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REVIEW ARTICLE

WEIMAR TO COLD WAR: NEW BOOKS ON TWENTIETH-CENTURY GERMAN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

EMILY A. STEINHAUER

UDI GREENBERG, *The Weimar Century: German Émigrés and the Ideological Foundations of the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), ix + 276 pp. ISBN 978 0 691 15933 1 \$US 37.50. £30.00 (hardback); ISBN 978 0 691 17382 5. \$US 29.95. £24.00 (paperback)

NOAH BENEZRA STROTE, *Lions and Lambs: Conflict in Weimar and the Creation of Post-Nazi Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), xii + 357 pp. ISBN 978 0 300 21905 0. \$US 40.00. £30.00

HEINZ BUDE, *Adorno für Ruinenkinder: Eine Geschichte von 1968* (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2018), 128 pp. ISBN 978 3 446 25915 7. €17.00

ROBERT ZWARG, *Die Kritische Theorie in Amerika: Das Nachleben einer Tradition*, Schriften des Simon-Dubnow-Instituts, 27 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 464 pp. ISBN 978 3 525 37048 3. €49.99

STUART JEFFRIES, *Grand Hotel Abyss: The Lives of the Frankfurt School* (London: Verso, 2017), 448 pp. ISBN 978 1 784 78569 7. £18.99

The history of German political thought and ideologies is currently experiencing a moment of political urgency: comparisons, denials, and revisions are shaping public discourse and historians are increasingly under pressure to leave the confines of the academy and address a wider audience. Thus during the recent ‘Historikertag’, the Association of German Historians (VHD) published a resolution on current threats to democracy, arguing against populism and discrimination and in favour of democracy and pluralism.¹ At the same time,

¹ Verband der Historiker und Historikerinnen Deutschlands, ‘Resolution of the Association of German Historians on Current Threats to Democracy

in a more reflective mood, historians and the public are looking back on the course of the twentieth century as a number of anniversaries converge. As far-right parties and movements are on the rise across Europe, seemingly defying the ability as much as the willingness to learn from the recent past, Germany battles with old concerns: Bonn might not have been Weimar, but would the 'Berlin Republic' see a revival of the factionalism and extremism that eventually undermined the democratic institutions of the inter-war period? Similar developments in the Anglo-American sphere call into question the longstanding transatlantic alliance, escalating the breaking apart of a shared value system based on 'consensus liberalism' that had shaped a formative part of the twentieth century.

As historically rooted values and narratives are increasingly disputed, discussion surrounding the deconstruction and reconstruction of historical storylines is revived, leading to fierce battles over prerogative of interpretation. Some voices are now calling for a 'conservative revolution' to set an end to the perceived dominance of a morally patronizing, elitist minority of leftover 68ers.² The far right now openly calls into question the place of the Holocaust and the National Socialist regime in the narrative of German history and identity. The liberal camp tries to counter this rhetoric with a moral consensus deeply rooted in 'working through the past'.³ Yet it also cannot close its eyes to the demographic changes that make a homogenous, historically grounded moral identity increasingly difficult to achieve. The well-known but also worn-out storyline of twentieth-century Germany needs to be reassessed, as the straightforward narrative of a 'long path towards the West', in which an authoritarian Germany learns its lesson and proceeds steadily on a path towards democratization in the wake of the Second World War and Holocaust

(27/09/2018)', online at <<https://www.historikerverband.de/verband/stellungnahmen/resolution-on-current-threats-to-democracy.html#c1553>>, accessed 24 Nov. 2018.

² Most prominently, Alexander Dobrindt, 'Wir brauchen eine bürgerlich-konservative Mitte', *Die Welt*, 4 Jan. 2018, online at <<https://www.welt.de/debatte/kommentare/plus172133774/Warum-wir-nach-den-68ern-eine-buergerlich-konservative-Wende-brauchen.html>>, accessed 29 Jan. 2019.

³ This rhetoric is, of course, fundamentally shaped by Theodor W. Adorno's essay, 'Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit' (1959), in id., *Gesammelte Schriften*, 10/2 (Frankfurt, 2003), 555–72.

no longer encompasses the historical diversity modern observers are attuned to.⁴

Scholarship increasingly recognizes the narrative structures of historical writing for what they are: literary interpretations that serve a particular status quo, consensus, or viewpoint as much as they reveal about the actual past. All the books reviewed here contribute in one way or another to this deconstruction, whilst also developing new ways of thinking and writing in the twentieth century. Spanning almost the entire century, they challenge existing intellectual histories of a period or a set of thinkers and activists, taking readers from Weimar—Udi Greenberg’s *The Weimar Century* and Noah Benezra Strote’s *Lions and Lambs*—to the consequences of the 1968 student movement in the works of Robert Zwarg, Heinz Bude, and Stuart Jeffries.

Two central themes stand out: first, the role of generations and intellectual cross-generational fertilization, and second, the widening of the geographical scope to include transnational, and especially transatlantic, perspectives. The latter does not remain uncontested: whilst the ‘Westernization’ trope popularized by historians such as Anselm Doering-Manteuffel is discernible in much of the scholarship under scrutiny here, especially Strote’s work and the reflections of Heinz Bude call for a more careful acknowledgement of the inwards-turned intellectual world of twentieth-century Germany. Both these themes share, however, the overarching concern with the way ideas travel—across countries, time, and generations. Especially Greenberg’s, Bude’s, and Zwarg’s works therefore also open new avenues in emigration and remigration history. They manage to break with a more negative trope of homelessness and pessimistic paralysis that still dominates existing literature.⁵ Unlike these works, referencing even in their titles dismayed remigrants—‘*Ich staune, dass Sie in dieser*

⁴ Heinrich August Winkler, *Der lange Weg nach Westen*, 2 vols. (Munich, 2000). ‘Westernization’ as a field of historical scholarship was established by Anselm Doering-Manteuffel in the 1990s, see e.g. his *Wie westlich sind die Deutschen?* (Göttingen, 1999).

⁵ Monika Boll and Raphael Gross (eds.), ‘*Ich staune, dass Sie in dieser Luft atmen können*’: *Jüdische Intellektuelle in Deutschland nach 1945* (Frankfurt, 2013); Irmela von der Lühe, Axel Schildt, and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (eds.), ‘*Auch in Deutschland waren wir nicht wirklich zu Hause*’: *Jüdische Remigration nach 1945* (Göttingen, 2008).

Luft atmen können, 'Auch in Deutschland waren wir nicht wirklich zu Hause'—Greenberg's and Zwarg's books both confidently assert the influence German émigrés had on the constitution of twentieth-century thought.

Central to this is the problem of generations and their importance for German history in the twentieth century. Thus whilst Strote calls for a greater appreciation of the generation born between 1890 and 1910 as the founding fathers of German post-war democratic consensus, shifting emphasis away from what scholars such as Dirk Moses have called the '45ers' or 'Flakhelfer' generation, Bude in *Adorno für Ruinenkinder* closes in again on the generations of the '45ers' and the '68ers'.⁶ In Bude's narrative, the absence of this older generation shaped the political generation of those growing up in the ruins of Nazi Germany. Searching for new ideas and idols, they turned to figures who had never completely shaken off their 'outsider' status, in contrast to the heroes of Strote's and Greenberg's stories, who had helped build the consensus of the 1950s.

Yet in Theodor W. Adorno they again chose a figure from their father's generation—no family novel without a paterfamilias, after all. Stuart Jeffries, in his wide-ranging, eclectic account of the Frankfurt School, *Grand Hotel Abyss*, tries to capture the attraction this group of thinkers exerted over multiple generations—and establishes how the intellectual history of the twentieth century can still frame the political discussion of the twenty-first. This fascination with outsiders and the exiled and their apparent ability to provide a sense of identity and identification for younger generations was not limited to Germany but also an American phenomenon, as Zwarg shows. His *Die kritische Theorie in Amerika* shares some ground with Greenberg in emphasizing the transatlantic exchange, eventually enabling a global transmission of ideas initially conceived of in Weimar Germany. To what extent, Greenberg asks, is the 'American Century' also the 'Weimar Century', a century in which some of the most formative political and intellectual constellations from totalitarianism and militant democracy to conceptions of the individual, were forged in the heat of German inter-war ideological conflict?

The title of Greenberg's 2014 monograph neatly encapsulates his main argument: *The Weimar Century: German Émigrés and the Ideological*

⁶ Dirk Moses, *German Intellectuals and the Nazi Past* (Cambridge, 2007).

Foundations of the Cold War. By tracing five biographies, Greenberg challenges some of the preconceived narratives surrounding the intellectual context of German reconstruction as well as the Cold War generally. First, he argues, émigrés are often unrecognized vital players in post-war reconstruction. Yet through American financial and institutional support, they in fact shaped much of the ideological consensus that created a stable, democratic West German state. Not only did they (re-)introduce certain ideas into the intellectual sphere, they also helped to delegitimize others that could have threatened the construction of liberal democracy: thus the doctrine of anti-communism and the theory of totalitarianism were developed and fostered by German theorists in exile. Greenberg certainly has a point here; accounts of exile and remigration tend to focus on the difficulties faced by remigrants as well as the hostilities of the German population. The figures he points to—Carl J. Friedrich, Ernst Fraenkel, Waldemar Gurian, Karl Loewenstein, and Hans Morgenthau—all had a significant impact not just on the formation of German politics, but also on the way American policies were developed and applied globally: ‘Their ideas, policies, and institutional connections stood at the heart of the postwar Atlantic order.’⁷

Yet the character of Greenberg’s study—individual biographies tracing the development of thought and influence of five different thinkers from the Weimar Republic to America and into the Cold War—glosses over the difficulties faced by the majority of emigrants and remigrants. Returning to Germany was generally confined to those with contacts and sufficient financial backing, whilst the ‘common people’ usually faced too many bureaucratic obstacles and more or less veiled hostilities to make a return seem viable. Those who returned had usually been in influential positions before the rise of the Nazis and the outbreak of the Second World War, but frustration and rejection ran high among these as well. Thus Thomas Mann’s criticism of the ‘inner emigration’ and Alfred Döblin’s ultimate decision to throw in the towel as a member of the French post-war re-education effort already demonstrate the difficulty many exiles faced reconnecting to the German population.

Finding a footing in America had been equally difficult for many exiles, as Robert Zwarg’s brief analysis of the Frankfurt School in

⁷ Greenberg, *Weimar Century*, 3.

America demonstrates. His argument that many emigrants struggled to integrate themselves into American institutions, despite existing organizational structures, is similarly evinced in Thomas Wheatland's account of the American years of the Institute for Social Research.⁸ The impact émigrés could have was largely determined by their usefulness to the Allies. This was demonstrated by members of the Frankfurt School themselves, when in the course of the war their expert knowledge on Germany suddenly opened doors for them at the Office of Strategic Services (OSS).⁹ Greenberg's second major argument, that the intellectual roots of democratization were not merely a reaction to Nazism but derived from the tense atmosphere of the Weimar Republic, thus makes sense only insofar as a particular set of 'influencers' is considered. Whilst Greenberg's case studies are coherent, meticulously researched, and conclusively analysed, the wider argument they feed into must be viewed with caution, keeping in mind the countless ideas that were born in the context of the Weimar Republic but not rekindled in the post-war world.

Greenberg's third major point then turns the readers' gaze from Europe to America, highlighting not only how the rise of the USA to superpower status enabled the emigrants to spread their ideas more forcefully, but also how these ideas helped to forge the new American empire. Ernst Fraenkel's reach thus went as far as Korea, and Loewenstein's ideas influenced policies across Latin America. However, the book does not shy away from highlighting the darker sides of this influence. In his chapters on Gurian's early conception of 'totalitarianism' and Loewenstein's 'militant democracy', Greenberg forcefully demonstrates the sad irony in the emigrants' aggressive defence of democracy. By delegitimizing any critical or deviant voices, they sometimes mirrored the practices of the authoritarian regimes they were trying to combat. Greenberg's book is hence not an idealistic account of Westernization, nor an intellectual 'rags-to-riches' story. Instead, his analysis of transatlantic exchange carefully unearths the institutional, political, and governmental factors that framed twentieth-century soft power and cultural diplomacy.

⁸ Thomas Wheatland, *The Frankfurt School in Exile* (Minneapolis, 2009).

⁹ Raffaele Laudani (ed.), *Secret Reports on Nazi Germany: The Frankfurt School Contribution to the War Effort*. Franz Neumann, Herbert Marcuse, Otto Kirchheimer (Princeton, 2013); Tim Müller, *Krieger und Gelehrte: Herbert Marcuse und die Denksysteme im Kalten Krieg* (Hamburg, 2010).

Like Greenberg, Noah Strote in his *Lions and Lambs* traces the biographies of several intellectuals born around the turn of the century, emphasizing the importance of Weimar thought and its relationship to German post-war consensus. In Strote's analysis, it was the generation born between 1890 and 1910 that took on the role of 'founding fathers' of the new Federal Republic of Germany, overcoming internal fissures that had, twelve years previously, hindered them in constituting a united front against Nazism. It is, however, this focus on the national that differentiates Strote's work from Greenberg's account. Taken together, the two texts help to differentiate the history of post-war German reconstruction and international order, doing so at the expense of homogenous, linear explanations.

Strote's book is divided into two parts, 'Conflict' and 'Partnership', and therefore stresses the intellectual break occurring at some point after 1937 much more clearly than Greenberg, who emphasizes continuity across the watershed of the Second World War much more vigorously. Strote consciously sets out to challenge dominating narratives asserting the importance of economic development, stable institutions, and American influence. Instead, he focuses on the reconciliation of former conflict groups within the German debate as such. His argument here transcends the framework of the specific case of German post-war reconstruction and makes a wider point about the way societal success has been analysed and theorized. Both the modernization theory of the 1950s and 1960s and newer models of neo-institutionalism had focused on the relationship between prosperity and social peace on the one side, and liberal democratic institutions on the other.¹⁰

Strote points out another formative element: value consensus. In the course of the book, he tracks the emergence of this consensus in a region traditionally fraught with political, social, and religious strife, accentuating that this was an internal transformation.¹¹ Unlike in Greenberg's account, émigrés hardly play a role at all in this account. One of the reasons for the emphasis on internal developments, rather than influences coming through outside exchange, is Strote's attention to the part played by Christianity in these con-

¹⁰ Strote, *Lions and Lambs*, 4–5.

¹¹ Strote himself uses the term 'region', implying that this is a conflict reaching beyond the German empire of 1871.

flicts.¹² Although he includes figures from all sides of the political spectrum, except communists, who did not manage to integrate into the post-war consensus, the long-raging conflict between Protestants and Catholics is of prime importance. Strote traces the evolution of the 'culture war' between the two confessions, as well as the struggle between church and state for influence on education and culture policy, right up to the rise of the Nazis and the growing disenchantment of religious thinkers after Hitler's lack of true commitment to supporting church influence became evident. After the war, the commitment to reconciliation and partnership allowed a new, mutually inclusive society to emerge: 'What was decisive in the postwar period was not the importation of foreign ideals, but rather the reconciliation of German ideals that had long been regarded as mutually opposing.'¹³

Participation in this consensus was vital in order to influence politics at all, as Strote demonstrates in his last chapter, in which he discusses the role of Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer. Despite their left-leaning, critical attitudes they established themselves as part of this German partnership in order to participate in its politics. To include them in this consensus might seem strange at first. Debates about their role in the 'intellectual foundation of the Federal Republic of Germany' are not resolved, although in more recent years, the work of Monika Boll and Raphael Gross among others has made headway in ascertaining their re-establishment and role in the young West German state.¹⁴ Their case also serves well to highlight one of the major problems with Strote's otherwise excellent study. As with Greenberg, the focus on individual biographies allows Strote to give an extremely detailed overview of the evolution of actors and their ideas in the historical development of Germany. Yet at times

¹² For the current scholarly interest in Christianity and politics, see e.g. Samuel Moyn, *Christian Human Rights* (Philadelphia, 2015).

¹³ Strote, *Lions and Lambs*, 149.

¹⁴ Clemens Albrecht et. al, *Die intellektuelle Gründung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Eine Wirkungsgeschichte der Frankfurter Schule* (Frankfurt, 1999); Jens Hacke, *Philosophie der Bürgerlichkeit: Die liberal-konservative Begründung der Bundesrepublik* (Göttingen, 2006); Monika Boll, *Nachtprogramm: Intellektuelle Gründungsdebatten in der frühen Bundesrepublik* (Münster, 2004); Monika Boll and Raphael Gross (eds.), *Die Frankfurter Schule und Frankfurt: Eine Rückkehr nach Deutschland* (Göttingen, 2009).

this destabilizes his 'enemies into partners' thesis. It is, for example, not always clear whether these individuals chose 'partnership' out of a true desire for reconciliation under a (Judeo-)Christian banner, or whether they participated in the new consensus simply to play along in a new game for influence. Similarly, not everyone partaking in the new public, political, and academic sphere had renounced authoritarian or even Nazi ideologies—universities, political parties, and other public roles were still staffed by former members of the Nazi party, or those who had enabled, condoned, or fostered its rise. Strote himself admits that, when zooming out to look at the bigger picture, his conception of consensus might appear brittle, as marginal and minority figures excluded from partnership now come into focus.

Like Greenberg's book then, Strote's well-researched, detailed contribution adds another piece to the vast puzzle that constitutes the intellectual transition from the Weimar to the Federal Republic. Both are aware that the particular intellectual climate and consensus they envision did not last forever. The 1960s, with the rise of the student movement and alternative politics and lifestyles, put an end to these trajectories. Heinz Bude and Robert Zwarg follow these lines of development further, explicitly engaging with the way different generations related to their predecessors—not just across time, but also geographical, national, and cultural boundaries.

Heinz Bude's 'story of 1968', published in time for the fiftieth anniversary of that year, follows a similar structure to Greenberg's and Strote's studies: every chapter focuses on a different individual, bringing together distinct experiences to form a kaleidoscopic expression of the historical moment as a whole. Bude's book, however, is much more difficult to situate in terms of genre and objective. It follows up on his sociological research on *Das Altern einer Generation*, but is less restricted by the methodological and stylistic demands of the previous study.¹⁵ Instead, Bude himself describes the work as a 'remix' that questions the role of the '68ers' in the 'Familienroman' of the Federal Republic and their place in the succession of generations.¹⁶ It is as much of a socio-psychological reflection as a personal coming to

¹⁵ Heinz Bude, *Das Altern einer Generation: Die Jahrgänge 1938 bis 1945* (Frankfurt, 1995). The book analysed the life stories of Germans coming of age around 1968.

¹⁶ Bude, *Adorno für Ruinenkinder*, 9.

terms with a generation that fascinated, but also confused Bude. Unsurprisingly, one of his interview subjects, Peter Märtesheimer, called him a ‘mix of therapist and judge’.¹⁷

The book brings out, in impressionistic miniatures, the non-synchronicity of critical theory (and Marxism in general) that Zwarg also describes in his own portrait of 68ers across the Atlantic and their reception of German thought.¹⁸ Unlike their American counterparts, the protagonists of Bude’s story are not interested in orthodox Marxism and theorizing—let alone practising—the revolution. Instead, the German 68ers appear preoccupied with themselves and their own biographies, which seem interwoven with the larger fate of the nation. The modern eye visualizes 1968 through demonstrations, sit-ins, and lecture-halls filled with rebellious students, images of mass power and mass agitation. Yet Bude’s protagonists all emphasize the importance of autonomy and personal development; although 1968 did awaken a new sense of responsibility in them, this played out in the confines of the individual.

Hence Bude’s is a story of those who did not fit in, who were uneasy with strict organization and party lines, and whose own backgrounds alienated them sometimes from the rebelling, largely middle-class students. The absence of fathers, as well as childhood and adolescence spent in wartime Nazi Germany and its aftermath, emerge as an overarching theme. Seemingly, it is this lack of an identification figure that leads Bude to anoint Adorno as patron saint of the 68ers. This move is not always convincing; some of Bude’s subjects, such as Adelheid Guttman or Camilla Blisse, appear to have developed interests outside the mainstream of the student movement’s revival that for a time at least celebrated Adorno’s iconoclastic, critical power. Nonetheless, their inclusion is important and laudable because it sheds light on figures who have remained excluded for a long time thanks to the idealization of the ‘revolutionaries’ who shouted the loudest and simply drowned out their often female challengers.¹⁹ A defeated, resigned tone therefore dominates the book. ‘1968’ as a political moment never lived up to the expectations of its

¹⁷ Ibid. 24.

¹⁸ Zwarg, *Die Kritische Theorie in Amerika*, 224.

¹⁹ On the role of generations and other influences in ‘1968’, see esp. Christina von Hodenberg, *Das andere Achtundsechzig: Gesellschaftsgeschichte einer Revolte* (Munich, 2018).

participants, and its second coming in the shape of the 1999–2005 coalition government of SPD and Greens might have been, as Bude contemplates, a ‘perversion’ of older ideals.²⁰ Missed chances dominate these accounts. Whilst Bude’s book is not an academic study, and never attempts to be one, it can function as a discussion-piece bringing to the forefront those personalities, ideas, and projects that are not (yet) part of the collective memory of ‘1968’ but that nonetheless shaped Germany’s way towards this anniversary.

Robert Zwarg’s *Die kritische Theorie in Amerika* only reveals its true subjects in the subtitle: instead of contributing to the growing interest in the Frankfurt School’s first generation’s exile in America, Zwarg focuses on the *Nachleben einer Tradition*, the reception of critical theory in the USA by the students coming of age around ‘1968’.²¹ Diligently researched with great attention to detail, Zwarg’s study not only manages to capture the avenues of reception and dissemination of critical theory’s core texts. It also demonstrates how theories can develop a life of their own when they are confronted with new contexts, receptors, and influences. Zwarg’s book is therefore also partly a history of the evolution of the American Left and its encounter with Marxism on the one hand, and German culture on the other. The towering figure in this narrative is, as in Bude’s book, Adorno.

However, whilst some of the protagonists of Bude’s narrative still had first-hand encounters with the philosopher, either in lecture halls or at the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, Zwarg’s main protagonists rely on a few translations and contact with émigrés who had stayed in the USA. The practice of reading for reception as an in-depth exegetic endeavour, rather than independent philosophizing and writing, takes centre stage. In this, Bude’s ‘Achtundsechziger’ resemble Zwarg’s ‘Sixty-Eighters’. Whilst in Germany publishing houses and their distinctive publications, such as Suhrkamp’s cheap and colourful paperbacks and Peter Gente’s Merve-Verlag, began to shape the image of the intellectual moment, theoretical journals provided

²⁰ Bude, *Adorno für Ruinenkinder*, 115.

²¹ Besides Wheatland’s 2009 work referenced above, see also David Jene-
mann, *Adorno in America* (Minneapolis, 2007) and, most prominently, the
works of Detlev Claussen, e.g. ‘Intellectual Transfer: Theodor W. Adorno’s
American Experience’, *New German Critique*, 97 (2006), 5–14.

the much-needed space for thought and discussion in the USA.²² Yet, as Zwarg is quick to point out, because the reception of critical theory is predominantly a hermeneutic exercise, and because this process of interpretation is highly charged with political expectation, conflict easily emerges over who holds sovereignty of interpretation. This leads, for example, to the rejection of Martin Jay's *The Dialectical Imagination*, the first history of the Institute for Social Research.²³ In the eyes of its critics, Jay's study was too historical and too unpolitical in its assertion that the moment of critical theory had passed.

Jay, however, is only a minor figure in Zwarg's analysis that focuses on the two major theoretical journals emerging in the wake of the student movement: *Telos* and *New German Critique*. Both of these were embroiled in an attempt to make sense of the ultimate failure of the student movement and the problem of reconciling theory and praxis. They were closely linked to academic centres, Buffalo and Madison, and therefore also to the academic influences there. Zwarg points here especially to the impact of German émigrés who had remained in their US exile. Cultural and intellectual historians such as George L. Mosse or Peter Gay were not direct representatives of critical theory, but their work allowed students to immerse themselves more fully in the Weimar context of critical theory's initial inception. This contact with a generation of émigrés conscious of their outsider status influenced the students to such an extent, Zwarg argues, that a 'Jewish habitus' developed among them, transferring the experience of exile into a narrative of self-description in which the young generation suddenly saw themselves as 'displaced persons' like their teachers.²⁴

At the same time, Zwarg concedes, many of the members of the close-knit editing and contributing circles around these two journals had roots outside the USA: Seyla Benhabib came from Turkey to study in America, Andrew Arato fled Hungary after 1956 with his parents, Paul Piccone hailed from Italy, and many other members were part of a Jewish diaspora that remained socially excluded—

²² On the reading and publishing culture of the time see Philipp Felsch, *Der lange Sommer der Theorie: Geschichte einer Revolte 1960–1990* (Munich, 2015).

²³ Martin Jay, *Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute for Social Research, 1923–1950* (Berkeley, 1973).

²⁴ For one of the most famous conceptualizations of the role of the outsider in culture see Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (London, 1968).

Paul Breines, Jack Zipes, and Russell Jacoby among them. Although a certain distance to American culture and politics is therefore unsurprising, Zwarg digs deeper than this superficial ‘otherness’ of critical theory’s new American generation to showcase also how a non-synchronicity and incommensurability of German and American contexts made a complete adaption impossible. Whilst Bude’s subjects were becoming increasingly resigned to the fact that their dreams of changing the world had been naive, Zwarg’s students are still leading the fight, albeit in a mainly intellectual milieu, to redefine the new left. As Zwarg notes repeatedly, this also has to do with the absence of Marxism from America in the previous decades, which had led the Left on a completely different course compared to Europe. America was also, however, always more positive about its own culture than the persistent pessimism of German intellectuals allowed – the terms of critical theory on either side of the Atlantic therefore could never completely align. And, finally, the emergence of French theory in the two decades after 1968 fed new impulses into an increasingly embattled intellectual debate.

Zwarg traces the breaking apart of the first moment of reception, seeing the dividing lines between different camps drawn up in the confrontation of Habermas and French theory as well as in different interpretations of ‘praxis’. He ends, eventually, with *Telos’* turn towards Carl Schmitt under its long-time editor Piccone, which alienated many of his original collaborators. Zwarg’s book is thus not only a reception history of critical theory in America but, by necessity of its subject matter, attempts to achieve something more ambitious: it traces the evolution of thought conceived in response to specific contexts and experiences, which are, in turn, received by individuals with their own specific influences.

Sometimes, the work appears to falter under the pressure of this task, and long passages on French theory seem to lead the reader astray from the initial theme, whilst passages on exchanges and travels as well as translations could have been more elaborate. All in all, however, Zwarg achieves his bold goal. *Die Kritische Theorie in Amerika* is not only a formidable study of critical theory’s multiple traversing of the Atlantic, but also delivers a more general model or method for studying the transfer of ideas.

Out of all these works, Stuart Jeffries’s *Grand Hotel Abyss* is in many ways the most ambitious, attempting to cover a substantial

part of twentieth-century German intellectual history. His collective biography of *The Lives of the Frankfurt School* follows a number of prominent intellectuals more or less closely associated with the so-called Frankfurt School or the Institute for Social Research. Jeffries's declared aim is to offer a re-reading of this group of thinkers that frees it of older interpretations and makes their critical apparatus accessible to the understanding of current society. Jeffries's book is most successful when it attempts to do exactly that, that is, to use the mechanism of critical thinking propagated by the Frankfurt School to understand our modern world. Whenever he veers from this political and journalistic tone, problems begin to appear. Despite his claims to offer a new reading of the Frankfurt School, he remains stuck in many of the old orthodoxies that have persisted since the 1970s. Quoting Georg Lukács's dictum that the Frankfurt School had withdrawn into a 'Grand Hotel Abyss' in which the elitist critical theorists were pessimistically and apathetically watching the decline of Western civilization, and referring to them on multiple occasions as 'armchair philosophers', means Jeffries resurrects dismissive tropes that much scholarship has successfully left behind.²⁵ His aim to offer a new reading is also undermined by the fact that he draws mostly on older scholarship and does not undertake any considerable primary research. Whilst this approach can partly be explained by the audience Jeffries is writing for—an interested but not academic public—it does prevent him from offering anything new to readers. The latter point is particularly disappointing because new material is constantly becoming available as the Theodor W. Adorno Archive is digitizing Adorno's vast correspondences, lecture drafts, and notes.

Whilst the book therefore does not break any new ground in the field, it can serve as a solid introduction to non-academic readers, although caution is necessary here as well, as the book contains some factual errors and superficialities. To highlight one example, Jeffries does not differentiate between the Frankfurt School and the Institute for Social Research, although the former term is much contested in research and, regarding its 'members', ideas, and objectives, not congruent with the Institute, which has its own distinct history. Without

²⁵ Criticisms of the Frankfurt School's apolitical attitude can be found in e.g. Tom Bottomore, *The Frankfurt School and its Critics* (London, 2002); Göran Therborn, 'The Frankfurt School', in *New Left Review* (ed.), *Western Marxism* (London, 1977), 83–139. See n. 14 above for works following a new direction.

an understanding of this difference it is impossible to grasp the consequences and developments of the political role of critical theorists as public intellectuals, academics, and institute directors in West Germany and across the Atlantic — a task Strote masters far more skillfully in his (much shorter) account. Jeffries's work thus lends itself well to the current political climate. Although published before Donald Trump's election and the Brexit referendum, it does capture the economic and political anxieties of the twenty-first century that increasingly have to confront the question of whether history repeats itself after all. He provides ample food for thought for a new generation willing to adapt critical theory's original texts to their own circumstances, even if it cannot replace older histories and accounts of the Frankfurt School, the Institute, and their associates.

All the books discussed here prove that the intellectual history of twentieth-century Germany has not yet been conclusively written. As the role of émigrés and permanent exiles gains more traction in research, and groups whose place in Germany's 'Bildungsroman' has previously been eyed with suspicion, the field as such opens up to new dimensions. As the above studies have shown, these are often grounded in a vast expansion of the geographical scope of what German history and thought can entail: the transatlantic connection, but also the global spread of ideas emanating initially from Germany are increasingly prominent in new historical research.

Greenberg's and Strote's books stand out with their groundbreaking research, highlighting how much of the history of exile and especially remigration remains to be written. Like Jeffries's book, their emphasis on a creative, positive German intellectual development in the twentieth century will also be significant for the evolution of German intellectual history, signalling a more substantial entanglement with transatlantic history. The role the Frankfurt School has played in many of these accounts demonstrates how, fifty years after Adorno's death, the historicization of critical theory is still very much debated. Yet as philosophy turns from praxis into history, historians need to set to work; Bude and Zwarg have, each in their own way, embarked upon this task, pushing the frontiers of historical research closer towards the contemporary once more.

WEIMAR TO COLD WAR

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