Student Proposals

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‘The Portrait Photograph and its uses by Nazi scholars’

One of the particularly surprising domains of the Nazi Third Reich was the university, where students and professors not only professed their loyalty to the Nazi party, but fed the fires of Nazism. Many scholars chose to support the Nazi racial ideology through their own research and writing efforts. One striking example of this is the 200+ pp Der Jude als Verbrecher (1937, The Jew as Criminal) by Josef Keller and Hanns Andersen. Here the authors make a sociological and essentialist case for the strong affinity between Jews and various forms of criminality. They undertake statistics, consider several specific categories from thievery to murder, and offer an appendix of photographic portraits of what are alleged to be especially malevolent and (in)famous Jews [212-35], all of whom are cast as representative. I propose to read this text (from a pdf facsimile in the original German), noting its interplay between statistics, prose, and photographs, in order to evaluate the ways in which the authors followed the expectations of scholarly critical rigor and the moments in which they failed to do so. That is, at what specific junctures in the larger analyses and arguments of the text, and on what grounds, might a reader have objected to its strident antisemitism in addressing these questions I will situate Der Jude in the larger historical context of the Nazi propagandistic theory and practice.

My interest in this particular era and this topic of the rhetoric of Nazi ideology stem from my desire to supplement my goals in gaining a history and German double-major with a minor in anthropology. I feel that this project would be ideal in developing skills for research not just through the act of sifting through works and analyzing them, but also specifically in exploring German history, language, and culture. I am fascinated by the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich where vehemently racialized nationalism caused sharp distortions in society and how these issues relate to the state of today’s world. Analyzing documents in the original German will also greatly benefit my grasp of the language and culture. Finally, this research project is quite relevant to goals I have in mind for my future after Willamette. After gaining my undergraduate degree, I would like to acquire an International Parliamentary Scholarship that would allow me to spend five months in Berlin, Germany working alongside a German Parliament member in the Bundestag where I would become exposed to parliamentary processes in the German government and gain some practical experience of political decision-making processes. In the longer term, I envision myself working for the US Department of State, my dream goal being a job in US-Germany diplomacy. A rich background in German sociopolitical history, analysis of original German academic works, and a comfort with collaborative and individual research will highly benefit me not only in enhancing my experience at Willamette but with my future career goals. I am extremely thankful to be a part of a university community that is intimate enough to allow for this sort of extracurricular collaboration among fellow students and the professors.
Josef Keller and Hanns Andersen, *Der Jude als Verbrecher* (1937, *The Jew as Criminal*)