

tion that binds them together with their positive force. It's a little emblematic of how inessential the words can be, how much they lack of positive conceptual force, when we see how easily they can under certain circumstances vanish. The Muirs don't find "frei" a distinctive enough reference to render as "free" in their translation of that chapter of *Der Proceß*. They choose "at ease" for their version (Willa and Edwin Muir translation, page 168 of the 1968 edition).

Oschmann builds on the point that what we confront here is the condition of the petit-bourgeois individual under developed capitalism in his relationship to his work. Josef K. goes to his office at the bank to deal with the documents that locate other people's money and determine the work that goes on in the world beyond. The land surveyor K. goes to the village to measure out other people's land. He has to leave his home ground because in that profession, you don't measure your own ground, or have a professional relation to it, any more than a bank official has a professional relationship to his own money. Such people are "free" in an extremely peculiar way, quite hard to penetrate. Critical minds among Kafka's contemporaries, certainly going back to Georg Simmel, were the first generation to have made it their professional business to penetrate that exterior standpoint from which one might fail to know one's own being. Kafka's artistic achievement was not to document how his characters thought about freedom, but how they had lost the ability to do so and how they had lost the last whisper of tragic awareness when ground out of existence by this inability. Simmel appears in several of Oschmann's footnotes, as in fact do other figures who could have lent a better framework to this enterprise if they had been intimately woven into the discussion.

There has been a lot of interest in recent years in exploring the line of division between the being of animals and the being of human individuals in Kafka's work. He explores the issue of freedom and estrangement most vividly and painfully in "Bericht für eine Akademie" with the case of Rotpeter, an ape who has acquired human speech, and therefore a human conception of freedom applied to the existence of an animal. Clearly, if we say an animal is free we have yet to open the meaning of the word for ourselves. Restricting this study to the three novels, *Der Verschollene*, *Der Proceß*, and *Das Schloß* as a sequential development in the three primary chapters does close out this theme, except for a general setting of the scene in the early pages and an all-too-brief addition entitled "Die Freiheit der Tiere?" (223–30) that brings it back at the end. In that apparent afterthought one can surmise a missed opportunity. Perhaps a second volume might make it up.

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Black Magic Woman: Gender and the Occult in Weimar Germany.

By Barbara Hales. Oxford/Bern/Berlin/Bruxelles/New York/Wien: Peter Lang, 2021. xii + 206 pages. \$62.80 paperback, \$61.85 e-book.

In *Black Magic Woman*, female engagement with various occult practices during the Weimar Republic functions as a lens through which to explore the socio-political and cultural anxieties caused by the emancipated *Neue Frau*. By positing "women's involvement in occult practices as an expression of Weimar's New Woman," Hales

provides unique insights into how the interwar *Neue Frau* qua “occult woman” navigated, if not embodied, the contested terrain of gender relations during the Weimar Republic (3). She contends that the crisis of modernity influenced the rise of the occult while the postwar crisis of male subjectivity impacted the perception of the *Neue Frau* as a threat to masculinity and the patriarchal order.

Female participation in the occult was a double-edged sword. The association of New Women with the occult liberated them from the strictures imposed by patriarchal society but simultaneously marked them as dangerous figures who were treated with suspicion and hostility because of their defiance of traditional gender roles. The occult woman operated between opposing roles and gendered expectations, which marked her as “an interstitial being” (18). As sisters in their interstitial Otherness, occult women and *Neue Frauen* were regarded as threats to already-compromised interwar masculinity.

Hales’s thorough examination of the occult woman during the interwar period provides a unique contribution to scholarly discourse on the *Neue Frau*. The author foregrounds women’s embrace of the occult as a means to investigate the fraught position occupied by liberated women during a period of uncertainty. She draws upon the theoretical approaches of Maria Tatar, Anton Kaes, Elisabeth Bronfen, and Barbara Creed in her discussion of the perception of “sexually predatory women,” postwar fears about modern women, the supposed connection between women and “the realm of the dead,” and women’s “relationship with death” respectively (19–20).

Hales deftly synthesizes a variety of well-known and obscure sources including fiction, criminology texts, popular-press accounts, photography, film, and dance. Examples from the visual arts, while mentioned, are not her primary focus. Her investigation of historical sources that address both fictional portrayals of women engaged in occult practices and factual accounts presents a nuanced cultural history of Weimar’s New Woman.

The introduction discusses the occult movement in Germany and its relationship to modernity (1880–1930). For some women, participation in the occult provided a sense of agency that the prevailing patriarchal culture denied them. The supposedly “masculinized” or androgynous *Neue Frau* was caught in a realm of incompatible desires and expectations and, thus, occupied a liminal position that paralleled the interstitial state of the “occult woman” (19). The *Neue Frau*’s ambiguous position “in-between” conflicting desires and pressures and the fears aroused by her independence and sexuality found expression in the occult woman whose “overt sexuality” designated her as *femme fatale* or embodiment of the “monstrous feminine” (20).

Hales divides her analysis into four thematic chapters that engage representations of female ghosts, female vampires and monsters, witches and ‘gypsies,’ and trace-dancers and mediums respectively. [Ed. note: we have introduced quotation marks to indicate that the term refers to a racist fantasy, rather than the lived realities or histories of the Romani people.] The first chapter references spirit photography, occult and parapsychology texts, fiction, visual art, and film to address the German fascination with the paranormal, especially communicating with spirits, which was commonplace after the massive loss of life during World War I. Just as the female ghost “inhabits a realm between the living and the dead,” the *Neue Frau* occupied an ambiguous position between emancipation from and entrapment in the patriarchal

system of her day (21). The uncertainty of the New Woman's situation was mirrored by the ambivalent status of the female specter as both a benign and malicious entity.

In Chapter Two Hales contends that female vampires and the "monster-woman" were "cultural metaphors for the newly liberated, sexualized Weimar woman" (57). These *femmes fatales* used their dangerous sexuality for self-gratification and left trails of male victims who were powerless to resist their otherworldly charms. For Hales, the female bloodsucker found a real-world counterpart in the sexually motivated female criminal. Women as tantalizing yet abhorrent vampiric sexual predators, as demonized in film and fiction, are investigated as metaphors for the *Neue Frau* as "Other" who was vilified for her violation of traditional gender norms. The brazen sexuality of the interwar *Neue Frau* further undermined Weimar male subjectivity, which was seriously compromised by the Great War.

The third chapter is devoted to literature, expressive dance, and films featuring the figures of the witch and the 'gypsy.' Hales acknowledges the problematic nature of the latter term, but notes its historical implications to justify its usage. Witches were perceived as being sexually and socially transgressive. The seductive 'gypsy' woman, who was often associated with magic and brazen sexuality, was regarded as a similarly wayward entity. These infernal temptresses functioned as surrogates for modern, emancipated women whose sexual liberation caused much trepidation in the interwar period.

Hales's focus turns to the trance-dancer and medium in Chapter Four. For Hales, these women acted as "emblems of the New Woman's marginalization" (145). The trance dancer who enthralled men with her sensual movements is posited as a proxy for the liberated *Neue Frau* who beguiled and alarmed Weimar society with her independent spirit and liberated sexual mores. Likewise, the female medium, who purportedly communed with the dead via séances, was regarded with suspicion for the uncontrollable or potentially fraudulent nature of her powers.

The hypnotic, erotic powers of these supernatural women were regarded with distrust just as New Women were perceived as "posing a serious threat to the masculine order" due to their outsider or interstitial status (174).

Hales concludes with a brief analysis of the status of *Neue Frauen* and occult women after the onset of National Socialism. She remarks that "the Nazi regime was hostile to occult practice in general, and the occult woman in particular" (180). However, as Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke and others have demonstrated, the Nazis were not hostile to all manifestations of the occult. The Nazis forbade certain occult practices that may have disproportionately impacted women, but they utilized a strange synthesis of occult symbols, ideas, and rituals that were manipulated to support their worldview and propaganda. Hales suggests that "the New Woman—and by extension the occult woman—was ultimately a casualty of Hitler's Third Reich" and remarks that, under the National Socialists, female participation in the public sphere was limited (182). Yet, as Claudia Koonz, among others, has noted, women were actively involved, both publicly and behind the scenes, during the Nazi years. Leni Riefenstahl figures in Hales's discussion of witches in Weimar cinema, but her transition from Weimar dancer and actress to successful filmmaker during the Nazi regime is not mentioned. Although Riefenstahl's directorial work on films such as *Olympia* (1936) was a far cry from the expressionist dancing witchy woman she played in *Das Blaue*

Licht (1932), her ability to adapt to the National Socialist regime suggests that some women were able to leverage their talents to their advantage despite Nazi chauvinism. The complexities of this situation suggest an avenue for further research that accounts for the varied experiences of these “interstitial” women and the manner in which some were able to find a degree of success under Nazi rule while others met with oppression and death.

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Thomas Mann’s War: Literature, Politics, and the World Republic of Letters.
By Tobias Boes. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021. 354 pages + 24 b/w images. \$34.95 hardcover, \$21.95 paperback, open access e-book.

Tobias Boes’s *Thomas Mann’s War* is the first monograph to trace the formation and shifts of Mann’s role as a representative of the German and European cultural traditions in a global context. Drawing on a wealth of material, Boes reveals that Mann’s public image was shaped by the interplay of the writer’s self-stylizations, national and world politics, and far-reaching changes in the German, U.S., and global media landscapes and literary communities. The book focuses on Mann’s time in the United States, to which he and his family emigrated in 1938. Finding himself separated from his home country and original audience, Mann redefined the tenets of national culture and gave up his earlier non-political stance. Boes highlights pivotal moments of Mann’s political and cultural engagement while shedding light on the key figures that the writer encountered. He offers a novel view of Mann that pinpoints both the extent to which the writer was driven by a strong sense of his responsibility as a public intellectual in exile and his ambition to be considered the pre-eminent modern writer. At the same time, Mann’s development serves as a lens through which Boes offers a novel view of the intersections of politics, culture, and literature during a period of authoritarianism, nationalism, and ideological wars.

Thomas Mann’s War is organized chronologically and is divided into seven chapters, an introduction and conclusion, as well as five so-called interludes, which offer brief discussions of literary works. It begins during the Weimar Republic, when Mann worked tirelessly to establish himself as an emblematic German figure in the tradition of Goethe, Schiller, and Wagner and stylized himself as a bourgeois writer firmly anchored in German culture and society. As such he appeared well-positioned to examine contemporary issues without taking sides or entering political debates—a role he reflected upon in *Reflections of a Non-Political Man*. A Europe-wide series of lectures ensured that Mann’s reputation as a modernist German author was consolidated beyond the nation’s borders: he became an important actor in the European republic of letters, many members of which viewed literature and art as cultural antidotes to the permeation of politics into all aspects of life and the growing belligerence among nation states. When the Nazis increasingly blurred the boundary between culture and politics, Mann regarded his (self-)image as the representative of an autonomous cultural sphere as under threat. He had to reconceive his identity as a German writer, particularly after leaving the country in 1933.