

ideals of camaraderie extend to gender? Participants' style of dress was a clear rejection of modern fashions, yet for all their glorification of rural ways, these educated young women and men were quite modern in self-fashioning lifestyles and identities using consumer goods.

This work raises fascinating questions about how culture and commerce intersected among a segment of Weimar-era youth. It should be read by anyone interested in the German youth movement.

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## **Moderate Modernity: The Newspaper *Tempo* and the Transformation of Weimar Democracy**

**By Jochen Hung. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2023. Pp. 266. Hardcover \$75.00. ISBN: 978-0-472-13332-1.**

Jennifer Lynn

Montana State University Billings

Jochen Hung's engaging monograph is an important addition to the scholarship on modernity, media, democracy, and the late Weimar Republic. Using a microhistorical approach, the author captures how the newspaper *Tempo* articulated a vision of "moderate modernity" through the broad themes of democracy, citizenship, and consumerism. In doing so, the newspaper constructed an identity of a "modern, young German citizen, who expressed their citizenship through participation in a burgeoning consumer society" (222).

While the concept of multiple modernities is not unique to Hung's work, his analysis of a liberal alternative modernity underscores the contestation and flexibility of the concept of modernity itself. Historicizing modernity provides a more nuanced and complex understanding of the late Weimar years rather than a simple characterization of crisis or failure. *Tempo*, published by Ullstein, is particularly suited to the interrogation of modernity, as its publication dates of 1928-1933 encompass a vibrant and fraught period. Hung argues that the positioning of *Tempo* was one of "moderate modernity, that contained the promise of modest material and social progress without the need for drastic political measures" (17).

Hung offers a thorough and engaging introduction, situating the book within existing scholarship and positioning *Tempo* in conversation with the media landscape of the late Weimar Republic. This work presents an important historiographical intervention on the role of the liberal press in Weimar and assumptions that the press was powerless, too focused on entertainment, or that it undermined democracy through its attention to crisis and difference. Through his analysis of *Tempo*, he challenges the validity of the question of the "failure of Weimar's liberal press," and points to the "plurality" and "fluidity of Weimar's public discourse" (11).

The first chapter focuses on *Tempo* in 1928 and 1929 and its vision of consumerism, the celebration of technology, the belief in a "rational body politic" (82), and emphasis on a modern masculinity and femininity. Emphasizing an optimistic vision of an American style of consumerism and a "democracy of goods," *Tempo's* features on the automobile, leisure time on the "weekend," nightlife in Berlin, radio, and photo contests from holiday trips stressed the possibility of consumerism for its readers (47). Modern technology was not to be feared, but embraced as a way to make a "peaceful, democratic consumer society a reality"

(61). Hung's attention to cultural criticism, various responses to technology, *Sachlichkeit* and the concept of "tempo," is rich in detail. The final and most extensive part of chapter 1 examines *Tempo's* focus on young white-collar workers (as the "modern" and "objective" generation), who were interested in consumerism and popular culture. Hung's analysis of masculinity – in all of its unease and contradictions – makes clear the attempt on behalf of *Tempo* to create a modern man who looks toward the future. The reality, as the author demonstrates, is much more complicated, as radicalization of young men, generational conflict, and the inability to fully actualize the consumer dream reflected larger social conflicts. *Tempo's* vision of modern femininity also reflected a type of femininity embraced by a white-collar worker or rationalized housewife and mother but rejected any radical subversion of modernity or the existing gender order.

Chapter 2 captures the twin challenges of the Great Depression and the Nazis' upswing in the general election, alongside an internal (but very public) family conflict at Ullstein in 1930 and 1931, which resulted in a shift in how *Tempo* envisioned democracy. In particular, as Hung carefully demonstrates, the newspaper veered away from its support of *Parteiismus* and "focused on the directly elected President Hindenburg as the real representative of the will of the people" (127). When contemporaries blamed women, white-collar workers, and younger voters for the increase in Nazi votes, *Tempo* followed suit and second-guessed the ability of an "overtly rational style of politics" to form the future of Germany (134). Despite all evidence to the contrary, *Tempo* also insisted on stressing an optimistic vision of Germany's economic state and the role consumer citizens should play in meeting the crisis. Furthermore, the image of a young, forward-thinking modern man was replaced by images of men as "adolescent radicals, dangerous louts, and a threat to Weimar democracy" (161). Discussions of femininity concentrated more and more on conflicts (paid labor, motherhood, independence), in which *Tempo* promulgated more conservative views.

The final chapter begins with a careful analysis of how *Tempo* reacted to political upheaval (and internal changes in 1932 and 1933), resulting in a change in messaging. No longer was the newspaper so optimistic about the rational voter or the future of the Republic. In 1932, *Tempo's* shift in tone became more evident: addressing consumerism as a "duty," linking the speed of technology to "destructive politics" (202), and rejecting the ideals of the "new woman." The newspaper's reputation for democracy and its bold pronouncements of modern gender roles had no place in the Nazi regime. In early August 1933, *Tempo* ceased publication.

The author's attention to the politics and representation of gender and their intersection with the political order and consumption is an important example of how the gender order and ideas of "modernity" during Weimar were inseparable and highly politicized. Including scholarship from historians of gender on the rationalized modern housewife or the links between the discourse of modernity and the sex reform movement could have expanded this analysis a bit further. Despite these small critiques, the author provides a compelling argument that gender, consumerism, and democracy were intertwined.

While acknowledging that some aspects of *Tempo's* vision and the "alternative modernity" of the Nazis shared similarities (in areas like consumerism), their "motivation and end goals couldn't have been more different" (226) and *Tempo* did "not clear the path for the Third Reich" (227). Jochen Hung's conclusion places *Tempo* and the concept of "moderate modernity" within the larger context of the interwar years in Britain, France, Japan, and the United States and the global, transnational debates surrounding consumerism, the gender order, and democracy. *Moderate Modernity* is a valuable contribution to recent scholarship.

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