

FINZSCH, Norbert, and Ursula LEHMKUHL (eds.) — *Atlantic Communications: The Media in American and German History from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century*. Oxford and New York: Berp. 2004. Pn. 472.

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ical symposia sponsored by the City of Krefeld, Germany. Its focus is very broad chronologically, spanning from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, but more targeted thematically, concentrating on the history of the media in Germany and the United States. In an interesting and productive organizational choice, each set of papers is accompanied by two commentaries placing the more specific texts within a broader perspective.

The first section of the book comprises three papers primarily about oral communication: on evangelical revivals in early America, on men who acted as mediators for transatlantic religious communities, and on how church sermons, gun salutes, and illuminations were used to communicate news of military victories in Europe in the 1740s. The second section focuses on transatlantic telegraphic communication in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly that between the United States and Germany. The third section comprises two papers on journalism, one on the portrayal of homelessness in middle-class media in the United States between 1850 and 1930 and the second on the reception of American muckraking journalism in Germany. The fourth section is about radio. The first paper here attempts to construct a model for a parallel examination of the effect of early radio on social life in the United States and in Germany. The second is about how swing music (especially that of Glenn Miller) was used to bolster a type of white middle-class patriotism among American troops and others during World War II. The final section of the book addresses television and public memory with two papers on remembering the Holocaust on film, again in the United States and Germany respectively. The book also includes a useful 55-page "Select Bibliography" organized around the sections.

As can be seen from this brief synopsis, the topics covered within each section are usually (although not always) comparative, but they also treat very specific historical events, and one wonders why some of the topics were chosen. Nevertheless, some common threads run through the whole; these come out most clearly in the two commentaries that accompany each section. Indeed, for me, the commentaries were the best part of the book. As described by co-editor Ursula Lehmkuhl in the introduction, the format of the conference was really that of a workshop, and the commentaries (and the papers as published) were all influenced by feedback and discussion among all 30 persons present. The commentaries are rich with insights and informed by the latest literature and theory (especially on the German side). They provide an excellent introduction to the main issues of current debate in the field of media history and some guidelines for new directions in future research.

One of the common themes, as the very structure of the conference and collection suggests, is that it is time historians moved beyond examining media history within the confines of nation-state structures and began working more transnationally and comparatively. This is especially true for the histories covered in the last three sections. Mass media, as commentator Michele Hilmes of the University of Wisconsin-

Madison points out, developed simultaneously with nation-states and have been institutionally and culturally linked to those states (p. 301). Media are also about the flow of ideas and information, however, and, while nation-states have often, to greater or lesser degrees, tried to control that flow to buttress the social control of their own populations, none has been able to prevent communications from seeping across borders, in or out. In the earliest period covered here, the means of communication was often the movement of individuals or of private correspondence. Later it occurred through the circulation of printed materials of various kinds. In the twentieth century, the development of electronic forms that are difficult if not impossible to jam at borders has made the media even more the “hyper-national” avatars of “techno-globalization”, for better or for worse (pp. 300–301). Yet few media historians think in those expansive terms yet. One of the great strengths of this book, then, is that it brings together scholars from a variety of disciplines from Germany and the United States (and one from Israel) to foster cross-national Atlantic World fertilization.

A second theme, highlighted by commentator Volker Depkat of the University of Greifswald, is that media history needs to be conceived of in the broadest possible way as social history. While in the past the history of the media often focused on technological development and commercial imperatives (and to a lesser extent on content analyses), what really makes media important is their “interdependence with ongoing processes of social change”, in other words, their social function (p. 374). Unfortunately, in most national historiographies, media history is viewed as a rather limited sub-field of interest only to a handful of specialists. But as Joan Scott argued with respect to her concept of gender history, a redefinition of the field is necessary to bring it into the mainstream, and a renewed emphasis on integrating the history of the media and media messages with the histories of the societies within which they are so embedded suggests another model for future endeavours.

There are some small irritants in the book. Unfortunately, the English translation of some of the German texts is less than fluent, and the English editing is rife with errors, especially of punctuation. In sum, however, the five discrete sections of this collection will be of interest to those who are specialists in the particular fields covered. More importantly, the broad themes so ably identified by the ten commentators point to the significance of media history as a sub-genre of social history and as central to the burgeoning field of global history. In those respects, this book should be of interest to all.

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FRAGER, Ruth A., and Carmela K. PATRIAS — *Discounted Labour: Women Workers in Canada, 1870–1939*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005. Pp. 189.

Les femmes travaillent à rabais. Sur le marché du travail, elles exécutent des tâches en tout point comparables à celles des hommes, mais elles touchent en règle générale une rémunération moindre que ces derniers. Si, depuis la fin du XIX^e siècle, l'écart