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**GENDER, NATIONALISM, AND THE BOUNDARIES OF CITIZENSHIP IN  
GERMANY, 1890-1920**

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## **Nation and Citizenry**

Germany, far more than the other national polities emerging from the European constitution-making conjuncture of the 1860s (including Italy, its exact peer as a freshly unified country), has experienced repeated ruptures in its continuity as a territorialized nation-state. Its state boundaries have been frequently and drastically redrawn; the disjunctions within the claims to nationhood between territorial integrity and cultural formation have been both variable and extreme; changes in constitutional organization have run the entire gamut between centralism and federalism, dictatorship and democracy, monarchy and republic. “Germany” has been a mobile, contingent, and highly contested political term. It has only ever approximated the postulated unity of territory, language, institutions and wider culture, which nationalist discourse -- and the usages of common sense -- would like to assume. In the space of 150 years, six of these major ruptures occurred: in 1864-71, in 1914-18, in 1918-23, in 1936-45, in 1945-49, and from 1989 to the unfinished present. In each of these conjunctures, the languages of nationhood have either cleared a space for democratic experimentation, or else closed such space brutally down. Whatever the outcomes of these immediate political contests, moreover, “Germany” has emerged with the playing-field of citizenship and democracy fundamentally changed.

We can see the importance of this violently posed indeterminacy by contrasting Germany’s territorial instability with the settled stability of, say, British national history in the same broad period. Even allowing for the big disruptions of the loss of empire, or the contained and intermittent peripheral instabilities of Northern Ireland, British national history has afforded fundamental continuities in the relationship between (a) territorialized political identity, (b) citizenship, and (c) the institutional coordinates of the nation form, which German history has palpably lacked. Moreover, these days we’ve become acutely sensitized to the indeterminacies and contingencies, not only of the nation, nationhood and national identity, but also of other key political terms, from citizenship to the state. So far from

being stable or transparent in meaning, or juridically fixed, these terms are culturally constructed. They rest on explicit, subtle and disguised languages and mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. They are subject to disagreement, conflict, counter-interpretation and contestation. And they may be transformed. As well as the formal political contest between dominant and oppositional social forces and their party-political organizations, wider differences of meaning circulated less visibly through the political cultures. Complicated processes of delegitimization and entitlement were involved, privileging some social groups and categories of people over others. Such differences among the national citizenry -- or among those accorded the full faculties of citizenship and those who were not -- were ordered by gender, class, race, religion, sexual orientation, and other logics of centeredness and marginalization.

Given the dramas of the German past, where the unities of national and state-centered political reproduction have been broken so many times, German history offers excellent opportunities for getting inside the indeterminacies I've been describing -- that is, for exploring the processes of transformation and normalization involved in the modern histories of citizenship and their imperfectly realized promises of democracy. Moreover, categories of gender and race have provided the impetus and framing for much of the best work in the modern German field recently, recasting the terms in which German political history can now be understood. If we bring these analytical terms to the major moments of rupture mentioned above, they can help us see how the prevailing contexts of political order and identification became reconfigured. The period I'll be considering in this paper covers both the long-lasting stability of the settlement laid down in the 1860s and the successive upheavals that brought this stability to an end, in the First World War (1914-18) and the following revolutionary conjuncture (1918-23), when the territorial, constitutional, social and cultural landscape became fundamentally redrawn.

## **Being National**

So far, I've stressed the inchoateness and non-fixity of national identifications, and in the nineteenth century the boundaries of the national categories in Europe were anything but fixed. Increasingly during the last decade, we've come to see the indeterminacy, constructedness, and contingency of national identity as central to the subject in general, and certainly not confined to the period before the First World War. But at the same time, there were vital ways in which national affiliations became hardened into continuities after 1918, in juridical, institutional, ideological, and other terms. In the period covered by my paper, by contrast, the fully articulated ideal of the nation-people-citizenry, as the basis for state-political organization, was still being proposed.

Let me spell out more extensively what I mean. The transition to statehood marks a key watershed in the development of any nationalist movement. Possessing the nation-state, with its juridical machinery of constitutions, legal codes, courts and police, its centralized administrative systems, its society-wide institutions in governmental, party-political and associational terms, its organized cultural life, and so on, makes an enormous difference to the strength of national identifications, as well as to the range of modalities through which the latter can be built. The ideal of "the nation", as opposed to some other principle of state-political organization, became a source of extraordinary legitimizing power in the centralizing drives of government during the nineteenth century, enabling demands on the population's loyalties going far beyond the expectations of earlier forms of government -- even allowing for the momentary surges of millennial and other popular mobilizations in earlier times. As Benedict Anderson famously put it, the willingness to die for the nation, to sacrifice one's own body, memorialized in poetry and monuments, became the extreme heroic form for this suturing of the individual and the nation together.<sup>1</sup>

It made a huge difference to this discourse of sacrificial inscription -- which was inescapably gendered in its allegories and public symbolics -- whether the nationalism concerned was a campaigning or insurgent movement demanding its rights, or a state already wielding its independence. Different

temporalities of state formation were in play. On the one hand, infrastructures of national identification in the old states of Western Europe (the cumulative histories of legal and institutional sedimentation) allowed practical consciousness of national belonging to coalesce. On the other hand, purposeful movements of political creation generated explicit demands for national independence. Thus the coordinates of nationalism in England and France were profoundly different from those in Germany and Italy, still more from the moving nationalist frontier of Eastern Europe. Outside the “core” states of the West, nationality lacked the faculty of established statehood. For the German nationalists of the anti-Napoleonic wars, the Vormärz, and the 1860s, the real work of proposing and elaborating the national category -- or inventing the nation as a political program -- was conducted without benefit of existing state institutions. The architecture of national identification, and the process of imagining the nation as an organized, proselytizing act, in a politics of continuous nationalist pedagogy, depended on private rather than official bodies, individuals and voluntary associations rather than governments. Moreover, this process of proposing the German national category was to a great extent identical, or at least co-terminous, with the emergence of a public sphere in Habermas’s sense, so that “the nation” became conceived simultaneously as a political community of citizens.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the very virtue of “publicness” in its civic sense, and the associated coalescence of civil society, were entailments of the demand for the nation.

The complex interpenetration of these two ideas -- nation and citizenry -- in the political languages of the nineteenth century was extraordinarily important. There was a key tension in processes of national unification between the coalescing of national consciousness in institutional ways (as an effect of longer-term histories) and the campaigning of the nationalist movement per se. For example, a political identity of Germanness may have cohered institutionally over a long period, in response to state

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, rev.ed. (London: Verso, 1991), 7, 9ff.

<sup>2</sup> See Jürgen Habermas, The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993); and Geoff Eley, “Nations, Publics, and Political

policies, constitutional frameworks, juridical definitions, and political opportunity structures, but German nationalism required new languages of political subjectivity that called on the inhabitants of this Central European region to think of themselves in national as opposed to other ways.

It's worth thinking about this tension for a moment, by naming both the inventedness of national identity and the constraints in which the inventiveness had to move. Thus on the one hand, the element of political innovation has become key to how we think of nations and nationalism nowadays: nationality was not a natural consequence or outgrowth of common culture of great antiquity; nations were not so much discovered or awakened, as they were invented by the labors of intellectuals. That is, nationalisms rested on specific political histories and ideals of citizenship far more than they arose spontaneously out of pre-established cultural communities. Moreover, achieving continuity in national culture required hard, repeated, creative ideological and political efforts by intellectuals and nationalist leaderships. It did not occur by itself. Yet on the other hand, nationalists could only work with the cultural materials at hand -- not with cultures of their own choosing, but with cultures directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past. For all the power of the "constructionist" insight (the inventedness and contingency of nations), it was this complicated dialectic of political innovation and actually existing cultures that provided the key to the particular histories nation-building involved.

This fissiparous and fractured quality of nineteenth-century political cultures is critical to the understanding of nineteenth-century nationalisms. Eventually, nations attained a presence independently of the political practices that originally proposed them -- they acquired an instituted and renewable everydayness, which built them into the underlying framework of collective identification in a society, part of the assumed architecture of political order and its common-sense intelligibility. With the attainment of sovereignty or political self-determination at the latest, the nation became a discursive formation -- ideologically, institutionally, culturally, practically in myriad small ways -- of immense power, which already prescribed the possible forms of political action and belief, what was thinkable

and what not. In Tom Nairn's words, in these circumstances nationalism turned into "a name for the general condition of the modern body politic, more like the [overall] climate of political and social thought than just another [free-standing] doctrine".<sup>3</sup> But in the nineteenth century, this hard-wiring couldn't yet be presupposed. Accordingly, the history of nationalist belief and nationalist practice before 1914 concerns the contexts and processes through which this came to be the case.

From our contemporary vantage-point, nationality or nation-ness -- the complex, conscious, unspoken, and inescapable modalities of "being national" in the territorialized constitutional polities of the period since the 1860s -- delivers the generic languages of political identity formation in the public and everyday conditions of life of the twentieth century. We are "national" when we vote, catch the six o'clock news, follow the national sport, observe (while barely noticing) the repeated iconographies of landscape and history in TV commercials, imbibe the visual archive of suggestion and citation in the movies, and perform the nation day by day in our unreflected repetitions of political identification. We are interpellated in mundane ways as national subjects in this sense. As Lauren Berlant has argued, in a study of national identification in the nineteenth-century United States, this is the sort of thing implied by the attribution of "a common national character", where "National Subjects are taught to value certain abstract signs and stories as part of their intrinsic relation to themselves, to all 'citizens', and to the national terrain". This is what Berlant calls the "National Symbolic":

“. . . the order of discursive practices whose reign within a national space produces, and also refers to, the 'law' in which the accident of birth within a geographic / political boundary transforms individuals into subjects of a collectively-held history. Its traditional icons, its metaphors, its heroes, its rituals, and its narratives, provide an alphabet for a collective

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(Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992), 289-339.

<sup>3</sup> Tom Nairn, "Scotland and Europe", in Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (eds.), Becoming National: A Reader (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 80.

consciousness or national subjectivity; through the National Symbolic the historical nation aspires to achieve the inevitability of the status of natural law, a birthright".<sup>4</sup>

In defining "the political space of the nation", the National Symbolic goes beyond the legal discourse of citizenship, seeking "to link regulation to desire, harnessing affect to political life through the production of 'national fantasy' ". This is how the idea of the nation works, figuring history and geography into a landscape of familiarity and promise, inciting memories and expectations of citizenship, and bringing its claims and demands into the intimate and quotidian places of ordinary life. "National fantasy" designates the process by which "national culture becomes local -- through the images, narratives, monuments, and sites that circulate through personal / collective consciousness".<sup>5</sup>

### **Gender, Citizenship and the Nation**

It has become a commonplace of feminism that the default languages of modern political thought were shot through with gendered partialities of understanding, not least in the doubled context of Enlightenment and French Revolution from which so many of the key terms of democratic discourse descend. This founding conjuncture of modern political meaning, which also invented the language of nationality, was pervaded by binary orders of assumptions about woman and man, which became inscribed in the constitutions, codes of law and political mobilizations, as well as the formal philosophical discourse around the universals of reason, law and nature, embedding such talk in an ideologically constructed system of differences in gender.<sup>6</sup> Across the emergent national contexts of the

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<sup>4</sup> Lauren Berlant, The Anatomy of National Fantasy: Hawthorne, Utopia, and Everyday Life (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> Carole Pateman has been a key influence here. See The Sexual Contract and The Disorder of Women (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988 and 1989). For pointed and eloquent discussion, see Sarah Benton, "Gender, Sexuality, and Citizenship", in Geoff Andrews (ed.), Citizenship (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1991), 151-63, and Anne Phillips, "Citizenship and Feminist Politics", *ibid.*, 76-88.



nineteenth century, this en-gendering of political languages translated into the exclusion of women from citizenship, most obviously through denial of the franchise, but more elaborately through a complex repertoire of silencings and disabilities, barring them from property, education, professions and politics, or all the roles that qualified men for the public sphere. It was not until the second quarter of the twentieth century and later, in most parts of the world, that women began demanding and securing formal entry into the political process.

Thus membership in the nation has been a powerfully gendered faculty. Nations have invariably been imagined through the metaphors of family, thereby replicating the patriarchy and hetero-normative axioms of conventional familial forms. National identity's referents of "common descent", "shared lineage", and "the relatedness of the community" had a natural affinity for the languages of family and household. In one recurring chain of associations, women were addressed as mothers of the nation, reproducing its biological future, nurturing the next generations, teaching the "mother tongue" -- reproducers rather than producers, prized and revered objects of protection, rather than agents in their own right. Anxieties about the national health, the nation's demographic future and productive efficiencies, its global competitiveness, or the stabilities of the social fabric, invariably authorized a politics directed to and against women, whether through systems of mother-and-child welfare, rhetorics of family values, or policy offensives around reproductive health, regulation of sexuality, or direct control over women's bodies. Maternalism has been a recurring and mobile discursive formation in this sense, focusing forms of welfare-state intervention, condensing large-scale programs of reform, resonating with popular hopes and fears, and working with or against competing conceptions of citizenship. In twentieth-century contexts, especially, it's impossible to discuss nationalism without encountering this systematic and explicit gendered dimension.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The literature here is huge, but relatively few examples deal directly with the issues of national citizenship. See for France, Karen Offen, "Depopulation, Nationalism, and Feminism in Fin de Siècle France", American Historical Review, 89 (1984), 648-76; and Jane Jensen, "Gender and Reproduction or Babies and the State", Studies in Political Economy, 20 (1986), 9-46. For Britain, see Anna Davin, "Imperialism and Motherhood", History Workshop Journal, 5 (1978), 9-65; and Susan Pedersen, "Gender, Welfare, and Citizenship in Britain during the

If the fundamental terms of modern social and political identity -- of class, citizenship, race, nationhood, religion, the very category of the self -- have been constituted from dichotomous assumptions about what it means to be a woman or a man, whether the juridical definitions of citizenship and personhood concede formal equality or not, then two important consequences for our understanding of nationalism follow. For one, we finally need to consider the gendered dimensions and meanings of nationalist discourse more seriously, for this remains an astonishing absence in most of the scholarly literature, whether general or particular. The gendered text of international relations, of militarism, and of formally nationalist movements; the subtle, complex and disguised dialectics of femininity and masculinity in the construction of national identity; the relationship between the politics of sexuality and the discourse of belonging in the nation; the fields of reciprocity between languages of motherhood, family and domesticity, and those of participation within the public sphere of the nation -- all these require explicit recognition.

But secondly, women aren't exactly absent from the scene of nationalist grandiosity, but figure as important supporting players -- as "conquerors' mistresses, wartime rape victims, military prostitutes, cinematic soldier-heroes, pinup models on patriotic calendars", and (of course) as workers, wives, girlfriends and daughters waiting dutifully at home.<sup>8</sup> This structure of meanings also needs to be unpacked. But if nationalist discourse marginalizes women from public roles, then we have to look somewhere else for the female voice -- namely, in the family and the household, in the education of children, in the unspectacular spaces of the everyday, in all those places Berlant counterposes as "the local" to the national frame of abstracted citizenship and power.<sup>9</sup> It is this domain of "not-political" but highly political practices that cultural studies, with its stress on popular culture and representation, has become so valuable in addressing.

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Second World War", *American Historical Review*, 95 (1990), 983-1006. For Germany, see Geoff Eley and Atina Grossmann, "Maternalism and Citizenship: The Gendered Politics of Welfare", *Central European History*, 30, 1 (1997), 67-75.

<sup>8</sup> Cynthia Enloe, *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 245.

It's precisely here, where "woman" becomes a key term of political identification beyond legitimate agency, that powerfully charged ambiguities of meaning have arisen. In maternalist discourse, "woman" functions as a positive term of address, interpellating women for the nation as mothers, coopting them for the national good, if usually in disempowering and subordinating ways. But the feminine just as easily became demonized into a source of corruption and threat. This was palpably the case during Germany's accelerated industrialization after the 1880s, when the emergent urban mass public received feminized constructions in the discourse of the time. On the one hand, this responded (knowingly and unconsciously) to the rising pressure of women for political rights, focusing in Germany before 1914 around the codifying of civil law (at its climax in 1896-1900) and women's admission to full civil rights (in the Law of Association in 1908), and culminating during the Weimar Republic in access to the franchise (1918-19) and recruitment into employment through the new machinery of the welfare state. On the other hand, explicitly misogynist constructions of the urban mass public as dangerously feminine became a pervasive feature of public language, orchestrating anxieties that were easily and brutally magnified in times of social stress, disorder, revolutionary insurgency, or wartime defeat. As the mass rapes of the Bosnian War reminded us, the performance of violence on the bodies of women can also be a national act. Klaus Theweleit's extraordinary treatment of militarist misogyny during the German counter-revolutionary violence of 1918-23 (still barely addressed by historians) draws our attention to this question in the German context, as do the moral panics surrounding rape narratives on the Western Front during the First World War.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> See Berlant, Anatomy of National Fantasy, p. 216f.

<sup>10</sup> See Klaus Theweleit, Male Fantasies, 2vols. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987 and 1989); Ruth Harris, "The 'Child of the Barbarian': Rape, Race and Nationalism in France during the First World War", Past and Present, 141 (November 1993), pp. 170-206; John Horne and Alan Kramer, "German Atrocities", 1914: Meanings and Memory of War (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming). See also Atina Grossmann's work on the complex politics surrounding the rape of German women in 1945: "A Question of Silence: The Rape of German Women by Occupation Soldiers", in Robert G. Moeller (ed.), West German under Construction: Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), pp. 33-52; and "Pro-Natalism, Nation-Building, and Socialism: Population Policy in the SBZ / GDR,

## **Regendering National Citizenship in Germany**

There's a strong case for seeing the gendered discourse of the nation as being shaped during key defining conjunctures, of which the classic foundational moment of the great French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, with the wider transatlantic contexts of democratic republicanism, was certainly the most important in pan-European terms. The 1860s provided another general European conjuncture of the same kind, where dramatic changes in the overall socio-political environment became the setting for the remaking of national citizenship. In such constitution-making moments, established normativities became fragile -- both in the languages of political agency and identification and in the institutional structures and practices of the political system, including the existing gender order. Such moments allow us to ask: what was the space for women's political agency in nationalist movements, and where were the possible cracks in the political system of male dominance? This can't be answered as a straightforward question of membership and formal affiliation, because such participation was extremely limited, where it wasn't excluded altogether. Discursively speaking, women were allowed only certain kinds of political agency in terms of visibility, efficacy and recognition. The primary languages of familialism and gendered solidarity left little space for egalitarian models of women's participation. A politics based on the latter might cohere during moments of dramatic political rupture, like the French Revolution, or the British Reform Act of 1832, or the constitution-making upheavals of the 1860s.

In Germany, there may be grounds for seeing the 1890s as one of these key conjunctures. This was a decade of rising political mobilization, and whereas women were denied access to such processes as full citizens (they lacked the franchise, and were barred from political association till 1908), they were still addressed politically in other ways -- via the new social legislation aimed at the protection of women workers, via the climax of the debates over the Code of Civil Law, via widespread public anxieties about

the stability of the family, via national panics over prostitution and public morality, via growing concern about the health of the national body, and more.<sup>11</sup> We might also read the moral purity campaigns of the turn of the century, and conversely the activities of Magnus Hirschfeld's Scientific Humanitarian Committee (formed 1897) for decriminalizing homosexuality, together with the sexual scandals surrounding the Kaiser's circle (1907-8), as signs for an incipient crisis of masculinity.<sup>12</sup> The voluminous propaganda generated for colonial causes and the big naval program after 1897, combined with broader radical nationalist agitations, might also be read for their gendered meanings. The temperature was considerably raised by the arms race on the eve of the First World War, when the radicalized demands of right-wing nationalists displayed an aggressively misogynist dimension, most obviously in the launch of the German League for Combatting Women's Emancipation (June 1912). The latter's political language combined extremes of maternalist domesticity ("The German woman belongs in the house", with "nothing to accomplish outside the home") with aggressive exclusion of women from the public sphere (they had no "understanding for the organic relationships in the life of the state", and were "by virtue of their whole nature unsuited for the struggle").<sup>13</sup>

Much of this is about re-reading familiar histories differently. Thus bringing a feminist analytic to the "social question" between the 1890s and the First World War not only shows such public discourses of reform to have been heavily gendered in their public preoccupations (whether directed formally at women or not). It also has vital bearing on questions of citizenship -- less as a juridical question or as a constitutional debate (for movements for women's suffrage were weak in pre-1914 Germany, by contrast with Britain), than as a different perspective on political identity and political capacities. For example, the bringing to visibility of women workers (as in debates about feminization of

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of German Socialism and Communism from 1840 to 1990 (Providence: Berghahn Publishers, 1998), pp. 443-65.

<sup>11</sup> See especially Kathleen Canning, "Social Policy, Body Politics: Recasting the Social Question in Germany, 1875-1900", in Laura L. Frader and Sonya O. Rose (eds.), Gender and Class in Modern Europe (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 211-37.

<sup>12</sup> See John C. Fout, "Sexual Politics in Wilhelmine Germany: The Male Gender Crisis, Moral Purity, and Homophobia", Journal of the History of Sexuality, 2, 3 (January 1992), pp. 388-421.

factory work and “de-feminization” of the home) became an “ideological fact” of major importance in the public discourse of the 1890s, for as Kathleen Canning has shown, the novel forms of social policy discussion in national politics refashioned the ways in which women were considered participants in the nation. Complex repertoires of political thinking were available in this domain, from ameliorative and paternalist versions, to left-liberal and Social Democratic ones, social-catholic ones, eugenicist projects of social engineering, social imperialist speculations, and so on.<sup>14</sup> Under the sign of national efficiency, discourses of social reform became charged with new gendered meanings, not only via emergent areas of professional expertise in social policy and the pressure of the women’s movement, but also via new priorities in public health, maternal and child welfare, the control of youth, regulation of sexuality, moral purity campaigns, and so forth.<sup>15</sup>

There’s a large literature on these aspects of German nationalism before 1914. Under the impact of Hans-Ulrich Wehler’s “social imperialism” thesis, this connected the drive for overseas empire to the desire to contain or divert socio-political tensions at home.<sup>16</sup> But Wehler focused on the manipulative aspects of colonialism and other nationalist enthusiasms from a government point of view, with little interest in the wider cultural consequences of colonialism. Yet more recent work has shown how forms of social relations, patterns of culture, and increasingly racialized discourses of national superiority

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<sup>13</sup> See Roger Chickering, “‘Casting their Gaze More Broadly’: Women’s Patriotic Activism in Imperial Germany”, Past and Present, 118 (February 1988), pp. 157-8. The quotations are taken from speeches at the League’s rallies.

<sup>14</sup> See especially, Languages of Labor and Gender: Female Factory Work in Germany, 1850-1914 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), chs. 4 (“State, Social Body, and the Public Sphere: Regulating Female Factory Labor during the 1890s”) and 5 (“Social Policy, Body Politics: Factory Labor, Maternity, and Volkskörper, 1900-1914”), pp. 126-217.

<sup>15</sup> See Ute Frevert, “The Civilizing Tendency of Hygiene: Working-Class Women under Medical Control in Imperial Germany”, in John C. Fout (ed.), German Women in the Nineteenth Century (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1984), pp. 320-44; Reinhard Spree, Health and Social Class in Imperial Germany: A Social History of Mortality, Morbidity and Inequality (Oxford: Berg, 1988); Nancy R. Reagin, A German Women’s Movement: Class and Gender in Hanover, 1880-1933 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), pp. 147-85. Detlev J. K. Peukert, Grenzen der Sozialdisziplinierung: Aufstieg und Krise der deutschen Jugendfürsorge 1878 bis 1932 (Cologne: Bund, 1986).

<sup>16</sup> For this earlier debate, see Hans-Ulrich Wehler, “Bismarck’s Imperialism 1862-1890”, Past and Present, 48 (1970), pp. 119-55; Wehler, “Industrial Growth and Early German Imperialism”, in Roger Owen and Bob Sutcliffe (eds.), Studies in the Theory of Imperialism (London: Longmans, 1972), pp. 71-92; Geoff Eley, “Defining Social Imperialism: Use and Abuse of an Idea”, Social History, 1 (1976), pp. 269-90; Eley, “Social Imperialism in

developed in the colonies became powerfully reinserted within the metropolitan society, including sexualized forms of “colonial knowledge”. Forms of colonial representation via literature, museums and exhibitions, entertainment and popular culture provide one key site for investigating this. The gendering of national identity, whether through militarism or warfare per se, or in the more general ordering of nationalist representations, also acquired colonial roots. Projects of colonial emigration of white German women, harnessed to the work of producing orderly relations of family, culture and nation in the colonies, were one kind of link, particularly in the aftermath of the colonial wars of 1904-7. Intensive discussions of colonial intermarriage generated a complex discourse around gender inequalities, sexual privilege, class priorities and racial superiority, which became sharply rearticulated into nationalist thinking at home. This was the real ground of social imperialism, arguably, rather than the conscious manipulations of governing elites stressed by Wehler. More insidious processes of ideological structuration of this kind reoriented nationalist assumptions in aggressively gendered ways.<sup>17</sup>

Jean Quataert has also deepened our understanding of women’s patriotic activism before 1914, defining this via the legacies of the wars of unification in the 1860s, longer traditions of aristocratic philanthropy and dynastic patronage, medical war services, civic voluntarism, and the rituals of commemorative culture. As she argues, after 1871 “patriotic women played a central role in keeping alive the memory of war and continuously reintegrating the war culture into an evolving nationalist construction of ‘Germany’ ”. Identifying with the nation via this militarist culture of veneration for the specifically martial origins of the new state created a space for women as well as men to insert

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Germany: Reformist Synthesis or Reactionary Sleight of Hand?”, in Eley, From Unification to Nazism: Reinterpreting the German Past (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986), pp. 154-67.

<sup>17</sup> See Lora Wildenthal, “‘She Is the Victor’: Bourgeois Women, Nationalist Identities, and the Ideal of the Independent Woman Farmer in German Southwest Africa”, in Geoff Eley (ed.), Society, Culture, and the State in Germany, 1870-1930 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), pp. 371-96; and her forthcoming book, Female Culture: German Women and Colonial Politics, 1884-1945. Much of the inspiration for this approach came from the work of Ann Stoler. See for instance, “Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers: European Identities and the Cultural Politics of Exclusion in Colonial Southeast Asia”, in Eley and Suny (eds.), Becoming National, 286-324. In general now, see Sara Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox, and Susanne Zantop (eds.), The Imperialist Imagination: German Colonialism and its Legacy (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998).

themselves. She calls this “the workings of a ‘gender war ideology’ ” going back to the War of Liberation against Napoleon:

“In the last third of the nineteenth century, this ideology functioned by evoking a dual conception of the state as a war-making machine but also as a caring institution -- caring for its soldiers at war, its veterans and disabled, and its needy in general. The cumulative effect of public philanthropic activity under the guise of this ideology in peacetime served to instill identification with a caring state that made war in its name that much more possible”.

These highly gendered practices of identification -- which were generated from within civil society as well as via state initiative -- sought “to orchestrate dispositions among the citizenry that were designed to transform the state into a nation”.<sup>18</sup>

Formally patriotic activism, the common-sense and unreflected performance of nationalist loyalties, the everyday cultures of national identification, and indeed general discourses of politics inside the framework of the nation-state -- everything Berlant seeks to capture through the “National Symbolic” and “national fantasy” -- can all be read for their gendered meanings in this manner. On the other hand, Germany politics lacked the energetic presence of a women’s suffrage movement comparable to that in Britain, which destabilized “normal politics” so radically in the decade before 1914, and opened the political agenda to wider issues of family, sexuality and personhood, as well as problematizing given forms of the distinction between public and private. “Citizenship” as a wider set of political claims and capacities wasn’t thrown open for debate to anything like this degree in Germany. Here, it was certainly the war years that threw the existing gender order into crisis.

The most important consequence of the war in this respect was the most obvious, namely, the massive concentration of masculine identity into soldiering. In Elisabeth Domansky’s view, the mass militarization of 1914-18 severed men’s dominance from its peacetime foundations in patriarchal family

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<sup>18</sup> See Jean H. Quataert, “Introduction 2: Writing the History of Women and Gender in Imperial Germany”, in Eley (ed.), Society, Culture, and the State in Germany, pp. 62, 64. See Quataert’s forthcoming major book, Staging



structures and the associated systems of economic power and public influence, regrounding claims to citizenship in men's new role as soldiers, via the hyperbolic languages of heroism, duty and sacrifice, and representations of masculinity based on violence, physical coercion and killing. Given women's concurrent centrality at home to production, all forms of employment, household management and family life during the war, amidst the mobilizing patriotic rhetorics of the female contribution to the war effort, this militarizing of masculinity easily acquired an aggressive misogynistic edge. The gendered antinomies of political identification were sharpened as women became allowed their own claims to citizenship based on their status as mothers. Fears of "emasculatation" became a common theme of men's political discourse during the First World War, as a kind of backlash against women's new visibility and their own physical removal from the normal scenes of patriarchal privilege. This gender antagonism (and not only the horrendously brutalized conditions of warfare) explained the viciousness of the misogyny attributed by Theweleit to the counter-revolutionary nationalism of the Freikorps in 1918-23.<sup>19</sup>

Finally, Belinda Davis further deepens this analysis of gendered languages of political identification during the war, by stressing the interrelations between wartime politics and the conditions of everyday life. She focuses on the practical logics of negotiation and empowerment entailed by the official languages of national unity and patriotic mobilization on the German home front, when issues of shortages, distribution of food supplies, and management of hardships necessarily dominated the government's domestic policies. This process of negotiation -- which necessarily centered on women (on the food lines, in the street) -- created spaces for a new discourse of citizenship and sovereignty, for forms of popular mobilization, and for the political voice of women. The leverage in all of this came from the political urgency of food shortages and distribution at a time when official rhetoric was stressing

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Philanthropy: Patriotic Women and the National Imagination in Dynastic Germany, 1813-1916 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

<sup>19</sup> Elisabeth Domansky, "Militarization and Reproduction in World War I Germany", in Eley (ed.), Society, Culture, and the State in Germany, pp. 427-64. For a brilliant vignette (and one of the few attempts by historians to take up Theweleit's ideas), which considers part of the topic analyzed by Quataert in the context of the war, where solidarities and divisiveness characterized gender relations, see Regina Schulte, "The Sick Warrior's Sister: Nursing during the First World War", in Lynn Abrams and Elizabeth Harvey (eds.), Gender Relations in German

the paramountcy of patriotic solidarity and an implicitly egalitarian notion of sacrifice, participation and community. In particular, the focusing of these discussions around the category of the citizen-consumer gave a political identity and eventually a political voice to women. Needless to say, this was not the intention of the German government (nor of the political parties), and the process was a classic case of unintended consequences, produced from social and political histories that were enormously complex. But the legitimacy and popular credibility of the German state was profoundly shaken as a result, as were the available understandings of German citizenship within a discourse of needs and entitlements, and the effective modalities of popular political action within a public sphere.<sup>20</sup>

From our point of view, this argument about the stabilities and vulnerabilities of the German state has several vital dimensions. First, by foregrounding women's political identities (rather than those of the militant working class), it allows us to reconceptualize wartime popular politics in a new way, and thereby reformulate the explanatory framework for the 1918 Revolution and the Weimar Republic's founding context. Secondly, it brings new light to the Left's political failures in the revolutionary crisis at the war's end, because neither the SPD and its associated trade unions nor the forces further to the left (USPD, council-based activism, eventually the KPD) took the question of women's political empowerment seriously. Despite the role of women's protests in delegitimizing the state in the final stages of the war, these registered nowhere in the Left's programmatic languages of democratization in 1918, although food protests certainly continued in quite militant forms during 1918-23. Thirdly, the agendas of the non-socialist parties certainly did incorporate this women's protest activity, but as a desire to contain and suppress it. The counter-revolutionary backlash against women's new visibility, which became ever-more intensified after the Weimar Republic's validation of women's citizenship via the franchise and other legal reforms, became a big theme of fascist politics in the 1920s and 1930s. The

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History: Power, Agency and Experience from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century (London: UCL Press, 1996), pp. 121-42.

<sup>20</sup> See Belinda Davis, "Reconsidering Habermas, Gender, and the Public Sphere: The Case of Wilhelmine Germany", in Eley (ed.), Society, Culture, and the State in Germany, pp. 397-426; and Home Fires Burning:

Left's political deficit in this regard had disastrous consequences. Lastly, this wartime discourse of political empowerment and emasculation around women's emergence into the public sphere powerfully confirms the necessity of studying the gendered languages of national citizenship.

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**GENDER, NATIONALISM, AND THE BOUNDARIES OF CITIZENSHIP IN GERMANY,  
1890-1920**

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**SUMMARY**

This paper develops some general arguments about the relationship between “nation” and “citizenry” in nineteenth-century Europe, situating these both in relation to recent theoretical discussions of nationalism and in the contexts of German historical development after unification in the 1860s. It further explores the tension between constructedness and institutionalization in the shaping of nationalist consciousness and national political cultures, before making an argument about the underlying logics of national identification (“being national”) once the hegemony of the national state has become established. The gendered languages of nation and citizenship are then discussed, focusing on the place of women in political contexts where the juridical terms of citizenship gave them few positive rights. Moving onto the specifically German context of the period between the 1890s and 1920s, the paper suggests some of the ways in which political history might be re-read in order to open up the gendered meanings of national citizenship, with special attention to pre-1914 reform discourses and the nature of politics during the First World War.