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Hesse, Huxley And How To Make Sense Of Modernity:

How Were Socio-cultural Anxieties and Experiences of Modernity Expressed in British and German Interwar Literature?

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Abstract

In the historiographies of both interwar Britain and Germany, historians have identified a collective and profound sense of cultural crisis and social anxiety. Such anxieties were a direct result of modernizing change, accelerated by the events of World War One and coalesced in both countries around the same aspects of society; the changed role of women, the health and security of the population, the atrophy of national culture and the implications of the proliferation of technology and science into daily life are but some of the discourses which characterized the period in both Germany and Britain. This thesis examines how such anxieties were expressed in popular literature at the time and uses Volker Schmidt's 'varieties of modernity' theoretical framework to explore the comparative differences that arise when the tone and texture of such literature is analysed. The argument is made that by exploring a country's literature that engages with and reacts to modernizing change, a more comprehensive and nuanced picture is built of how modernity was experienced in each country and, in this particular comparative instance, can offer suggestions as to how it was that it went so catastrophically wrong in Germany in the 1930s.

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Introduction

The interwar years in Europe were a turbulent kaleidoscope of rapid, modernizing change, characterised by the reactionary processes of adjusting to and negotiating them. The First World War gave rise to brutal and deadly acts of humankind, the likes of which the world had never before imagined possible. Even after the Armistice the war continued to define and shape European societies as well as those worldwide for many years. Consequently, the two decades following the war saw accelerated changes to the socio-cultural fabric of countries, such as Britain and Germany, that were experienced as exciting and full of opportunity, but simultaneously as destructive, unstoppable and confusing.

Whilst the historiography of Britain and Germany in the interwar period attests to the many ways in which the war wrought tremendous change in both countries, there exists within it an evenly developed consensus that each country had been plunged into darkness and was, for better or worse, emerging into a new, modern era.[1] It is argued by many historians - such as Bernhard Rieger, Richard Overy and Detlev Peukert - that in British and German societies there was an increased sense of rupture from the past and the perceived sensation of being hurtled into an unrecognisably modern time. Peukert argued that the pre-eminence of social and cultural modernization during the height of the republic has made the Weimar years historically synonymous with the term 'modernity'.[2] Martin Pugh makes a similar argument for Britain, contending that the interwar period was fraught with tension between cultural anxiety and progressive change - characteristics that Marshall Berman asserts are fundamental to periods of high modernity.[3]

This research will explore canonical German and British novels written during this period that engage with themes of modernity, in order to examine how modernizing change was experienced and constructed in popular culture. By identifying on a broad level how national literary modernism in each country engaged with its modernity, and then providing a close reading from a British and German novel, the tone and texture of each's modernism will be explored in order to contribute to the understanding of how modernity developed in each nation. Doing so will support the central argument of this thesis, which is that British modernism appears to cling to eighteen-and nineteenth-century notions of man possessing the ability to control and change the trajectory of civilization in response to modernizing change, whereas German modernism displays resignation and defeat in the face of the perceived backslide of its culture and society as a result of similar changes. This research utilizes Volker Schmidt's 'variations of modernity' theory, which shall be subject to analysis and explanation in the following, and in application will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how

[1]Bernhard Rieger, *Technology and the Culture of Modernity in Britain and Germany, 1890-1945*. New Studies in European History (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 2.

[2]Detlev Peukert, and Mazal Holocaust Collection. *The Weimar Republic : The Crisis of Classical Modernity*. 1st American ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992),164.

[3]Martin Pugh. *We Danced All Night : A Social History of Britain between the Wars* (London: Vintage, 2009), 4. Marshall Berman. *All That Is Solid Melts into Air : The Experience of Modernity*. (London: Verso, 2010), 24.

modernity developed in each country in a way that was remarkably similar but still markedly different. Novels provide a rich site of analysis for how modernity was experienced or perceived, as modernity was and is not an event; it is an experience, an attitude and a product of change.[4] Novels have been used historically as a site for expression and experimentation, and a way of making sense of reality as well as interrogating it. Literary historian Karl Leydecker argued the fictional novel lends itself well to the exploration of turbulent periods of political and social change by functioning as a medium for understanding societal transformation.[5] Jon Thompson and Stephen Greenblatt have both argued that novels should be understood in the context of the dominant ideology of the time, place and society in which it is written - even if they are questioning or rejecting it.[6] As such, novels written in periods of particularly charged, modernizing change, such as the 1920s and 1930s, can offer insight into how modernity was experienced. Additionally, a novel's status as part of the canon of national history attests to its popularity, implying its resonance with a broad audience at the time of publication. This makes it a legitimate source of experiences of modernity if engaged critically.

Modernity is a notoriously slippery cultural and social theory. It is both difficult to define as attempts to define it often infer value judgements, and difficult to resist due to its historically hegemonic tendencies. If, as Dipesh Chakrabarty argues, it is difficult to escape the Western model of modernity when analysing socio-cultural transformation across countries, continents and civilizations all over the world, perhaps looking at creative expressions of modern life might foster understanding of different experiences of modernization.[7] This approach would support Schmidt's suggestion that modernity is best understood in 'variations'. Schmidt's theorization sits between the traditional modernization theory and S. Eisenstadt's 'multiple modernities' theory, in so much as he argues that whilst we should not underestimate the differences between civilizations and how they have developed as the modernization theorists do, it is also important that we do not place too much value on their differences either - as he claims is typical of 'multiple modernities' theory. He argues that due to the global pervasion of capitalism, it is likely that some countries have developed very similarly, and places emphasis on difference within national contexts but that which sit within 'a common mode of societal organization, that of modern capitalism.'[8] Once we accept this, Schmidt argues, we can 'take differences seriously' without over emphasizing them and obscuring important similarities, thus excavating the more intricate patterns of modernity as it developed and unfolded in Europe.[9] Application of Schmidt's approach to this research would demonstrate how Britain and Germany developed in a surprisingly similar way, as is exemplified by the historiography. In order to identify intricacies and nuances, popular culture and literary expression can therefore act as an advantageous site of analysis.

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[4]Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow, trans. Catherine Porter (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 32–50.
[5]Karl Leydecker. *German Novelists of the Weimar Republic : Intersections of Literature and Politics*. Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2006), 12.
[6]Jon Thompson. *Fiction, Crime, and Empire : Clues to Modernity and Postmodernism*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 6.
[7]Dipesh Chakrabarty. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference-New Edition*. (Princeton University Press, 2009), 2.
[8]Volker H. Schmidt . "Multiple Modernities or Varieties of Modernity?" *Current Sociology* 54, no. 1 (2006): 82
[9]Schmidt, Volker H. . "Multiple Modernities or Varieties of Modernity?" *Current Sociology* 54, no. 1 (2006): 88

methodology

An interwar novel that famously engages with themes of modernity, the meaning of modern life, and the trajectory of man as consequence is Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (*BNW*). Published in 1932, it offers an ambiguous glimpse into a future wherein human beings are man-made and culturally conditioned for the 'good of society'[10], recreational drug use and frivolous polygamy are both promoted over meaningful relationships and experiences, and society is divided into a concrete class system which dictates everything from taste and career to mental capacity and temperament. The novel has been extensively critiqued and dissected, both because its ambiguity leaves room for interpretation and because Huxley's story projected visions of a future that have remained eerily relevant. As a novel of the modernist persuasion, Laura Frost argues that it works to explore unnatural ways of living in order to know and understand emotion that is not simply summoned up mindless pleasure.[11] Indeed, a key function of modernist literature is to breakdown normative, dominant societal habits, ideology and values. In this sense, the novel could be interpreted as an attempt to work through and problematize dominant ideas and explore alternative ways of living in the modern world.

Published in 1927 and engaging with the 'bittersweet melancholy' common to much modernist literature in the interwar period in Europe is Hermann Hesse's enduringly famous *Steppenwolf.*[12] Where Huxley subverted modernity and examined the results, Hesse conducted a detailed exploration of modern life in Germany and offered by way of solutions for enduring the pain and confusion modernity wrought. The narrative tells the story of protagonist Harry Haller, aka 'The Steppenwolf', who wallows in the liminal space between despising modern life and being unable to live without it. The novel wields 'mesmeric power' that, as Frank Breslin identifies, has enjoyed popularity worldwide because of its themes of alienation, authenticity, and contempt for institutions of power.[13] Whilst *BNW* is a novel exploring solutions to the confusion of modernity as experienced in Britain, *Steppenwolf* is a novel about enduring life in a world that may not make sense but that cannot be changed.

In order to substantiate and historically ground literary interpretation and critique, this research will be supplemented by discourse analysis, using journalistic and popular press to connect and contextualise themes, motifs and narrative in the novels with the time in which they were written. Newspaper articles began to fully function in the interwar period as a fundamental dimension of modern life that straddled both the emergence and establishment of a public sphere and the widespread use of mass communication. So integral was it to how modern life was experienced in the 20s and 30s that David Trotter argues the period in-between the two world wars was the 'first media age', because the period was characterised by new widespread

[10]Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World* (New York: Rosetta Books, 2002), 1.
[11]Laura Frost. "Pleasures of Dystopia." In *Brave New World: Contexts and Legacies,* ed. by Jonathan Greenberg and Nathan Waddell (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 136.
[12]Theodore Ziolkowski. *The Novels of Hermann Hesse: A Study in Theme and Structure* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1965), 4.
[13]Frank Breslin, "Hermann Hesse's Steppenwolf: Accepting The Shadow." Last Modified January 19, 2018, https://epochemagazine.org/herman-hesse-steppenwolf-shadow-7de5b741c69f

awareness of the existence of mass media.[14] The ability to communicate with mass audiences and disseminate information in this way was an integral contributing factor towards the feeling of living in a modern age and as such its discourses should reflect mediations of modernity.

theory

The last decades of the twentieth century were marked by increased debates about modernity; when it began, if it has ended, to whom it applies, and how it manifested in social, cultural, economic and political institutions. Modernity here is conceptualised as the experience of life as influenced by modernizing processes that take shape in different institutions and social arenas. What contributes to being modern and how it is experienced varies on different national, regional, local and individual levels and is what makes defining it without marginalization or homogeneity difficult. However, following Schmidt's 'varieties of modernities' (VM) theory helps guide analysis that doesn't overemphasize difference so as to be able to identify nuances.

It is advantageous to differentiate two veins that sit within modernity. The first such vein is modernization, which can be understood as the historical and ongoing processes and developments through which people have come to understand themselves as modern. These processes, argues Berman, have stimulated 'an amazing variety of visions and ideas' that have consequently made people both the 'objects' and 'subjects' of modernizing change.[15] In this sense it can be understood that modernization is simultaneously the external processes of modernizing change, and the development of modern consciousness. The nature of modernization and its genesis was written about and examined extensively by eighteenth-and-nineteenth-century intellectuals such as Immanuel Kant and Max Weber, whose influential works have formed the foundation of our understanding of the process and continues to stimulate how contemporary scholars understand modernity. The second vein is modernism. Whilst modernism is as complex as the concept of modernity itself, it can be liberally understood as the reactions to and expressions of the experience of modernization. Berman defines modernism as the 'visions and values' caused by modernization, an example of such being Walter Benjamin's experiences of marvelling at the the parades and streets of Paris.[16] Both selected novels can be understood as modernist texts through their engagement with and expressions of experiencing modernizing change during the interwar period.

Berman wrote that experiencing life alongside the processes of modernizing change was to 'experience modernity'.[17] He contended that experiencing modernity was to simultaneously experience happiness, adventure and transformation and at the same time the contradictory forces that could destroy everything mankind knows and is.[18] His analysis of modernity aimed to identify what made nineteenth-and-twentieth-century modernism so vibrant to understand why it

[14]David Trotter. *Literature in the First Media Age: Britain between the Wars* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013), 2.
[15]Berman, *All That Is Solid*, 16.
[16]Berman, *All That Is Solid*, 16.
[17]Berman, *All That Is Solid*, 15. This work is indebted to and inspired by that of Berman and his exploration of modernity and modernism in *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*.
[18]Berman, *All That Is Solid*, 15.

had, in his opinion, atrophied towards the end of the twentieth century.[19] In the same way, I will examine interwar literary modernism for similar energetic engagement with modernity; the inherent tensions and anxieties that characterised the period stimulated the desire to negotiate and explore the state of life through literature as many writers of the interwar period did. In examining this commentary, connections will be drawn from the novel's wider context and to broader discussions about the state of modern life.

In *All That Is Solid,* Berman begins his examination with Goethe's *Faust*. Through close reading, Berman exemplifies how Goethe grappled with how he perceived the modernization of mankind. Faust, in the novel, sells that which made him most human - his soul - in the name of progress and property with tragic consequences. Berman also identifies how writers such as Kant, as far back as 1784, confronted the experience of modernization, or the acknowledgement of its perceived effects on the world around them. Kant places firm emphasis on his belief in mankind holding the key to his own enlightenment, should they have the self-understanding and courage.[20] Nietzsche, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, negotiates with the emergence of a new kind of man, a modern 'übermensch', which implies grasping at the sensation of something on the horizon, of moving forward into modern times. Georg Simmel, in 1903, diagnosed the modern mentality in relation to the urban environment and his diagnosis concludes that all there is to do with modernity is to understand it: it is unstoppable and uncontrollable. In the same way, writers in the interwar period can be understood as confronting their experiences of modernity through literary expression. Analysing the tone and criticisms of such texts can contribute to an understanding of national modernist expression, which in turn has the potential for a greater understanding how modernity was experienced in both Britain and Germany.

justification

I will conduct my research by way of a comparative, transnational analysis, exploring British and German expressions of modernity through literature and popular discourses. The inextricable link between these two countries makes them an intriguing comparative pairing and their historical antagonisms make for interesting context when identifying similarities and differences. What has inspired the choice of these countries is the fascinating similarity that reveals itself in analysis of the historiography; that in the interwar period both countries' socio-cultural spheres were characterized by a dominant 'culture of crisis' and belief in the decline of their respective societies.[21] This is reflected in the historiography in both articles and essays as well as sustained analysis on this phenomenon. It is also exemplified by the titles of works such as Kniesche and Brockmann's *Dancing On The Volcano* in allusion to Peter Gay's famous observation that Weimar culture was "...a dance on the edge of a volcano." and Martin Pugh's

[19]Berman, *All That Is Solid*, 17.

[20]Immanuel Kant and H.B Nisbett. *An Answer to the Question ``What Is Enlightenment"?* Repr ed. (Great Ideas. London: Penguin, 2009)

[21]Anton Kaes, Edward Dimendberg and Martin Jay. *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*. Weimar and Now, 3. (Berkeley Etc.: University of California Press, 1994), 355.

We Danced All Night in reference to the hedonism that many perceived the British interwar years to be plagued by.[22] There is an extensive body of historiographic work comparing and contrasting the two countries in the same period, and by comparing and analysing expressions of national literary modernism in the interwar years as a means to better understand interwar modernity it is my hope that this research will contribute to it.

Literary scholar Jon Thompson argues that studies of historical fiction enable us to see how cultural practices such as the writing of fictional literature can interact and communicate with the dominant ideology of the time in which they were written.[23] Thus, through the analysis and interpretation of historical literary works that engage with wider dominant discourses, fears, obsessions and cultural phenomena, we reach a better understanding of how the processes of modernizing change were understood and experienced by individuals and societies. This research will utilize Schmidt's VM theory by examining national literary modernism, on a broader level, and providing a close reading of *Brave New World* and *The Steppenwolf* in order to examine how modernity developed and was experienced in each national context in ways that are strikingly similar, and yet also distinctly different. Chapter one will provide an overview of the different fields into which this research wades, covering the historiographic fields of both Britain and Germany in the interwar period, as well as interwar literary modernism. It will also sketch out the theoretical modernity framework that will be applied to the research. Chapter two and three will each be dedicated to *Brave New World* and *The Steppenwolf* respectively, providing a close reading of excerpts from each novel supplemented with discourse analysis. Chapter four will then synthesize my analysis of each novel in order to demonstrate the underlying argument of this research. Modernism, understood as a reaction towards modernizing change and an expression of that experience, can thus help us understand how modernity developed with similarities in different European countries, but was experienced with profound difference. The difference between Britain and Germany is that it would appear Britain maintains a belief in man's ability to change and control the perceived trajectory of British society, whereas Germany adopted an attitude of acceptance, disillusionment and pervasive was the sense that German civilization had disintegrated as a result of modernizing change. The implication of this is that the tone of German modernism offers explanation as to why there was greater reception to more radical ideology at the start of the 1930s which ultimately ended in tragedy and the outbreak of the Second World War.

[22]Peter Gay. *Weimar Culture: The Outsider As Insider*. (London Etc.: Penguin, 1992), xiii.
[23]Thompson, *Fiction, Crime, and Empire,* 6.

Chapter 1

Examining the intersection of modernity and literature in the interwar period wades into several different academic conversations. Extensive work has been done in the different fields that overlap in this thesis, thereby it is beneficial to take an overview of the literature and theory. An account of the historiography of Britain and Germany during the interwar years not only contextualizes this research, but also locates the social and cultural changes during the period in each country that gave rise to discourses voicing anxiety and ambivalence. The historiography demonstrates that both countries experienced a 'culture of crisis' during the interwar period and this similarity makes bringing them into the same analytical framework an advantageous site of analysis for the way modernity was experienced in Europe. Such cultural anxieties as identified by various historians, including Richard Overy, Thomas Kniesche and Stephen Brockmann, Kathleen Canning, Martin Pugh and Bernhard Rieger to name a few, are expressed in the respective cultural output from both countries in the years between the war and this research argues that each country's modernism reflects the way socio-cultural anxieties characterized how British and German people experienced modernity.

Modernity is an advantageous theoretical framework for the analysis of such 'cultures of crisis' because the sense of civilizational foreboding and social anxiety that was rife in both countries were a result of modernizing change that was accelerated by the First World War. A brief overview of modernity literature from the nineteenth-century through to works of contemporary theorists will not only demonstrate the transformative nature of the way we have historically understood modern life but will also provide analysis and explanation of the central, contemporary theory this research utilizes. Additionally, an outline of the relationship between modernity and literary modernism will highlight the ways in which modernism can offer advantageous historical insight into how modernity was perceived and constructed. The intersection of these four immense bodies of work and research - British historiography, German historiography, Modernity theory and literary modernism theory - is where I shall place my own analysis through the close reading of *The Steppenwolf* and *BNW.* This analysis will forward the argument that socio-cultural anxieties in Britain expressed through modernist literature were characterized by a desire to alter the perceived trajectory of British civilization, whereas those expressed in German literature suggest a passive, observational acceptance of the disintegration of the German population and national culture.

british historiography

Interwar Britain experienced a period of turbulent change that was perceived as the result of emerging into a new, modern era, ruptured from tradition. The socio-cultural landscape of the country was dramatically altered in a myriad of ways that whilst, as Overy notes, actually took root at the turn of the twentieth century, had gained momentum in the years after the war

because it provided a catalyst for socio-cultural transformation to take hold. Overy's work, along with that of other historians including Pugh, Rieger and Stephen Constantine, provide the historical foundation of this research as each identifies the ways in which the interwar period was characterised by a 'culture of crisis'.[24]

That the period was plagued by socio-cultural anxiety is not surprising; Europe had emerged from a war that had produced harrowing experiences of death, acts of brutality and the mobilization of machines capable of obliterating people, landscapes and cities. Overy, in *The Morbid Age*, traces the consequent construction and function of socio-cultural anxiety in Britain.[25] He argues that whilst many of the anxious discourses had little grounding in reality - due to the fact that Britain itself was less damaged (physically, economically and culturally) by the war than continental Europe - their widespread diffusion during the 1920s and 1930s attests to the notion that the generation who had experienced the war required a new language to express the 'unique nature of their suffering'.[26] Similarly, Pugh suggests that whilst discourses on the nature of modern life in the period often eluded reality, they functioned as a way through which people publicly debated different dimensions of society after the war. The contribution to this historiography by Stephen Constantine instigates further questioning of the socio-cultural anxieties that wracked the country during the period. He reignites arguments made by revisionist historians in the 1970s that the study of interwar Britain should not exaggerate the effects of the economic depression and resulting 'slump' when examining the socio-cultural atmosphere.[27] He outlines the various ways in which, contrary to the discourses analysed by Overy and Pugh which suggest civilizational and moral decay, the country experienced growth in employment rates and the development of a higher standard of living through welfare and housing.[28]

The manifestation of a particular strain of social concern in Britain came in the form of discourses on the quality and future of its population, and how best to control it. It is understandable that in the aftermath of losing approximately eight-hundred-thousand of its population during the war that the preservation of the population became of urgent significance to Britain.[29] In the war Britain had lost the 'cream of the crop', as argues Pugh, by which he means the young men who would have gone on to run the country.[30] Thrown into sharp relief by the 'surplus women' everyday more visible in the public sphere driving buses, walking in throngs to factories and actively demanding enfranchisement, the make-up of Britain's population, and therefore its health and future was in question.[31] At the turn of the century the British Eugenics Society was already well established, but the movement gained momentum within the interwar period; indeed, argues Magnus McLaren, nowhere else in interwar Europe was there such

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[24]Kaes, Dimendberg and Jay. *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, 355.

[25]Inspiration for this thesis is indebted to Richard Overy and his seminal work *The Morbid Age*.
[26]R. J. Overy. *The Morbid Age: Britain between the Wars*. (London: Allen Lane, 2009), 48.
[27]Stephen Constantine. *Social Conditions in Britain, 1918-1939*. Lancaster Pamphlets. (London: Methuen, 1983), 1.
[28]Constantine, *Social Conditions in Britain,* 5.
[29]"Commonwealth War Graves Commission Annual Report 2014–2015." Commonwealth War Graves Commission Annual Report. Accessed August 1, 2019. 38.
https://issuu.com/wargravescommission/docs/ar_2014-2015?e=4065448/31764375

[30]Pugh,*We Danced All Night,* 4.
[31]Pugh,*We Danced All Night,* 3.

reverent discourse on eugenics than in Britain. Figures such as Margaret Sanger and Julian Huxley were two of the most outspoken and notable supporters of the movement of the period, promoting eugenic ideology following that the population would become out of control and degenerate without regulation and policy. The movement's popularity and authority attests to the idea that in the face of modernity, the British public clung tightly to the notion that they were still able to control the trajectory of British civilization.

Modernity became visually 'objectified' in the interwar years by technological developments, and their proliferation into everyday life gave rise to concerns about its implications for society.[32] Technology embodied modernity not only in its relationship to science and progress, but also through the duality which many perceived it represented. Rieger identifies this duality in British discourses as a result of technology having the ability to both create and destroy, and argues that it was confronted in Britain with excitement but also deep ambivalence, accentuated by a general ignorance of how technology worked.[33] Constantine emphasises the positive reception in Britain of increased use of technology in everyday life, and argues that it created employment opportunities and a new generation of 'experts' within various technological fields.[34] Rieger focuses less on technology's implications for employment and economic development, and grounds his work in the societal reception to its diffusion in Britain; arguing that one reason for the commonly held notion that the interwar period was a truly 'modern era' was as a result of technology visibly changing the landscape of the country.

The cinema and film brought also on an entirely new set of socio-cultural concerns, which reached their apex with the advent of the 'talkies' in 1929. As with other forms of mass culture and communication technology including the radio and the gramophone, the cinema represented for many a symbol of modernity and contributed to socio-cultural anxiety.[35] The degradation of Britain was perceived not only in its body and population, but also through the supposed decay of culture that many argued the cinema represented. Bound up with concerns over ambiguous morals of the younger generation and the increase in leisure time supposedly fueling such ambiguity, the negative discourses surrounding the cinema and society ran the gamut of concerns over health and mental wellbeing, from its links to crime and disorder, to fears of the corrosion of real, high culture. Interwar historian David Fowler notes how the lifestyles of young people at the time flourished, in tandem with the increased employment opportunities, and entered a reciprocal relationship with consumerism and popular culture, both influencing it and thriving from it.[36] Their obsession with cinema going, highlighted also by Pugh, Rieger and Overy, raised questions about 'brainwashing' and 'Americanization' predicated on the notion that mass audiences would be confused by the blurring of the lines between fact and fiction.[37]

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[32]Rieger, *Technology and the Culture of Modernity in Britain and Germany,* 11.
[33]Rieger, *Technology and the Culture of Modernity in Britain and Germany,* 3.
[34]Constantine, *Social Conditions in Britain,* 3.

[35]Mark Glancy. "Temporary American citizens? British audiences, Hollywood films and the threat of Americanization in the 1920s." *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 26, no. 4 (2006): 465.
[36]David Fowler. *The First Teenagers: The Lifestyle of Young Wage-Earners in Interwar Britain*. Woburn Education Series. (London Etc.: Woburn Press, 1995), 1.
[37]Fowler, *The First Teenagers*, 119. Rieger, *Technology and the Culture of Modernity in Britain and Germany,* 18. Pugh, *We Danced All Night*, 2.

An in-depth analysis of the literature of Britain's interwar period would highlight the ways in which implicit in many of these discourses were debates about the transformation of gender roles which were thrown into sharp relief in after the war, and that can only be sketched out here. Such discourses focused on the changing role of women in British society as a result of being brought into the public sphere and city centres to fill the need for workers during the war, which had afforded them greater personal freedoms due to both economic independence and relative liberation from traditional family commitments. McLaren goes as far as to argue that sex, gender and reproduction were key sites of negotiating for British modernity in this period, assigning gender and sexuality a defining role in the stimulation for the general sense of anxiety the period is characterised by.[38] This is supported by Overy who suggests that women were blamed for a myriad of modern social phenomena perceived as destructive.[39] 'Sexually promiscuous' women were identified as the cause of the problem of population deterioration, he argues, and Pugh supports this with a somewhat opposing argument that women, having secured certain freedoms and jobs across different industries, were perceived to have been 'de-sexed' and 'masculinized' and hence no longer 'fit' for reproductive purposes.[40] Both arguments demonstrate the ways in which different social phenomena during the interwar period converged on discourses surrounding gender, sexuality and the role of women in interwar society.

german historiography

Peukert stated that the Weimar Republic has become synonymous in German history with the word 'modernity' due to the heightened way in which German people experienced modernizing change during the interwar period.[41] Consequently, he argued, the Weimar experienced a 'crisis' of modernity. Other historians, such as Anthony McElligott and Ruth Henig, have supported this argument and contend that the modernizing changes that happened all over Europe during the period were experienced more acutely in Germany.[42] The consequence of the rapid nature of these changes, combined with what Peukert identifies as conflict within society as it tried to develop new socio-cultural values and rules in the face of change, was a general sense of doom and foreboding; "The train of development is racing at a speed...The whole of humanity has booked a round-trip ticket" decried journalist Ludwig Bauer.[43] [44]

Within the historiography of the Weimar Republic, it is possible to discern a similar pattern as that of the British historiography, in that the age has been identified as one of great

[38]Angus McLaren. *Reproduction by design: sex, robots, trees, and test-tube babies in interwar Britain*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 2.
[39]Overy, *The Morbid Age*,112.
[40]Overy, *The Morbid Age*,112. Pugh,*We Danced All Night*, 3.
[41]Detlev Peukert, and Mazal Holocaust Collection. *The Weimar Republic : The Crisis of Classical Modernity*. 1st American ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992),164.
[42]Anthony McElligott. *Weimar Germany*. Repr ed. The Short Oxford History of Germany. (Oxford Etc.: Oxford University Press, 2010), 7. Ruth B. Henig, *The Weimar Republic, 1919-1933*. Lancaster Pamphlets. (London: Routledge, 2002), 1.
[43]Peukert, *The Weimar Republic,* 8.
[44]Ludwig Bauer, "The Middle Ages". In *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook.* Weimar and Now, 3, ed. by Anton Kaes, Edward Dimendberg and Martin Jay (Berkeley Etc.: University of California Press, 1994.), 384.

socio-cultural turmoil and anxiety. This is what makes a comparison between the two countries interesting, especially in light of the debate on if the Republic was doomed from the outset. Peukert, although emphasizing the importance of not letting hindsight obscure our analysis of an era, contended that during the Weimar a collective sense of 'Volkstod' loomed at large.[45] Leydecker argues that this was a result of the defeat in the war alone, which led to disillusionment with politics and institutions, fueling a perceived lack of control and chaos.[46] Stephen Brockmann, through exploring sexuality in Weimar Germany, suggests that the 'sexual cynicism' that has often been identified as pervasive during the period can actually be widened to a general attitude of cynicism; taken to mean that society was enlightened enough to understand the desperation of their situation, but were not brave enough to fight and change it.[47] And of course, Peter Gay's vivid and enduring description of the Weimar Republic as a 'dance on the edge of a volcano' powerfully invokes such an atmosphere of crisis and nihilism.[48] What is emphasized in Germany's interwar historiography that distinguishes it is the notion of these anxieties as manifesting in a mindset or mentality, which supports the idea that cultural expressions of experiences of modernity during the Weimar interwar period took on a particular tone of despondency. Although the republic bore little responsibility for creating this particular mentality or the culture of anxiety, Gay argues, it did foster an environment in which it could take root and flourish.[49] Weimar, he contends, was consequently characterized with an exuberance that was at once due to its disenchantment and anxiety as it was to its creativity, and this atmosphere was inscribed into every aspect of its culture.[50]

Interwar Germany also experienced technological ambivalence which stimulated discourses on its implications for German society and found expression in much of Weimar culture.[51] New technology and devices of mass communication, as well as industrial scale innovation, contributed towards the sense of rupture from the past that was perceived in the 1920s and 1930s, and as Leydecker argues, also acted as sites of negotiation about modernizing changes.[52] Historian Peter Fritzsche contends that extraordinary technological events both nationally and worldwide (such as the use of tanks for the first time during the Battle of The Somme) exacerbated the ambivalence towards machinery and technology in Germany, and testified to the perception that man could and would lose control of the rationalization and order that technological innovation represented.[53]

Despite (or perhaps because of) the tensions which found expression in much of Weimar culture, the cultural output of the republic was dazzling and exported as much influence as it absorbed from other countries during the period. Its nightlife was vibrant and had a multicultural character as Berlin became as obsessed with jazz as Paris. Men and women socialized

[45]Peukert, *The Weimar Republic,* 8.
[46]Leydecker, *German Novelists of the Weimar Republic*, 7.
[47]Stephen Brockmann, "Weimar Sexual Cynicism." In *Dancing on the Volcano: Essays on the Culture of the Weimar Republic*. Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture, ed. By Thomas W Kniesche and Stephen Brockmann. (Columbia, SC, USA: Camden House, 1994), 166-167.
[48]Gay, *Weimar Culture*, xii.
[49]Gay, *Weimar Culture*, 6.
[50]Gay, *Weimar Culture*, xii.
[51]Rieger, *Technology and the Culture of Modernity in Britain and Germany,* 3.
[52]Leydecker, *German Novelists of the Weimar Republic*, 11.
[53]Fritzsche, "Landscape Of Danger", 32.

together, and male and female bodies met on the dancefloors of Berlin's many revues and dance halls. Social commentators such as journalists Alice Gerstel and Frank Warschauer observed the ways in which the 'pleasure-seekers' soaked up jazz music and how the music took German society and "...dances with it over the abyss…".[54] Cornelius Partsch argues that such receptions reflect the way Weimar society had perceived jazz; as both exciting and foreign but also inherently sexual and threatening for German culture.[55] Jazz and dancing represent a key site of debate within the Weimar Republic as to the status and nature of German culture, and a space in which many other discourses intersected - for example that of gender.

The changes for women propelled by the war, such as the dissolution of the divide between the domestic and the public sphere and the world of work, created greater freedoms and opportunities for them to take part in civic life. As a result, and as Peukert and Canning both identify, their emancipation fuelled anxieties about sexuality that ran high throughout the Weimar Republic.[56] These newly created freedoms also meant more leisure time for women; they could consume mass culture and products and enjoy the vibrant nightlife of cities such as Berlin. Pivotal in these changes, and most potentially threatening, was the development of *choice* for women, which presented itself not only in popular culture and consumerism, but also in relationships; women had greater sexual freedom as their worlds and opportunities expanded and the family unit was slowly marginalized.[57] The new dimensions of modern life for many women in Germany at the time coalesced around and were embodied in the figure of the 'new woman', who was pervasive in Weimar culture. Implicit in descriptions of her was the notion that this woman had greater control of her life, was inherently modern and therefore able to navigate bustling, urban, modernized cities like Berlin with ease and flair. Consequently, she was respectively held up as an icon of modernity itself and as the utmost indication of moral decline and national degradation. The degree to which this figure had any grounding in reality is up for debate but Kathleen Canning contends that despite the often difficult and different reality for many working women, the image of the new woman itself and its pervasiveness cannot be underestimated. She argues that not only was the 'New Woman' an aspirational figure for many women, but that she also existed in the collective social imagination as part of a conservative reaction surrounding the fears of the loss of control of female sexuality.[58] Whilst Peukert suggests that this was promulgated by concerns surrounding the degeneration of the German race, McElligott places emphasis on the war as cause for sexual anxiety, and argues that it had deeply damaging effects on traditional male sexuality, which is why female sexuality came

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[54]Gerstel, "Jazz Band.", 554. Frank Warschauer, "Berlin Revues." In *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*. Weimar and Now, 3, ed. by Anton Kaes, Edward Dimendberg and Martin Jay (Berkeley Etc.: University of California Press, 1994.), 554-555.

[55]Cornelius Partsch, "Hannibal Ante Portas: Jazz in Weimar." In *Dancing on the Volcano: Essays on the Culture of the Weimar Republic*. Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture, edited by Thomas W. Kniesche and Stephen Brockmann (Columbia, SC, USA: Camden House, 1994), 105.

[56]Kathleen Canning. "Women and the Politics of Gender." In Anthony McElligott. *Weimar Germany*. Repr ed. The Short Oxford History of Germany. (Oxford Etc.: Oxford University Press, 2010), 167. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic,* 102.

[57]Thomas W Kniesche and Stephen Brockmann. *Dancing on the Volcano: Essays on the Culture of the Weimar Republic*. Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture. (Columbia, SC, USA: Camden House, 1994), 167.

[58]Canning, "Women and the Politics of Gender.", 164.

under scrutiny during the period.[59] Indeed Helen Boak also argues that the obsession with female bodies and sexuality was a 'crisis of masculinity' provoked by the loss of the war.[60]

modernization & modernism

Whilst the historiography of both countries during the interwar period offers a number of interesting similarities, the unifying element for both Germany and Britain during this time was each country's relationship to modernity. The anxieties and reactionary social phenomena that characterized the years between the war in both countries were as a result of the war accelerating changes that had been slowly developing long before 1914. Consequently, socio-cultural, political and economic transformations were experienced more intensely, affected communities more profoundly and heightened the sense of rupture from the past that was understandably as traumatic for some as it was exciting for others, giving rise to 'cultures of crisis'.[61] Crucial to this research, then, is a definition of the different working conceptualizations of modernity. Outlining definitions of modernity, modernization and modernism assists to excavate experiences of modernity as expressed in literature, and that which reflect the socio-cultural anxieties so prevalent during the interwar period. Such an outline will identify the relationship between modernization and modernism, and how modernizing change contributed to such 'cultures of crisis' which gave rise to tones of modernism specific to each country.

Immanuel Kant, in his seminal essay *What Is Enlightenment?*, answered the question by exploring the latter dimension of modernization as identified by Berman: the development of modern consciousness as modernization. For man to become modern, Berman suggests Kant is arguing, he must reject the complacency of 'self-incurred immaturity' which he perceives as a reluctance to embrace the courage required to think and act for one's self.[62] In doing so, Kant locates the potential for enlightenment in man himself by promoting the importance of the 'spirit of rational assessment of individual worth and the vocation of each man to think for himself'.[63] Man's ability to exert this spirit publicly is how Kant idealizes the development of modern society. The idea that man holds within him the power to wield modernizing change is also argued for by Nietzsche. Implicit in his concept of the 'overman' is the idea that human beings are in a perpetually transient state between unthinking, primitive animal and a new kind of modern man, prepared to harness self-reflectivity and the challenges he faces in the modern world.[64] For Kant, too, modern life and man are transitory, for he argues that whilst man is not yet enlightened, he is living in a time of enlightenment, that we can interpret to suggest will ultimately be the age of modern man.[65] Implicit in both Kant and Nietzsche is the idea of man moving steadily forward towards a horizon, the direction of which he alone controls.

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[59]McElligott, *Weimar Germany*, 15**.** Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, 101.
[60]Helen Boak, *Women in the Weimar Republic*. (Oxford: Manchester University Press, 2015), 4.
[61]Overy, *The Morbid Age*, 2.
[62]Kant, *An Answer to the Question ``What Is Enlightenment"?*, 58.

[63]Kant, *An Answer to the Question ``What Is Enlightenment"?*, 59.

[64]Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm, and Thomas Common. *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. The Modern Library of the World's Best Books. New York: Modern Library, 1940.

[65]Kant, *An Answer to the Question ``What Is Enlightenment"?*, 62.

Max Weber, on the other hand, identified modernization by the processes that work to shape the modern subject. In *Protestant Asceticism And The Spirit Of Capitalism* he traced the genesis of the mentality, attitudes and crystallization of behaviours that had led to modern day capitalist idea-world ('the rational conduct of life on basis of idea of the calling') through Protestant asceticism.[66] He argued that the distinctly modern dimensions of Protestant faith (the eradicating of the saints and the 'fantastical', the direct and individually controlled conversations with God) combined with its ascetic values asserting the importance of hard work, and the embracing of a particular 'calling' and rejection of any greed, wealth or indolence have irrevocably shaped the Western world.[67] It was this notion of a 'calling' in life that Protestant asceticism added real resonance to because, as Weber argued, it promulgated the idea that the only way to achieve personal excellence and purity was through following a calling without question.[68] He demonstrated how this, in turn, normalized a myriad of different behaviours and processes that have created the functioning structures of the modern world.[69]

The second strain of thought through which we can come to understand the nature of modernity is modernism. Whilst modernism is as vast and complex as the concept of modernity itself, we can reductively understand it as the reactions and expressions of the experience of modernization. Indeed, Berman defines modernism as the 'visions and values' caused by modernization.[70] He claims that the impetus of his work is to formulate ways in which we can reconnect and revitalize our modernism in the twenty first century by revisiting the 'richness and complexity' of nineteenth-century modernism.[71] Among the modernists who have had lasting influence due to their vivid ruminations on modernization, including Goethe, Charles Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin, the essays of Georg Simmel represent a differentiation between identifying modernization and identifying the lived experience of modernization that we understand as modernism.

In 'The Metropolis And Mental Life', Simmel demonstrates how every aspect of life, our surroundings, change and indeed modernization, directly impact our inner selves and thus the 'meaning and style' of the way we live our lives.[72] Through analysis of the genesis and dimensions of the distinctly modern mentality of the city, Simmel located its roots in the changed nature that city inhabitants experienced, evaluated and processed information, relationships and stimuli as a result of modernization. The tensions of modernity reveal themselves in Simmel's diagnosis. For example, he contended that the city is the centre of the 'most advanced' division of labour, and an active market seeking ever new ways to create customers, thus the city is the site of increased individual variation and a space that offers limitless freedom and possibility for self-expression. Paradoxically, this freedom and opportunity generates a mass of 'unique' individuals, fighting above the din preserve and assert their own individuality and so, Simmel

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[66]Max Weber, and W. G Runciman. *Max Weber : Selections in Translation*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 69.

[67]Weber and Runciman, *Max Weber*, 144.

[68]Weber and Runciman, *Max Weber*, 168.

[69]Weber and Runciman, *Max Weber*, 168.

[70]Berman, *All That Is Solid*, 16.

[71]Berman, *All That Is Solid*, 19.

[72]Georg Simmel. "The metropolis and mental life." In *The urban sociology reader* (Routledge, 2012), 13.

argued, the individual feels increasingly lonely and obscured.[73] This duality is a compelling characteristic of much modernism, Berman observed. Through Nietzsche and Marx, he demonstrated how nineteenth-century thinkers identified the ways that modern life was 'pregnant' with contradiction.[74] What, he argued, is distinctive about the tensions within literature on modernity from the nineteenth century is its 'readiness to turn on itself'.[75] Modernity's contradictions can be read throughout literary modernism from the nineteenth-and-twentieth-century: it generates the literature's vibrance and energy, and Berman argued that no longer engaging with such tensions has caused twentieth century modernism to ossify and as a result we today have lost touch with the history and roots of our modernity.[76]

modernity

A possible reason for the lack of vibrance that Berman argued characterized modernism of the late twentieth-century could articulate to broader speculation about the applicability and inherent flaws in the ways modernity itself has historically been understood and approached that have been underway since the 1960s. During this time and since then, it has come to a general consensus that modernity as has been historically theorized is no longer adequate for either describing the history of the world or the nature of modern life, and scholars of all stripes and disciplines have worked through and against the concept to highlight its many problematic assumptions and the acts, behaviours and power imbalances that it has allowed.[77] The commitment in doing so, and for searching for alternative ways to describe and understand the development of the modern world, may well have eclipsed the desire to make sense of its present state as modernism does. Be that as it may, identifying new ways to understand the history of processes and phenomena that have created the world we live in is urgently important, and doing so contributes to our understanding of the stimulation behind twentieth-century modernism.

Prompted by a number of different world changing events during the twentieth century, such as the Great Depression, the Second World War and, most prominently, the Holocaust, scholars have been working through and against traditional modernization theory in order to more accurately explain modernity.[78] Contemporary literature reveals an increasing body of diverse interpretation as to how best rethink through or against the Eurocentric conceptualization of modernity theory, involving arguments to pluralize it, look at alternatives, focus on improvisational modernity and or argue that in trying to define and understand it a temporal period is being forged which reflects an inaccurate sense of historical reality.[79] The

[73]Simmel, "The metropolis and mental life.", 11.
[74]Berman, *All That Is Solid*, 20.
[75]Berman, *All That Is Solid*, 23.
[76]Berman, *All That Is Solid*, 17.
[77]For a recent comprehensive attempt to problematize our understanding of modernity as a cultural theory, and for some compelling, interdisciplinary solutions as to how best engage with and conceptualize it from some of the world's most prominent modernity scholars please see the The American Historical Review, Vol. 116 (No. 3) 2011.
[78]S. N. Eisenstadt, *Multiple Modernities*. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 2002), 1.
[79]See: Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar. "On alternative modernities." *Public Culture* 11, no. 1 (1999): 1-18. 1. Carol Gluck, "The End of Elsewhere: Writing Modernity Now." *The American Historical Review* 116, no. 3 (2011). 685. Carol Symes. "When We Talk about Modernity." *The American Historical Review* 116, no. 3 (2011): 716

problem with the addition of various adjectives to the concept (e.g. *blended* modernity, *liquid* modernity) argues Frederick Cooper, is that it has the potential to rid the concept of clarity and meaning, making it nothing more than 'a word for everything that has happened in the last five hundred years'.[80]

An overview of the complex body of work concerning "the modernity problem" would require a thesis of its own in order to comprehensively do it justice, but there are three contemporary theorizations that will be analysed for best applicability to this research. Each are attempts at re-thinking traditional modernization theory as a result of it being questioned and complicated by tragic world events in the twentieth century. The work of Dilip Gaonkar, Eisenstadt and Schmidt each argue, with and against each other, for the importance of considering modernity as having alternatives, multiples and varieties. A unifying component of each of these distinct arguments is how and to what degree we should place emphasis on the duality of modernity (to put it reductively the 'good' modernity: personal freedom, creativity, invention and progress and the 'bad modernity': standardization, mechanization, disenchantment and bourgeoisie modernity) in our re-workings of the concept, and whilst each has differing ideas as to how we should consider each strain when engaging the concept, all three argue that the troubling of this duality alone gives rise to cogent ways of thinking about modernity.

Gaonkar, in *On Alternative Modernities,* argues first and foremost that the Western model of modernity is inescapable.[81] Despite the negative implications of such a statement, he remains hopeful for the future of modernity. He contends that whilst inescapable, modernity is far from over, it is still arriving and that societies all over the world are continuing to engage with their own 'hybrid' modernities.[82] Additionally, he argues that those who engage with modernity are not unaware of its Western origins, and that those who 'submit to that rage for modernity' are able to completely re-appropriate the 'form' of modernity.[83] Alternative modernities requires thinking through and against the traditional theorization by focusing on cultural modernity. The justification for this, Gaonkar explains, is that too often in the re-thinking of modernization theory it has been assumed that modernity differs vastly from site to site, when in fact there are a number of similarities (such as the modern spirit of the city, the figure of the flâneur') that express themselves in cultural modernity which has long been considered as the point of divergence.[84]

In contrast, Eisenstadt argues in *Multiple Modernities* for the profound and vastly different ways that modernity developed in countries across the world and contends that the best way to understand all of these multiples of modernity is to consider the modernizing phenomena as 'continual constitution and reconstitution of a multiplicity of cultural programs'.[85] He rejects Gaonkar's contention that the Western model of modernity is inescapable and

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[80]Frederick Cooper, and Rogers Brubaker. *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 127. Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*. (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2000).

[81]Gaonkar, *Alternative Modernities,* 1.

[82]Gaonkar, *Alternative Modernities,* 13.

[83]Gaonkar, *Alternative Modernities,* 17.

[84]Gaonkar, *Alternative Modernities,* 18.

[85]Eisenstadt, *Multiple Modernities*, 2.

globally diffused and reverts the distinction between theories of divergence and convergence, arguing that the core commonalities of modernization, at a very macro level, developed similarly in so much as modernization *happened*, but that these developments took hold completely differently in different countries. Schmidt firmly rebukes Eisenstadt's thesis, arguing that the idea of multiple modernities simply distances itself from the main body of modernity theorization without offering an alternative and that in doing so the work relies on an unspecified conception of modernity which he believes articulates to traditional modernization theory which the work claims to reject.[86]

Schmidt's theorization proves to be the most applicable in so much as his approach is a combination and development of the ideas in the 'alternative' and 'multiple' camps of thought. His notion of 'varieties' of modernity accepts the enduring pervasiveness of the western model of modernity, similar to Gaonkar, and does so due to the fact that its relationship to capitalism is inextricable and capitalism's worldwide diffusion has had profound but similar consequences in different societies.[87] He argues that along this line of thought, societies the world over cannot all be so fundamentally different that we cannot understand them as a 'larger family of modern societies'.[88] To think of modernity as variables requires us to avoid placing greater focus on cultural modernities, and instead understand that without the 'epistemological revolution' of the Enlightenment and the subsequent societal and institutional modernization that developed as a result, cultural modernity would not have been possible.[89] Where Schmidt's theory provides an advantageous approach for this research is in its usefulness in highlighting geographic differences; countries such as Britain and Germany have developed in very much a similar way as exemplified by the historiography. Once we accept this, Schmidt argues, we can 'take differences seriously' without over emphasizing them, thus excavating the more intricate patterns of modernity as they developed and unfolded in Europe.[90] Such intricacies, this thesis argues, can be found in the literary output of both Britain and Germany during the years between the two World Wars.

literary modernism

In order to be able to substantiate any argument as broad as that literary modernism provides evidence as to how people in Britain and Germany during the interwar period both experienced modernity, constructed their understanding of it and shaped its development, it is beneficial to take a macro look at the output from both countries. To trace the mentioned intricacies of experience and construction of modernity, the methodological approach of this thesis is close reading of two nationally canonic novels which will act as examples of the detail, tone and texture of each country's modernism. However, it is problematic to use a mere two texts as representative of a whole movement from within interwar literary output, therefore the following

[86]Schmidt, "Multiple Modernities or Varieties of Modernity?", 78.
[87]Schmidt, "Multiple Modernities or Varieties of Modernity?", 82.
[88]Schmidt, "Multiple Modernities or Varieties of Modernity?", 81.
[89]Schmidt, "Multiple Modernities or Varieties of Modernity?", 79.
[90]Schmidt, "Multiple Modernities or Varieties of Modernity?", 88.

will take a look at the central texts attributed to modernist expression in both countries, as well as a brief overview of how this thesis defines and understands literary modernism.

As outlined previously, this thesis understands modernism to be the aesthetic, reactionary responses to the experience of modernization. As the interwar period in both Britain and Germany, particularly in the Weimar Republic, has been acknowledged as a period of high modernity, we can interpret a huge body of novels from each country as engaging with, negotiating, celebrating or questioning modernity.[91] What gives the movement its vibrancy and complexity is in its refusal to conform to a set of formal rules, although literary scholars such as Michael Whitworth, Dominick LaCapra and Laura Frost have for years attempted to excavate definitive features of the texts. Although Whitworth has outlined fourteen features that are often identified in texts understood to be part of the modernism movement, he argues that in order to define modernism, it is best to focus not on the context of the text, but instead by the processes which have shaped it.[92]

Using this notion as a guideline, novels written during the interwar period can be understood as irrevocably shaped by the processes of modernization occurring as have been sketched out above. LaCapra suggests that an enduring feature of the modernist text is an ambiguity; characters, settings, motives, meaning and form can appear elusive and offer complex interpretation.[93] Frost develops this idea and argues that the reason for this particular phenomenon in modernism is because of modernist's writers reactions towards 'low', mass culture. Through Lionel Trilling, she argues that modernists sought to create a text that would be a challenging read, exposing the pleasures of modern, mass culture as false, atrophied and vacuous.[94] In doing so, modernists often created texts that were committed to unusual, sometimes ominous or 'unnatural' ways of life so as to question habits of bourgeoisie modernity.[95] Taking this into account, and considering Britain and Germany's literary output during the interwar years as a whole, we should ask; what is the tone of this body of work? What can its allusions, assumptions, projections and criticisms tell us about how modernity was experienced, and how socio-cultural anxieties were fueled, then constructed? This thesis forwards the argument that British modernism held tightly to the notion that mankind and civilization could still be changed, whereas German literary modernism portrays a Germany that appears to have detached, lost control and accepted its doom.

A glance at some of the most iconic German novels of the time, those which most resonated with audiences during the interwar period, supports this argument. Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1929) follows the anti-hero Franz through a journey of degradation and misery on the streets of Berlin, until he finally accepts his inescapable descent into the mire of filth that was then modern day Germany. Erich Maria Remarque's haunting *All Quiet On The Western Front* (1929) describes the disillusion and detachment experienced by German men returning from the war to discover an unrecognisable Germany, the fragility and vulnerability of

[91]Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, xiii.
[92]Whitworth, *Modernism*, 5.

[93]Dominick LaCapra, *History, Literature, Critical Theory*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013), 8.

[94]Frost, "Pleasures of Dystopia.", 3.

[95]Frost, "Pleasures of Dystopia.", 4.

life in the face of death and destruction which is wrought without meaning, and ultimately the inability to recover from the war. Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* (1924), set before the war, prophesied about the fate of Germany as characters representing different European countries meet at a sanitorium in the Swiss mountains. Castorp, the youthful main character, and who is largely acknowledged to represent Germany, suffers from continually failing health after visiting his cousin at the sanitorium and ends up spending a number of years there before enlisting in the war, wherein the novel suggests his early, tragic death. Themes of inevitable destruction, detachment from German tradition, helplessness in the face of modernity and the inability to redeem German culture pervade throughout.

British modernism, while no less pessimistic, does appear to maintain a palpable belief in the ability of man to control and shape the socio-cultural changes in society, engaging with transformations as opposed to succumbing to them and accepting them as destructive. There are a number of examples of iconic novels from the period working in this way. The work of Virgina Woolf provides various instances in which she engages with, problematizes and negotiates a variety of social and cultural phenomena in such a way as supports this argument. For example, in *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), the figure and treatment of Septimus can be interpreted as a critique of the role of medical sciences in everyday life and the destructive implications it had. The failure of medical professionals in the novel to correctly care for his war-induced PTSD, leading to his suicide, invokes a criticism of the role of science in society, and explores how the war has changed the way human beings need to treat each other and the importance of acknowledging this. Also, in *Orlando* (1928), the immortality and gender fluidity of Orlando attests to the immortality and adaptivity of English culture, as exemplified throughout the novel with the protagonist's adventures with the most famous writers in English literature. D. H. Lawrence's most famous novel, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928) mediates on the relationship between mankind, nature and mechanized, industrialized spaces through the different characters enthusiasm or ambivalence towards each. Lawrence neither denounces industrialization as evil, nor celebrates its progress, but instead explores it in such a way as suggests different ways of living with nature and machines simultaneously. Content is not the only way in which British modernists constructed modernity in a more optimistic way; in T.S. Eliot's famous review of Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) he argued that Joyce's use of metaphor so as to make Dublin a microcosm of society at large acts as 'a way of controlling, of ordering...the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history'.[96] A different technique particular to English language literary modernism in the period was the use of stream of consciousness prose, employed most famously by in *Ulysses* and by Woolf in *Mrs Dalloway,* can also be interpreted as a narrative function employed to explore and suggest new ways of living with modernizing change that are not necessarily destructive. By focusing on individual, private thoughts, this tool can be seen as a way as to suggest different ways of thinking to a readership, new patterns of thought and ways to reconcile change with tradition.

The following close reading of *BNW* and *Steppenwolf* will assist to provide evidence of these tonal differences in the experience and construction of modernity in literature in the interwar period. Each novel will exemplify the kind of attitudes and anxieties that have been

[96]T. S. Eliot. "Ulysses, order and myth." review of *Ulysses,* by James Joyce, *The Dial* LXXV, November, 1923, 480.

briefly sketched out here that this thesis argues are ingrained with a distinctly national character, and can be used as evidence to support ideas about how modernity was experienced in Britain and Germany. Such close reading will contribute to the overall argument of this thesis - that German modernism reflects an unmistakably more ominous attitude towards socio-cultural modernization, where Britain's retains old fashioned notions about mankind's ability to control and shape such modernization - whilst simultaneously supporting Schmidt's VM theoretical approach so as to contribute to wider debates about how we should think about how modernity developed across Europe.

Chapter 2

Set in a familiar yet distinctly altered London during the year "...of stability, A.F 632,"BNW explores many themes of the modern social, cultural and political reality in Britain during the interwar years.[97] Babies are no longer born (the idea of 'viviparous' child rearing is considered smutty and the word 'mother' makes men blush) but are instead genetically engineered, created in bottles and conditioned to fulfil the requirements of society. Citizens are kept compliant through this conditioning, as well as through the use of recreational drugs, polygamy and participation in mindless mass entertainment in the form of the 'feelies' and 'obstacle golf'.[98] Motifs such as these function within the narrative as allusions to interwar anxieties. Concerns about the quality of the British population, fears over the implications of technology on humans, and discourses on the meaning and consequences for British people and 'high culture' as a result of the spread of a mass consumer culture are all engaged with in the novel. Joanne Woiak has argued that the book can be interpreted as a 'blueprint' of often conflicting ideas of how Aldous Huxley envisioned modern, post-WW1 society could work, supporting the notion that a characteristic of British modernism was belief in the idea of man's ability to change and control the world around him.[99]

The themes, motifs, characters and allusions in *BNW* have given rise to an extensive body of interpretive and analytical work and the text has been interrogated since its publication, in particular the aspects of the novel engaging with sex, technology and culture. For example, Laura Frost and McLaren have both produced work on the novel's engagement with sex, pleasure and reproduction, Woiak and Jerome Meckier examine the eugenics movement in Britain as context for the novel and Peter Miles and Malcolm Smith have identified the embattled state of high / low culture in *BNW* as representative of discourses going on in Britain during the interwar period as a result of the rise of mass culture and entertainment within cinema and literature. Whilst there are many differing interpretations of the novel, there is now a general consensus that what makes it so enduringly resonant is its inherent paradoxes and tensions.[100] As Harold Watts argues, it can be read as a 'record' of the 'uncertainties and hopes' of its period and is therefore full of contradictions.[101] Nathan Waddell and Jonathan Greenberg have suggested that the novel is 'profoundly unsettling', and argue that instead of trying to unpick its

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[97]Huxley, *Brave New World*, 1.
[98]Huxley, *Brave New World*, 2, 10, 15, 20.
[99]Joanne Woiak, "Designing a Brave New World: Eugenics, Politics, and Fiction." *The Public Historian* 29, no. 3 (2007): 114.

[100]Most of the scholars mentioned here celebrate *BNW's* tensions, for example; Joanne Woiak argues they represent Huxley's search for an answer to the question 'how must we live?', Greenberg and Waddell contend that all of the authors in their edited volume embrace and engage with the inherent tensions as to be able to read in between the lines of the text, Robert S. Baker suggests that the turmoil in the books various messages are to reflect the turmoil of British interwar society and Frost identifies how the novel's obvious disapproval for mindless pleasure exists in tension with the fact that it does seem appealing.
[101]Harold H. Watts, *Aldous Huxley*. Twayne's English Authors Series, 79. (New York, N.Y.: Twayne, 1969), 72.

uncertainties, we should embrace them as what sets the novel apart from others of its time.[102] Harvey Webster, along with David Bradshaw in a recent attempt to trace Huxley's personal ideological transformations, both argue that Huxley's own tendency to 'vacillate between political activism and highbrow nebulosity' is what infuses the novel with paradox and makes it a text with a sustained focus on searching for answers to questions about the state of modern life.[103] Such tensions are, as argued by Waddell and Greenberg, 'productive' for analysis of the novel, and in particular represent a characteristic of British modernism from the interwar period; that which was grounded in the belief that man still had the ability to control and shape the world.[104] By weaving the narrative with contradiction, conflict and ambiguity, Huxley was actively working through many of the problems thrown up by modernity and was seeking answers and solutions to them as well as exploring and expressing cultural anxieties prevalent at the time.

The ambiguity infused into the fabric of *BNW* is representative of the state of British modernity in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Indeed, the World State's central maxim "...Community, Identity, Stability…" were the very things perceived to be under fundamental threat during the interwar years.[105] Despite the fact that its landscape wasn't visibly destroyed by the war, or as Stephen Constantine argues it wasn't hit as hard by the economic depression as other countries like Germany or America, the years after the war were of tumult, of change, and of anxiety about the state of British civilization.[106] The proliferation of technology into the daily lives of British people and machinery onto the British landscape, the enfranchisement of a mass electorate and irrevocably changed gender roles as well as the advent of mass entertainment, culture and consumerism were but some of the transformations Britain witnessed in the interwar years and that had vast socio-cultural consequences. Huxley was an acerbic commentator on, and a firm believer in, the decline of the British population and its culture in the years following the war as a result of many of these changes. In *The Victory of Art Over Humanity*, he wrote of the state of mankind as 'staggering' under the forces of change that were of his own making; "Humanity is at present staggering under the blows received in the course of this disastrous conflict with the organized forces of its own intelligence."[107] David Bradshaw argued that Huxley, more so than any other British writer of his generation, was committed to engaging with socio-cultural issues as they developed in the country during the 20s and 30s.[108] *BNW*, his most famous novel, was resonant with readers because at the time of publication it was provocative literary experimentation which illuminated for many the most prevalent socio-cultural problems of the era in which it was written. A review of the novel for *The Bystander* observed that Huxley 'has carried to a pitilessly logical conclusion many of our modern tendencies and theories, showing with biting satire the outcome' acknowledging how the novel drew from the

[102]Jonathan Greenberg and Nathan Waddell, eds. *Brave New World: Contexts and Legacies*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 2.

[103]Harvey Curtis Webster. "Facing Futility: Aldous Huxley's Really Brave New World." *The Sewanee Review* 42, no. 2 (1934): 49. David Bradshaw, ed. *The Hidden Huxley: Contempt and Compassion for the Masses, 1920-36*. (London: Faber, 1994), viii.

[104]Greenberg and Waddell, eds. *Brave New World*, 3.

[105]Huxley, *Brave New World*, 1.
[106]Constantine, *Social Conditions in Britain,* 2.

[107]Bradshaw, *The Hidden Huxley*, 79.
[108]Bradshaw, *The Hidden Huxley*, viii.

socio-cultural climate of its time and the centrality of those 'tendencies' in the narrative.[109] The novel represents a fusion of both collective and personal experiences of modernity that Huxley subverts and dissects; in *BNW* he turns interwar modernity inside out, explores its depths and its elasticity, and the results provide us with interpretative insight into the way it was experienced.

eugenics & science

Thehe most famous aspect of *BNW* is its treatment of reproduction and population control. The novel opens at the "...Central London Hatchery And Conditioning Centre…" (BNW1) where the reader is given a thorough account of the process used to create and condition human beings of the future in order to fulfil specific social requirements. The detail with which Huxley describes this process is representative of his treatment of science and technology throughout the novel;

> 'Described the artificial maternal circulation installed on every bottle at metres 112; showed them the reservoir of blood-surrogate, the centrifugal pump…Explained the system of labelling - a T for the males, a circle for the females and for those who were destined to become freemartins a question mark, black on a white ground.'[110]

Whether describing the way that oxygen is starved from "...lower caste…" fetuses in order to achieve the desired cognitive activity, or the "...drowsy hum of passing helicopters…" (BNW 25) and the "...deeper drone of the rocket-planes…" (BNW 25) as Lenina and Henry Foster whizz off to play obstacle golf, Huxley emphasizes the centrality and importance of science and technology in this future society. The contradictions inherent in his portrayal of this centrality suggest an exploration and inspection of the kind of world where science governs all logic, and can be interpreted as Huxley's way of finding meaning and answers to problems scientific progress and technological advancements modernity facilitated and that generated certain socio-cultural anxieties. For example, the use of population control and the conditioning process means that whilst an ambiguous use of human life on the one hand, people in the brave new world are supposedly peaceful and happy, because they are conditioned to be that way. There is no turmoil, sadness or confusion;

> '"...Everybody's happy now." "Yes, everybody's happy now," echoed Lenina. They had heard the words repeated a hundred and fifty times every night for twelve years.'[111]

It is well established through ego documents and biography that Huxley was a keen supporter of the eugenics movement in Britain, and even promoted the idea of forced sterilization of 'undesirable' members of the British population when the Eugenics Society found the idea extreme.[112] They were in fact far from that point; in the annual report for the society for the year

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[109]The Bystander Review. "Mr. Huxley's Horrible World." *The Bystander* 113, no. 1470, February 17, 1932. 332-332. https://search-proquest-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/docview/1689095318?accountid=14772.
[110]Huxley, *Brave New World*, 5.
[111]Huxley, *Brave New World*, 32.
[112]Bradshaw, *The Hidden Huxley*, xix.

1929-1930, their focus was more on sharpening the laws surrounding voluntary sterilization procedures as it was decided that promoting the widespread use of such procedures in hospitals 'was thought that at the present state of the law in regard to voluntary sterilisation was so vague as to make very hazardous a venture of this sort at the moment.'.[113] Contrastingly, Huxley was as early as 1924 promoting forced sterilization on what he perceived to be Britain's increasing population of 'half-wits';

> "Compulsory sterility is already imposed on idiots and imbeciles, who pass their lives in asylums...The rest - about a quarter of a million - are at large...There is one simple and, so far as it goes, effective way of limiting the multiplication of subnormal stocks: certified defectives can be sterilised."[114]

In *BNW,* Huxley can be seen to be playing with different realities that articulate to such ideas, fleshing them out so as to see how this kind of world would look: '"...civilization is sterilization,..."' (BNW 46). Articulating to the proliferation of the sciences into the fabric of everyday life during the interwar period, Huxley furnishes the brave new world's power structures with such institutions as the "...Neo-Pavlovian conditioning room…" (BNW 8), the "...College of Emotional Engineering…", (BNW 28) and transforms the society's religious exclamation "...Our Ford…" into "...Our Freud…" when speaking of psychology (BNW 17).[115] True to the modernist form, such features of the narrative are portrayed as either celebratory or with condemnation. Through the eyes of John the Savage, we experience the creepiness of the "...Bokanovsky process…" wherein large groups of identical twins are produced for labour purposes;

> 'What seemed an interminable stream of identical eight-year-old male twins was pouring into the room. Twin after twin, twin after twin, they came - a nightmare. Their faces, their repeated face - for there was only one between the lot of them - puggishly stared, all nostrils and pale goggling eyes.'[116]

and at the same time, convincing reason is given for the process being implemented in the brave new world in the first place. Despite its ominous undertones, in a post-World War One world justification for such control over the population resonated in a society whose own population had been irrevocably altered. The conversation between 'World Controller for Western Europe', Mustapha Mond, and John in the penultimate chapter of the novel serves as a site of summary and negotiation of the way this world has been shaped. As John is enraged by this sterile, vacuous society, Mond rebukes him;

> '"The world's stable now. People are happy; they get what they want, and they never want what they can't get. They're well off; they're safe; they're never ill; they're not afraid of death; they're

[113]The Eugenics Society, "The Eugenics Society Annual Report: 1929-1930." The Wellcome Collection, London. Accessed July 20, 2019. https://wellcomelibrary.org/item/b16230875#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=4&z=0.225%2C0.1598%2C0.379%2C0.24
[114]Bradshaw, *The Hidden Huxley*, 152.

[115]Huxley, *Brave New World*, 17.
[116]Huxley, *Brave New World*, 85.

> blissfully ignorant of passion and old age...they're so conditioned that they practically can't help behaving as they ought to behave.'"[117]

Thus, through this conversation, Huxley contemplates both positive and negative implications of the use of forced population control through eugenics, sterilization and conditioning. It raises questions; how could society progress in the interwar years balancing between the two? Is the brave new world a better one, if everyone is happy? Is it better to be happy and ignorant, or "...mad, wicked and miserable."?[118]

atrophy of meaning & culture

In the same way that fears over the decline of the British population were uniquely bound up with the perceived atrophy of British culture over the advent of mass entertainment such as the cinema, in *BNW* the obliteration of privacy and individuality in favour of the mass is closely connected to conditioning and population control. As exemplified by the "...Bovanofsky process…", being an individual is no longer a necessity, but instead a form of luxury that only the higher echelons of society are afforded. Even then, high society is also encouraged to let go of the individual self, through the hypnopaedically taught maxim 'everyone belongs to everyone', through frivolous polygamy and by taking part in regular 'Solidarity Service' rituals (a quasi-religious, distinctly but ambiguously sexual group ritual in the name of 'Our Ford), before which a toast taken is to the annihilation of the self; 'I drink to my annihilation.'.[119] Whilst the onset of mass entertainment obviously did not make everyone indistinguishable, it fueled discourses on the perceived decline of British national culture to which these features in *BNW* are alluding to. An outspoken enemy of the talking cinema, calling it '...the latest and most frightful creation-saving device for the production of standardized amusement…'[120] as well as mass culture and entertainment in general, Huxley uses culture and entertainment in the novel as a way of negotiating the perceived eradication of 'high' or specifically 'British' national culture.

Arguably the least ambiguous message in the novel is how Huxley envisioned the future of mass entertainment and culture, particularly the cinema. Viewed as a troubling concern on many levels for the British public during the interwar years, Huxley interpreted the coming of the 'talkies' to Britain as a sign of the end of 'high culture'; 'a species which has allowed all its instincts and emotions to degenerate and putrefy in such a way must be pretty near either its violent conclusion or else its radical transformation and reform.'[121] Widespread among the social commentators of British society was the belief in cinema's ability to putrefy the minds of the British population, influence and encourage questionable behaviour, and obfuscate British national culture with 'Americanization'. A 1928 report from the League of Nations Child Welfare Committee exemplifies such fears, contending that the link between films and the criminality of

[117]Huxley, *Brave New World*, 93.
[118]Huxley, *Brave New World*, 18.
[119]Huxley, *Brave New World*, 34.
[120]Huxley, Aldous, "Silence is Golden." *Golden Book Magazine*, April 1930.
[121]Huxley, Aldous, "Silence is Golden." *Golden Book Magazine*, April 1930.

young people '...can hardly be doubted.' and that the darkness of film screenings, let alone the content, was enough to encourage morally bereft behaviour; 'cinema performances in the dark, with promiscuity of the sexes and languorous music, should excite the child by appealing to his lowest instincts and least noble passions.'[122] Much of the fears about 'Americanization' were uniquely bound to the talking cinematic phenomenon due to the imaginative nature of the films themselves; they could reflect reality but they could also create it. G. K. Chesterton, in a debate with the British actress Betty Balfour, argued that cinema was 'part of a great modern tendency to create unreality on an enormous scale' and as most of this reality creation was generated in America, 'everything was coming from the same place' thus simplifying and eclipsing specifically British cultural endeavour.[123]

Such fears about the degradation of culture and meaning are reflected throughout *BNW.* Simplistic sounding sports with banal names such as 'obstacle golf' (BNW 20) and 'escalator squash' (BNW 29) are not only wildly popular, but are part of everyone's daily routine, and it would appear that the cinematic phenomenon of the 'feelies' (BNW 15) are above all else the height of culture and entertainment. The scene in which Lenina takes John for his first trip to the 'feelies' is one saturated with unmistakable contempt; "Sunk in their pneumatic stalls, Lenina and the Savage sniffed and listened." (BNW 70). In order to be able to enjoy '"...any of the feely effects"' John is instructed to grasp onto some '"...metal knobs…"' and when the film begins it is to a chorus of asinine cries of '...Oohs….' and '...Ooh-ah!...' (BNW 70). Even the title of the 'feely' in question smacks of derision; 'THREE WEEKS IN A HELICOPTER. AN ALL-SUPER-SINGING, SYNTHETIC-TALKING, COLOURED, STEREOSCOPIC FEELY. WITH SYNCHRONIZED SCENT-ORGAN ACCOMPANIMENT' (BNW 70) and articulates to public discourses on the future and meaning of talking cinema.

Huxley's treatment of cinema in the novel is an exploration asking; whatever will be next? In 1929 - the year of the 'talkie' - a journalist for *The Observer* suggested that perhaps one of the reasons that film with sound was received with such 'indignation' was less because of the '"mechanical voices"' or '"canned music"' and more as a result of what they represented; "I wonder if the truth of the matter is that the "talkies" have made fools of us all? We used to think we knew something about cinema before the "talkies" came along ...Nowadays all of that has changed. The "talkies" have upset our standards of criticism."[124] This kind of uncertainty about the future of entertainment is palpable throughout the narrative of *BNW.* More so than any other feature in the novel, Huxley's stance on this is unmistakable, and in his portrayal of the sensational and yet hare-brained cinematic phenomenon he is not only trying to draw attention to the atrophy of what was once considered to be culturally important, but also the implications of such entertainment on society. The name 'feely' suggests that in order to enjoy the film, you need only your senses - Lenina and John are in chairs with specific functions to help them feel,

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[122]Report Of The League Of Nations Child Welfare Committee. "Film Industry: Employment of Children", The archive of the TUC, held by The Warwick Modern Records Centre. Accessed July 29, 2019.

[123]The Times Editorial. "The Art Of The Cinema." *The Times*, June 3, 1926. 13. The Times Digital Archive. Accessed 27 July 2019. http://link.galegroup.com.proxy.library.uu.nl/apps/doc/CS218700483/GDCS?u=utrecht&sid=GDCS&xid=25b1c33e.

[124]The Observer Opinion Piece. "The Pictures: Why Should We Hate The Talkies?" *The Observer*, Aug 25, 1929. 11. https://search.proquest.com/hnpguardianobserver/docview/481199561/fulltextPDF/37C994A3C8A44629PQ/1?accountid=14772

the "...knobs…" on the chairs also assist as does the "...scent-organ…" which pumps "...pure musk…" (BNW 70). What this also suggests is that you do not need to engage your brain whilst viewing. In the brave new world, and Huxley's vision of a projected future, technology and entertainment, as well as the perpetual use of the recreational drug "...soma…" (a hallucinogenic pill so strong as to enable you to go on 'holiday' for days on end) have enabled society at large to cease thinking about anything; "Old men in the bad old days used to… spend their time reading, thinking - *thinking!*"'[125] Whilst in the novel much of the cognitive control takes place during the conditioning processes when inhabitants of the brave new world are children, the instinct to avoid deep thought is promulgated throughout adult life through cultural offerings such as 'soma' and the 'feelies'. By fleshing out such narrative features as "...soma holidays…" (BNW 23) and the experience of the 'feelies', Huxley explores what he perceives to be a decline in engaging thought, a decline in culture and a decline in meaning.

This is also explored in Huxley's elimination of God, languages and history from the brave new world. For sure, this is an exaggerated and satirical reaction to what was essentially just the proliferation of modern types of technology and entertainment into the daily lives of British people during the interwar years, but through taking cornerstones of human civilization out of the social mix in the same way as modernity was perceived to be doing, Huxley was able to examine what is left in order to be able to ask the question: are we better off in the brave new world without Jesus Christ or history, or in our world with them? We find out early in the novel that all languages apart from English are dead;

> '"You know what Polish is, I suppose?"
> "A dead language."
> "Like French and German," added another student,'[126]

which works to suggest that other cultures such as specifically German or French cultures are also lost in the brave new world, a thing of the past. Culture in "...The World State…" (BNW 1) is hegemonic and meaningless; a distraction from thinking. Although not explicitly referred to within the narrative, the simple and smart use of 'Our Ford' instead of 'Our Lord' is a powerful statement about the values and beliefs of the people of the brave new world, and effortlessly eradicates religion and religious values from the future. People in the novel often use the exclamation 'Our Ford' in the same way as someone in reality would use 'Our Lord'; "...by his refusal to obey the teachings of Our Ford…" (BNW 62) but by exchanging God with the figure of Henry Ford, Huxley is able to explore the kind of world in which capitalist principles and mass production and consumption govern everything. The principles and influence of Henry Ford in reality are infused in the book in more ways than one; indeed, much of the attitude of the brave new world and its central maxims can be interpreted as Huxley's reaction to Ford's infamous quote; "History is more or less bunk. It's tradition. We don't want tradition. We want to live in the present and the only history that is worth a tinker's dam is the history we make today."".[127] The inhabitants of the brave new world are conditioned to find history nauseating; '"Was and will

[125]Huxley, *Brave New World*, 24.
[126]Huxley, *Brave New World*, 10.
[127]Charles N. Wheeler. "Interview with Henry Ford". *Chicago Tribune*. May 25, 1916.

make me ill," she quoted," (BNW 44) and are encouraged to focus on only the present, a whimsical, throwaway attitude applied to everything from clothing to relationships; "Ending is better than mending. Ending is better than mending." (BNW 22) '"After all, everyone belongs to everyone else."' (BNW 19). In the novel, there is no history, no future, everything is for now and everything is new.

progress

As has been identified by Bob Barr and Woiak, the vision of the future Huxley presents is one that is no longer progressing forward.[128] What is interesting is that this element of the novel straddles every other aspect, indeed, measures have been taken by those in control of The World State in order to maintain its three central goals; "...Community, Identity, Stability…" (BNW 1). This is the dimension of Huxley's novel that most works to support the central argument of this thesis; that British modernism embraced the belief that humans still had the ability to control and shape the world around them. There are many different moving parts of the narrative that function as explorations and negotiations of the social and cultural modernity of the interwar years; some are horrifying (for example, the electrocution of babies in order to develop in them a dislike for books and nature (BNW 8)), some are exciting (the ability to casually holiday on The North Pole (BNW 36)) and some are downright strange (the 'Solidarity Service' rituals (BNW 33) and everyone's obsession with 'obstacle golf' (BNW 20)), but what they all have in common is their relationship and attitude towards progress. Vague as Huxley's stance on much of his text may be, what is discernible is his belief in the importance of progress at all costs, and his novel itself represents an attempt to continue to progress and work through modernity no matter how degrading or frightening it may appear.

The changes that British society experienced during the interwar years were negotiated through discourse and culture throughout the period and were bound up closely with progress that was often perceived as destructive. Mr F. Pick, the managing director of London's Underground companies, addressed the Institute of Transport in 1931, comparing the growth of the cities of British civilization to that of ancient ones such as Attica.[129] He stated, however, that the irony of progress was that booming cities like London had 'contributed less than a twentieth of what Attica contributed to the resources of civilization.' which suggests a notion of progress being perceived as, whilst overwhelming in its breadth, meaningless in regards to what it brought to the world.[130] It appeared to be progress for progress's sake. In correspondence with *The Times*, a preacher expressed condemnation for modernizing change, decrying the fact that

[128]Bob Barr, "Aldous Huxley's Brave New World - Still a Chilling Vision After All These Years." *Michigan Law Review* 108, no. 6, (2010): 856. Woiak, "Designing a Brave New World.", 107.

[129]The Times Opinion Piece. "Growth Of Cities." *The Times*, October 13, 1931. 9. The Times Digital Archive. Accessed 27 July 2019. http://link.galegroup.com.proxy.library.uu.nl/apps/doc/CS153429325/GDCS?u=utrecht&sid=GDCS&xid=004f0c4e.

[130]The Times Opinion Piece. "Growth Of Cities." *The Times*, 9.

'progress in mechanical invention should have so far outstripped progress in human character' articulating to Huxley's ideas about the atrophy of meaning and depth.[131] Numerous opinion pieces from both *The Times* and *The Guardian* comment on even the *volume* of progress - thanks to modernizing changes, the world was now a noisier place and characterized British progress, a sense that is satirized throughout *BNW* from the 'feelies' to the sounds made by the fertilization machinery and helicopters (BNW 13).[132]

Huxley's vision of the future is essentially one in which due to the overwhelming anxiety modernity instilled in society, progress and any change at all has been halted. The brave new world in the novel is how Huxley conceptualizes a future that wherein society has stopped dealing with change. The penultimate chapter of the novel, wherein John meets Mustapha Mond and they discuss the nature of the brave new world is the best example of Huxley's persuasion, and also gives the reader the opportunity to decide for themselves if they think the brave new world, the one without progress, is the better one.

> '"*Othello's* good, *Othello's* better than those feelies."
> "Of course it is,' the Controller agreed. "But that's the price we have to pay for stability. You've got to choose between happiness and what people used to call high art. We've sacrificed the high art. We have the feelies and the scent organ instead."'[133]

Mond concedes that the brave new world is one bereft of depth of meaning, of tragedy and passion - as he has, like John, read Shakespeare thus he knows what the world lacks ('"...I make the laws here, I can also break them."' (BNW 93)). He agrees;

> '"And, of course, stability isn't nearly so spectacular as instability. And being contented has none of the glamour of a good fight against misfortune, none of the picturesqueness of a struggle with temptation, or a fatal overthrow by passion or doubt. Happiness is never grand."'[134]

Herein we see Huxley's message with clarity, perhaps the only time throughout the novel except for his attack on the talking cinema. Stability, and therefore happiness, and its perceived lack thereof characterized the years between the two wars in Britain due to the tumultuous socio-cultural changes the First World War heightened. These gave rise to a plethora of anxious social discourses on the nature and state of British civilization, to which *BNW* is responding. Throughout the narrative Huxley presented solutions, nightmarish or otherwise, to the different problems of modernity in order to promote continual engagement with change and progress, despite the costs. Not doing so, he was suggesting, could have even more sinister consequences. Huxley's belief in progress and its importance which can be interpreted from this conversation, as well as can be derived from the novel's many satirical allusions to socio-cultural realities in interwar Britain articulates to a belief in the ability of man to harness change and control its trajectory.

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[131]Artifex, "Progress And Human Nature." *The Manchester Guardian*, August 6, 1924. 14. https://search-proquest-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/docview/476905710?accountid=14772.
[132]M, U. S. "Modern Noise: Its Effect On Manners And Leisure." *The Manchester Guardian*, September 10, 1930. 6. https://search-proquest-com.proxy.library.uu.nl/docview/478121796?accountid=14772.
[133]Huxley, *Brave New World*, 93.
[134]Huxley, *Brave New World*, 94.

Chapter 3

Steppenwolf (1927) by Hermann Hesse is, to a degree, more solidly grounded in reality than *BNW.* If *BNW* can be interpreted as a set of ideas, an attempt at turning British modernity inside out in order to examine what worked, what didn't, then *Steppenwolf* represents a sustained mediation on the actual state of German modernity; "...a document of the times." (Steppenwolf 21) as decides the unnamed narrator of the preface. Hesse doesn't turn modernity inside out in the novel, but instead wades deeply into the perceived "...widespread sickness of our times." (Steppenwolf 21) and explores how it can be that one lives in such a time, what that means for the mentality of man and its implications for German civilization. To be sure, in this exploration Hesse weaves a dreamy, melancholy story that plunges into the depths of man's psyche and that has fantastical elements such as *BNW.* The story, replete with mystical characters such as the exotic Pablo and androgynous Hermine, as well as narcotics, dancing and drinking, culminates in a "...magic theatre…" which is explicitly "For madmen only!" (Steppenwolf 32) in which the protagonist, Harry Haller, confronts the many fragments of his soul.

The narrative follows Haller's experiences upon moving to an unnamed town in Germany, and is presented to the reader in the form of a manuscript by an unnamed author in the preface (we later learn this author is the nephew of Haller's landlady). Haller is a man in despair, deeply troubled and alienated from modern life and yet unable to be totally without it, and within him there burns "....a rage against this toneless, flat, normal and sterile life." (Steppenwolf 27). In occupying the unbearable and liminal space between "...soul-destroying..." (Steppenwolf 26) modern life and total isolation, Haller embodies a "...Steppenwolf...";

> "A wolf of the Steppes that had lost its way and strayed into the towns and the life of the herd, a more striking image could not be found for his shy loneliness, his savagery, his restlessness, his homesickness, his homelessness."[135]

Living in such a way has reduced him to desperation, and he has decided to kill himself on his fiftieth birthday. A chance encounter on the night he decides to do so with the alluring Hermine draws Haller into an extraordinary and ominous pact with her, and from that moment Hermine envelops him into her world of dancing, laughter and sensual pleasure.

Much like *BNW, Steppenwolf* is a novel that has received enduring interpretation, enjoys popularity to this day and continues to resonate with readers worldwide. It is famously known for achieving cult-like status among young readers in America during the 1960s, because of its contemptuous attitude towards 'the establishment', and its portrayal of hallucinogenic drugs and sex. There exists a large body of scholarly work that interrogates the novel's themes, meaning and raison d'etre. Theodore Ziolkowski's interpretation has had resounding influence on this scholarship to the present and combines literary analysis with biography in order to obtain a deeper understanding of both Hesse's literary output and innermost self.[136] Ziolkowski argued

[135]Hesse, Hermann. *Steppenwolf.* (New York: Picador, 1963), 17.

[136]Ziolkowski, *The Novels of Hermann Hesse,* 10.

that Hesse's 1916 commitment to a sanitorium, his experiences of being treated psychoanalytically by Joseph B. Lang, a student of C. G. Jung, and their subsequent friendship 'altered Hesse's life and works'.[137]

Ziolkowski's influence echoes throughout scholarship on the novel; the existing body of work has been occupied since the 1970s with questioning the applicability of Jungian psychoanalysis to the central characters and tenets of the novel, in particular the Jungian concept of the 'anima' and the character Hermine. According to Jungian psychology, Eugene Webb explains in his interpretation, the 'anima' is the imagined symbolic representation of dimensions of the self that are as yet 'underdeveloped'.[138] Against Ziolkowski's argument, Webb contends that to suggest Hermine's function is to act as Haller's 'anima' misunderstands her role in the novel. She is a guide, he concedes, but she also represents temptation and destruction which complicates her as an 'anima'.[139] Acknowledging Hermine as more than Haller's mirror, and as representative of tempting and destructive aspects of German modernity, such as dancing and promiscuity, makes her a key character for understanding how women were constructed in interwar discourses.

Other readings of the novel have focused on and engaged with comedy and laughter as a motif that runs throughout. Michael Sipiora emphasizes the role of comedy within the novel, and offers a 'comic-psychological' reading that presents the argument that laughter and comedy function in the narrative as a solution to the alienating dichotomies of modernity; 'flesh/spirit' or 'subject/object' are the two prominent examples in the novel that Sipiora identifies.[140] Following Ziolkowski, who argued that humour was Hesse's outlook on life after WW1, as for '...when it becomes apparent that the idyll can never be attained in our world.', Sipiora suggests that humour in the novel functions as a way of accepting the world for what it has become.[141] Humour, he argues, is both 'antidote' to the 'deadly' seriousness of Haller's split man / wolf personality, and also a way to be able to enjoy the modern world from which many feel alienated.[142] Key from the perspective of this research is this idea of acceptance.

In 1961 Hesse wrote that *Steppenwolf* was one of his most 'misunderstood' novels. He conceded that whilst certainly the novel portrays a world of 'griefs and needs' and 'disease and crisis', the book is actually about maintaining belief, and the process of healing.[143] Whilst the feasibility of this notion in the novel has been questioned - Webb, for example, quotes a literary review from 1968 which argued that the 'weight of melancholy' in the first half of the book completely eclipses any notion of belief or healing that Hesse may have been trying to convey.[144] It is up to the reader in the end to decide whether to derive doom and gloom or hope and belief from the story, but a focus on Hesse's engagement with culture, with women and meaning

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[137]Ziolkowski, *The Novels of Hermann Hesse,* 9, 10.
[138]Eugene Webb. "Hermine and the Problem of Harry's Failure in Hesse's" Steppenwolf"." *Modern Fiction Studies* 17, no. 1 (1971): 116.

[139]Webb, "Hermine and the Problem of Harry's Failure.", 117.

[140]Michael P. Sipiora, "Hesse's Steppenwolf: A Comic-Psychological Interpretation." *Janus Head* 12 (2011): 123.

[141]Ziolkowski, *The Novels of Hermann Hesse,* 69. Sipiora, "Hesse's Steppenwolf", 142.
[142]Sipiora, "Hesse's Steppenwolf", 142.
[143]Hesse, *Steppenwolf*, VI.

[144]Webb, "Hermine and the Problem of Harry's Failure.", 115.

and humour will work to identify an overall tone and attitude that this research argues supports the idea that German modernism was characterized by a distinct sense of doom and foreboding. For example, the novel's emphasis on humour as a way of accepting life in the modern world contrasts with the central notion in *BNW* that presses for change and negotiation; in *Steppenwolf* modernity is engaged by coming to terms with it - the only way to be able to live, is to be able to laugh at life. You cannot change it, you can only survive it. In Hesse's words, the novel is '...about enduring life.'.[145]

laughter & pain

The treatment of and emphasis on both pain and suffering, laughter and comedy throughout the novel can be interpreted as an expression of the kind of attitude that this thesis argues characterized German literary modernism in the interwar years. In the novel pain is referred to as both physical; for example, it is remarked upon by both Haller himself and his landlady's nephew that "His health was not good." (Steppenwolf 13) and as emotional turmoil; Haller proudly quotes Novalis early on to the nephew; "...he said, 'A man should be proud of suffering. All suffering is a reminder of our high estate.'".[146] The shape and pitch of pain throughout the narrative therefore changes. However, from Haller's physical ailments to the stifling life without pain as he identifies bourgeois modernity to represent - "...He is ready to be virtuous, but likes to be easy and comfortable in this world as well…" (Steppenwolf 52) - the overall thrust behind the pain motif in the novel is the same. A life without pain is a life without intensity and according to Haller, through Hesse, life without it is not worth living. Such ideas were also promulgated by writers like Ernst Jünger, who in *On Danger* in 1931, wrote that a modern bourgeois individual is '...best characterized as one who places security among the highest of values…'.[147]

The nephew, in the preface, takes the meaning of Haller's manuscript as a call to "...give battle to chaos, and to suffer torture to the full." (Steppenwolf 21). This can be interpreted as Hesse communicating that "....in a chaos of a world…." (Steppenwolf 21) such as Germany, all one can do is endure the pain, the fear and the suffering of modernity - one cannot change it. The world has already sunk into chaos, and the pain and confusion this inflicts on society is an indicator of the heights to which it has raised itself in the past, as represented in the novel as the "...Immortals…" (Steppenwolf 36) such as Mozart, Goethe and Novalis. Whilst Haller is not a perfect person, and in the novel undergoes various metamorphoses in the quest for peace and happiness in the world, he exemplifies a person who is living and enduring the pain of modernity; he despises "...days without special pains…." (Steppenwolf 26) which represent a life that is easy, and therefore meaningless. He actively criticizes bourgeois modernity that has rendered life filled with "....contentedness and painlessness…" (Steppenwolf 26) and yearns to "...rage against this toneless, flat, normal and sterile life." (Steppenwolf 27). Whilst feeling pain, or feeling intensely in general, is a theme also engaged with in *BNW*, what is different in

[145]Mark Bolby. *Herman Hesse: His Mind and his Art.* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), 202.
[146]Hesse, *Steppenwolf*, 16.

[147]Ernst Junger, "On Danger." In *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*. Weimar and Now, 3, ed. by Anton Kaes, Edward Dimendberg and Martin Jay (Berkeley Etc.: University of California Press, 1994.), 369.

Steppenwolf is that the pain - caused by symbols representing modernity and modernizing change - is irrevocably part of modern life and its use in the novel is promoting the idea of embracing it and having to endure it.

Laughter and comedy function in the novel in much the same way, or at least dovetail into this sentiment; if pain is the common condition of the intelligent person 'enduring' modern life then laughter is the only antidote, according to Hesse. As mentioned, Ziolkowski argued that laughter as remedy for modern life and its antagonisms is the central tenet of the novel, and Hesse's ultimate perspective towards life.[148] After first catching a glimpse of the "...magic theatre..." (Steppenwolf 32), Haller is given the "...Treatise On The Steppenwolf..." (Steppenwolf 40) in which the "...Immortals...", who it is generally understood have written this text within the text, contend;

> "Humor alone, that magnificent discovery of those who are cut short in their calling to highest endeavour ...humor alone (perhaps the most inborn and brilliant achievement of the spirit) attains to the impossible and brings every aspect of human existence within the rays of its prism. To live in the world as though it were not the world, to respect the law and yet stand above it...it is in the power of humour alone to make efficacious."[149]

And while embracing this ideal would "...it is true, keep him forever tired to the bourgeois world...his suffering would be bearable and productive." (Steppenwolf 55). Although ultimately this message in the novel is a positive one - it suggests that one does not have to be doomed to unhappiness in a world perceived as chaotic - and is probably the reason Hesse argued that the novel was one about continuing to believe in life, it does simultaneously suggest acceptance. This is the world, says Hesse, with its "...so-called culture…", its "...vampires of finance…" and capitalism as a "...flabby and slightly stupefied half-and-half god of contentment…" (Steppenwolf 26), and all we can do is endure, and learn to be able to laugh at it. Haller's inability to laugh at the beginning of the novel is largely given to be the reason for his complete misery and why the world was "...strange and incomprehensible…" (Steppenwolf 31) to him. Pablo, Hermine's mysterious musician friend, comments on Haller's sorry situation; "'Poor, poor fellow. Look at his eyes. Doesn't know how to laugh.'" (Steppenwolf 124). Hermine, as part of her pact with Haller to teach one another the ways the other lives life, instructs him on the art of learning to laugh. She pokes fun at his melancholy; "...you make me almost sorry for you. I never knew such a baby." (Steppenwolf 91) and encourages him to make a fool out of himself, to "...let yourself be laughed at." (Steppenwolf 122). Haller embarks on an inner journey with Hermine, and experiences and embraces modern life for the first time, in which "At many moments, the old and the new, pain and pleasure, fear and joy were quite oddly mixed…" (Steppenwolf 134) hence still experiencing pain, but learning how to tolerate it. At the end of the novel, Haller fails his final test and is unable to completely succumb to the comedy of life; in a fit of petty jealousy he stabs Hermine, therefore continuing to take life too seriously. The story ends positively, however, with Haller hoping that "One day I would learn to laugh." (Steppenwolf 218) which explains Hesse's contention that the novel is about 'a man believing' but that also supports the

[148]Ziolkowski, *The Novels of Hermann Hesse,* 69. Sipiora, "Hesse's Steppenwolf", 123.
[149]Hesse, *Steppenwolf*, 55.

notion that the novel is simultaneously about learning to accept the state of the world as changed and about learning to endure it.[150]

cultural decline

Rife throughout the years of the Weimar Republic was a collective sense of the decline of German culture and tradition and a yearning for its revival. Intellectuals and social commentators from across the political spectrum deliberated on the perceived backslide of German civilization as represented by the atrophy of German culture. For example, women's fashion was admonished for being 'asexual' and was seen as part of a process of 'masculinization', which *Berliner Illustrirte Zeitung* magazine found to be a 'distressing aberration'.[151] Writer Vicki Baum eviscerated the modern obsession with trends as making everyone alike in *People Of Today*, embodied by her character 'Ypsi', her 'great desire' to be original and her great fear that she 'could come off unmodern'.[152] Gerstel observed that 'The dancing couples are under a spell' of the jazz rhythms thumping through Berlin revues and dance clubs.[153] The participation of women, in particular, in such dancing was taken as a sign of degradation of traditional family values, as is exemplified by journalist Hans Ostwald's comment that 'youthful mademoiselles took the opportunity to dance along - and the children suffered their fears alone at home'.[154] Ernst Lorsy saw the popularity of chewing gum as making an 'inexorable advance on the soul of the modern masses' and cultural critic Hans Siemsen deplored the obfuscation of 'real literature' with the advent of 'practical, cheap, useful' mass literature and billboards. Hesse himself commented in *Uhu 2* in 1926 that modern development has;

> '...so accelerated in the years since the outbreak of the world war that one can already, without exaggeration, identify the death and dismantling of the culture into which the elder among us were raised as children and which then seemed to us eternal and indestructible.'[155]

Implicit in *Steppenwolf,* within Hesse's 'message of hope' on the importance of learning to laugh at life, is the idea of taking life less seriously. Nothing, it would seem, was worth taking seriously anymore - least of all culture. Thus, the novel provides acerbic commentary on the state of German culture as it was perceived in the interwar period. After all, culture that became popular during the 1920s often functioned as a visual representation for many of the 'disease and crisis'

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[150]Hesse, *Steppenwolf*, vi.

[151]Kaes, Dimendberg and Jay, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, 659.

[152]Vicki Baum, "People Of Today." In *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook.* Weimar and Now, 3, ed. by Anton Kaes, Edward Dimendberg and Martin Jay (Berkeley Etc.: University of California Press, 1994.), 665.
[153]Alice Gerstel, "Jazz Band." *In The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*. Weimar and Now, 3, ed. by Anton Kaes, Edward Dimendberg and Martin Jay (Berkeley Etc.: University of California Press, 1994.), 554.
[154]Hans Ostwald, Ostwald, Hans. "A Moral History Of The Inflation." In *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook.* Weimar and Now, 3, ed. by Anton Kaes, Edward Dimendberg and Martin Jay (Berkeley Etc.: University of California Press, 1994), 78.
[155]Hermann Hesse, "The Longing Of Our Time For A Worldview." In *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*. Weimar and Now, 3, ed. by Anton Kaes, Edward Dimendberg and Martin Jay (Berkeley Etc.: University of California Press, 1994.), 365.

that Hesse discusses in his 1961 author's note and that many believed Germany to have had irrevocably slipped into.[156] Even the narrator of the preface, modern man though he may be, senses the 'disease' of the times, and imagines Haller to have the ability to pierce "...our whole epoch, its whole overwrought activity, the whole surge and strife, the whole vanity, the whole superficial play of a shallow, opinionated intellectuality."[157] Haller is alienated and disgusted by modern culture. He yearns for a return to traditional, 'high' culture, as is exemplified through his "...homesickness…".[158] He ruminates on how it can be that he is the only one who appears to feel this way, reeling off great lists of modern cultural phenomenon that he finds abhorrent;

> "How could I fail to be a lone wolf...as I did not share one of its aims nor understand one of its pleasures? I cannot remain for long in either theater, or picture-house. I can scarcely read a paper, seldom a modern book. I cannot understand what pleasures and joys they are that drive people to the overcrowded railways and hotels, into the packed cafes with the suffocating and oppressive music, to the Bars and variety entertainments, to World Exhibitions…"[159]

All of the listed phenomena directly relate to the culture of modernity during the interwar years and were enjoyed obsessively by the masses whilst viewed with contempt and foreboding by those who perceived their advent to signify the decline of German culture. Such "...mass enjoyments and these Americanised men who are pleased with so little…" (Steppenwolf 31) represent cultural decline in the novel, and are very much the majority - Haller appears to be the only one to can't enjoy them. He concedes that if such things are as popular as they are, and if they "...are right…" (Steppenwolf 30), then surely he is the crazy one, and resigns himself to the role.[160] He is outnumbered, alone and "...astray…" (Steppenwolf 30) which can be interpreted as culture having slipped in the gutter in a way that is not reversible, new, modern culture is too popular to do away with and appears to have established itself as the new norm.

Also articulating to the central tenets of the prominent Expressionism movement of the Weimar Republic years is the treatment of jazz in the novel. Expressionism had a preoccupation with jazz music and Black culture, and many saw this young, raw, "...savage…" (Steppenwolf 37) culture as an antidote to European, specifically German culture, which was perceived to be atrophying. Ivan Goll, in *Die Literarische Welt* in 1926, wrote an article entitled *The Negroes Are Conquering Europe,* which despite the questionable title appears to be celebrating that the Revue Nègre had 'All of Europe...dancing to their banjo.'.[161] As a '...new, unspoiled race.', he argued, Black culture had the potential to revitalize German culture, which had become a '...long since dried-up land that can scarcely breathe.'.[162] Inverting traditional colonial ideology of taking care of the Black races and raising them to European standards, he asked; 'Do the Negroes

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[156]Hesse, *Steppenwolf*, VI.

[157]Hesse, *Steppenwolf*, 9.

[158]Hesse, *Steppenwolf*, 17.

[159]Hesse, *Steppenwolf*, 30.

[160]Hesse, *Steppenwolf*, 31.

[161]Goll, Ivan. "The Negroes Are Conquering Europe." In *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook.* Weimar and Now, 3, ed. by Anton Kaes, Edward Dimendberg and Martin Jay (Berkeley Etc.: University of California Press, 1994), 559.

[162]Goll, "The Negroes Are Conquering Europe.", 560.

need us? Or are we not sooner in need of them?'.[163] Commenting on the development and transformation of dance crazes throughout history, Katharina Rathaus wrote in 1926 that the young generation of the Weimar '...takes its inspiration from the original motions of primitive peoples.'[164] Such sentiments towards jazz are alluded to in *Steppenwolf,* as Haller passes a jazz club filled with "...lively jazz music, hot and raw as the steam of raw flesh." (Steppenwolf 37) which although he detests, he also concedes is "...ten times preferable to all the academic music of the day." (Steppenwolf 37). Most importantly, he calls jazz; "...the music of decline." (Steppenwolf 37) and conceptualizing jazz music in this way supports the notion that German culture and society was very much perceived to be in decline and dancing to jazz whilst it disintegrated. Whilst the German civilization supposedly sunk into the mire, rather than fight it, try to control it, society appeared to have given in - to have let modern culture consume them irreversibly; "...the whole building reverberated everywhere with the sound of dancing, and the whole intoxicated crowd...became by degrees a wild dream of paradise. Flower upon flower wooed me with its scent." (Steppenwolf 168).

women

As previously mentioned, much of the scholarly focus on gender and specifically women in *Steppenwolf* has occupied itself with the role of Hermine as a psychological mirror for Haller, his 'anima'*,* and has interrogated the applicability of this aspect of Jungian psychology to her character as to better understand her function and meaning. Whilst this approach has produced interesting new readings of her and the central message of the novel itself, obscures how women are represented in the narrative as alluding to the perceived state of gender roles and female sexuality in the interwar period in Germany. When Jungian theory is set aside, Hermine can be seen as the living embodiment of both German modernity, and the perceived decline of German civilization. She is a bright, glittering modern, representative of the experience of modern life; "But in this Hermine was like life itself; one moment succeeding to the next and not one to be foreseen."[165] She is also representative of the 'New Woman' ideal which saturated popular culture and public discourse in the Weimar Republic; "Her bright red lips smiled and she firmly shook her waved and shingled head…" (Steppenwolf 87). Simultaneously, however, Hermine also ultimately represents destruction and death; she is steadfast in her laissez faire certainty that she will be killed by Haller and meet an untimely end;

> "'And so I shall kill you one day?" I asked, still half in a dream while she laughed, and attacked her fowl with great relish.
> "Of course," she nodded lightly. "Enough of that. It is time to eat.'"[166]

[163]Goll, "The Negroes Are Conquering Europe.", 560.
[164]Katharina Rathaus, "Charleston: Every Age Has The Dance It Deserves." In *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook.* Weimar and Now, 3, ed. by Anton Kaes, Edward Dimendberg and Martin Jay (Berkeley Etc.: University of California Press, 1994), 558.
[165]Hesse, *Steppenwolf*, 112.
[166]Hesse, *Steppenwolf*, 111.

In this sense, Hesse can be interpreted as perceiving modern, young German women as a sign of the times, an indication of the decline of German civilization - such discourses on the perceived decline were always closely bound to the status of women in society. For example, Ostwald, in 1931, traced the 'moral history' of the inflation years of the Weimar Republic with a distinct contempt for developments in women's liberation, claiming that 'an ecstasy of eroticism cast the world into chaos' as a result of 'women who in many respects completely transformed themselves. They asserted their demands, particularly their sexual demands' and saw this as symptomatic of a world in which there had been 'an apparent collapse of all the values that had guided human life for centuries'.[167] In a more extreme and explicit linkage of the decline of the German civilization and women, R. W. Darré, a leading Nazi ideologist, argued that Germany needed to 're-educate our girls to a full understanding of the old German concept of *Züchtigkeit* (chastity)' seeing as Germans were 'so surprised that German culture more and more disappears' as female sexual emancipation developed.[168]

Hermine is sensual and confident, is representative of embodying the kind of attitude as identified by Ostwald, and navigates German modernity with ease and detachment. Her character also articulates to a particular facet of the 'New Woman' image, identified by Elsa Herrmann in 1929, as being 'oriented exclusively towards the present'.[169] When Haller tells Hermine of his upset over the picture of Goethe, she reinforces Hesse's central message by insisting that Haller should have laughed at it; "'If you had sense, you would laugh at the artist and the professor - laugh and be done with it...I've understood your story very well, Harry. It's a funny story. You make me laugh."[170] Hermine is able to laugh at life, and enjoy it most vigorously through dancing: her fundamental requirement of Haller in their pact is that he take dance lessons, and promises that through doing so, he will learn to "...dance and play and smile, and still not be happy." (Steppenwolf 126). In return for teaching him to dance, she asks that he teach her how to think, thus simultaneously reinforcing the notion of the 'New Woman' existing or knowing only of the present, and therefore that her existence is fleeting, and will ultimately fade as the present ever disappears and reappears anew.

The recurring concept of female destruction is echoed again in an encounter with Hermine's fellow courtesan, Maria, with whom Haller experiences liberating sexual pleasure. Again, women in the Weimar Republic are equated with the culture and consumerism of modernity - Haller comments that for Hermine and Maria "The world of dance and pleasure resorts, the cinemas, bars and hotel lounges...was....the world complete." (Steppenwolf 138) and whilst Haller yearns for the connection to the world which these women have, he observes that ultimately their lifestyles will end in destruction;

> "Assiduous and busy, care-ridden and light-hearted, intelligent and yet thoughtless, these butterflies lived a life at once childlike and *raffné*; independant...finding their account in good luck

[167]Ostwald, "A Moral History.", 77-78.
[168]R. W. Darre, "Marriage Laws And The Principles Of Breeding." In *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook.* Weimar and Now, 3, ed. by Anton Kaes, Edward Dimendberg and Martin Jay (Berkeley Etc.: University of California Press, 1994), 136.
[169]Elsa Hermann, "This Is The New Woman." *In The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*. Weimar and Now, 3, ed. by Anton Kaes, Edward Dimendberg and Martin Jay (Berkeley Etc.: University of California Press, 1994), 207.
[170]Hesse, *Steppenwolf*, 91.

> and fine weather, in love with life and yet clinging to it far less than the bourgeois...always certain...that a difficult and sad end was in store for them."[171]

thus emphasizing the inevitable, destructive demise of German womanhood which, as has been demonstrated, was uniquely connected to the idea of the atrophy of German culture and the decline of the nation. Representing German modernity, Hermine and Maria in *Steppenwolf* function as a way of exploring the status of women in the Weimar Republic. An examination of their treatment in the novel demonstrates how the liberation and sexual freedom experienced by many women during the Weimar Republic, as well as their ability to consume and partake in culture and entertainment, was perceived by many as an indisputable indicator of the irrevocable decline of German society and culture.

[171]Hesse, *Steppenwolf*, 138.

Conclusion

The most striking similarity between interwar Germany and Britain is the profound atmosphere of crisis that characterized both. Undoubtedly, this climate was conceived by the First World War and the modernizing change it wrought. The atrocities of the war generated disillusionment and anxiety, and gave rise to questions about the functionality and security of the way people lived their lives and structures used to enforce and protect them. Such questions were manifest in the public discourse and cultural output of both countries, and examining the tone of such engagement with modernizing change in popular culture such as literature has the potential to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the way that modernity was experienced in Germany and Britain. This research has yielded evidence to suggest that whilst both countries experienced a 'climate of crisis', British literary modernism was characterized by the belief that British people could still control and harness modernizing change, whilst German modernism expressed resignation and pessimism in the face of such changes that were perceived to have destroyed German society and culture. In turn, this can be used to support the argument that modernity was experienced and collectively imagined in Germany as destructive and unstoppable, whereas in Britain modernity was experienced in such a way as to give rise to often frantic public discussion as how to change and control it.

Such an attitude as expressed in British modernism is exemplified by *BNW.* Huxley presented readers with a disconcerting projection of the future by taking aspects of life from the interwar period and subverting them, taking them to their extremes. The purpose of this was to raise questions about the trajectory of British society, explore problems caused by modernizing change and above all to encourage persistent engagement with such changes no matter how anxiety-provoking they appeared to be. Huxley's brave new world is one that contains many unsettling elements but the most worrying of all is its stagnation; it is a world without progress, without change and development.[172] It is in exploring this stasis that we can interpret Huxley's attempts to engage and harness modernizing change, to promote the idea that human beings could still control and change their future if only they are brave enough to continue to embrace modernity.

Detachment from modernity and the notion of decline this generated as characterized German modernism is demonstrated in *Steppenwolf.* Cultural degradation is portrayed in the narrative through music, literature, the changed role of women and through Haller and Hermine's shared sense of doom. Most prominently this attitude is expressed through the treatment of pain and laughter. The two aspects dovetail into one another to promote the importance of not taking life too seriously; what had become of Germany could not be changed, thus the only way to endure modernity was to learn to be able to laugh at it. This central tenet is the only way that alienated protagonist Haller will be able to reconcile himself with the modern world that he finds so abhorrent. Simultaneously, the novel emphasizes that the pain and confusion modernizing change causes is the single remaining indicator of the heights to which

[172]Barr, "Aldous Huxley's Brave New World.", 849.

German civilization had once raised itself - exemplified by the 'Immortals' Mozart, Geothe and Novalis - and should therefore be embraced. Pain is evidence of life intensified and not stifled by the security and "...contentedness…" (Steppenwolf 22) of bourgeois modernity. Both pain and laughter in the novel articulate to the idea of acceptance.[173] Germany had, in Hesse's perception, changed irrevocably and there was nothing to be done accept learn to live with it.

So what are the implications of this argument; how does it contribute to our existing understanding of the interwar period in Britain and Germany, and how modernity developed in each nationally specific context? This research could contribute to existing historiography in the intersection between the history of the Weimar Republic and modernity theory. What took place under the regime of the Nazis throughout the Second World War is unspeakably tragic, and has also complicated our understanding of modernity; it shook the collective understanding of what it meant to be a modern human to the core and has given rise to retrospective analysis as to how it was possible, if it was inevitable and if it was the consequence of modernity gone wrong.[174]

Whether or not the Weimar was irrevocably doomed is not the line of inquiry of here, and whilst the 'doomed from the start' notion may not necessarily be subscribed to in contemporary historiography, the literary output of the Weimar republic was undoubtedly despondent and reflected the society in which it was written. That is not to say that the rise of the National Socialists was simply the result of disillusion and a national bad mood, but the consistency of such an attitude in a dominant vein of cultural output can be used as an indicator of a certain kind of mindset and outlook that might have been more receptive to alternatives to German society in the interwar period. Certainly, what can be discerned in various themes of *Steppenwolf* is a yearning and grief for the traditional, *German* past - something that was promulgated in National Socialist ideology. This is exemplified in the NSDAP's 'Twenty-five Points'; "4. None but members of the nation may be citizens. None but those of German blood...10. It must be the first duty of each citizen of the state to work with his mind or with his body...21. The state must see to raising the standard of health in the nation by protecting mothers and infants…".[175] Kaes, Jay and Dimendberg contend that such ideology intentionally drew from such 'resentments' towards modernity as to draw as wider demographic of 'the discontented' as possible.[176] Both Remarque's *All Quiet On The Western Front* and Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz,* along with *Steppenwolf,* are about men who are unable to recognise and reconcile themselves with modern Germany, and in their longing for the past they are alienated from society. The Weimar Republic did not create a vacuum for the rise of the popularity of the National Socialists, but the tone of its literary modernism is evidence to suggest that there was social belief in the irrevocable decline of German society, and as such any group promoting a return to traditional German ideals such as the protection of the traditional family, the promotion

[173]Hesse, *Steppenwolf*, vi.

[174]For a recent, comprehensive overview of contemporary modernity theorization about The Holocaust, please see Mark Roseman, "National Socialism And The End Of Modernity." *The American Historical Review* 116, no. 3 (2011): 688-701.

[175]German Worker's Party. "The Twenty-five Points", Kaes, Dimendberg and Jay, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, 124-126.

[176]Kaes, Dimendberg and Jay, *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, 119.

of labour of the body or mind, and the rejection of outside influence, would have resonated with many.

Also noteworthy is that Hesse was situated on the political left. The Weimar political party constellations were obviously a prominent factor in momentum gained by the National Socialists. Gay argued that 'trauma' of the conception of the Republic, with its democratic constitution fused with the remains of the traditional Whilhelmine order of old, meant that from the outset it could never fully get the support of the right or the left.[177] He also contended that the warring on the left between the parliamentary socialists and the Spartacists created a space for radical, right wing alternatives like the NSDAP. During the September elections after the Republic fell in 1930, both the far left and far right were fighting for majority and, as economic historian Christian Stögbauer argues, both were aiming to eradicate the government with their own alternative polity.[178] However, the radical left was a feeble minority in comparison to the NSDAP, faith in the parliamentary left was waning and consequently the NSDAP made substantial gains in 1930. What the tone and attitude expressed by *Steppenwolf,* and other modernist novels of the Weimar period, perhaps then attest to is a disillusionment and lack of engagement with the left. One factor of the left represented radical socialists views, and the other was attached to the Weimar which had crashed and burned having never gained much support in the first place. Further and comprehensive research into the engagement of the left in terms of voting habits and political participation would be needed to substantiate such a claim but once undergone it could contribute towards our understanding of how modernity was experienced in the interwar years and how it could have gone so badly wrong in Germany.

Further implications of the argument forwarded by this thesis are what we can as historians conclude from using literature as a primary source. As has been demonstrated, the critical analysis of literary texts can offer comprehensive understanding of how something as complex and amorphous as modernity was experienced by particular societies and on an individual level. Although novels cannot reasonably represent entire societies, or nations, they can suggest attitudes, infer collective beliefs, hopes and fears which in turn provides historians with explanations as to why, for example, modernizing change caused a variety of social anxieties. In turn, explanations such as these can guide historical research that traces the transformation of attitudes towards different social components such as the role of women, technology or culture, and how such attitudes would shape the functionality or institutional engagement of a given society. Whilst much more comprehensive research is needed to fully substantiate such a claim, an example of this is that by tracing the negativity and passivity as expressed in Weimar's literary output to attitudes in German society that might have been receptive towards the radical change and simultaneous return to the traditional German past that was promoted by National Socialist ideology in the lead up to 1933.

[177]Gay, *Weimar Culture*, 9.
[178]Christian Stögbauer, "The Radicalisation of the German Electorate: Swinging to the Right and the Left in the Twilight of the Weimar Republic." *European Review of Economic History* 5, no. 2 (2001): 252.

varieties of modernity

It is beneficial to test the applicability of Schmidt's VM theory to this research because it attests to the level of detail that he implies would be required in order to be able to comprehensively understand global modernization via the theory.[179] Schmidt contends that a VM approach steers away from a socio-cultural focus, and instead examines the development of modern institutions. The reason for this, he argues, is that such institutions facilitated the necessary 'revolutionary shifts to the modern age' that gave rise to epistemological developments, thus socio-cultural transformation and expression, so analysis and understanding of institutional modernity is paramount to understanding the development of modern countries. This approach is agreeable, but then once we have mapped out the modern institutions world over with their inextricable links to capitalism and profound similarities as a result (a task that Schmidt himself contends might be too large), how can we discern the nuances, the differences, the attitudes and experiences that in turn then shape how society interacts with such institutions? A country's cultural output is perhaps the richest source of expressions and accounts of the experience of modernization, and if engaged critically and contextually can be used as evidence to help account for the attitudes, actions and anxieties that take place in any given period.

The similarities between Germany and Britain during the interwar period are astounding, and too great to be explored in full detail in this research. Technology, entertainment, the role of women, family values and population control, sexuality and culture are but a few major discourses whose negotiations characterized the two decades between the war in both countries. The application of VM theory to research on such discourses as has been undergone here demonstrates the striking similarities that were a result of modernization and its effects on national institutions. This complicates and rejects any notion that Weimar was uniquely 'doomed from the start' and that modernizing change in Germany created a vacuum for the rise of the Nazis.[180] Both countries had active socialist left and radical right, fascist movements, but the difference was, as argues Constantine as well as historians Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska and Dan Stone, that in Britain economic hardship and unemployment were less destructive and as such the country didn't fully take to radicalism.[181] Mass unemployment and financial turmoil resulted in Germany caused radical alternative politics to resonate on a large scale, argues Stogbauer; the country was on its knees at the start of the 1930s and offers to turn the country around and restore it to its former glory fell on receptive ears. Using VM theory it is possible to map such institutional similarities and consequently their respective differences. Where this research aims to support the theory is in providing cultural analysis to substantiate and offer a way of explaining and understanding the details of such differences. A focus on the cultural output of both countries, such as the popular literature of each, suggests the attitude, the hopes

[179]Schmidt, "Multiple Modernities or Varieties of Modernity?", 88.

[180]McElligott, *Weimar Germany*, 5.

[181]Dan Stone. *Breeding Superman : Nietzsche, Race and Eugenics in Edwardian and Interwar Britain*. Studies in Social and Political Thought, 6. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002), 2. Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, "Building a British Superman: Physical Culture in Interwar Britain." *Journal of Contemporary History* 41, no. 4 (2006): 596.

and fears and the spirit of the people living at the time and thus offers a new depth of understanding as to how people experienced modernity in the interwar period.

final thoughts

Regardless of the differences or similarities between the attitudes and approaches towards modernization such as those identified here, what unified the experiences of Huxley and Hesse, along with countless hundreds of thousands of people during the interwar period, was the unsettling sense of living in a distinctly different, modern era. Throughout the world, it was a period of profound grief, of confusing and frightening change and of negotiating and readjusting the meaning of modern life. It was a time where socio-cultural anxiety was rife, but that is not to say that it was a period of bleakness, nor hollowness. The two decades between the war gave rise to some of the most resonant and moving accounts of human life as expressed through culture, such as literature, that have given us enduring accounts of anguish, of fear, but also of hope, belief, of community and the will for mankind to embrace modernity and "...give battle to the chaos…" (Steppenwolf 21). It is easy in hindsight to see such anxiety over modernizing change as trivial, especially in the current context of unprecedented globalization, transformation of life and work as a result of the fourth industrial revolution and heightened awareness of our dire environmental situation, but tracing such expressions and experiences of modernity, identifying them in the details and reading in between the lines, has the potential to contribute towards a greater understanding of a time when it was truly believed that the world as it had been heretofore known was irrevocably changed and actively disintegrating. The courage, critique and engagement visible in the cultural output of this time could act as instruction and inspiration for us today.

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