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Dolores L. Augustine. *Patricians and Parvenus: Wealth and High Society in Wilhelmine Germany.* Oxford and Providence: Berg Publishers, 1994. xii + 303 pp. $49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-85496-397-3.

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"Feudalization" has over the past two decades become a controversial part of Wilhelmine German historiography. Briefly, this theory as presented by Max Weber, Robert Michaels, Werner Sombart, and more recently, Juergen Kocka and Lamar Cecil, holds that the failure of the 1848 bourgeois revolution in Germany coupled to the rapid rise of an industrial working class after 1871 resulted in a political capitulation of the bourgeoisie to the pre- industrial Prussian aristocracy. Instead of seeking the political power that should have been theirs, the bourgeoisie opted for "feudalization"; that is, a demoralized bourgeoisie capitulated politically and socially to a nobility that maintained order by riding roughshod over the demands of the lower classes for change. In short, those who might have used their increasing wealth to their own advantage ended up being used by others for less progressive ends. In turn, "feudalization" contributed to the rise in the late nineteenth century of the German *Sonderweg* - the "special path" of deviance from Anglo-French democratic norms that would ultimately lead "to the failure of democracy in Germany and the rise of National Socialism (3)." In a process probably better described in Heinrich Mann's 1918 novel, *Der Untertan* than by historians who subsequently dealt with the phenomenon, German society after 1871 developed into one that was top-heavy in authoritarianism. Frequently the product of this process was the disempowered, confused, and often helpless protagonist of such Weimar classics as Hans Fallada's *Little Man, What Now?*, or Alfred Doeblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*.

In the past decade such exaggerations have been called into question, particularly in the works of Geoff Eley, David Blackbourn and Richard Evans. In their *Peculiarities of German History* (1984), the first two have argued in terms not dissimilar from those employed by the protagonists of the "feudalization" thesis that the German bourgeoisie had no reason to pursue political power. From above they had already attained national unification, the rule of law, and protection from the country's rapidly growing group of restive have-nots. Others elsewhere had to struggle toward these aims from beneath. Evans, in his prizewinning *Death in Hamburg* (1987), pointed for his own part to both the survival of great bourgeois autonomy in one local setting and the shortcomings to which it sometimes could lead.

To this debate Professor Delores Augustine has now added a commendable study. Begun as a doctoral dissertation at Berlin's Free University and ably translated by her father, this well researched and smoothly reading study hammers one more nail into the coffin of the "feudalization" thesis. In confronting a term so connotative of the Middle Ages as "feudal," Professor Augustine appropriately employs prosopography - collective biography - a technique that has long been dear to medievalists. For this endeavor her principal source is *The Yearbook of Millionaires of Germany* for 1912-1914. >From that source Professor Augustine has culled Germany's 502 wealthiest businessmen. These were individuals who, on the basis of tax records, were estimated to possess fortunes in excess of six million marks. Such individuals, she argues, were the ones who on the surface should have been the most likely to be feudalized (8), since after all, they of all people had the means to accomplish that end.

Fleshing out that source with approximately 200 autobiographies of the super-rich, the author finds that although the owners of Germany's enormous fortunes indulged themselves "in an orgy of luxury, much encouraged by the Emperor's (William II) own attitude," (189), the businessmen were not feudalized. For virtually all of them, the "reproductive and social aspects of life were subordinated to the productive (that is, to business activity)" (116). Most were far more interested in making money than in slavishly seeking amalgamation into the nobility. Even those who acquired landed estates regarded them as vacation homes for their families. In dealing with these families the author shows great sensitivity toward the variations that colored family life among the Wilhelmine super-rich. Some of her titans - August

Thyssen, Hugo Stinnes, and Valentin Weisbach -were truly tyrannical when it came to dealing with relatives, particularly their children. Others like Carl Duisberg and Emil Rathenau were less ruthless. Virtually none, she finds, actively pursued "feudalization," nor were they particularly enthused over their sons entering such "aristocratic" professions like diplomacy, estate farming, or the military (143).

Professor Augustine also addresses other issues that make her book a welcome addition to the literature on Wilhelmime Germany. The first is the role of women in the Imperial German high bourgeoisie. Here she makes sophisticated use of some of the newer discoveries of women's history to demonstrate that the wives of the titans led lives which aimed primarily at the advancement of their husbands' interests either as household executives in charge of conspicuous consumption (107) or as hostesses at the social functions where noble guests served either as decorations or useful intermediaries with government ministries (204). When it came to social welfare these women participated to "advance the interests of the husbands, not their opponents" (112).

The second significant subtheme that Professor Augustine handles is that of Jews and anti-Semitism. From her list of Germany's wealthiest businessmen she identifies twenty-five percent as Jews. Of that number fifty-nine percent owed their fortunes to banking. That last point is significant, for it allows the author to focus on anti-Semitism and Jewish "self-hatred." Here she shows that conflating the two produces a distorted picture. True, Jewish pursuit of the nobility was often reciprocated by contempt, but Augustine convincingly demonstrates that this behavior was usually the product of the need for "inside information" on which those engaged in banking often depended (204). More, she shows that the behavior of the non-Jewish elite in this industry was no different from that of Jews. Accordingly, "self-hatred was by no means typical of the Jewish business community" (210).

In short, Professor Augustine has made a significant contribution to the attack on the traditional historiography of the Wilhelmine elite. She has created a picture of a "niche society" that predated that phrase's application to the last years of the GDR. It deserves a wide audience among both historians and scholars of Wilhelmine literature.

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