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Review of *People in Transit: German Migrations in Comparative Perspective, 1820–1930*, edited by Dirk Hoerder and Jorg Nagler

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**People in Transit: German Migrations in Comparative Perspective, 1820–1930.**

Edited by *Dirk Hoerder* and *Jörg Nagler*. Publications of the German Historical Institute. Edited by *Detlev Junker*.  
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Pp. xv+433. \$79.95.

Studies in the international migration of peoples have advanced remarkably in the past quarter century. As recently as the 1960s scholars were still trying to shoehorn immigration history into the confines of Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis. Since then scholars on both sides of the Atlantic have laid new conceptual foundations, developed new modes of analysis, and thus opened a new subfield of historical research. New scholarly journals in migration studies have appeared and new research centers have been created, especially in German universities. These investments have stimulated the publication of numerous books and articles. The German Historical Institute in Washington, D.C., has contributed importantly to this scholarship by sponsoring the publication of this and several other collections of essays relating to migration history.

*People in Transit* offers a score of articles that treat American immigrant experience, transatlantic migrations, and various migratory streams within Europe, especially to and within Germany, since 1820. Most of the essays are based on papers presented at a conference on German immigration history held in Bremerhaven in 1991. Many are empirical and hence treat topics that are sharply limited in place and time; a few are historiographical and interpretive on a broad scale. Although the subtitle announces a comparative perspective, systematic comparisons to other European migrants, such as Poles, Swedes, and the Irish, are parts of the research designs of only a few of the essays.

Twenty scholars, including the two editors, contributed to the volume. About two-thirds are European (all German, save one Pole), the rest American. Although several of the European scholars (again including the editors) have published works on American topics in English, most have not. Thus the volume admirably serves the purposes of the German Historical Institute (to foster cooperation between historians from both Germany and the United States) by bringing their work to the attention of American historians.

The book opens with an excellent introduction by Dirk Hoerder, followed by an informative survey of German emigration research by Walter Kamphoefner. Emigration from German provinces east of the Elbe River and Galician Poland to western Germany is the theme of the first part. These chapters are particularly valuable because they treat a subject long neglected by German scholars. Moreover, the majority of Germans who emigrated to the United States in the latter decades of the nineteenth century came from these regions. Each essay in this section is excellent; Adam Walaszek's penetrating study of Poles in Germany and the consequences of their emigration (and return) for Galicia seems especially valuable for American historians.

The second part of the book treats migration within Germany. Here, as in the first section, the emphasis is on the search for work. Susanne Meyer's detailed study of migration in and out of Georgmarienhütte, an industrial center founded in 1860 near Osnabrück, includes an illuminating discussion of *Heuerleute*, that is, landless peasants who exchanged their labor for a residence and the use of some land. In a study of foreign workers in or near Bremen, Karl Martin Barfuss plumbs the intricacies of life and the labor market for non-German Germans from the eastern provinces and contrasts the treatment of these "foreign" workers in three neighboring political jurisdictions—Bremen, Oldenburg, and Prussia.

Part 3 shifts the focus to the migration of women. Suzanne Sinke offers many illuminating interethnic comparisons in her discussion of the international marriage market. Silke Wehner, in a study of German domestic servants in the United States, demonstrates that immigrant experiences must be differentiated by class and gender and that, contrary to commonly held beliefs, young immigrant women were neither helpless dependents nor slow to acculturate. The essays by Joy Lintelman and Deirdre Mageean provide some of the best comparative analyses in the entire volume.

Immigrant acculturation in the United States and remigration to Germany are treated in part 4. Here the essay by Sven Beckert stands out. He focuses sharply on the relationship between immigration, ethnicity, and working-class formation in a study of several German-owned textile mills in Passaic, New Jersey. German immigrants held managerial and skilled-worker positions; Poles, Slovaks, and Ruthenians the unskilled jobs. The exploitation of unskilled workers, especially women, was relentless until ethnic divisions were surmounted when German skilled workers joined the unskilled in opposition to the owners and managers. Beckert also relates ethnic and class divisions to spatial patterns and social life in Passaic.

The book concludes with two essays. The first, by Klaus Bade, masterfully surveys migration to and from Germany over the centuries and demonstrates his clear command of the bibliography. He concentrates particularly on the post-World War II migrations, the era for which his own research and numerous publications dominate. Dirk Hoerder, who heads the labor migration project at the University of Bremen, describes the work of the several migration research centers in the universities of Hamburg, Munich, Bochum, Berlin, Bremen, Oldenburg, and Rostock, and refers briefly to research by American scholars. Both essays, neither of which draws conclusions from the several

contributions, should have been placed at the beginning of the book. There, along with Hoerder's introduction and Kamphoefner's essay, they might better equip readers unfamiliar with the field of migration studies for the detailed analyses that follow.

Migration research on Germany generally surpasses that done by scholars for any other country. Even so, this book offers only a sample. It emphasizes economic variables throughout. Laudably, it features East Elbian migration and the role of women whenever possible. But examples of good work done at Hamburg, Berlin, and Bochum do not appear here.

*People in Transit* is a treasure for students of immigration history who wish to discover some of the best recent work in this field as it relates to Germany. It is equally valuable for any seasoned historian seeking to synthesize German immigrant experience.

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