

# Monarchy and German identity in the later Middle Ages

by

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'What is the German's fatherland?', Ernst Moritz Arndt famously demanded to know. Also famous is his own answer. Prussia? Swabia? Where the vine ripens by the Rhine? Where the seagull wheels over the Belt? No: none of these, but something larger and more abstract:

So weit die deutsche Zunge klingt  
Und Gott im Himmel Lieder singt,  
Das soll es sein!  
Das, wackerer Deutscher, nenne dein!<sup>1</sup>

'Germany' was where the German tongue was heard. To medievalists, and perhaps especially to those with their roots in the Anglophone and Francophone traditions, the idea should be a familiar one. 'It is probably best to begin with language in the search for German identity', a standard English-language survey of late medieval Germany recommends.<sup>2</sup> *Surprisingly* familiar, we ought surely to say, because the European political landscape of Arndt's day was obviously very different from that of the late Middle Ages. For Arndt, writing in 1813, and for the lecture-hall and drawing-room patriots who shared his ideals, a German state capable of framing their putative nation was a dream and an aspiration.<sup>3</sup> The German nation to which they felt attachment remained what Friedrich Meinecke would later call a *Kulturnation*: one which drew such unity as it had from shared cultural values, not from political institutions

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<sup>1</sup> For Arndt's text, see *Fremdherrschaft und Befreiung 1795-1815*, ed. R.F. Arnold, Deutsche Literatur, Reihe Politische Dichtung 2 (Leipzig: Reclam, 1932), 135-7. For analysis (and a partial translation), see Hagen Schultze, *The Course of German Nationalism: From Frederick the Great to Bismarck, 1763-1867*, Eng. trans. by S. Hanbury-Tenison (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1991), 54.

<sup>2</sup> F.R.H. Du Boulay, *Germany in the Later Middle Ages* (London: Athlone, 1983), 1.

<sup>3</sup> David Blackbourn, *Fontana History of Germany 1780-1918: The Long Nineteenth Century* (London: Fontana, 1997), chs 1, 2.

and the effects of power.<sup>4</sup> In the Middle Ages, by contrast, most speakers of the German language – regardless of whether or not they can be said to have inhabited a common 'state'<sup>5</sup> – did at least recognise a shared political allegiance: to the ruler of the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>6</sup>

Yet in spite of this, an explicitly political conception of Germanness seems to have eluded them. The imperial bond, it appears, did not exercise for the Empire's German subjects the same kind of compulsive force that, by the later Middle Ages, loyalties to king and kingdom were beginning to acquire in other western European realms.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, in an era which saw popular sentiments and loyalties elsewhere in Europe solidifying within the structures of the nascent monarchical state, 'German' identity had to draw such small sustenance as it could from cultural – specifically, linguistic – points of reference. That, at least, is the prevailing impression. Bernard Guenée expresses the distinction starkly:

In the birth of French national identity ... a political fact – the existence of a king and a kingdom – was of primordial importance. Language [by contrast] certainly played a vital role in the development of German national consciousness.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For Meinecke's 'cultural nation', see: Margaret Canovan, *Nationhood and Political Theory* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1996), 52; Friedrich Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*, Eng. trans. by R.B. Kimber (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton U.P., 1970), 234.

<sup>5</sup> The idea is encountered in the older literature: e.g., Karl Gottfried Hugelmann, *Stämme, Nation und Nationalstaat im Deutschen Mittelalter* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1955). The problems with viewing the medieval Empire as a state are, however, considerable. For discussions, see: Charles R. Bowlus, 'The early *Kaiserreich* in recent German historiography', *Central European History* 23 (1990), 349-67; Stuart Jenks, 'A capital without a state: Lübeck *caput totius Hanze* (to 1474)', *Historical Research* 65 (1992), 134-49, esp. 136-7; Hagen Keller, *Zwischen regionaler Begrenzung und universalem Horizont: Deutschland im Imperium der Salier und Staufer* (Berlin: Propyläen, 1986), 13-53. But see also Karl-Ferdinand Werner, 'Deutschland', in *Lexikon des Mittelalters* 3 (Munich / Zürich: Artemis, 1984-6), 781-87 at 782, where 'Germany' is defined as 'der überwiegend von "Deutschen" bewohnten Staat, der seit dem 10. Jahrhundert aus dem ostfränkischen Reich hervorgegangen ist'.

<sup>6</sup> For the political geography of the late medieval Empire, see Peter Moraw, *Von offener Verfassung zu gestalteter Verdichtung: Das Reich im späten Mittelalter* (Berlin: Propyläen, 1985), 43-6.

<sup>7</sup> For general accounts of this process, see Joseph R. Strayer, *On the Medieval Origins of the Modern State* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton U.P., 1970); Jean-Philippe Genet, 'Which state rises?', *Historical Research* 65 (1992), 119-33.

<sup>8</sup> Bernard Guenée, *States and Rulers in Later Medieval Europe*, Eng. trans. by J. Vale (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), 218. Another French work expressing similar ideas is Colette Beaune, *The Birth of an Ideology: Myths and Symbols of Nation in Late-Medieval France*, Eng. trans. by S.R. Huston (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1991), 6: 'In a country such as this [i.e., France], ... the state most definitely preceded and supported the development of the nation, contrary to the experience of Italy and Germany, both of them

Antony Black highlights the distinctive place of the Germans within a general process:

In the later Middle Ages there were trends towards a more articulate self-consciousness of nationhood. This might be based on language; Germans, ... despite their lack of political integration, expressed sentiments of nationhood.<sup>9</sup>

The 'cultural nation' available to late medieval Germans was clearly a second-best outcome: a consolation prize for a people which had 'failed' to 'achieve' a mature and comprehensive framework of monarchical institutions – a project in which their French neighbours, by contrast, are to be congratulated on their 'remarkable success'.<sup>10</sup> The inability of the Germans to fashion their medieval nation within clear structures of power was no petty omission, however, but was in the longer term to prove portentous, for themselves and for the rest of Europe – as Adrian Hastings recently argued, in an important comparative essay:

The German predicament – consciousness of nationhood, absence of a state, strength of German as a literary language – made the particular form which German nationalism would take almost inevitable, the nationalism of *ius sanguinis*, the most dangerous of all nationalism's forms. A combination of high prestige and ineffectiveness in the medieval Empire held the German political nation in thrall, leaving the task of national identification to language and literature.<sup>11</sup>

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nations before they were states'. The same combination of ideas finds more radical formulation in a French-language introduction to thirteenth-century Germany: Sylvain Gouguenheim, 'Les structures politiques', in *De la Meuse à l'Oder: l'Allemagne au xiii<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. M. Parisse (Paris: Picard, 1994), 47 ('On manqué à l'Allemagne à la fois le sentiment national et la capacité politique à forger un Etat centralisé').

<sup>9</sup> Antony Black, *Political Thought in Europe 1250-1450* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1992), 109-10.

<sup>10</sup> For examples of this contrasting language of 'failure' and 'success', see: Hagen Schultze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, Eng. trans. by W.E. Yuill (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 24 (German 'failure'); Joseph R. Llobera, 'State and nation in medieval France', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 7 (1994), 343-62, esp. 361 ('remarkable' French 'success'). See also Strayer, *Medieval Origins* (as n. 7), 35: 'The Germans failed to build large and enduring states'.

<sup>11</sup> Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood. Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1997), 108-9.

The statements so far encountered, about the peculiar qualities and shortcomings of the medieval German 'nation', apart from reflecting a view widely held among leading scholars in the field, share a further important element in common: they rely mainly on a judgement about the kinds of collective consciousness that, it is contended, German political arrangements and cultural life *ought to have* produced. Clearly, there remains scope for a study of those sources which can illuminate the outlooks of late medieval Germans themselves, in order to establish whether these do, in fact, reveal the kind of language-focused, fundamentally non-political sense of identity that comparative models of late medieval European state-formation insist they should. The present essay represents a provisional and tentative sketch for such a study. It concentrates on an era in which the imperial monarchy's 'ineffectiveness', as Hastings terms it, was arguably at its most acute: broadly, on the period between 1245, when a general council of the church deposed the Hohenstaufen emperor Frederick II, and 1414, when another great church council, at Constance, was convened by the Empire's ruler, Sigismund of Luxemburg.<sup>12</sup>

The essay draws inspiration, and a further justification, from the compelling general account of the relationship between medieval kingdoms and collective identities offered by Susan Reynolds.<sup>13</sup> For Reynolds, medieval 'national' communities were imagined within a mould formed by kingdoms. Accounts of shared descent and of common pasts were, according to this view, powerful fictions shaped around the hard facts of political allegiance; and so close was the fit between them that Reynolds was able to urge substituting the adjective 'regnal' for the potentially problematical 'national'.<sup>14</sup> It is a vision of medieval political solidarities that leaves no space for the formation of *Kulturnationen*: Reynolds's 'regnal' communities were at their heart political ones. Her approach seems, therefore, to render highly problematical the account of late medieval German identity with which we have become familiar. A major aim of this paper is, therefore, to trace the connections and disjunctures which the sources reveal, between notions of Germanness and the rulers, institutions, and narratives of imperial power to which late medieval Germans were made

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<sup>12</sup> For a detailed account of German political history in the period, concentrating on the imperial monarchy, see Heinz Thomas, *Deutsche Geschichte des Spätmittelalters 1250-1500* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1983).

<sup>13</sup> Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe 900-1300* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), esp. ch. 8.

<sup>14</sup> Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities*, 254.

subject. First, however, some attention must be given to that seemingly inescapable focus for German collective selfhood, namely language.<sup>15</sup>

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Medieval Germans did not doubt that there existed such a thing as the 'German tongue', and they not uncommonly made appeal to shared language to explain who 'the Germans' were. Their name itself – *diutsch*, *tiutsch*, *dûdesch* – was in its origin a linguistic term, for speakers of the 'vulgar tongue'.<sup>16</sup> Writers could use the language criterion to identify the Germans with some precision. An example of what was possible is provided by the vernacular, rhymed *World Chronicle* compiled, probably in the 1270s, by a Viennese burgher, Jansen Enikel. Enikel organised his history around the Old-Testament division of the 'two and seventy tongues'.<sup>17</sup> One biblical *zung* was German, and it provides his yardstick for marshalling different regional communities and descent groups within a larger, composite identity: 'the Franks also have the German tongue'; 'the people of Meißen also have the German tongue'; 'the Carinthians also know German'; and so on.<sup>18</sup> Particularly when a writer was contrasting Germans with, or locating them in relation to, neighbouring peoples of non-Germanic speech, the language criterion was likely to be invoked. In its most general form, this amounted to a kind of broad linguistic topography, constructing 'the Germans' in space with a directness that the indistinct political and physical boundaries of the German lands could not match. It finds succinct expression in a rhetorical motif quite common in vernacular literature, invoking 'Germans, Romance-speakers, Slavs' (*tiutsch – welsch – wint*), to express a broad notion of 'everyone'.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> For a general examination of this subject, see Rüdiger Schnell, 'Deutsche Literatur und deutsches Nationsbewußtsein im Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit', in *Ansätze und Diskontinuität deutscher Nationsbildung im Mittelalter*, ed. J. Ehlers, Nationes 8 (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1989), 247-319, esp. 294-307.

<sup>16</sup> See Heinz Thomas, 'Sur l'histoire du mot "Deutsch" depuis le milieu du XII<sup>e</sup> siècle jusqu'à la fin du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle', in *Identité régionale et conscience nationale en France et en Allemagne du moyen âge à l'époque moderne*, ed. R. Babel, J.-M. Moeglin (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1997), 27-35.

<sup>17</sup> Jansen Enikel, *Weltchronik*, in *Jansen Enikels Werke*, ed. P. Strauch, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* [henceforth MGH] *Deutsche Chroniken* 3.i (Hannover: Hahn, 1891), 532-3.

<sup>18</sup> Jansen Enikel, *Weltchronik*, 534-6.

<sup>19</sup> As examples, see: *Kaiserchronik: Schwäbische Fortsetzung*, ed. E. Schröder, MGH *Deutsche Chroniken* 1 (Hannover: Hahn, 1892), 411, 412; Jansen Enikel, *Weltchronik*, ed. Strauch (as n. 17), 533-7. For a variant, including Hungarian and Danish as separate language

Matters were not, however, as straightforward as may seem, and speech alone did not in fact always provide a clear or agreed measure of 'Germanness'. Much depended on the context. A cautionary tale known as *Helmbrecht*, composed in the far south of Germany in the second half of the thirteenth century, contains a famous set piece. The eponymous anti-hero, a ruthlessly upwardly-mobile peasant's son, visiting the family farm and wishing to dazzle his kinsfolk with his fashionably cosmopolitan style, regales them with doggerel in various unfamiliar tongues: Latin, Czech, French, but also a pseudo-courtly Low German. His hearers affect bafflement, declaring that he must be a stranger, 'raised in Saxony or in Brabant', until Helmbrecht's father steps in, pressing the son to honour father and mother by speaking 'just one German word'.<sup>20</sup> In the poet's eyes, for the purpose of this dramatic exchange at least, *ein Sahse oder ein Brâbant* were no Germans. For others, however, they were: Jan van Heelu composed his rhymed chronicle of the deeds of Duke John I of Brabant (1268-1294) with the declared aim of teaching 'German' (by which he meant the Middle Netherlandish of the Brabantine court) to the duke's daughter-in-law, a daughter of Edward I of England.<sup>21</sup>

It is easy to see how such differences of perception might have arisen. As plenty of evidence shows, late medieval Germans frequently found incomprehensible the regional dialects of their ostensible fellow-countrymen.<sup>22</sup> A well known observation on the subject comes from Peter of Zittau, abbot of the Cistercian monastery of Königsaal, near Prague. Writing towards the middle of the fourteenth century, Peter reflected how strange it was that the Saxon and the Bavarian were both properly called German, when neither understood the other's speech.<sup>23</sup> Not without reason did the school master Hugo von Trimburg, at the end of the thirteenth century, warn anyone wishing to write in German of the need to take into

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groups, see the singer known as 'Meister Boppe' in Friedrich Heinrich von der Hagen, *Minnesinger: Deutsche Liederdichter des zwölften, dreizehnten und vierzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 4 vols. (Leipzig: J.A. Barth, 1838-61), 3.381: 'Des merke unt vröu dich, hoher, werder, wiser mensch, / du sist Tiutsch, Welsch, Windisch, Ungersch oder Tensch ...'.

<sup>20</sup> Wernher der Gartenaere, *Helmbrecht*, ed. F. Panzer (9<sup>th</sup> edn, Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1974), 30-2.

<sup>21</sup> *Rymkronyk van Jan van Heelu betreffende den Slag van Woeringen, van het Jaer 1288*, ed. J.F. Willems (Brussels: M. Hayez, 1836), 1.

<sup>22</sup> See Peter Wiesinger, 'Regionale und überregionale Sprachauffassung im Deutschen vom 12. bis 15. Jahrhundert unter dem Aspekt der Nationsbildung', in *Ansätze und Diskontinuität*, ed. Ehlers (as n. 15), 321-43.

<sup>23</sup> *Die Königsaal-Geschichts-Quellen mit den Zusätzen und der Fortsetzung des Domherrn Franz von Prag*, ed. J. Loserth, *Fontes rerum Austriacarum: Oesterreichische Geschichtsquellen*, I Abtheilung 8 (Vienna: Karl Gerold's Sohn, 1875), 52.

account the existence of 'various different tongues'.<sup>24</sup> The important questions to ask are therefore: why these several languages were at the same time conceivable, as Hugo himself conceives them, as making up a single 'German' tongue;<sup>25</sup> and why that German language was in its turn so widely and, it seems, unhesitatingly applied to designate a community invested with certain kinds of significance. Answers to these questions are clearly not to be sought in a rarefied cultural sphere, remote from power and rulership.

A sense of common language does not explain medieval German self-consciousness, but itself needs explaining. It is important here to take a conscious step back from the world of the nineteenth century – of bourgeois cultural archaeologists, their dictionaries and folk-tale collections, of vernacular mass culture and affordable national literary classics. If the several Germanic tongues spoken within the bounds of the Empire came over time to be regarded, at least in some contexts, as constituting a single 'German language', that was the result of processes in which power and rulership had a central role. How shared language could be invoked within an otherwise mainly political-legal set of criteria of Germanness is shown by the Franciscan encyclopaedist Bartholomaeus Anglicus, writing at Magdeburg in the 1230s. Enumerating the provinces of *Alemannia*, he explained that Holland belonged to Germany 'in respect of situation, of customs and of lordship, and also of language'.<sup>26</sup> The roots of such a linguistic-constitutional mode of thought were much older, however, and ultimately lie south of the Alps, in Italy.<sup>27</sup> There, in the course of the tenth and eleventh centuries, a series of Latin terms (*Teutonici*, *Teutones*, and various derivatives) had become established, to designate collectively the various northern peoples who followed the Saxon and Salian emperors, and whose military activities in the south had become a conspicuous fact of life. It took some time for the new terminology to win acceptance among northern writers, but gradually it did so, with a major stimulus coming from the war of words and principles that we know as the Investiture Contest.<sup>28</sup> 'The Germans' were those speakers of Germanic tongues who owed their allegiance to the emperor: this remained, down to the end

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<sup>24</sup> *Der Renner von Hugo von Trimburch*, ed. G. Ehrismann, 4 vols (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1970), 3.220.

<sup>25</sup> *Der Renner*, ed. Ehrismann, 1.2.

<sup>26</sup> Anton E. Schönbach, 'Des Bartholomaeus Anglicus Beschreibung Deutschlands gegen 1240', *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichischen Geschichtsforschung* 27 (1906), 74.

<sup>27</sup> Heinz Thomas, 'Das Identitätsproblem der Deutschen im Mittelalter', *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 43 (1992), 135-56, esp. 136-8.

<sup>28</sup> Eckhard Müller-Mertens, *Regnum Teutonicum: Aufkommen und Verbreitung der deutschen Reichs- und Königsauffassung im frühen Mittelalter* (Vienna / Cologne / Graz: Böhlau,

of the Middle Ages, the principal and the most straightforward (if not quite the only) measure of German identity.<sup>29</sup> Shared language provided the framework for imagining a community of political destiny, a way of thinking which is encountered in the vernacular 'political song' tradition, at its richest in the troubled years after the middle of the thirteenth century. There, 'German language' could stand as shorthand for an explicitly German community of political actors, with *Diutsche zunge* rhetorically castigated for the bad order into which German political and social life have been allowed to fall.<sup>30</sup>

Language was not a substitute for a German political community but, for the Germans as also for other medieval European peoples, part of the way in which such a community was conceived and explained. Indeed, the character of the imperial monarchy ensured that the German language might on occasion be made, in a particularly direct way, the basis for material constitutional acts. A letter of 1282, in the name of King Rudolf's chancellor and imperial vicar thus suspends judicial proceedings in Tuscany pending the arrival there 'of his German-speaking vicar-general ... with a company of five hundred German knights of the same tongue'.<sup>31</sup> Among the Germans too, common tongue was a fiction, or at best a slippery half-truth, woven around significant elements of shared political experience. It is true that, as general accounts of the subject often point out, the place occupied by perceptions of common language in the political discourse of different western kingdoms varied considerably. In some, such as France and Scotland, its role appears to have been fairly small.<sup>32</sup> Elsewhere, as in Bohemia or in Poland, it was evidently much more substantial.<sup>33</sup> In yet other realms, such

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1970); Fritz Vigener, *Bezeichnungen für Volk und Land der Deutschen vom 10. bis zum 13. Jahrhundert* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1901).

<sup>29</sup> In the eastern, colonial regions, where many German settlers lived in the towns, other criteria had more relevance, such as occupation, culture and legal status, as well as language. For detailed examples, see Paul Johansen and Heinz von zur Mühlen, *Deutsch und Undeutsch im mittelalterlichen und frühneuzeitlichen Reval* (Cologne / Vienna: Böhlau, 1973).

<sup>30</sup> Thus 'Meißner' in *Politische Lyrik des deutschen Mittelalters: Texte I (Von Friedrich II. bis Ludwig dem Bayern)*, ed. U. Müller (Göppingen: Alfred Kümmerle, 1972), 68, no. XIV.2: 'Daz so lange gestanden hat ane keiser Roemisch riche, / daz ist von diner girikeit, Diutsche zunge, sicherliche'. On the 'political song' tradition, see Ulrich Müller, *Untersuchungen zur politischen Lyrik des deutschen Mittelalters* (Göppingen: Alfred Kümmerle, 1974).

<sup>31</sup> *MGH Legum Sectio IV: Constitutiones et Acta Publica Imperatorum et Regum* 3, ed. J. Schwalm (Hannover, Leipzig: Hahn, 1904-6), 570, no. 608.

<sup>32</sup> For France, see Bernard Guenée, 'Etat et nation en France au moyen âge', *Revue historique* 237 (1967), 17-30; for Scotland, Alexander Grant, 'Aspects of national consciousness in medieval Scotland', in *Nations, Nationalism and Patriotism in the European Past*, ed. C. Bjørn, A. Grant and K.J. Stringer (Copenhagen: Academic Press, 1994), 68-95.

<sup>33</sup> František Graus, *Die Nationenbildung der Westslaven im Mittelalter*, *Nationes* 3 (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1980).



as the kingdom of England, identification with a native tongue seems to have grown in importance during the political crises of the later Middle Ages.<sup>34</sup> Among Germans, the idea of a common language had a deep-rooted, though never an exclusive, role in defining and explaining common identity. What a comparative study of medieval European kingdoms above all illuminates, however, is the complexity of language's place within different collective identities: its importance, or relative unimportance, in a particular case in itself allows no certain conclusions to be drawn about the cohesiveness, the constitutional or institutional maturity, the incipient modernity – or, for that matter, about the *longue-durée* 'healthiness' – of the political culture in question.

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Ascribing a *Biedermeier*-style cultural-linguistic nationalism to late medieval Germans is thus clearly quite inappropriate. But the main point being made in the many comparative studies which have emphasised the role of language in fashioning a German identity nevertheless appears irrefutable: namely, that monarchy and royal government, elsewhere in Europe principal motors and objects of 'national' allegiances, were in Germany relatively enfeebled. Essentially, the problem was twofold: the Empire's ruler exercised in Germany a rule too meagre, too qualified and too opaque to have been capable of crystallising any sense of Germanness among the Empire's subjects; and, in any case, the doctrinal and constitutional systems upon which the imperial monarchy historically rested were such as to render inadmissible any notion of a distinct, limited sphere of rule over a specific, self-conscious 'regnal' community. Whether viewed as a series of institutions and instruments of power or as a body of principles, the imperial monarchy, set beside its rapidly evolving counterparts in the west, appears hopelessly moribund and archaic.<sup>35</sup>

The conditions for the growth in Germany of strong royal government had never been propitious. From its very origins, following the end of the Carolingian hegemony, imperial rulership in eastern Frankia was extensive rather than intensive, according a major share in

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<sup>34</sup> Thorlac Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: Language, Literature, and National Identity, 1290-1340* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), esp. chs 1, 6; Basil Cottle, *The Triumph of English 1350-1400* (London: Blandford, 1969).

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, the comments of Geoffrey Barraclough, *The Origins of Modern Germany* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Oxford: Blackwell, 1947), 300-1.

government to the established men of power in the regions.<sup>36</sup> Imperial, and in the later years also dynastic, commitments in the south kept the rulers of the central Middle Ages out of Germany for long periods: of the final thirty years of his reign, Frederick II spent just twenty months north of the Alps.<sup>37</sup> Imperial government in Germany showed few signs of the early bureaucratisation detectable in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in other, smaller and more compact, European realms.<sup>38</sup> During the thirteenth century, the threadbare fabric of the Empire's institutions was rent, their functioning shaken, by a series of grave material and ideological shocks, and by constitutional changes with far-reaching importance. After 1198, and again in the middle decades of the thirteenth century, the crown became the object of violent competition, in the course of which substantial imperial resources passed into the hands of powerful individuals and communities.<sup>39</sup> Bitter and protracted conflict with the papacy hastened the process of material disintegration, but also cast a shadow over the monarchy's traditional prestige. It seemed to some that the medieval Roman Empire's days were numbered.<sup>40</sup> The hereditary descent of the crown – well founded in practice, if not in principle, during the central Middle Ages – was radically ended, with the emergence, soon after mid-century, of a select group of princes exercising the right to nominate the Empire's ruler.<sup>41</sup> Between Frederick II's death in 1250 and that of his Habsburg namesake in 1493, son

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<sup>36</sup> Timothy Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages 800-1056* (London: Longman, 1991); idem, 'The "imperial church system" of the Ottonian and Salian rulers: a reconsideration', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 32 (1982), 347-74; Benjamin Arnold, *Princes and Territories in Medieval Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1991), esp. chs 1-7.

<sup>37</sup> Moraw, *Von offener Verfassung* (as n. 6), 203. For the Hohenstaufen in the south, see Horst Fuhrmann, "'Quis constituit Teutonicos iudices nationum?'" The trouble with Henry', *Speculum* 69 (1994), 344-58.

<sup>38</sup> See Keller, *Zwischen regionaler Begrenzung* (as n. 5), 356-71; Egon Boshof, 'Die späten Staufer und das Reich', in *Rudolf von Habsburg 1273-1291: eine Königsherrschaft zwischen Tradition und Wandel*, ed. E. Boshof and F.-R. Erkens (Cologne / Weimar / Vienna: Böhlau, 1993), 1-32.

<sup>39</sup> For the period after 1198, see Keller, *Zwischen regionaler Begrenzung* (as n. 5), 414-33; for the mid-thirteenth century, see Martin Kaufhold, *Deutsches Interregnum und europäische Politik: Konfliktlösung und Entscheidungsstrukturen 1230-1280*, *Schriften der Monumenta Germaniae Historica* 49 (Hannover: Hahn, 2000).

<sup>40</sup> Hans Martin Schaller, 'Endzeit-Erwartungen und Antichrist Vorstellungen in der Politik des 13. Jahrhunderts', in *Ideologie und Herrschaft im Mittelalter*, ed. M. Kerner (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982), 303-31; Diether Kurze, 'Nationale Regungen in der spätmittelalterlichen Prophetie', *Historisches Zeitschrift* 202 (1966), 1-23.

<sup>41</sup> Ernst Schubert, 'Königswahl und Königtum im spätmittelalterlichen Reich', *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 4 (1977), 257-338; Heinrich Mitteis, *Die deutsche Königswahl: Ihre Rechtsgrundlagen bis zur Goldenen Bulle* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn, Brünn, 1944, repr. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1987).

would only once follow father on the throne: in 1378, when Wenceslas succeeded the Luxemburger Charles IV.<sup>42</sup>

Weakness and discontinuity are among the main themes in the history of the imperial monarchy during the later Middle Ages. The rule exercised by kings and emperors over the Empire's German territories was patchy, variable and intermittent. Few durable institutions were established, capable of discharging routine government functions in the ruler's absence.<sup>43</sup> His itinerary remained, as it had been in the early Middle Ages, the central instrument and expression of his power. Of surviving documents in the name of Rudolf of Habsburg, only five per cent went to recipients living off the route of the king's travels.<sup>44</sup> The *iter* too was in the late Middle Ages a diminished institution, however, and those parts of Germany which Peter Moraw has termed *königsfern* – 'remote' from the king's travels, and thus from his government – grew in size and inaccessibility.<sup>45</sup> The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries saw imperial rights and properties, which had traditionally sustained the itinerant monarch, fall in growing quantities into the hands of German princes and nobles.<sup>46</sup> During

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<sup>42</sup> It may be helpful at this point to list the Empire's rulers during the period covered by this essay. They are: Frederick II of Hohenstaufen, 1211-1250; Conrad IV of Hohenstaufen, 1237-1254; Henry Raspe, Landgrave of Thuringia (papally-backed anti-king), 1246-1247; William, Count of Holland, 1247-1256; Richard, Earl of Cornwall, 1257-1272; Alfonso (X), King of Castile, 1257-1275; Rudolf I, Count of Habsburg, 1273-1291; Adolf, Count of Nassau, 1292-1298; Albert I of Habsburg, Duke of Austria, 1298-1308; Henry VII, Count of Luxemburg, 1308-1313; Ludwig IV of Wittelsbach ('the Bavarian'), 1314-1347; Frederick ('the Fair') of Habsburg, 1314-1322 (anti-king; 1325-30 nominally joint king with Ludwig); Charles IV of Luxemburg, King of Bohemia, 1346-1378; Günther, Count of Schwarzburg, 1349 (anti-king); Wenceslas of Luxemburg, King of Bohemia, 1376-1400; Rupert, Count Palatine of the Rhine, 1400-1410; Jobst of Luxemburg, Margrave of Moravia, 1410-1411 (anti-king); Sigismund of Luxemburg, King of Bohemia, Hungary, 1410-1437.

<sup>43</sup> For an overview of imperial government during the period, see Karl-Friedrich Krieger, *König, Reich und Reichsreform im Spätmittelalter* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1992); Peter Moraw, 'Die Verwaltung des Königtums und des Reiches und ihre Rahmenbedingungen', in *Deutsche Verwaltungsgeschichte I: Vom Spätmittelalter bis zum Ende des Reiches*, ed. K.G.A. Jeserich, H. Pohl and G.-C. von Unruh (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1983), 21-31.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas M. Martin, *Die Städtepolitik Rudolfs von Habsburg* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), 185.

<sup>45</sup> The changing shape of the imperial itinerary is outlined in Theodor Mayer, 'Das deutsche Königtum und sein Wirkungsbereich', in Theodor Mayer, *Mittelalterliche Studien: Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Lindau / Constance: Thorbecke, 1959), 28-44. For Moraw's scheme for classifying different areas of the *Reich* in terms of their relationship with, and accessibility to, the ruler, see Moraw, 'Die Verwaltung des Königtums', in *Deutsche Verwaltungsgeschichte* (as n. 43), 24-6.

<sup>46</sup> On one estimate, the ruler may have been able, early in the fourteenth century, to expect a regular annual income from the Empire of over 100,000 gulden. By the reign of Rupert of the

the same period, in an interconnected process, those princes built up the ramparts of sovereign government over their territories, shutting out the Empire's head.<sup>47</sup> By the fourteenth century, the whole of northern Germany had become *königsfern*, less touched by the king's presence than was imperial Italy.<sup>48</sup> Goslar in the Harz, under the Salian emperors one of the main palaces in the realm, had its last visit from a ruler (William of Holland) in 1253.<sup>49</sup> When Charles IV entered Lübeck in 1375, he was the first monarch to come to that great imperial city – among the largest in Germany – since Barbarossa's day.<sup>50</sup> Little wonder, then, that in substantial parts of Germany political life took its course with scant regard for the Empire's ruler.<sup>51</sup>

The journeying of kings and emperors in Germany continued into the fourteenth century to follow the broad pattern established under the Hohenstaufen, concentrating on the south-west, where the imperial towns clustered which were now the king's main source of accommodation.<sup>52</sup> A hostile versifier mocked Rudolf of Habsburg as a mere 'keiser ümbe den Rin': 'emperor' around the Rhine.<sup>53</sup> In a letter of 1315 the Habsburg anti-king Frederick the

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Palatinate (1400-1410) this figure may have declined to c.17,500 gulden, and perhaps to 13,000 gulden under Sigismund. For these figures, see Krieger, *König, Reich und Reichsreform* (as n. 43), 34.

<sup>47</sup> See Ernst Schubert, *Fürstliche Herrschaft und Territorium im späten Mittelalter* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1996).

<sup>48</sup> Hartmut Steinbach, *Die Reichsgewalt und Niederdeutschland in nachstaufischer Zeit (1247-1308)* (Stuttgart: Klett, 1968); Thomas, *Deutsche Geschichte* (n. 12), 23, 47.

<sup>49</sup> Bernd Schneidmüller, 'Reichsnähe-Königsferne: Goslar, Braunschweig und das Reich im späten Mittelalter', *Niedersächsisches Jahrbuch für Landesgeschichte* 64 (1992), 1-52 (here 19). On Goslar's importance for the Salians, see John W. Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, c. 936-1075* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1993), esp. 156-60.

<sup>50</sup> See Erich Hoffmann, 'Der Besuch Kaiser Karls IV. in Lübeck im Jahr 1375', in *Nord und Süd in der deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters*, ed. W. Paravicini (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1990), 73-95, esp. 73.

<sup>51</sup> Steinbach, *Reichsgewalt* (as n. 48), 78; Thomas, *Deutsche Geschichte* (as n. 12), 278-9.

<sup>52</sup> Mayer, 'Das deutsche Königtum' (as n. 45), 34; Josef Riedmann, 'Die leere Mitte: Das erste Auftreten der Habsburger', in *Die Hauptstädte der Deutschen: Von der Kaiserpfalz in Aachen zum Regierungssitz Berlin*, ed. U. Schultz (Munich: Beck, 1993), 44-56. For the changing material foundation of the ruler's travels, see Thomas M. Martin, 'Die Pfalzen im dreizehnten Jahrhundert', in *Herrschaft und Stand: Untersuchungen zur Sozialgeschichte im 13. Jahrhundert*, ed. J. Fleckenstein (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 277-301; for Rudolf of Habsburg's itinerary, see Martin, *Städtepolitik*, esp. 291.

<sup>53</sup> 'Schulmeister von Esslingen', in *Politische Lyrik*, ed. Müller (as n. 30), 89, no. V. The poet's verses are examined in Müller, *Untersuchungen* (as n. 30), 142-4.

Fair could still refer to Swabia and Alsace as 'the heart of Germany' (*cor Alemanie*).<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, the regular changes of dynasty on the imperial throne brought with them marked shifts in the focus of the ruler's activity.<sup>55</sup> These swings were magnified by the fact that, as the imperial properties available to support the monarchy shrank, rulers drew increasingly upon the resources of their dynastic patrimonies.<sup>56</sup> The pattern is already visible in the reign of Ludwig the Bavarian (1314-1347), when the Wittelsbach town of Munich gained new importance as a centre of government, as well as providing a home for the imperial regalia.<sup>57</sup> Dynastic lands took on a more fundamental role as a basis for imperial government under Ludwig's successor, the Luxemburger Charles IV, who developed Prague as a centre for the rule both of his Bohemian patrimony and of the Empire.<sup>58</sup> The chronicler Henry of Diessenhoven, writing in south-western Germany, was moved to reflect that the seat of the Empire, which was once in Rome, then in Constantinople, had in his own day passed to Prague.<sup>59</sup>

This change in the material basis of government helped ensure that the imperial monarchy's gradual disengagement from Italy did not result in the ruler necessarily becoming more visible in Germany. Charles IV, it is true, was for much of his reign an energetic traveller, reaching corners of the German lands which otherwise rarely saw the monarch.<sup>60</sup> But even he remained for extended periods in his dynastic realm, spending in total almost a

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<sup>54</sup> In a letter to the king of Aragon: *Regesta Habsburgica: Regesten der Grafen von Habsburg und der Herzoge von Österreich aus dem Hause Habsburg* 3, ed. L. Gross (Innsbruck: Wagner, 1924), 31, no. 229.

<sup>55</sup> Traced in Peter Moraw, 'Nord und Süd in der Umgebung des deutschen Königtums im späten Mittelalter', in *Nord und Süd*, ed. Paravicini (as n. 50), 51-70, esp. 52.

<sup>56</sup> For the growing importance of dynastic *Hausmacht* in the government of the *Reich*, see Moraw, *Von offener Verfassung* (as n. 6), 229-59.

<sup>57</sup> Richard Bauer, 'München als Landeshauptstadt', in *Zeitschrift für bayerische Landesgeschichte* 60 (1997), 115-25, esp. 120-21; Elsbet Orth, 'München und die Reichstädte: Ludwig IV. im Kampf mit dem Papsttum', in *Hauptstädte*, ed. Schultz (as n. 52), 57-66; Alexander Marksches, 'Ludwig IV., der Bayer (1314-1347): Krone und Krönungen', in *Krönungen: Könige in Aachen – Geschichte und Mythos*, 2 vols. (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1999), 2.469-75.

<sup>58</sup> See Peter Moraw, 'Zur Mittelpunktfunktion Prags im Zeitalter Karls IV.', in *Europa slavica, Europa orientalis: Festschrift für Herbert Ludat zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. K.-D. Grothusen and K. Zernack (Berlin: Duncker und Humblot, 1980), 445-89; Jiří Spěváček, 'Prag zwischen West- und Osteuropa im Zeitalter der Luxemburger', *Historica* 30 (1990), 5-27.

<sup>59</sup> *Heinricus Dapifer de Diessenhoven 1316-1361*, in *Fontes rerum Germanicarum: Geschichtsquellen Deutschlands* 4, ed. Alfons Huber (Stuttgart: Cotta, 1868), 116.

third of his 32-year reign in Prague.<sup>61</sup> The pattern was reinforced under his son Wenceslas, who between 1378 and his removal from the imperial throne in 1400 came into Germany for just three years.<sup>62</sup> The physical marginality of the ruler is a recurrent theme in late medieval German history. Some of those elected king had their patrimonies outside the Empire altogether – such as Richard of Cornwall (1257-1272), who spent the central years of his reign, between 1262 and 1268, not in Germany but in his native England.<sup>63</sup> In light of all this, it is easy to see why, at a time when royal government elsewhere in Europe was taking root in settled urban centres, nothing comparable is seen in the *Reich*. Prague, the city which for a while seems most to resemble an imperial capital, lay outside Germany, within a distinct kingdom, with its own political culture, traditions, and non-German majority tongue.<sup>64</sup> Few German princes showed any desire to spend time there.<sup>65</sup> Within Germany, some of a capital's functions were displayed by the imperial city of Nuremberg, where late medieval kings and emperors made many visits.<sup>66</sup> Their presence there was, however, too irregular and too short-term for the town to develop as a major seat of government.

There was not even an accepted imperial mausoleum in Germany, to receive the bones of the Empire's rulers: Rudolf of Habsburg was interred alongside his Salian and Staufer forebears at Speyer, and the remains of his two immediate successors were subsequently placed there also; but the rulers who came after were scattered to diverse corners of the Empire, mostly finding burial in their family lands.<sup>67</sup> Germany had no glittering temple of monarchy to compare with Paris or Westminster, and no realistic hope of

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<sup>60</sup> His achievements are emphasised in Winfried Eberhard, 'Herrschaft und Raum: Zum Itinerar Karls IV.', in *Kaiser Karl IV.: Staatsmann und Mäzen*, ed. F. Seibt (Munich: Prestel, 1978), 101-8.

<sup>61</sup> Moraw, 'Mittelpunktsfunktion Prags' (as n. 58), 455.

<sup>62</sup> Ivan Hlaváček, *Das Urkunden- und Kanzleiwesen des böhmischen und römischen Königs Wenzel (IV.) 1376-1419*, *Schriften der Monumenta Germaniae Historica* 23 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1970), 440.

<sup>63</sup> Björn Weiler, 'Image and reality in Richard of Cornwall's German career', *English Historical Review* 113 (1998), 1111-42 (here 1119).

<sup>64</sup> For the characteristics of late medieval Bohemia, see Peter Moraw, 'Das Mittelalter', in *Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas: Böhmen und Mähren*, ed. F. Prinz (Berlin, 1993), 23-178.

<sup>65</sup> Moraw, 'Mittelpunktsfunktion Prags' (as n. 58), 463-5.

<sup>66</sup> For Nuremberg's importance for Ludwig IV, see Orth, 'München' (as n. 57), 65; for Charles IV, see Moraw, 'Mittelpunktsfunktion Prags' (as n. 58), 455-6; for Wenceslas, see Hlaváček, *Kanzleiwesen* (as n. 62), 440-42.

<sup>67</sup> See Rudolf J. Meyer, *Königs- und Kaiserbegräbnisse im Spätmittelalter* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau, 2000).

acquiring one.<sup>68</sup> The dynasties which ruled in late medieval Germany – above all the Luxemburgs and the Habsburgs – did indeed attempt to fashion legitimising historical and mythical landscapes within which to place themselves. But these landscapes in no way conformed to a notion of 'Germany' – which, if anything, they tended rather to marginalise and to displace. Thus, Charles IV sought in Bohemia to fit himself to the ancient and illustrious mantle of the Přemyslid kings, while the Habsburgs painted themselves, albeit less decidedly and consistently, as the heirs to the Babenberger in Austria and the Zähringer in the far south-west.<sup>69</sup> Small wonder, then, that so little supernatural charisma seems in Germany to have adhered to the monarch's person or dynasty. Unlike his counterparts in the west, the emperor's touch did not heal the sick.<sup>70</sup> Late medieval Germans venerated no dynastic royal saint, no direct counterpart for St Louis or Edward the Confessor, capable of shaping a sacred unity out of ruling house, Chosen People, and Holy Land.<sup>71</sup> No Teutonic Joan of Arc stepped forth to convince a Wenceslas or a Rupert that he was truly Heaven's choice.

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<sup>68</sup> Though, as noted below, nn. 138-9, Germany did have a number of centres with considerable ideological – though not administrative – significance.

<sup>69</sup> For Charles, see Franz Machilek, 'Privatfrömmigkeit und Staatsfrömmigkeit', in *Kaiser Karl IV.*, ed. Seibt (as n. 60), 87-101; for the Habsburgs, see: Dieter Mertens, 'Die Habsburger als Nachfahren und als Vorfahren der Zähringer', in *Die Zähringer: Eine Tradition und ihre Erforschung*, ed. K. Schmidt (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1986), 151-74; Jean-Marie Moeglin, 'Dynastisches Bewußtsein und Geschichtsschreibung: Zum Selbstverständnis der Wittelsbacher, Habsburger und Hohenzollern im Spätmittelalter', *Historische Zeitschrift* 256 (1993), 593-635.

<sup>70</sup> Note, however, the handful of nebulous late medieval references seemingly associating the Empire's ruler with the health of his subjects, collected in Ernst Schubert, *König und Reich: Studien zur spätmittelalterlichen deutschen Verfassungsgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 40-42.

<sup>71</sup> For western Europe, see: Joseph R. Strayer, 'France: the Holy Land, the Chosen People, and the Most Christian King', in *Action and Conviction in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Memory of E.H. Harbison*, ed. T.K. Rabb and J.E. Seigel (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton U.P., 1969), 3-16; Paul Binski, *Westminster Abbey and the Plantagenets: Kingship and the Representation of Power 1200-1400* (New Haven / London: Yale U.P., 1995), ch. 2. The lack of an equivalent royal saint in the medieval *Reich* is emphasised by František Graus, *Lebendige Vergangenheit: Überlieferung im Mittelalter und in den Vorstellungen vom Mittelalter* (Cologne / Vienna: Böhlau, 1975), ch. 4. The figure who came closest to fulfilling this role in Germany was Charlemagne, whose relationship with both land and ruling dynasty was, however, complex and problematical; see Robert Folz, *Le Souvenir et la Légende de Charlemagne dans l'Empire germanique médiévale* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1950). Charles IV was an assiduous devotee of royal saints' cults, but, again, none had a straightforward relationship with 'Germany'; see: Machilek, 'Privatfrömmigkeit' (as n. 69); Rudolf Chadraba, 'Kaiser Karls IV. devotio antiqua', *Mediaevalia Bohemica* 1 (1969), 51-68; idem, 'Der "zweite Konstantin": Zum Verhältnis von Staat und Kirche in der karolinischen Kunst Böhmens', *Umeni* 26 (1978), 505-20. For the role of Aachen and other German towns with a part in imperial ceremonial, see below, nn. 139-9.

It would, it appears, be hard to conceive of rulers less well suited to touch the imaginations of their German subjects, and thus to fashion in their minds the kind of 'regnal' community envisaged by Reynolds. Suspended between a shrinking, impoverished *iter* and dynastic patrimonies often remote from the old heartlands of the *Reich*, the instruments of imperial government atrophied – or showed, at best, merely fitful and sluggish growth in an age when neighbouring realms were taking giant strides. The role of literate methods in ruling the Empire remained modest: the 10,000 documents which recent scholarship ascribes to the long and busy reign of Charles IV make a stark contrast with the 90,000 noted in the registers of Charles' contemporary, Pope Clement VI (1342-1352).<sup>72</sup> The institutions of justice in the hands of the Empire's ruler were meagre: the supreme court which sat in his name travelled with the imperial retinue, heard no criminal cases, had little power over the great men of the realm or their subjects, and entirely lacked local executive instruments.<sup>73</sup> The fiscal resources of the monarch were also limited. His power of taxation fell mainly on the burghers of the imperial towns, whose support, indispensable to his rule in Germany, could quickly be withdrawn were he to gain, as did Charles IV in his final years, a name for rapacity.<sup>74</sup> The growth of the importance of money in European society, a development which princes elsewhere were able to exploit to their benefit, left the Empire's rulers further weakened, in an age when German princes sold their support dear.<sup>75</sup> This in turn helped ensure that the great expansion in the scale of royal armies which is such a conspicuous element in the history of other European realms in the period had no counterpart in Germany. The armed and warlike men in which, all commentators agreed, Germany was so fertile did not, on the whole, follow the banners of their monarch, but found other masters, with deeper

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<sup>72</sup> Paul-Joachim Heinig, 'Der König im Brief: Herrscher und Hof als Thema aktiver und passiver Korrespondenz im Spätmittelalter', in *Kommunikationspraxis und Korrespondenzwesen im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance*, ed. Heinz-Dieter Heimann (Paderborn, Munich, Vienna, Zürich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1998), 31-49 at 37; Thomas, *Deutsche Geschichte* (as n. 12), 168.

<sup>73</sup> For the *Hofgericht* and its limitations, see: Krieger, *König, Reich und Reichsreform* (as n. 43), esp. 23-4; Peter Moraw, 'Die königliche Verwaltung im Einzelnen', in *Deutsche Verwaltungsgeschichte* (as n. 43), 31-49, esp. 46-9.

<sup>74</sup> For the ruler's fiscal resources, see: Krieger, *König, Reich und Reichsreform* (as n. 43), 31-5; Moraw, 'Die königliche Verwaltung im Einzelnen', in *Deutsche Verwaltungsgeschichte* (as n. 43), 42-6. For the difficulties encountered by Charles IV, see Ferdinand Seibt, *Karl IV.: Ein Kaiser in Europa 1346 bis 1378* (Munich: Süddeutscher Verlag, 1978), ch. 8.

<sup>75</sup> See Hugo Stehkämper, 'Geld bei deutschen Königswahlen des 13. Jahrhunderts', in *Wirtschaftskräfte und Wirtschaftswege: Festschrift für Hermann Kellenbenz* 1, ed. J. Schneider (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1978), 83-135.



purses.<sup>76</sup> Nor, before the Hussite emergency of the fifteenth century, did Germany face an external military menace grave enough to rally the Empire's forces behind their ruler.<sup>77</sup>

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If the power of the Empire's ruler in Germany was distinctly limited, he was also heir to a language of rulership and a tradition of constitutional thought that left little space for a specifically 'German' sphere of rule. Following his election and his first, Aachen, coronation, the new king entitled himself in his official acts 'Dei gratia Romanorum rex semper augustus', a style with its origins in the terminological manoeuvrings of the Investiture Contest.<sup>78</sup> Essentially the same appellation – 'Roman king' – was maintained when the imperial chancery produced documents in German.<sup>79</sup> Use of the supreme imperial title, 'emperor of the Romans', had by convention to await the king's coronation in Rome by the pope or his representative; but, in most other elements, a fully-formed language of Roman imperialism was at his disposal from the outset. It is recorded that when Rudolf of Habsburg met King Otakar of Bohemia at the battle of Dürnkrut in 1278, and the Bohemian army raised its battle cry of 'Prague', Rudolf's forces responded with shouts of 'Rome' and 'Christ'.<sup>80</sup> In view of the tasks which, it was argued, fell to the Empire's head, and the breadth of the stage on which he was held to discharge them, any terminological limitation of his rule to a mere 'German' field of action seemed to threaten the whole basis of his authority.<sup>81</sup> On the broadest definition, he

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<sup>76</sup> For the association of late medieval Germans with military activity, see Len E. Scales, 'German militiae: War and German identity in the later Middle Ages', *Past & Present* (forthcoming). For an accustomed channel for such activity, see Stephan Selzer, *Deutsche Söldner im Italien des Trecento* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2001).

<sup>77</sup> The impact of the Hussite wars on the administrative and fiscal affairs of the *Reich* is surveyed by Peter Moraw, 'Die Kurfürsten, der Hoftag, der Reichstag und die Anfänge der Reichsverwaltung', in *Deutsche Verwaltungsgeschichte* (as n. 43), 53-65, esp. 57-8.

<sup>78</sup> For the early history of this term, see Gottfried Koch, *Auf dem Wege zum Sacrum Imperium: Studien zur ideologischen Herrschaftsbegründung der deutschen Zentralgewalt im 11. und 12. Jahrhundert* (Vienna / Cologne / Graz: Böhlau, 1972), esp. 112-13.

<sup>79</sup> For some early examples of this form, see *MGH Constitutiones* 3, ed. Schwalm (as n. 31), 108, 128, 130, nos. 135, 170, 176.

<sup>80</sup> *Magni presbyteri annales Reicherspergenses*, ed. W. Wattenbach, *MGH Scriptores* 17 (Hannover: Hahn, 1861), 439-534 (here 533-4). On the battle generally, see Oswald Redlich, *Rudolf von Habsburg: Das deutsche Reich nach dem Untergang des alten Kaisertums* (Innsbruck, 1903, repr. Aalen: Scientia, 1965), esp. 320-21.

<sup>81</sup> For resistance to the Germanisation of the imperial title, see: Koch, *Sacrum Imperium* (as n. 78); Müller-Mertens, *Regnum Teutonicum* (n. 28), esp. 382; Schnell, 'Deutsche Literatur' (as n. 15), esp. 282-94.

had charge of the welfare of the entire Christian community – a doctrine which, even if only very seldom given material expression, continued in the late Middle Ages to command much assent.<sup>82</sup> Even when conceived in its more limited sense, as an agglomeration of territories with definite frontiers, the *imperium* bound 'Germany' together with a number of other historical regions in which, from his election and Aachen coronation onward, the ruler could claim some authority: Burgundy, Bohemia, and substantial parts of Italy.<sup>83</sup> The imperial chancery seldom varied its traditional vocabulary of *Romanitas* and Christian universalism; and the terms in which chroniclers and annalists working in Germany most often wrote about the Empire's ruler show that they had imbibed the same official language.

By the late Middle Ages, the idea was nevertheless long established that there existed, in some sense, within the Empire a distinct and identifiable 'German' realm.<sup>84</sup> By the thirteenth century *regnum Alemannie* was becoming the most common phrase to designate it, gradually superseding the older *regnum Teutonicum* (another eleventh-century import from Italy).<sup>85</sup> Around this same time, approximate vernacular equivalents were also starting to appear.<sup>86</sup> The phrase served the narrative ends of chroniclers like John of Winterthur, who was thereby able to explain how Rudolf of Habsburg had settled for ruling the *regnum Alemanie* in tranquillity, rather than face the dangers of involvement in Italy.<sup>87</sup> The nature and status of this German *regnum* were, however, shadowy in the extreme. There was, it is true, an imperial office associated explicitly with Germany: the arch-chancellorship *per*

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<sup>82</sup> See Friedrich Heer, 'Zur Kontinuität des Reichsgedankens im Spätmittelalter', *Mitteilungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 58 (1950), 336-50.

<sup>83</sup> His authority was not, however, necessarily accepted by all inhabitants of these regions. For the complexities of the situation, see Fritz Kern, 'Die Reichsgewalt des deutschen Königs nach dem Interregnum: Zeitgenössische Theorien', *Historische Zeitschrift* 106 (1911), 39-95.

<sup>84</sup> A study which concentrates on (and exaggerates the importance of) the German *regnum* is Hugelmann, *Stämme, Nation und Nationalstaat* (as n. 5).

<sup>85</sup> For the development of *regnum Alemannie*, see Schubert, *König und Reich* (as n. 70), 227-30; also Vigener, *Bezeichnungen* (as n. 28), esp. 215.

<sup>86</sup> Schnell, 'Deutsche Literatur' (as n. 15), 284-5. Schnell, however, thinks the concept was less firmly established in vernacular than in Latin writings.

<sup>87</sup> *Die Chronik Johannis von Winterthur*, ed. F. Baethgen, *MGH Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum* [henceforth *SsrerGerm.*] (N.S.) 3 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1924), 21. For a similar example, see *Die Chronik des Mathias von Neuenburg*, ed. A. Hofmeister, *MGH SsrerGerm.* (N.S.) 4 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1924), 56. Mathias explains how Rudolf's son Albert, although 'potens in regno Alamannie', did not involve himself in other regions.

*Germaniam* or *in Dutschen landen*, which belonged by right to the archbishop of Mainz.<sup>88</sup>

The title, however, conferred no clear role in governing the Empire's German lands.<sup>89</sup> Even the boundaries which demarcated the German realm from the Empire's other territories were not always clear: in 1281 the duke of Saxony observed that the limits of the kingdom of Arles – the Burgundian lands which bordered Germany in the south-west – had almost passed out of living memory.<sup>90</sup> The German 'kingdom', viewed as a distinct element within the Empire, had by the late Middle Ages only a limited, uncertain and fading constitutional significance, which helps explain why it was explicitly invoked only occasionally in narrative sources, still less often in official writings.<sup>91</sup>

Indeed, the whole notion of 'the Germans' as inhabitants of a specific geographical space was fraught with difficulties for late medieval writers. The problem was not so much with the idea itself as with the barriers in the way of its clear and precise articulation.<sup>92</sup> The accounts to be found in the ancient authorities on which German geographies mainly relied were vague and incomplete, and matched only very inadequately the political and ethnic landscapes of Central Europe in the late Middle Ages.<sup>93</sup> The Latin vocabulary available to signify the Germans and their lands, while undeniably rich and varied, offered a riotous confusion of overlapping labels (*Germania*, *Teutonia*, *Alemannia*, and so on), each with its own traditions, nuances, ambiguities and snares for writers and readers.<sup>94</sup> In the German vernacular, although the range of terms available to choose from was smaller, the way in

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<sup>88</sup> Both forms are standard. For an example of each, see *MGH Constitutiones* 3, ed. Schwalm (as n. 31), 11, no. 53; *Deutsche Reichstagsakten* 1, ed. J. Weizsäcker (Munich: Cotta, 1867) 10, no. 2.

<sup>89</sup> On the arch-chancellorship, and attempts to add to its powers, see Harry Bresslau, *Handbuch der Urkundenlehre für Deutschland und Italien*, 2 vols. (Leipzig: W. de Gruyter, 1912, 1915), 2.518.

<sup>90</sup> *MGH Constitutiones* 3, ed. Schwalm (as n. 31), 253, no. 258. Other evidence confirms the picture of confusion: e.g., on the ambiguous position of the town of Basel, see Kern, 'Reichsgewalt' (as n. 83), 51.

<sup>91</sup> Schubert, *König und Reich* (as n. 70), 230. Schnell, 'Deutsche Literatur' (as n. 15), 288, observes that, for Germans, 'das Imperium, nicht das Regnum bildete den staatlich-rechtlichen Identifikationsrahmen'.

<sup>92</sup> For the geographical location of medieval Germany, see: *Deutschlands Grenzen in der Geschichte*, ed. A. Demandt (Munich: Beck, 1990); Paul Kirn, *Politische Geschichte der deutschen Grenze* (3<sup>rd</sup> edn, Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1944).

<sup>93</sup> The legacy of antique geography is examined in Margret Lugge, '*Gallia*' und '*Francia*' im Mittelalter: *Untersuchungen über den Zusammenhang zwischen geographisch-historischer Terminologie und politischem Denken vom 6-15 Jahrhundert* (Bonn: Röhrscheid, 1960). See also Schnell, 'Deutsche Literatur' (as n. 15), 258-75.

<sup>94</sup> For this, see Vigener, *Bezeichnungen* (as n. 28); Schnell, 'Deutsche Literatur' (as n. 15), 258-75.

which they were habitually deployed seemed to negate the very idea of a single, coherently 'German' sphere of existence. In most cases, writers in the vernacular adopted a plural form, referring not to 'Germany' but to the 'German lands'.<sup>95</sup> The defining essence of Germanness, this usage seems to declare, lay not in any notional 'regnal' unity under a monarch, but, on the contrary, in a daily-experienced reality of regional and local diversity and independence, in which monarchs and their acts had little or no part.

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Almost every current in the political life and thought of late medieval Germany therefore seems to conspire against the identification of monarchy, land and people in the manner found elsewhere in Europe. And in one sense, a scrutiny of the sources bears out this perception: references to 'the Germans' and their lands are not especially numerous in German writings concerning the Empire's government and its rulers. But neither are they negligible, and the contexts in which they often appear are suggestive enough to justify a closer look. It is instructive to begin with documents produced in the imperial chancery, since these, with their stereotypical, Romanising clauses, seem an especially unpromising category of evidence. 'German' points of reference are indeed largely absent from the more formulaic parts of such writings. They occur more frequently, however, when rulers came to define the scope of their enactments, or to recount the problems which they were framed to address. A list of promises (in German) which Charles IV made in 1374 to Archbishop Kuno of Trier, with the aim of securing the archbishop's support for his son's succession, includes an undertaking to protect the clergy 'in the German lands'.<sup>96</sup> In similar spirit, Rudolf of Habsburg had written to Edward I of England on behalf of 'the merchants of the German realm'.<sup>97</sup> An ordinance on minting issued by Wenceslas in 1382 claimed to regulate the quality of the coinage 'in the German lands'.<sup>98</sup> Making 'Germany' the object of monetary legislation was not new, nor is it encountered only in documents in the German vernacular: a statute of Rudolf of Habsburg from 1282 regulated mints 'in regno Alamanie'.<sup>99</sup> It was specifically from 'the

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<sup>95</sup> Schnell, 'Deutsche Literatur' (as n. 15), 275-82.

<sup>96</sup> *Deutsche Reichstagsakten* 1, ed. Weizsäcker (as n. 88) 13, no. 3.

<sup>97</sup> J.M. Lappenberg, *Urkundliche Geschichte des Hansischen Stahlhofes zu London*, vol. 2, no. 14, cited in Hugelmann, *Stämme, Nation und Nationalstaat* (as n. 5), 394.

<sup>98</sup> *Deutsche Reichstagsakten* 1, ed. Weizsäcker (as n. 88), 354, no. 201.

<sup>99</sup> *MGH Constitutiones* 3, ed. Schwalm (as n. 31), 322, no. 335.

German lands' (and not from the *Reich* more generally) that, in 1403, King Rupert banished two knights implicated in the death of the duke of Braunschweig-Lüneburg.<sup>100</sup>

The German-speaking territories of the medieval *Reich* never found unity in a single, extensive and coherent body of imperial law; but they did together constitute a zone periodically subject to specific legislative acts by kings and emperors. It was, however, particularly in relation to the public peace (*Landfriede*), its disruption and restoration, that imperial documents took on occasion an explicitly German frame of reference.<sup>101</sup> Wenceslas declared in his *Landfriede* of 1383 that he had made alliance with the princes and towns against all peace-breakers 'here on this side of the Lombard mountains [i.e., the Alps], in all German lands and in our kingdom of Bohemia'.<sup>102</sup> Whatever the historical diversity of the various German regions, the message seems to be, they none the less shared significant elements in common: allegiance to the Empire's ruler and subjection to his government. These ties were themselves a source of unity. A mandate sent by King Rupert to princes, nobles and towns, enjoining continued obedience to Pope Gregory XII (1406-9), portrays these 'German lands' as constituting one single community of destiny under their monarch, capable collectively both of winning honour and suffering shame.<sup>103</sup>

If a German 'regnal' community is only occasionally and fitfully to be glimpsed behind the accustomed forms of imperial documents, other sorts of writings produced in Germany in the later Middle Ages bring it more fully and unhesitatingly into view, and allow something of its character and significance to be made out. The *Braunschweig Rhyming Chronicle*, composed late in the thirteenth century, tells repeatedly of the rule which emperors historically exercised 'ober al Dhutesch lant'.<sup>104</sup> Away from the court, literate

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<sup>100</sup> *Deutsche Reichstagsakten* 5, ed. J. Weizsäcker (Gotha: Perthes, 1885) 452, no. 333.

<sup>101</sup> On the late medieval *Landfriede* generally, see Heinz Angermeier, *Königtum und Landfriede im deutschen Spätmittelalter* (Munich: Beck, 1966).

<sup>102</sup> *Deutsche Reichstagsakten* 1, ed. Weizsäcker (as n. 88), 372, no. 205.

<sup>103</sup> *Deutsche Reichstagsakten* 6, ed. J. Weizsäcker (Gotha: Perthes, 1888) 468-9, no. 280 (1409): '... davon sunderlich zu besorgen ist, das den Frantzosen zu lobe und zu eren, soltent die wege fur sich gen, die heilige kirche und das Romisch rich zu iren henden kement oder nach irem willen bestalt wurdent, das unserm herren dem konige und allen Dutschen fursten herren stetden und landen gemeinlich zu großen schanden und schaden komen mochte ...' (p. 468, clause 7); '[Item herumbe so begert unser herre de]r konig ernstlich, bittet und manet uch auc[h allis des er uch gebitten odir erman]en kan, das ir heruff yme und allen Dutsche[n landen zu eren] ... bij unserm vatter [dem babeste in gehorsam und dari]nne by unserm herren dem konige verlibent wollent, als [ir und andere Dutsche lande biß]her getan hant' (p. 469, clause 11).

<sup>104</sup> *Braunschweigische Reimchronik*, ed. L. Weiland, *MGH Deutsche Chroniken* 2 (Hannover: Hahn, 1877) 472 (Otto I), 475 (Otto II).

Germans are sometimes even to be found speaking of their ruler as a 'king of Germany' – a form almost unknown in official texts.<sup>105</sup> German writers did not, on the whole, strive for constitutional precision, and only sometimes did they locate their monarch's deeds specifically within a *regnum Alemannie*. But, if their vocabulary of Germanness was mostly of a looser sort, it was nevertheless unmistakably a political vocabulary. One major chronicle from the early fourteenth century, indeed, reserves 'German' references almost solely for political contexts (military expeditions, tensions with neighbours, and the like), otherwise relying mostly on regional designations.<sup>106</sup> Nor does it seem much to have bothered late medieval writers that the scholarship of the time could not offer precise and agreed limits for the 'Germany' which they invoked. Contemporaries did not, on the whole, trouble themselves with such nice points: they felt they knew, with enough clarity for their own ends, what they meant. 'Germany' supplied the fortunes of the Empire's ruler with a frame and a measure: Henry of Diessenhoven tells how, in 1346, 'on account of the power of his enemies throughout the *regnum Alamanie*', Charles IV did not dare to go about there in public, but slipped away 'slyly' and in disguise, into his hereditary lands.<sup>107</sup> On occasion, indeed, 'Germany' – standing for the totality of the Empire's German-speaking populations – was made an active participant in the fate of the *Reich* and its rulers. Gottfried of Ensmingen thus portrays *tota Germania* as mourning the death of Conradin.<sup>108</sup>

When chroniclers recount the actions of the Empire's rulers, they show on occasion not just a willingness but a positive determination to establish explicitly 'German' contexts within which to place them. Peace-keeping and the absence of peace caught their imaginations particularly. According to the Strasbourger Gottfried of Ensmingen, writing at the end of the thirteenth century, Rudolf of Habsburg made 'a great peace throughout Germany, from the mountains of Italy to the waters of the English sea'.<sup>109</sup> It is the

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<sup>105</sup> As an example, *Die Chronik Johannis von Winterthur*, ed. Baethgen (as n. 87), 21. The phrase was not wholly without precedent in chancery documents: Frederick II had referred to his son Henry (VII) as *rex Alemanie* (Schubert, *König und Reich* (as n. 70), 228 n. 15). References to 'the king of Germany' were commonplace among foreign princes and at the papal Curia; see Schnell, 'Deutsche Literatur' (as n. 15), 286-7.

<sup>106</sup> *Ottokars österreichische Reimchronik*, ed. J. Seemüller, *MGH Deutsche Chroniken* 5 (Hannover: Hahn, 1890); Schnell, 'Deutsche Literatur' (as n. 15), 295.

<sup>107</sup> *Heinricus Dapifer de Diessenhoven*, ed. Huber (as n. 59), 54.

<sup>108</sup> *Ellenhardi chronicon*, - 1299, ed. P. Jaffé, *MGH Scriptores* 17 (Hannover: Hahn, 1861), 122.

<sup>109</sup> *Ellenhardi chronicon*, ed. Jaffé, 124. Gottfried later makes another, similar claim for Rudolf's peace-keeping activities: 'Et sic facta est pax in tota terra Swevie, ab Alpibus

exaggeration in this remark that illuminates most powerfully its writer's notion of the bounds naturally set for royal government: active as Rudolf was in the field, his regional peace-keeping did not come close to embracing all the Empire's German lands.<sup>110</sup> Nor was Gottfried alone in imagining that Rudolf had established peace 'throughout Germany'.<sup>111</sup> Other kings and emperors are granted similar accolades: the chronicler Henry Taube recounts how 'through shrewdness and eloquence, and through negotiations', Charles IV 'made a general peace in *Alemania*'.<sup>112</sup> And if the making of public order suggested to contemporaries a German setting for the monarch, so too did its breakdown. John of Winterthur records how, between 1314 and 1325, when the crown was contested between Ludwig the Bavarian and Frederick of Habsburg, 'there arose many conflicts in Germany'.<sup>113</sup> Germany was not only the zone within which the good ruler worked for harmony, but also provided the bounds within which a negligent one might oversee its collapse. An envoy of the town of Frankfurt reports among the grounds for Wenceslas's deposition that 'he permits robbery, arson [and] murder as far as German soil extends'.<sup>114</sup>

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Belief in the existence of an explicitly German political sphere, with which the imperial monarchy had a special bond, has a more central place in late medieval writings than a glance at German political institutions and principles in the period would seem to allow. The imagined relationship between power and ethnicity in late medieval Germany appears, on the evidence of contemporary writings, less anomalous, closer to the broad pattern found elsewhere, than is commonly supposed. Explaining why this should be so requires two distinct points of concentration. Further thought will have to be given to the complex relationship between views of German ethnicity and the doctrines, traditions and institutions of the *Reich*. First, however, an attempt must be made to understand why, in an age when the

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montium Ytalie usque ad Traiectum [i.e., Utrecht] super fluvium Reni, et quievit omnis *Alemania* in conspectu eius'.

<sup>110</sup> For the absence of north Germany from Rudolf's peace-keeping, see Steinbach, *Reichsgewalt* (as n. 48), 98.

<sup>111</sup> For a further example, see *Chronicon Colmariense*, ed. P. Jaffé, *MGH Scriptores* 17 (as n. 108), 245.

<sup>112</sup> *Die Chronik Heinrich Taube von Selbach mit den von ihm verfassten Biographien Eichstätter Bischöfe*, ed. H. Bresslau, *MGH SscrGerm.* (N.S.) 1 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1922), 89.

<sup>113</sup> *Die Chronik Johannis von Winterthur*, ed. Baethgen (as n. 87), 81.

Empire and its rulers seem to be so peripheral to German political life, and to have such modest substance in the German lands, commentators still paid them attention at all.

Whatever its material deficiencies, the imperial monarchy continued, at least among those literate Germans who left a record of their views, to act as a source of imagined unity and coherence.<sup>115</sup> Despite the fundamentally regional focus of much historical writing in late medieval Germany, the Empire and its rulers had a special capacity to motivate chroniclers to look beyond their habitual horizons, and take in more distant views. For many decades after the fall of the Hohenstaufen, extended historical works continued to be structured around, and devoted principally to recording, the events of imperial history.<sup>116</sup> On those occasions when northern chroniclers reported events in south Germany, these frequently concerned the deeds of the monarch. The Lübeck chronicler known as 'Detmar', for example, is among those who record the siege of Ulm by Charles IV in 1378.<sup>117</sup> By contrast, the almost complete invisibility of the north in south German chronicles doubtless has much to do with the monarch's own protracted absence from the northern regions.<sup>118</sup> The capacity of the Empire's ruler, regardless of his institutionalised power, his physical proximity, or even, on occasion, his legitimacy, to seize contemporary imaginations is revealed by the case of Tile Kolup, the impostor who appeared on the lower Rhine in 1284, claiming to be the emperor Frederick II. Short and precarious as his 'reign' – first in Neuss, then in Wetzlar – proved to be, it was enough to earn him substantial notices in chronicles from parts as far distant as Austria, Styria and Alsace.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> *Deutsche Reichstagsakten* 3, ed. J. Weizsäcker (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1877), 272, no. 212.

<sup>115</sup> It was, as Peter Moraw has written, part of the 'basic consensus' (*Grundkonsens*), which helps explain the resilience of the imperial idea: Peter Moraw, 'Bestehende, fehlende und heranwachsende Voraussetzungen des deutschen Nationalbewußtseins im späten Mittelalter', in *Ansätze und Diskontinuität*, ed. Ehlers (n. 15), 99-120, esp. 101-2.

<sup>116</sup> See Peter Moraw, 'Politische Sprache und Verfassungsdenken bei ausgewählten Geschichtsschreibern des deutschen 14. Jahrhunderts', in *Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtsbewußtsein im späten Mittelalter*, ed. H. Patze (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1987), 695-726.

<sup>117</sup> *Die Chroniken der deutschen Städte vom 14. bis ins 16. Jahrhundert* [henceforth *Chron. dt. Städte*] 19, ed. K. Koppmann (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1884), 563.

<sup>118</sup> Rolf Sprandel, 'Was wußte man im späten Mittelalter in Süddeutschland über Norddeutschland und umgekehrt? Studien zur Geschichtsschreibung 1347-1517', in *Nord und Süd*, ed. Paravicini (as n. 50), 219-30, esp. 220-22.

<sup>119</sup> *Annales S. Rudbert Salisburgenses*, ed. W. Wattenbach, *MGH Scriptores* 9 (Hannover: Hahn, 1851) 809; *Continuatio Vindobonensis*, ed. W. Wattenbach, *MGH Scriptores* 9, 698-722 (esp. 712); *Ottokars österreichische Reimchronik*, ed. Seemüller (as n. 106), 421-7; *Ellenhardi chronicon*, ed. Jaffé (as n. 108), 125. On his significance, see Rainer Christoph Schwinges, 'Verfassung und kollektives Verhalten: Zur Mentalität des Erfolges falscher



An explanation, on one level, lies in the triumph of hope over experience and cold-eyed analysis. Chroniclers and other writers on the late medieval Empire consistently overrated the capacity of their rulers to cause, but also to cure, the ills of their society. Their way of thinking is illuminated by a negative example. A chronicler at the Bavarian monastery of Fürstenfeld is among a number of writers who paint in impossibly lurid shades the period of weak and divided rule which followed the downfall of the Hohenstaufen: not only were peace and justice absent, the chronicler alleges, but the land itself lay barren, until at last God ended the chastisement of his people (which had resembled that suffered by the Israelites) by sending a 'saviour', in the form of Rudolf of Habsburg.<sup>120</sup> German subjects of the *Reich* took literally the promises of peace and justice that Christian Roman emperorship seemed to extend to them.<sup>121</sup> Nevertheless, a view emphasising the monarch's power was not in every case unrealistic. If his scope to compel appears in the late Middle Ages distinctly small, his traditional power to sanction and to legitimise remained intact. Imperial privileges were still, in turbulent times, a valued source of protection – a fact which helps explain the prominent place accorded to the Empire's rulers in the mental world, and in the burgeoning historical writings, of German urban elites.<sup>122</sup> The difference that the monarch's intervention could on occasion still make was appreciated by the burghers of the imperial town of Donauwörth, who in the fifteenth century set up on their fortifications an image of King Sigismund, resplendent with crown and sceptre – a mark of gratitude for his part in helping them escape from the oppressive lordship of the dukes of Bavaria.<sup>123</sup>

The ruler, it was true, could be viewed in the flesh only by fairly small numbers of his German subjects; and the scope of his written communications to touch a larger public was modest at best. Those were not, however, the only ways in which the imperial monarchy was present among late medieval Germans. The literate – particularly, but no longer exclusively,

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Herrscher im Reich des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts', in *Mentalitäten im Mittelalter: Methodische und inhaltliche Probleme*, ed. F. Graus (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1987), 177-202.

<sup>120</sup> *Chronica de gestis principum*, in *Bayerische Chroniken des XIV. Jahrhunderts*, ed. G. Leidinger, *MGH SscrerGerm.* 19 (Hannover / Leipzig: Hahn, 1918), 28.

<sup>121</sup> Emphasised by Moraw, 'Voraussetzungen' (as n. 115), 101-2.

<sup>122</sup> Heinrich Schmidt, *Die deutschen Städtechroniken als Spiegel des bürgerlichen Selbstverständnisses im Spätmittelalter* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958).

<sup>123</sup> Olaf B. Rader, 'Zwischen Friedberg und Eco: Die Interpretation von Urkundentexten Karls IV. oder Vom Gang durch die Säle der Erkenntnis', in *Kaiser, Reich und Region: Studien und Texte aus der Arbeit an den Constitutiones des 14. Jahrhunderts und zur Geschichte der Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, ed. M. Lindner, E. Müller-Mertens and O.B. Rader (Berlin: Akademie, 1997), 245-93 (at 269).

the clergy – could draw on an inherited historiography which had traditionally accorded the Empire a central place.<sup>124</sup> The succession of (ancient and medieval) Roman emperors, commencing with Augustus, became a well established framework for historical writing, readily adaptable to include regional perspectives and concerns.<sup>125</sup> At the same time, other media were making the imperial monarchy more generally accessible, for those with eyes to see. Particularly in towns, the period saw the setting up of significant works of public art which made reference to the Empire, to Christian rulership, and to particular rulers.<sup>126</sup> The gothic style, which gained acceptance in Germany in the thirteenth century, encouraged the multiplication of ambitious and realistic visual images.<sup>127</sup> These took various forms. Charles IV re-fashioned Prague as a complex stage set for the visual celebration of his imperial and Bohemian crowns.<sup>128</sup> Over seventy contemporary and near-contemporary likenesses of him are known to have existed – although only a portion of these were on public view.<sup>129</sup> Under Charles and Wenceslas, the visitor to Prague could even see the imperial insignia on display,

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<sup>124</sup> For the tradition to which the late Middle Ages was heir, see Herbert Grundmann, *Geschichtsschreibung im Mittelalter* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965).

<sup>125</sup> The succession of emperors provided a framework for what was perhaps the most influential universal chronicle of the late Middle Ages, compiled by Martin of Troppau: *Martini Oppaviensis chronicon pontificum et imperatorum*, ed. L. Weiland, *MGH Scriptores* 22 (Hannover: Hahn, 1872), 443-75 (for *imperatores*, from Augustus). Martin's chronicle provided the model for German compilations, employing the same structure: thus, *Flores temporum auctore fratre ord. minorum*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, *MGH Scriptores* 24 (Hannover: Hahn, 1879), 226-50. For the adaptability of the 'world chronicle' form in late medieval Germany, see Peter Johannek, 'Weltchronistik und regionale Geschichtsschreibung im Spätmittelalter', in *Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtsbewußtsein*, ed. Patze (as n. 116), 287-330.

<sup>126</sup> Examples from Goslar and Braunschweig are noted by Schneidmüller, 'Reichsnähe – Königsferne' (as n. 49), 12, 29, 48. Note also the continuing presence and importance of earlier imperial monuments, such as the great palace at Goslar.

<sup>127</sup> Thomas H. von der Dunk, *Das Deutsche Denkmal: Eine Geschichte in Bronze und Stein vom Hochmittelalter bis zum Barock* (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Böhlau, 1999), 11-62; Wolfgang Schenkluhn, 'Monumentale Repräsentation des Königtums in Frankreich und Deutschland', in *Krönungen* 1, ed. Kramp (as n. 57), 369-77; Jiří Fajt, 'Karl IV. – Herrscher zwischen Prag und Aachen', in *Krönungen* 2, 489-500. See also, for a somewhat different emphasis, Willibald Sauerländer, 'Two glances from the north: the presence and absence of Frederick II in the art of the Empire; the court art of Frederick II and the opus francigenum', in *Intellectual Life at the Court of Frederick II Hohenstaufen*, ed. W. Tronzo (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1994), 188-209.

<sup>128</sup> Paul Crossley, 'The politics of presentation: the architecture of Charles IV of Bohemia', in *Courts and Regions in Medieval Europe*, ed. S. Rees Jones, R. Marks and A.J. Minnis (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2000), 99-172, esp. 126.

<sup>129</sup> Iva Rosario, *Art and Propaganda: Charles IV of Bohemia, 1346-1378* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2000), 13.

on the special feast day granted by the pope at Charles's urging.<sup>130</sup> But the ruler was also present – again, especially in towns – in rumour and popular report. These sometimes became substantial and dangerous enough to move the king to refute them.<sup>131</sup> A detailed eye-witness account of Charles IV's funeral in Prague, which found its way into a vernacular chronicle from distant Augsburg, appears to derive from a newsletter.<sup>132</sup> And where the monarch did show himself, the impact on those who were present should not be underrated. The public spectacle that attended Sigismund's reception in 1414 by the imperial town of Bern could stand for many.<sup>133</sup> Already in the suburbs, he was met by a company of 500 liveried boys of the town, garlanded with the arms of the *Reich*, and headed by a standard-bearer. At the town's gates, the clergy received him with banners and relics. The decorated streets through which he then passed were thronged by the entire population, Bern's councillors at their head. No wonder, then, that German town chroniclers recount in such detail the visits made by kings and emperors.<sup>134</sup>

The remoteness of the Empire and its high politics from the lives of ordinary Germans should not be overstated. In one particular way, it touched them with a ubiquity that had few parallels in late medieval Europe. Since the eleventh century, the quarrels of emperors and popes had delivered some heavy blows to the fabric of German society.<sup>135</sup> One of these lay in the harsh spiritual sanctions that were liable to fall on regions which remained loyal to recalcitrant emperors. These had the potential to affect everyone, regardless of status, age or sex. The disappearance of the Hohenstaufen dynasty did not end the wrangling of the 'two powers'. Relations remained tense, and open conflict with the Curia was resumed under

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<sup>130</sup> Dankwart Leistikow, 'Die Aufbewahrungsorte der Reichskleinodien – vom Trifels bis Nürnberg', in *Die Reichskleinodien: Herrschaftszeichen des Heiligen Römischen Reiches* (Göppingen: Stadtarchiv, 1997), 184-213 (here 201); Crossley, 'The politics of presentation' (as n. 128), 131. For the symbolic significance of the insignia in the late Middle Ages, see Jürgen Petersohn, 'Die Reichsinsignien im Herrscherzeremoniell und Herrschaftsdenken des Mittelalters', in *Reichskleinodien*, 162-83.

<sup>131</sup> For examples of the operation of rumour, see Ernst Schubert, 'Probleme der Königsherrschaft im spätmittelalterlichen Reich: Das Beispiel Ruprechts von der Pfalz (1400-1410)', in *Das spätmittelalterliche Königtum im europäischen Vergleich*, ed. R. Schneider (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1987), 135-84, esp. 177-8.

<sup>132</sup> *Chron. dt. Städte* 4, ed. F. Frensdorff (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1865), 59-63.

<sup>133</sup> For what follows, see Anna M. Drabek, *Reisen und Reisezeremoniell der römisch-deutschen Herrscher im Spätmittelalter* (Vienna: H. Geyer, 1964), 15.

<sup>134</sup> As a single example, see Detmar's account of Charles IV's visit to Lübeck in *Chron. dt. Städte* 19, ed. Koppmann (as n. 117), 551-3. Many more references of similar character are noted in Drabek, *Reisen* (as n. 133).

<sup>135</sup> The role of conflict with the pope in focusing German identity in the fourteenth century is underlined by Moraw, 'Voraussetzungen' (as n. 115), 107.

Ludwig the Bavarian. The long papal interdict which resulted caused distress and resentment, and focused German opinion on the principles at stake and on the actions and moral qualities of the protagonists.<sup>136</sup> Particularly in the towns, Ludwig worked deliberately and successfully to nurture a sympathetic climate of opinion. When, in 1338, procurators from Aachen appeared before Benedict XII at Avignon, the pope acknowledged that he had already received thirty-six identical letters from other imperial towns, professing loyalty to the emperor.<sup>137</sup> Imperial institutions may have had only a limited capacity to penetrate German society, but the arm of the Church had a surer and a more comprehensive reach. It was the instruments not of 'the state', but of its adversary, the spiritual power, that thus, for a time, took a part in reminding Germans of their subjection to a monarch.

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Explaining the prominent place of the imperial monarchy in the imaginations at least of some late medieval Germans does not, however, on its own help us understand their readiness to ascribe to their rulers an ethnic frame of reference, and to view them as the leaders of a specifically German community of destiny, descent and political action. To account for that, two related matters must briefly be surveyed: the external character of the late medieval *Reich*; and the constitutional and historical assumptions on which it rested. One explanation for the 'German' character ascribed to the imperial monarchy is straightforward: it was a conclusion that outward appearances seemed naturally to invite. The attention given by the Empire's rulers to their German territories may in the late Middle Ages have been slight and fitful; but, as a whole, Germany still saw far more of them than did any other region of the *Reich*. They were elected on German soil (mostly at Frankfurt) and crowned there (generally at Aachen), by a German prelate (properly, the archbishop of Cologne).<sup>138</sup> Other prominent

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<sup>136</sup> Martin Kaufhold, *Gladius Spiritualis: Das päpstliche Interdikt über Deutschland in der Regierungszeit Ludwigs des Bayern (1324-1347)* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1994), ch. 5; Thomas, *Deutsche Geschichte* (as n. 12), 174-5.

<sup>137</sup> Kaufhold, *Gladius Spiritualis*, 219; Thomas, *Deutsche Geschichte* (as n. 12), 197.

<sup>138</sup> For election, and the role of Frankfurt, see Schubert, 'Königswahl und Königtum' (as n. 41); for Aachen coronations, see Silvinus Müller, 'Die Königskrönungen in Aachen (936-1531)', in *Krönungen* 1, ed. Kramp (as n. 57), 49-57; for the role of the archbishop of Cologne, see Franz-Reiner Erkens, *Der Erzbischof von Köln und die deutsche Königswahl: Studien zur Kölner Kirchengeschichte, zum Krönungsrecht und zur Verfassung des Reiches (Mitte 12. Jahrhundert bis 1806)* (Siegburg: F. Schmitt, 1987). There is an overview of the procedures for making a late medieval *rex Romanorum* in Otto Volk, 'Von Grenzen ungestört – auf dem Weg nach Aachen: Die Krönungsfahrten der deutschen Könige im späten

German towns, especially Cologne and Nuremberg, also figured in the accustomed ceremonies through which the new king took power.<sup>139</sup> As Moraw has observed, the late medieval Empire should not be peremptorily dismissed as a '*Reich* without a capital': if a single principal city was lacking, there nevertheless existed a whole series of 'hauptstadtähnliche Zentren' – urban places displaying some of a capital's features, acting particularly as focal points of legitimation, public spectacle and political memory.<sup>140</sup> Rome apart, all the main centres lay in Germany. It was in his German lands that the new king had first to show himself, travelling about, being seen, and winning acceptance from his principal subjects, before he could turn his attention to other parts of the *Reich*. This is what Henry Taube has in mind in recounting how, at the time of his 1349 Aachen coronation, Charles IV was 'recognised by all the princes and cities of Germany as king of the Romans'.<sup>141</sup> Germany took priority. 'Having settled affairs in *Teutonia*, he went into Italy', a chronicler writes of Henry VII.<sup>142</sup> The regular sources of imperial income on which the Empire's rulers relied, meagre and dwindling as they were, came from their German territories, as also did most of their servants and officials.<sup>143</sup>

In some ways, the German character of the *Reich* came into sharper view between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries. If the voice of imperial government was not heard very

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Mittelalter', in *Grenzen Erkennen – Begrenzungen Überwinden: Festschrift für Reinhard Schneider zur Vollendung seines 65. Lebensjahres*, ed. W. Haubrichs, K.-U. Jäschke and M. Oberweis (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1999), 263-97. The vicissitudes of German politics ensured, however, that these principles were not invariably adhered to: e.g., Charles IV was elected at Rhens; Rupert of the Palatinate was crowned at Cologne; Ludwig the Bavarian was crowned by the archbishop of Mainz. Such 'irregularities' could be multiplied.

<sup>139</sup> Information on the role of both towns will be found in Drabek, *Reisen* (as n. 133), esp. ch. 1. By the mid-fourteenth century, Nuremberg's position as the proper venue for the first solemn court held by a new ruler was well enough established to gain mention in Charles IV's Golden Bull of 1356: *Die goldene Bulle Kaiser Karls IV. vom Jahre 1356*, ed. W.D. Fritz, *MGH Fontes iuris Germanici antiqui* 11 (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1972), 87.

<sup>140</sup> Moraw, 'Die königliche Verwaltung im Einzelnen', in *Deutsche Verwaltungsgeschichte* (as n. 43), 34. On the problem of a German 'capital' in the Middle Ages, see *Hauptstädte*, ed. Schultz (as n. 52), esp. essays by Moraw, Riedmann, Orth, Seibt.

<sup>141</sup> *Die Chronik Heinrichs Taube*, ed. Bresslau (as n. 112), 97-8.

<sup>142</sup> *Liber de rebus memorabilioribus sive Chronicon Henrici de Hervordia*, ed. A. Potthast (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1859), 227.

<sup>143</sup> For the thirteenth century, see S. Herzberg-Fränkell, 'Geschichte der deutschen Reichskanzlei 1246-1308', *Mittheilungen des Instituts für österreichischen Geschichtsforschung*, Ergänzungsband 1 (1885), 254-97. Even Charles IV's government, with its heavy concentration on Prague, relied substantially on Germans for its functioning: see Moraw, 'Mittelpunktsfunktion' (as n. 58), esp. 469-80; Ludwig E. Schmitt, *Die deutsche Urkundensprache in der Kanzlei Kaiser Karls IV. (1346-1378)* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1972), 74.

distinctly by its German subjects, it did at least address them increasingly in their own tongue. Vernacular documents from the imperial chancery are first encountered around the middle of the thirteenth century.<sup>144</sup> During the fourteenth, the vernacular advanced rapidly, with German-language documents, close to half of the total surviving from Ludwig the Bavarian's chancery, becoming a clear majority by the time of Wenceslas.<sup>145</sup> The chronicler John of Viktring, looking back from mid-century, was even moved to claim – mistakenly, but significantly – that Rudolf of Habsburg had decreed that German be adopted for royal diplomas, since Latin misled the laity.<sup>146</sup> During the same period, the passage of significant parts of imperial Burgundy under French control, coupled with a sharp fall in both the frequency and duration of the monarch's visits to Italy, helped ensure that the traditional distinction between the Empire as a whole and the narrower German *regnum* became harder to discern.<sup>147</sup> The habit in vernacular writings of using a single word – *rîche* – to signify both only hastened the process.<sup>148</sup>

One element in the late medieval monarchy does, admittedly, seem to challenge the whole notion of a German 'regnal' community: the identity of the rulers themselves. The choice of king lay, in the first instance, with the prince-electors, and nothing bound them to choose a German. The candidates raised to the throne in the period thus included a king of Castile and a brother of the king of England.<sup>149</sup> French princes were several times contenders, as were the English kings Edward III and Richard II.<sup>150</sup> In the thirteenth century, the crown had seemed destined to fall to the Přemyslid Otakar II of Bohemia.<sup>151</sup> It is hard even to ascribe a clear ethnicity to the princes of the house of Luxemburg, which supplied four of the

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<sup>144</sup> Max Vancsa, *Das erste Auftreten der deutschen Sprache in den Urkunden* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1895), esp. 60-91.

<sup>145</sup> Helmut Bansa, *Studien zur Kanzlei Kaiser Ludwigs des Bayern vom Tag der Wahl bis zur Rückkehr aus Italien (1314-1329)* (Kallmünz: Lassleben, 1968), 89; Schmitt, *Die deutsche Urkundensprache* (as n. 142), 3-4; Hlaváček, *Kanzleiwesen* (as n. 62), 88.

<sup>146</sup> *Iohannis abbatis Victoriensis Liber certarum historiarum*, ed. F. Schneider, *MGH SscrerGerm.* 36 (Hannover, Leipzig: Hahn, 1909), 294.

<sup>147</sup> Moraw, *Von offener Verfassung* (as n. 6), 252-3; Schnell, 'Deutsche Literatur' (as n. 15), 292.

<sup>148</sup> Schubert, *König und Reich* (as n. 70), 234-6.

<sup>149</sup> See above, n. 42.

<sup>150</sup> For French candidatures, see Gaston Zeller, 'Les rois de France candidats à l'Empire', *Revue historique* 173 (1934), 273-311; for Edward III, H.S. Offler, 'England and Germany at the beginning of the Hundred Years' War', *English Historical Review* 54 (1939), 608-31; for Richard II, Anthony Tuck, 'Richard II and the house of Luxemburg', in *Richard II: the Art of Kingship*, ed. A. Goodman and J. Gillespie (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 205-29.

<sup>151</sup> For Otakar's imperial ambitions, see Jörg K. Hoensch, *Přemysl Otakar II. von Böhmen: Der goldene König* (Graz / Vienna / Cologne: Styria, 1989), esp. 200-19.

Empire's rulers.<sup>152</sup> The dynasty illuminates in striking fashion the international horizons of the European high nobility, whose members did not seek their identity in narrow ethnic categories.<sup>153</sup> Associating the Luxemburgs with a specifically German sphere of power and culture is especially problematical. Henry VII seems barely to have understood the language.<sup>154</sup> Charles IV, Wenceslas and Sigismund all bore dynastic royal titles in addition to the imperial crown; the Hungarian kingdom held by Sigismund at the time of his election was not even within the *Reich*. Charles, in a break with tradition, incorporated the phrase *rex Bohemie* into his imperial title and paired the imperial eagle with the double-tailed Bohemian lion on his seals, conflating imperial and dynastic frames of reference.<sup>155</sup> The change was not lost on German observers: for a chronicler in fourteenth-century Magdeburg, the emperor was 'keiser Karle van Behmen'.<sup>156</sup>

None of this, however, did much to undermine the idea of a German political community under its monarchs. In the first place, the fact that not all the Empire's rulers were German did not prevent at least some contemporaries from insisting that they ought to be, or, in the case of the Luxemburger, persuading themselves that they actually were. The publicist Alexander of Roes, writing in the 1280s, demanded that the electors raise to the throne 'a German knight ... just like Charlemagne'.<sup>157</sup> Others believed that questions of ethnicity had actually played a part in particular decisions. Siegfried of Balnhausen depicted Pope Gregory X as rebuffing Otakar II's imperial pretensions with the question, 'why should we wish to raise up a Slav to the Empire, when we have many princes and counts in Germany?'<sup>158</sup> The Strasbourg chronicler Jakob Twinger, writing early in the fifteenth century, not only insisted that Germanness was a condition of election to the Empire but, just as strikingly, firmly declared that Charles and Wenceslas met the condition.<sup>159</sup> Similar assumptions may have

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<sup>152</sup> Henry VII, Charles IV, Wenceslas, Sigismund. I exclude the brief anti-kingship of Jobst of Moravia.

<sup>153</sup> See Jörg K. Hoensch, *Die Luxemburger: Eine spätmittelalterliche Dynastie gesamteuropäischer Bedeutung 1308-1437* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2000).

<sup>154</sup> Thomas, *Deutsche Geschichte* (as n. 12), 135.

<sup>155</sup> As examples, see the plates in *Kaiser Karl IV.*, ed. Seibt (as n. 60), 327-8.

<sup>156</sup> *Chron. dt. Städte* 7, ed. C. Hegel (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1869), 246.

<sup>157</sup> Alexander of Roes, *Noticia seculi*, cap. 18, in *Alexander von Roes: Schriften*, ed. H. Grundmann, H. Heimpel, *MGH Staatsschriften des späteren Mittelalters* 1.1 (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1958), 165.

<sup>158</sup> *Sifridi presbyteri de Balnhusin historia universalis et compendium historiarum*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, *MGH Scriptores* 25 (Hannover: Hahn, 1880), 707.

<sup>159</sup> *Chron. dt. Städte* 8, ed. C. Hegel (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1870), 422: 'also keyser Karle der vierde und Wenzelaus sin sun das rich besossent und künige worent zu Behem, und doch worent von dütschem geslehte und sin mustent von dütschem geslehte'.

been present among the electors themselves: Count Palatine Rupert, in a document promising his vote to Wenceslas, declared that, in his fitness for the *Reich*, the Luxemburger was 'the best and most beneficial [candidate to be found] in the German lands'.<sup>160</sup>

In a way, the ruler's own ethnicity was largely irrelevant in framing the identity of his German subjects. The German people as a whole, many writers agreed, had a special relationship with the imperial monarchy: it was *their* monarchy, granted to them, controlled by them, suited specially to their collective temperament and aptitudes, its prestige accruing to them alone.<sup>161</sup> Alexander of Roes wrote of 'the Germans, to whom the government of the world is translated'.<sup>162</sup> But who, in this sense, stood for 'the Germans'? For German commentators, the main conduit between the Empire and German identity was evidently not the monarch, but the German princes who elected him.<sup>163</sup> Novel though the electoral college may have been, it was viewed from the outset as the constitutional expression of ancient entitlements.<sup>164</sup> These were believed to have had an ethnic frame of reference from the outset. The German princes, it was argued, were the bearers of the Roman Empire's historical 'translation' to the German people.<sup>165</sup> Evidence from the chronicles shows that the doctrine of *translatio imperii in Germanos* reached beyond rarefied learned circles, to a larger, more

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<sup>160</sup> *Deutsche Reichstagsakten* 1, ed. Weizsäcker (as n. 88), 45, no. 20 (1375).

<sup>161</sup> A single, particularly eloquent, example of this way of thinking is provided by the publicist Alexander of Roes, who wrote during the 1280s. In addition to his edited works (*Alexander von Roes: Schriften*, ed. Grundmann & Heimpel (as n. 157)), see: M. Hamm, 'Alexander von Roes', in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters: Verfasserlexikon* 1, ed. K. Ruh *et al* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1978), 222-6; Leonard E. Scales, 'Alexander of Roes: Empire and Community in Later Thirteenth-Century Germany' (unpub. University of Manchester PhD dissertation, 1993).

<sup>162</sup> Alexander of Roes, *Memoriale*, cap. 10, ed. Grundmann & Heimpel (as n. 157), 100.

<sup>163</sup> As an illustration of this view, the title of one of the principal fourteenth-century treatises on the Empire's history and constitution might be cited: Lupold of Bebenburg, *Libellus de zelo Catholicae Fidei ueterum Principum Germanorum*, in *De iurisdictione, auctoritate, et praeeminencia imperiali, ac potestate ecclesiastica*, ed. S. Schardius (Basileae: Ex officina Iohannis Oporini, 1566). For Lupold's writings, see Katharina Colberg, 'Lupold von Bebenburg', in *Verfasserlexikon* 5, ed. Ruh *et al* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1985), 1071-8.

<sup>164</sup> See Max Buchner, 'Die Entstehung und Ausbildung der Kurfürstenfabel', *Historisches Jahrbuch der Görres-Gesellschaft* 33 (1912), 54-100, 255-322.

<sup>165</sup> For the idea of *translatio imperii*, the standard work is Werner Goetz, *Translatio Imperii: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Geschichtsdenkens und der politischen Theorien im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1958); see also Folz, *Le Souvenir et la Légende* (as n. 71). A key authority on the Empire's translation, widely cited by late medieval Germans, was the decretal *Venerabilem*, issued by Innocent III in 1202. On this text, see Friedrich Kempf, *Papsttum und Kaisertum bei Innocenz III.: Die geistigen und rechtlichen Grundlagen seine Thronstreitpolitik* (Rome: Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1954), 48-55.



diverse group of literate Germans.<sup>166</sup> What is striking is the emphasis commonly given to the *German* identity of the prince-electors – and, beyond them, to that of the larger community of princes and nobles loyal to the *Reich*.<sup>167</sup> The *Schwabenspiegel*, a legal compilation probably dating from the 1270s, was adamant, for example, that the temporal electors 'should be Germans (*tvtsche man*), all four'.<sup>168</sup> The readiness of narrative, and sometimes documentary, texts to insist on the 'Germanness' of the high nobility – even in formal contexts, where the monarch was given his full Roman titles – is a general pattern.<sup>169</sup>

Ultimately, however, it was the ruler who, whatever the complexities of his own identity, supplied the most fundamental impulse to late medieval conceptions of the Germans. The *Reich* was, after all, a monarchy, and it was the monarch who, by the bare fact of his existence, infused with meaning the powers of the electors and the duties of the German nobility. The princes appear in late medieval writings at their most 'German' when they are serving him: performing, under his leadership, the protective functions which, it was argued, had won their forebears the Christian Roman Empire in the first place. These duties were fundamentally military.<sup>170</sup> Their loyal discharge, at the emperor's summons, sanctioned the German people's continuing existence, through the imperial title, as a unique, and uniquely prestigious, political community.<sup>171</sup> Of course, by the fourteenth century, the ossification of imperial government and the growth of princely sovereignty had in hard fact gone far to consign such high-minded ideals to the realm of romantic fiction. That was not, however, how some literate Germans persisted in seeing things. Only thus can we explain the stubborn determination shown by otherwise well-informed fourteenth-century chroniclers, in a traditional, imperial style, to paint as sanguinary triumphs of German *animositas* the

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<sup>166</sup> Henry of Herford dated the chapters of his chronicle not only from the foundation of Rome and the Incarnation, but also 'a translatione imperii in Theutonicos': see, e.g., *Liber de rebus memorabilioribus*, ed. Potthast (as n. 142), 274, cap. 100: the Lübeck chronicler Detmar refers repeatedly to Franco-papal plans to take the Empire away 'van den Dudeschen' or 'van den Dudeschen vorsten': *Chron. dt. Städte* 19, ed. Koppmann (as n. 117), 464, 473.

<sup>167</sup> The Strasbourger Gottfried of Ensmingen thus speaks freely of the electors as 'principes Alemanie': *Ellenhardi chronicon*, ed. Jaffé (as n. 108), 122, 123.

<sup>168</sup> *Schwabenspiegel Kurzform* 1, ed. K.A. Eckhardt, *MGH Fontes iuris Germanici antiqui* (N.S.) 3 (Hannover: Hahn, 1960), 192 (*Landrecht*).

<sup>169</sup> For some examples of references to the *principes Alemannie* in documentary sources, see *MGH Constitutiones* 3, ed. Schwalm (as n. 31), 83, , 417, 598, nos. 90, 427, 623.

<sup>170</sup> The *Schwabenspiegel*, thus insists that it is the duty of 'die tvtschen' to accompany the king south over the Alps: *Schwabenspiegel Kurzform* 1, ed. Eckhardt (as n. 168), 406 (*Lehnrecht*).

<sup>171</sup> The relationship between German military activity and the imperial title is more fully explored in Scales, 'War and German identity' (as n. 76).

impoverished and disappointing forays of Henry VII and Ludwig the Bavarian in the south.<sup>172</sup> Others resigned themselves to disappointment, and to registering the gulf that seemingly yawned between the high duty to which the princes were called and the service they actually rendered. A Salzburg annalist professed himself unable to say whether King Rudolf's great victory over Otakar of Bohemia reflected glory or shame on 'our illustrious Germany' (*nostra clara Germania*), when it was observed how few princes had been with the king.<sup>173</sup>

The routes traditionally taken by imperial armies had naturally led beyond the limits of Germany, to where Christendom's welfare or the Empire's wars dictated. In imagination, they led there still, even if the kings and emperors of the late Middle Ages rode them less often, and to less remarkable effect, than in days gone by. Italy retained for literate Germans its old power of suggestion. Yet the essential core, which nurtured the Empire's armies and gave them their defining qualities, the natural centre to which they would one day return, was Germany. It was *felix Germania* that, in a frequent pun, 'germinated' the armed men whom the monarch led against neighbours and enemies.<sup>174</sup> 'Germany' was habitually named when the ruler departed German soil at the head of an army, and named again when he returned – 'over berch in Dudeschland', as Detmar wrote, in Lübeck, setting his gaze to the distant Alps.<sup>175</sup> It was to 'the German lands' that, in 1402, King Rupert explained, he had 'come back', from his dismal Italian adventure.<sup>176</sup> The same gravitational quality shows through in a letter from the city of Mainz.<sup>177</sup> Mainz's forces with Rupert's army had been given leave to 'ride back into the German lands'; and now that they were 'back home again', Mainz declared, the city was no longer willing to send men into Lombardy – to, as the letter phrases it, 'such a far-off land'.

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The German's late medieval 'fatherland', if we mean that term as Arndt meant it – the rightful home of those people who shared the name of Germans – was no doubt a weak and a nebulous concept. For most 'Germans', most of the time, it was a matter of rather small

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<sup>172</sup> As examples, see: *Die Chronik des Mathias von Neuenburg*, ed. A. Hofmeister, *MGH SsrerGerm.* (N.S.) 4 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1924), 83; *Die Chronik Johannis von Winterthur*, ed. Baethgen (as n. 87), 62.

<sup>173</sup> *Annales S. Rudberti Salisburgenses*, ed. Wattenbach (as n. 119), 803.

<sup>174</sup> See, for example, *Die Chronik des Mathias von Neuenburg*, ed. Hofmeister (as n. 172), 39.

<sup>175</sup> *Chron. dt. Städte* 19, ed. Koppmann (as n. 117), 463 (Ludwig the Bavarian).

<sup>176</sup> *Deutsche Reichstagsakten* 5, ed. Weizsäcker (as n. 100), 312, no. 230.

<sup>177</sup> *Deutsche Reichstagsakten* 5, ed. Weizsäcker (as n. 100), 267, no. 206.

significance – when they knew of, or gave thought to, its existence at all. All that being said, when all its limitations are duly recorded, it remains to its core a *political* 'fatherland'. The Germans were among the younger of western Europe's medieval 'nations'.<sup>178</sup> Their formative period was in the central Middle Ages, and the political allegiance around which the *Teutonici* coalesced in the minds of their literate spokespersons – the western, medieval Roman Empire – was older than they. It was the Empire, and the acts of rulership which, in its high-medieval heyday, its monarchs undertook, that *made* the Germans – that is to say, made them manifest as a single, meaningful community, first to others, then to themselves. The unwholesome, bookish, folkloric themes, whose deep-laid presence is occasionally suspected by modern long-range commentators on the course of German history, are, in fact, to an unusual degree missing.<sup>179</sup> Ancestor legends, descent and settlement myths, the celebration of blood, kin and ancient homeland – such elements are all found in the Middle Ages more fully developed in other parts of Europe than in Germany.<sup>180</sup> The themes which stand out in German writings tend on the whole in an opposite direction. The late medieval German 'nation' appears to a striking degree artificial, fabricated, composite: a result of the documented exercise of power by well attested historical actors in the comparatively recent past. Germanness, as literate medieval Germans themselves understood it, was a compromise – in some ways, a distinctly uneasy one. Perceiving in the political culture of late medieval Germany patterns for the blood-and-soil ethnic fundamentalism of later and very different times requires, truly, the eye of faith.

There is, however, another, somewhat less melodramatic, viewpoint, which is often encountered in modern, comparative studies of medieval political allegiances. This regards the late medieval German 'nation', insofar as one existed at all, as inert and enfeebled – sapped, by the meagreness of German political institutions, of the capacity for more than pale, cultural reference. As this paper has argued, this view too appears to show the distorting effect of assumptions derived from much later periods of German history. The assiduous search, conducted in recent decades particularly by some North American, French, and

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<sup>178</sup> For recent work on their origins, concentrating on the tenth and eleventh centuries, see *Beiträge zur mittelalterlichen Reichs- und Nationsbildung in Deutschland und Frankreich*, ed. C. Brühl and B. Schneidmüller, Historische Zeitschrift, Beihefte 24 (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1997).

<sup>179</sup> Hastings, *Construction of Nationhood* (as n. 11), tends towards this view. See esp. 108.

<sup>180</sup> Their absence in Germany is shown by Graus, *Lebendige Vergangenheit* (as n. 71), ch. 3. For their significance elsewhere in medieval Europe, see Norbert Kerskens, *Geschichtsschreibung im Europa der "Nationes": Nationalgeschichtliche Gesamtdarstellungen im Mittelalter* (Cologne / Weimar / Vienna: Böhlau, 1995).

British historians, for the 'medieval origins of the modern state', has resulted in an unhelpfully narrow and prescriptive view of the permissible contours of the medieval political 'nation'. Nevertheless, such studies have raised an undeniably important question – and a hard one for the historian of late medieval Germany to answer with confidence: did Germany, in view of its peculiar political arrangements, nurture any sense of shared identity significant and widespread enough to merit study? As this paper has sought to show, references to the Germans and their lands are, in fact, routine enough in late medieval writings, and were quite often invoked in ways that seem to presuppose the existence of what we might, following Reynolds, broadly call a 'regnal' community, under the Empire's ruler. The evidence is, however, by its nature limited, revealing, at best, something of the thought and assumptions of the few who have left a record. What of the rest? And how should we gauge the mentalities underlying even those references that we have? Reasons for scepticism are not hard to find. Too many of the generally-accepted foundations of the medieval 'nation' – possession of a common law, participation in the workings of mature royal government – are absent, or are present only in attenuated form.<sup>181</sup>

Here, however, some open-mindedness is advisable. First of all, it may be permissible to wonder whether the rich opportunities which medieval English and French royal government undeniably made available to their subjects, to pay their king's taxes, suffer the strictures of his justice, die in his wars, or help his officials with their interminable local inquiries, invariably nurtured in their breasts the patriotic fervour which some modern commentators suppose. The point would, at any rate, need to be proven, not merely assumed. A weak yet prestigious monarchy on the German model – all promise and imperial pomp, with little pain – was perhaps not without its own appeal, and its own capacity to rally popular allegiance.<sup>182</sup> A survey of other regions of Latin Europe, from the Celtic west to the eastern marchlands, would yield plenty of stirring expressions of medieval patriotism, from the pens of writers in regions subject only to weak royal government, or to none at all.<sup>183</sup> All this suggests that the role of institutions in nurturing such sentiments may have been more complex than is sometimes supposed. In any case, the sceptic, confronted with the many

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<sup>181</sup> These two factors are particularly emphasised by Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities* (as n. 13), 253.

<sup>182</sup> The seemingly paradoxical role of the, relatively weak, late medieval Scottish monarchy in nourishing patriotic sentiment is illustrated by Grant, 'Aspects of national consciousness' (as n. 32), esp. 79-81.

<sup>183</sup> R.R. Davies, 'The peoples of Britain and Ireland 1100-1400: (i) identities', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6<sup>th</sup> ser., 5 (1994), 1-20; Graus, *Nationenbildung* (as n. 33).

studies of recent times celebrating the medieval birth of the English or the French 'nation', is tempted to retort that these too appear mostly to rest on mere heaps of words – on the elusive, perhaps untypical, utterances of those who could hold a pen.<sup>184</sup> Showing the nation in action, infusing popular sentiment and motivating popular deeds (a task that historians of nineteenth- or twentieth-century European nations accept as an everyday part of their job description) is in most cases a far harder trick for medievalists – and not only those whose concern is with Germany – to perform.<sup>185</sup> The history of medieval 'states' and 'nations' is a field of inquiry with an in-built temptation to the historian to lend a particularly close ear to those medieval voices that appear to be speaking from the right script. It is a temptation that, in the studies of recent decades, has not always been successfully resisted. An examination of late medieval Germany yields some further, different, voices for the historian to listen to. If their utterances seem somewhat to complicate familiar grand narratives and general models, that, surely, can be no bad thing.

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<sup>184</sup> Heavy reliance on literary and relatively learned works is a striking feature, for example, of Turville-Petre, *England the Nation* (as n. 34); Beaune, *Birth of an Ideology* (as n. 8).

<sup>185</sup> That is not to suggest that ideas and actions never came together in the Middle Ages. One notable instance where they appear to have done so is provided by the Bohemian Hussite uprising. See František Šmahel, 'The idea of the "nation" in Hussite Bohemia', *Historica* 16 (1968), 143-247, 17 (1969), 93-197.