

The readership of *Guerres mondiales* have a generous sample of the work of their French-speaking colleagues in Canada since just about all of them are represented, a contrast noted in his introduction by Jean Pariseau. A decade ago, in a larger collection, only Bernier was represented. On fait du progrès !

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Jean-Paul Bled — *Rodolphe et Mayerling*. Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1989. Pp. 306.

Hindsight is the sin of historians. It is difficult to write about *fin de siècle* Austro-Hungary without falling into clichés. Did the mood of political helplessness and artistic irrationality inevitably presage the multinational empire's decline and breakup? Or was it rather a period of liberating modernism? Again, does its model of *Mittel-europa* have something to teach us today, or is it merely a nostalgic utopia? Was its disappearance determined by history through its creaky make-up? Were the Anschluss and Holocaust merely outcomes of its complex history?

Luckily, Jean-Paul Bled takes the education, career, and 1889 suicide of the heir to the throne, Archduke Rudolph, on their own historical terms. A professor of contemporary history at the University of Strasbourg, president of the Study Group for the Habsburg Monarchy, and director of the journal *Études danubiennes*, Bled has launched a veritable explosion of books about Austro-Hungary over the past three years. In 1987, he published a biography of Emperor Franz Joseph of Austro-Hungary; the next year, a study about the foundations of Austrian conservatism between 1859 and 1879; and now, an account of Crown Prince Rudolph of Austria and his suicide in 1889. This last book, under review here, appeared on the hundredth anniversary of this tragic event, and joined a vast stream of other books on this romantic topic, some literary and some historical in nature.

A reading of this fascinating and well-written book turns one's mind to the situation of so many other crown princes, whether Charles of Britain or sons of industrial magnates, who are forced to wait for so long before they come to power because of long-lived and independent fathers. Bled admits in his conclusion that the life and death of Rudolph and his admirer Maria Vetsera were without great political import. It was hardly likely that Rudolph would have come to the throne, even without the suicide. If he had, his reign would probably have been a failure because he was cut off from many of the historical roots of this complicated federal system.

For Rudolph, at thirty, was already morally and physically at the end of his tether. Depressed by the empire's return to conservatism, isolated from state affairs by his imperial father, and ridden with disease as a result of his indiscriminate love life, Rudolph would, in any case, most likely not have outlasted his older but healthier father, who died in 1916. His desperate act of murder-suicide in 1889 probably only hastened his own approaching death.

Most authors seem to see Rudolph as a progressive and sympathetic figure struggling against overwhelming traditional forces within the empire. Bled takes a much more critical view of the young man, portraying him instead as an overheated and unrealistic idealist. Through the influence of his absent mother, the egotistical and prickly Empress Elizabeth, Rudolf was given a series of liberal tutors, who inculcated into him a typical late-19th century faith in science and secular, progressive reason. He hoped vainly for the formation within Austro-Hungary of a powerful, progressive middle class linked to an enlightened aristocracy more loyal to the throne than to its diffuse historical roots after the British model of New Toryism. He believed in the secular advance of human reason in the world, and hoped for a reform of the traditional and multinational empire along new and more logical lines. He hated the stubbornness of the Hungarians and the Czechs, who demanded their own rights to the disadvantage of the whole instead of following the lead of German-Austrian liberalism. At the same time, he fell out with his father —and nationalist German-Austrian liberalism — over the German alliance, holding William II in contempt. After 1879, the liberals were ousted in Austria and replaced by the conservatives under Count Taaffe. Rudolph felt a deep antipathy to this regime, which for him represented backwardness and clericalism.

Because of the extremes of his character, these concepts were held in a confused and uncritical, but also self-righteous manner, which led him into conflict with his father and the imperial ministers. But he went even further than merely criticizing imperial policies in private. Through middle class, sometimes Jewish, friends and newspaper proprietors, he secretly wrote articles attacking his father's government. This journalistic activity eventually became known, with the result that his father was even more loath to associate him with affairs of state. Rudolph became even more isolated and depressed about Austro-Hungary and his own fate.

His personal health, meanwhile, deteriorated as well. Eventually, he caught gonorrhoea, which he gave to his wife, Stephanie of Belgium. This rendered her sterile and left him without a male heir. At the same time, believing his sickness to be incurable syphilis and fearing eventual blindness, lameness and madness, he fell into deep depressions. He underwent rigorous treatments which included massive doses of cocaine, morphine and opium, as was the habit at the time, which probably turned him into an addict.

Not strong enough to take his own life, eventually, he found a willing victim-accomplice in the form of the romantic 17-year old Baroness Maria Vetsera. Rudolph had to commit an unpardonable act, he felt, in order to go through with his own suicide. Having met Rudolph only fleetingly over a three-month period, but having long admired him from afar, Maria agreed to the suicide pact. The end came in January 1889 in his hunting lodge, at Mayerling, when he first shot his willing victim, and then shot himself. Until 1918, the court resisted admitting the whole truth, especially his assassination of Maria. A royal doctor's medical certificate attested to Rudolph's madness at the moment of suicide, which allowed him to be buried in the normal fashion. Maria's body was unceremoniously bundled away and buried secretly in an abbey.

Bled's book contains excellent sections about the type of liberal education Rudolph underwent, and about his relations with his parents and surroundings. These passages are of great general interest. When he moves into Rudolph's relations with Maria, the double suicide, and the subsequent cover-up about their deaths, he approaches the realm of detective story. Bled's conclusion is balanced and stresses

mainly the former of these two threads. There, he speaks with deep understanding of Rudolph's marginalization within Austro-Hungarian society as an example of the loss of influence of European liberalism, caught between rising conservatism and social democracy towards the end of the century.

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Patrick Brantlinger, ed. — *Energy & Entropy: Science and Culture in Victorian Britain*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989. Pp. vii, 352.

This collection of essays is drawn from the pages of *Victorian Culture*, primarily from the Autumn 1984 special issue on science and culture in nineteenth-century Britain. Thirteen papers (plus a lengthy editorial introduction) deal with a wide range of topics, from medicine to mathematics, and geology to physics. Aspects of the Victorian crisis of faith appear in many of the chapters and are of special concern in discussions of physics and public health. By design, the collection omits material on Darwin and the problem of evolution. By chance, it includes nothing on astronomy, a topic of considerable interest to the Victorians, and one which has received a great deal of attention in the history of science community. By the same token, no author deals specifically with chemistry during this era.

As a social historian concerned with nineteenth- and twentieth-century science, I find only a few of these papers to be of value. Richard Yeo examines "Science and Intellectual Authority" using Chambers' *Vestiges* as a case study. His focus is tight, the analysis controlled and informed by social-historical categories that entail a clear understanding of the social system and the groups that comprise it. Those who are interested in the professionalization of Victorian science must reckon with Yeo's arguments. At mid-century, science remained a part of the common culture and professionalization (as both a social and cognitive process) "part of disputes about the proper form of natural knowledge" (27).

In a complex and methodologically self-conscious essay (it is the only paper in the collection to explicitly discuss methods), Harvey Becher explores "The Intellectual Origins and Post-Graduate Careers of a Cambridge Intellectual Elite, 1830-1860." Using the techniques of prosopography, Becher focuses on the top ten wranglers (honors graduates) over a thirty-year span. Honors, at Cambridge, were restricted to the classics and mathematics until the Natural Sciences and Moral Sciences Tripos were introduced, in 1851. Becher's discussion has important implications for a number of historiographical problems in both the history of science and the history of literature as well as the "decline of Britain" debate. This paper will repay careful attention by scholars who are not afraid of numbers.

Greg Myers discusses "Nineteenth-Century Popularizations of Thermodynamics and the Rhetoric of Social Prophecy." His far-ranging analysis forcefully reminds us that along with evolution, thermodynamics provided the **other** most important science-based metaphor employed by Victorians both in England and in America. In addition, the discussion of Roderick Murchison by James A. Secord and David K. van Keuren's