

# H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Anton Kaes Dimendberg, Martin Jay, eds. Edward. *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994. xx + 806 pp. \$55.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-520-06774-5.

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As teachers, we have come to see anthologies purely as pedagogical instruments; generally as rather blunt ones. At best we hope that they excerpt our favorite primary documents or secondary pieces. The *Weimar Republic Sourcebook* will force us to reconsider. Rather than merely trotting out the expected themes (Weimar Modernism, Hitler and National Socialism, etc.), using documents with which we are all familiar, Kaes and company have revived the Weimar debates in all of their tattered, messy glory. This is especially important, as Weimarer intellectual debates had become embalmed, reduced to the role of genealogies of later intellectual and political movements, ranging from the Frankfurt School to Nazism.

The anthology is organized according to logical principles derived during the Weimar era. On the first page of the preface, the editors invoke Ernst Bloch's idea of *Ungleichzeitigkeit* (xvii). As they realize, the concept subverts any master narrative. Rather, again borrowing from the Weimar era's vocabulary, they attempt a Weimar montage which includes everything from radical politics to photography; from opera to mass consumption. The pieces' selection depends on the dual axes of specificity and relevance, a frame that recalls the thought of Walter Benjamin.

The book is divided into six sections, encompassing four to six chapters each, all of which begin with a short introductory essay. The following is the Table of Contents.

## A NEW DEMOCRACY IN CRISIS

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with Democracy 5. The Rise of Nazism 6. The Struggle against Fascism

## PRESSURE POINTS OF SOCIAL LIFE

7. White-Collar Workers: *Mittelstand* or Middle Class? 8. The Rise of the New Woman 9. Forging a Proletarian Culture 10. The Jewish Community: Renewal, Redefinition, Resistance

## INTELLECTUALS AND THE IDEOLOGIES OF THE AGE

11. Redefining the Role of the Intellectuals 12. Critical Theory and the Search for a New Left 13. Revolution from the Right 14. Cultural Pessimism: Diagnoses of Decline

## THE CHALLENGE OF MODERNITY

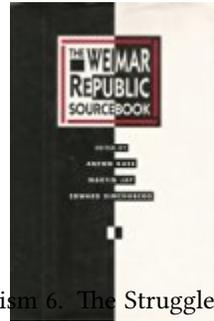
15. Imagining America: Fordism and Technology 16. Berlin and the Countryside 17. Designing the New World: Modern Architecture and the Bauhaus 18. Housing for the Masses 19. From Dada to the New Objectivity: Art and Politics

## CHANGING CONFIGURATIONS OF CULTURE

20. Literature: High and Low 21. Theater, Politics, and the Public Sphere 22. The Roaring Twenties: Cabaret and Urban Entertainment 23. Music for Use: *Gebrauchsmusik* and Opera 24. New Mass Media: Radio and Gramophone 25. Cinema from Expressionism to Social Realism

## THE TRANSFORMATION OF EVERYDAY LIFE

26. Visual Culture: Illustrated Press and Photography 27. Visions of Plenty: Mass Consumption, Fashion and Advertising 28. The Cult of the Body: *Lebensraum*,



Sports and Dance 29. Sexuality: Private Rights versus Social Norms 30. On the Margins of the Law: Vice, Crime and the Social Order

As the table of contents shows, this volume both meets and exceeds all expectations. There are far too many headings to discuss all of them with care. It would be worthwhile, however, to look at a pair of examples.

Chapter Two, "Revolution and the Birth of the Republic," certainly includes all that a Germanist could expect; The Spartacus Manifesto, Rosa Luxemburg's founding Manifesto of the KPD, a very well-edited translation of the Weimar Constitution, and one of Count Harry Kessler's diary entries. What is truly exciting, however, is the unexpected. Wilhelm Hausenstein's "Remembering Eisner" and Theodor Heuss's "Democracy and Parliamentarism: Their History, Their Enemies, and Their Future" provide fascinating, near-contemporary analyses. Most interesting, as well as most unexpected, are Bernard Prince von Buelow's reminiscences. One thinks of von Buelow as purely a creature of the Wilhelmine era. His comments on the revolution in Berlin and the assassination of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg serve to remind us of the aptness of Bloch's insight.

Continuing on with the unexpected is chapter Twenty-seven, "Visions of Plenty: Mass Consumption, Fashion, and Advertising." Although the topic might not strike the cultural historian as odd, some of the selec-

tions are quite wonderful. An article that analyzes the shopping style of women from *Die Reklame: Zeitschrift des Verbandes deutscher Reklamefachleute* is very telling about gender stereotypes. Ernst Lorsy's piece on William Wrigley and chewing gum states that, "Chewing gum is the cheapest way to Americanize oneself, and that is why the Germans of today, who harbor an intense yearning for America, have chosen it (662)." Obviously, the editors have made marvelous choices - choices that by bypassing the obvious have reopened the world of Weimar culture for inspection.

Unquestionably, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* is a wonderful resource and I hope that it stays in print for years to come. Courses on German culture could easily be built around the book's chapters. In addition, it should be on the reading list of all prospective anthologists. Finally, it should serve as a model for the H-German translation databank. Not only should we think about the obvious documents for inclusion. As Kaes, et al have shown, we need to go back to our own research materials, those filed away photocopies and microfilms, so that we can help to transmit the reality of *Ungleichzeitigkeit* to our students.

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