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# Max Kade Center for European and German Studies

Fall 2012

## Special points of interest:

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## Eutopia—or at least getting

As we fly over the English Channel, I point out the swirling white windmills to the passenger sitting on my left “They are pretty,” she says, disinterested. I tell her that Denmark is planning to use such windmills to be energy independent by the year 2050. It’s a factoid, I admit, but I feel like just communicated the secret stairway to heaven. It makes no dent.

Finally, we arrive in Amsterdam, where I’m supposed to give a masters-class seminar, and then a lecture. The students have read three chapters scattered across various books of mine. They ask penetrating questions in English: it’s not their first language, but everyone here speaks it more or less perfectly. Except that this is an institute for the study of Germany, and for many of them, English is their third best language. It doesn’t matter; they ask away, and after two hours, we adjourn; I have dinner and a beer with the students and their professors. The Dutch, it should be said, drink beer in moderate size glasses, so to have one in the late afternoon, just before giving an early evening lecture, is just doing what the Romans do. Then the lecture: it starts with the universal phenomenon of professors fumbling with technology. The crowd is modest. I’m competing with Ajax Amsterdam against FC Utrecht. Still, the students and professors, about fifty of them, ask probing questions, and I try to defend my arguments. When they remain unconvinced, they praise my openness.

On the next day I went to

the City Museum of Amsterdam. It tells a story about cosmopolitanism and tolerance. It begins with how city buildings were built on piles stuck into the mud; then the growth of shipping, then the golden age—Rembrandt, Vermeer, Hals, de Hooch—and how the Dutch were masters of the seas; then decline; the calamity of Napoleon; the slow expansion of the city in the nineteenth century; the tribulations and shame of Nazi occupation; and then the 1960s, which in Amsterdam involved students throwing rancorous humor rather



than Molotov cocktails at the police. The exhibit, which is of course bi-lingual and interactive, ends with a second golden age: the present.

What does this golden age consist of? The people of Amsterdam think they are on the forefront of things, and they might, like their seventeenth century ancestors, be right. In the museum, they proudly proclaim a first: the first country to consecrate same-sex marriages. It happened in 2001, when four male couples and one female tied the knot and branched in a widely publicized

ceremony. The museum tells us about the other European countries that have followed, and the number of marriages consecrated: it lists Belgium, Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden, if my memory serves me right. Subtly, proudly, the museum points out how the numbers of gay marriages in the Netherlands have increased, outstripping its competitors. Go Orange!

Amsterdam is a young, vibrant city. This is remarkable because for forty years the citizens of Holland have had less than two children per marriage. Ordinarily, this means that a population cannot replenish itself, is doomed to decline, a graying sets in. But not here. Why? Three hundred years ago Americans, borrowing from the Dutch, knew the two answers: toleration and immigration. The second statistic Amsterdam brandishes is how many nationalities there are here. The museum gives a number: 178. The United Nations recognizes 192 nationalities in the world. I wonder who didn’t get the news? It’s an impressive, dizzying fact. You hear it in the languages spoken on the streets. You see it in the dress. In the café I am in, there is hardly a table where people of only one nationality sit together. And yet many, if not most, immigrants learn Dutch. English, too, of course. This is how they move in the world. America is a study in contrasts—only 20% of Americans even have passports. But it is not just the United States. Japan too suffers

## Eutopia continued

suffers from the same problem: a declining population and insufficient immigration. Despite its prodigious efficiency, the Japanese economy is sputtering because it lacks the young people to supplant the old and to pay for their pensions, and no amount of belt tightening is likely to solve the problem. The Dutch have solved it. Let more people in.

The third new golden-age statistic is about bicycles. Everyday, on average, 350,000 people get on a bicycle. One has to imagine this. That's half the population of Nashville, which, within its city limits, is in terms of population roughly the size as Amsterdam. Half the population! Young people. Middle Aged People. Old People. Carrying their groceries. Carrying their kids. Sometimes one person on a bike, often two, three is not unseen. It's not just Amsterdam either. In all of Holland, there are 18 million bicycles for 17 million people. In Portland, Oregon, the most bicycle-happy city in the United States, roughly four percent of people bike to work. We are so, so, far behind. U.S. car makers are finally being forced to make more fuel-efficient cars, but no cars match bicycles when it comes to saving gas. To ride a hundred miles you need zero gallons of gas. Of course, you need calories and it helps if the ground is flat. You also need an infrastructure of bike paths, and you have to slow down the cars (which turns out to be great for local businesses). Finally, you have to make places where people park their bicycles (near Amsterdam Central Train Station there is a parking garage for bicycles alone that seems to me twice as large as all the Vanderbilt parking garages put together). Gasoline is one saving. CO2 emissions another. A third, hard to calculate, is what hap-

pens when a population moves their legs everyday. I asked colleagues about this. How is it that the Dutch have become so tall—the tallest on average in the industrialized world—the Americans so wide. The colleague said something about the quality of the milk. Nutrition is no doubt a big part of it. The Dutch, apparently, eat much less junk food, processed food, preserved food, and, perhaps too, slightly less food. But it's bicycling, walking, movement, on the one side, car-driving, couch-sitting, TV watching, that no doubt explains part of the other side. Here too we see the city as a focus of human movement: Amsterdam is a window, when we allow it, a window to a better world.

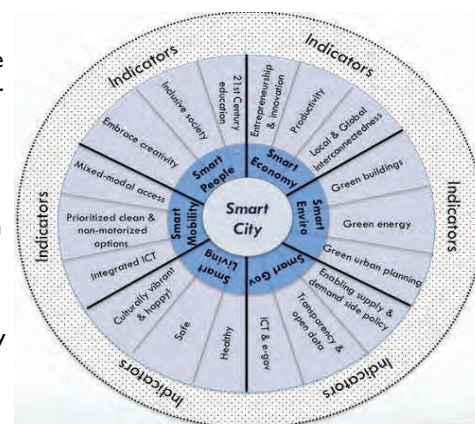
Of course, not everything is perfect in Eutopia. The process by which nations and religions are integrated is often more difficult than it seems (as the murder of "Theo" van Gogh in 2004 made clear). The unemployment rate in the Netherlands is inching up to six percent—better than many countries, but still too high. There are tensions between Amsterdam and much of the rest of Holland. One issue involves pot. In their openness and tolerance, the people of Amsterdam have decided to legalize marijuana, making it possible to go to cafés and ask for a joint (which you usually have to roll yourself). The people of Amsterdam are reconsidering their decision, not for residents of the Netherlands, but for all the sketchy kinds of tourists it attracts. One park bench reads "please don't smoke funny things here, there are kids on the second floor." The Dutch argument is that by placing a serious wedge between one drug (marijuana) that is no more dangerous than alcohol, and the battery of drugs that are (crack cocaine, heroine, meth), one keeps a

potentially terrible situation at bay. Perhaps they are right, but many people in the Netherlands think it encourages bad practices and the wrong sorts of tourists. A second issue is prostitution, more openly displayed here than anywhere I know. Prostitution is legal. Women are given health exams. The city buys them space. The result is that violent pimps are kept at bay and drugs are closely monitored. Is it

better? I'm not sure. It seems to me that supply encourages demand. It is also the case that human trafficking, especially from Eastern Europe, is a significant part of the scene here.

And still, one cannot help the impression that Amsterdam is on its way to being one of the world's smart cities, as indicated by its commitment to a greener, more connected, inclusive, innovative, mobile, culturally vibrant, safe, and healthy urban society. Obviously, it is not the only smart city. This past year it was edged out of the top ten smart cities in the world as ranked by Co.exist, though it was sixth in the world in a ranking of innovation economies. Of the top ten "smart cities," six are in Europe, with Vienna at the top.

European Studies. Its partly about looking out, not in, and seeing how problems are solved elsewhere. As fall turns to winter, and snow and sleet descend, fewer people will be riding their bikes, even in Amsterdam. But apparently there is a solution for this too. The Dutch are considering building heated cycling lanes. The costs of heating the lanes will be less than the costs incurred by injured cyclists sliding and crashing in



***“To catch the reader's attention, place an interesting sentence or quote from the story here.”***

## Spotlight on Jay Calico

## Spotlight on Celia Applegate

In European Studies, we are excited to welcome Celia Applegate, William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of History, one of the leading cultural

historians of Europe, a widely admired expert on modern Germany, and a pathbreaking scholar in the interdisciplinary field of history and music. She is the author of numerous articles, chapters, and edited works, but she is primarily known for two books that have had a deep and lasting impact in her field.

The first is *A Nation of Provincials*, was about the idea of *Heimat*, or homeland, in the Pfalz, or the Palatinate as it is awkwardly called in English. With innovative research and a great deal of intricacy, Applegate showed how the idea of local *Heimat*, far from standing in the way of German national feeling, actually contributed powerfully to it. *Heimat*, Applegate argued, was the vessel for German national identity inflected locally. It is for this reason that the chronology of nation-building, far from running at cross purposes with the development of *Heimat*-consciousness, actually ran parallel to it; indeed, the communicative infrastructure of nations was roughly the same as for the narrower *Heimat*. But what the earlier research on nation-building failed to effectively show, namely how one got from structure to affection, Applegate demonstrated by means of a more tightly focused cultural history of a place, while arguing that place, or *Heimat*, was in fact the missing link between the individual and the nation.



In her second book, *Bach in Berlin: Nation and Culture in Mendelssohn's Revival of the St. Matthew Passion*, Professor Applegate turned an event, Mendelssohn-Bartholdy's performance of Bach's St. Mathew Passion in Berlin 1829, into a cultural history of musical production and appreciation from Bach's death in 1750 to the Berlin performance. Applegate's book is hardly just about music, however, for it places music in the broadest possible context, a panorama that includes the crumbling of a feudal world, the cultural work of nation-building, and new sensibilities concerning the past and future. Within this panorama we are entreated to illuminating forays into the new sense of aesthetics in the wake of Kant's deprecation of music in his *Critique of Judgment*, detours into novel ideas about childhood and education, reflections on the place of men and women in an emerging public sphere, and path breaking investigations into the roles of amateurs and dilettantes in the field of music.

Not least, we also learn a great deal about the vexed relationship between Germans and Jews. In a final chapter of the book, Applegate considers the aftermath of the Bach revival, and so we see in a new light the anti-Semitic essays of Richard Wagner, whose warped theories that Jews could only imitate and not create genuine German music were in significant measure directed at Mendelssohn-Bartholdy's resurrection of Bach.

When it appeared, *Bach in Berlin* was the winner of the DAAD/GSA Book Prize, the most prestigious prize in German Studies. Previous to her coming to Vanderbilt, she was a professor at the University of Rochester, where she also won a number of awards for teaching. Currently, she is working on an ambitious, comprehensive interpretation of musical life in Germany from the 17th century to the present, tentatively entitled *Music and the Germans: A History*. She is also Past President of the German Studies Association and Vice President of the Central European History Society.





## Spotlight on David Blackbourn

David Blackbourn is one of the leading historians of modern Germany in the world. The Cornelius Vanderbilt Distinguished Chair of History, Blackbourn comes to Vanderbilt and the Max Kade Center



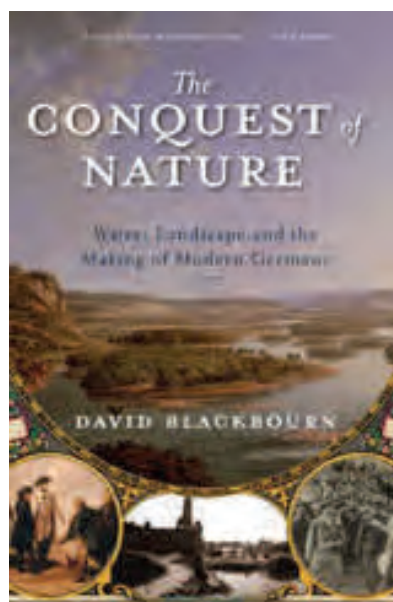
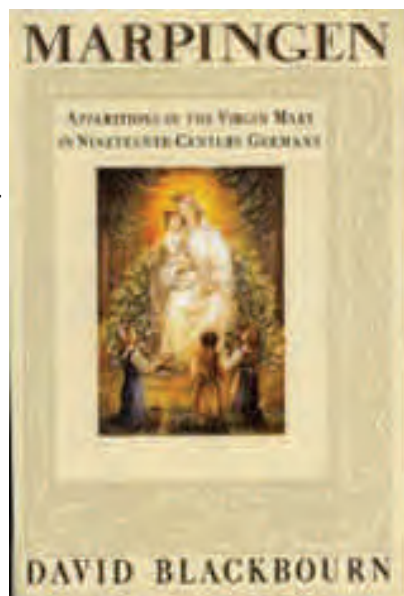
for European and German Studies from Harvard, where he had previously been Coolidge Professor of History, Chair of the Department of History, and Director of the Mina de Gunzburg Center for European Studies.

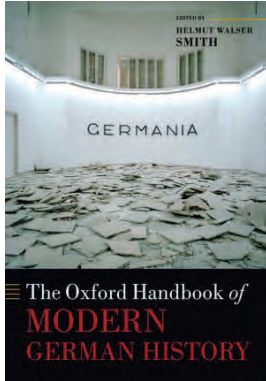
Blackbourn's reputation as a scholar rests on a series of path-breaking books, almost all of which have of which been translated into German (and many other languages as well), and won major scholarly awards. One of his early books, co-authored with Geoff Eley and entitled *The Peculiarities of German History* (1984), is considered by many professional historians to be the most influential book in modern German history written in the last three decades. It constituted a frontal assault on the then central argument of modern German history: namely, that Germany's path to modernity was misdirected by the political power of the Prussian nobility, making Germany, in comparison to England, a country in which the ruling economic class (the bourgeoisie) eschewed political power. Blackbourn and Eley showed that the German bourgeoisie was in fact very influential in the public sphere, and that the historians who argued for German exceptionalism operated with an idealized understanding of British developments.

Blackbourn's books span a wide range. His *Marpingen: Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in Bismarckian Germany* is a classic in modern

religious and political history, tracing, in micro-historical detail, and supported by a wide comparative sensibility, the clash of secular liberalism with popular Catholic piety. His broad, sweeping *The Fontana History of Germany: The Long Nineteenth Century, 1780-1918* (1998) is a sharp-edged, terse, synthesis that is virtually

without peer. Finally, his most recent work, *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape, and the Making of Modern Germany* (2006) is an outstanding exemplar of environmental history. Building on models developed in U.S. History, Blackbourn weaved together environmental policy, local interests, perceptions of the land, and a genuine history of changing nature within a human environment. Like *Marpingen*, it received major accolades, including a prestigious German prize for the best book in European history as well as the George L. Mosse Prize of the American Historical Association for the best work in European cultural history. Blackbourn has also received a prestigious Guggenheim Fellowship, and has been elected as a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He is currently writing a book tentatively entitled *Germany in the World, 1500-1800: A Global History*.





## Some New Books From Our Faculty

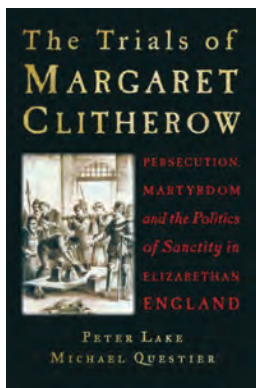
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### Oxford Handbook of Modern German History

Edited by Helmut Walser Smith

Oxford University Press, USA: 2011

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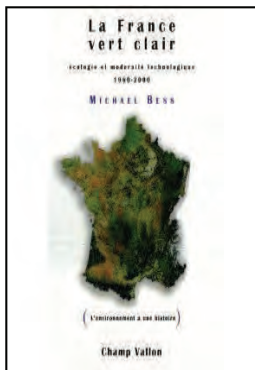


### Trials of Margaret Clitherow

By Peter Lake and Michael Questier

Continuum, New York: 2011

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### La France Vert Clair

By Michael Bess

University of Chicago Press

Released in French on October 6, 2011

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### Constellation

By James McFarland

Fordham University Press, USA: 2012

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**This would be a good place to insert a short paragraph about your organization. It might include the purpose of the organization, its mission, founding date, and a brief history. You could also include a brief list of the types of products, services, or programs your organization offers, the geographic area covered (for example, western U.S. or European markets), and a profile of the types of customers or members served. It would also be useful to include a contact name for readers who want more information about the organization.**

## Back Page Story Headline

This story can fit 175-225 words.

If your newsletter is folded and mailed, this story will appear on the back. So, it's a good idea to make it easy to read at a glance.

A question and answer session is a good way to quickly capture the attention of readers. You can either compile questions that you've received since the last edition or you can summarize some generic questions that are frequently asked about your organization.

A listing of names and titles of managers in your organization is a good way to give your newsletter a personal touch. If your organization is small, you may want to list the names of all employees.



**Caption describing picture or graphic.**

here. You may want to refer your readers to any other forms of communication that you've created for your organization.

You can also use this space to remind readers to mark their calendars for a regular event, such as a breakfast meeting for vendors every third Tuesday of the month, or a biannual charity auction.

If space is available, this is a good place to insert a clip art image or some other graphic.

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### Dieter Sevin

Dr. Dieter Sevin, former chair of the Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages at Vanderbilt University, died of pancreatic cancer on July 29, 2012, at his home in Brentwood, Tennessee. He was 73. A specialist in language pedagogy and the literature of the former East Germany, Dr. Sevin published extensively and taught German language and literature for over 44 years.

Born on November 5, 1938, near Wittenberg, Germany, Dr. Sevin decided to follow his dream when emigrating by boat from Bremerhaven to New York. With little money to his name, his enterprising spirit and work ethic enabled him to finance his undergraduate studies at San Jose State College. After getting married in 1963, he and his wife moved to Seattle to



**Professor Dieter Sevin**

pursue graduate studies at the University of Washington. He received his Ph.D. in German and History in 1968 and then accepted a position at Vanderbilt University. In 1969, Dr. Sevin was instrumental in

launching the Vanderbilt-in-Germany program with Regensburg University. In subsequent years, he served as the program's director and helped establish a summer exchange program with the Free University of Berlin. Convinced that travel, studies, and/or work in different countries widens perspectives and enriches lives, he saw himself as somewhat of a cultural mediator between the United States and Germany and worked enthusiastically to enable others to participate in intercultural exchange. He also was active in Nashville's Sister City partnership with Magdeburg, Germany, and the German-American Chamber of Commerce.

In 2007, he was awarded the Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germa-