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Research

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Although there is not a single professorial chair at a Historical Institute of a German University concentrating explicitly with Victorian Studies, there exist a number of German institutions that have come to foster German research on British history in general and the Victorian epoch in particular. The reason for this significant development is to be seen both in institutional changes in post-1945 German historiography and in certain methodological trends since the 1980s.

One of the most important factors, leading to a growing interest in British and Commonwealth History and to an intensified exchange between historians in both countries, was the foundation of the German Historical Institute in London in 1976, following the foundation of a similar Institute in Paris in 1964. Both stood in the tradition of the oldest German Historical Institute abroad, which was founded in Rome in 1888 as the Royal Prussian Historical Institute. Since 1976 the GHI in London has served as a mediator between British and German scientific communities. Numerous conferences, special publication series and periodicals, many of them bi-lingual, an annual Lecture and a well established Research Prize as well as a growing number of German doctoral students, postdoctoral and senior researchers who have profited from the Institute in terms of funding and the publication of research results underline the fundamental role of the Institute. The GHI has also become crucial in training scholars who had come to work in London for a longer period and had joined the scientific staff of the institute, normally working on their German habilitation, and later returned to Germany to continue their academic careers. That institutional background helps to explain why, from the early 1980s onwards, a growing number of professional university historians in Germany focused on British history topics both in their research and in teaching.¹

In addition and often in close co-operation with the GHI, two other research institutions with a particular profile in research on modern British history and Victorian studies deserve attention. The 'Arbeitskreis Deutsche England Forschung', founded in 1981, organizes annual conferences and focuses on Anglo-German relations, on the history of Britain and the Commonwealth and has developed a special forum for young researchers.² Since 2004 an annual Prize is awarded to the best doctoral thesis in the field of British History and

the history of Anglo-German relations. Numerous publications have concentrated on Victorian Britain since the foundation of this research cluster. In addition there is an 'Anglo-German Foundation for the Study of Industrial Society', established in 1973, concentrating mainly on the interaction between and exchange of economic, political and social knowledge between Britain and Germany.³ More important with regard to Victorian studies is the 'Prince Albert Association'.⁴ Focusing on the research of Anglo-German relations with particular reference to Coburg in the nineteenth century, the Association has published many bilingual conference volumes in a special series.

The other major factor is, to a certain degree at least, inseparable from this institutional infrastructure. Under its Director Wolfgang J. Mommsen, the GHI became, from the 1980s onwards, a major forum to test and discuss comparative analyses, mainly concentrating on comparisons between Britain and Germany in the long nineteenth century. The controversial discussion of the German 'Sonderweg' [peculiar path], which gained new momentum with the publication of Geoff Eley's and David Blackbourn's book on 'Peculiarities in German History', from the early 1980s onwards underlined the necessity to overcome a mere German view of modern German history. Only by systematic comparisons between two or more cases would it be possible to identify, if not the German special path to modernity, then at least the political, socio-economic and cultural peculiarities in post-1800 German history.⁵ These controversial discussions clearly intensified German historians' interest in a closer analysis of Victorian society and a critical deconstruction of some of its myths that had coined so many historiographic stereotypes of Anglo-German perceptions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Thus a solid infrastructure and innovative methodological trends combined. The result was a whole range of works which looked at Victorian Britain and Germany as different poles of modernization. These impulses have clearly stimulated German interest in the Victorian period as a point of reference in comparative analyses. In addition to views of Victorian Britain as a breeding ground for cultural modernity⁶ and the problem of the three 'British' nations in the nineteenth century,⁷ much attention has been given to comparative analyses of industrial societies and modernization processes in Germany and Britain since the first half of the nineteenth century.⁸ Reflecting the dominance of social history in the 1980s many studies focused on the different paths towards welfare state structures, modern trade unions and elite formation in both societies.⁹ Mirroring the different thematic fields of the 'Sonderweg' debate, other research projects have concen-

trated on the differences between German and British parliamentary cultures after 1815 and the meaning of political and constitutional reforms in both societies.¹⁰ In recent years a new trend away from strictly social and political-constitutional comparative analyses towards the interaction of politics and religion,¹¹ historiographic traditions and juridical cultures has developed.¹²

Another important trend, thematically and often conceptually connected with the comparative approach, can be seen in German studies on perceptions of Germany in Victorian Britain and of British views on nineteenth-century Germany.¹³ In more recent times this has led to a growing interest in processes of exchange and experience of otherness, for instance the meaning of Britain as a place of political exile for Germans since the nineteenth-century revolutions.¹⁴

Apart from these themes, which have a clearly comparative and transfer-analytical profile, a number of other research fields can be identified which reflect a strong and still growing interest of German historians in Victorian Britain. Six of these fields deserve special attention, since they allow a more representative view of the state of German research on Victorian Britain: (I) Looking at *international relations*, German research has tended to concentrate on the continental meaning of the balance of power problem and the role of Germany's nation-state-building in this context. More recently the question of the relation between the public and foreign policy decision-making in Britain, but also the peculiarities of the transatlantic relation has attracted attention.¹⁵ (II) Britain's role as an imperial power and the question of continuity and discontinuity of the *British Empire* is a major theme in German historiography on Victorian Britain.¹⁶ (III) Given the historic relations between German dynasties and the British monarchy, there is an established field of research on *Prince Albert, the Coburg background* and Albert's role in British cultural life, but also on the personality of Victoria herself.¹⁷ (IV) Reflecting the main trends since the 1970s there is a strong cluster of *social historical analyses*, focusing on key concepts such as 'property' and 'philanthropy', but also on the poor and British society being confronted with mass immigration and integration since the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁸ (V) Given the meaning of *British parliamentary culture* and the image of *British Liberalism* for many contemporary German authors in the nineteenth century, and against the background of the dominating paradigm of an apparent British pioneer in terms of political institutions and parties and a German late-comer, German historians have concentrated on a more refined and differentiated view of these phenomena,¹⁹ often with a clearly comparative profile.²⁰ (VI) Lastly, there has not only been an

interest in the Great Exhibition,²¹ the special relation between *science and the state* in Britain,²² and the development of British *historiography* in the Victorian epoch,²³ but also a strong influence of *culturalist approaches* in German studies of Victorian Britain, based on a wide range of empirical research ranging from the politics of history and the cultures of international relations to the meaning of urban space and the culture of juridical experiences in Victorian Britain.²⁴

This overview which could – in a symptomatic rather than a systematic tour d’horizon – only focus on the main research trends since 1980, underlines how Victorian Britain has developed into a very dynamic and important field of historical research in Germany. Clearly catalyzed, if not initiated, by the controversy over a German ‘Sonderweg’ since the nineteenth century and the discussion about apparent ‘pioneers’ and ‘latecomers’ in the modernization-process, many of the German works on Victorian Britain explicitly or implicitly operate from a comparative angle. However, the premise is no longer an antagonistic model of German failures and British successes, but rather a stimulating reflection of different paths of historical experience and their historical determinants.

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Endnotes

1. See www.ghil.co.uk The GHI publishes, in regular intervals, both a *Bulletin* and a systematic bibliography of German works on British and Commonwealth History: *Research on British History in the Federal Republic of Germany, a Systematic Bibliography*.
2. See www.adeb-britishstudies.de
3. See www.agf.org.uk
4. See www.uni-bayreuth.de/departments/Prinz-Albert-Gesellschaft/prinz.htm
5. David Blackburn, Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in nineteenth-century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).
6. Hans-Joachim Rieke, *Strukturwandel der Lebenswelt: Der Viktorianismus als Formationsperiode der Moderne* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1991).
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8. Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Britain and Germany 1800–1914. Two Developmental Paths Towards Industrial Society* (London, 1986); Adolf M. Birke, Lothar Kettenacker (eds), *Wettlauf in die Moderne. England und Deutschland seit der industriellen Revolution. Britain and Germany since the Industrial Revolution* (Munich: Saur, 1988); Hartmut Berghoff, Dieter Ziegler (eds), *Pionier und Nachzügler. Vergleichende Studien zur Geschichte Großbritanniens und Deutschlands im Zeitalter der Industrialisierung. Festschrift für Sidney Pollard zum 70. Geburtstag* (Bochum: Brockmeyer, 1995).
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 11. Adolf M. Birke, Kurt Kluxen (eds), *Kirche, Staat und Gesellschaft im 19. Jahrhundert. Ein deutsch-englischer Vergleich. Church, State and Society in the 19th Century. A British-German Comparison* (Munich: Saur, 1984); Richard Bonney, Franz Bosbach, Thomas Brockmann (eds), *Religion und Politik in Deutschland und Großbritannien. Religion and Politics in Britain and Germany* (Munich: Saur, 2001).
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17. See, for instance, Walther Fischer, *Deutscher Kultureinfluss am Viktorianischen Hofe bis zur Gründung des Deutschen Reiches 1870* (Giessen, 1950); Hans-Joachim Netzer, *Albert von Sachsen-Coburg und Gotha. Ein deutscher Prinz in England* (Munich: Saur, 1988); Franz Bosbach, John R. Davis (eds), *Prinz Albert – ein Wettiner in Großbritannien. Prince Albert – A Wettin in Britain* (Munich: Saur, 2004); Franz Bosbach, John R. Davis (eds), *Geteilter Nachlaß – gemeinsames Erbe. Eine Dynastie und ihre Sammlungen in Windsor und Coburg. Divided Estate – Common Heritage. The Collections of a Dynasty in Windsor and Coburg* (Munich: Saur, 2007); Wilfried Rogasch (ed.), *Victoria & Albert, Vicky & The Kaiser. Ein Kapitel deutsch-englischer Familiengeschichte* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje, 1997); Ronald D. Gerste, *Queen Victoria. Die Frau hinter dem Mythos* (Regensburg: Pustet, 2000); Edgar J. Feuchtwanger, *Königin Victoria und ihre Zeit* (Zürich: Muster-Schmidt, 2004).
 18. See, for instance, Günther Lottes (ed.), *Der Eigentumsbegriff im englischen politischen Denken* (Bochum: Brockmeyer, 1985); Karl Heinz Metz, *Industrialisierung und Sozialpolitik. Das Problem der sozialen Sicherheit in Großbritannien 1795–1911* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht: 1988); Bernd Weisbrod, Thomas Sokoll (eds), *Victorian Values. Arm und Reich im Viktorianischen England* (Bochum: Brockmeyer, 1988); Adolf M. Birke, Lothar Kettenacker (eds), *Bürgertum, Adel und Monarchie. Wandel der Lebensformen im Zeitalter des bürgerlichen Nationalismus. Middle Classes, Aristocracy and Monarchy. Patterns of Change and Adaption in the Age of Modern Nationalism* (Munich: Saur, 1989); Thomas Sokoll, *Household and Family among the Poor: The Case of two Essex Communities in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth Centuries* (Bochum: Brockmeyer, 1993).
 19. See, for instance, Andreas Wirsching, *Parlament und Volkes Stimme. Unterhaus und Öffentlichkeit im England des frühen 19. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990); Willibald Steinmetz, *Das Sagbare und das Machbare. Zum Wandel politischer Handlungsspielräume. England 1780–1867* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1993); Ulrike Jordan, Wolfram Kaiser (eds), *Political Reform in Britain, 1886–1996. Themes, Ideas, Policies* (Bochum: Brockmeyer, 1997); Jörg Neuheiser, Michael Schaich (eds), *Political Rituals in Great Britain 1700–2000* (Augsburg: Wißner, 2006).
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 23. Benedikt Stuchtey, W.E.H. Lecky (1838–1903), *Historisches Denken und politisches Urteilen eines angloirischen Gelehrten* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997).

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Identity and Reception. Polish Research on Victorian Art and Art Theory

Piotr Juskiewicz

In Poland, the interest in the art and culture of the Victorian age became particularly intense in two distinct periods. It appeared for the first time at the turn of the twentieth century, often called by Polish cultural historians the ‘Young Poland’ period; for the second, after 1989 and in the following decades of regained political independence. In both cases, British culture attracted, or has been attracting, much attention in reference to the local problematic of cultural and national identity.

The age of ‘Young Poland’, perhaps one of the most interesting periods in the whole history of Polish culture, has been usually situated between the late 1890s and 1918. In common, to some degree, with other European countries, those three decades began with a critique of positivism, which gradually evolved toward an atmosphere of melancholy, scepticism, and metaphysical speculation. Then ‘Young Poland’ turned to an ideology of direct action placed in the context of the struggle for independence and surfacing social antagonisms. Consequently, while the main mentor of the first phase was Schopenhauer, in the latter stage he was succeeded by Nietzsche, Bergson, and Marx. In art, the evolution went from realism and naturalism to symbolism, and then to early expressionism.

Within such an artistic field, Polish artists, art theorists, and critics attempted to reconcile the autonomy of the work of art with its social appeal, particularly as regards its specific national character in the times of the country’s political non-existence. Also for that reason, the interest in British literature and art at that time became more intense than before, resulting in a number of translations of literary, theoretical, and critical texts from English into Polish, including those by John Ruskin, Walter Pater, and William Morris.¹ According to Bożena