

Buchbesprechungen/ Book Reviews

Krobb, Florian and Elaine Martin (eds): Weimar Colonialism: Discourses and Legacies of Post-Imperialism in Germany after 1918. Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2014 (=Postkoloniale Studien in der Germanistik, 8). 263 pp. ISBN: 978-3-8498-1049-8.

Since the 1990s scholars and writers have taken up Germany's colonial past with vigour and rigour, exploring German colonial practices overseas and in Europe as well as tracing the deep historical roots and persistent legacies of colonial fantasies. In this growing body of work, the Weimar period tends to get the shortest shrift, often treated as a mere interlude between the imperialist expansion of the Kaiserreich and the Third Reich. This is unfortunate, for it is perhaps the Weimar period that best shows the distinctiveness of Germany's colonial past and present. German decolonization was not driven by tensions in the colonies but rather was bound up with the experience of defeat, occupation, and political instability at home. In large part because of this, the end of German colonial rule did not necessarily make Germany a 'postcolonial' country, since a fundamentally colonial mindset continued to permeate German politics and culture. Instead, as Florian Krobb and Elaine Martin suggest in their introduction to this volume, the result was a unique state of "post-imperial coloniality" (p. 43) that fundamentally shaped Germans' perspectives on their place in an emerging global order.

The collection is the result of a 2012 conference, with many of the pieces taken from further research that has been published in other forms. But the chapters hold together remarkably well for a conference volume. Krobb and Martin's introduction provides a very useful survey of major themes on the period, showing how colonialism became an important sphere for working through domestic tensions after 1918. They show how a pervasive sense of loss and victimhood, fed by allied denigration of German colonial rule, led colonialists to produce a particularly delusional sense of their own benevolence overseas and also pushed them to configure their revanchism in the language of geopolitics and eugenics. Of course colonialists were operating within a culture that was fascinated by the exotic and the primitive, producing new colonial fantasies unencumbered by the practical realities of an existing empire but still shaped by a dialectical tension between "the desire for 'the Other' and the fear of becoming 'other'" (p. 36). In this sense, Weimar's colonialist culture served as a "domestic contact zone" (p. 42) where German identity could be re-negotiated to suit a new world order.

A number of chapters provide nicely focused case studies of this re-negotiation, of the sort that would be effective for classroom use. Martin, for example, provides close readings of two literary interventions into the 'Black Shame' campaign against the Rhineland occupation, Rudolf Mavege's *Die Schwarze Schande* and Guido Kreuzer's *Die schwarze Schmach* (both 1921). Her reading of Mavege is particularly interesting when paired with Stefan Hermes's discussion of Hans Grimm's *Der Pavian* (1930); both authors try to give readers an 'insight' into the

psychology of their black characters, to humanize them in order to lend credence to their dehumanizing racist stereotypes. Martin's discussion of Kreutzer is complemented nicely by Catherine Repussard's discussion of a periodical aimed at young Germans, *Deutsche Jugend und Deutsche Kolonien* (1932). Both sources show how the concept of a levelling *Volksgemeinschaft* was taken up in colonialist texts. Brett M. Van Hoesen's discussion of photomontage – used by the artists Marianne Brandt and Hannah Höch to challenge colonialist discourses and appropriated by the popular press in ways that erased past atrocities – should provoke debate over the politics of the visual within mass culture.

Three of the chapters draw our attention to regions that were not part of Germany's overseas empire. Kristin Kopp uses *Ostmarkenromane* to show that 'the East' remained an object of colonial fantasy under Weimar, even as authors reconfigured their frame of reference to suit new political realities. A new emphasis on medieval colonization, and especially the Teutonic Order, allowed them to argue that Polish territory was eternally 'German' while also drawing lessons for the present from a previous era of weakness and decline. Hinnerk Onken shows that Germans had a persistent fascination with South America as a colonial space characterized by "freedom" (p. 165), even if the various articulations of that freedom were fundamentally contradictory. Krobb's chapter explores the curious end of a colonialist fantasy. Looking at a niche genre of memoirs by soldiers and officers involved in Ottoman theatres during the Great War, he demonstrates that such recollections fed nostalgia for the era of German informal imperialism in the Middle East and Turkey but, unlike with the European East, did not fuel demands for a renewal of that project.

The final two chapters take us past the Second World War, examining later representations of Weimar colonialism. Jason Verber shows how the Weimar myth that Germans were ideal colonizers remained meaningful after 1945 as West Germans tried to reconstruct a 'clean' history free of the stigma of Nazi racism and violence. Former colonialists appealed to a broader public seeking redemption by celebrating noble heroes and loyal natives, adventurous deeds and lasting progress. Verber notes that anti-colonial critics found it difficult to convince their compatriots that colonial racism had a long and ongoing tradition in Germany, and, as Dirk Göttsche's closing chapter suggests, Weimar's mythmaking continues to shape German literature today. Looking at the surge of works since the 1990s that have taken up Germany's colonial past, he shows that most do so from a perspective that does not take African agents or contexts seriously and can even re-inscribe hoary colonialist tropes. He does point out, however, the ways that some authors have successfully challenged those myths and pointed the way to a postcolonial present.

The volume has some gaps. Although Krobb and Martin mention ongoing debates over the relationship between the Weimar and Nazi eras, the topic gets relatively little attention. Despite contributors' analysis of a wide range of popular media, there is relatively little discussion of challenges to a colonialist worldview; Weimar was the era of jazz and Josephine Baker as well as colonial nostalgia, and

there was a good deal of anticolonial organizing by Black Germans, foreign students, and Communists. But the volume is nevertheless successful in bringing together a variegated investigation of Weimar colonialist discourse and demonstrates that this era should not be overlooked. Not only did it leave a lasting, underappreciated legacy. It also offers an object lesson in the mythmaking and fearmongering involved when dealing with loss and victimhood in a time of increasing global exchange.

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Fergal Lenehan: Intellectuals and Europe: Imagining a Europe of the Regions in Twentieth Century Germany, Britain and Ireland. *Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2014. (=Irish-German Studies, 7). 224pp. ISBN: 978-3-86821-529-8.*

Gisela Holfter (ed.): The Irish Context of Kristallnacht: Refugees and Helpers. *Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 2014. (=Irish-German Studies, 8). 180pp. ISBN: 978-3-86821-571-7.*

These latest publications from the Centre for Irish-German Studies of the University of Limerick are valuable contributions to the debate about European identities and Ireland's associations with Europe.

Fergal Lenehan has produced a learned contribution that explores intellectuals' visions of a decentralized but united Europe during two epochs: World War Two and its aftermath; and the demise of Communism leading to debates about the integration of Europe. His focus is on public intellectuals from contested multinational spaces and regions. Thus English, Scottish and Irish (Northern Ireland and the Republic), Austrian and German imaginings are scrutinized. The English essayist, Christopher Dawson, the controversial German author Ernst Jünger, the émigré Jewish-Austrian Leopold Kohr and Northern Irish poet John Hewitt were influenced by World War II. Richard Kearney, Neal Ascherson, Peter Glotz and Hans Magnus Enzenberger contended with the consequences of the fall of Communism and intellectualized the potentials for a 'Europe of regions'. Lenehan's methodology is effective. He employs the agent-centred ideational approach of Quentin Skinner, which regards space and time as critical factors in academic formation and production, and he fuses it with Reinhart Koselleck's *Begriffsgeschichte* or history of concepts which recognizes that concepts are "shifting, conditional entities" (p. 6).

All the intellectuals imagined a pan-European identity and flexible structures. They endeavoured to design a European polity or entity that empowered regions in a post-national (sometimes pre-national) space tolerant of minorities, human rights and freedom. Some of the writers (e.g. Dawson, Jünger) were anti-modernists or