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What follows is the contribution by **Margaret Lavinia Anderson (MLA)**
University of California-Berkeley(MLA).

The other participants (whose contributions I have no authority to post) were:

(AZ): Andrew Zimmerman, George Washington University
(CC): Carl Caldwell, Rice University
(CG): Christian Goeschel, Birkbeck University of London
(IM): Ian McNeely, University of Oregon

I. In the past, those who argued that seeking to explain National Socialism should no longer guide the study of German history have been accused of historical revisionism. Yet recently, a number of critically-minded scholars with strong liberal credentials have again suggested that it may be time to find new narrative frameworks for modern German history, which would de-centre the Third Reich. Should we continue to allow National Socialism and the Holocaust to structure our perceptions of what constitutes a "significant question" to bring to the German past, or are there empirical and ethical reasons for moving to new perspectives?

(MLA): Put so baldly, who could disagree? National Socialism is not the only significant question in German history. But the desire to explain the Holocaust was what took *me* into German history; the only reason why I, like so many then, ended up in the 19th century was because in those days big effects were assumed to have "deep" (read: distant) causes. Nazism is still what attracts students to German history, although they have dropped our "big effects must have deep causes" assumption. Hurray for the truth. Alas for the 18th and 19th centuries. At Berkeley, almost all our applicants for the PhD program either want to work on National Socialist themes *tout court* or on its consequences and memory in postwar Germany. With undergraduates, it is no different. My course on "The Germanies, 1700-1918" (note the spatial de-centering) got gratifying teaching evaluations – and anemic enrollments. I did an internet search to learn how colleagues were teaching it, expecting to find that most would concentrate on the decades after 1871, but hoping for inspiration on the century before. I was shocked: almost all began in 1900. In the beginning was *not* Napoleon. Goodbye Enlightenment. Goodbye Romanticism. Goodbye 1848, Ringstrasse (yes, my German history certainly included Austria), Constitutional Conflict, Kulturkampf, Rosa Luxemburg versus Eduard Bernstein. I gave in and renamed my course "The Rise and Fall of the Second Reich" – at which point enrollments quadrupled. Since one of my themes is the *non*-centrality of so many of the issues in the Third Reich to Germany before 1914, you can imagine the inward wincing this new title cost me. It's the same course, but now my classroom is full. Pandering? You bet.

So should we really hope (even "for empirical and ethical reasons") to move people to "a new perspective"? Our audiences won't tire of the Nazis, but they might tire of Germany. In terms of maintaining readers and enrollments, a new meta-narrative might well be self-defeating. The pathological narrative of Germany history has been popular in the English-speaking world since World War I, long before it received its

canonical iteration by the Bielefelders. I ceased to believe in it shortly after I began teaching. But minus its pathological narrative, Germany's history may go the way of Italy, France, and Spain; that is, reduced to the single period non-professionals care about: Italy = the Renaissance; France = the Revolution; Spain = the Conquest, Inquisition, and Golden Age.

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II. *If we did want to re-think the place of National Socialism in meta-narratives of modern German history, how should we proceed? What becomes the new centre, or subject, of German history? Or is a centre even necessary?*

(MLA): A subject is always necessary. But it's not sufficient; we need to know there's a *stake*. The reason the study of National Socialism has been so compelling so long is its moral weight, something I find characteristic of political history more generally: revolution, repression, diplomacy, humanitarian intervention, war, imperialism, democracy and its enemies, and – as Carl has just reminded me – legal traditions, to name a few. Such subjects grip our imaginations because they must confront, in one way or another, the fragility and ambiguity of "good". When I search beyond political history for themes that have enjoyed similarly long runs, they too seem to be those with moral weight. For economic historians it has been the Industrial Revolution (pessimists vs. optimists; pro- vs. anti-capitalism). If the the Industrial Revolution has now been dislodged (I'm not sure that it has), it is by themes also morally fraught, like famine. Ecology and even (if the historian is alert to impacts on distant regions and generations) consumption may also claim this kind of moral weight. Truly great history – provocative questions, original perspectives, brilliant writing – will always have an audience. (Who would have thought that German "home towns" would provide a compelling "centre" ? – though, perhaps not accidentally, one whose epilogue, "Death and Transfiguration," ends with National Socialism.) Bottom line: any new centre in German history must meet the challenge of discovering or imparting moral weight (however subtly or ironically) to its alternative meta-narrative.

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III. *Following Jürgen Osterhammel, attempts to de-centre the Third Reich can be seen as part of a broader move to de-centre the nation state, embracing a *longue durée*, and moving toward histories that are multiple and meandering. In what ways might such approaches transform the writing of German history?*

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(MLA): I doubt that it is given to most of us to follow Jürgen Osterhammel. To see the universe in a grain of sand (think *Marpingen* !) is, for ordinary mortals, a more promising tack than Osterhammel's reversal of that perspective. The cry to "de-center the state" has been trumps as long as I can remember. "Economics, society, and culture seem to have monopolized historians' attention for the last half-century," Jacques Le Goff opined approvingly in 1971, when it was Braudel who provided the inspiration. But "the old political history is still a corpse that has to be made to lie down," he warned. For the next two decades it was social history that was supposed to nail the stake into its heart ("We are all social historians now," observed John Binfield and Harold Perkin – independently of each other). And now cultural history is the flag that gets all ships, whatever their cargo, into port. ("We are all cultural historians now," David Blackbourn noted in a recent conference volume – not without a similarly raised eyebrow.) I can't help noticing that, as was the case when the flag of social history ruled the waves, the port itself is often a political one. I wonder why political history, practiced so widely, remains largely (except among those who work on National Socialism) in the closet, the love that dare not speak its name?

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IV. Conventional periodization in German history has focused on highly visible ruptures in the formal constitution of different German states, such as 1806, 1815, 1848, 1871, 1918, 1933, 1945, and 1989-1990. Much recent cultural history has questioned the validity of such period breaks for important spheres of human experience and day-to-day political practices. Are such approaches simply a way of nuancing political history, or do they generate entirely different narratives and chronological models?

(MLA): If breaks are sometimes less sharp in cultural than in political history, still, there are landmarks: 1776? Publication of *The Wealth of Nations*. 1960? The FDA approves the "pill." (And then there's Philip Larkin's *annus mirabilis*, 1963....) Every historian has to start and stop somewhere. But it is not the placement of these bookends or their erasure that "generate entirely different narratives." It is we, the historians, who construct the narratives and thus it is *we* who get to decide the breaks. Paul Veyne is right: "Events have no natural unity; one cannot, like the good cook in *Phaedrus*, cut them according to their true joints, because they have none." This should give heart to imaginative historians who have a new story to tell (or, as Carl points out, new questions to ask).

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V. What role does space play in this? Recent work has also drawn attention to the polycentricity of Germany itself, the particular role that regional patterns have played in its history, and the ways in which German history has taken place far beyond Central Europe. What implications do these new spatial perspectives have for conceptualising the flow of German history over time?

(MLA): "How should they know England, who only England know?" Kipling's lines, *mutatis mutandis*, should be the watchword for all historians, whatever nation they specialize in. We should *always* be looking over our shoulders, across the (various) ponds, for connections, comparisons, analogies. But I'm not sure I know what is meant by the "role... space plays in this" and "new spatial perspectives." Yes, German history has taken place outside of Germany (especially between 1939-1945). And as Germany participated in developments common to the West there will always be spaces for Germans in the geographies of intellectual history, history of science and religion, and economic history. But I would warn against encouraging graduate students outside of those well-established sub-disciplines to take the much celebrated "trans-national" route. German gold miners in Mexico or Germans drafted into the Union army lie not only beyond National Socialism, they lie beyond German history. They belong to another history. And searches are still organized around national units – whatever scholars advocate at conferences and in journals, and whatever search committees themselves may suggest. I speak from bitter experience. I have a student, out now ten years, whose dissertation/first book was truly transnational (German, Russian, and French, primarily), who in graduate school had published peer-reviewed articles in 18th and 20th century French history, and who has subsequently published books (with distinguished presses) on Russian and German topics, each with a strong transnational dimension. He's gotten post-docs aplenty, but not a single job offer in North America or the UK. He's too Russian for the German searches, too German for the Russian searches, and not French enough for the French searches. Yet another, with a dissertation on Alpine sports as they developed in Austria and Switzerland and hopped to Lake Placid and Sun Valley, is facing a similarly dismal future. And while kicking myself that I ever encouraged these transnational interests, I also understand the objections. University departments want someone who can not only write great books and teach exciting courses but can also – perhaps especially – train graduate students in a "field," which, for modern historians, is usually defined nationally. That means knowing the historiography of a state or collection of related states, and caring about it. Don't expect small liberal arts colleges looking for two-fers to provide alternative employment. As I learned from two decades at Swarthmore: where 15 students, more or less, make the difference between a big course and one that isn't viable, search committees are very concerned about overlaps, lest they inadvertently put an existing colleague out of business. This is the way our *profession*, not just German history, is organized. I do have two students, however, who've enjoyed splendid professional success with transnational history. One wrote on German minorities in 1930's Poland; the other, ethnic Germans and Czechs in Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia – neither, tellingly, "beyond National Socialism."

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