Challenging the Modern: Conservative Revolution in German Music 1918–1933 by Nicholas Attfield (review)

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a writer notorious precisely for resistance to unequivocal grasp. Although Thiher certainly acknowledges the elusive character of his subject's writing, along with the innumerable attempts and myriad ways devised to make sense of it, he is less forthcoming on the question of how that bears on his own immediate task, which is to offer Kafka up for general consumption. Such a disclosure would then enable the reader to more clearly see that, far from being a straightforward task to be taken for granted, literary "understanding" (of Kafka, especially) means making hermeneutical assumptions and interpretive decisions, selected from a range of options and ultimately chosen based on criteria of justice to the text, on the one hand, and which lens opens up the greatest unplumbed depths of meaning, on the other. The surest way to quell the tacit suggestion that the task of understanding Kafka has ceased is to try continually, indefinitely.

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Challenging the Modern: Conservative Revolution in German Music 1918–1933. By Nicholas Attfield. Oxford: The British Academy for Oxford University Press, 2017. Pp. 222. Cloth $105.00. ISBN 978-0197266137.

Nicholas Attfield's book is a welcome addition to an ongoing discussion about the problems and limitations of the concept of "Weimar culture," the well-worn refrain of which suggests that the liberal policies of the republic created an open society allowing cultural activity to enjoy a brief heyday. For at least fifty years, "Weimar Culture" has continued to be identified with modernism, the avant-garde, cosmopolitanism, experimentation, and all other progressive movements that would allegedly meet their abrupt end in 1933, as the Nazis terrorized Weimar's artistic community and transported German culture back to the nineteenth century. An outgrowth of this narrative was to imagine the existence of two distinct camps of "progressives" and "conservatives," who opposed each other in both their aesthetic and political loyalties. It would not be long before the cracks in this simplified construction would show, especially when it came to neatly lining up politics with aesthetics. In the case of music, the most glaring paradoxes came to light when Adorno and others tried to uphold the liberal and populist sensibilities of a pathbreaking composer such as Arnold Schoenberg, even after his embarrassing expressions of nationalist impulses were discovered. Such discoveries continued to reveal the futility of trying to assign progressive political leanings to musical iconoclasts, while trying to ferret out the avant-garde musical sympathies of left-leaning activists.

The messiness of Weimar culture has been evident for some time now, yet Attfield's work is timely nonetheless because it further problematizes the shortcomings of the standard narrative in a discipline that has been particularly resistant to entertaining

alternative interpretations. As suggested by the title, Attfield aims to demonstrate the existence of a "conservative revolution" in music, citing the work of Jeffrey Herf, Louis Dupeux, Roger Griffin, and others, but also noting how music has been left out of most discussions. Following an introductory chapter that lays out the historiography and stresses the need to question accepted wisdoms about progressives and conservatives, Attfield dedicates the remainder of his study to cases in which close analysis reveals the intermingling of what many regard as "conservatism" and "progress." His investigation of the complex and changing relationship between Thomas Mann and composer Hans Pfitzner highlights not only the problems with documenting Mann's political conversion, but also explains the seemingly paradoxical alignment of conservatism with revolution. Attfield then extends his reach into music journalism by focusing on the venerable *Zeitschrift für Musik*, founded in 1834 by Robert Schumann to give a voice to those defying the musical establishment, but transformed into a vehicle for the crusade to preserve German values under the stewardship of editor Alfred Heuss. With no desire to check his xenophobia and antisemitism, Heuss lashed out at the Jews Franz Schreker, Paul Bekker, Adolf Aber, and any others he saw as coming under "foreign" influence; but he also launched attacks at Pfitzner, demonstrating further how there was no readily identifiable united front of conservatives. The next case study reveals how Ernst Kurth, a Jew whose advocacy for Bruckner's mystic Catholicism and core Germanness has been conveniently overlooked, was very much at the center of the conservative revolution, even going so far as to reject any suggestions that he was a champion of musical modernism. Turning to the musical arm of the youth movement (the *Jugendmusikbewegung*), Attfield brings to light another entity supposedly fraught with contradictions because of its embrace of fiercely conservative motives alongside socialist goals, particularly in the figure of August Halm. The epilogue to the book further reveals that most accounts have overlooked how many of these projects begun in the 1920s continued without interruption beyond 1933.

Adopting the notion of "conservative revolution" as a central trope does not always serve Attfield's purpose: he does not consistently draw attention to the persistence of any of the revolutionary impulses he had laid out in the early parts of the study. Given that Attfield's case studies focus largely on individuals who have been erroneously labeled as conservative or progressive, a far more prominent agenda throughout the book seems to be the successful dismantling of the museum of heroes and villains that has been so well established in cultural histories, and in musicology in particular. Attfield vividly outlines the construction of such a museum in his first few pages, when he takes issue with a 1992 article by Michael Kater that builds on Peter Gay's 1968 book *Weimar Culture*, not only distinguishing between progressives and conservatives, but also assigning them to distinct generations ("fathers" and "sons"). Attfield's critique may be overly harsh, as Kater revisited and corrected his earlier assumptions a few years later in his book *The Twisted Muse* (1996). I would take further issue

with his less aggressive but similarly dismissive treatment of Bryan Gilliam's 1994 edited collection, *Music and Performance during the Weimar Republic*, which in fact paid unprecedented attention to the conservative elements of Weimar musical life. Gilliam's work in general has been pathbreaking, if too often ignored, by showing how musicology's focus on Schoenberg's challenges to traditional harmony (what he once labeled the "Schoenbergian paradigm") have caused us to overlook the equally iconoclastic challenges to musical and theatrical norms that are not restricted to harmony, particularly in the operas of Richard Strauss. This, alongside my frustration with the publisher's decision to forgo a bibliography, would be my only quibbles with this otherwise important contribution to deepening our understanding of the complexities of "Weimar Culture." Rather than trying to make sense of what has stumped many as "contradictions," Attfield has brought to light the heterogeneity of the artistic community, the fluidity of the period's politics and aesthetic, and the many subtleties and nuances of an important turning point in German cultural history.

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Die Lust zu gehen. Weibliche Flanerie in Literatur und Film. Edited by Georgiana Banita, Judith Ellenbürger, and Jörn Glas. Paderborn: Fink, 2017. Pp. 223. Paper €36.90. ISBN 978-3770561919.

Building on thirty years of Anglo-American scholarship on the Flaneuse, the female strolling poet of urban spaces, the ten essays collected by Georgiana Banita, Judith Ellenbürger, and Jörn Glas in *Die Lust zu gehen. Weibliche Flanerie in Literatur und Film* offer insights from a West German scholarly perspective. The contributors in literature and media studies seek to reinforce female Flanerie within gender studies as a theoretical apparatus in its own right, against the seemingly perpetual need for legitimization against the (male) Flaneur of Charles Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin, and Franz Hessel. The frequent mention of these authors' names in the essays is evidence enough of how difficult that task can be. In their brief introduction, the editors place special emphasis on the intermedial and comparative perspectives of film and literature, citing classic examples such as Irmgard Keun's *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* (1932) and Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin—Die Symphonie der Großstadt* (1927), both explored in later essays, in comparison to newer examples of Flanerie in films that feature Audrey Hepburn and directed by Agnès Vardas, Joel Schumacher, and Béla Tarr. A welcome shift in the study of the Flaneuse as racial/ethnic other appears in essays that explore authors with east-west migration experience.

The essays cover mainly German-language fiction and films that span from the 1930s to roughly 2010, with some exceptions. In the first chapter, Maren Lickhardt offers a comparison of female Flaneurs in texts by Irmgard Keun and Klaus Mann.