

**The Report Committee for Natalie Rose Cincotta
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following report:**

**Reconsidering the Cultural History of West Germany from 1945 to
Unification: A Historiographical Review of Recent Works**

**APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

Supervisor:

David F. Crew

Tatjana Lichtenstein

**Reconsidering the Cultural History of West Germany from 1945 to
Unification: A Historiographical Review of Recent Works**

by

Natalie Rose Cincotta, BA

Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2017

Abstract

Reconsidering the Cultural History of West Germany from 1945 to Unification: A Historiographical Review of Recent Works

Natalie Rose Cincotta, MA

The University of Texas at Austin, 2017

Supervisor: David F. Crew

This report surveys recent directions in cultural-historical approaches to the historiography of West Germany. While yielding important insights, institutional and economic histories have been preoccupied with the “democracy problem,” concerned with whether it had a chance, how it took root, and when it became successful. More recently, scholars have emphasized the importance of cultural-historical approaches in writing about the Federal Republic, often forging new ways to understand economic history itself. These scholars, including Moritz Föllmer, Anna Parkinson, Paul Betts, Elizabeth Heineman, Dagmar Herzog, and Timothy Scott Brown, have shown that the project of creating individual subjectivities after 1945 was also a cultural project, carved and contested in arenas ranging from industrial design to sexual politics. In reviewing these recent works, I propose that cultural approaches allow us to frame the historical problem less as a project of forming subjectivities in an attempt to be model democrats, which can take on a teleological tone, and more as a project of forming subjectivities in an attempt to distance oneself from Nazism, and in doing so imagine what it could mean to *be* West German.

Table of Contents

Reconsidering the Cultural History of West Germany	1
Preface: Historiographical Remarks	1
Self-Help and Postwar Subjectivities.....	3
Emotional Rigidity? Revisiting "an Inability to Mourn"	14
Consumption during the <i>Wirtschaftswunder</i> : From Design to Erotica	19
The Politics of Pleasure: Sex and Sexuality After 1945	26
1968: The Anti-Authoritarian Revolt and Beyond	32
Conclusion	40
Bibliography	45
Vita	47

Preface: Historiographical Remarks

Scholars have long been preoccupied with the “democracy problem” in the historiography of West Germany, concerned with whether democracy had a chance, how it took root, and when it became successful. More often than not, the process of democratization is understood in economic terms: The Marshall Plan and 1948 currency reform precipitated the economic miracle (*Wirtschaftswunder*), which not only revived the German economy, but also taught West Germans to become democratic citizens through consumption.¹ Confidence in the postwar order was predicated on the availability of material goods, which allowed West Germans to erect a barrier between past and present, and between East and West.² Werner Abelshauser, whose 1983 book *Wirtschaftsgeschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* sparked a lively debate on the initiating factors of the economic miracle, has famously commented that “the history of the Federal Republic is above all its economic history.”³

Arguing that institutional histories have inadequately addressed the democracy problem, Konrad Jarausch has more recently attempted to take a socio-cultural approach to assess how Germans learned to become ‘civilized’ democratic citizens. Jarausch argues that West Germans underwent a “collective learning process,” which taught Germans to become civilized democratic citizens in a sincere commitment to human

¹ Michael Wildt, “Changes in Consumption as Social Practice in West Germany during the 1950s,” in *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern, and Matthias Judd, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 301-316.

² Paul Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects: A Cultural History of West German Industrial Design*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 121.

³ Werner Abelshauser, *Wirtschaftsgeschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1945-1980*, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983), 8.

rights.”⁴ Jarausch optimistically concludes that “the civilizing of politics ought to be understood as a goal for which one must continually strive.”⁵

Such teleological histories of West Germany have dominated the literature, casting modernity in the postwar period as a gradual progression of learned democracy at both the state and societal levels. In the recent work *German Modernities from Wilhelm to Weimar: A Contest of Futures*, Geoff Eley, Jennifer L. Jenkins, and Tracie Matysik lend a fresh perspective to German modernity spanning the Wilhelmine years to the Weimar period, arguing that German modernity was part of an uncertain and contested global condition, marked by a ubiquitous sense that state, society, and subject could be transformed, and many voices competed to bring about their visions of this transformation. In the twentieth century, the editors propose that a “democratizing ethos” entailed greater assertion on the part of the individual subject who strove to shape and transform these social worlds.⁶

Confronted with Berliners’ individualist expectations, Nazism attempted to redefine and steer individual subjectivity through promises of personal fulfillment and agency by pitting forms of legitimate and illegitimate individuality against one another.⁷ The project in the postwar period, then, became one of creating individual subjectivities that would be in constant conversation with the past in an attempt to define oneself

⁴ Konrad Jarausch, *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germans, 1945-1999*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), vii.

⁵ Ibid, 281.

⁶ Geoff Eley, Jennifer L. Jenkins, and Tracie Matysik, eds., *German Modernities from Wilhelm to Weimar: A Contest of Futures*, (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016).

⁷ Moritz Föllmer, *Individuality and Modernity in Berlin: Self and Society from Weimar to the Wall*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013) 1.

against Nazism. Many voices and visions had different answers to and held varying stakes in the problem of ‘coming out of fascism,’ which began with self-help strategies in the ruins of 1945 and continued well into the 1970s with a marked focus on sexual matters. While economic and institutional histories have made significant contributions to our understanding of West Germany after 1945, a more recent generation of scholars have emphasized the importance of cultural-historical approaches in writing about the Federal Republic, often forging new ways to understand economic history itself. Scholars such as Moritz Föllmer, Anna Parkinson, Paul Betts, Elizabeth Heineman, Dagmar Herzog, and Timothy Scott Brown have shown that the project of subjectivity creation after 1945 was also a cultural project, carved and contested in arenas ranging from industrial design to sexual politics. In reviewing these recent works, I propose that cultural approaches allow us to frame the historical problem less as a project of forming subjectivities in an attempt to be model democrats, which can take on a teleological tone, and more as a project of forming subjectivities in an attempt to distance oneself from Nazism, and in doing so imagine what it could mean to *be* West German.

Self-Help and Postwar Subjectivities

In his analysis of the radical experience of the black market in Berlin from 1939 to 1950, Malte Zierenberg comments that “besides exchanging goods, market participants exchanged meanings.”⁸ Along with the economic concerns of securing basic goods and necessities, the black market also represented a key discursive site for renegotiating

⁸ Malte Zierenberg, *Berlin's Black Market 1939-1950*, (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 13.

social relationships, practicing new modes of communication, and reevaluating modes of legitimate and illegitimate individualism based on questions of morality. The black market was not only an economic space, but also represented a cultural project of creating new individual subjectivities in a state of emergency and political power vacuum.

The consideration of the black market as a site marked by distinct cultures of exchange lends a fresh perspective to the attempt to construct new modes of social interaction in the immediate aftermath of war, a process that had already begun during the war itself. During the war, for example, the utilization of urban space by black marketeers revealed the gendered and class dimensions of bartering relationships and interactions. Public spaces, like restaurants and bars, were typically utilized more by men than by women. But, the lower-class women who often worked in bars and restaurants were more likely to utilize these spaces than middle- and upper-class women, who were more likely to use cafés and restaurants known through acquaintances and in their familiar *Kiez*.

For Zierenberg, the black market is a compelling entry point to analyze the way this radical experience prompted discussions of morality. Bartering and sexual relationships, particularly those with foreigners, were considered especially immoral. During the war, most Germans and the government drew a distinct boundary between private, occasional bartering – a mode of survival and thus legitimate form of individuality – and profiteering – a crime and thus an illegitimate form of individuality. Drawing on collective memories of black market trading in the chaotic years of the First

World War and postwar inflation, the black market profiteer, or hustler, was often described in anti-Semitic terms as a character reminiscent of the Weimar “republic of profiteers.”⁹ The Nazis also contributed to this conflation of Jewishness and profiteering by casting illegal traders as outside threats to the racial elite of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

In the postwar period, illegal trading continued to flourish in the vacuum of state order, and so did discourses about morality and legitimate forms of behavior. The supply situation worsened in the last months of the war, so many turned to the black market to trade what they had left for basic necessities. The diversity of people participating in this bartering culture thus led to transformed social relationships, whether within pre-existing relationships or the creation of new partnerships and the expansion of networks. Rather than rational calculations, trust played the most significant role in bartering relationships, as trust became a performative act of credibility and foundational in all aspects of interpersonal communication. In a time of chaos and insecurity, trustworthiness was an important quality of the urban individual. Debates about everyday morality in the vacuum of state power and social order in 1945 reflected the “complexity of a society in which moral security had become unstable.”¹⁰ Establishing stability would begin with the creation of individual subjectivities that were centered on understandings of morality and acceptable behavior, understandings that were rooted in the radical black market experience during wartime. Moritz Föllmer writes that the rhetoric of morality and self-cultivation “reassured Berliners that, even amidst postwar hardship, their individuality

⁹ Ibid, 100.

¹⁰ Ibid, 169.

was not merely defined by materialist pursuits: instead, they were striving to be well-rounded *Persönlichkeiten* with substantial selves.”¹¹

Marked by the suave lighting of a coveted cigarette, the cool, collected hustler is one example of a performed identity that allowed Berliners to begin breaking with the past and postwar misery. Both a good and a currency, the cigarette acquired a discursive power that became an integral part of the hustler’s performance of the nonchalant male. That the hustler could smoke his cigarette, and not have to trade it, relayed his power, as he smoked what others needed as currency for necessary items. “A hustler without cigarettes was not a hustler,” writes Zierenberg, “by smoking, they exhibited a certain nonchalance to the problems of the day.”¹² Thus, the performance of indifference to the surrounding chaos with cigarettes was an initial form of self-presentation, which reveals a desire to forget the surrounding misery and to establish social and economic order. Zierenberg’s cultural approach to an economic phenomenon thus highlights the way Germans initially dealt with the misery of the postwar years by creating new modes of communication, interaction, and self-presentation. This radical experience of the black markets, argues Zierenberg, also encouraged Germans to look for greater security in the form of the West German social market economy or the East German controlled economy.

Trading on the black market, at the improvised vegetable garden in the *Tiergarten*, the repaired wall in a reclaimed flat, the self-reflective practice of diary-

¹¹ Föllmer, *Individuality and Modernity in Berlin*, 199.

¹² Zierenberg, *Berlin’s Black Market*, 182.

writing – individual acts of self-help took various forms in Berlin in 1945, as Berliners tried to take some form of control of the chaos that surrounded them. Moritz Föllmer's work *Individuality and Modernity in Berlin: Self and Society from Weimar to the Wall* illustrates how discourses about these acts of self-help and individuality became an initial means for Berliners to distance themselves from fascism. Föllmer charts shifting understandings of individualism in Berlin through economic depression, war, occupation, and reconstruction to highlight the ways individuality was central to Berliners' expectations of themselves and society throughout the twentieth century. Confronted with such expectations, individuality was redefined under National Socialism in terms of legitimate or illegitimate subjectivities, rather than a difference between individuality and collectivity.

But, in the post-war period, Nazism came to be understood as the latter, as discourses about self-help contributed to the understanding that individuality and Nazism were dichotomous entities, and this dichotomy became essential to the Berliner's sense of self as a postwar subject. The American occupiers promoted self-help as both a solution to immediate material concerns and as a means to "overcome" the culture from which Hitler emerged, a culture of passive individuals who felt they needed a strong leader. Additionally, they hoped that the promotion of self-help would "win Berliners for a new society."¹³ The emphasis on self-help and individuality thus separated individualism from the forcible collectivism of the Nazi state, and also eventually pitted individualism against the Communist state in the East. For Berliners, this proved convenient, as

¹³ Föllmer, *Individuality and Modernity in Berlin*, 190.

distancing individuality from Nazi collectivity contributed to a mentality that “drew a line under the past,” or *Schlußstrich*, as opposed to “engaging with the personal responsibility of non-Jewish Berliners for exclusion and persecution in the Third Reich.”¹⁴ Even newspaper columns gave self-help advice, encouraging Berliners to focus on practicality and everyday improvements, which would allow them to restore a sense of normality and security amidst postwar chaos. In sum, the American occupiers believed that promoting self-help and individualism was key to overcoming a culture of passive collectivity that made Hitler possible, and would thus be instrumental in molding ideal democratic subjects. For Berliners, self-help was key to a sense of self: it unified diversity of experience, gave meaning and direction to life among the ruins, and allowed them to break from the past.

As Berliners engaged in these various forms of self-help, they already began outlining the boundaries of legitimate and illegitimate behavior in a new postwar society. Returning Jewish-Berliners quickly became frustrated with the rhetoric of self-help, as their exhaustion and isolation made it difficult to adapt to an environment that emphasized personal initiative. Any attempt at self-help was further stymied by ongoing discrimination, as the generic discourses of self-help obscured the experiences of Jewish Berliners by failing to acknowledge the personal involvement of non-Jewish Berliners in their exclusion and persecution. Jewish Berliners were publicly vocal about their concerns and exclusion from postwar discourses, which in turn embittered the non-Jewish Berliners who were trying to maintain the image of “uninvolved individuality” in the

¹⁴ Ibid, 207-208.

Third Reich.¹⁵ In one example, Föllmer cites an Auschwitz survivor who felt plagued by distrust and disappointment in his inability to find support among those unwilling to disturb their “universal good conscience.” He further lamented that “I still don’t feel that I am allowed to rise to my full height from the stooped position, into which Nazism forced me to popular acclaim.”¹⁶ It seems that Nazi delineations of legitimate and illegitimate individuality continued in the postwar period, even if their meanings were reconstituted through discourses of self-help.

Furthermore, the gendered dimensions of self-help discourses point to the ways individual subjectivities for men and women were construed and understood in complicated ways. The actual victims of Nazism did not represent the “average German,” and thus were deemed unsuitable for the basis of a new postwar community founded on narratives of national victimhood. Elizabeth Heineman argues that because the civilian experience was disproportionately female, this allowed women to represent a universal German victimhood as victims of Allied bombings, of Soviet rapes, and of the Nazi party, which was portrayed as an “alien element that had inflicted a terrible war upon an unwilling people.”¹⁷ The victim narrative thus reinforced the dichotomy between Nazism and individuality, for women and for the population as a whole, which emphasized suffering and deemphasized active involvement in and benefit from the Nazi regime.

¹⁵ Ibid, 204.

¹⁶ Ibid, 205.

¹⁷ Elizabeth Heineman, “The Hour of the Woman: Memories of Germany’s “Crisis Years” and West German National Identity,” in *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany 1949-1968*, ed. Hanna Schissler, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 28.

With a hammer in hand and hair secured with a kerchief, the rubble women (*Trümmerfrauen*) who helped clear the ruins of bombed cities became a universal symbol of Germany's ability to survive through hard work and selflessness. But, as Leonie Traber has pointed out, the image of the woman of the rubble as the hero of German reconstruction is largely a myth, arguing that a minority of women participated in the rubble clearing, and social necessity was more a factor than altruism or selflessness in doing so.¹⁸ Nonetheless, the symbolic power of the rubble women cannot be underestimated, as the myth pulled together an imagined community of "equality in sacrifice" in postwar reconstruction.¹⁹

Despite the utility of a feminized narrative of victimhood for most Germans, Föllmer argues that there was an ambivalence about self-help as the "crucial postwar virtue," as this initiative was largely displayed by women. While the rubble women offered Germans a universalizing narrative of resilience, women were largely excluded from the benefits of currency reform in 1948, as it was much more difficult for women to find jobs or collect unemployment.²⁰

As conservative forces began restoring gender and sexual hierarchies, such feminized forms of self-help became a moralized practice. German men were particularly concerned with the disruption of sexual order, particularly when it came to the

¹⁸ Treber also notes that women were offered more food rations and were marketed the cheerful, hard-working image of the rubble woman to encourage participation. Leonie Treber, *Mythos Trümmerfrauen: Von der Trümmerbeseitigung in der Kriegs- und Nachkriegszeit und der Entstehung eines deutschen Erinnerungsortes*, (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2014).

¹⁹ Heineman, "The Hour of the Woman," 35.

²⁰ In the first month after currency reform, unemployment rose 42.5% for men and 70% for women. Often, applications for unemployment compensation were rejected "on the grounds that their presumed household responsibilities made them unavailable to the labor market." Ibid, 37.

fraternization of women with foreign soldiers. In her book *GIs and Frauleins: The German-American Encounter in 1950s West Germany*, Maria Höhn examines the way sexual relationships between German women and African American GIs in rural Baumholder featured in discourses about self-help and morality. German women fraternized with American soldiers out of a variety of motives, an important one being survival. But, conservative groups saw such fraternization as a reminder of defeat, as well as a sign of German moral and cultural decay and disrupted racial and sexual order. This concern, and the corrective efforts that accompanied it, could be explained by two interrelated factors. First, the disdain of German men for the self-reliance of women (which did not suit them as much as the female victim narrative) was manifest in their labeling of such relationships as prostitution. Second, sexual relationships between Germans and Americans reminded men of their emasculation and lack of sovereignty as men and as a nation, as well as the fear that American cultural influences could disturb German cultural renewal. This is especially apparent in Höhn's study, as American presence and transgressions with German women "fueled a lingering anxiety over weakened state authority and male identity," especially considering that the occupation statute placed American soldiers above German authority.²¹ Legitimate forms of self-help, such as the rubble women working for the common good, were contrasted to forms of self-help that involved a "quest for pleasurable and conspicuous consumption and the

²¹ Maria Höhn, "Heimat in Turmoil: African-American GIs in 1950s West Germany," in *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany 1949-1968*, ed. Hannah Schissler, (Princeton University Press, 2001), 155. See also Maria Höhn, *GIs and Fräuleins: The German-American Encounter in 1950s West Germany*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

fulfillment of erotic desires.”²² The stigmatization of sex as a form of self-help thus reveals a frustrated attempt to control and define what constituted legitimate individuality in postwar Germany, an individuality that was meant to create a sexual (and, for that matter, racial) order defined against Nazism and against American presence.

Frank Biess highlights the role of reaffirming masculinity as the basis for the ideal postwar subject. Medical circles and the Christian Church in particular cast POWs as demoralized and deformed victims of both Nazism and Communism, whose prolonged presence in the foreign East (especially their imprisonment in Soviet camps) deprived them of their conventional notions of masculinity and German *Heimat*. Church groups, motivated by a need to distance themselves from fascism through the reassertion of moral authority, helped transition POWs from their status as victims to a new status of survivors, and, by extension, from emasculated pawns of Nazism to masculine citizens of an emerging democratic order. To measure their capabilities as men was to measure their “essential Germanness,” determined by their resistance to “massification” (resistance to Nazism and Communism, that is) and commitment to the transhistorical ideals of *Kultur* that remained intact in the wake of defeat. This proved especially important not just in the resistance to Communism, but also in resistance to American cultural influences, which were seen by many conservative groups as contemptible and decadent. “The returned POW now appeared as a powerful symbol for an ideal West German citizen,” writes Biess, “who was firmly anticommunist yet also kept a skeptical distance from the

²² Föllmer, *Individuality and Modernity in Berlin*, 200.

“American way of life.”²³ This marked a key shift in the past thirty or so years, as masculine identity was tied to civilian life and citizenship, and not to functions as soldiers. If women fraternized with American soldiers, it would be up to the German man to represent the ideal German subject committed to timeless German ideals unbroken by Nazism, Communism, or American presence.

These recent socio-cultural directions in the historiography of the immediate postwar period paint a complex portrait of German behavior and attitudes in the wake of defeat. The attention to individuality, self-help, and social interaction reveal important nuances that narratives of denazification and democratization obscure: Discourses of self-help allowed Germans to dissociate themselves from Nazism with an understanding of individuality that was “by virtue of being an active individual, not a Nazi.”²⁴ The postwar subject was self-reliant in creative, nontraditional ways, as long as he or she did not disturb gender (or racial) hierarchies. Many voices and visions contributed to the definition of the postwar subject, but the major thread linking these visions was the construction of individual subjectivity against certain understandings of Nazism, and not necessarily as a key to democratic citizenship. The mosaic of voices in crafting individual subjectivities would continue well into the 1950s and 1960s, especially as younger generations developed different answers in assessing what it could mean to *be* West German.

²³ Frank Biess, “Survivors of Totalitarianism: Returning POWs and the Reconstruction of Masculine Citizenship in West Germany, 1945-1955,” in *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany 1949-1968*, ed. Hannah Schissler, (Princeton University Press, 2001), 68.

²⁴ Föllmer, *Individuality and Modernity in Berlin*, 209.

Emotional Rigidity? Rethinking the “Inability to Mourn”

In 1967 psychoanalysts Margarete and Alexander Mitscherlich published *The Inability to Mourn (Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern)*, an indictment of the perceived failure to master the recent past in the Federal Republic. Rooted in Freudian psychoanalysis, the Mitscherlichs argue that the difficult process of mourning was unable to take place in Germany because Germans did not confront the loss of Hitler, an object of “deep libidinal commitment” idealized by millions.²⁵ Instead of doing the difficult work of mourning the loss of this attachment, and expressing the ‘appropriate’ emotion of guilt, Germans instead took the easier path of denial and forgetting.

In the historical scholarship, emotion has featured prominently in discussions on coming to terms with the past. Working within paradigms of guilt and an ‘inability to mourn,’ scholars have understood German silence and forgetting as a manifest lack of emotion. But, as recent scholarship on discourses of self-help has shown, the picture is more complex than this assessment. Working in the growing field of emotion and affect studies, Anna Parkinson asks us to reconsider such epistemological certainties in her new study *An Emotional State: The Politics of Emotion in West German Culture*. Parkinson proposes that just because displays of emotion, such as guilt, were not socially legible in the postwar period, does not mean that potent affective structures were absent. As such, a manifest lack of emotion did not necessarily mean that Germans were completely silent about the past.

²⁵ Martin Jay, “Once More an Inability to Mourn? Reflections on the Left Melancholy of our Time,” *German Politics & Society* no. 27 (2002): 69. 69-76.

Importantly, Parkinson makes an analytical distinction between emotion and affect. Emotions are considered to be “socially articulated expressions of feeling open to normative judgment,” or “sociopolitical markers of ‘community’” with important moral dimensions.²⁶ In the postwar period, it seems that Germans were caught between two normative emotional regimes: that of the Nazi regime and that of the new American occupying powers, who were attempting to direct appropriate emotional responses through reeducation and denazification. On the other hand, Parkinson understands the more equivocal affect as a “diffuse, not yet legible, and often morally ambivalent manifestation of feeling.”²⁷ As such, intense, potent affects can be present even if not expressed as outwardly legible emotions, and could have a more forceful presence than emotions themselves.

With this understanding of emotion and affect, Parkinson argues against the notion that Germans lacked feeling or exhibited no ability to mourn by reading seminal postwar texts, by authors including Karl Jaspers, Ernst von Salomon, and the Mitscherlichs, for their underlying affective structures. The Allied occupiers deemed guilt to be the most appropriate emotion to express personal responsibility for Nazi crimes. This normative emotional regime has made its way into the scholarship, which tends to link a lack of outward expression of feeling (that is, the appropriate response of guilt and mourning) to a pervasive silence about the past (namely, Germans’ personal responsibility for Nazi crimes). Parkinson challenges the dominance of this guilt

²⁶ Anna Parkinson, *An Emotional State: The Politics of Emotion in West German Culture*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015), 115.

²⁷ Ibid.

paradigm in academic work: if one looks below the surface of normative emotional regimes, like those promoted by the Allied occupiers, one might see the ways Germans hotly contested and debated certain understandings of the past. West Germans in this period were anything but silent.

In the first chapter, Parkinson takes the reader to a lecture hall at Heidelberg University, where Karl Jaspers rationally contemplated the criminal, moral, political, and metaphysical dimensions of German guilt in his 1945-46 lectures, also published in a short text *The Question of German Guilt (Die Schuldfrage)*. “Narrowing the scope of analysis to emotional expressions of “guilt” in Jaspers’ lectures,” writes Parkinson, “overlooks how his rationalism acts as a defense against a complex affective structure of shame, doubt, and, ultimately, frustration.”²⁸

Parkinson thus regards Karl Jaspers’ cool and rational discussion of the question of German guilt in his writings and lectures as an attempt to conceal an excess of affects, namely shame and grief. By emphasizing the moral weight of guilt in a rational manner, Jaspers hoped to dispel the *ressentiment* or negative affects he observed in his audience, and instead foster critical self-reflection in a communal setting. By elevating emotion (guilt) to a moral level, Jaspers seems to be reconstructing a German emotional habitus and national community around the issue of guilt. According to Parkinson, Jaspers’ rational approach reveals his awareness of a charged affective atmosphere in the lecture hall, which he fears might breed *ressentiment* and negativity, which he does not consider

²⁸ Ibid, 20.

conducive to his pedagogical aims in existentialist renewal, or arriving at the truth through self-reflective communication.²⁹

Furthermore, Parkinson pits Jaspers' approach against the perceived heavy-handedness of Allied denazification and re-education policies. In the introduction, Parkinson highlights Jaspers' indignation at the use of images of the liberation of the concentration camps to shock German citizens. According to Jaspers, Germans often responded to images, accompanied by captions like "That is your guilt!" ("Das ist eure Schuld!"), with "defensive disavowal," leaving them without a sense of who was pointing the finger and how to atone for the guilt they were 'meant' to feel. But, reactions of disavowal (or a lack of other outward emotional reactions) does not mean potent affectual structures are absent, "indeed, following shock, the first response was often an involuntary recoiling back on the self that might indicate a defensive posture or be a sign of shame."³⁰ Here, it does not seem to be the photograph itself but the way it is situated and framed by an Allied hand that appeals to such affects. Instead of shock tactics, Jaspers saw dialogue (*Miteinanderreden*) as a means for Germans to reconstruct a community around guilt as a shared emotion and navigate an environment in which they were expected to exhibit particular signs of guilt deemed appropriate by the normative emotional regimes created by the Allies.

There is certainly evidence of such dialogue taking place in the hall of Jaspers' university lectures. In another example, the Wednesday Conversations

²⁹ Parkinson writes that, "Jaspers' leading existentialist idiom – his philosophy of Existenz – was based on the assumption that on the way to truth, each individual would attain a state of self-illumination through communication, first and foremost with the self and then with others (ein Miteinanderreden). Ibid, 35.

³⁰ Ibid, 3.

(*Mittwochsgespräche*) about Ernst von Salomon's cynical 1951 text *The Questionnaire* (*Der Fragebogen*) was also a physical space that facilitated public participation in debating the recent past and present moment. Such a social setting allowed for a kind of public participation suppressed under Nazism and constitutive of a new democracy. Overall, Parkinson makes clear the ubiquitous presence of charged affective structures in social settings, as well as the way emotion was a constitutive element of political debate. By reading for emotions in texts and physical spaces, and the potent affective structures that may have undergirded them, Parkinson reinvents our understanding of emotional rigidity to illuminate the role of emotions in nation and politics, as well as the dynamism and mutability of affect. What emerges from this discussion is a picture of a feverish postwar atmosphere in which contested expressions of emotion and muted affective constellations drove the rebuilding of community and politics in the Federal Republic.

This is not to say that forums of public debate or discussion denoted a rigorous working through of the recent past. Nina Verheyen complicates our idea of what a discussion forum or *Meinungsaustausch* may signal to us about the roles and attitudes of Germans in an emerging democratic state. Like Parkinson, Verheyen challenges the idea that the 1950s was a decade of silence or repression, pointing to the eager engagement in discussion circles as evidence of a lively discourse in West German society. On the one hand, we could consider the *Mittwochsgespräche* and other gatherings as the groundwork for breaking with behavior during the Third Reich and cultivating individual subjects of a democracy. But, Verheyen is careful not to make such a connection so simply. Firstly, Verheyen does not argue that such conversations signaled an intensive “working

through” of the past, as conversations that dealt directly with antisemitism and other sensitive topics were exceptions to the rule. Furthermore, considering the conversations as a moment of freedom is an overestimation, as the form of conversation took shape within a matrix of Allied reeducation.³¹ However, it seems that such public forums and discussions always occur with an explicit or implicit set of social codes and rules. That these conversations often happened organically at all, and not necessarily with the explicit direction of Allied authorities, speaks a great deal to a moment of experimentation marked by a flurry of textual productivity and public activity centered around questions of the past. Approaches preoccupied with questions of appropriate manifestations of guilt or mourning have obscured these activities; and the emerging field of emotion and affect studies has certainly challenged any notion of a simple conservative restoration marked by silence and forgetting.

Consumption during the *Wirtschaftswunder*: From Design to Erotica

Some scholars have suggested that Germans learned democracy through consumption, as material goods, rather than a love of liberalism, secured economic stability and political legitimacy.³² Some have even suggested that consumption also distracted Germans from working through the past in the 1950s, as material goods allowed them to forget both any personal responsibility for Nazism and the misery of the

³¹ Nina Verheyen, “Eifrige Diskutanten: Die Stilisierung des >freien< Meinungs-austauschs zu einer demokratischen Kulturtechnik in der westdeutschen Gesellschaft der fünfziger Jahre,” in Daniel Fulda, Dagmar Herzog, Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, and Till van Rahden, eds., *Demokratie in Schatten der Gewalt: Geschichten des Privaten im deutschen Nachkrieg*, (Göttigen: Wallstein Verlag, 2010), 99-121.

³² Wildt, “Changes in Consumption as Social Practice.”

postwar years. But, considering consumption as a site of forgetting the Nazi past and learning democracy limits our understanding of the ways cultural products and objects were key sites where Germans negotiated their relationship to the past in an attempt to help shape subjectivities in the present.

Far more than material consumption, struggles over the means and meanings of the production of household wares and spaces in the 1950s were closely intertwined with frustrated attempts to demarcate past and present. Paul Betts' *The Authority of Everyday Objects: A Cultural History of West German Industrial Design* is an intelligent work that connects a seemingly nominal topic to broader debates about culture and self-understanding in the postwar period. Betts convincingly argues that modern industrial design did not change much between 1925 and 1965, but its ideological and social meanings certainly did. In the postwar period, industrial modernism became a site of cultural construction, where West Germans attempted to cultivate a new cultural order and new forms of national self-understanding. According to Betts, four factors influenced these debates: economic futures, cultural idealism, diplomatic capital, and dealing with the recent past.

Highlighting a number of vivid examples, Betts charts the various ways industrial designers attempted to achieve cultural reform through everyday objects. With its Wilhelmine origins, the revival of the *Werkbund* was emblematic of a general postwar initiative to recultivate a liberal German past. The *Werkbundler* considered themselves vanguards of postwar industrial design culture, and restorers of "cultural dignity and

spiritual dimension to everyday things and spaces" rooted in pre-Nazi traditions.³³ The need to imbue products with a spiritual value was not just about the product itself. A number of *Werkbundler* continued their careers during the Nazi regime, some even taking official commissions. Even if prominent designers like Wilhelm Wagenfeld and Hermann Gretsch were not fanatical Nazis (Wagenfeld was a leftist), they still benefited from flourishing careers in designing various versions of the "Nazi Modern."³⁴ And, the Nazis coopted the *Werkbund's* vocabulary for social reform and design as they relate to functionalism, quality, and the "joy of work." After the war, the *Werkbund* was thus faced with the task of articulating a new vocabulary for these principles, and in doing so dissociating themselves from the Nazis. The *Werkbundler* attempted to cultivate their pre-1933 functionalist traditions to fashion themselves as cultural tastemakers not only of modern industrial design, but also as an "uncorrupted refuge of German idealism."³⁵

What did the German consumer make of this wedding of industrial modernism and cultural reform? Betts supports Michael Wildt's argument that West Germans learned democracy through consumption, denying the possibility of affective relationship to democracy in light of the failed "turnip democracy" of the Weimar Republic.³⁶ But, the relationship between consumption and political leanings remains ambivalent: Betts mostly considers the roles of intellectuals, designers, and political figures in shaping such discourses about modernism and culture, but does not engage much with the way these

³³ Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects*, 82.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 80.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 121.

meanings may have been decoded by the German consumer. In his discussion of the spiritualization of the commodity during the Nazi era, for example, Betts cites Alf Lüdtkke's argument that German workers were not seduced by the beautification of factories, but by cultural compensation and a commitment to worker happiness that this beautification entailed, "modern canteens, swimming pools, and new housing facilities further cultivated loyalty to the regime," as promises of the "good life" could be "sensually experienced."³⁷ It could be said that German workers did not necessarily have an ideological, affective relationship with Nazism per se, but one based on the promise of material prosperity. In the postwar period, the attempt to spiritualize the everyday object, albeit with different meanings, continued to offer Germans a promise of material prosperity and the "good life." It does not seem that the intended political and social meanings imbued in objects and spaces by designers were necessarily decoded that way by the average German.

Take the *Nierentisch* debate, for example. Abhorred by industrial designers like the *Werkbundler*, who crusaded for the good form of functionalist design, and by intellectuals, who were wary of consumerism, *Nierentisch* was widely popular in West Germany and occupies a special place in nostalgic memories of the Golden 50s. The kidney-shaped coffee table was considered bad design, especially because it virtually came from nowhere, as most designers were anonymous independent contractors who made no claims to cultural redemption. According to Betts, "*Nierentisch* culture helped give form to this new dream of prosperity," as West Germans could now afford

³⁷ Ibid, 23.

nonessential commodities and material comforts.³⁸ Furthermore, many Germans associated *Werkbund*-style functionalism with the emergency functionalism of postwar hardship, and instead turned to an organic design like *Nierentisch* that was not so lifeless. Indeed, there seems to be a great discrepancy between design circles, which envisioned everyday objects as carriers of a particular cultural idea, and popular tastes, which were apparently informed by both a desire for comfort and a desire to leave behind the misery of the postwar years. In this sense, the design of objects mattered for ordinary Germans, but perhaps not for the reasons we may think. Ordinary Germans seemed to value material prosperity, especially that of *Nierentisch* design, as a promise of comfort and ease in light of fresh memories of postwar misery. This did not necessarily align with a “liberal consciousness” nor with hegemonic ideas about the cultural purposes of everyday objects as advocated by the *Werkbund* and other groups.

By the mid-1960s, functionalism was the object of critique by conservatives and leftists – including Theodor Adorno, Ernst Bloch, and Alexander Mitscherlich – as a “cultural menace” representing the commercial and anti-individualist elements of a misguided dream of postwar renewal.³⁹ Nonetheless, efforts of groups like the *Werkbund* point to an experimental faith in industrial modernism as a means for cultural reform, as well as the role of design as an arena to negotiate past and present. Industrial modernism was the way to cultural renewal for designers, who also dissociated themselves from Nazism in the process.

³⁸ Ibid, 121.

³⁹ Ibid, 175.

Sex was also a key battleground where Germans struggled over understandings of the past, as well as the means and meanings of cultural renewal. Elizabeth Heineman considers sexual consumption a key site where Germans debated the meanings of liberalism in the Federal Republic. Debates about sexual morality were less a strict battle between conservatism and liberalism, and more a struggle over the very meaning of liberalism itself. Both conservatives and liberals advocated for some kind of sexual-moral order, but they differed in what behaviors this included, and the role of the state in regulating these behaviors.⁴⁰ The debate about the Law on the Dissemination of Youth-Endangering Texts and Images in 1953 is emblematic of this tension, which enabled the government to control the distribution and advertisement of texts considered obscene. But, because the law did not allow the state to block the publishing of such texts, the state asserted that the law was not censorship.⁴¹ Heineman further comments:

The lines were not neatly drawn between clearly defined positions. Rather, all positions involved some concern for a sexual-moral order, some concern for constitutional principles, and some sense that the Weimar past, the Nazi past, and the Communist counterexample had lessons to teach West Germans: it just wasn't clear what those lessons were. Was the bottom line for the SPD its opposition to the Law on Youth-Endangering Texts or its tacit acceptance of the criminalization of obscene texts and images? Christian conservatives were conspicuously split: all agreed on the seriousness of youth endangerment and obscenity, but their divisions on the priority of civil liberties ran deep.⁴²

It is clear that a sexual-moral order was central to liberalism in complex, sometimes contradictory ways. But, despite the efforts of sexual conservatism, a sexual revolution was occurring within the home well before the sex wave of the late 60s. The erotica

⁴⁰ Elizabeth Heineman, *Before Porn was Legal: The Erotica Empire of Beate Uhse*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 3.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 35.

⁴² *Ibid*, 59-60.

industry, spearheaded by the legendary Beate Uhse, found an important loophole in the Law on Youth-Endangering Texts that saw sexual consumption flourish: while the law forbade the distribution of indexed works in spaces like storefronts or newsstands, there were no restrictions on selling or distributing indexed works from private libraries or mail-order catalogs.⁴³ Mail-order erotica became a democratizing force: by 1957, Heineman estimates that about 8 million West Germans were on erotica firm mailing lists, and, by the 1960s, most West Germans used sexual consumer goods. Moreover, erotica firms served as sex educators for German couples, providing them with a vocabulary for the discussion of sexual matters, which was otherwise difficult in light of the suppression of sexual knowledge. The catalogs of Beate Uhse, in one example, emphasized the importance of women's sexual experiences in saving marriages while also creating less guilty language for the desires of men. In sum, Uhse's catalogs "made sexual consumption compatible with customers' hopes for a "normal" family life that blended security and deep feeling: a couple which bore healthy children but not too many, and a sex life that fulfilled the erotic passions of both partners."⁴⁴ Although geared mostly toward heterosexual partnerships, the erotica industry in the 50s was instrumental in reducing the element of shame and discomfort in discussions about sex, and increasing sexual knowledge for both men and women.

The recent works by Paul Betts and Elizabeth Heineman show that consumption during the *Wirtschaftswunder* was not simply a distraction which allowed Germans to

⁴³ Ibid, 39.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 73.

forget the Nazi past and embrace democracy. Debates about cultural renewal played out in the design and consumption of everyday wares, and, by attempting to demarcate past and present, sometimes made these boundaries more fluid and porous. Designers provided one set of answers for the question of West German subjectivity: they saw the consumption of spiritually meaningful, functional design as the means to achieve cultural renewal within the home. Erotica firms headed by entrepreneurs like Beate Uhse saw sexual consumption as a means to democratize pleasure and strengthen marriages that were often under strain in the crisis of the immediate postwar years. Sexual consumption became a key battle ground where erotica firms, the Church, and the state struggled over meanings of liberalism and the characteristics and meanings of a sexual-moral order in the postwar state. These debates would continue and evolve in complicated ways as the sex wave brought sexual cultures into public view.

The Politics of Pleasure: Sex and Sexuality after 1945

Already in 1945, discourses about sex had become intertwined with understandings of the morality and individuality of the postwar subject, especially surrounding the sexual relationships between German women and American soldiers. Unlike the valorization of the female hero of the rubble, which was largely confined to a transitional period, the contentiousness of sexual morality would continue to shape debates about individual subjectivities as they relate to liberalism and questions of the past throughout the turbulent 60s and beyond.

In *Sex After Fascism*, Dagmar Herzog looks at the ways discourses about sex in the postwar period were intrinsically tied to questions about the past. Up until this point, historians have reproduced the postwar argument that Nazism was sexually repressive, but Herzog demonstrates that it was anything but: The Nazi party advocated a “ribald and unapologetic celebration of sexual activity” and even promoted pre-marital and extramarital heterosexual sex.⁴⁵ Nazi subjectivity was partially formed around sex as pleasure, as the aim was not to repress sexuality but to reinvent it as a privilege of the racial elite.⁴⁶ In fact, trends of both sexual liberalization and sexual restraint began before the Weimar period, and the Nazis came to power during a time of great tension between these two forces. Sexually liberal authors who published fairly freely in the 1930s saw premarital sex as unproblematic and a part of healthy adult relationships. Such views rejected religious notions of sexual morality, and thus espoused pro-sex views as central to the process of secularization during the Third Reich. But, sexologists, writers, and advertisers promoted this kind of sexual permissiveness mainly for men: in 1937, physician Carl Csallner wrote that men should freely enjoy premarital sex while women should remain chaste, which, of course, presents a double standard for women.⁴⁷ Initially,

⁴⁵ Dagmar Herzog, *Sex After Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 4.

⁴⁶ The edited volume *Pleasure and Power in Nazi Germany* has conceptualized the complex, mutually reinforcing relationship between pleasure and power during the Third Reich, particularly the way the regime rationalized pleasures for political purposes while also dealing with the pressure to cater to popular expectations. Chapters dealing with consumer research, sex, luxury, and entertainment, to name a few, show how the Nazis catered to individual desires by offering modes of pleasure rendered appropriate for a strong, healthy, and satisfied racial elite. Pamela Swett, Corey Ross, and Fabrice d’Almeida, eds., *Pleasure and Power in Nazi Germany*, (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

⁴⁷ Herzog, *Sex After Fascism*, 30. While sexual pleasure was promoted as an important component of marriages that relied on the satisfaction of both partners in the Weimar Republic, Pamela Swett has also shown that the marketing of sexual pleasure during the 1930s was geared toward the satisfaction of men alone as an important element of spiritual and physical wellbeing, and not necessarily in maintaining

Christian churches aligned themselves with Nazism to combat the supposed sexual decadence of the Weimar Republic and restore the sanctity of marriage, but quickly realized that such sexual permissiveness would continue in the 1930s. Overall, Herzog paints a complex portrait of sexuality during the Third Reich, notably as a central component of the way Nazism redefined individuality in racial terms.

Before the period of relative sexual conservatism in the 1950s, Herzog points to a postwar moment of existential crisis accompanied by a flurry of free sexual activity.⁴⁸ In what Herzog terms a window of “erotic liberality,” German women were more confident to seek premarital sexual relationships, and growing numbers of German men were comfortable with this trend, except for when such interactions took place between German women and American soldiers. Herzog explains this window as part of a longer trajectory of sexual liberalization over the course of the twentieth century, but, it would seem that experiences of the postwar moment may have also driven this trend, whether out of a desire for private space, a sense of ephemerality, or a combination of these factors.⁴⁹

Why did the Church pour so much moral energy into ordering sexual relations in the 1950s? Because sex and sexuality were so central to Nazi state and society, and perhaps

marriages. Pamela Swett, “Selling Sexual Pleasure in 1930s Germany,” in *Pleasure and Power in Nazi Germany*, eds. Pamela Swett et al. (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 39-66.

⁴⁸ By sexual conservatism, I refer to the state-sponsored and church-driven policies and efforts that attempted to construct a sexual order based on Christian morality. As Elizabeth Heineman has shown, conservative efforts were frustrated by erotica firms whose products made their way into millions of West German households. Heineman, *Before Porn was Legal*.

⁴⁹ Moritz Föllmer analyzed the perception of Russian soldiers in the diaries of German women in Berlin, arguing that they “show a determination to start afresh, to cope with an unprecedented situation from a position of disempowerment and outside any functioning authority. On the other, they betray a longing for the restoration of material security and domestic privacy.” Föllmer, *Individuality and Modernity in Berlin*, 188.

due to free sexual activity occurring within the vacuum of state authority, sex was a key site, if not *the* key site, for restoring some semblance of a moral and sexual order in postwar society. The Church saw the breakdown in sexual order as the source of a moral crisis, and thus advocated sexual propriety as the cure for this crisis.

The Church certainly had more at stake than simply regulating sex for the sake of order. According to Herzog, the German churches attempted to distance themselves from their association with Nazism by contrasting the open sexual license of the 1930s and 40s with the sexual conservatism of the Church. It was not the immorality of killing, but sexual permissiveness, and its supposed links to uncontained violence, that underscored the nation's larger moral crisis.⁵⁰ By creating dichotomous understandings of sex and morality between Christianity and Nazism, the Churches – Catholic and Protestant alike – were able to position themselves as moral vanguards, and thus conceal their own links to and benefit from Nazism, despite the continuities with Nazi ideas about homosexuality, the so-called burden of the disabled, abortion, and eugenics. Sex, therefore, was the central battleground where the Church tried to stake a claim to moral authority in creating the postwar subject. It was against this sexual conservatism and evasion of the past that the New Left would react in the 1960s anti-authoritarian revolt.

⁵⁰ The ways conservative groups linked sex and violence are complex. Herzog highlights one Catholic physician, who “directly linked Nazi encouragement of sexual activity with Nazism's other transgressions. Hofmann contended that the disrespect for the spiritual dimension of life evident among people overly obsessed with erotic pleasure was intimately associated with disrespect for the bodies of others and therefore facilitated brutality and mass murder. Or, as he put it, as he lumped together “overvaluation of the body” with “godlessness and cruelty,” what needed to be understood was “the paradoxical matter that the same person who raises the body to dizzying heights, in an instant can sacrifice the bodies of a hundred thousand others.” Herzog, *Sex After Fascism*, 75. Other concerns included the extramarital sexual activity of Wehrmacht soldiers in occupied territories, both consensual and coercive, and the general loosening of sexual mores for women on both the home front and in occupied territories (women in the Reich Labor Service, for example, attended social evenings with soldiers for the purposes of sexual pairings).

As Heineman has illustrated, sexual behavior was already undergoing changes in the 1950s with the help of the erotica industry, and the way it provided a vocabulary for discussing sexual pleasure within the home. With the legalization of the pill, the decriminalization of homosexuality, and the *Fanny Hill* Decision, the “sex wave” of the mid-60s sought publicly to redefine what pleasure was and who it was for: sex could be for the sake of pleasure, not procreation, and it could be enjoyed outside marriage, between homosexual men and women, and even without a partner. Arguably, it was the explosion of sexually provocative visual images in films, on newsstands, and in shops that brought discourses about sex into public view, precipitating further changes to sexual behavior and consumption. According to Herzog, the sex wave was “joined by a broad liberalization of popular values around nudity and pre- and extramarital sex. What had been surreptitious and in hiding was brought out in the open and loudly defended. There was a far greater willingness to publicize liberal values and to attack sexual conservatism vigorously and directly.”⁵¹ But, the sex wave did not necessarily denote a liberal “sex for all” atmosphere as one might think, even if reformers regarded sexual liberty to be gender-neutral. Heineman shows that the legalization of pornography in 1973 greatly influenced sexual behavior and consumption, as sexual pleasure, with or without a partner, was geared toward men, while women were portrayed as sexually available.⁵² Even sex shops adjusted to this climate, shifting from “*pleasure in companionate sex*

⁵¹ Ibid, 141.

⁵² Heineman, *Before Porn was Legal*, 159.

through consumption to selling *solo male sexual pleasure in consumption*.”⁵³ This gender inequality in sexual pleasure would again emerge within the 1968 student movement and would play a significant role in the formation of the nascent women’s movement.

Thus, sex was never just about sex, and sexual liberty was never just about innocent pleasure. On the one hand, debates about sex were related to larger questions of subjectivity and social order. The Church linked sexual conservatism with the moral order of the state, asserting that sex was reserved for married couples only for the purposes of procreation. In doing so, they sought to dissociate the Church from Nazism, and, importantly, re-christianize German society after an era when sexual licentiousness and secularization went hand in hand. As we will see, for the New Left, sexual liberty was connected to a broader project of social justice that ultimately became an antifascist project. Although conservatives and liberals held different understandings of the past and the purpose of sex in the present, the stakes were clear: as Nazism redefined pleasure as a privilege of the racial elite, thus tying it to the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in the *Volksgemeinschaft*, both conservatives and liberals strove to connect their differing notions of pleasure to antifascist imperatives. Herzog seems to suggest that understandings of sexuality shifted from one type of sexual permissiveness under Nazism to another form of sexual permissiveness free of the constraints of the racial elite, a kind of pleasure that was, in theory, meant for everyone.

⁵³ Ibid, 149. Heineman notes that men constituted 95% of sex shop customers in 1969, producing an intimidation effect for women.

1968: The Anti-Authoritarian Revolt and Beyond

Debates about the significance and impact of 1968 continue to the present-day. Much has been written about the politics of the student movement, which aimed to create political alternatives to the conservative, anti-Communist politics of the Adenauer years, democratize university hierarchies, and put an end to the repression of the Nazi past. The Extra-Parliamentary Opposition, or *Außerparlamentarische Opposition* (APO), saw political revolution as a precondition for societal change and for reshaping the self.⁵⁴

Timothy Scott Brown's *West Germany and the Global Sixties: The Antiauthoritarian Revolt, 1962-1978* looks at the greater cultural changes taking place both within and beyond the student movement to highlight the ways Germans – artists, musicians, hippies, and intellectuals – sought to expand “the boundaries of the permissible” and broaden “the cultural palette of lifestyle.”⁵⁵ The democratization of cultural expression was not restricted to the politics of the student movement, and sometimes even at odds with it, but it often became politicized. As opposed to the political drives of the APO, the driving forces of this counter-cultural project sought to reshape society by first remaking the self. Both strands proposed differing, although sometimes interacting, methods of anti-authoritarian revolt. Far from a homogenous entity, the emerging New Left struggled over the meaning and means of revolution, as

⁵⁴ Anna von der Goltz has recently complicated the idea that 1968 represented only two sides of the leftist student movement against the older conservative press and hostile urban population. Drawing on memoirs, oral histories, and both German and American archival sources, Goltz highlights the ways that Christian Democratic activists, especially those from the Association of Christian Democratic Students (RCDS), took part in the rebellion in various ways. Anna von der Goltz, “Other ‘68ers in West Berlin: Christian Democratic Students and the Cold War City,” in *Central European History* vol. 50, no. 1 (2017): 86-112.

⁵⁵ Timothy Scott Brown, *West Germany and the Global Sixties: The Antiauthoritarian Revolt, 1962-1978*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 10.

both strands proposed differing, although sometimes interacting, solutions that converged in 1968 as a “general stream of rebellion,” but perhaps only in appearance.⁵⁶

Throughout each chapter, conceptually divided into “Space,” “Time,” “Word,” “Sound,” “Vision,” “Power,” “Sex,” and finally “Death,” Brown reveals four main tensions that underpin loosely coordinated rebellion and its transnational dimensions: temporal concerns, spatial concerns, the limits of politicized cultural production, and tensions between individualism and collectivism.

As the anti-Communism of the Adenauer era became untenable for student rebels, they looked beyond the boundaries of time and space to democratize the political process and create alternatives to the conservative government, society, and culture of West Germany. In the initial chapters, Brown explores the opportunities and tensions presented by spatial and temporal orientations in reacting against the political status-quo. In the chapter “Space,” Brown highlights the way West German rebels looked beyond national boundaries to imagine a new space, both physical and discursive, where revolutionary ideas could converge, and where new political subjectivities might be imagined. This functioned on a few different levels. Brown highlights the way West German rebels tried to establish a new “moral geography” that connected Third World liberation struggles with local liberation struggles, evidenced in the anti-Tshombe and *Africa Addio* protests which connected Third World student diaspora and the German student revolt.⁵⁷ West German students also defied the anti-communist ideology and the hard boundaries of the

⁵⁶ Ibid, 363.

⁵⁷ The anti-Tshombe and Africa Addio protest not only marked the confluence of liberation discourses, but also the student diaspora and the student movement, as foreign exchange students also took part. Ibid, 40.

Bloc system: The Socialist German Student Union (*Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund*, or SDS) and the East German Free German Youth (*Freie Deutsche Jugend*, or FDJ) attempted to cooperate during the Tshombe protests, finding common ground over questions of anti-imperialism. Finally, students turned to over-idealized images of the United States as a source of modernizing liberalism. This idealization, however, soon turned to protests over the U.S. war in Vietnam, expanding student “networks of affinity” focused on common global struggles related to war.⁵⁸ It is clear that rebellion in the 1960s was marked by both the expansion and collapse of space in the way local concerns borrowed from the global and vice versa.

Defining the “New Left” was also marked by temporal concerns, as 68ers sought to legitimize and theorize their claims on historical foundations. On the one hand, dealing with the past was an attempt to recover a lost revolutionary tradition of the Left, which was destroyed first by the Nazis and ignored by postwar left-wing parties. Seeing the parallels between the Emergency Laws and Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution, student rebels saw the destruction of the Left as happening a second time. The New Left attempted to recover this past by mining primary texts – like *Das Kapital* – in a simultaneous attempt to theorize and historicize their movement. Furthermore, the antiauthoritarian revolt of the 1960s was strongly rooted in the antinuclear protests of the previous decade, as the *Ostermarsch* movement, a protest movement against nuclear weapons with wide social support, became a major umbrella organization for left-liberal

⁵⁸ The student movement also drew from the strategies of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. Students at the Free University in Berlin (*Freie Universität Berlin*) staged a sit-in on June 22, 1966 to advocate for the democratization of the university system. Ibid, 50.

opposition from which the APO would later emerge.⁵⁹ Lastly, the continued presence of Nazism in the “fascist present” – anti-Semitic attitudes, the continuity of public officials between the Third Reich and the Federal Republic, the widespread failure to face personal responsibility for Nazi crimes – became a key organizing point of the SDS, who aimed to expose these continuities. Fascism was also re-theorized to understand the global present: the US intervention in the 1973 coup in Chile, for example, represented another example of the way anti-Communism could be used to justify anti-leftist terror. Hence, engagement with the past – both the fascist past and post-fascist past – was central to emerging understandings of alternative political subjectivities among the New Left.

In addition to spatial and temporal tensions, the protest movement was also marked by tensions over the politicization and democratization of cultural production, which was occurring on a scale that extended beyond the boundaries of the SDS. The meaning of “subculture,” “counter-culture,” and “underground” were constantly debated by student rebels and activists outside of the student movement, like artists, *Gammler*, musicians, and the members of *Kommune I*. The communal living arrangements of *Kommune I* represented a revolution that was not only theorized but lived, as “the communards sought to establish new possibilities of being in the human interior and new possibilities of action in the public spaces of the city.”⁶⁰ *Kommune I* was eventually

⁵⁹ Ibid, 88.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 57.

expelled from the SDS, as the emphasis on self-liberation was seen by SDS leader Rudi Dutschke as disruption to the seriousness of left-wing politics.

The counter-cultural project had many moving parts beyond that of *Kommune I*, as activists, within and beyond the student movement, aimed to democratize and politicize cultural production by creating grassroots alternatives in press, film, publishing, art, and lifestyle. These activities were as much about the right to expression as the project of creating alternative cultures itself. In the chapter “Vision,” Brown highlights the uneasy role of the image in the student movement itself, as political theorizing was seen as a written activity.⁶¹ But, a revolution of visual language was nonetheless taking place in the pages of magazines, in the underground press, in film, and in art, as the visual became a key means of expression but also a site of ideological debate and ambiguity.⁶² Brown draws on the performative aspects of artistic productions, film, and icons of revolution, but perhaps the most compelling example of struggles over politicization and cultural production can be located in the visual politics of the sex wave.

First, it is necessary to explain the role of sex in the antiauthoritarian revolt. Herzog argues that the New Left’s embrace of sexual liberty was not a reaction against sexual repression under Nazism, but rather a reaction to the sexual conservatism of the Church. Continued sexual repression was linked to the postwar repression of the Nazi past. And, in contrast to the Church, which deemed Nazism sexually immoral, liberals and leftists

⁶¹ This is not to say that the student movement did not employ images. Images of revolutionary heroes, such as Karl Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg, were often used as “visual shorthand” for the revolution in general in SDS materials. The visual represented a site of ideological ambiguity sometimes “a means of supplementing rational argument” and other times presenting it in shorthand. Ibid, 212, 231.

⁶² Ibid, 231.

believed that Nazi violence and the Holocaust resulted from a “perverted product of sexual repression,” and that sexual liberation was therefore “itself an antifascist imperative.”⁶³ Leftists like Arno Plack argued that “un-lived-out sexual impulses” led young German men to become aggressive as adults, fostering a “lust for murder,” an image of a sexually repressed perpetrator epitomized by the defendants in the 1963-1965 Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials. In this regard, discourses about sex and the past allowed the New Left to characterize itself not only as antifascist, but as ‘antipostfascist.’

The explosion of sexual cultures in the public spaces thus became an important part of the antiauthoritarian attitudes of the student movement, renewing and provoking debates about obscenity, youth behavior, nudity, and sexual repression. Given that the Left explained Nazism as a perverted product of sexual repression, it is no wonder that prolific writers, sexologists, and photographers focused their efforts on sexual liberation starting in childhood, especially as the public sphere became increasingly saturated with sexual images. This idea was especially evident in Gerhard Botts’ film about the *Kinderladen*, in which he endorsed their open approach to permitting children to run about naked and freely touch their own and each other’s bodies.⁶⁴ Adolescents, who were also participants in the student rebellion, also contributed to the liberalization of sexual mores during the sex wave, much to the horror of conservative groups, who were particularly concerned with the protection of youth from early ‘sexualization.’ By 1971, Herzog estimates that a third of adolescents had intercourse by 16 or 17. Summarizing

⁶³ Herzog, *Sex After Fascism*, 156.

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 166.

sexological research, an article in a 1971 edition of the left-leaning magazine *Der Spiegel* contended that "within four to six years, the sexual behavior of German youth has changed as never before in this century."⁶⁵ Herzog contends that adolescent students understood the political power of sexual liberty, often utilizing it in defiance of authority figures such as parents and schoolteachers.

Sexual imagery reveals the individualist and collectivist tensions that undergirded the politics of the student movement. Frequently appearing semi-naked, Rainer Langhans and Uschi Obermeier became the faces of the sexual freedom and openness of counterculture, appearing in left-leaning magazines like *Stern*. Although both were photographed naked, Brown argues that the "equality" of joint nudity was, in fact, asymmetrical, as the more frequent depictions of naked women emphasized their position as both sex objects and revolutionary heroines. This depiction seems to be a source of ambiguity about the ties between the sexual and the political. These depictions of women, according to Brown, did a triple duty: they appealed to viewers (Klaus Rainer Röhl, publisher of *Konkret*, commented that he employed nudity for sales, not to win people over to leftist ideas); it "telegraphed" an idea of sexual revolution that could coalesce with other sorts of revolution; and it presented an idea of a revolutionary heroine, both beautiful and militant.⁶⁶ Some leftists objected to such depictions of women, arguing that *Konkret* covers showing naked and sometimes bound women only rendered them objects of the male gaze. At the same time, such depictions could also be a means of attacking

⁶⁵ Ibid, 147.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 315.

bourgeois taboos. Sexual imagery could also be deployed in a general rebellion against authority, as “the relationship between the rebels and the state,” writes Brown, “was depicted as a sexualized relationship of violence.”⁶⁷ Additionally, as illustrated by the example of Röhl, leftists also raised concerns about the effects of “selling out to the capitalist image machine,” and whether it would delegitimize the general revolution and the authenticity of the counterculture.⁶⁸ This discussion of sexualized vision is revealing in a few respects. First, images generally were important sites of countercultural expression in challenging hegemonic controls of cultural production, also revealing ambiguities about the authenticity and role of the counterculture. These various layers of contestation and representation in sexualized imagery also reveal a debate about *how* cultural production might be mobilized politically; and, while sexual imagery was a potent ideological force, it was also a source of ideological ambiguity.

These struggles over sexual imagery and cultural production also reveal underlying tensions about individualism and collectivism within the student movement. Throughout Brown’s book, we see various conflicts related to personal and group identity, but these struggles come to the fore particularly in the women’s and gay-rights movements, which extended well into the 1970s. Women in the student movement felt that elitist male theoreticians dominated the movement, and there was not much room to find meaning and create their own subjectivities within stringent Marxist doctrine. As Brown, Heineman, and Herzog have also suggested, the sex wave was by no means

⁶⁷ Ibid, 318.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 224.

gender-neutral: many women activists became frustrated with the male leaders of the movement who equated sexual liberty with the sexual availability of the women in their ranks. Women of the student movement thus began forming discussion circles to address issues relevant to women, making the private political. But, the movement was marked by a central identity crisis: “was the women’s movement being advanced by socialists who were above all *women* or by women who were first and foremost *socialists*?”⁶⁹ Initially the women’s movement seems to have tried the latter, as evidenced in discussion circles dedicated to *Das Kapital*. When this Marxist framework did not work, women activists began focusing their efforts on legalizing abortion, which essentially established the women’s movement as a social movement in its own right outside the milieu of the SDS. The emergence of the women’s movement within the broader student rebellion can thus be tied to tensions about sexual politics, and reveals the ways multiple subjectivities clashed as tensions between individualism and collectivism persisted.

Conclusion

Confronted with the collapse of a 12-year Reich that waged a murderous racial war in the East, Germans were faced with the task of rebuilding society and with the formation of new individual subjectivities after fascism. This survey of recent works has shown that new cultural approaches to the historiography of West Germany have generated important insights into the ways these subjectivities were imagined, created, and frustrated. This project began with discourses about self-help and individualism, as

⁶⁹ Ibid, 297.

Zierenberg and Föllmer have illustrated in the urban context of Berlin, and with affect-laden exchanges about the recent past, as illustrated by Parkinson's study of emotion. As Betts and Heineman have shown, consumption during the *Wirtschaftswunder* not only represented material affluence for the average German, but also served as a site for the negotiation of visions of individual pleasure, cultural renewal, and dissociation from the past. Herzog and Heineman have also drawn attention to the way sex became a battleground for various imperatives of antifascism and antipostfascism for conservatives and liberals alike, and Brown has highlighted that sexual politics underlay many of the tensions of the 1968 student rebellion. Although dealing with various topics, bringing these scholars in conversation with each other reveals that West Germans possessed a faith in the ability to transform their world, and in the ability to implement their own vision of what the postwar self might look like. In surveying these works, I suggest that these visions were framed, more often than not, in terms of their distance from fascism rather than as a measure of democracy. In doing so, these voices proposed competing visions of what being West German could mean.

Reframing the conversation in this way opens up new avenues for research. In the chapter on the sexual revolution of the mid-60s, Herzog notes that the saturation of the visual landscape with sexually suggestive images significantly contributed to the liberalization of sexual mores. Beyond a brief discussion of film, Herzog does not fully engage with the causal link between visual consumption and changing attitudes about sex. Further investigation of the visual language of sexual politics could yield further insight into developing discourses about sex in West Germany that reached far beyond

the scholarly umbrella of 1968. What place did visual media, especially photography, occupy in West German cultural and sexual debates in the 1970s? Did the movements of the '68 generation create transnational spaces where such debates and representations coalesced?

Connected to two cultural worlds, American-born and West Germany-based photographer Will McBride is a compelling entry point into these questions, and the intended subject of my dissertation. At the age of twenty-two, McBride was stationed in Würzburg, Germany with the U.S. Army from 1953-1955. Enamored of the vibrant youth and jazz culture in Berlin, McBride decided to stay in Europe, after he left the army, photographing these profound changes in German society through its most turbulent and exciting moments. Publishing in youth magazines like *Twen* and *Konkret*, as well as leftist magazines like *Stern* and *Der Spiegel*, McBride took part in the explosion of sexually provocative images during the sex wave highlighted by Brown, Herzog, and Heineman.

As mentioned above, both conservative and liberal forces were particularly concerned with youth sexuality. Conservatives feared that youths began sexual activity too early, and that this would lead to the moral decay and secularization that they felt characterized the Third Reich. Liberals, on the other hand, saw sexual repression as the cause of Nazi aggression and violence, and thus considered the sexual development of young persons to be paramount to the development of individuals committed to the ideals of antifascism and social justice. Will McBride similarly framed his photographs of young men and women in such a way, linking sexual liberty with social change. This link

between sexuality and humanity is a recurring thread throughout McBride's published works. McBride's book *Coming of Age* aimed to capture "the child's joy and sense of self" which was "in tension with the strictures of the adult world and with his own evolving sensuality...although born into a world of conflicting messages and expectations, the young men coming of age in McBride's photographs are at ease in their bodies and free of spirit."⁷⁰ The 1975 book *Zeig Mal!* was intended to be a sex education manual for youth and parents that also included clear social critiques alongside its instructional purpose: McBride and Swiss psychiatrist Helga Fleischhauer-Hardt both point to the way societal repression of child sexuality "produces inhibition, fear, and aggression," only to be overcome by frank sex education that would, in turn, have a positive effect on social relations.⁷¹ In *I, Will McBride*, a sort of illustrated biography published in 1997, McBride reflects on the twentieth century as one ravaged by war and inhumanity. By focusing on young men, McBride sees a beauty and fragility that shouldn't have to go to war again, and thus visualizes a coming of age as a chance to *be human* through free-spirited adventure, the embrace of the naked body, and sexual liberty.⁷² What can the visual landscape of the sex wave tell us about historical understandings of pleasure in different moments in the history of West Germany? What was at stake in the proliferation of sexual knowledge and education? Investigating McBride's life, career, and relationships in archives such as the Will McBride Archive

⁷⁰ Will McBride, *Coming of Age*, (New York: Aperture, 1999).

⁷¹ Will McBride and Helga Fleischhauer-Hardt, *Show Me! A Picture Book of Sex for Children and Parents*, Hilary Davies trans., (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975).

⁷² McBride, Will. I, Will McBride. Köln: Könemann, 1997.

Berlin, the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, and the Institut für Stadtgeschichte Frankfurt could yield important insights into these questions, and further consider whether the visual dimensions of sexual liberty, youth, and the body could provide more nuanced insights into the way West Germans envisioned sexual liberty, conceptions of masculinity, and youth culture in the late twentieth century.

Bibliography

- Abelshauer, Werner. *Wirtschaftsgeschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1945-1980*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983.
- Betts, Paul. *The Authority of Everyday Objects: A Cultural History of West German Industrial Design*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.
- Brown, Timothy Scott. *West Germany and the Global Sixties: The Antiauthoritarian Revolt, 1962-1978*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Eley, Geoff, Jennifer L. Jenkins, and Tracie Matysik, eds. *German Modernities from Wilhelm to Weimar: A Contest of Futures*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2016.
- Föllmer, Moritz. *Individuality and Modernity in Berlin: Self and Society from Weimar to the Wall*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- von der Goltz, Anna. "Other '68ers in West Berlin: Christian Democratic Students and the Cold War City." *Central European History* vol. 50, no. 1 (2017): 86-112.
- Heineman, Elizabeth. *Before Porn was Legal: The Erotica Empire of Beate Uhse*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- Herzog, Dagmar. *Sex After Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Jarausch, Konrad. *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germans, 1945-1999*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Jay, Martin. "Once More an Inability to Mourn? Reflections on the Left Melancholy of our Time." *German Politics & Society* no. 27 (2002): 69. 69-76.
- McBride, Will and Helga Fleischhauer-Hardt. *Show Me! A Picture Book of Sex for Children and Parents*. Translated by Hilary Davies. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975.
- McBride, Will. *I, Will McBride*. Köln: Könemann, 1997.
- McBride, Will. *Coming of Age*. New York: Aperture, 1999.
- Parkinson, Anna. *An Emotional State: The Politics of Emotion in West German Culture*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2015.

- Schissler, Hannah, ed. *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany 1949-1968*. Princeton University Press, 2001.
- Swett, Pamela, Corey Ross, and Fabrice d'Almeida, eds. *Pleasure and Power in Nazi Germany*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Treber, Leonie. *Mythos Trümmerfrauen: Von der Trümmerbeseitigung in der Kriegs- und Nachkriegszeit und der Entstehung eines deutschen Erinnerungsortes*. Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2014.
- Verheyen, Nina. "Eifrige Diskutanten: Die Stilisierung des >freien< Meinungs-austauschs zu einer demokratischen Kulturtechnik in der westdeutschen Gesellschaft der fünfziger Jahre." In *Demokratie in Schatten der Gewalt: Geschichten des Privaten im deutschen Nachkrieg*, edited by Daniel Fulda, Dagmar Herzog, Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, and Till van Rahden, 99-121. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2010.
- Wildt, Michael. "Changes in Consumption as Social Practice in West Germany during the 1950s." In *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century*, edited by Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern, and Matthias Judd, 301-316. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Zierenberg, Malte. *Berlin's Black Market 1939-1950*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

VITA

Natalie Rose Cincotta was born in Sydney, Australia. She did her undergraduate work at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Illinois, where she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts with Honors in History and minor in German in May 2015. In September 2015, she entered the Graduate School at the University of Texas at Austin, where she studies intersections between visual culture and sexual politics in West Germany.

Address: ncincotta@utexas.edu