

communities in Istanbul, who drew on their experience with pirate ransom in the Mediterranean. It can be considered a major contribution of Teller's book to uncover this testimony of generosity and solidarity between the two ethnic minority groups. Too many historians have considered them mostly oblivious if not antagonistic towards each other's fates, overlooking these important interactions that helped create a transregional and transethnic sense of Jewish belonging.

Teller follows several professional emissaries who were sent from Istanbul throughout the European mainland to raise funds for ransoms, elegantly providing the reader with a topography of charity networks through their travel itinerary. Almost always the emissaries' way led through northern Italy, where Venice was the major clearing center. From there, they continued through the urban centers of the Holy Roman Empire, eastern France, up to Amsterdam. Throughout parts I and III of this book, Teller adds nuance and detail to the refugee migration to the West, for which we have better source transmission. He argues that Polish Jewish refugees received a rather harsh welcome and little support in traditional Ashkenazi communities like Frankfurt, in comparison to centers with mixed Jewish populations like Hamburg, Amsterdam, and Vienna. While Teller sees the causes for this in the "narcissism of small differences" à la Freud, there would be more to argue for the precarious and micromanaged Christian surroundings in which Ashkenazi urban communities lived. In combination with their ongoing welfare efforts for the masses of local vagrant poor, it left them little room to maneuver. What Teller convincingly argues, though, is that the Polish refugee crisis created a pattern of difficult reception of East European Jewish refugees in the West that would repeat itself in future centuries and set in motion a process of stigmatization and Othering of East European Jews in the Ashkenazi world.

Teller's book is recommended reading for Central European historians who might not have been aware of the profound Jewish refugee crisis that unfolded and was successfully overcome by concerted Jewish efforts throughout Europe and the Mediterranean in the seventeenth century. The parallels that can be drawn to other forced ethnic refugee migrations, to trauma-coping practices within refugee communities, and to the need for philanthropic collaboration through transregional communal infrastructures could not be timelier for our understanding of the continuities of the seventeenth century as well as our own time.

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Armer Adel in Preussen 1770–1830

By Chelion Begass. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2020. Pp. 457. Cloth €99.90. ISBN: 978-3428156528.

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The association between nobility and poverty has had a long tradition in late-nineteenth-century German literature, not least in the novels of Theodor Fontane, who tells us about the poignant attempts of the Poggenpuhl family to make ends meet and keep up appearances. It has found less reflection in historical research, where a focus on powerful noble elites has often relied on the survival of rich, sometimes privately held archival materials.

The doctoral dissertation by Chelion Begass, which is a study of the poor Prussian nobility spanning from the late reign of Frederick the Great to the Vormärz period, wants to rectify this omission. Begass's study benefits from a variety of approaches in cultural, legal, micro-historical, and social history, as well as anthropology and the study of "ego-documents" (mostly correspondence). The author's ambition, however, goes beyond providing a source-based narrative of individual "poverty-careers." Charting Prussian nobles' economic, cultural, and social status decline, Begass aims to make a contribution to Ewald Frie's "laboratory of modernity" through the analysis of a heterogeneous German society no longer strictly defined by estates or social classes.

By attaching a new name to Prussia's poor service nobility (*versorgungsabhängiger Dienstadel*), Begass makes creative use of thousands of petitions sent to state officials and the king begging for low-paid administrative posts, funding of a "suitable" education for nobles' children, or a pension after dismissal from the military due to invalidity. She divides her research into three parts. The first section traces socioeconomic changes back to Frederick II's noble-protection policies in the second half of the eighteenth century, when many nobles led a precarious existence on ever-more fragmented noble smallholdings in the eastern territories of Prussia (incorporated after the partitions of Poland-Lithuania, 1772–1795), Pomerania, and parts of Brandenburg. Hit by the devastating consequences of the French Revolutionary Wars and Napoleonic occupation, noble landowners experienced mass bankruptcies, devaluation of their fortunes, and high mobility when forced to leave the countryside for urban abodes. In the cities, their fortunes did not improve, not least due to legal restrictions on their way of life and professional activity. As Begass stresses, the General Law Code of 1794 defined nobility by law, no matter how poor a family became, while barring nobles from pursuing professional "bourgeois" or other economic activities which were deemed "incompatible" with noble status and honour.

The second section focuses on "structural" poverty after 1800 as a result of the above-mentioned causes, presenting various groups within the nobility most at risk of falling into poverty. It discusses several categories of poverty: "self-described," "absolute," or "relative" poverty, including the notion (after Georg Simmel) that only the acceptance of support defined someone as belonging to the poor. A particularly interesting subchapter focuses on noble women, usually widows or unmarried daughters, and large families. The study explicitly excludes poor landowning nobles not in state service, although many noble paupers who appear in the source material descended from old landowning houses that fell on hard times.

In the third section, we learn about nobles' strategies of coping with poverty, such as home schooling, private stipends, acceptance into religious foundations (*Damenstifte*) and girls' schools, handiwork or a position as governess, but above all, appeals to state funds, sometimes over many years, despite Prussia's dire financial position after the defeat of 1806–1807. The widespread – usually insufficient – support paid out to the poor nobles, who were particularly numerous in the Prussian East and in the main cities such as Berlin, Königsberg, and Breslau, demonstrates the extent of the nobility's crisis. A final strategy was to relinquish the noble lifestyle and status altogether and merge with the "rising bourgeoisie." Although the reforms of the early nineteenth century had opened bourgeois professions to the nobility, the Law Code of 1794 – valid in most parts of Prussia until 1851 – still denied nobles all "bourgeois pursuits." Yet Begass provides intriguing examples of noble butchers, tailors, surgeons, cobblers, and even farm servants. Once a noble gave up his title, however, the decision was irreversible.

The conclusion tries to place a highly complex phenomenon within a narrative of modernity that was anything but linear. By refuting older clichés of a strictly divided Prussian society, the work shares a revisionist tendency with William Hagen's impressive 2001 microhistorical study of the Stavenow estates, or Peter Wilson's refutation of Otto Büsch's "social militarisation" thesis. Curiously, neither of these authors is included in Begass's bibliography, and several other, older studies are missing, by Robert Berdahl, Hanna Schissler,

Tim Blanning, Chris Clark, Hartwin Spenkuch, and Jonathan Sperber. Instead, there is almost too much protesting over gaps in previous research, which Begass's book is meant to fill.

While the geographical focus concentrates on East and West Prussia, Silesia, Pomerania, and Brandenburg, there are occasional comparisons to the nobilities of France and England. The most obvious point of comparison, however, is left out: the landless nobility of Poland, which in the Constitution of May 1791 was deprived of its legal status. The introduction of property criteria and access for burghers to citizenship in Poland find a parallel in the rise of non-noble state servants to the top of the Prussian bureaucratic apparatus. At the same time, impoverished nobles eked out a miserable existence in the lowest Prussian administrative offices, long alienated from their ancestors' link to the land. The case studies – occasionally reiterated too frequently, leading to unnecessary lengths in the publication – leave the reader without doubt about the suffering of this significant group in Prussian society. Their heterogenous character prevented the development of any group consciousness. The author admits that the history of the nineteenth-century nobility, faced with a host of contingencies, cannot be written as a “history of the nobility,” treating the nobles as an estate or as a class. Leaving behind such “master narratives” is a refreshing perspective. If an “intersectionality” approach is to take their place, however, we will need to learn more about the opportunities that such an approach provides.

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It Could Lead to Dancing: Mixed-Sex Dancing and Jewish Modernity

**By Sonia Gollance. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2021.
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Experiences of modernity permeated many people's lives in the long nineteenth century. This was a period when Jews became citizens in a number of European countries, contributing to shifts in self-conception; when people raised in farming families moved to cities, changing dynamics of work and leisure; when public spaces and entertainments vastly expanded, increasing possibilities for social interactions; and when many women began to seek greater pleasure in their lives, from love matches in marriage to careers as architects and painters.

These experiences of modernity mesh together in Sonia Gollance's book. One of the most widespread forms of social interaction in the long nineteenth century, mixed-sex social dancing served as an expression of modernity itself. Engaging with a social history of dance and its interpretations in Jewish literature across a range of decades, languages, and communities, the book focuses on the period from about 1780 to 1940, on texts in German and Yiddish, from numerous locales in Central and Eastern Europe and Yiddish-speaking immigrant communities in New York City.

It Could Lead to Dancing features middlebrow books grappling with the emotions of engaging in societal interactions and novels featuring romance narratives where social dancing figures prominently in courtships and women's pleasures. Unlike modernist poetry that circulated in a rarified milieu, middlebrow literature would have engaged a larger swath of the reading public, especially bourgeois women. Gollance notes that these texts