

## Leopold Ranke's Archival Turn

Location and Evidence in Modern Historiography

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# LEOPOLD RANKE'S ARCHIVAL TURN: LOCATION AND EVIDENCE IN MODERN HISTORIOGRAPHY\*

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*From 1827 to 1831 the German historian Leopold von Ranke travelled through Germany, Austria, and Italy, hunting for documents and archives. During this journey Ranke developed a new model for historical research that transformed the archive into the most important site for the production of historical knowledge. Within the archive, Ranke claimed, the trained historian could forget his personal predispositions and political loyalties, and write objective history. This essay critically examines Ranke's model for historical research through a study of the obstacles, frustrations, and joys that he encountered on his journey. It shows how Ranke's archival experiences inspired him to re-evaluate his own identity as a historian and as a human being, and investigates some of the affiliations between his model for historical research and the political realities of Prince Metternich's European order. Finally, the essay compares Ranke's historical discipline to other nineteenth-century disciplines, such as anthropology and archaeology.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

After the July Revolution in France in 1830, a new wave of revolutionary fervor swept across Europe. During a short period of time, the Belgians declared their independence from Holland and the Poles rebelled against their Russian oppressors. Civil war broke out between clericals and liberals in Spain and Portugal. Unrest spread throughout Germany and Italy, momentarily threatening Austro-Prussian domination in the German *Bund* and Austria's hegemony on the Italian peninsula. Liberal advocates for constitutional rule found new hope and captured new momentum across the continent. Thus the July Revolution

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not only dethroned the Bourbons, but also unsettled the European status quo of the Congress of Vienna and challenged Prince Metternich's system of internal governance, based upon monarchic sovereignty, centralized bureaucratic control, and preventative censorship.<sup>1</sup>

The young historian Leopold Ranke, residing in Venice during the late summer and fall of 1830, was terrified. Although never a revolutionary, Ranke had sympathized with the liberal and democratic cause during the 1810s and 1820s. Now he saw only destruction and disorder. In his letters, he grieved that he suddenly found himself in "decisive opposition to public opinion." He worried that the "plebes" would seize Germany before his homecoming, and could not accept a government of "journeymen and street urchins." He considered the "incessant blabbering about governing" to be a threat to European peace, described the new revolutionary spirit as "a kind of contagion," and foresaw a "horrible catastrophe" and "most unhappy times."<sup>2</sup> Arriving safely in Berlin in March 1831, Ranke discussed with colleagues, friends, and allies how their historical studies could serve as a bulwark against the horrors of liberalism.<sup>3</sup> His publisher, Friedrich Perthes, expressed their sentiments in December 1830, in a letter to Friedrich von Gentz at Metternich's court in Vienna. Perthes predicted the "breakup of the closely knit Europe" as "one little people after another are agitated to elect princes, who are not grounded upon divine right," and proposed an intellectual counter-offensive:

It is due time to protect public opinion from new corruption—one can restrain the newspapers, and that is justified, but no force can halt the deluge of pamphlets, public leaflets, and all kinds of writings—the division of Germany and the character of our literature and book trade spoil every preventative measure against these. The only defense against the lie is to let the truth be heard—it still has power . . . In times where everything is questioned, everyone, who values right and truth, must at every moment do what he can in his position.<sup>4</sup>

Ranke's first publication after the July Revolution was a small booklet entitled *Ueber die Verschwörung gegen Venedig im Jahre 1618* (On the Conspiracy against

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<sup>1</sup> Also P. W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics 1763–1848* (Oxford, 1994), 666–711.

<sup>2</sup> L. von Ranke, *Das Briefwerk*, ed. W. P. Fuchs (Hamburg, 1949), 222, 223–4, 231–2. All translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

<sup>3</sup> Also T. H. von Laue, *Leopold Ranke: The Formative Years* (Princeton, NJ, 1950), 89–108; S. Baur, *Versuch über die Historik des jungen Ranke* (Berlin, 1998), 123–55; and J. E. Toews, *Becoming Historical: Cultural Reformation and Public Memory in Early Nineteenth-Century Berlin* (Cambridge, 2004), 374–80.

<sup>4</sup> F. von Gentz, *Briefe von und an Friedrich von Gentz*, ed. F. C. Wittichen, 4 vols. (Munich, 1909–13), 1: 345.

Venice in the Year 1618).<sup>5</sup> The book, written in Venice between August and December 1830 and printed in Berlin in the summer of 1831, summarized some of his recent findings in the archives of Austria and Italy.<sup>6</sup> On the surface it had no connection to contemporary politics. When he first proposed the book to Perthes in February 1831, Ranke doubted if a second edition would be necessary and estimated that it would sell 750 copies, if not immediately, then over time.<sup>7</sup> The conspiracy, Ranke explained in a letter, was a “distant, complicated . . . [and] in itself not a very important matter.”<sup>8</sup>

However, Ranke's book marked an important turning point in modern historiography. During the 1830s Ranke established his reputation as the leading German historian. He founded the *Historisch-politische Zeitschrift*, together with Perthes, in 1832. In the mid-1830s he began teaching his famous exercises at the University of Berlin, which, at the end of the century, garnered him the reputation as the father of the historical discipline.<sup>9</sup> Ranke's book about Venice contributed to this development. It delivered a paradigmatic example of how historians ought to work and established the archive as the most important site for the production of historical knowledge. This “archival turn” in modern historiography and Ranke's concurrent political turn were not unrelated.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, historians have challenged Ranke's status as the most eminent representative of objective and scientific history. Ranke's debt to philosophical and religious beliefs of the early nineteenth

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<sup>5</sup> L. Ranke, *Ueber die Verschwörung gegen Venedig, im Jahre 1618. Mit Urkunden aus dem Venezianischen Archive* (Berlin, 1831).

<sup>6</sup> Few Ranke scholars have found the book interesting enough for further analysis. One exception is Leonard Krieger, who reads it as a reaction to the July Revolution and as an overtly political book. However, Krieger admits “the absence of any explicit testimony from Ranke.” L. Krieger, *Ranke: The Meaning of History* (Chicago, IL, 1977), 148–9, 148. On Ranke and Venice see also U. Tucci, “Ranke Storico di Venezia,” in L. Ranke, *Venezia nel Cinquecento*, trans. Ingeborg Zapperi Walter (Rome, 1974), 1–69.

<sup>7</sup> Ranke, *Briefwerk*, 231.

<sup>8</sup> L. von Ranke, *Neue Briefe*, ed. B. Hoefft (Hamburg, 1949), 158.

<sup>9</sup> Ranke's “exercises” (*Übungen*) were not connected to an institutionalized seminar and, thus, were not called a seminar. During the second half of the nineteenth century his former students shaped German seminars after Ranke's example. “It was Ranke's fortunate idea,” Wilhelm von Giesebrecht explained in 1887, “to secure the propagation of critical historical research this way; he never spoke of a seminar himself, but his exercises have become the seminar for all those seminars, which we now have at our universities.” W. von Giesebrecht, *Gedächtnissrede auf Leopold von Ranke* (Munich, 1887), 11. However, to Ranke and many of his followers, the distinction was crucial as they considered the teaching environment of institutionalized seminars too uncontrollable and impersonal to secure proper training for future researchers. See also K. R. Eskildsen, “Leopold von Ranke, la passion de la critique et le séminaire d'histoire,” in C. Jacob, ed., *Lieux de savoir: Espaces et communautés* (Paris, 2007), 462–82.

century is now documented and many have pointed to the overt political tendencies in his writings, especially in his *Historisch-politische Zeitschrift*.<sup>10</sup> Ranke's historical works, John Toews recently summarized, "now appear as forms of constructive storytelling informed by the desires and purposes emerging from his time, culture, and personal situation."<sup>11</sup> These revisionist critiques primarily serve a historiographical purpose. Much like their predecessors, recent critics have written about Ranke to legitimize contemporary standards of historical research and history writing. The "image of Ranke" no longer serves as a norm or model for imitation, but instead provides evidence that the discipline has moved beyond the late nineteenth-century "scientification" of history.<sup>12</sup>

This revisionist approach has had some unfortunate consequences. During recent decades, not much has been written about Ranke's research and teaching practices, which many of his nineteenth-century admirers considered his most important contributions to the historical discipline. While historians have focused upon how larger philosophical, religious and political contexts informed Ranke's historical works, they have delivered fewer insights into how Ranke's new model of historical research redefined these contexts for succeeding generations of historians. Thus these critics have often ignored the fact that Rankean research and teaching practices not only were products of politics, but also helped determine which opinions nineteenth-century historians and their readers would adopt.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See, for example, F. Meinecke, *Die Entstehung des Historismus* (Munich, 1936); E. Shulin, *Ranke und Hegel* (Munich, 1928); C. Hinrichs, *Ranke und die Geschichtstheologie der Goethezeit* (Göttingen, 1954); G. G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of History* (Middletown, CT, 1968); and H. White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, MD, 1973).

<sup>11</sup> Toews, *Becoming Historical*, 373.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, P. Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge, 1988), 21–46 and 573–629; and G. G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Middletown, CT, 1997), 141–7. On the image of Ranke see G. G. Iggers, "The Image of Ranke in American and German Historical Thought," *History and Theory* 2/1 (1962), 17–40.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, the two volumes published after the hundredth anniversary of Ranke's death in 1986: W. Mommsen, ed., *Leopold von Ranke und die Moderne Geschichtswissenschaft* (Stuttgart, 1988); and G. G. Iggers et al., eds., *Leopold von Ranke and the Shaping of the Historical Discipline* (Syracuse, NY, 1990). Despite their titles, both volumes concentrate upon Ranke's contexts instead of his role in the shaping of the historical discipline. None of the articles describe his archival research practices, his source criticism, or his exercises. One exception, focusing upon gender and practice, is B. G. Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice* (Cambridge, MA, 1998), esp. 103–29. Also P. Müller, "Geschichte machen. Überlegungen zur lokal-spezifischen Praktiken in der Geschichtswissenschaften und ihrer epistemischen Bedeutung im 19. Jahrhundert. Ein Literaturbericht," *Historische Anthropologie* 12/3 (2004), 415–33.

Ranke's embrace of the anti-revolutionary politics of Austria and Prussia after July 1830 may be the first example. Like his definition of the historical discipline, Ranke's distinctive political vision owed much to his archival experiences during the late 1820s.

## II. FIELDS OF HISTORY

The new disciplines of the nineteenth century often defined and justified themselves through their control of specific sites of knowledge production.<sup>14</sup> The modern disciplines of chemistry and physics were established in specialized teaching laboratories, such as those of Justus von Liebig in Giessen and Franz Neumann in Königsberg.<sup>15</sup> Modern archaeology and anthropology were sheltered within museums, such as Christian Jürgensen Thomsen's Museum for Nordic Antiquities in Copenhagen and Adolf Bastian's Museum for Ethnography in Berlin.<sup>16</sup> These sites of knowledge production demarcated one discipline from other disciplines, and provided spaces for the training of new specialized practitioners.

The renowned, and now well-documented, cases of Liebig, Neumann, Thomsen, and Bastian offered clear examples for emulation and disciplinary formation. Their places of research and teaching were easily defined and demarcated. One could visit Thomsen and Bastian's museums or Liebig and

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<sup>14</sup> D. Cahan, "Institutions and Communities," in *idem*, ed., *From Natural Philosophy to the Sciences: Writing the History of Nineteenth-Century Science* (Chicago, IL, 2003), 291–328. On sites of knowledge production see also D. Livingstone, *Putting Science in Its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge* (Chicago, IL, 2003); N. Jardine, *The Scenes of Inquiry: On the Reality of Questions in the Sciences* (Oxford, 2000), esp. 274–87; A. Ophir and S. Shapin, "The Place of Knowledge: A Methodological Survey," *Science in Context* 4/1 (1991), 3–21; and S. Shapin, "Placing the View from Nowhere: Historical and Sociological Problems in the Location of Science," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 12 (1998), 5–12.

<sup>15</sup> F. L. Holmes, "The Complementarity of Teaching and Research in Liebig's Laboratory," *Osiris* 2/5 (1989), 121–64; and K. M. Olesko, *Physics as a Calling: Discipline and Practice in the Königsberg Seminar for Physics* (Ithaca, NY, 1991).

<sup>16</sup> J. Jensen, *Thomsens museum: historien om Nationalmuseet* (Copenhagen, 1992); A. Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany* (Chicago, IL, 2001); and H. G. Penny, *Objects of Culture: Ethnology and Ethnographic Museums in Imperial Germany* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2002). Nineteenth-century museums were not only important for the formation of disciplines, but also for the institutionalization and control of collective memory. For discussions of these questions in a German context see S. A. Crane, *Collecting and Historical Consciousness in Early Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Ithaca, NY, 2000); J. J. Sheehan, *Museums in the German Art World* (Oxford, 2000); and W. Ernst, *Im Namen der Geschichte: Sammeln—Speichern—Er/Zählen. Infrastrukturelle Konfiguration des deutschen Gedächtnisses* (Munich, 2003).

Neumann's laboratories. Simultaneously, these museums and laboratories were, in principle, placeless places. Here, one studied objects detached from their contexts. Natural specimens and prehistoric tools were removed from their place of origin in order to be investigated. Anthropological taxonomies and experimental results were reproducible anywhere.

The archives, in which Ranke worked, did not immediately resemble the placeless museums and laboratories that have attracted most of the attention within the history of science. Ranke traveled for months to visit archives. He depended upon the aid of archivists and, especially, upon the benevolence of bureaucrats and reluctant owners of documents. Other historians had to trust Ranke's personal credibility. One could not immediately investigate if he quoted accurately or ignored and misrepresented important evidence. During the nineteenth century, German historians edited and published large source editions, most importantly the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, which rendered their research practices more transparent.<sup>17</sup> But archival research still resembled fieldwork rather than laboratory experiments or museum research. Like fieldwork, archival research depended upon local conditions, cultural conventions, improvisation, and craft skills. Its practices were, as Robert Kohler has claimed about biological field studies, "not the placeless practices of labs but practices of place."<sup>18</sup>

Historians of science have often pointed to status differences between natural philosophers and mere collectors.<sup>19</sup> Scientists working in the field were usually grouped in the latter category.<sup>20</sup> Before the nineteenth century a similar status

<sup>17</sup> D. Knowles, *Great Historical Enterprises: Problems in Monastic History* (London, 1963), 65–97; and Ernst, *Im Namen der Geschichte*, 91–189.

<sup>18</sup> R. E. Kohler, "Place and Practice in Field Biology," *History of Science* 11 (2002), 189–210, 192. Also R. E. Kohler, *Landscapes and Labscapes: Exploring the Field–Lab Boundary* (Chicago, IL, 2002); and R. E. Kohler and H. Kuklick, "Introduction," *Osiris* 2/11 (1996), 1–14. The localness of the archive has often been noticed. Especially in recent years, considerable attention has been given to archives as places of imagination, desire, and political control, much of this work inspired by Jacques Derrida's *Mal d'archive: Un Impression freudienne* (Paris, 1995). *History of the Human Sciences* dedicated two special issues to the topic in 1998 and 1999 (11/4 and 12/2), so did *Poetics Today* in 2003 (24/4). For recent overviews see C. Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2002); and A. Burton, ed., *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History* (Durham, NC, 2005), esp. 1–24. For an overview of the theoretical discussion see W. Ernst, *Das Rumoren der Archive: Ordnung aus Unordnung* (Berlin, 2002).

<sup>19</sup> Recently in P. Dear, *The Intelligibility of Nature: How Science Makes Sense of the World* (Chicago, IL, 2006), esp. 1–14.

<sup>20</sup> D. Outram, "New Spaces in Natural History," in N. Jardine et al., eds., *Cultures of Natural History* (Cambridge, 1996), 249–65; and M. Rudwick, *Bursting the Limits of Time: Reconstruction of Geohistory in the Age of Revolution* (Chicago, 2005), 37–48.

relationship separated philosophical historians from archival researchers. During the eighteenth century the impact of Cartesian science, in Germany in its Leibnizian and Wolffian variations, and the resurgence of philosophical universal history only further diminished the relative status of archival research.<sup>21</sup> Archives, philosophers claimed, only delivered local and disparate knowledge with little or no relevance for the overall development of humankind.<sup>22</sup> True history was conceived upon the lectern or in an armchair. In 1739, for example, one influential education reformer scorned the prolific legal historian Johann Peter von Ludewig for the long hours he wasted in archives across Germany:

It doesn't matter that Ludewig has seen into more archives than that in Magdeburg. What can I learn from an archive, apart from particularities about a country that others don't know? This doesn't belong to the sciences, which, of course, are about universals. Otherwise all archivists should be more learned than other people; although one sees the contrary. It is a mistake . . . when one attributes Ludewig's learning and reputation to the archives. Yes, I am quite sure that the inspection of archives has harmed him more than helped him.<sup>23</sup>

Already during the eighteenth century some historians challenged this philosophical approach to history and emphasized the importance of empirical evidence. A prominent example is August Ludwig Schlözer, who, together with his Göttingen colleague Johann Christoph Gatterer, often is considered one of the originators of modern historical research based upon philological methods.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> On the relationship between philosophically inclined universal histories and empirical evidence see also M. de Certeau, "Writing vs. Time: History and Anthropology in the Works of Lafitau," *Yale French Studies* 59 (1980), 37–64; M. Harbsmeier, "World Histories before Domestication: The Writing of Universal Histories, Histories of Mankind and World Histories in Late Eighteenth-Century Germany," *Culture and History* 5 (1989), 93–131; A. Pagden, "Eighteenth-Century Anthropology and the 'History of Mankind,'" in D. R. Kelley, ed., *History and the Disciplines: The Reclassification of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe* (Rochester, NY, 1997), 223–33; and T. Griggs, "Universal History from Counter-Reformation to the Enlightenment," *Modern Intellectual History* 4/2 (2007), 219–47.

<sup>22</sup> For example F. Schiller, *Was heißt und zu welchem Ende studiert man Universalgeschichte? Eine akademische Antrittsrede bey Eröffnung seiner Vorlesungen* (Jena, 1789).

<sup>23</sup> E. F. Rössler, ed., *Die Gründung der Universität Göttingen: Entwürfe, Berichte und Briefe der Zeitgenossen* (Göttingen, 1855), 460.

<sup>24</sup> R. Vierhaus, "Die Universität Göttingen und die Anfänge der modernen Geschichtswissenschaft im 18. Jahrhundert," in H. Boockmann *et al.*, eds., *Geschichtswissenschaft in Göttingen* (Göttingen, 1987), 9–29. Also P. H. Reill, *The German Enlightenment and the Rise of Historicism* (Berkeley, CA, 1975); H. E. Bödeker *et al.*, eds., *Aufklärung und Geschichte: Studien zur deutschen Geschichtswissenschaft im 18. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 1985); Ulrich Muhlack, *Geschichtswissenschaft im Humanismus und in der Aufklärung: Der Vorgeschichte des Historismus* (Munich, 1991); and B. Stuchtey *et al.*, eds., *British and German Historiography 1750–1850* (Oxford, 2000).



In his programmatic book *Vorstellung seiner Universalhistorie* of 1772, Schlözer distinguished “prehistory” (*Vorgeschichte*) from the rest of world history due to the poverty of sources.<sup>25</sup> He critiqued armchair philosophers and declared the history of humankind “the property of the historian.”<sup>26</sup> He emphasized the importance of source criticism, the significance of craftsmanship and technical training, and the necessity of collaboration among specialists.<sup>27</sup>

However, Schlözer still wrote universal history and enclosed prehistory within a biblical framework of six thousand years. He argued that history should not remain a pure “aggregate” of isolated events, but must be organized into a “system in which world and humankind are the unit [*Einheit*]”<sup>28</sup> The true historian was not the philological specialist, lost in “the desert of reports under which history . . . often is buried,”<sup>29</sup> but needed “the universal view that contains everything.”<sup>30</sup> Only universality, Schlözer argued, could grant history scientific legitimacy:

Individual facts or events in historical science are like the small colored pebbles in a mosaic painting. The critique digs out these facts from annals and monuments . . . the composition is the work of the history writer. When unity [*Einheit*] dominates throughout the entire canvas of the composition then world history wins scientific renown.<sup>31</sup>

Schlözer was not the only critical historian to consider empirical research a means to a universal end. Even Barthold Georg Niebuhr, who inspired Ranke in his use of philological methods, shared this sentiment. In 1811, in the introduction to his celebrated lectures on Roman history at the University of Berlin, Niebuhr condemned the “philological pseudo-knowledge” (*philologische Halbkenntniß*) of specialized academics, who neither appreciated the eternal value of antiquity nor considered the contemporary significance for their research. The ideal academic not only knew sources and historical particularities, but also searched

<sup>25</sup> A. L. Schlözer, *Vorstellung seiner Universal-Historie*, 2 vols. (Göttingen, 1772–3), 1: 67. In later editions, however, he discarded the expression “prehistory” and instead used “original world” (*Urwelt*), from Adam to Noah, and “preworld” (*Vorwelt*), from Noah to the reign of Cyrus the Great of Persia. On the concept of prehistory see U. Kösser, “Vorgeschichte,” in J. Ritter *et al.*, eds., *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, 13 vols. (1971–2007), 11: 1186–8; H. Zedelmaier, *Der Anfang der Geschichte: Studien zur Ursprungsdebatte im 18. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg, 2003), esp. 177–83; and D. Kelley, “The Rise of Prehistory,” *Journal of World History* 14/1 (2003), 1–40.

<sup>26</sup> Schlözer, *Vorstellung*, 1: 15.

<sup>27</sup> Also A. L. Schlözer, “On Historiography,” trans. H. D. Schmidt, *History and Theory* 18/1 (1979).

<sup>28</sup> Schlözer, *Vorstellung*, 1: 15.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 21.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 18.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 44–5.

for divine “omniscience” (*Allwissenheit*).<sup>32</sup> During the 1830s Ranke turned the status relationship between archive and armchair upside down. He convinced readers, colleagues, and students not only that archival work was independently purposeful, but also that proper history could only be written from within an archive.

The emergence of this Rankean school of archival research provoked strong reactions.<sup>33</sup> As early as 1837 the liberal Berlin historian Johann Gustav Droysen, who had studied under Hegel and remained inspired by his philosophy of history, complained that the new “Rankean school of sources” regarded “the accuracy of the facts as the only purpose of historical studies; this [accuracy] they think they achieve, when they examine the primary sources.”<sup>34</sup> Karl August Varnhagen von Ense, a pillar of Berlin’s intellectual community who during the 1820s had been a friend and supporter of Ranke, in 1847 condemned not only Ranke’s new politics, but also his “delusion that the essence of history is located in those materials that he is the first to open and use.”<sup>35</sup> In 1841 another critical observer, writing in the left-Hegelian *Hallische Jahrbücher*, noted the formation of a Rankean school based upon archival research. Ranke, he commented,

has not only more than any other of our historians reverted to the archive, the handwritten records and documents; but he also loves to create primarily, yes exclusively, from these . . . Only within these, he thinks, one can find thorough and secure knowledge; only from these, one can learn the true and original interrelationship between the events and their ultimate causes.<sup>36</sup>

The clearest example of Ranke’s new approach to history, the critic claimed, was his 1831 booklet about the conspiracy against Venice.

### III. DISCOVERING THE ARCHIVE

Already before 1831 Ranke had written about early modern history. His dissertation had been on the Greek historian Thucydides, but, since his student

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<sup>32</sup> B. G. Niebuhr, *Kleine historische und philologische Schriften*, 2 vols. (Bonn, 1828–43), 2: 1–19, quotes on 5 and 9.

<sup>33</sup> Also Baur, *Versuch über die Historik*, 112–23.

<sup>34</sup> J. G. Droysen, *Briefwechsel*, ed. R. Hübner, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1929), 1: 119.

<sup>35</sup> Karl August Varnhagen von Ense, *Werke*, ed. K. Feilchenfeldt, 5 vols. (Frankfurt am Main, 1987–94), 5: 420.

<sup>36</sup> Anonymous, “Die Berliner Historiker,” *Hallische Jahrbücher für deutsche Wissenschaft und Kunst* 4 (1841), 421–2, 425–7, 429–39, quote on 430. Günter Berg considered Karl Friedrich Köppen, a friend of Engels and Marx, the author of this article. Siegfried Baur has recently proposed Arnold Ruge as another possibility. G. Berg, *Leopold Ranke als akademischer Lehrer: Studien zu seinen Vorlesungen und seinem Geschichtsdenken* (Göttingen, 1968), 57; and Baur, *Versuch über die Historik*, 31, note 48.

days, he had cultivated an interest in the Reformation period.<sup>37</sup> In 1824 he published his first monograph, *Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494 bis 1534*, which often is quoted for his intention to write “how it actually was” (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*). Although the book had little popular appeal, it was well received among scholars, and earned him a position as extraordinary professor of history at the University of Berlin.

Shortly after his arrival in Berlin, in the spring of 1825, Ranke discovered a collection of forty-eight manuscript volumes in the Royal Library. The volumes contained *relazioni*—reports written by early modern Venetian diplomats about the politics and lives of other European countries.<sup>38</sup> Reading through these volumes, Ranke became increasingly intrigued. Already by the summer of 1825 he was planning an ambitious book, based upon these diplomatic reports, which would redefine European history, from the Reformation to the French Revolution.<sup>39</sup> This book never materialized, but, in 1827, his work with the Venetian sources in the Royal Library resulted in *Fürsten und Völker von Süd-Europa*, which carried the programmatic subtitle “Primarily from unpublished diplomatic reports.”<sup>40</sup>

To uncover more reports and expand his work on southern Europe, Ranke traveled to Austria in the early fall of 1827. Initially, he had only planned a short archival visit to Vienna, but, mesmerized by the treasures of foreign archives, he refused to return to his teaching duties at the University of Berlin and repeatedly begged the Prussian authorities for extensions of his leave—at one point inciting rumors in Berlin that he had converted to Catholicism.<sup>41</sup> Ranke finally returned in late March 1831, after more than three years in German, Austrian, and Italian archives.

Before leaving Berlin, Ranke had imagined what the foreign archives would be like. “How rich this archive must have been!” he exclaimed about Venice in *Fürsten und Völker von Süd-Europa*.<sup>42</sup> However, the daily archival work was unlike anything he could have anticipated. Apart from his intensive work with the forty-eight manuscript volumes in the Royal Library, Ranke had little archival

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<sup>37</sup> Also, J. Pelikan, “Leopold von Ranke as Historian of the Reformation: What Ranke did for the Reformation – What the Reformation did for Ranke,” in Iggers *et al.*, *Leopold von Ranke and the Shaping of the Historical Discipline*, 89–98.

<sup>38</sup> Also G. Benzoni, “Ranke’s Favorite Source: The Venetian Relazioni Impressions with Allusions to Later Historiography,” in Iggers *et al.*, *Leopold von Ranke and the Shaping of the Historical Discipline*, 45–57.

<sup>39</sup> Ranke, *Briefwerk*, 84–5.

<sup>40</sup> L. Ranke, *Fürsten und Völker von Süd-Europa im sechszehnten und siebzehnten Jahrhundert. Vornehmlich aus ungedruckten Gesandtschafts-Berichten* (Hamburg, 1827).

<sup>41</sup> Ranke, *Briefwerk*, 156–63.

<sup>42</sup> Ranke, *Fürsten und Völker*, viii.

experience. His first book was based upon printed sources. Only during his journey through Austria and Italy did Ranke fully convince himself that history and archival research were inseparable. In the archives he learned to view human history as a history of documents.

#### IV. DECONSTRUCTING HISTORIOGRAPHY

By Ranke's standards, *Ueber die Verschwörung gegen Venedig* was a very brief book. It contained only 141 short pages of analysis, followed by a forty-eight-page appendix of documents from the Venetian Archive. Not only this appendix, but also the composition and rhetorical style of the book revealed Ranke's "archival turn." The reader was not immediately shown "how it actually was" in Venice in 1618. This history, Ranke repeatedly explained, was not very interesting and probably irrelevant to modern-day readers. Only on page 98 did he tell the story of the French mercenary Jacques Pierre, who conspired with a group of fellow mercenaries in the Venetian service to attack and plunder the city, possibly aided by the Spanish viceroy of Naples, Pedro Téllez-Girón, Duke of Osuna.<sup>43</sup>

The drama of Ranke's book was not the drama of 1618, but the drama of Ranke's struggle with his sources. It recounted his investigations, his gathering of evidence, and his recording of testimonies from more or less reliable witnesses. The intention was not primarily to present an account of past events, but to explain to the reader how Ranke had uncovered these events. The main character in this story was not the deceitful Jacques Pierre, betraying the Venetian republic, but the heroic Leopold Ranke, facing the deceits of past historians of Venice. The first programmatic words of the book read,

The investigation, on which I venture, poses more than one difficulty. The authors, whom it concerns, often make unintended, and sometimes even deliberate, errors; many of the documents, which are presented to us, are not authentic; the actors themselves are faced with false as well as well-founded indictments. As I strive to recognize undeceived the authentic, and to discern the true course of these matters, it is my wish, to lead the reader out of this labyrinth and to a pure and satisfactory conviction.<sup>44</sup>

Ranke began the book with "the first reports," emerging in chronicles, letters, and printed pamphlets, shortly after the conspiracy had been exposed. He emphasized the context of these writings—when, where, and by whom they were written and read—not the context of the conspiracy itself. He also chose not (yet)

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<sup>43</sup> For a recent historiographical overview see R. Mackenney, "'A Plot Discover'd.' Myth, Legend, and the 'Spanish' Conspiracy against Venice in 1618," in J. Martin *et al.*, eds., *Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State 1297–1797* (Baltimore, MD, 2000), 185–216.

<sup>44</sup> Ranke, *Ueber die Verschwörung*, 1.

to deal with documents that only were known to the Venetian authorities. Ranke then turned to the historiography. The first part of the historiography described pro-Venetian and anti-Spanish interpretations. Ranke discussed the official Venetian history of the events, written by Battista Nani half a century later, and inspected the seventeenth-century Savoyard historian Abbé de St Real, his sources, and his Venetian imitators. The second part of the historiography described what Ranke called the “opposition.” He especially focused upon two recent histories by the Prussian diplomat Jean Pierre de Chambrier, and the French historian Pierre Daru.<sup>45</sup> The conclusion Ranke drew from his historiographical readings was that none of the previous accounts of the events of 1618 were trustworthy. Some of these accounts, he admonished, could not even be labeled history. To reach this verdict, Ranke did not compare the historiography with “how it actually was.” Instead, he pointed to disagreement between the texts and inconsistencies within the texts. He showed the reader how one approached historical narratives and sources before one knew the entire picture. Even more than his 1824 *Zur Kritik neuerer Geschichtsschreiber*, Ranke’s book about Venice demonstrated his philological training and the increasing influence of philological methods upon German historiography during the early nineteenth century.<sup>46</sup>

A dramatic example of Ranke’s comparative and philological techniques was his exposure of a collection of false documents, reproduced in an anonymous manuscript entitled *Sommario della congiura contra la citta di Venetia*.<sup>47</sup> This summary, which could be found in Paris and several Italian libraries, had heavily influenced St Real, and, through him, many later historians. It was, more or less, the basis of the pro-Venetian interpretative tradition. Ranke found several names and dates in the summary that were inconsistent with those in other contemporary documents. Some of the names had also been misplaced or misspelled. These small inconsistencies led Ranke to a daring conclusion. Not only was the summary mistaken, its mistakes also descended from a much larger forgery. The presumed documents in the summary were not authentic, but were forgeries that had been produced and sold for profit. With the authoritative voice

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<sup>45</sup> Also C. Povolo, “The Creation of Venetian Historiography,” in Martin *et al.*, *Venice Reconsidered*, 491–519. On the role and political significance of Spain in Italian historiography see also A. Musi, ed., *Alle origini di una nazione: Antispagnolismo e identità italiana* (Milan, 2003).

<sup>46</sup> Also N. Hammerstein, “Der Anteil des 18. Jahrhunderts an der Ausbildung der historischen Schule des 19. Jahrhunderts,” in K. Hammer *et al.*, eds., *Historische Forschung im 18. Jahrhundert* (Bonn, 1976), 432–50; and U. Muhlack, “Historie und Philologie,” in Bödeker *et al.*, *Aufklärung und Geschichte*, 49–81.

<sup>47</sup> Ranke, *Ueber die Verschwörung*, 12.

of the archival researcher, Ranke finished his detailed critique:

This large fraud points us to a school of forgers, who, to sell what they did not have, instead produced something that was in demand. For good money, these people sold documents, which would have been invaluable if they had been authentic, from the earliest times of the Republic to the houses of the most revered nobles; they even imitated the worm holes of such old paper. However, [the forgery] was not done flawlessly.<sup>48</sup>

More than a third of the way into the book, Ranke ended his historiographical overview with a sad conclusion: "After so many efforts, we are still almost standing where one stood immediately after May 1618."<sup>49</sup> He had not learned anything from two centuries' cumulative literature, but instead he had proven an important point: the archive was the only proper site for the production of historical knowledge. An author who did not have an intimate and personal knowledge of the archival documents would only reproduce tradition or expose his own fantasies. He would not write history. History writing could not be separated from the collecting of historical evidence. History only came into being through the archive. Shortly after his return to Berlin in 1831, Ranke clarified his position to his students. In an introductory lecture on universal history, Ranke distinguished the earliest undocumented history from world history, as Schlözer had done in 1772. However, unlike Schlözer and Niebuhr, who argued for the use of antiquities and monuments as well as rationalized reconstruction and divination, Ranke insisted that only written records could keep history alive:

In and for itself, history embraces the life of humankind through all times. However, all too much of this [life] is lost or unknown . . . Some of what has been described is lost, some has never been described—all this is draped with death; only those, whom history considers, are not entirely dead, their essence and existence still act, when they are understood: with the loss of memory the actual death emerges . . . I think that [periods without documentary traces] should be excluded from history. For good reasons, as they contradict the principle of documentary research.<sup>50</sup>

## V. RECONSTRUCTING THE ARCHIVE

The culmination of Ranke's 1831 book was his description of the great Venetian archive, which, during the 1810s and 1820s had been gathered in the former convent of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, after negotiations with French and Austrian authorities and squabbles between local archivists.<sup>51</sup> Ranke opened with

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>50</sup> L. von Ranke, *Aus Werk und Nachlass*, ed. W. P. Fuchs, 4 vols. (Munich, 1964–75), 4: 84.

<sup>51</sup> Ranke, *Ueber die Verschwörung*, 53–62. Also R. Minutelli, "Archivi e biblioteche," in M. Isnenghi et al., eds., *Storia di Venezia: L'Ottocento e il novecento*, 3 vols. (Rome, 2002), 2:

a guided tour and engaged the reader in what Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer call “virtual witnessing.”<sup>52</sup> The historian’s work in libraries and archives was inherently solitary, but Ranke invited the reader to visualize the archive and imagine himself in Ranke’s place. He not only listed the many documents that one could find on the shelves, but also described the building, the rooms, the light falling through the windows, and the coolness of the air in August.

Ranke compared this tour through the archives with that of the ordinary tourist through the streets of Venice. While the tourist only sensed, the historian and his readers witnessed. The city’s palaces, churches, and market squares made the visitor remember the past, but, Ranke claimed,

if one wants to proceed from these loose inklings to a view [*Anschauung*] of past existence, if one wants to become acquainted with the inner driving forces, which provided this being with constancy, then one must move to these [archival] rooms, and seek advice in the vellum treasures. Only that part of life, which has been stored in writings, can once again be clearly understood.<sup>53</sup>

Inside the archive one acquired what French Romantics later would call the “mind’s eye” or “second sight” of the historian.<sup>54</sup>

Allowing his readers to witness the research process, Ranke diminished their spatial distance from the Italian archive and concealed their dependence upon his personal credibility. His pictorial description of the Frari, and his appendix with sources from the archive, made the “practices of place” of archival fieldwork resemble the “placeless practices” of laboratories and museums. With Ranke’s book in hand, one could enter the Frari from anywhere in the world. In his description, archival work did not demand local knowledge or craft skills. The archive had no doors or opening hours. No other users inhabited the archive. No restrictive librarians or archivists were standing between the researcher and his sources. Ranke and his virtual visitor strolled freely through the rooms and explored the documents as they appeared in front of them. They had few problems finding documents or understanding them. History immediately presented itself to them, even before they had started reading. “Already by the sizes of diverse

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1081–122, esp. 1084–92; and C. Povoio, *Il romanziere e l’archivista. De un processo veneziano del ’600 all’anonimo manoscritto dei Promessi Sposi* (Venice, 1993), esp. 71–95.

<sup>52</sup> S. Shapin and S. Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* (Princeton, NJ, 1989), 60–5.

<sup>53</sup> Ranke, *Ueber die Verschwörung*, 54.

<sup>54</sup> J. Tollebeek, “Seeing the Past with the Mind’s Eye: The Consecration of the Romantic Historian,” *Clio: A Journal of Literature, History and the Philosophy of History* 29/2 (2000), 167–91.

sections of these papers,” Ranke explained, “we again recognize some ways of life of the Venetians.”<sup>55</sup>

The archival work was also not disturbed by considerations of the outside world. Although placed in Venice, the Frari escaped place. Personal, financial, or political concerns did not influence Ranke's choice of topics or sources. Inside the archive, the historian's only allegiances were to God, truth, and the silenced—and otherwise dead—voices of the past. “God doesn't want,” Ranke assured,

that I should hide or gloss over some act of violence, regardless if [this act of violence] was committed by the rulers or by their opponents. Only the defense of those, who no longer can defend themselves, to bring the truth into daylight, I will always consider one of the most important duties of history.<sup>56</sup>

Not only was the outside world irrelevant inside the archive; what happened inside the archive was also irrelevant to the outside world. Ranke repeatedly emphasized that his book was neither entertaining nor useful. “Not only,” he announced already on page one, “can I promise no one the pleasure that one is perhaps used to acquire from unconditional historical accounts, I cannot even promise knowledge of great events and very important circumstances.”<sup>57</sup> “I don't know,” he declared before entering Venetian archives, “if it is worth so much effort to come to the bottom of this matter.”<sup>58</sup> While describing the many documents in the archive, he apologized to the reader that he still occupied himself with “an event of so little significance, as our conspiracy.”<sup>59</sup>

## VI. ROMANCING THE ARCHIVE

Ranke's private letters from the journey through Austria and Italy reveal that the printed description of his work did not tell the whole truth and that his research did depend upon local conditions and craft skills. In his letters, Ranke reported how he disciplined himself for the work in the archives. He discussed how he structured his day and planned his diet according to the needs of archival research.<sup>60</sup> More importantly, the letters reveal how the many hours in the archives changed Ranke's understanding of himself as a historian and as a human being.

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<sup>55</sup> Ranke, *Ueber die Verschwörung*, 54–5.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>60</sup> Ranke, *Briefwerk*, 121–2, 131–2, 172, 194.



Ranke's style of letter writing was confessional, anecdotal, and entertaining. His letters most resembled the sentimental travelogues of German Romantics.<sup>61</sup> Ranke replaced English landscapes, Italian castle ruins, and rosy-cheeked millers' daughters with early modern diplomatic reports, but imitated the sentiment. For the Romantics, Nicholas Jardine argues, the "most authentic reunion with nature requires not the discursive exercise of the mind, but immediate engagement: the innocent gaze of the child (Novalis), the sensitivity of the nervously disordered (Schubert), the absorption of the artist-genius lost in the work of creation (Schelling)."<sup>62</sup> Much the same could be said of Ranke's reunion with history. While Ranke's 1831 book emphasized the visual immediacy of the past, his letters contained the entire register of Romantic emotions and experiences.<sup>63</sup>

To his brother Heinrich, a Lutheran minister, Ranke described how his studies catapulted him between desperation and joy; how, at times, he felt the presence of God among the fragments he studied and, at other times, he sensed nothing but hopelessness and confusion.<sup>64</sup> With his friend Heinrich Ritter, Ranke discussed his erotic experiences inside as well as outside the archives. While detailing an encounter with a scantily clad young Czech woman, with whom he shared his overcoat during a *Spaziergang* outside Prague, he suddenly interrupted himself: "I am terrified that I am more long-winded about this than about all the manuscripts."<sup>65</sup> Later, rhapsodizing about the Italian collections in Vienna, he declared, "Here I have splendid and sweet lovers' trysts with the object of my desire, which is a beautiful Italian woman. And I hope we bring forth a Romano-Germanic wonder-child."<sup>66</sup> Sometimes, Ranke compared himself to a Romantic explorer. He saw his future as "a Columbus of Venetian history."<sup>67</sup> Later, he lowered his ambitions to "becoming if not a Columbus then a kind of Cook for the many beautiful, unknown islands of world history."<sup>68</sup> At other times, employing a metaphor especially popular among German Romantics, Ranke

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<sup>61</sup> Also P. J. Brenner, *Der Reisebericht in der deutschen Literatur: Eine Forschungsüberblick als Vorstudie zu einer Gattungsgeschichte* (Tübingen, 1990), 329–44.

<sup>62</sup> N. Jardine, "Naturphilosophie and the Kingdoms of Nature," in *idem et al.*, *Cultures of Natural History*, 230–45, quote on 231.

<sup>63</sup> Also U. Muhlack, "Leopold Ranke, seine Geschichtsschreibung und seine Briefe," in L. von Ranke, *Briefwechsel. Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, ed. U. Muhlack et al. (Munich, 2007), 1: 3–49.

<sup>64</sup> Ranke, *Briefwerk*, 128, 130, 154–5, 186–7, 208.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 121–2.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

compared the archives to the mines.<sup>69</sup> In Vienna, shortly before leaving for Italy, Ranke slipped the following note into one of the archival packets:

I compare this library to a mine. However, the prince brings it together. Benevolent overseers ensure that it is a pleasure to work here. To each one belongs what he hauls out and, in the end, the purest gold is still here.  
L. Ranke, Professor in Berlin.<sup>70</sup>

Ranke increasingly viewed his life from the perspective of the archive. After a year abroad, he confessed to his brother, "I have now become a gatherer . . . Sometimes I feel the need to gather myself."<sup>71</sup> In the summer of 1829 he started to doubt if anywhere in this world could be considered his "home."<sup>72</sup> By the summer of 1830 he had learned to overcome this feeling of homesickness—this time longing for Rome and not Germany—through more archival research.<sup>73</sup> After more than two years abroad, archival research had become his entire existence. To historical research, Ranke wrote to his brother, "I have been called, to this I have also been born, here is my sufferings and my joys, my life and my destiny is defined through this!"<sup>74</sup> His life, he wrote to Ritter, had "no other purpose."<sup>75</sup> Jo Tollebeek has distinguished between the "two fantasies" of the archive: the Romantic fantasy of direct contact with the past and the scientific fantasy of objectivity and completeness.<sup>76</sup> For Ranke these two fantasies were not distinguishable. His Romantic relationship with archives allowed him to overcome not only the deceits of past historians, but also his loyalties to his country, to politics, and to friends and family. Critical philology demanded imagination and immediate contact with past writers. Passion paved the way for a-perspectival objectivity.<sup>77</sup>

During the 1830s Ranke employed a similar technique to discipline the students attending his historical exercises at the University of Berlin.<sup>78</sup> Many of his early students described his peculiar mixture of Romantic imagination, emotional engagement, and critical philology. According to Ranke, Heinrich von Sybel explained, the personality of a past writer "cannot be defined, as in chemical

<sup>69</sup> Also T. Ziolkowski, *German Romanticism and Its Institutions* (Princeton, NJ, 1990), 18–63.

<sup>70</sup> Ranke, *Neue Briefe*, 108, n. 2.

<sup>71</sup> Ranke, *Briefwerk*, 164.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 214.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

<sup>76</sup> J. Tollebeek, "'Turn'd to Dust and Tears': Revisiting the Archive," *History and Theory* 43 (2004), 237–48.

<sup>77</sup> Also L. Daston, "Objectivity and the Escape from Perspective," *Social Studies of Science* 22 (1992), 597–618.

<sup>78</sup> Eskildsen, "Leopold von Ranke."

formulae of composite matters; it can only be grasped with imaginative fantasy, that is, through a process completely analogous to the artistic.”<sup>79</sup> He instructed them, Georg Waitz recalled, “that history is both a science and an art, which must not only be learned, but also received [*empfangen*].”<sup>80</sup> Ranke’s passion also motivated the students to detach themselves from the world. Amidst the troubles and joys of historical research, outside loyalties seemed irrelevant. Another founding member of the Rankean school of the 1830s, Wilhelm von Giesebrecht, remembered the enchanted atmosphere:

As he worked in front of our eyes, we were enraptured to work ourselves. What counted was solely the application of the true method in historical research, which was not taught in abstract rules but directly in the exercise, either when the master presented the objects which currently had his interest or when he subdued our papers to his criticism. He erupted in joyful laughter and true jubilation, when he succeeded in annihilating a false tradition and uncovering the true historical event.<sup>81</sup>

## VII. ACCESSING THE ARCHIVE

Ranke’s letters from Italy and Austria also reveal some of the practical problems of archival research. His book’s description of the open and transparent Venetian archive had little to do with Ranke’s actual experiences. During the journey, Ranke used considerable time and energy gaining access to archives. And even once inside, many documents remained inaccessible and had to be released one at a time. Ranke’s favorite sources were diplomatic reports, which were normally confidential. Civil servants did not save secret notes, encrypted documents, and diplomatic correspondences to aid visiting historians. Openness reduced the value of the archive as an administrative tool and possibly damaged the administration. The centralization of archives during the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth, such as the Viennese Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv in 1749, the French Archives nationales after 1789, the reorganized Prussian Staatsarchiv after 1810, and the Venetian Frari archive after 1815, did not necessarily result in more transparency. Centralization of archives primarily served the consolidation of power.<sup>82</sup> The French National Assembly in 1794 declared the new national

<sup>79</sup> H. von Sybel, *Vorträge und Abhandlungen* (Munich, 1897), 302.

<sup>80</sup> G. Waitz, *Die historischen Übungen zu Göttingen. Glückwunschsreiben an Leopold von Ranke zum Tage der Feier seines fünfzigjährigen Doctorjubiläums. 20. Februar 1867* (Göttingen, 1867), 3.

<sup>81</sup> Giesebrecht, *Gedächtnissrede auf Leopold von Ranke*, 14–15.

<sup>82</sup> For example L. Kammerhofer, “Die Gründung des Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchivs 1749,” in M. Csáky *et al.*, eds., *Speicher des Gedächtnisses: Bibliotheken, Museen, Archive*, 2 vols. (Vienna, 2001), 2: 81–99; and Ernst, *Im Namen der Geschichte*, 586–613.

archives “the central depository for the entire Republic” and made access a right of all citizens, but, in practice, access remained limited and a public reading room was not installed before 1847.<sup>83</sup> The old monarchies of Europe did not share the French democratic sentiment and were even less inclined to allow the public to inspect their secrets.

As early as 1818 the Prussian minister of culture, Karl vom Stein zum Altenstein, recognized this problem for historical research and proposed that the Prussian archives be divided between documents vital to contemporary politics and those “which merely can be attributed a historical value.”<sup>84</sup> The political section of the archives, Altenstein argued, “can, according to its nature, only be accessible to few” and, therefore, “fruitful use [of the archives] for scholarship has until now not been feasible.”<sup>85</sup> The Prussian chancellor, Karl August von Hardenberg, rejected his minister’s proposal, since “a borderline between the two sections cannot be drawn with accuracy.”<sup>86</sup> A division of the archives would not only harm the government, but also historians and philologists, who would lose access to documents in the political section. Hardenberg only made documents from before 1500, the upper limit of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, immediately accessible to historians.

The borders between political and scholarly documents were no less blurry in Austria and Italy. In Vienna, no guidelines for the use of the archives existed, and the central administration determined questions of access on an individual basis. During the first decades of the nineteenth century the administration was extremely cautious and, for periods, the archives were almost completely closed to scholars. Access to documents from secret government archives, such as diplomatic reports, Metternich dictated in 1818, demanded government authorization. Without such authorization “nothing shall be released from the archive . . . not even when the content seems entirely harmless.”<sup>87</sup> Even when access had been granted, the director of the archive carefully examined archival packets for compromising material before showing them to visitors.<sup>88</sup> In Italy, where many documents were within private collections or scattered between

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<sup>83</sup> J. S. Milligan, “‘What is an Archive?’ in the History of Modern France,” in Burton, *Archive Stories*, 159–83, quote on 161.

<sup>84</sup> R. Koser, ed., *Die Neuordnung des Preussischen Archivwesens durch den Staatskanzler Fürsten von Hardenberg* (Leipzig, 1904), 6.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>87</sup> L. Bittner, *Gesamtinventar des Wiener Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchivs*, 5 vols. (Vienna, 1936–40), 1: 163–9, 167.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 175–80.

small city states, the diplomatic game over archival access became even more complicated.<sup>89</sup>

If the archives allowed Ranke to forget the outside world, getting into the archives demanded connections in this world. When Ranke reached his first destination, Vienna, in late September 1827, he wrote to Bettina von Arnim: “You know what I have to search for next: libraries and archives, and the persons who can pave my way to these.”<sup>90</sup> During the rest of his journey he carefully cultivated contacts with civil servants, noble families, and other dignitaries who possessed the influence to open archival doors. Already before leaving Berlin, Ranke had obtained letters of recommendation from Prussian officials.<sup>91</sup> Later, Prussian diplomats in Vienna and Florence interceded on his behalf.<sup>92</sup> When he discovered Alexander von Humboldt’s popularity in Italy, he wrote to friends in Germany to secure himself a letter from the scientist.<sup>93</sup>

Ranke’s most vital contacts were at the Viennese court. Friedrich von Gentz especially proved an invaluable ally. Gentz was one of the foremost intellectual figures of the European reaction.<sup>94</sup> He had been secretary to the Congress of Vienna and was one of the chief architects of the Carlsbad Decrees of 1819, which limited the freedom of the press and of universities. More importantly, Gentz was a close associate of Prince Metternich. In Vienna, a Prussian diplomat on 28 September 1827 applied on behalf of Ranke for archival access, but the director of the archive, Josef Knechtl, initially recommended that the administration should deny him access, since he was a foreigner and it would be impossible to censor properly the large Italian collections. Only after Gentz’s personal intervention, and a meeting with Metternich, could Ranke enter the archive, on 13 October, despite the director’s complaints.<sup>95</sup> A few months later, Ranke explained to Varnhagen how this was negotiated:

Concerning the archive, everything appeared to fail. Baron von Maltzahn, who occupies himself with this matter, after some time called me to him and read me a letter, as utterly negative as ever possible, from the State Chancellery: ‘Too recent history. Rules. A stranger to the archive’ . . . Fortunately, however, a man was interested in the matter, who had the inclination and capability: Mr von Gentz. He also called me to him, and indeed to the

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<sup>89</sup> Ranke, *Briefwerk*, 171.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 191; and Bittner, *Gesamtinventar*, 1: 182.

<sup>93</sup> Ranke, *Briefwerk*, 171.

<sup>94</sup> B. Dorn, *Friedrich von Gentz und Europa: Studien zu Stabilität und Revolution 1802–1822* (Bonn, 1993); and G. Kronenbitter, *Wort und Macht: Friedrich Gentz als politischer Schriftsteller* (Berlin, 1994).

<sup>95</sup> Bittner, *Gesamtinventar*, 1: 182–3.

Prince . . . that [Metternich] knew my situation and appeared to think much good of me, impressed me considerably. The matter was immediately decided . . . The next day, I gave Gentz a slip of paper, without heading or signature, only with a more detailed description of what I was searching for. This [slip] was delivered to the archive.<sup>96</sup>

Parts of the Italian collections in the Viennese archive remained inaccessible and demanded new authorizations. To continue his work, Ranke developed an intimate relationship with Gentz. On 9 December 1827 he wrote to Ritter about his frequent meetings with Gentz since their first encounter in October: "Not seldom I visit him after dinner and always find him well-disposed and as helpful as then."<sup>97</sup> According to Knechtel, Ranke's archival privileges were unprecedented, even among Austrian historians.<sup>98</sup>

Also in Italy, Ranke encountered problems with archival access. The Frari proved especially troublesome. When Ranke first arrived in Venice in October 1828, he was allowed to peep into the archive, but not to read his treasured diplomatic reports. "With agony," Ranke wrote to his publisher on 12 October, "I have spotted my treasure, the final reports, from a distance; little protected, without bindings or order, held together with strings, and nonetheless not to be reached immediately."<sup>99</sup> Since Venice was under Austrian control, Ranke wrote to Gentz on 17 October. The distance from Vienna, however, made it impossible for Gentz personally to oversee Ranke's work at informal meetings. On 9 January 1829 Ranke complained that, despite Metternich's support, "even now no definite decision has followed as these matters not only pass through different ministries, but also are sent here for assessment and must be returned to Vienna."<sup>100</sup> The same year, however, the Austrian government bypassed the local archivists and granted Ranke an unusually generous authorization to see all documents dating from before the French Revolution.<sup>101</sup>

Ranke's Romantic relationship with his sources, and his new self-identification as archival researcher, made him feel increasingly passionately about his patrons at the Viennese court. After their first meeting in the fall of 1827, Ranke praised Metternich's "fresh, spirited, stately personality" and confessed to Varnhagen, "Do you know what I thought when I left? That, in the end, the effort to acquaint oneself with those people who are in the highest places and estates normally

<sup>96</sup> Ranke, *Briefwerk*, 126–7.

<sup>97</sup> L. von Ranke, *Sämmtliche Werke*, 54 vols. (Leipzig, 1867–90), 53/54: 181.

<sup>98</sup> Bittner, *Gesamtinventar*, 1: 182–3.

<sup>99</sup> Ranke, *Neue Briefe*, 109.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>101</sup> Ranke, *Briefwerk*, 169–70. Also Tucci, "Ranke Storico di Venezia," esp. 3–18; and *idem*, "Ranke and the Venetian Document Market," in Iggers *et al.*, *Leopold von Ranke and the Shaping of the Historical Discipline*, 99–107, esp. 100.

pays off. Honestly, I am for now somewhat bought [*bestochen*].”<sup>102</sup> A year later, in January 1829, while his case was pending between Venice and Vienna, he had forgotten his reservations and critical distance, and declared to an Austrian friend, “I truly venerate your Prince Metternich. It is surely most noble that he offhandedly has permitted my access to the final reports of this archive.”<sup>103</sup> After finally entering the Venetian archive, in August 1830, he considered his “obligations to the Austrian government” as “extraordinary.”<sup>104</sup> Immersed in his work with the Venetian final reports, and probably writing on his book about the Venetian conspiracy, he thankfully wrote to Gentz on 26 September 1830:

when a human being, whoever he is, achieves what he honestly and eagerly wishes for, and what is necessary for the realization of the purpose of his life, then he feels very obliged to those, whom he can thank for this. I simply consider it the result of your recommendation to His Highness Prince Metternich that everything goes well, and without significant difficulties, with my current endeavors in Venice, as before in Vienna . . . In the archive, I have consequently been received as a good friend.<sup>105</sup>

In his 1831 book Ranke also expressed his gratitude for “the extraordinary favor with which both of the two great German governments [the Prussian and the Austrian] have honored me undeservingly.”<sup>106</sup> However, Metternich and Gentz’s favors were not given without reason and certainly were not the result of unconditional love for academic freedom. Even if Ranke preferred to see his writings as independent from politics, he also knew that Vienna expected some guarantees, especially considering the recent eruption of revolutionary passions across Europe. On 26 September 1830, in his thankful letter to Gentz, Ranke assured him that even “if I had had the hatred against Austria of a Frenchman from the extreme left, it would be hard for me to bring forth anything from this material, which could harm your cause in public opinion.”<sup>107</sup> He even considered publishing some of the documents he had uncovered, since “the nature of these sources corresponds with my own loyalty towards a country, which has treated me with such extraordinary liberality.”<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Ranke, *Briefwerk*, 126–7.

<sup>103</sup> Ranke, *Neue Briefe*, 113.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 137–8.

<sup>105</sup> Ranke, *Briefwerk*, 220–21.

<sup>106</sup> Ranke, *Ueber die Verschwörung*, 57.

<sup>107</sup> Ranke, *Briefwerk*, 221.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 211.

## VIII. ACTION AND REACTION IN THE ARCHIVES

In the fall of 1832 the poet Heinrich Heine, who had befriended Ranke during a visit to Venice in 1828, distinguished between the new political Ranke, writing openly in support of the Prussian government, and his previous identity as “a quaint talent for cutting out small historical figurines and gluing them picturesquely next to one another, a good spirit, as cozy as mutton with turnip from Teltow, an innocent human being.”<sup>109</sup> However, Ranke's figurines were not entirely innocuous. Ranke and his students, Peter Burke argues, were reactionaries in a historiographical sense.<sup>110</sup> They rejected the Enlightenment schools of history writing that focused upon intellectual, cultural, and social history, and returned to the history of events. They ignored the innovators and scientists whom historians from Voltaire to Schlözer placed at the center of their narratives, and reduced the people, as the *Hallische Jahrbücher* complained in 1841, to “suffering, passive, exoteric masses.”<sup>111</sup> This reaction against Enlightenment history writing was not unrelated to the concurrent reaction against Enlightenment political thought.

Ranke's archival research practices helped connect his historiographical reaction to the broader political reaction. Political figures like Friedrich von Gentz and Prince Metternich controlled the access to the archives. Thus, before a single archival packet had been opened, political concerns had colored the outcome. Ranke denied that political considerations would make him ignore inconvenient evidence, but, in his letters to Gentz, he recognized the value and significance of their shared political outlook and even offered to publish material that supported the Viennese position in the heated political climate of his day.

Ranke's attempt to detach the archive from the world, and to make his “practices of place” resemble “placeless practices,” also concealed, even to himself, another connection between his approach to historical research and past and present politics. Inside the archive, Ranke's work was also limited by political decisions beyond his control. Diplomats and higher civil servants had produced most of the documents that fascinated him. The documents had been saved, and collected in archives, because the authorities needed them for future reference. During the early nineteenth century, as the centralization of archives and high-level government involvement in questions about archival access testify, archives were considered of crucial political importance. Thus the interests and concerns of civil servants determined the limits of Ranke's historical work. Especially

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<sup>109</sup> H. Heine, *Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke*, ed. M. Windfuhr, 23 vols. (Hamburg, 1973–97), XII(1): 70.

<sup>110</sup> P. Burke, “Ranke the Reactionary,” in Iggers *et al.*, *Leopold von Ranke and the Shaping of the Historical Discipline*, 36–44.

<sup>111</sup> Anonymous, “Die Berliner Historiker,” 432.



considering Ranke's strong Romantic identification with his sources, his books were necessarily written from the viewpoint of the state. The state archive as site for the production of historical knowledge also determined the content of that knowledge, as advocates for alternative archives, postcolonial theorists, and postmodern critics contend to this day.<sup>112</sup> In 1841 the *Hallische Jahrbücher* remarked,

It often happens that progress and life completely escape both the administration and the diplomacy, and that historic moments also only can be encountered where one does not encounter the government and its archive . . . In his studies as well as in his life, Ranke has had so much commerce with diplomats that he himself completely has become a diplomat, and sees everything through the eyes of a diplomat. He . . . has been called an "Austrian historian," and it is impossible to deny, that his view of states and people and their development is very Austrian: nothing is permitted to happen from below, but everything must be made and controlled from the top in utter secrecy.<sup>113</sup>

Ranke's new history "from the top" did share some important characteristics with the social and cultural histories of the Enlightenment. The Revolution of 1789, as Reinhart Koselleck and recently Peter Fritzsche claim, unsettled the Enlightenment's sense of historical continuity.<sup>114</sup> History no longer promised continuous progress, but foreboded disorder, disruption, and violence. Many early nineteenth-century writers felt caught in a "transitional period" between a past lost and a future unknown.<sup>115</sup> Ranke never embraced the progressive and universal viewpoint of Schlözer and other Enlightenment historians, but he reestablished continuity and diminished the threat of history.<sup>116</sup> He revived the history of events, but he still denied these events the ability to change the course of history suddenly or permanently. Much like contemporary German artists and architects, as Heine noted, he transformed history into an ornament. History was an instrument for identification and reassurance, not a call for individual action

<sup>112</sup> See note 18.

<sup>113</sup> Anonymous, "Die Berliner Historiker," 431.

<sup>114</sup> R. Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt am Main, 2000), esp. 67–86; and P. Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present: Modern Time and the Melancholy of History* (Cambridge, MA, 2004), esp. 11–54.

<sup>115</sup> G. Blix, "Charting the 'Transitional Period': The Emergence of Modern Time in the Nineteenth Century," *History and Theory* 45/1 (2006), 51–71.

<sup>116</sup> Leonard Krieger advocated the viewpoint that Ranke late in his life turned to universal history with his unfinished *Weltgeschichte*. Krieger, *Ranke: The Meaning of History*, 320–43. However, the topic and title of Ranke's book was not "universal history," as it is often erroneously translated into English, but "world history." On Ranke and historical continuity see also R. Vierhaus, "Die Idee der Kontinuität im historiographischen Werk Leopold von Rankes," in Mommsen, *Leopold von Ranke und die moderne Geschichtswissenschaft*, 166–75.

or radical reform. Hence after 1840, as John Toews documents, Ranke's historical works proved an important component in the antirevolutionary identity politics of the Prussian regime of Friedrich Wilhelm IV.<sup>117</sup> In 1841 Ranke was even appointed official historiographer of the Prussian state.

Ranke's 1831 book foreshadowed this antirevolutionary employment of history. The conspiracy of 1618 was a failed conspiracy without long-term consequences. Only politicizing writers, such as Pierre Daru, had rendered the episode dangerous to the existing order. The historian's task was to unmask such corrosive reinterpretations. In February 1831, in the same letter in which he first proposed to Perthes that he publish the book, Ranke emphasized how such sound German scholarship could serve as a counterweight to the radicalized "French" voices in the newspapers. In Germany he found "so much love of calm development" that a violent revolution was preventable. The Germans, he assured Perthes,

are not like the French. Our mind is not reflected in the newspapers . . . We must face them upon their field in open battle and not let the world keep the misapprehension that we are German Frenchmen. However, even without this, I have confidence that we will endure, if we do not abandon ourselves.<sup>118</sup>

In 1832, in the editorial introduction to his *Historisch-politische Zeitschrift*, which focused upon the Restoration and the July Revolution, Ranke openly allied himself, and the emerging historical discipline, with the conservative Prussian bureaucracy committed to gradual, controlled reform. "True politics," Ranke explained, "does not abandon its past for a possibly deceitful promise; it aims at calm progress, a gradual secure development; it keeps with its line."<sup>119</sup> In his own time, Ranke complained, "the extremists set the tone."<sup>120</sup> The historian should limit the destructive effects of "political theories," support the existing order, and prove both liberal revolutionaries and conservative counterrevolutionaries wrong. Proper history underscored continuity as well as gradual progress. "Nothing is more urgent," Ranke emphasized, "than to keep in memory the distinction between regular progress and impatient destructive change, between reasonable perseverance and one-sided defense of what's outdated and now lifeless."<sup>121</sup>

1831 was a remarkable year for proposing such a model for proper historical research. The July Revolution and its European aftermath, as Ranke recognized, proved that ideas were powerful and that civil servants did not control the

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<sup>117</sup> Toews, *Becoming Historical*, esp. 372–418.

<sup>118</sup> Ranke, *Briefwerk*, 231–2.

<sup>119</sup> L. von Ranke, *Historisch-politische Zeitschrift*, 2 vols. (Hamburg, 1832–6), 1: 1–8, 2.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 1.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 1: 3.

course of history. Since the Congress of Vienna, European governments had toiled together to secure the status quo. Despite these united efforts, most of the continent was suddenly gripped by revolutionary fervor. At this crucial point in European history, Ranke introduced a new model for the production of historical knowledge that favored the viewpoints of civil servants and administrators and denied the possibilities of individual action and sudden changes. Late in his life, Ranke even claimed that his works would not have been possible if the revolutions had succeeded. Objective history and revolutionary politics were incompatible:

Among the events that we have experienced, one recognizes the defeat of the revolutionary forces, which make the regular development of world history impossible. Had these [revolutionary forces] sustained their position, then one could not have talked of further advancement of the historical forces, not even of a disinterested view [*Anschaung*] of these [historical forces]. A world history, in the objective sense, would have become impossible.<sup>122</sup>

Still, the revolutions of 1789, 1830, and 1848 did sustain their positions and lay the foundations for the constitutional states of modern Europe. The Rankean school survived and adjusted to the needs and demands of the civil servants and administrators of these new constitutional states. While Metternich's European order slowly crumbled, Ranke's new model for historical research grew stronger and, at the end of the nineteenth century, even dominated the historical discipline within countries with revolutionary pasts such as France and the US.<sup>123</sup>

## IX. ARCHIVE AND DISCIPLINE

The most enduring context of Ranke's research model was the historical discipline itself. The archive never offered the same advantages as the laboratories of physicists and chemists or the museums of nineteenth-century anthropologists and archaeologists. Archival research remained fieldwork and the archive did not function as common training ground for future historians. In this, however, the historical discipline resembled geology and biology or even anthropology and archaeology, as these fields during the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth were transformed into university disciplines and increasingly focused upon fieldwork and excavations.<sup>124</sup> Despite its deficiencies, the archive served as a model site for the production of historical knowledge and empowered what

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<sup>122</sup> Ranke, *Sämtliche Werke*, 51/52: 597.

<sup>123</sup> For a recent overview see G. Lingelbach, *Klio macht Karriere: Die Institutionalisierung der Geschichtswissenschaft in Frankreich und den USA in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen, 2003).

<sup>124</sup> Also J. Callmer *et al.*, *Die Anfänge der ur- und frühgeschichtlichen Archäologie als akademisches Fach (1890–1930) im europäischen Vergleich* (Rahden, 2006).

the chair of the University of Chicago's Department of History, John Franklin Jameson, in 1902 approvingly coined the "professorial régime" within history.<sup>125</sup>

Rankean exercises, which during the nineteenth century were institutionalized in historical seminars, offered an alternative venue for the training of students.<sup>126</sup> As the discipline globalized, such seminars were established across the world.<sup>127</sup> If history students seldom were working in archives, they acquired their disciplinary identity as archival researchers, including the philological preference for written texts, through these seminars. The "function" of the modern history professor, Jameson explained in 1902, was "in writing or causing young men to write, or in showing them how others have written, and how they themselves might write."<sup>128</sup> When Frederick Jackson Turner started teaching historical seminars in Madison, Wisconsin in the 1890s, he adopted the motto that "all history is comment on a text."<sup>129</sup> In France, Charles-Victor Langlois and Charles Seignobos opened their 1898 methodological textbook, intended for students in historical seminars, with this declaration: "History is done with documents . . . Lacking documents, the history of immense periods of the past of humankind is forever unknowable. For nothing can replace documents: no documents, no history."<sup>130</sup>

This preference for written texts also fortified borders between history and neighboring disciplines. The self-imposed limitations of the historical discipline did not prevent nineteenth-century anthropologists and archaeologists from working in museums, analyzing prehistoric objects, or proposing universal taxonomies. The Rankean research model, on the contrary, clarified distinctions between disciplinary specialties, practices, theoretical approaches, and sites of knowledge production.<sup>131</sup> In 1859, for example, the anthropologist Theodor Waitz noted, "If history begins where there are somewhat secure leftovers, where writing is available . . . then anthropology, in contrast, strives to embrace all

<sup>125</sup> J. F. Jameson "The Influence of Universities upon Historical Writing," *University Record of the University of Chicago* 6/40 (January 1902), 294–300, 297.

<sup>126</sup> Eskildsen, "Leopold von Ranke."

<sup>127</sup> M. Middell *et al.*, eds., *Historische Institute im internationalen Vergleich* (Leipzig, 2001).

<sup>128</sup> Jameson, "The Influence of Universities," 300.

<sup>129</sup> W. Stull Holt, ed., *Historical Scholarship in the United States, 1876–1901: As Revealed in the Correspondence of Herbert B. Adams* (Baltimore, MD, 1938), 160.

<sup>130</sup> C.-V. Langlois and C. Seignobos, *Introduction aux études historiques* (Paris, 1898), 1–2.

<sup>131</sup> Also A. K. Gjerløff, "Syn for sagn. Dansk arkæologi og historie i 1800-tallet," *Historisk Tidsskrift* 99/2 (1999), 406–45; A. Zimmermann, "Geschichtslose und schriftlose Völker in Spreeathen: Anthropologie als Kritik der Geschichtswissenschaft im Kaiserreich," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 3 (1999), 197–210; and U. Veit, "Gründerjahre: Die Mitteleuropäische Ur- und Frühgeschichtsforschung um 1900," in Callmer *et al.*, *Die Anfänge der ur- und frühgeschichtlichen Archäologie*, 43–61.

people upon earth.”<sup>132</sup> Christian Jürgensen Thomsen’s successor at the Museum for Nordic Antiquities in Copenhagen, Jens J. A. Worsaae, observed that historians seldom consulted museum collections and, thus, had limited their field of expertise to sources “that, per definition, only cover the *historic*, and not the immense, preceding, and entirely *prehistoric* interval of the life of humankind upon earth.”<sup>133</sup> At the Museum of Ethnography in Berlin, Adolf Bastian in 1881 even inscribed disciplinary borders along geographical borders, demanding “all of the Pacific, America in its past, most of Africa, dispersed parts of Asia, and Europe in half- and prehistoric times” for ethnographers, including both anthropologists and archaeologists, and leaving the rest to historians. This geographical division, Bastian admitted, prevented ethnography from becoming a new “philosophy of history,” but still provided “more work than the low number of disciples, who until now have reported for duty in this study, will be able to cope with.”<sup>134</sup>

At the end of the nineteenth century, Ranke and his followers also acknowledged the legitimacy of disciplinary differences. In 1880 Ranke drafted an introduction to his *Weltgeschichte*, in which he noticed the results of “ethnographic research” and the finding of “observable traces of prehistoric human life.”<sup>135</sup> Ranke still demanded that historians limit themselves to written sources, and did not mention ethnography in the published edition, but prehistory was no longer, as he had claimed in 1831, “draped with death.” In 1889 the Greifswald historian Ernst Bernheim codified the methodological achievements of the century in his *Lehrbuch der historischen Methode* and here described ethnography as an “ancillary discipline” (*Hilfswissenschaft*). He distinguished between history and prehistory, but only to demarcate disciplines from one another. The distinction, Bernheim wrote, “only has this practical meaning, otherwise none . . . the expression ‘prehistoric’ is only acceptable to us with this reservation.”<sup>136</sup>

The passionate and detailed discussions about archival work in Ranke’s letters from his journey to Austria and Italy were unusual even among nineteenth-century historians. His youthful dedication to a life in the archives was probably singular and not the standard within the discipline. Ranke’s students also did not imitate the rhetorical and argumentative style in his 1831 book about the Venetian

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<sup>132</sup> T. Waitz, *Ueber die Einheit des Menschengeschlechtes und den Naturzustand der Menschen* (Leipzig, 1859), 8.

<sup>133</sup> J. J. A. Worsaae, *En Oldgrandskers Erindringer 1821–1847*, ed. V. Hermansen (Copenhagen, 1904), 64–5. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>134</sup> A. Bastian, *Die Vorgeschichte der Ethnologie* (Berlin, 1881), 58–9.

<sup>135</sup> L. von Ranke, *Aus Werke und Nachlass*, ed. W. P. Fuchs et al., 4 vols. (Munich, 1964–), 1: 166, n. 1.

<sup>136</sup> E. Bernheim, *Lehrbuch der Historischen Methode: Nachweis der wichtigsten Quellen und Hilfsmittel zum Studium der Geschichte* (Leipzig, 1889), 32.

conspiracy. The model for Rankean history writing, if not for Ranke's own books, was rather *Jahrbücher des Deutschen Reichs unter dem Sächsischen Hause*, which during the late 1830s were written by students in his exercises in a uniform and monotonous style and followed a strict chronological order.<sup>137</sup> Passions were reserved for the exercises and references to archives were hidden in the footnotes. However, Ranke's 1831 book and his letters from Austria and Italy open a window into a formative phase of the historical discipline, when historians first learned to consider history as a history of documents. They also reveal some of the costs and benefits of this new disciplinary identity. If the historical discipline today has moved beyond late nineteenth-century "scientification" of history, and historians now feel more comfortable with interdisciplinary work, the discipline, as Leora Auslander argues, has preserved its preference for the written word.<sup>138</sup> While sensitized to the instability and hidden political implications of historical interpretation, recent historiography may even have reinforced the Rankean focus upon texts, distaste for rationalized reconstructions, and heroization of the archival experience.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> L. Ranke, ed., *Jahrbücher des Deutschen Reichs unter dem Sächsischen Hause*, 3 vols. (Berlin, 1837–40).

<sup>138</sup> L. Auslander, "Beyond Words," *American Historical Review* 110/4 (2005), 1015–45.

<sup>139</sup> Micro-history, Geertzian anthropology, and post-structural and postmodern theories have all contributed to a renewed interest in close readings of archival documents. Examples of influential historical narratives that focus upon the historian's personal experiences with archival documents are N. Z. Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford, CA, 1987); and A. Farge, *Le Gout de l'archive* (Paris, 1989). For a discussion of the role of text in recent historiographical theory see also E. A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge, MA, 2004), esp. 130–55.