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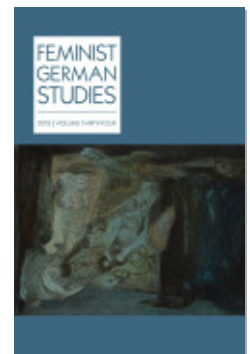
*The Jazz Republic: Music, Race, and American Culture in  
Weimar Germany* by Jonathan O. Wipplinger (review)

Sharon M. Wailes, Monika Herzig

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Braun seeks to confront with a geocultural alternative that takes shape on the shifting ground” between German utopian thinking and Cuban revolutionary thought (166). Not surprisingly, Braun’s poetics reject East German social realist aesthetics and Soviet guidelines. His *Neuer Mensch/Hombre nuevo* appears as a possible synthesis of a critical dialectic and takes shape in the figure of Tania La Guerillera. “The New Man is a woman,” concludes Trnka (164).

In *Der Auftrag* (1979; *The Mission*, 1995), Müller places aesthetic solidarity within a larger narrative of revolution and resistance that erupt in “antisystemic and decolonial thrusts” (212) aiming to destabilize the geopolitical order of the Cold War and the European unified subject position. In Müller’s postdramatic aesthetics, historical characters are exploded, fragmented, reassembled, and the body becomes “a site of revolution and counterrevolution” (212). This aesthetic program of *Der Auftrag*, Trnka argues, is an overt critique of both the White Russian Revolutionaries and Stalinism.

Delius’s novel *Adenauerplatz* (1984; Adenauer Square) uses the lens of the German-Chilean Felipe Gerlach, who lives as a political refugee in Germany. The novel traces the topic of solidarity through the violent intertwined histories of Germany and Chile and the “transnational circulation of people, capital and commodities” that “interpolates the revolutionary subject of literature into an analogous process” (267). The constant breakdown of dialogue between the protagonists exhibits the loss of true exchange and their captivity within a culture of fetishized consumerism.

Jamie H. Trnka has written a book that is impressive in its scope and ambition and concise, timely, and rigorous in its execution. It is a model for German studies with comparative, interdisciplinary outlooks.

Andreas Stuhlmann  
University of Alberta, Edmonton

Jonathan O. Wipplinger. *The Jazz Republic: Music, Race, and American Culture in Weimar Germany*. U of Michigan P, 2017. 311 pp. Paper, \$39.95.

Jonathan Wipplinger presents a thorough analysis of the impact of jazz as a musical art form rooted in African American culture on the young democracy of Germany, specifically the city of Berlin. His research digs

deep into articles, news reports, publicity materials, concert programs, and also translations of the poetry of Langston Hughes, while also providing an analysis of the political context in order to document the impact of the arrival of jazz as a symbol for American culture. Wipplinger refutes the commonly held notion that legitimate African American jazz was unknown in Weimar Germany apart from its “diluted commercial imitations” (12). Furthermore, he argues that the overwhelming publicity that symphonic jazz and the white band director Paul Whiteman received in Weimar Germany eclipsed the presence of African American jazz artists, leaving the initial impression that Germans were unfamiliar with African American jazz. Wipplinger offers a badly needed alternative narrative in which the musical contributions of African American jazz performers and composers become visible and in which the complexity and “messiness of cultural transfer” are acknowledged (13).

The modernism of the 1920s, observed in Dadaism and expressionism, was largely facilitated through the cultural friction associated with jazz that allowed the development of a new identity. During this dynamic period, American Sam Wooding and his jazz orchestra from New York premiered in Berlin. Wooding’s presence points to an influence on Weimar culture of African American jazz directly from America. Wipplinger discusses the strong (both positive and negative) reception of the group and then moves to the theoretical level, engaging with modernist theory. He uses the concept of aural shock, based on the theories of Theodore Adorno and Walter Benjamin, along with socially constructed ideas of Blackness and images of the modern metropolis in his analysis. Wipplinger acknowledges Adorno’s negative writings on jazz but nonetheless applies his theories, deliberately reading Adorno “against the grain” (70), a valid move consistent with the book’s innovative approach. The paradoxical juxtaposition of the modern and the primitive was found in jazz—the machination and noise of the modern city reflected in the instrumentation and overwhelming nature of jazz, and Blackness in its associations for Weimar Germans with the syncopated rhythms of the “jungle” representing the primitive—yielding the concept of a “techno-primitive hybrid” (45). Wipplinger also argues that perceptions (and misperceptions) of African American musicians in Weimar Germany influenced modernist thought.

With the rise of the Nazi party, racial discrimination led to the rejection of jazz. Nazis conflated Blackness, modern jazz, and Jewishness, as shown in an image at the exhibition *Entartete Musik* (Degenerate music),

depicting a caricature of a black saxophonist with a large hoop earring and a Star of David on the lapel (234). Yet German Jewish writers and artists were attracted to jazz because they saw parallels between the plight of African Americans in American culture and their own circumstances as outcasts.

In uncovering an alternative narrative of history, Wipplinger also engages with gender directly. His chapter on *Girlikultur* discourse of the mid-1920s analyzes a new conception in which the feminine was cast as the foreign, even threatening other. Although the dancing girls of the era were white, Fritz Giese posits a primitive black ancestry to their rhythmic dancing. The ideas surrounding *Girlikultur* give jazz, race, and gender an interrelatedness that was perceived to drive the process of modernity.

A thorough, in-depth document of the impact of jazz culture on the Weimar Republic, *The Jazz Republic* satisfies a need to see jazz from a transnational perspective and can function in the classroom as a springboard for fruitful discussion of German modernism and the complexity of cultural exchange. Wipplinger offers a list of alternative figures on the Weimar jazz scene whose presence can serve as an antidote to the prominent white males featured in textbooks for German foreign-language instruction. His narration supplements the usual materials about cultural exchange involving Germany. The intersection of Blackness, Jewishness, femininity, and jazz as forces in the genesis of modern culture could yield productive classroom discussion.

Sharon M. Wailes

*The Pennsylvania State University*

Monika Herzig

*Indiana University, Bloomington*