

Abstracts

Martin Baumeister

The invention of the „Berlin wit“. Laughter and the struggle over metropolitan identities in 19th century Berlin

The article discusses the „Berlin wit“ as a means of representing the city and its inhabitants in an era of profound urban transformations from the 1820s until World War I. It tries to explain the social and political functions of „wit“ as well as the reasons for its success as a cultural practice in the city and as a particular feature of the Berlin character. „Berlin wit“ dealt with questions of social identity, power relations and hierarchies of inclusion and exclusion, which are analysed by considering comical genres of popular literature and theatre on the one hand and contemporary debates and comments about „wit“ on the other hand. „Berlin wit“ can be understood as a media product which emerged from a quickly developing popular culture that eagerly picked up all aspects of local everyday life. It moved easily between the spheres of elite and popular culture under the conditions of censorship and political repression as well as of an increasing commercialisation. In its versatility and ambiguity, „Berlin wit“ rose as a particular form of communication and representation that suited the city perfectly on its way to becoming a modern metropolis in an era of deep social distress and political conflict.

Norbert Schindler

Exodus to Corsica. Tracing mobility in the Mediterranean and the history of Greek settlement at Cargèse

The essay tries to give a microhistorical example of migration and mobility in the Mediterranean in the early modern period. It follows the traces of the Maniots – fleeing the Turkish hegemony – from the Peloponnes peninsula in southern Greece to Corsica in 1675 and further on to Sardegna, Menorca, Florida, Algeria and France. In Corsica, the refugees were expelled twice by native inhabitants (1731 from Paomia, and 1796 from the new colonial settlement of Cargèse nearby). Their houses were burnt down and their economy was ravaged.

During their odyssey their community experienced significant cultural change. They had been pirates and slave traders who became fearful agrarian colonists. The Greek refugees came into contact with many different cultures and, thus, tried to sustain their identity in an enforced process of cultural assimilation up to modern times.

The Mediterranean is said to be the transcultural cradle of European civilization with the Greek being some of their oldest and most experienced protagonists – but it was not a comfortable childhood as it is shown by various conflicts in the diaspora.

Eva Labouvie

Heavenly Bodies – Human Bodies – Female Bodies. The order of the cosmos and the places assigned to the sexes in the sciences from the 16th to the 19th centuries

Renaissance and humanism began to break up the established coordinate systems of macro- and microcosm. Scientific reorientation became most apparent in the insights gained by astronomy, which deals with heavenly bodies, on the one hand, and in anatomy, which deals with human bodies, on the other. The article casts light on the changes that occurred in both fields of research by relating the „mechanization of the world“ to the „evolution of the individual“. Both processes are understood as being interrelated and occasioning each other, giving rise to a novel interpretation of the world. It was no accident that this „double revolution of consciousness“ took off from Kopernikus' heliocentric treatise „De revolutionibus“ (1543) and the anatomic work by Andreas Vesal, „De humani corporis fabrica“, published in the same year. On the contrary, the investigation of both micro- and macrocosm, of both the human and the heavenly bodies, was grounded in similar models of thought: the experimental investigation of observable entities instead of holistic considerations; the „sectio“, i. e. the dividing into ever smaller units of observation instead of pursuing questions of essence; mathematical calculation, physical measurability, modes of functioning and principles of movement. While the macrocosm of the earth had lost its uniqueness, the human being was increasingly accorded uniqueness among the creatures of the earth by medicine and anthropology. The article follows the stages of scientific knowledge via the development of a specific female anthropology by the principle of „sectio“ from the 18th century onwards to the modern scientific revolution in micro- and macrocosm: the discovery of the atomic nucleus as the materialization of the physical universe, and of the sexual hormone as the materialization of the physiological differentiation of the human into two sexes.

Jens Wietschorke

„Going to the people“. The German educated bourgeoisie and the cultural logic of their „friendship with the common folk“ before 1933

In the period of classical modernity between 1900 and 1933, various members of the well-educated bourgeoisie in Germany turned towards the „common people“. In different roles such as social workers, folklorists, national educators or socialist leaders, they acted as passionate advocates of the people and benefited from the cultural power of authentic social knowledge. The article is interpreting this phenomenon in light of the gradual delegitimization of „Bildung und Kultur“ as well as the increasing loss of status which bourgeois academics were facing at that time. It argues that the pretended proximity to the common people – industrial workers and peasants – can be understood as a symbolic resource to redefine the academics' own social position. And in so doing, it points out the cultural logic and symbolic economy of emphatic populism in the well-educated bourgeoisie.