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The Once and Future Budapest – Book Review

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The Once and Future Budapest by Robert Nemes

Review by: Harry Ritter

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immigrants" (85) in Mexico or examples of a reconstruction of the German cultural landscape (*Heimatvereine* and other "little Germanies") in Chicago and Milwaukee; on the other hand, we find reports about German Jews and their efforts to find a new homeland in the United States or in Brazil. Whereas it might be true that all of these groups saw themselves as pioneers of (German) culture and even used quite similar strategies in order to keep up at least remnants of a "higher" culture, the differences between these groups (German or German-Jewish) should have been shown in more depth: the *Verein* (later *Völkbund*) *für das Deutschtum im Ausland* has a quite different function from the unions created by "we American-German Jews," which Tobias Brinkmann describes in his important contribution. However, a paper about the situation in a country outside of the Americas, Israel for example, would have made this clearer. Chapter three assembles examples of "Islands of Germanness": Germans from Russia and their political network in the United States, Germans in Hapsburg East Central Europe, the perception of *Auslandsdeutsche* in Southwest Africa and Eastern Europe, the situation of *Völkdeutsche* in the context of World War II and the Holocaust, and the politics of the German governments towards German ethnic minorities in postwar Eastern Europe.

Most of the contributions are very interesting and well-researched; they open up new perspectives on the very old question: What does it mean to be German? Still, one might feel that more could be gained if these stories of "Germanness" would be placed in a more general, European, or even worldwide context of migration, transnationality, cultural transfer, and inter-ethnic relations between "Germans" and other culturally constructed groups in Germany and abroad.

JOACHIM SCHLÖR, *Potsdam University*

Robert Nemes. *The Once and Future Budapest*. DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005. Pp. xi, 247. Cloth \$38.

Robert Nemes has written a concise and useful overview of the expansion, modernization, and ethnic transformation of Budapest in the classic era of nineteenth-century nationalism and liberalism, from the French Revolutionary era to the eve of World War I. The author tells the story of the rise of a metropolis imagined as a "national" (i. e., Magyar) capital city, in place of the older, prenationalist and socially corporatist seventeenth- and eighteenth-century towns of Ofen (Buda), Óbuda, and Pest, which were largely German *Sprachinseln* straddling the Danube on the Hungarian plain.

Nemes' emphasis is strongly on the early nineteenth century, the heyday of Count Stephen Széchenyi, Lajos Kossuth, and the heroic builders of early Magyar liberalism and nationalism. Aside from the case of Széchenyi, however he can draw on George Barany's magnificent biography published in the late 1960s), Nemes does not focus much on individual biography or personal agency. Rather, he stresses collective social experience in the form of the rise of club life and the

emergence of an ethnically inflected public sphere of increasingly politicized thinking and behavior, especially in the 1830s and 1840s. A particularly interesting chapter explores ways that such developments translated into the construction of new fashions in clothing—especially for elite women—and new, supposedly “historic” and *echt*-Maygar dances (e. g., the *csárdás*) for the ball season. He also explores the search for ethnic symbolic forms in other areas of cultural life, such as architecture and city planning, and leisure pursuits, such as horse racing.

On the whole, however, Nemes’ study is not so much the product of new archival scholarship or pioneering conceptualization as it is an updating of previous knowledge in currently fashionable theoretical terms. In effect, it packages the research of a host of older and recent Hungarian scholars on nineteenth-century Hungary, as well as the work of older English-language historians, such as C. A. Macartney, Barany, Peter Sugar, and Deák, in the late twentieth-century idiom of nationalism and liberalism understood as imagined community, cultural politics, free association, civil society, and the public sphere. Thus, Nemes’ study nicely complements work by previous students of the transformation of public life in other Habsburg cities, such as Prague and Vienna by Gary Cohen in the 1980s, and Pieter Judson (another student of Deák) in the 1990s. Nemes’ cleanly written study would thus be a welcome addition to course syllabi on Central European—or, more broadly—continental European cities in the nineteenth century.

HARRY RITTER, *Western Washington University*

Rainer Hering. *Konstruierte Nation: Der Alldeutsche Verband 1890 bis 1939* (Hamburger Beiträge zur Sozial- und Zeitgeschichte). Hamburg: Hans Christians, 2003. Pp. 600. Cloth €34,80.

Rainer Hering’s study represents the most recent contribution to the historiography of the Pan-German League. The book’s five main chapters touch on many aspects of the League’s history from the group’s founding in Imperial Germany to its dissolution in the Third Reich. Following the well-known book *Imagined Communities*, Hering applies Benedict Anderson’s model of a “constructed” image of the nation to the Pan-German League’s ideology. Hering’s explication of this “constructed” Pan-German nation in chapter one covers a wide range of issues including the League’s stance on antisemitism, democracy, state authority, and the role of women and ethnic minorities in domestic politics. This interesting approach to the study of the League’s nationalism is Hering’s most important contribution to the ongoing study of the Pan-German League.

In addition to this first section, two other chapters deserve special attention. Chapter four presents a detailed local study of the League’s large and active Hamburg chapter. In many ways, this book reflects Hering’s original intention to focus his research on the Hamburg chapter of the Pan-German League. Because of this focus, the book benefits from new and detailed local archival material. These new