

heightened profit orientation. Tieck's thinking about craftsmanship and art is presented in long conversations between Leonhard and his friend Baron Elsheim. That such a friendship is a far cry from the social relations typical of the vast majority of German artisans in the 1830s and 1840s does not prevent Eiden-Offe from giving the nostalgia for guilds highlighted in Tieck's novel a prominent place in artisanal self-conceptions and from postulating a projective potential for it. But contrary to the work e.g. of William Sewell, who carefully analysed the future possibilities of traditional guild semantics in working-class utterances and practices, artisans and workers do not have a voice in Eiden-Offe's book. While there may be an "irreducible moment of the imaginary" (p. 320) present in social reality, it is hard to see why the way to find out more about that moment is to re-read novels.

In turning to Eiden-Offe's second main example, Ernst Willkomm's 1845 novel *Weisse Sklaven* (white slaves), we basically encounter the same problem. One of the main themes of this obviously involuted novel is machine breaking. And we are offered a convincing interpretation of both Willkomm's fictional account and an extensive summary of Eric Hobsbawm's well-known essay on the phenomenon, the latter being used as the foil against which Willkomm's misunderstandings are made clear. Whether that is an adequate procedure or not, the overall exercise adds nothing new to what we know about the agency of historical Luddites and the meaning of their actions. In the end, we are confronted with a kind of circular argument: It takes the understandable sympathy for "primitive rebels" to lend the propositions about the proletarian imaginary some plausibility, which is then linked to the history of the other, the dissident labour movement. And as a reconsideration of pre-March class relations claims to tell us much about our present situation, the implication seems to be that the time to exhaust the potential of the imaginary informing that other, the dissident labour movement, may finally have come.

To say that the main argument is unconvincing is not to deny that the book does have some strengths. Among these is the re-reading of the whole genre of pre-March social criticism. It cannot be said that Weitling and Weerth, Dronke und Heß, not to mention Marx and Engels, have been neglected. But it is certainly worthwhile reconsidering their writings – and their narrative strategies – in the light of the conception of romantic anti-capitalism. And if the book should contribute to reopening the debate between social and literary history that would be welcome too.

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REININGHAUS, WILFRIED. Die Revolution 1918/19 in Westfalen und Lippe als Forschungsproblem. Quellen und offene Fragen. Mit einer Dokumentation zu den Arbeiter-, Soldaten- und Bauernräten. [Veröffentlichungen der Historischen Kommission für Westfalen, Neue Folge 33.] Aschendorff Verlag, Münster 2016. 392 pp. Ill. € 39.00.

In preparation for the centenary of the German Revolution of 1918/19, the Historical Commissions of the German Länder made a concerted effort to broaden and solidify the

empirical basis of research on the political transformation from Imperial Germany to the Weimar Republic that occurred at the end of World War I. In the volume under review, the former director of the archives of North Rhine-Westphalia, Wilfried Reininghaus, concentrates on the revolution in Westphalia and the Principality of Lippe, focusing in particular on the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils. Drawing on the extensive research in North Rhine-Westphalian state and local archives by himself and his colleagues, the result is a highly useful reference book for future research on the regional development of the revolution of 1918/19. In particular, it contains a 120-page list of virtually every workers', soldiers' or farmers' council that existed in the area, pointing to the archival records in Germany as well as identifying the existing literature. Fortunately, this indispensable research tool for the history of the German revolution in Westphalia and Lippe has also been published online.<sup>1</sup> The bibliography lists not only the relevant secondary literature, but also unpublished high-school and university papers with their location in Westphalian archives as well as often obscure and short-lived revolutionary newspapers. These research tools are accompanied in the volume by a long introduction in which Wilfried Reininghaus reviews the existing literature on the revolution in Westphalia, identifies "open questions", and proposes new research perspectives.

Examining the historiographical literature on the German revolution, Reininghaus reaffirms Reinhard Rürup's observation that debates on 1918/19 in general, and the workers' and soldiers' councils in particular, have always been highly politically charged.<sup>2</sup> This is not true only for the early studies on the revolution, which were published with clear political intentions, either attacking the legitimacy of the Weimar Republic, or bemoaning a failed revolution, as Reininghaus notes. After 1945, Karl Dietrich Erdmann's thesis that Germany had faced an existential decision between parliamentary democracy and radical Sovietization became highly influential. By contrast, Arthur Rosenberg emphasized that the search for a "third way" occupied the councils, while, in the 1960s, empirical research by Peter von Oertzen and Eberhard Kolb<sup>3</sup>, among others, established that the workers' and soldiers' councils were more moderate and democratically minded than had often been assumed. After a surge in research on the revolution in the wake of the political upheavals of the 1960s, historians' interest in 1918/19 has ebbed since the 1980s to the point that it can appear as a "forgotten revolution", Reininghaus observes, with the declaration of the Republic being overshadowed by other events that occurred on 9 November in German history in 1938 and 1989. Thus, he discerns three basic challenges for further research. First, sweeping generalizations on the revolution should be reappraised through local studies on actual developments within small communities on the basis of a firmer empirical knowledge of local actors and events. Secondly, he suggests a typology of different pathways from the monarchy to the republic, and, thirdly, he requests a research agenda that would open the field of the revolution to newer trends in the cultural history of politics (p. 35f.).

1. Available at: [http://www.lwl.org/hiko-download/HiKo-Materialien\\_011\\_\(2016-01\).pdf](http://www.lwl.org/hiko-download/HiKo-Materialien_011_(2016-01).pdf); last accessed 14 August 2018.

2. Reinhard Rürup, *Probleme der Revolution in Deutschland* (Wiesbaden, 1968); *ibid.*, "Demokratische Revolution und 'dritter Weg'. Die deutsche Revolution von 1918/19 in der neueren wissenschaftlichen Diskussion" *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 9:2 (1983), pp. 278–301.

3. Peter von Oertzen, *Betriebsräte in der Novemberrevolution. Eine politikwissenschaftliche Untersuchung über Ideengehalt und Struktur der betrieblichen und wirtschaftlichen Arbeiterräte in der deutschen Revolution 1918/19* (Düsseldorf, 1963); Eberhard Kolb, *Die Arbeiterräte in der deutschen Innenpolitik 1918–1919* (Düsseldorf, 1962).

Distinguishing between soldiers' councils, workers' councils, farmers' councils, and citizens' councils, Reininghaus repeatedly emphasizes the heterogeneity of the revolutionary movement in Westphalia and Lippe, calling for more regional and local studies that account for specific circumstances and peculiarities. Against the commonly held view that the revolution entered the region from the outside through the media and returning soldiers, he stresses that endogenous developments had a large impact on how the revolution developed in often improvised and very diverse ways. In particular, the interaction between returning soldiers from the front and the home army would have to be taken into consideration in order to understand the conduct of the soldiers' councils (p. 43). For the workers' councils, Reininghaus can show that they spread truly everywhere but varied in their composition and political outlook, depending on the internal party leanings. Mostly occupied with a vast array of different day to day activities in order to provide for the people's basic needs as well as to organize and maintain public life and order, the more radical, independent social democrats often tried to overtake the councils in order to develop the revolution further but succeeded, at most, temporarily. Reininghaus confirms the conclusion of the research from the 1960s and 1970s that most councils were democratically minded and even their demands for the socialization of industries often meant nothing more than the fulfilment of classical social-political demands (p. 63). As there is no comprehensive study of the regional and local workers' councils, he suggests that more research needs to be done, especially concerning their ends and their adversaries. On the one hand, the majority social democrats generally aimed at substituting the councils with democratically elected bodies while the conservative administration, which remained largely intact, obstructed the work of the councils (p. 82f.). Particularly instructive are Reininghaus' remarks concerning the farmers' councils, which reacted to concrete local problems of food provision as well as the citizens' councils. While non-social democrats were often co-opted into the workers' councils, they founded their own competing councils in towns where social democrats isolated themselves from the rest.

Most of Reininghaus's arguments point in the direction of differentiation, nuancing the various forms and shades of revolutionary activities in local communities. Where he develops typologies, those often involve so many categories that they come close to the description of empirical reality and their analytic value fades from view. For the soldiers' councils, for example, he distinguishes between those which were formed on 8, 9, or 10 November in the big cities, those in smaller cities consisting mainly of soldiers on vacation, those in military barracks and depots, and those in military hospitals. These are reasonable distinctions, as are others, but it remains a little elusive which analytic ends they serve. As Reininghaus correctly acknowledges, the need to develop a more coherent and integrative perspective on the revolution that goes beyond differentiation and the emphasis of heterogeneity is still there. He suggests that future research should pay more attention to the adversaries of the revolution and scrutinize how their activities have influenced and undermined the councils' work. Reininghaus mentions the military, the administration, the church, teachers, entrepreneurs, the nobility and the universities as agents trying to prevent radical change. Moreover, he deems a biographical approach to be particularly fruitful and advocates a closer focus on the revolutionary media and symbols. Above all, he suggests analysing the interplay between newspapers and rumours in their capacity to advocate or hinder the revolutionary cause. Many other perspectives could be added here, such as the relationship between practical politics and political utopias, or the self-affirmation of revolutionary subjectivities. The few pamphlets and photographs, which are reproduced in

the volume, are already apt to engender new ideas, of which we will probably hear and read a lot on the occasion of the revolution's 100th anniversary.

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ROGAN, TIM. *The Moral Economists: R.H. Tawney, Karl Polanyi, E.P. Thompson, and the Critique of Capitalism*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ [etc.] 2017. viii, 263 pp. \$39.95; £30.00

Intellectual histories often rest on assertions and assumptions, followed by arguments. The results are not always wrong, and certainly not routinely disappointing. But their foundations, depending on whether they are erected on stable and sustainable premises or on sands that shift with any tremor of challenge, are always open to question. In the process, what has been given the appearance of illuminating insight can appear strained, even little more than a creative construction of an author committed to a particular stand.

It might well be suggested that this is true of any historical work. But the pitfalls are perhaps greater within a genre such as intellectual history. Research and writing can take place in ways that rely almost entirely on specific texts, either written by subjects of study or commenting on particular historical developments, which are then boiled down to the interpretive meaning assigned to them by the author responsible for the assertions, assumptions, and arguments at the core of their particular analytic undertaking. Tim Rogan's recent historiographic essay on three critics of capitalism, R.H. Tawney, Karl Polanyi, and E.P. Thompson, whom he classifies as moral economists, reveals some of these pitfalls.

Rogan's study rests on an initial assertion/assumption. Criticism of capitalism has, Rogan claims, undergone "a radical truncation" from the 1800s to present times. An earlier stream of thought accenting the "moral or spiritual despoliation" associated with capital's reign has been displaced by our latter-day unease with poverty and widening "material disparities" (p. 1). Enamored of the extent to which Thomas Piketty's *Capital* has supposedly elevated inequality to the prime consideration in economic discussions of capitalism, Rogan turns to Tawney, Polanyi, and Thompson to insist that a now "abandoned" moral critique of capitalism needs to be resurrected (p. 2). Abandoned, where, when, and how? That Piketty's social democratic focus on inequality can stand in for the totality of contemporary critique of capitalism, and that there exists some kind of binary opposition between those who oppose capitalism because it fosters poverty and inequality and those who insist that alternatives to the regime of acquisitive individualism rest more properly on a moral critique of the profit system's debasement of humanity, can certainly be questioned, even rejected. Thompson, for instance, can hardly be said to have lacked an interest in the poor, and he cited Tawney as linking, not severing, issues such as poverty and the treatment of children as touchstones indicative of the character of any social philosophy.