The Jazz Republic

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Conclusion

Good bye, Jonny
You were my best friend.
One day, one day, [ . . . ]
We’ll be together again.
—Kreuder and Beckmann (1939)

The end of the Weimar Republic in 1933 meant, amongst many other things, that the stakes of jazz for German culture changed fundamentally, and Adorno’s incomplete opera is but one example of this. Around the same time as members of Germany’s internationalist avant-garde took leave of jazz as a progressive art form, the Nazi attack on “cultural bolshevism” further wed the rejection of “Jewish modernism” with Blackness and jazz.¹ What this ultimately meant for jazz was that, by 1933, there were but few voices remaining to defend the music and many more, including Adorno, invested in its critique. Having been so thoroughly identified with a now defunct and discredited republic, under National Socialism, the music was subjected to repeated attacks. Yet, jazz’s fate under the Nazis was not to be systematically eliminated but to suffer sporadically according to the caprices of the new dictatorial regime. At times, the Nazis proceeded vigorously and publically against jazz and the “foreign” musicians associated with it—through radio bans in 1933 and 1935, through the prohibition of listening to foreign radio stations in 1939, or Goebbels’ 1941 prohibition not of jazz but of music featuring muted horns, atonal melodies, or with a “deformed rhythm (verzerrte Rhythmen).”² Perhaps the most infamous example of jazz’s pariah status during the Third Reich was the Entartete Musik (Degenerate Music) exhibition of 1938, which prominently displayed jazz, Jewish, and Black musicians as racial antipodes to National Socialist culture. To these instances of the Nazis’ public war on jazz, however, must be added curious moments of toleration. For example, musical practices associated with jazz, like syncopation, even saxophone solos, by no means disappear in 1933.
Instead, they can be found in German popular music throughout the 1930s. Paralleling the *Funkstunde*’s ambiguous ban on jazz, during the first half of the Nazi regime at the very least, German musicians remained to a large extent free to connote jazz.

Obviously, the short space afforded by a conclusion can by no means serve as a thoroughgoing discussion of jazz under the Third Reich. As the work of scholars like Michael Kater, Bernd Polster and others has shown, jazz’s fate under National Socialism was both complicated and convoluted. What I offer instead is an attempt to trace the afterlife, or aftereffects, of the jazz republic during this period. Though jazz did not act in this period as an object through which Nazi culture defined itself, neither did Weimar jazz culture disappear overnight. Instead, certain elements, personalities, and figures from it lived on in the early Nazi era.

Following on Erica Carter’s analysis of the role played by Weimar’s cinematic ghosts of Marlene Dietrich in Nazi cinema, I would like to suggest that Weimar jazz culture lived on during National Socialism as specter of this time past. As Carter’s study shows, Nazi cinema is filled with doubles of Weimar cinema, most notably the actress Zarah Leander, who filled in for absent stars like Marlene Dietrich. One strategy deployed within Nazi cinema in terms of compensating for the loss of émigré stars was to recall performances and roles from the Weimar period, such as the femme fatale, only to, in Carter’s words, “obliterate that image in the actual or symbolic death of the characters.” At the same time, for Carter, such doubles not only registered a loss but could also serve the production of a new, National Socialist public sphere. Weimar jazz, as well, existed as an uncanny double of a culture lost to emigration, incarceration, and death. Nazi-era evocations of Weimar jazz can be said, in Carter’s terms, to compensate “by disavowal of that loss . . . with a fantasied double, copy or facsimile.” Though one could explore Weimar jazz culture’s continued existence into the 1930s through a variety of examples, Willy Fritsch, Theo Mackeben, or via instrumentation, perhaps the most publically visible of these is the Jonny figure. This figure has shadowed the present work from almost the very beginning. First seen as Friedrich Hollaender’s 1920 “Jonny (fox erotic),” it burst onto the national stage in Krenek’s 1927 *Jonny spielt auf* (*Jonny Strikes Up*), the *succès de scandale* of the decade. From there, it fractures into almost innumerable forms: cigarettes, photographs, operettas, recordings, etc. In other words, by 1933, Jonny had achieved a form of iconic status and could thus stand to a large degree for the entirety of Weimar jazz culture.

Before exploring how the Jonny figure lived on during the 1930s, it is important to consider it in relation to the broader situation of jazz and African
American popular music during the Third Reich. Only in comparison with the wider question of jazz under the Third Reich does the Jonny figure’s unique status come into view. For one, jazz and later Swing presented a number of practical difficulties in terms of governmental attempts to control them. Not only were they almost impossible to define in any objective, verifiable manner, as Guido Fackler suggests, the development towards Swing in the early to mid-1930s actually made the music less susceptible to Nazi control, at least for a time. With a new name, a more orchestral, more melodic sound, Swing enjoyed a degree of tolerance in the mid-1930s, in part due to Nazi censors’ unfamiliarity with the genre. By contrast, Jonny was most certainly a known quantity, closely associated with the “decadence” of the Weimar Republic and thus a likely target of Nazi censors.

And yet, the Jonny figure remains in the public eye during the period between 1933 and 1939. The examples of its use range from oblique to explicit and can be found within the political as well as cultural spheres. Already in 1934, Weimar’s Jonny reappears in the 1934 popular song “Ich wünsche dir Glück, Jonny” (“I Wish You Luck, Jonny”) with music by Ludwig Schmidseder and lyrics by Rudolf Grau. Telling the story of a woman and her lover Jonny, this song’s lyrics clearly took their impetus from Hollaender’s original song and were read as such by at least one writer within the musical press. Though recorded by three different female vocalists, in the following, special attention will be paid to the performance of Marita Gründgens. This is not only because she, sister of the famous actor Gustaf Gründgens, is the best known of the three, but, more importantly, because her fame in part derived from her ability to impersonate voices and take on various alter egos. In fact, she is today best known for songs like “Ich wünsch’ mir eine kleine Ursula” (“I’m wishing for a little Ursula of my own”) in which she imitates the voice of a little girl asking her mother for blond-haired, blue-eyed little sister. Less well-known is the fact that she apparently made a name for herself during the late 1920s through impersonation of, amongst other figures, the American blackface performer Al Jolson. Equally germane to the present argument is that Gründgens was an exquisite mimic of Marlene Dietrich, who had previously released what was to become the most famous recording of Hollaender’s “Jonny” in 1931. Gründgens’ uncanny ability to mimic Dietrich is demonstrated on the September 1933 recording “Filmsucht” (“Film Addiction”). Featuring lyrics written by Gründgens and set to the well-known Hollaender tune of “Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuß auf Liebe eingestellt” (“Falling in Love Again”), she mimics the voices of three Weimar film divas: Marlene Dietrich, Greta Garbo, and Lilian Harvey. The apolitical song is an amazing display of
her abilities and, though relatively obscure, deserving of rediscovery. At the same time, it is significant that all three performers invoked here were absent from Germany at the time (though Harvey would return in 1935). Within this context, Gründgens’ mimicry of Dietrich, Garbo, and Harvey lends itself to a reading of the song as Nazi-era doppelgänger for an absent Weimar culture.

In “I Wish You Luck, Jonny,” Gründgens impersonates not a specific person but the genre of the Weimar Jonny song more generally. Described as a chanson and blues, the recording begins with three deep tones from a bassoon over which the piano adds a series of light arpeggios. As the listener soon learns, these initial tones indicate the sounding of a ship’s horns at a nearby dock, from where Jonny will tomorrow leave. The year 1934 was a time of departure for many figures of Weimar jazz culture, and quite a few jazz musicians of the 1920s were already absent: Dajos Béla, Marek Weber, and Weintraubs Syncopators. Further, by November 1933, the Reichsmusikkammer (RMK, Reich Music Chamber), a subdivision of Goebbels’ ministry of culture, had decreed that foreign musicians needed to register with the RMK and carry an identity card issued by this agency. This meant that they also would have to declare their race and religion, a potentially dangerous prospect for Jewish and Black artists.

As Jonny’s lover, the female singer seems to sense that the sound of the ship’s horn might have distracted him, and so her first words command him to “drink, drink, drink my blond Jonny / don’t talk to me about tomorrow.” While most immediately these lines refer to her concern over separation and the ensuing heartache both will suffer, here she is singing not to any lover, but to Jonny, whose name marks him as foreign. Continuing over a plaintive piano accompaniment, she consoles him, saying that nothing matters other than that: “I wish you luck, Jonny.” Significantly, each time she sings this line, the song’s tempo speeds up and a drum brush technique adds a syncopated, percussive element that enlivens both the piano and Gründgens’ delivery. Viewed in parallel to Gründgens’ mimicry of Dietrich, this flirt with jazz instrumentation intensifies the song’s self-conscious play with Jonny as an icon of Weimar jazz culture. Exasperated at the recording, critic Kurt Herbst writes of Gründgens’ song in Die Musik: “This sort of subject is too unimportant to discuss from the perspectives of morals, music, rhythm or anything else. It is simply boring, because this Jonny—pars pro toto—is simply overdone and with it the outmoded worldview (abgeklapperte Gesamtschematismus) from which we have to liberate ourselves.”

At the same time, I would suggest that “I Wish You Luck, Jonny” not only invokes Weimar jazz culture but it also situates itself outside of this culture, that is to say within a post-jazz, post-Weimar era. For one, the lyrics stabilize...
Jonny’s potentially ambiguous racial identity, referring to him as “blond Jonny” in the first line. Further, the overall tone to the song borders on mockery of Jonny—his anxiety and impending exile. Concurrent to a timbral change in her voice that suggests a smile, she tells him: “one day you’ll come back to me anyway. So I wish you luck, Jonny, really, good luck.” Whereas Weimar-era songs tend to position Jonny as a figure who will soon leave to return to his home, in Nazi-era versions, the figure’s impending absence is often coupled with the promise of his, albeit indeterminate, return. While this surely compensates for Jonny’s absence, marking it as but a temporary interruption within a long-standing relationship, Gründgens’ delivery of this line is punctuated by an awkward, almost ominous laugh. As such, the song leaves the nature of his return open—will the two be united in a future in which they can once again be together, i.e., in a post-Nazi, post-Weimar state, or, given her mocking tone, will Jonny come to see his departure as an overreaction and return willingly? The second verse continues on in this vein, with Jonny being told to laugh and forget the sadness of tomorrow. At the song’s close, the ship’s horn returns and adds a tonal layer of dissonance to the piano accompaniment, reminding listeners of Jonny’s and jazz’s departure from their lives. Neither pro- nor anti-jazz, “I Wish You Luck, Jonny” addresses and compensates for jazz’s absence in a manner that reflects, rather than rejects, the Third Reich’s ambiguous relationship to the music.

In 1935, Jonny again reappears, in both popular song and a controversial radio program. The first of these occurs in the song “Jonny hat Sehnsucht nach Hawaii” (“Jonny’s Yearning for Hawaii”) with music by Hans Reinfeld and lyrics by Bruno Balz. It is described as a “Hawaiian Waltz” available in an arrangement for “jazz voice” and vocal trio.\(^\text{17}\) While the word “jazz” appears regularly within the music publishing industry in this year and beyond (though rarely in titles), it is in fact the title “Jonny” that is unique. In the year of its release, the song was recorded by at least three separate groups, Hans Bund, Fritz Domina, and an anonymous male quartet for the discount label Woolco.\(^\text{18}\)

Before addressing the song itself, we should note the significance of the lyricist Balz, a homosexual songwriter from the Weimar cabaret scene who first became well-known for his work on the film *Viktor und Viktoria* (*Victor and Victoria*) (dir. Reinhold Schünzel 1933). During the 1930s, he survived, though not without being at one point imprisoned in a concentration camp, by exploiting his usefulness as a songwriter, in particular for the aforementioned Zarah Leander.\(^\text{19}\) Like other Jonny songs from the 1930s discussed here, Balz’s “Jonny’s Yearning for Hawaii” would become an evergreen of the German popular music industry.\(^\text{20}\) The song itself, though unique in its use of the topos of Ha-
waii, once again positions Jonny in an unnamed harbor. Rather than a young man, however, in Balz’s version, he is a sailor past his prime, longing to escape the dreariness of his present life. As with “I Wish You Luck, Jonny,” the male singer seeks to console Jonny. Though longing to go to Hawaii, the singer tells him: “Poor Jonny, forget your pain / Everything is past and everything is over.” More sedate than anything, Balz and Reinfeld’s version transforms Jonny into a non-threatening old man, longing to return home but unable to do so.

In the same year, Jonny’s continued relevance and relationship to jazz returned in an even more direct manner. This occurred in the form of satirist Hugo Hartung’s radio play *Jonny spült ab* (*Jonny Does the Dishes*), which featured music by the composer Bernhard Eichhorn. Its immediate purpose was to parody Weimar jazz culture and Ernst Krenek’s *Jonny spielt auf* (*Jonny Strikes Up*) specifically. Perhaps best known today for authoring the novel *Wir Wunderkinder* (*Aren’t We Wonderful*), at the time, Hartung was working as a dramaturge for the Bavarian radio station. Broadcast in the evening of February 25, 1935, *Jonny Does the Dishes* is described as “a cheery play with deep meaning and a grand piece of opera parody.” Though other plot members are listed with the name of the actor who will portray them, the listing for “the Negro Jonny” remains blank, substituted by the presence of two question marks. In fact, the title and its obvious reference to Krenek’s jazz opera created a difficult situation for Hartung. Though this would obviously be a satire, so directly invoking Blackness, jazz, and Jonny also carried the danger of attraction. Patrick Merziger summarizes the dilemma in the following manner: Hartung “wanted to eradicate Jonny by writing a satire on him, but the satire only kept his memory alive.” For Merziger, examples like Hartung’s *Jonny Does the Dishes* are indicative of the broader failure of politically motivated satire during the Nazi era, which, according to him, became increasingly unpopular with critics and audience members alike.

The tension within National Socialist satire of Jonny and other specters of the Weimar past is put on display in the published plot summary: “The piece takes place in a German cosmopolitan hotel in the age of inflation and the glorification of niggers. Interested in profit, the hotel’s director Knölle pays homage to the fashionable interest in this rootless taste by hiring the world-famous Negro violinist Jonny for a guest appearance. We won’t yet say how this affair (der ganze Spuk) ends.” Though the description invokes the vocabulary of “cultural bolshevism” and insists on the pastness of Jonny and his jazz, its suggestive use of the word “Spuk” (affair, ghost) also invites questions about Jonny’s potential relevance to the Nazi present. Even more clearly demonstrating the idea that *Jonny Does the Dishes* is as much about the present as it is a par-
ody of the past is the mock interview between the “Negro jazz king” Jonny and Hartung that appeared in *Der Deutsche Rundfunk*. In this “Conversation with Jonny,” Jonny and jazz’s irrelevance are repeatedly called upon to satirize their popularity in the “golden twenties” and, one suspects, their continued presence in the new Germany. Of the 1920s, Hartung’s Jonny says: “Those were the days! When I think back to the finale of this opera [*Jonny spielt auf*]—I struck up the band—and old Europe lay at my feet. . . . A lot has changed since then—everything!!” Hartung responds by saying: “Yes, actually you’ve been completely forgotten. More forgotten than forgotten. I don’t think that even one young person today knows your name.” As Merziger argues, a problem in this interview is that it fails to justify the need to parody a so unimportant and irrelevant matter like Jonny. The only justification for the parody comes from Jonny himself, who, after again hinting at a secret plot element, insists: “maybe it’s not so bad to bring this forgotten so-called ‘art’ back into the light of day again and present it as reflected in parody.” Here, as in the plot description, the language struggles to contain the implicit power of Jonny and his jazz.

Unsurprisingly, the official reaction to *Jonny Does the Dishes* was severe. Writing in *Der Deutsche Rundfunk*, one critic bemoaned the fact that while satire of this depraved era and its music is a laudable endeavor, here it is superfluous and without impact. While the plot begins as a satire of Weimar culture, according to the reviewer, by the end, it had turned into “a typical theater intrigue with masquerading,” with the result that the piece’s main targets, according to this critic racial and cultural miscegenation, were missed entirely. Even more directly, another critic felt the only good thing about the work was its title, otherwise it, like its purported object of parody, lacked “sharp wit and trenchant satire. A copy, instead of parody.” Similarly, the same Kurt Herbst who had chided Gründgens for her Jonny recording, complains that Hartung’s *Jonny Does the Dishes* is less parody than an example of base cultural production “for the purpose of ‘popular’ entertainment,” i.e., kitsch. Herbst additionally implies that this same tendency towards kitsch is present in further productions by Hartung and Eichhorn. Indeed, in an internal report on Hartung from 1937 by Willy Reichartz for the *Reichssenbedeitung*, their use of satire as such is found to be “highly questionable.” Reichartz feared, for example, that the general public could not distinguish between the parody of Weimar jazz culture in Hartung’s Jonny and the real thing.

Though the relationship is in all probability coincidental, it is also noteworthy that 1935 is the last appearance of Jonny in popular song until 1939. In the meantime, though, the Jonny figure will make one important detour in 1938. In this year, Jonny will again be mobilized towards propagandistic ends.
as part of the “Degenerate Music” exhibition. Held in the city of Düsseldorf and organized by Hans Severus Ziegler, this exhibition had been inspired by the more infamous visual exhibition “Degenerate Art” of a year earlier. It was the occasion for the Nazis to present their ideological vision of jazz—the horrific caricature of a Black saxophone player, portrayed as more simian than human, that has in many ways come to stand in for the fate of jazz under the Nazis (figure 16). Here, one not only confronts National Socialism’s racialized theory of culture but also an intensification and condensation of cultural motifs from the Weimar encounter with jazz. Though the figure bears the name “Lucky,” as others have pointed out, in both form and content, the image clearly belongs within the genealogy of the Jonny figure. For one, this image, created by the graphic artist Ludwig Tersch, draws on colonialist images of Africans, as seen, for example, in the figure’s oversized hoop earrings. Further, we recognize in the Black saxophone player not only Jonny from Krenek’s Jonny spielt auf but the broader visual trope of the Black saxophone player and his threat to the “racial health” of German women. Finally, the Star of David placed on the figure’s lapel telescopes Nazi rejections of Blackness and Jew- ishness, a foundational element of the Nazi discourse of “cultural bolshevism.” If hardly ambiguous in its depiction, the image nonetheless depends on and indeed invites comparison to jazz imagery and jazz musicians once present in Weimar and now missing. Still, the figure carries not the name “Jonny,” but “Lucky.” Thus, while the image depends on a visual vocabulary clearly legible as Weimar’s Jonny, the title conspicuously avoids directly referencing it, contenting itself with connoting, rather than denoting this figure, who for many stood not only for jazz but for Weimar culture more generally.

Yet if Jonny was publicly, if obliquely derided as “cultural bolshevism,” the figure still had not yet disappeared from popular music in the Third Reich. Jonny will make one final curtain call in the 1939 hit “Good bye, Jonny!” featuring music by Peter Kreuder and lyrics by Hans-Fritz Beckmann. Though this song will enjoy an important afterlife during the 1950s and beyond as an evergreen of German light entertainment, the song originates in the 1939 Wasser für Canitoga (Water for Canitoga, dir. Herbert Selpin), a frontier film taking place in 1905 in Canada and featuring the Third Reich’s most important male star, Hans Albers. Lutz Koepnick has analyzed Albers’ two versions of the song that appear in the film as examples of the reassertion of masculinity within Nazi culture. With this film and song, Koepnick argues, “Albers establishes himself as a roughneck whose aim is to evacuate women and uncontrolled passion from the Far West. [. . . ] Albers’s song intends to make language rough and dangerous again, to transform orality into a conduit for manly
Figure 16: “Entartete Musik” (Degenerate Music), 1938. Brochure published by the Weimar National Theatre. Courtesy bpk, Berlin/Art Resource, NY.
Yet the versions presented in the film are not the only ones and, given the number of recordings of the song that exist by Albers and others, hardly the most familiar ones.

As released in a separate recording for the Odeon label, both the orchestration and lyrics to the film version of the song are substantially changed. Here, the misogyny referenced by Koepnick is excised in favor of the homosocial bond between the German Albers and his departed, foreign friend Jonny. “My friend Jonny was a fine boy (Knabe),” laments Albers at the opening of the song. Continuing on in this vein, he sings: “He was a tramp and had no home.” As in Krenek, Hollaender, Grau, and Balz, Jonny’s status as wandering vagabond remains pivotal to his characterization. To these lyrics, Peter Kreuder, veteran composer of German film and revue music, added a very specific musical texture with important connotations in German popular song. In a word, Kreuder’s composition (on the Albers’ recording performed under the direction of Werner Eisbrenner) is jazz-inflected. In terms of instrumentation, it uses muted trumpets, clarinets, and saxophones, while rhythmically, it displays a slight syncopation throughout and features an instrumental break filled with a rich big band sound. The success of the song’s combination of Hans Albers, one of the remaining major film stars from the Weimar era, and American Swing reveals much about the vicissitudes of jazz in National Socialism.

Such partial tolerance of jazz on the part of National Socialist functionaries, however, did require implicit (and often explicit) acceptance on the part of artists of the entirety of the Nazi ideological system. Put differently, the music’s continued existence depended upon musicians voicing jazz from within the hegemonic order, rather than outside of it, let alone against it. If they failed to toe this broader line, Nazi authorities could and did intervene. It is thus no accident that the song as performed by the public star Albers begins with the death of Jonny, acting in parallel to the treatment of Weimar film stars and types in Nazi film. In other words, any emotional cathexis Albers and his audience are allowed to exhibit vis-à-vis Jonny presupposes this figure’s absence from the material world. So whereas in “I Wish You Luck, Jonny” and “Jonny’s Yearning for Hawaii,” Jonny still exists, however temporarily, within physical proximity to the singer, Albers’ “Good bye, Jonny!” will only venture hope for reunion in the afterlife. “One day, one day,” screams an emotional Albers in the song’s concluding line, “whether in heaven or hell. / We’ll be together again.” What Koepnick suggests about the film as a whole thus applies to this recording as well: it seeks to control the passion for the foreign and ra-
cially suspect Jonny by channeling such desire through rather than against the Nazi vision of contemporary Germany.

Still, while Albers’ is the most famous, it is hardly the only version of “Good bye, Jonny!” Indicative of the song’s broad popularity, there were at least six further recordings of the song issued that year, one instrumental version and five with vocals. Each in its own way engaged with the legacy of Jonny, jazz, and Weimar, often in ways at odds with the more controlled recording by Albers. For example, not only are the recordings by Otto Stenzel and Egon Wolff stylistically closer to Swing, but they feature substantially different lyrics. Most importantly, in their versions, Jonny is no longer a dead figure from the past. While in Albers’ version, an exploding bomb kills Jonny at the song’s openings, these recordings reinterpret the sound of the explosion, its “boom,” as the pop of a bottle for the two to drink together. Accordingly, German listeners to these versions can imagine themselves meeting Jonny “on earth or in heaven.” The closer proximity of Jonny to the Nazi present meant, in turn, that there was greater latitude in these recordings to connote jazz culture. Consider the presence of a slide whistle within Stenzel’s recording. This instrument, today used primarily for sound effects in animation, was known in the 1920s as the “Swanee whistle” and had been a common instrument with 1920s jazz instrumentation, notably in Krenek’s *Jonny spielt auf*. Of course, Stenzel’s use of a slide whistle functions at most as an inside joke to those already in the know. Instead, this hardly rebellious detail, to draw again upon Erica Carter’s work, reminds and compensates German listeners for Jonny’s and Weimar jazz’s absence with a Nazi Swing fantasy.

This is not the only version of “Good bye, Jonny!” to directly reference Weimar jazz culture. As it were, Krenek and Jonny meet once again in Iska Geri und die Neun Casaleon’s recording of the song. Though two years later Geri will record “Känguru” (“Kangaroo”), a parody of Swing music and dancing, her recording of “Good-bye, Jonny!” is one of the least identifiable jazzy of the group, for example, in its prominent use of the accordion. Still Geri’s recording is significant for two reasons. First, she is the only female singer to record this song in its entirety, whereas the Jonny songs during the 1920s and early 1930s had been primarily sung by female singers or from a female perspective. Second, though altered to fit her status as woman, her version uses the original lyrics as sung by Albers rather than the alternate version of Wolff and Stenzel. For these reasons, Geri’s recording acts more directly than even Albers’ as a Nazi double of the Weimar Jonny tradition. Most striking in this context is that after Geri concludes the second to last chorus, the instrumental break that follows begins by quoting the first two measures of

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Stephen Foster’s “Old Folks at Home” (better known as “Swanee River”). In referencing this foundational nineteenth-century American song, Geri’s recording inserts itself into the long chain of German encounters with African American music and its appropriation by white Americans. These flow through blackface minstrelsy to ragtime, most notably Irving Berlin’s Alexander’s Ragtime Band’s citation of Foster’s song and George Grosz’s reference to Berlin’s song in his “Song to the World,” to Sam Wooding and the Chocolate Kiddies who performed “Swanee River” in 1925, and finally to Ernst Krenek, who recycles the same two measures in Jonny spielt auf. More than any other recording, Geri’s version unearths Jonny’s Black, American, and, of course, Weimar German heritage. Yet, this unearthing is framed within the restrained lyrics used by Albers. To a certain extent, Geri’s “Good-bye, Jonny!” rewrites the history of German engagement with African American music and culture as simultaneously pre- and post-jazz. In a word, the non-jazz of Geri’s recording erases Weimar jazz, even as it depends upon it for its legibility. In this, but a four-second instrumental flourish invoking the twisted history of African American music and culture, Geri’s recording, like that of Gründgens, acknowledges and simultaneously negates Germany’s own jazz history.

Reflected in the three competing versions of Albers, Stenzel/Wolff, and Geri, “Good bye, Jonny!” in many ways stands for the complex, if ultimately negative, deployment of Weimar Germany’s jazz legacy in the Third Reich. This is even more so the case as 1939 was to be the last year in which a song featuring the Jonny figure was released during the Nazi era. Soon new regulations forbidding the use of English and other foreign words in German popular song severely impacted the use of the figure, transforming, for example, “Good bye, Jonny!” into “Leb’ woh!, Peter!” (“Long live Peter!”). Though Kreuder’s song was hardly the sole target of such regulation, it is nonetheless tempting to see in the quantitative number of Jonny recordings and their connotations of Weimar jazz culture something troubling for Nazi functionaries in this first year of the Second World War.

Be that as it may, it is clear that by 1939 and the outbreak of war, the curious combination of music and race, American and German culture, that had produced Weimar Germany as jazz republic had reached the outer limits of its immediate cultural and historical impact. Six years of Nazi rule had driven into exile, hiding, or death almost all the major figures encountered in preceding chapters. While some found temporary refuge in France, at least until 1940; England; or the United States, it is telling that by 1940, few of the major figures discussed throughout The Jazz Republic could be found inside of the borders of what was once Weimar Germany. From the perspective of
1939, let alone 1945, Weimar jazz culture appears remarkable as much for its brilliance as its seeming impermanence. Perhaps this is a reason why the metaphor of Weimar Germany as a “dance on a volcano” has had such lasting explanatory strength. The idea of people enjoying themselves before their imminent demise seems uniquely suited to capturing the precariousness of this experiment in German democracy.

Yet as the current work has argued, such jazz dancing on a volcano should stand less as evidence of a different, repressed Germany than as a pivotal link of the cultural history of the Weimar Republic. Attempting to move beyond the appearance of jazz as an ephemeral flare that simply burst onto the scene only to later disappear, *The Jazz Republic* began by looking at the ways in which jazz’s entry, as music and dance, was embedded within preexisting ideas about music, race, and American culture. It is a history defined by a series of musical encounters between Germans and jazz, mediated by very different experiences and traditions. Yet as I’ve also insisted throughout, Weimar Germany’s jazz effects are in no way simple projections of the German cultural imaginary, let alone reducible, to indulgences in primitivist and/or modernist fantasy. Jazz’s non-German origins did not merely function as a passive surface through which Germans could engage in discursive shadowboxing and simply create a new identity for themselves after World War I. Instead, jazz consistently acted to bring to the surface elements of discomfort and disjuncture, particularly as a result of its confounding racial origins. A presence at once at home within and alien to Weimar culture, German representations of jazz bring into focus both the overlap and friction between German and American society in the early twentieth century. As the cases of the syncopated Girl and symphonic jazz demonstrate, German understandings of white America were very much bound up with representations of Blackness, American and otherwise. To be sure, German discussions of African Americans and white Americans differ in significant ways. Yet, their respective treatments remained powerfully framed by each other. That Sam Wooding and Paul Whiteman could at times function as antipodal, ideal types of German jazz theory was due not only to an understanding of jazz in terms of race but because from the very first, white and Black America existed in close, if troubled, proximity to each other.

The new framework for understanding the German encounter with American culture developed in the introduction made it possible to attend to manifold configurations of jazz and jazz culture in the Weimar Republic. Most importantly, I’ve shown how early attempts at theorizing and practicing jazz in Germany did not emerge in isolation and according to a logic of their own. Instead, the Weimar-era understanding of jazz and jazz practices emerged at
points of contact and conflict with American and wider European culture. Transcending the long-standing emphasis on the Germanness of Weimar jazz, in turn, yielded any number of fascinating and, at first glance, “exceptional” cases, yet which lay at the very heart of Weimar Germany as jazz republic. These stretch from the jazz band’s entry into Berlin in 1921, to Frankfurt conservatory students being taught by jazz records, to the curious history of Langston Hughes’ translation into German, and finally to Adorno’s operatic adaptation of Twain via the Scottsboro Boys.

Weimar’s experience of jazz left few of this period’s ideas, artworks, and people unchanged and moving jazz to the center of Weimar culture has involved much more than the addition of detail to well-known facts and figures. Instead, *The Jazz Republic* shows how a cultural shift towards jazz and other forms of American culture in the 1920s shaped this period’s modernism and modernity. Whether in the Dadaism of Grosz and Mehring, Herwarth Walden’s Expressionism, the New Objectivity of Dix and Janowitz, or Kracauer and Adorno’s initial elaborations of what became Frankfurt School critical theory, the German encounter, engagement, and theorization of jazz was in many ways elemental, rather than accidental to Weimar culture. From the high-cultural halls of conservatories and operas to the lowly spaces of bars and revue and variety theaters, not to mention those private moments enjoyed around a phonograph player, jazz produced an aural world of its own, both impressive and expansive. It is a world without which the culture of the Weimar Republic simply cannot be understood.