

Rethinking the Age of Emancipation. Comparative and Transnational Perspectives on Gender, Family, and Religion in Italy and Germany 1800-1918. Edited by Martin Baumeister, Philipp Lenhard, and Ruth Nattermann. New York; London: Berghahn Books, 2020. ISBN 9781789206326

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For many reasons, *Rethinking the Age of Emancipation, 1800–1918*, is an exciting and groundbreaking book. My first thought upon reading the first few introductory pages, was... if only this book had been around when I was writing my dissertation and book.

This book’s three editors are all highly qualified to comment on the present state of affairs in historiography regarding the family, the nation, and Jewish and gender history. They write with urgency and clarity. Martin Baumeister has been the current Director of the German Historical Institute in Rome since 2012 and has held the Chair of Contemporary European History at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität of Munich. Phillip Lenhard is Assistant Professor of Jewish history and culture at the University of Munich and Ruth Nattermann is Assistant Professor at the Department of European History at the University of Munich.

By integrating the comparative histories of Italy and Germany with the transnational, as well as the Jewish and feminist histories of Italy and Germany, the book shows very clearly how both these perspectives are significant and necessary, offering insights into the way individuals and families in both nation states considered how gender and identity formed a major part of their shared experiences.

The introduction begins with a discussion on the ideas of the proto-Romantic concept of the political and geographical construct of Italy and Germany, versus the literary and imaged one of the ‘nation state’. Discussing these early ideas of nationhood and nationalism in Italy and Germany foreshadows the direction the book takes. Comparative histories of Italy and Germany emerged around the time of the new millennium, but as my own dissertation and subsequent book tried to extrapolate, the history of Italy, and in my case Germany, have not successfully integrated both the perspective of Gender and Jewish history into these compelling national narratives.¹

Section One sets the mood by considering the concepts of family and the nation beyond the national states of Italy and Germany. Amerigas Caruso posits the idea that nation-building in both Italy and Germany created tensions between an individual’s multiple, social, political, and cultural loyalties, as well as between national emancipation and the emancipation of minorities. Ilaria Porciani highlights the role of the patriarchal family as a key institution of nation building, which mirrors the health of the nation, and its morality. By focusing on the political and religious nationalisation of the home and

family, she compares Italy's Catholic and social familial order, with German's Protestant concept of the nation. She then compares their notions of family and nationhood with the evolving Italian Jewish families' national and familial identities, suggesting they developed in unison which had its own strengths and weaknesses.

The next seven sections consider the family and nation in relation to religion and education, women's emancipation, patriotism and gender, war, violence, and memory. The editors have collected new insights regarding the transnational and comparative narratives that deserve to be told. My only regret is that the pandemic interrupted my reading of this important work earlier on. Scholars of nationalisms, the social history of the family, Jewish history, European history, and gender history, will find the book stimulating and a necessary addition to their libraries. Let's hope their nuanced transnational, integrated and comparative discourse on the Age of Emancipation in the Italian and German nation states continues to find an even wider and appreciative audience.

Endnotes

1. See my early discussion on gender, Jewish women and an integration of a transnational approach in *Gender, Orientalism and the Jewish Nation. Women in the work of Ephraim Moses Lilien at the German Fi de Siècle*. (New York; London: Bloomsbury, 2020, 2021), p. 8. Also see the chapter on the New Women: the New Jewish women, and the German Jewish family on pp. 69–84.