ABSTRACT

MOBILIZING GERMAN WOMEN AGAINST ‘CULTURAL DRUNKENNESS’: RASSEN-HYGIENE AND COLONIAL DISCOURSE IN THE PRUSSIAN-POLISH PROVINCES, 1880-1914

Lenny A. Urena, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

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My purpose in this project is to analyze the interactions of colonial, racial, and gender subjectivity in the height of German imperialism and the expansion of medical knowledge. By focusing on the notion of an imagined “Germannes,” I intend to show how colonial discourses were part of a much-complicated and dynamic rule circulating between policies “at home” and “abroad” in the colonies. The debates about Germanizing a considerable population of Polish-speaking Prussian citizens (the so-called “Polish Question”) provide a useful instance to analyze German fears of both cultural and epidemical contagion, as well as men’s constructions about German women’s role in reproducing and spreading Germannes. How were women mobilized and what were their responses to the civilizing discourses? The Prussian Polish provinces, “the Eastern frontier”, give us an example of a colonial experience, where images about colonial pathologies were lived not outside in the tropics, but at “home.”