter. Their subject matter and representational forms are shaped by their respective medium’s conditions of production and distribution and/or their respective institutional context – in terms of audience, quantitative reception, time budget, commercial aspects, potential for re-usability and for international distribution, and so on.

Yet, conventions and characteristics such as reduction, narration, and political exploitability also apply to academic historiography. Reduction and simplification are basic practices which scientists must necessarily rely on in order to communicate their results within the scientific community (Shinn and Whitley 1985: viiff). According to research on scientific knowledge, there is no fundamental or basic difference between popular and academic knowledge. Rather, the difference is one of degree. In research on the popularization of science, the interactionist model also suggests interdependence and mutual interference of academic knowledge producers, popularizers and recipients.<sup>4</sup>



Frequently, academic history tends to raise more questions than it provides answers and – at least ideally speaking – conceives of its results as a kind of knowledge that is methodologically reflected and sound, yet always open to scrutiny, always provisional and never definite. By contrast, popular representations of history are not interested in ambivalence and instead favour not-too-complex answers, providing meaning and political legitimization.

In spite of the provisional character of the interpretations produced by academic historiography, the latter tends to serve a controlling function in the public use of history. Thus, academic historiography points to incorrect facts, ahistorical assessment criteria and problematic comparisons and actualizations, even though academic history itself can never be completely free of such problems. Conversely, popular historiography can provide stimulation to its academic sibling; for example, where it picks up marginal or innovative issues or makes use of new methods, sources and representational forms.<sup>5</sup>

## Research Fields: Public History, the History of Historiography and Memory Culture

In 1994, the British socialist historian and founder of the history workshop movement, Raphael Samuel, pleaded for opening up academic historiography to popular historical narratives characterized by their great impact-related potential:

In any archaeology of the unofficial sources of historical knowledge, the animators of the Flintstones ... surely deserve, at least, a *proxime accedit*. Stand-up comedians, such as *Rowan Atkinson* whose *Blackadder* series re-animated the legendary moments of British history for a generation of television addicts, might get as much attention as the holder of a Regius chair. The impresarios of the open air museum, and their ever-increasing staff, would be seen to have made a far more substantial contribution to popular appetite for an engagement with the past than the most ambitious head of a department. (Samuel 1994: 17)

In Germany, there were similar calls by historians such as Rudolf Vierhaus, who as early as 1977 claimed that researching the history of historiography must exceed 'what has been common practice so far' by moving beyond traditional academic historiography to look at historical representations in education, museums, popular historical literature and monuments, and who also called for an investigation into 'historical awareness, its political and social function' (Vierhaus 1977: 111). Yet, pleas such as this did not lead to a systematic scientific engagement with popular presentations of history. What is beginning to show, meanwhile – particularly in the context of public history and the now booming interdisciplinary research on memory culture, as well as, in part, in the



history of historiography – are clear steps toward an intensified and more systematic engagement with popular presentations of history.

Emerging in the U.S. in the late 1970s as a new segment of academic history, public history – also conceived of in the beginning as ‘practising history’, ‘applied history’ or ‘consulting history’ – has been institutionalized in study programmes, scientific associations and scientific journals.<sup>6</sup> Public history refers to the employment of historians and the historical method outside academia (Kelley 1978: 16). It trains historians to transform their work so that it reaches audiences outside the academy. Public history is ‘history that is seen, heard, read, and interpreted by a popular audience’; it asks questions about the practical value of history and is also seen as ‘history that belongs to the public’.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, there are more than 100 universities, mostly in the U.S. and Australia, which offer study programmes (at the BA or MA level) in public history.<sup>8</sup> In American historical science, the field of public history in particular has produced investigations into popular presentations of history.<sup>9</sup> This can partly be accounted for by public history’s advanced institutionalization in the U.S. through study programmes, journals and expert associations.

Meanwhile in Australia, public history is now an up and coming field of history. Yet there are also some signs of its institutionalization in Great Britain through the establishment of study programmes and of new initiatives by historians such as the website *Doing Public History*, launched in 2008, which aims at promoting ‘public debate about the nature and role of history in Britain’.<sup>10</sup> This site calls for a sustained discussion about the relationship between academic historians and the public. Indeed, it seems paradoxical that despite a broad interest in history within British society and the media, and ‘despite a sophisticated and passionate debate about the nature of the heritage industry and National Trust’, there is little ‘engagement with the public value of historical discourse’ among British academics (Champion 2008b).<sup>11</sup>

Turning to Germany, there have been a number of lively public debates about history, particularly about an adequate commemoration of the Holocaust and the Second World War, to which academic historical science and university historians have also made major contributions.<sup>12</sup> A lively public interest was also caused by the fact that coming to terms with the past – particularly in relation to responsibility for the consequences of the Second World War and the Holocaust – has led to various ‘waves’ of intensified engagement with National Socialism since the end of the 1950s. In the beginning, there was much hesitancy and stagnation in efforts at taking on this task. Yet, particularly since the 1980s, these attempts have played a central role in national identity formation in the Federal Republic of Germany. In comparison to other European states which have only recently taken on the task of addressing aspects of their past such as crimes against humanity or dictatorship, Germany has sometimes been alluded to as a ‘master of coming to terms with the past’. Partly because the crimes committed by the national socialists have made historical responsibility disproportionately more burdensome, this ‘coming to terms with



the past' has succeeded because the country has practised an active politics of history, additionally flanked by academic research (Danyel 1995; Frei 1996; Wolfrum 1999; Reichel 2001; Welzer 2002). Meanwhile, there are numerous accounts which have engaged with this politics of history, and the coming to terms with history, in Germany. These accounts, however, have tended to focus on National Socialism, state action or the political elite. Thus, in Germany, history, and primarily the history of National Socialism, has been much more present in the political public than in other states since the 1980s. Yet this has not led to an investigation of popular forms of appropriation and presentation of history or to a more thorough reflection on public history. This may also be due to the widespread separation of and lack of contact between academic historical science and the didactics of history in Germany, and also to the rare occasions of cooperation between academic historians and 'practitioners' of history such as teachers, historians working in museums, archivists and historians or historically trained creative personnel in the media.

Lately, however, there have been tentative steps toward an institutionalization of public history, firstly in the form of study programmes<sup>13</sup> and, quite recently, by means of the formation of research groups (*Forschergruppen*) as well as through conferences and anthologies dedicated to the broad phenomenon of a popular historical culture that reaches beyond the engagement with National Socialism and a state-related politics of history.<sup>14</sup> At present, there are signs indicating the rise of the question *Wozu Geschichte?* ('History – what is it for?'), an intensified engagement with perceptions of history, or with history as a commodity.<sup>15</sup> In 2006, the annual convention of the Deutsche Historikertag (Society of German Historians) was dedicated to the issue of *Geschichtsbilder* (perceptions of history). Here, two panels dealt with the ongoing popularization of history on television. Existing research on history in film and on television reveals the above mentioned observation that National Socialism is the best researched topic (Bösch 1999; Classen 1999; Kansteiner 2006; Keilbach 2008). Yet there are also recent and quite promising shifts into other historical periods, new formats and efforts towards developing a more systematic approach (e.g., Crivellari et al. 2004; Lersch and Viehoff 2007; Fischer and Wirtz 2008; Steinle 2008).

The analysis of popular presentations of history might also be seen as part of the research on collective memory which has particularly flourished in Germany recently.<sup>16</sup> So far, this quite vivid, interdisciplinary research on memory and remembrance has focused on questions of 'how': how the memory of societies and of individuals works, how remembrance is constructed and how it shapes the identity of nations, groups and individuals, and how, in general, the past interacts with the present.

Research on memory culture started in the 1920s with Maurice Halbwachs (1985) who coined the term 'collective memory' and emphasized the constructed and socially determined character of individual remembrance. Halbwachs's theory was further developed by Jan Assmann, who introduced the



concept of cultural memory and focused on the interrelation of public memory, collective identity and political legitimization. Jan Assmann also introduced the distinction between communicative and cultural memory. Taking up the notion developed by Halbwachs (and also by Pierre Nora) that generational memory is limited to eighty to one hundred years, Assmann describes communicative memory as immediate commemoration passed on informally through communication. Cultural memory, in contrast, is organized and institutionalized, bound to objects and rituals. It includes any given society's and era's stock of 'reusable texts, images and rites ... whose "cultivation" serves to stabilize and convey that society's self-image. Upon such collective knowledge, for the most part (but not exclusively) of the past, each group bases its awareness of unity and particularity' (Assmann 1995a: 132). Aleida Assmann (1999) suggested a further differentiation between functional and storage memory. Functional memory conveys the segments of the past which are regarded as functional and serve the creation of political and social identity in a society, group or nation. Functional memory can be described as acquired memory that constructs meaning. Storage memory, in contrast, also includes currently useless historical knowledge which was meaningful once but is not longer made use of, though it can be reintroduced into functional memory when necessary. Recent work on historical remembrance also emphasizes the contested and continuous reinterpretation of remembrance which leads to a coexistence of numerous, hegemonic and marginal, cultures of memory (Winter 2006: 1–13). Popular presentations of history belong to memory culture, even though research on this topic has not paid much attention to these popular forms of appropriation, such as living history, historical docu-soaps and so on.

Apart from these concepts of memory culture, there is the concept of historical culture (*Geschichtskultur*) formulated by Jörn Rüsen and others (such as Wolfgang Hardtwig or Bernd Schöнемann), which also looks at the social/societal significance of historical commemoration. *Geschichtskultur* points to presentations of history existing in a broad variety of cultural institutions and media which integrate

the functions of instruction, entertainment, legitimation, criticism, diversion and education. By historical culture, we mean the historical interpretations of diverse cultural institutions, e.g. by the university, school, the museum, administration or mass media, which turn into an ensemble of locations for collective remembrance and integrate the functions of instruction, entertainment, criticism, diversion, education and other modes of recollection into the comprehensive unity of historical commemoration. (Rüsen 1994: 4)

However, existing works on *Geschichtskultur* are primarily of a theoretical nature and are oriented at traditional institutions and authorities for the mediation of history. Empirical studies have primarily addressed the nineteenth century – its



middle classes as well as the more 'high culture' products of that time such as memorials and monuments.

Popular presentations of history might also be understood as an analytic object in the history of historiography. Up to this point, the history of historiography has mainly concentrated on academic historiography, focusing on the (hi)story of great historians, on canonized works, on work-immanent interpretations and on the ex post tracing of methodological developments that became successful later on. However, a 'modern' history of historiography should also address the structural conditions of the production of historical knowledge, its political, institutional, material and social determinants as well as the relation of historiography to society, the state and the public. Also, and very importantly so, it should also include non-academic historical works and their interaction with the expert world – something done, for example, by Bonnie Smith in her book 'The Gender of History' (Smith 1998) which not only analyses institutional conditions but also academic and non-academic historiography (by women). It is particularly gender (along with other aspects of social difference) and an interest in bringing to light a female historiography which account for the importance of expanding the history of historiography to popular forms of presentation (Paletschek 2007). Of course, this opens up the question whether women as both producers and recipients of historiography, as well as issues of women's history and the history of gender relations, become more visible (or not) by including non-academic historical presentations in the history of historiography.

Presently, we are seeing more and more work which argues for the inclusion of non-academic forms of historiography in the history of historiography (Jordanova 2000) or specifically inquires into the scope of and the relationship between academic historiography, the state and the public (e.g., Tyrell 2005). First steps towards such an 'expanded history of historiography' and a new reflection on historiography and the public can also be seen in Germany.<sup>17</sup> To name just a few examples, this includes work on commemoration, historiography and gender (Regnath and Riepl-Schmidt 2007; Paletschek and Schraut 2008; Epple and Schaser 2009), Valentin Groebner's lucid work on views of the Middle Ages in the nineteenth century and in contemporary popular culture (Groebner 2008), the discovery of the thriller as a historical source for the twentieth century (Schwarz 2006), as well as the work done by Dieter Langewiesche (2008a) and Wolfgang Hardtwig, whose edited anthology of popular historiography in twentieth-century Germany contains 'history for readers'; for example, popular biographies of Emil Ludwig from the 1920s and C.W. Ceram's bestseller *Gods, Graves and Scholars* (1949). Last, but certainly not least, Martin Nissen's dissertation provides a first, condensed account of popular historiography in the second part of the nineteenth century, and particularly of the interaction between historians, publishers and the German public (Nissen 2009).



## Contributions to this Volume

To date little research on popular presentations of history has been done in Germany. Thus, the articles in this volume<sup>18</sup> attempt to provide a pathway into this new field of research and introduce some of the work which has emerged in Germany over the past few years. While mainly (though not exclusively) focusing on Germany, the articles analyse different forms of popular historiography and popular presentations of history since 1800. By doing so, they try to provide some answers to a set of basic questions: What kinds of history and which perceptions of history are presented? What kinds of interrelations are to be found between popular and academic history? What kinds of challenges and opportunities were created by popular historiographies?

The contributions presented in Part I focus on popular histories in the nineteenth century, predominantly presented in written form. While differing in their respective object of interest, the articles share a concern with the relationship between popular and academic historiography. Thus, Angelika Eppele investigates popular historiography produced by women writers from the mid eighteenth to the mid nineteenth century. As she points out, it was particularly the history of historiography which blocked out these successful popular historians. Female historians of popular historiography such as Catherine Macaulay, Therese Huber, Louise von Blumenthal and Johanna Schopenhauer employed innovative methods (such as closeness to sources, oral history) early on; in fact, they partly took up this practice prior to their academic colleagues. As a strategy for proving the authenticity of their accounts, these women authors pointed to their 'correct' moral and political attitude and their respective history's significance for the present. Thus, they set themselves apart from an increasingly more academic historiography, which considered scientific objectivity to be founded in the depiction of causality (Hume) or in the methodological criticism of sources (Ranke). Through their radical subjectivity, popular female historians not only challenged the canon's strategies of striving for 'truth' but also dealt with thematic fields excluded by professional academic historiography such as ethical values, friendship and family issues, death, birth, childhood, love and hatred. Angelika Eppele concludes that the division of labour between popular and professional historiography was legitimized two hundred years ago: 'It was an attempt to create a professional identity by excluding important themes and "unimportant" people'.

My own contribution provides an overview of the emerging institutions and forms of the popular mediation of history in the nineteenth century. Concentrating on the press as the most successful mass medium of its time, the article analyses presentations of history in the pictorial family magazine *Die Gartenlaube* for the years between 1863 and 1900. As the analysis shows, the perceptions of history circulated in these popular presentations were much more pluralistic than those provided by academic historiography in the second half of the nineteenth century. Simultaneously, however, *Die Gartenlaube's* popular



presentations of history were of a decidedly affirmative nature and strongly related to the present. As the analysis shows, the *Die Gartenlaube's* historical presentations were most notably dominated by contemporary history. Secondly, many of these accounts addressed topics of cultural history and the history of everyday life which were hardly touched on by contemporary academic historiography. Similar to present-day strategies, the magazine strongly drew on anniversaries as anchors of commemoration. Moreover, the analysis reveals traits of dealing with respective historical events by drawing on a broad spectrum of existing forms and formats of popular mediation. This suggests that in Modern Times, the period captured by communicative memory occupies the centre of a given society's functional memory. For one thing, this means that the time span covered by all living contemporaries along with topics and issues attached to their immediate everyday lives and to individual experience form the centre of a given period's primary interest.

Hartmut Bergenthum investigates the 'world histories' around 1900 which so far have been neglected by historiography. These works were bestsellers in Germany, with several hundred thousand copies in circulation around the turn to the twentieth century. Bergenthum looks at the kinds of issues and geographical spaces represented in these popular histories. He also considers the assumptions about history's driving forces on which these works were based and asks whether this sets them apart from academic historiography. For the most part marked by a strong Eurocentric signature, these popular 'world histories' were dominated by the idea that history begins with the formation of states and that the state, (male) elites and religion are history's driving forces. Yet, these 'world histories' also contained innovative approaches in that history could be organized according to a fundamentally new spatial concept, that of *Völkerkreise* ('circles of peoples'), which meant that African history was for the first time included in this type of historical account. Some of these 'world histories' drew on an interdisciplinary approach by using sociological, anthropological, ethnic, linguistic and also racial patterns of interpretation. Bergenthum concludes that the 'world histories' responded to their contemporaries' need for orientation by trying to 'stabilize a conventional world-view while adapting to globalization. New methods were adopted to justify old identities'.

The articles collected in Part II deal with popular historiographies in the twentieth century and cover both 'old' and what in their respective time were 'new' media. Wolfgang Hardtwig looks at successful books that focus on history in the twentieth century and particularly at the works of Sebastian Haffner and Golo Mann. Hardtwig raises basic questions with regard to the object of research and conceives of popular historiography as a challenge for the future. In his perspective, popular historiography is an answer to the audience's ethical and aesthetic needs, which are no longer adequately served by modern academic historiography. According to Hardtwig, 'research should focus on the contribution of popular historiography to the formation and change of historical and political awareness in Germany, as well as on the problem of whether



popular historiography can be seen as a source which is useful to the analysis of these historical processes'. However, the fundamental tension between academic historiography and memory culture, this binary way of approaching the past must itself be historicized.

Taking the example of contemporary history's presentation on radio in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) as his case in point, Christoph Classen takes a look at the way history functions to stabilize the political system and at the popular media's general potential within the context of dictatorship. He stresses the frequent reference to history, and particularly to contemporary history, in the GDR, which was so 'omnipresent that one might be tempted to talk about an obsession with history'. Yet, in comparison to the current history boom, Classen states that the GDR radio presentations provided 'a quite different form of popular history'. The history programmes on GDR radio were characterized by a personalized presentation, an emotional language and frequent recourse to witnesses of history, all of which served as strategic means of establishing authenticity. The prevailing style was that of a marked 'historical presentism'; that is, an instrumentalization of the past for confirming the respective present's political status quo, and of a predominant recourse to historical analogies, particularly in terms of delineating the GDR from the West. Constraints inherent to the political system foreclosed the possibilities of exploiting the new medium's potentials. This is particularly evident in the case of the historical radio play, which was extremely popular with audiences. Frequently, there was no way of synthesizing the writer's creative potential and a successful narrative structure with political constraints.

Frank Bösch investigates films (on cinema and television) released over the past thirty years and thematically devoted to the period of National Socialism, with a particular focus on German productions. He argues that 'audiovisual history about the Third Reich is seen as a key element of self-assurance with regard to historical and national identity'. His analysis points to the interactions and correspondence of issues and approaches in academic and popular accounts of history. Since the groundbreaking success of the mini-series *Holocaust* in 1978/9, numerous films about National Socialism have been made internationally, thus constituting a transnational phenomenon, which nevertheless is endowed with its respective national peculiarities. Taking German films as his case in point, Bösch traces three phases in German film production over the past thirty years. Each phase has been characterized by distinctive topics and modes of representation, which reflected its period's particular zeitgeist. Thus, Bösch emphasizes that historical research and film are closer connected to each other than seems to be the case at first sight. Since historical research does not necessarily function as an emitter for popular history, Bösch argues for a reconsideration of the term 'popularization' since films do not merely simplify scientific results. He also identifies a severe lack of research concerning audience studies of these historical movies.

The contributions collected in Part III are devoted to popular historiography as part of memory culture. They either address the relationship between



memory culture and popular and academic historiography in general (Langewiesche, Lenz) or provide case studies (Schraut, Ceranski, Brüggemeier). These chapters investigate persons or events which have been present in popular memory culture throughout the second part of the twentieth century but which have not so far figured in general historical overviews or in the kind of special research authorized by academic historiography, with the consequence that they have escaped the latter's grid of significance. This applies both to the Austrian Empress Elizabeth, better known as Sissi, and the German soccer team's victory in the 1954 football World Cup. Some of the contributions point to the vital significance of gender by showing that both in popular and scientific historiography contemporary gender relations function as the frame of reference and, thus, influence what can be said, thought and (re)presented.

Dieter Langewiesche's chapter investigates the relationship between memory culture and academic historiography. Langewiesche takes as his point of departure the topical finding of today's international responsibility for history, which he substantiates by various examples. He interprets this new, and historically unprecedented, international responsibility as an outflow of globalization and, more particularly, as signifying the democratization of the use of history in pluralistic societies, something which goes along with a deprofessionalization of historiography. The new type of 'lay history' can develop imaginative forms and follow unforeseen paths, quite independently and untouched by academic history writing. Departing from these findings, Langewiesche goes on to discuss the relationship between memory culture, popular historical narratives and historical science by drawing on historical propositions made by Johann Martin Chladenius, John Herald Plumb, Reinhart Koselleck and Paul Ricœur. A critical historiography can be practised in a given society only if historical science is linked to that society's memory culture. 'The possibility of historical writing having an effect on society depends on its ability to make the connection between "faithfulness to memory" and "historical truth"... This is only possible however, if historical writing puts forward a view of the past which is accessible to the experience of contemporaries'.

Wartime memories provide a good example for illustrating how modified social conditions and power relations form the preconditions whereby certain historical facts or actors become acknowledged. Claudia Lenz takes a look at the depiction of the Second World War and the period of German Occupation in Norway's popular memory culture. She looks at how stories considered worth remembering emerge in both the private and the public context. What authorizes those considered to be valuable narrators so that they can narrate their past? Lenz assumes that negotiations about the meaning of the past fulfil the crucial function of legitimizing a subject's former and present actions and, furthermore, of constituting the subject as an agent. In this regard, gender is a central category in the process of historical narration and of attributing authority. Lenz shows this in the analysis of popular recollections of the Second World War in Norway and by drawing on examples taken from films,



photographs as well as the orchestration of exhibitions and public honours. It was the rise of feminism and the societal changes which occurred from the 1980s onwards which gave way to a new historical culture of representation offering 'new images of courageous and active women who had participated in the struggle for national independence – both by means which traditionally had been regarded as "female" (smuggling food, hiding and helping refugees to flee) and by weapons in their hands'. Nevertheless, the demystification of male-biased narratives about 'boys in the woods' brought about by adding female heroines remained linked to the myth about the 'resisting nation' so that further deconstruction was – and is – yet to come.

Sylvia Schraut looks at popular presentations of the Austrian Empress Elizabeth (1837–1898), known as 'Sissi' in the German-speaking world in differing media, genres and formats throughout the twentieth century. Surprisingly, despite worldwide 'Sissimania' and a successful global marketing of her story, there has as yet been no scientific investigation of the Sissi 'myth' nor of Empress Elizabeth's political work and her impact. Popular historiography has primarily focused on her private life and her 'tragic fate' and is characterized by a mixture of fact and fiction. Interestingly, the Empress herself and her contemporaries respectively laid the foundation for her later mystification. The example of Sissi shows that presentation and, thereby, presence, across a variety of mediating forms – monuments, books, journal articles, pictures, exhibitions, plays, films, musicals, figures, artefacts or spatial representations at tourist sites – and recurring interpretations of the myth, topically refreshed and streamlined into the respective period's particular character, are prerequisites for entering, and lasting in, popular memory culture. Rounding up her contribution, Sylvia Schraut argues that the core of the fascination with Sissi as subject matter – in addition to the general attractiveness of power and royal splendor – lies in the fact that an ambiguous character resisting any unproblematic understanding can be utilized as screen on which can be projected almost any content for which there is demand in the popular engagement with historical matters.

Beate Ceranski turns our interest to the presentation of Marie Curie and Albert Einstein in popular biographies published between the beginning of the twentieth century and today. Her analysis reveals perplexing parallels as well as significant differences between their respective presentations. Both Einstein and Curie laid the foundations for their future image in their own lifetimes. After their respective death, it was close collaborators, friends or relatives who exclusively administered their estates and wrote the first, and extremely successful, biographies. It was only the new zeitgeist of the 1970s and 1980s, coupled with a new access to sources, which brought about a change in the earlier hagiographic and stereotyped images. Influenced by the pressures exerted by the second-wave women's movement and by altered moral conceptions, both the popular and academic history of science turned to an engagement with the relationship between gender and science. It was this engagement, which allowed for the development of a modified perspective on both protagonists, which



nonetheless remained characterized by significant differences related to gender. When analysing the semantic fields associated with these exceptional scientists, the presentation of Einstein still stresses his genius while that of Curie emphasizes her obsession (a trait connoting the realm of emotion and even that of the non-rational) – and this applies to both the popular and academic history of science, both of which must therefore be seen as reproducing gender clichés. When looking at the history of historiography, this case study reveals an interaction between the popular and academic history of science. As Beate Ceranski notes, the popular history of science's late success led to a rehabilitation of biography as a genre of the academic history of historiography.

Finally, Franz Brüggemeier takes a look at the so-called *Wunder von Bern* ('miracle of Bern'), the German football team's winning of the World Cup in 1954 and this event's role and function in popular memory culture. As an issue of national recollection, the 'miracle of Bern' slowly evolved from the 1980s onward. The major excitement that surrounded the fiftieth anniversary of the Bern victory in 2004, and the broad soccer enthusiasm of the summer of 2006, when Germany once again hosted the World Cup, firmly rooted the event in popular memory culture. In the mass media, the 'miracle of Bern' was retrospectively celebrated as the Federal Republic of Germany's proper founding act and as the decisive event in the formation of national identity after 1945 and the division of Germany into two separate states: East Germany (the German Democratic Republic) and West Germany (the Federal Republic of Germany). In strong contrast to this, the event is not even mentioned in relevant scientific overviews of the Federal Republic's history. Taking this finding as his point of departure, Franz Brüggemeier traces the meaning given to the event by its contemporaries. As his findings suggest, the World Cup victory of 1954 caused an intense, but rather short-lived mass enthusiasm and was not granted any meaning with regard to national identity formation at that point in time. It was only in the context of a decidedly altered societal situation, one which emerged in the 1980s, that the 'miracle of Bern' could be endowed with a new kind of meaning. Among the preconditions for this act of (re)writing popular history was an increased softening of the high culture/popular culture divide, the assumption of new economic, political and cultural functions by competitive sports, and a Federal Republic conceived by major parts of the population as a postnational society which has been gradually developing a more relaxed relationship to national identity since the turn of the millennium. The example of the 'miracle of Bern' reveals that new facets of popular memory culture and altered historical attributions fulfil a burning glass function and imply the potential for uncovering social and societal changes.

## In Conclusion

The articles collected in this volume show that popular presentations of history present a discrete and original form of knowledge production rather than one



which has branched off from historical science. Many of the contributions point to the multifaceted interdependences and interactions between popular and academic historiography. This means that popularizing history must not be conceived of in terms of a unidimensional and hierarchical process in which the body of knowledge created by historical science trickles down into other representational forms. What must be discussed is whether, when it comes to public awareness and the popular presentation of knowledge, not only history but the humanities in general ask for different models than those applied to the natural sciences.

The contributions clearly show popular history's adjustment to a given period's respective zeitgeist. Like a burning glass, an analysis of the popular images of history reveals an epoch's respective societal, political and social changes and provides insights into changing mindsets and social relations. Thus, this analysis is not just one of 'official' state-related historical politics or the big public controversies of academic historians but one which pays special attention to so far marginalized appropriations of history in popular culture and holds out the promise of gaining insights into vital political and societal developments.

The presently evolving academic interest in popular presentations of history might also be interpreted as an expression of a process of diversification and pluralization in the context of a generational change in academic history and a changing relationship between high and popular culture in the postmodern era. An engagement with popular history forces academic historical science to intensify its self-reflection and to always define its position at a given moment in time. It is exactly this reflexivity which ultimately should provide the decisive criterion of differentiation between popular and academic historiography. An analysis of popular historical accounts also provides an occasion for questioning the terms of academic historiography's societal and political functions, its conditions of production, its politics of lending significance to certain issues and of excluding others, its dominant discourses and its inscribed, past and present power relations. We should not abstain from the innovative impulses provided by an engagement with the 'other' (and sometimes not all that different) history of popular culture.

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## Notes

1. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 21 July 2006.
2. For history on the internet, see Epple and Haber (2005); on Wikipedia, see Lorenz (2006) and Rosenzweig (2006); on history in computer games, see Poblocki (2002), Fritz (2003) and Uriccio (2005).
3. See Beck and Giddens (1996), Beck and Bonß (2001) and Beck and Lau (2004). For a survey of the potentials and limits of different theories of modernity, see Degele and Dries (2005).
4. Research on the 'popularization of science' differentiates two approaches (Schwarz 1999: 38–48, 89–107; Kretschmann 2003: 7–22): Older work advances from a diffusion model (i.e., from a linear and hierarchically structured distribution of knowledge from experts to lay people): knowledge production and mediation seem to be distinctly separate processes. In contrast to this, the interaction model argues in favour of interdependency and the mutual impact of knowledge producers, popularization and recipients (Shinn and Whitley 1985; Shapin 1990; Cooter and Pumfrey 1994). The interactionist model is substantiated by recent work on laboratory research (Latour and Woolgar 1979; Knorr-Cetina 1984) and on the construction of scientific facts (Fleck 2002[1935]; Daston 2001: 20). These studies show that scientific facts or theories are not purely empirical and rational constructs but are created through interaction and communication in a collective process of negotiation and depend on the existing balance of power relations and on institutional structures. They also challenged the division between a sphere of 'pure science' and a social and societal sphere.
5. In this respect, a particularly good example is provided by experimental archaeology: see Keefer (2006).
6. See, e.g., *Public Historian* (since 1978) and *Public History Review* (since 1992).
7. Source: New York University's website for its graduate program in public history. Retrieved 7 August 2008 from: <http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/history/publichistory/main.htm>. See also Evans (2000) and the definition given in the following synopsis from the Australian journal *Public History Review*: 'Otherwise known as the History of the Present, Public History concerns the historical in the everyday, and the sense in which we are all historians – historians of our families, our homes and our lifetimes'; it also 'explores history as the terrain we traverse – battlegrounds, graveyards and television' (*Public History Review* 9: (2001)). For a 'classical' text, see Becker (1932: 221–36).
8. See 'Where to Study Public History' at the website of the Public History Resource Center. Retrieved 7 August 2008 from: [http://www.publichistory.org/education/where\\_study.asp](http://www.publichistory.org/education/where_study.asp).
9. See, e.g., Rosenzweig and Thelen (1998) and Glassberg (2001).
10. Retrieved 9 August 2008 from: <http://www.doingpublichistory.org/>. The mission statement continues:

Indeed, for example, the current discussion of a national memorial day, as well as TV series like *Monarchy*, *Great Britons*, and others, indicates there is popular context and demand for such discussion. Beyond engaging with the local commemoration of important anniversaries, centenaries and bicentennaries (think of recent events associated with 1807, or more traditional moments like the Gunpowder Plot, Trafalgar Day, Magna Carta Day, Holocaust Memorial Day, Black History Month and a number of WW2 events) there is little cogent



- reflection on the relationship between the academic historian and the public. On the contrary in the USA, Australia, and France during the late 1980s and after (for example the 500th anniversary of Columbus, the bicentenary of white settlement/First Fleet in 1988 for Australia, the 200th anniversary of the 1776 and 1789 Revolutions) the public events were driven by, reflected in and prompted considerable scholarly and public debate.
11. In 2006 a series of British public history conferences was launched (History and the Public, 13–14 February 2006). The first conference was organized by the Institute for Historical Research, which brought together a broad range of people from universities, archives, museums, publishers and the media to discuss the public study and consumption of history. Follow-up conferences were organized in Wales (Swansea University, 12–14 April 2007) and Liverpool (April 2008).
  12. See, for example, the *Historikerstreit* debate (1986 onwards), the debate about the *Wehrmachtsausstellung*, the *Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas* (Holocaust memorial) in Berlin (Heimrod 1999; Kirsch 2003; Leggewie and Meyer 2005) or the highly controversial discussion about the planned foundation of a centre against expulsions in Berlin.
  13. E.g., at the Free University in Berlin.
  14. See, e.g., the Freiburg DFG Research Group 'Historische Lebenswelten in populären Wissenskulturen der Gegenwart' which organized a conference on *Geschichte in populären Medien und Genres* in April 2008. For more recent publications, see, e.g., Korte and Paletschek (2008).
  15. See, e.g., the jubilee issue of the *Zeitschrift für Österreichische Geschichtswissenschaft* 15 (2005), devoted to the question 'What is history for?' (*Wozu Geschichte?*). In Greifswald, a conference held in January 2006 discussed *Wahre Geschichte – Geschichte als Ware* ('True history – history as a commodity') and the question of the historian's responsibility vis-à-vis science and society. For the role of images of history and foundation myths as forms of intentional history: see, e.g., Gehrke (2001).
  16. See, for example, the numerous works provided by the DFG Sonderforschungsbereich (Collaborative Research Centres) on memory culture in Gießen. For an overview on approaches to memory culture, see Erll (2005: 13–39).
  17. As for publications that have been released after this book was issued, see Kork and Paletschek (2009), Hardtwig and Schug (2009), Horn and Sauer (2009), Oswalt and Pandel (2009) and Pirker et al. (2010).
  18. Most of the articles collected in this volume are based on contributions to a lecture series at the European Studies Centre, St Antony's College, Oxford University, in Hilary term 2007.