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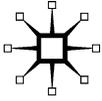
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Edited by John Alexander Williams

WEIMAR CULTURE REVISITED

EDITED BY
JOHN ALEXANDER WILLIAMS

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WEIMAR CULTURE REVISITED

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FOREWORD

John A. Williams

“The killing is over. The consequences of the war, need and misery, will burden us for many years... Be unified, loyal, and dutiful. The old and rotten, the monarchy, has collapsed. Long live the new. Long live the German republic.”¹ These words, spoken by the Social Democrat Philip Scheidemann to a massive crowd at the Reichstag on November 9, 1918, inaugurated Germany’s first true parliamentary democracy, soon to become known as the Weimar Republic. By the winter of 1933, the republic’s enemies on the far right had prevailed, and Adolf Hitler was the new chancellor. Attempting to justify why he was dismantling the democratic system, Hitler announced in March that, “Over the past fourteen years, our nation has suffered a decline in all realms of life that has been worse than we could ever have imagined.”² The revolutionary “November criminals” like Scheidemann and subsequent Weimar governments had brought near ruin to Germany, proclaimed Hitler. It was time to clean up the mess.

With this rhetoric, Hitler was furthering an antiliberal narrative of the recent past that presented the Weimar Republic as doomed from the beginning by its own weaknesses and political corruption. Indeed, democracy’s enemies on both the Right and the Left had been honing this representation of Weimar as a miserable failure since 1918. One need only look to the “stab in the back legend” propagated by Hindenburg, Ludendorff, and others, or to the fetishistic images of mutilated war veterans, corrupt politicians, syphilitic prostitutes, and “lust murderers” in the paintings of Otto Dix and George Grosz.

Unfortunately, this pessimistic and openly antidemocratic disdain influenced most of the memories and historical representations of Weimar Germany up to the 1980s, in the two Germanies and everywhere else. The resulting doom-laden narrative of Weimar gained added historiographical credence, even among political moderates and liberals, because of the *Sonderweg* (“deviant path”) thesis that dominated scholarship on

modern Germany from the early 1960s onward. Pre-1933 Germany, these *Sonderweg* historians asserted, remained under the control of the conservative aristocracy, and its culture was shot through with chronically irrational, illiberal, and anti-modern tendencies. Together these politically and culturally reactionary continuities undermined the attempt at democracy in Weimar and enabled the rise of Nazism.³

Most scholars of the high arts and literature—of “Weimar culture” per se—took an equally teleological approach. Either implicitly or openly, they commenced their analyses with the Nazi takeover and worked backward in search of ideological flaws. Doom-laden titles, such as *Before the Deluge*, *The Weimar Chronicle: Prelude to Hitler*, and *Dancing on the Volcano*, abounded.⁴ Moreover, scholars generally limited their analyses to the famous canon of artistically daring and politically ambiguous works. Starring roles were given to films like *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, *The Last Laugh*, *Metropolis*, and *M*; novels like *The Magic Mountain* and *Berlin Alexanderplatz*; the works of Bertolt Brecht; the architectural novelties of the Bauhaus; and the paintings of Expressionism and New Objectivity (*Neue Sachlichkeit*).⁵

A strong emphasis on the supposed decadence of Weimar shaped popular postwar representations as well. The best-known film about Weimar Berlin, Bob Fosse’s *Cabaret* (1972), is a good example of how historically flawed this view could be. *Cabaret* offers the Kit Kat Club as a metaphor for the country’s slide into jadedness and fascism, with Liza Minnelli as a politically oblivious, hedonistic American singer, Joel Grey as the sinister and increasingly Hitleresque German emcee, and Michael York as a hapless British onlooker. But as beautifully as the movie succeeds on its own cinematic terms, it departs significantly from the original source material and, from the realities of Weimar culture itself.⁶ *Cabaret* is very loosely based on Christopher Isherwood’s semiautobiographical novel of 1935, *Good-Bye to Berlin*, in which we find a far less portentous meditation on everyday life in early 1930s Berlin. Sally Bowles and the first-person English narrator never fall in love, and Sally never sings in a cabaret. Instead she performs at a sleazy bar called The Lady Windermere. This is how Isherwood describes her show:

I was curious to see how Sally would behave. I had imagined her, for some reason, rather nervous, but she wasn’t, in the least. She had a surprisingly deep husky voice. She sang badly, without any expression, her hands hanging down at her sides—yet her performance was, in its own way, effective because of her startling appearance and her air of not caring a curse what

people thought of her . . . I decided, as so often before, never to visit a place of this sort again.⁷

That's all—no belted-out songs about hunger or the hedonistic life, no sexy decadence, no grotesque emcee to symbolize the slide into fascism. In fact, Isherwood's story is far closer to the truth of everyday Weimar culture, in which the mundane and not particularly innovative far outweighed the spectacular and aesthetically challenging. Most of the enduring canonical works would never have come into existence without heavy subsidies from the states and municipalities. *Metropolis*, *The Threepenny Opera*, et cetera did not reflect popular mentalities or behaviors in any obvious way. As historian Karl Christian Führer points out,

Our understanding of Weimar culture is incomplete without a grasp of broader patterns of cultural production and consumption, and skewed if it does not take into account the conservative tastes and the forces of tradition which also characterized [culture]. Seen from this broader perspective, cultural life in the republic emerges as less spectacular and less experimental than it appears in many accounts.⁸

A scholarly re-evaluation of Weimar and its culture has been underway since the late 1980s, however. There are several reasons for this. First, the *Sonderweg* thesis of German deviance from “Western modernity” came under attack beginning in the early 1980s. This took the form of a vehement debate among historians, which they carried out in programmatic essays, scholarly monographs, and polemical exchanges. Many if not most scholars of Germany began to realize that the *Sonderweg* thesis was based on an idealized notion of “Western modernization” that had little to do with the real complexities of modernity. The demise of the *Sonderweg* has inspired scholars to rethink Germany's state, society, and culture since the nineteenth century. They have demonstrated convincingly that in this era of rapid industrialization, urbanization, and all of the accompanying social changes, Germany became an essentially *modern* nation.⁹

Second, a number of post-*Sonderweg* historians began in the late 1980s to interrogate the nature of Weimar Germany's “modernity”—most influentially the late Detlev Peukert. Peukert's 1987 book *The Weimar Republic* argues that Weimar faced the same political, social, and economic instabilities that every other Western industrial society has at one time or another faced. Yet the republic was burdened with all of these crises at once; it stood “at a crisis-ridden intersection of epochal social-cultural innovations.” This

was largely because the First World War and its legacies “narrowed the space available within which to reach any compromise which might have made the political and social innovations of the Weimar Republic acceptable to the various groups among the German population.”¹⁰ In contrast to the *Sonderweg* historians, who identified modernization with the rise of capitalism, liberalism, and rationalism, Peukert saw even those developments as deeply ambiguous. For him, modernity itself was “Janus-faced” and deeply ambiguous, both in an objective sense and as a subjective experience.

The hectic sequence of events, the depths of the crisis shocks, and the innovative power of the social-cultural and political changes were not marginal; they were central characteristics of the epoch. From them grew an underlying sense of insecurity and absence of bearings—of changes in the framework of everyday life and of the calling into question of traditional generational and gender roles. Insecurity was the mark of the epoch.¹¹

This insecurity weakened democracy and left it vulnerable to attack from both the far Left and the far Right. Authoritarian solutions to the nation’s problems, always a danger in any troubled democracy, came to the fore in the early 1930s. With the Depression and the polarization of politics, the republic finally ran out of both the time and the *Handlungsspielraum* (“room to maneuver”) that would have been necessary to create lasting democratic solutions.

Peukert interprets culture as a microcosm of the deeply modern uncertainty that characterized Weimar. Culture “elegantly and breathlessly played out all the positions and possibilities of modernity through to the end, put them to the test, and repudiated them almost simultaneously.”¹² This “playing out” took place not only in intellectual life and the high arts, but also within the mass media, everyday consumerism, and organized associations and subcultures. The diverse concept of “culture” found in Peukert’s work is only one way in which he offered a far more complex view of Weimar modernity than had previously been the case.

Many historians have engaged with Peukert’s thesis by seeking to bring specificity to his notion of “classical modernity,” as well as to his emphasis on the real and perceived crises of Weimar. One subject that has attracted renewed scholarly attention in the wake of Peukert’s interventions is the First World War and its cultural repercussions.¹³ Over two million men were killed on the battlefield, and the nearly 800,000 injured soldiers who returned to Germany became a constant reminder of the cost for young men and their families. On the home front,

exhaustion, malnutrition, and epidemics led to an estimated 300,000 civilian fatalities, not including some 400,000 people who perished in the 1918–1919 flu pandemic.¹⁴ In cultural terms, by causing a decline in traditional ideas and institutions of social order on the home front, the war deepened existing fears of social disorder. Civilians experienced the sudden collapse of established hierarchical relationships—men over women and children, adults over adolescents, the wealthy over the poor. The trauma of mass death and rapid social and political transformation greatly intensified preexisting fears that the moral, physical, and social health of the nation was in danger.¹⁵

Other scholars have interrogated or given added nuance to Peukert's pessimistic concept of the "pathologies of modernity," which he located in policies of state welfare and social discipline. Still others have begun to go even further, investigating not only the weaknesses, but also the very real and positive potentials in Weimar culture. This latter initiative shows the most promise for the field of Weimar studies, but it does involve some distancing from Peukert's pessimism. The best research on Weimar culture since 1990 has denied neither the damaging legacies of total war, nor that there were longer-term "pathological" tendencies that the war only intensified—most obviously racial nationalism with all its social darwinist, biopolitical, and anti-Semitic excretions. But these scholars have shown Peukert's pessimistic view of Weimar to be exaggerated and, in its own way, teleological. Combining this insight with a rejection of the simplistic *Sonderweg* view of modernization is the key to moving forward in researching the Weimar era. As Anthony McElligott puts it in a recent discussion of Peukert's legacy,

There is an increasing acceptance that there was not a single path to modernity; nor indeed was modernity itself one-dimensional but polyvalent. . . . On closer examination Weimar's "crisis" need not be interpreted as a "crisis of modernity" *per se*, but instead as one where there was an ongoing tension between these different paths to modernization.¹⁶

While those on the Left tended to see these crises as new opportunities for progress, traditional conservatives and the far Right clung to the selective notion of a unique and homogeneous "German culture." During Weimar The Nazi Fighting League for German Culture (*Kampfbund für deutsche Kultur*), for instance, trumpeted its "basic principle of rejecting all limited, partisan artistic creations in [favor of] an exclusive recognition, protection, and promotion of *German art and culture*."¹⁷ Yet the Right's hysterical

insistence on preserving homogeneously “Aryan” and canonical “German culture” only shows that they were fighting a losing battle. Real German culture was rapidly superseding this parched fantasy. Indeed, the far Right soon compromised with contemporary technological and political developments. It is no longer convincing to dismiss Nazi concepts of culture as simply anti-modern or “Romantic”; rather Nazism was just one of myriad projects of mastering modernity, all of which had a strong cultural component.¹⁸ And if popular insecurities and reactionary ideas could now be more freely expressed than ever before, so could genuinely forward-looking, experimental, and sometimes startlingly progressive blueprints for change.¹⁹

Contemporary scholars of Weimar are looking beyond the handful of texts that comprise the canon of “Weimar culture” and overturning popular clichés of flappers dancing on the volcano. This challenge to stereotypical reductions of Weimar culture was prepared by the critique of the *Sonderweg* and by Peukert’s complex view of modernity. A third inspiration has been the recent turn to everyday life in the historiography of Germany. *Alltagsgeschichte* (“the history of everyday life”) first emerged in West Germany during the 1980s as a collaboration between social historians, anthropologists, and a network of local *Geschichtswerkstätte* (history workshops).²⁰ These scholars understood culture broadly as a diverse set of historically contingent “texts” that shape how people view the world and themselves, as well as how they act in their daily social relationships. As anthropologist Hans Medick put it, culture serves as “a central dynamic and formative movement in the everyday ‘realization’ and transformation of social, economic, and political relations.”²¹ Yet in this view, culture never wholly determines human agency; for there is also an ongoing process through which people’s everyday language and actions either reproduce, contest, or transform cultural “texts.”

Finally, alongside the practitioners of *Alltagsgeschichte*, scholars of women’s history and gender relations have brought remarkable new insights to our understanding of Weimar culture. Women in interwar Germany faced some significantly different problems from men, and their opportunities differed as well. The most famous symbol of the complexities of gender in Weimar was the “New Woman.” This icon of an economically and sexually independent young urban woman reflected a (limited) social reality for some single women in the middle classes. For many others, the New Woman became a daring kind of potentially alternative identity, especially for those who were disappointed by the republic’s failed promises to help emancipate them in their everyday lives. Else Herrmann’s 1929 essay “This

Is The New Woman” expressed this link between political disappointment and gender:

Despite the fact that every war from time immemorial has entailed the liberation of an intellectually, spiritually, or physically fettered social group, the war and postwar period of our recent past has brought women nothing extraordinary in the slightest but only awakened them from their lethargy and laid upon them the responsibility for their own fate.²²

The New Woman also became a lightning rod for antifeminist anger. The Right tended to perceive women’s independence as a threat to social order and the biological vitality of the “race.” Fears of female autonomy were reflected in various attempts to reassert male control, most prominently in the retrenchment of the ideology of motherhood and in new forms of misogyny.²³ But above and beyond the political struggle over the New Woman, gender was in a larger sense fundamental to debates about the moral order; about work, both domestic and public; about the audience for the new mass media; and even about Germany’s relationship to the rest of the world.²⁴

All of these recent developments in the field of Weimar history have enabled younger scholars to produce extraordinarily innovative work. *Weimar Culture Revisited* offers a cross-section. The book focuses on four thematic areas: visual and mass culture, transnational film and literature, political culture, and the body and nature.

The first three chapters look into Weimar visual and mass culture. Avant-garde art still commands the attention of innovative scholars, as exemplified by Debbie Lewer’s essay, “Revolution and the Weimar Avant-Garde: Contesting the Politics of Art, 1919–1924.”²⁵ In the heady days of the November Revolution, Expressionists and Dadaists sought to extend their political influence in order to benefit to the radical working class. The November Group, founded in late 1918, announced that, “Art and people must form a unity. Art shall no longer be the enjoyment of the few but the life and happiness of the masses.”²⁶ Lewer interprets this kind of radical modernism not so much as a set of canonical works, but as a site of intertwined aesthetic and political experiments. She shows that avant-garde artists consciously propagated a new imagery of the spectacular, symbolizing their revolutionary aims with the image of a passionate, quasi-religious political agitator. Representations of this male “orator” also suggested a conflation of the figures of the artist, the agitator, and the religious prophet into the icon of the visionary outsider. Ironically, as Lewer shows, this very

image of the agitator exposed the early Weimar avant-garde's political limitations, as well as its partial alienation from the far Left.

As the next two chapters remind us, Weimar was also an era of remarkable innovation in mass culture. Radio and film, in particular, excited the popular imagination and intensified public debates over free expression, the politics of mass-produced art, and the psychology of the audience itself.²⁷ Some scholars have suggested that the unprecedented circulation of sights and sounds via the mass media led not only to a gradual displacement of regional particularities, but also to a partial dismantling of class hierarchies. This thesis reflects in part the strong influence of one of Weimar Germany's most famous intellectuals, Siegfried Kracauer. Kracauer built his pessimistic critique of mass culture on the assertion that there existed a homogeneous, petty bourgeois, and easily deluded mass audience. This "mass" was distracted from the travails of real life by flashy entertainment, and it was thus becoming indoctrinated into a socially conservative, proto-fascist form of capitalism.

Nearly all the [film] industry's productions work to legitimate the existing state of affairs by failing to examine either its excesses or its basic foundations. They numb the people with the pseudo-glamour of counterfeit social heights, just as hypnotists use shining objects to put their mediums to sleep. The same applies to the illustrated newspapers and the majority of magazines.²⁸

In his essay "Cinema, Radio, and 'Mass Culture' in the Weimar Republic: Between Shared Experience and Social Division," Corey Ross questions whether the new mass culture actually leveled social distinctions enough to create such a homogeneous audience. Ross investigates how this supposedly homogenizing mass culture actually functioned in the fragmented society of Weimar, as well as the degree to which film and radio offered shared social experiences. The essay challenges notions of cultural standardization and audience uniformity, focusing instead on who was seeing or hearing what, and on the specific circumstances in which films and radio programs were created and received.²⁹ Ross finds that there was no homogeneous mass audience in Weimar, because of persistent divisions by class, region, age, gender, and other factors. In light of the diverse public revealed by research such as this, generalizations about a single "mass audience" should finally be laid to rest.

Whereas Corey Ross attends to mass cultural reception in the context of everyday Weimar society, David Imhoof provides in "Blue Angel, Brown

Culture: The Politics of Film Reception in Göttingen” a local case study of how a popular and famous movie became intertwined with everyday politics. Josef von Sternberg’s *The Blue Angel*, with Marlene Dietrich as the sultry traveling nightclub singer Lola Lola, has been since its release in 1930 one of the most famous examples of Weimar cinema. As Imhoof writes, “The film’s content—the legs, the songs, the decadent nightclub setting, and especially the iconic imagery of Dietrich—has become shorthand for ‘Weimar culture.’” Yet while the film itself has been heavily analyzed, little is known about its critical and popular reception, or about the ways in which it influenced political culture. Imhoof offers a local case study, analyzing the reception of *The Blue Angel* in the mid-sized university town of Göttingen to illustrate the roles played by mass culture, gender representation, and local critics in a rapidly changing political landscape.

The next three chapters bring transnational analyses to Weimar representations of the Far East, Africa, and Germany’s relationship with the “Other.” The investigation of attitudes toward other cultures is an increasingly important theme in the historiography of modern Germany. As Young-Sun Hong writes, although the nation-state has certainly not disappeared from the concerns of German historians, its “conceptual and geographical borders are much more porous than was once believed to be the case.”³⁰ We are just beginning to recognize that in the modern world, as more people have become exposed through culture or experience to the ways of other peoples, their sense of identity and of life itself has been based in part on notions of the foreign and the exotic.

The research presented here on transnational currents in Weimar culture is pioneering. In his “Middle-Class Heroes: Anti-Nationalism in the Popular Adventure Films of the Weimar Republic,” Ofer Ashkenazi investigates one of the most popular genres in Weimar film, the exotic adventure. Although few of these films have made their way into the recognized canon, millions of Germans followed the heroes and heroines of these films to the palaces of Indian Maharajas, lost subterranean cities in Africa, opium dens in China, and soulless department stores in North America. Through a series of encounters with sometimes dangerous but often alluring foreigners, these films expressed some of the anxieties of Weimar’s middle-class liberals about the threat of dysfunctional state authorities, the dangerous appeal of mysticism and irrational convictions, and the possibilities of social chaos and absolute rulers. As Ashkenazi shows, Weimar adventure films became one way for bourgeois filmmakers and audiences to envision an optimistic, postnationalist, and pluralistic future for Europe.

Luke Springman's essay "Exotic Attractions and Imperialist Fantasies in Weimar Youth Literature" analyzes mass-produced children's literature, a rich field of cultural production that has only begun to draw scholarly attention. Such literature echoed many of the popular ideas about Africa in the wake of Germany's loss of its colonies in 1919. Springman looks comparatively at three texts—Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck's World War I memoir *Heia Safari!* of 1920, Colin Ross' 1928 travelogue *With Camera, Kith, and Kin Through Africa*, and the popular children's magazine *Merry Fridolin*. These works contained complex and sometimes contradictory representations of race relations and the Other. Africa appeared as a distant exotic realm, but postcolonial nostalgia made the continent's potential riches and its wild and "primitive" state seem even more enticing than before. Children's books and magazines tended either to idealize life in the former colonies or to present Africa optimistically as a refuge, where the next generation might find a new homeland. Springman shows that racist views of Africans could be both perpetuated and undermined in these works.

In "How Can a War Be Holy? Weimar Attitudes Towards Eastern Spirituality," Tom Neuhaus examines the growing interest of educated elites in both Tibetan Buddhism and a wider Eastern spirituality. This trend reflected a desire to look for "alternatives to the mistakes of the past (such as those that had led to the outbreak of the First World War), to the rapidly increasing urbanization of Weimar society, and to the supposed over-reliance on science to explain the human condition." Because Tibet and its religion were little known but had nonetheless long intrigued Germans, they became a kind of blank screen onto which one could project fantasies, fears, and desires. This meant that alternative solutions to Germany's problems could be discussed relatively freely through references to the beneficial aspects of Eastern culture. In this sense, growing interest in the East became one way of contemplating how postwar German society might heal itself and advance toward peace and spiritual regeneration.

The next two chapters analyze political culture as a site of ideological struggle. Central to Weimar was the ideological struggle to control culture. Traditionalist conservatives, liberals, and moderate socialists debated the relationship between culture and politics.³¹ The state was a particularly important actor in this regard, yet historians have long neglected its attempts to promote republican democracy. Instead, they have typically contrasted republican state representation negatively with the allegedly more determined and "successful" propaganda of the Nazi regime. In her "Visualizing the Republic: State Representation and Public Ritual in

Weimar Germany,” Nadine Rossol overturns this stereotype of the central state as an ineffectual advocate for liberal democracy. Rossol demonstrates that key officials were well aware of the need to popularize the republican state and developed innovative means to do so. Their new methods of representation echoed modern cultural developments by stressing spectacle and democratic inclusiveness. As Rossol argues, “Innovative representative methods were combined with optimistic hopes that the young democracy could educate its citizens in better artistic taste, a deeper communal spirit, and more republican dedication.”

Extremists of the Left and Right wanted to see Weimar democracy dead, and they fought it in large part by attacking it through language and imagery. At the same time, radical movements produced their own unique rhetoric and imagery, in which gender played a key role.³² Sara Ann Sewell offers a case study in the gendering of radical political culture in “The Party Does Indeed Fight Like a Man: The Construction of a Masculine Ideal in the Weimar Communist Party.” While the KPD consistently advocated women’s rights, neither the rank and file nor the party’s leaders ever fully committed themselves to everyday gender equality. As the KPD built a membership cadre that was committed to revolutionary struggle, its political culture increasingly prioritized not only men’s issues, but also the male fighter. This fierce masculine ethos became even more pronounced during the final years of the republic, as Communists devoted increasing energy to fighting Nazis with a force that excluded women.

The last two chapters focus on the body and nature, respectively. In part because of the very real damage caused to the human body by total war, and in part stemming from a diverse array of naturist organizations that had originated in the late nineteenth century, health, the body, and rural nature became key sites of everyday cultural endeavor in Weimar Germany. Erik Jensen’s chapter “Sweat Equity: Sports and the Self-Made German” shows that competitive sports were perfectly suited to the liberal context of the republic. By rewarding individual merit, they symbolized for many a new democratic openness and opportunity. Especially tennis and boxing, Jensen asserts, promoted individualism more than any social movement at the time. And the “self-made” quality of the champion athlete extended beyond the cultivation of biceps and stamina alone. Elite athletes had star power, which they converted into financial and social opportunities. Thus sports appealed particularly to those on the margins of society, such as single women, Jews, and working-class men. Successful male and female athletes provided the models for a new ideal of individual accomplishment in Weimar Germany.

My chapter “Friends of Nature: The Culture of Working-Class Hiking” concerns the *Touristenverein “Die Naturfreunde,”* a socialist cultural organization dedicated to bringing urban workers into closer contact with rural nature. Founded in 1898, the TVNF had by the mid-1920s won a substantial following of some 70,000 industrial workers throughout Germany. By means of organized hiking, the TVNF offered laborers opportunities for physical and mental recuperation, a new kind of everyday class solidarity in the rural countryside, and a sharp critique of capitalist exploitation. One of the organization’s goals was to anchor republican, Social Democratic values in the minds of the working class; and a discourse and everyday method of “social hiking” became the preferred way to raise popular consciousness of capitalist injustice. At the same time, the *Naturfreunde* developed a reverent attitude toward rural nature, which manifested itself in conservationist activity. While the history of the TVNF’s leadership reveals in microcosm the political divisions between moderate socialists and communists that weakened the Weimar Left, this organization also reminds us that there were in fact genuinely innovative ways in which the Left appealed to workers’ everyday needs and desires.

The research presented in *Weimar Culture Revisited* replaces the teleological, doom-laden narrative with a view of Weimar culture as pluralistic, complex, and full of both authoritarian and democratic potentials. What made Weimar culture so diverse and energetic was the urge across the entire ideological spectrum to overcome the war’s terrible legacies, to restore the nation’s collective physical and psychological health, and to navigate the rough seas of rapid change. The November Revolution might have failed to democratize key institutions like the judiciary and the military, yet it brought a true change of course toward democratic pluralism. Weimar culture was shaped above all by a powerful sense of transition and by the inevitable accompaniment: an unstable mix of fear, expectation, and hope. Through culture, Germans created between 1918 and 1933 the sites and practices of a democratically functioning civil society. Indeed, this was one of the most vital ways in which the German people participated, consciously or not, in the ongoing transformation of their nation. Looked at in this way, Weimar culture was not a failure at all.

Notes

1. Quoted in Philip Scheidemann, “Bericht über den 9. November 1918,” <http://www.dhm.de/sammlungen/zendok/weimar>. I wish to thank Michelle Eaton, Alan Gillett, Allison Jones, Justin Tabatabai, Karl Zdansky, and the anonymous reader for Palgrave-Macmillan for their helpful insights.

2. "Die Tagung des Reichstags in der Krolloper am 23. März 1933," <http://www.royallibrary.sakura.ne.jp>.
3. The sociopolitical *Sonderweg* thesis focuses largely on Imperial Germany, but it is explicitly extended to Weimar in Heinrich A. Winkler, *Weimar 1918–1933* (Munich, 1999) and *Der lange Weg nach Westen* (Munich, 2002, two vols.). The most important foundational histories of Germany's allegedly reactionary culture include Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair* (Berkeley, 1961), and George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology* (New York, 1964).
4. Otto Friedrich, *Before the Deluge: A Portrait of Berlin in the 1920s* (New York, 1972); Alex De Jonge, *The Weimar Chronicle: Prelude to Hitler* (New York, 1978); Thomas Kniesche and Stephen Brockmann, eds., *Dancing on the Volcano: Essays on the Culture of the Weimar Republic* (Rochester, 1994); Landesmuseum für Technik und Arbeit in Mannheim, ed., *Tanz auf dem Vulkan: Die Goldenen 20er in Bildern, Szenen, und Objekten* (Mannheim, 1994). The last two titles indicate that that tendency persisted into the 1990s.
5. Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture* (New York, 1968); Walter Laqueur, *Weimar: A Cultural History, 1918–1933* (New York, 1974); Bärbel Schrader and Jürgen Schebera, *The "Golden" Twenties: Art and Literature in the Weimar Republic* (New Haven, 1978); Eberhard Kolb, *Die Weimarer Republik* (Munich, 1988); Hans Mommsen, *Die verspielte Freiheit: Der Weg der Republik von Weimar in den Untergang 1918 bis 1933* (Berlin, 1989). This tendency to focus on the canon persists in Andreas Wirsching, *Die Weimarer Republik* (Munich, 2008) and Eric Weitz, *Weimar Germany* (Princeton, 2007), even if they attend more to mass culture.
6. For a historically grounded analysis of cabaret, see Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Cabaret* (Cambridge, MA, 1996).
7. Christopher Isherwood, "Good-Bye to Berlin" in *The Berlin Stories* (New York, 1954, orig. 1935), 26.
8. Karl C. Führer, "High Brow and Low Brow Culture" in *Weimar Germany*, ed. Anthony McElligott (Oxford, 2009), 260.
9. The critique of the *Sonderweg* began with David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History* (Oxford, 1984). Subsequent research that vindicates this early critique is too voluminous to cite. The originators of the *Sonderweg* thesis in Germany still adhere to it, e.g. Heinrich A. Winkler, *Der lange Weg nach Westen* (Munich, 2002, two vols.); Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte* (Munich, 2008, five vols.). Two important works that challenged the *Sonderweg* focus on reactionary elements in Weimar culture were John Willett, *Art and Politics in the Weimar Period: The New Sobriety* (New York, 1980); Jost Hermand and Frank Trommler, *Die Kultur der Weimarer Republik* (Munich, 1984), both of which shifted their focus to the Left's struggle for cultural influence.
10. Detlev J. K. Peukert, *Die Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt, 1987), 139.

11. Ibid., 266. Some of Peukert's critics fail to acknowledge this subjective angle in his analysis, e.g., Moritz Föllmer and Rudiger Graf, ed., *Die "Krise" der Weimarer Republik: Zur Kritik eines Deutungsmuster* (Frankfurt, 2005).
12. Peukert, *Weimarer Republik*, 140.
13. George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford, 1990); Gerald Hirschfeld, et al, eds., *"Keiner fühlt sich hier mehr als Mensch...": Erlebnis und Wirkung des Ersten Weltkriegs* (Frankfurt, 1996); Anton Kaes, *Shell Shock Cinema: Weimar Cinema and the Wounds of War* (Princeton, 2009).
14. Reichsarbeitsminister Dr. Brauen, cited in *Frauenstimme* (May 15, 1924); Robert Whalen, *Bitter Wounds: German Victims of the Great War, 1914–1939* (Ithaca, 1984), 40; Kathleen Canning, "Weimar and the Politics of Gender" in McElligott, *Weimar Germany*, 147.
15. Richard Bessel, *Germany After the First World War* (Oxford, 1993); Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914–1918* (Cambridge, 1998); Belinda Davis, *Home Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill, 2000).
16. Anthony McElligott, "Introduction" in idem, *Weimar Germany*, 7–8. Other works that address Peukert's work include Frank Bajohr, et al., eds., *Zivilization und Barbarei: Die widersprüchlichen Potenziale der Moderne* (Hamburg, 1991); Elizabeth Harvey, *Youth and the Welfare State in Weimar Germany* (Oxford, 1993); Geoff Eley, ed., *Society, Culture, and the State in Germany, 1870–1930* (Ann Arbor, 1996); Peter Fritzsche, "Did Weimar Fail?," *Journal of Modern History* (1996): 629–656; Young-Sun Hong, *Welfare, Modernity, and the Weimar State, 1919–1933* (Princeton, 1998); David Crew, *Germans on Welfare: From Weimar to Hitler* (Oxford, 1998); Föllmer and Graf, *Krise*.
17. Joseph Goebbels, "Kampfbund für Deutsche Kultur" (1932), reprinted in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. Anton Kaes, et al. (Berkeley, 1994), 143. On Nazi ideas of culture in late Weimar, see *Nazi Culture*, ed. George Mosse (New York, 1966); Peter Jelavich, *Berlin Alexanderplatz: Radio, Film, and the Death of Weimar Culture* (Berkeley, 2006).
18. Paul Weindling, *Health, Race, and German Politics Between National Unification and Nazism, 1870–1945* (Cambridge, 1989); John Alexander Williams, "Protecting Nature Between Democracy and Dictatorship: The Changing Ideology of the Bourgeois Conservationist Movement, 1925–1935" in *Germany's Nature: Cultural Landscapes and Environmental History*, ed. Thomas Lekan and Thomas Zeller (New Brunswick, 2005), 183–206.
19. See, for example, Mary Nolan, *Visions of Modernity: American Business and the Modernization of Germany* (Oxford, 1994); Thomas Rohkrämer, *Eine andere Moderne? Zivilisationskritik, Natur, und Technik in Deutschland, 1880–1933* (Paderborn, 1999); John Alexander Williams, *Turning to Nature in Germany: Hiking, Nudism, and Conservation, 1900–1940* (Stanford, 2007); Rüdiger Graf, *Die Zukunft der Weimarer Republik: Krisen und Zukunftsaneignungen*

- in Deutschland, 1918-1933* (Munich, 2008). For an illuminating discussion of modern Germans' repeated attempts to "remake the nation" in the face of upheaval, see Konrad Jarausch and Michael Geyer, *Shattered Past: Reconstructing German Histories* (Princeton, 2003).
20. Geoff Eley, "Labor History, Social History, *Alltagsgeschichte*: Experience, Culture, and the Politics of the Everyday—A New Direction for German Social History?," *Journal of Modern History* (1989): 297–343.
 21. Hans Medick, "'Missionaries in the Row Boat'? Ethnological Ways of Knowing as a Challenge to Social History," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (1987): 78. Key collections by *Alltagsgeschichte* scholars include Alf Lüdtke, ed., *Alltagsgeschichte: Zur Rekonstruktion historischer Erfahrungen und Lebensweisen* (Frankfurt, 1989); Belinda Davis, et al, eds., *Alltag, Erfahrung, Eigensinn* (Frankfurt, 2008). Bernd Widdig, *Culture and Inflation in Weimar Germany* (Berkeley, 2001), takes an *Alltagsgeschichte* approach to Weimar.
 22. Elsa Herrmann, *So ist die neue Frau* (1929), reprinted in Kaes, et al, *Sourcebook*, 207. See Marsha Meskimmon and Shearer West, eds., *Visions of the "Neue Frau": Women and the Visual Arts in Weimar Germany* (Aldershot, UK, 1995); Katharina von Ankum, ed., *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture* (Berkeley, 1997); Richard McCormick, *Gender and Sexuality in Weimar Modernity* (New York, 2001); Canning, "Women."
 23. Tim Mason, "Women in Germany, 1925–1940: Family, Welfare, and Work" in *History Workshop Journal* (1976); Renata Bridenthal, et al., eds., *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany* (New York, 1984); Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies* (Minneapolis, 1987–1989, two vols., trans. Stephen Conwa); Maria Tatar, *Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany* (Princeton, 1997).
 24. Eve Rosenhaft, "Women, Gender, and the Limits of Political History in the Age of 'Mass Politics'" in *Elections, Mass Politics, and Social Change in Modern Germany*, eds. James Retallack and Larry Eugene Jones (Cambridge, 1992), 149–74; Cornelia Osborne, *The Politics of the Body in Weimar Germany* (Hampshire, UK, 1992), and *Cultures of Abortion in Weimar Germany* (Providence, 2007); Atina Grossmann, *Reforming Sex: The German Movement for Birth Control and Abortion Reform, 1920–1950* (Oxford, 1995); Dorothy Rowe, *Representing Berlin: Sexuality and the City in Imperial and Weimar Germany* (London, 2003); Raffael Scheck, *Mothers of the Nation: Right-Wing Women in Weimar Germany* (Oxford, 2004); Kathleen Canning, *Gender History in Practice* (Ithaca, 2006).
 25. See also Shearer West, *The Visual Arts in Germany, 1890–1937* (New Brunswick, 2001); Helmut Lethen, *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany* (Berkeley, 2003); Sabine Hake, *Topographies of Class: Modern Architecture and Mass Society in Weimar Berlin* (Ann Arbor, 2009).
 26. "Work Council for Art Manifesto" (1919), reprinted in Kaes, et al., *Sourcebook*, 478.

27. Bruce Murray, *Film and the German Left in the Weimar Republic: From Caligari to Kuble Wampe* (Austin, 1990); Kaspar Maase, *Grenzenloses Vergnügen: Der Aufstieg der Massenkultur, 1850–1970* (Frankfurt, 2007); Kaes et al., *Sourcebook*.
28. Siegfried Kracauer, *Die Angestellten* (1930), reprinted in Kaes, et al., *Sourcebook, 190–91*. See also Kracauer's *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (Princeton, 1947).
29. With this emphasis on reception and audience diversity, Ross builds on the insights of Patrice Petro's pioneering *Joyless Streets: Women and Melodramatic Representation in Weimar Germany* (Princeton, 1989).
30. Young-Sun Hong, "The Challenge of Transnational History" (2006), http://www.h-net.org/~german/discuss/Trans/forum_trans_index.htm. Examples of transnational analysis include Alf Lüdtke, et al., eds., *Amerikanisierung: Traum und Alptraum im Deutschland des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart, 1996); Eric Ames, et al., eds., *Germany's Colonial Pasts* (Lincoln, 2009).
31. See Donna Harsch, *German Social Democracy and the Rise of Nazism* (Chapel Hill, 1993); Shelley Baranowski, *The Sanctity of Rural Life: Nobility, Protestantism, and Nazism in Weimar Prussia* (New York, 1995); David Barclay and Eric Weitz, eds., *Between Reform and Revolution: German Socialism and Communism from 1848 to 1990* (Providence, 1998); Julia Sneeringer, *Winning Women's Votes: Propaganda and Politics in Weimar Germany* (Chapel Hill, 2002); Wolfgang Hardtwig, ed., *Politische Kulturgeschichte der Zwischenkriegszeit, 1918–1939* (Göttingen, 2005); Kathleen Canning, et al, eds., *Weimar Publics/Weimar Subjects: Rethinking the Political Culture of Germany in the 1920s* (Providence, 2010).
32. See Eve Rosenhaft, *Beating the Fascists: The German Communists and Political Violence, 1929–1933* (Cambridge, 1983); Dietmar Petzina, ed., *Fahnen, Fäuste, Körper: Symbolik und Kultur der Arbeiterbewegung* (Cologne, 1986); Pamela Swett, *Neighbors and Enemies: The Culture of Radicalism in Berlin, 1929–1933* (Cambridge, 2007).

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