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SUPPLEMENTARY LITERATURE AS A TOOL OF ANALYSIS FOR THE INTELLECTUAL, POLITICAL, AND CULTURAL HISTORY OF GERMANY FROM 1870 TO THE PRESENT

Since traditional historical documents trend toward the political, the benefit of literary sources lie in their revelation of a society's cultural and intellectual evolution. Textual analysis of literary sources can be conducted systematically and thoroughly, or "scientifically," but perhaps not in the same way as traditional sources.[1] Subtle nuances of meaning, seemingly contrary to traditional history's matter-of-fact approach, can make the antiquated Rankean empiricist ill at ease in the literary world. But the quest for a more inclusive history, precisely the goal of modern, and now postmodern, historiography, grapples with the use of information from disciplines that disappeared long ago from the purview of those engaged in history-making.[2] This re-integration of literature and other "texts" with the processes of history-making has become a necessary part of the historian's methodology.

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[1]See "Source Typologies, Their Evolution and Complementarity" and "Source Criticism: The Great Tradition" in Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2001), 20-27, 60-68.

[2]For example, "In most fields of intellectual and artistic culture, twentieth-century Europe and America learned to think without history. The very word 'modernism' has come to distinguish our lives and times from what had gone before, from history as a whole, as such. Modern architecture, modern music, modern science–all these have defined themselves not so much *out* of the past, indeed scarcely *against* the past, but detached from it in a new, autonomous cultural space. The modern mind grew indifferent to history, for history, conceived as a continuous nourishing tradition, became useless to its projects. Postmodernism, to be sure, has found uses for elements of the past in its own constructions and deconstructions. But even as it consigns modernism to the past, it reaffirms as its own modernism's rupture from history as continuous process, as the platform of its own intellectual identity." Carl E. Schorske, *Thinking with History: Exploration in the Passage to Modernism* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), 3-4.

National history, like that of Germany, presumes a political nature but can be undertaken from an ethnic or cultural center. The narrative of the unified German people since 1870 can be divided into three separate periods: (1) the causes of truth and national unity, 1870 to 1890; (2) the discovery of economic dynamics and the shift to "other" histories (for example, economic or Marxist, social, macro/micro), 1890 to 1920; and (3) the transformations of German history after the Great War (World War I) and World War II.[3] A survey of various literary works, along with their strengths and weaknesses, will follow this general outline.

A number of important writers of literature about cultural and social developments of a unified Germany challenge the "truth" of the German nation and the primacy of Prussian autocracy. The writings of German novelist and social critic Thomas Mann certainly refine the sense of *Volk*, especially in light of broader European culture.[4] His application of mythology to modern cultural and social issues give his analysis of the soul or inner self a remarkably symbolic, but ambiguous, outlook. The limits of his writings, from 1897 to 1954, place Mann personally in the middle of or even in the last chronological period above. But as a counter force to earlier Victorian ideology, nationalism, and hypocritical bourgeois values, Mann is without peer. For example, his "Mario and the Magician" laughs at autocratic misuse of power (e.g., by Cipolla) and its nationalistic props. And his "Disorder and Early Sorrow" scoffs at the static

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[3]See Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, & Modern*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

[4]See the insightful remarks on *Volk* and *Staat* in J. W. Burrow, "Nation and State in Germany," *The Crisis of Reason: European Thought, 1848-1914* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2000), 132-136.

view of history (e.g., by Professor Cornelius) in light of Weimar's socioeconomic upheavals.[5] The value in Mann's critiques comes from the power inherent in story-telling and his overlay of symbols, use of double-entendre, and heightened but guarded sexual implications. Mann captures well the "feeling" part of the intellect. The disadvantages for traditional historical discourse, however, would come from Mann's discursive ambiguities and his reliance on psychological hermeneutics.

In the second period above, literary works explore the role of German women although in ways that typify traditional texts for political history. The Marxist version of history polarized the German people, and its women as well, into bourgeois and proletarian camps. And a big question for historians still concerns the role of Marxist thought versus industrialization and workers' consciousness in the processes of secularization.[6] Nevertheless, key feminists in Germany pushed for their increased involvement in the decision-making affairs of the state. According to Amy Hackett, this created two distinct women's movements–bourgeois and Social Democratic. Hackett synthesizes the thinking of women leaders during the Wilhelmine era and concludes that, regardless of affiliation, the women's movement was a "liberal" movement. While she acknowledges the desire of German women, in contrast to American women, to cultivate maternal and nurturing qualities, she centers her discussion on the body politic (i.e.,

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[5]Thomas Mann, *Death in Venice and Seven Other Stories*, trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter (1930; rpt., New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 133-178, 179-213.

[6]See, for instance, Owen Chadwick, "Karl Marx" and "The Attitudes of the Worker" in *The Secularization of the European Mind in the 19th Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 48-106.

suffrage, citizenship issues, legal rights).[7] Though missing the charm of story telling or the persuasion of individual rhetoric, the value of synthesis to provide detailed analysis, contextual meaning, or quick summary is apparent.

Two readings from primary, but political, source documents come from Clara Zetkin's statement "On a Bourgeois Feminist Petition" and Rosa Luxemburg's pamphlet "Crisis in the German Social Democracy."[8] Both are to be seen as protests against what is perceived to be socialist concessions to bourgeois and anti-feminist authority. In her role as editor of the paper *Gleichheit* ("Equality"), Zetkin strongly appealed for non-cooperation with those who appeared to be caving in to bourgeois, anti-socialist values. Luxemburg, as well as Zetkin, had opposed Eduard Bernstein's earlier modifications to the Marxist theory of history based on capitalist adaptations toward social reform in certain industrial countries.[9] By 1915, Luxemburg, who was in prison for anti-war activities, issued a staunch call for revolutionary resolve on the part of the proletariat. While limited to one person's thinking and raising questions about the larger context, these rhetorical pieces illustrate the power of sustained and passionate argument, particularly about a political matter.

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[7]Amy Hackett, "Feminism and Liberalism in Wilhelmine Germany, 1890-1918," *Liberating Women's History: Theoretical and Critical Essays*, ed. Berenice A. Carroll (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1976), 127-136.

[8]Jan Goldstein and John W. Boyer, eds., *Nineteenth-Century Europe: Liberalism and Its Critics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 538-544; Frederick C. Giffin, ed., *Woman As Revolutionary* (New York: Mentor Books, 1973), 156-166.

[9]Breisach, *Historiography*, 298.

For the third period above, many literary works, without espousing "the historiographical mastery of the German catastrophe" (e.g., the Critical School of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer),[10] highlight pros and cons of "quasi-status quo" history from 1918 to 1933, fascist historiography, and the Nazi reinterpretation. The dehumanizing effect of the Great War's carnage finds its classic expression in Erich Maria Remarque's war novel *All Quiet on the Western Front*. The novel does what no memoir could do and what no previous war story had done–that is, tell the gruesome tale from a consistent and thoroughgoing antiwar perspective yet from common soldiers of the *Vaterland* who suffered as a result of their naivety, patriotism, and zeal.[11] The tension in Remarque's narrative is captivating, but the novel's chief value rests in its opening of windows of meaning, thought, and expression that were impossible for participants both during and right after the war.[12]

In similar fashion, these "unspeakable" words about the Great War are given expression in collections of war poems from veterans that appeared soon after the war and well into the next decade. The curative function of poetry, with its poignant and surreal depictions of the horrors of death and destruction, effected catharsis for the authors. Readers thereby gain some sense, in limited measure to be sure, of the depth of feeling that overwhelmed those who experienced the unspeakable. This emphasizes the value of poetry as an important expressive mode for historical discourse. But the language of poetry is heightened. So exaggeration beyond literalness is to be

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[10]Ibid., 378-385.

[11]Contrast Ernst Juenger's *The Storm of Steel from the Diary of a German Storm-Troop Officer on the Western Front* (1929; rpt., New York: Howard Fertig, 1996).

[12]In fact, Nazi neo-nationalists banned and burnt Remarque's novel as well as his sequel, *The Road Back*.

expected, even though there can be no overstatement, from the viewpoint of most participants, of the horribleness of World War I.

This is what makes so remarkable the suppression of testimony from women who suffered from the war just as significantly as soldiers yet in "different" ways.[13] They, like Remarque, were censored but doubly so–first by Weimar's socialist leaders and then by the Nazis. Dorothy Goldman gathers the impressive evidence, from non-academic sources (e.g., museum exhibitions and television dramas), that seeks to reverse what she calls a dangerous exclusion. Her work synthesizes evidence for this important correction, but she notes the essentiality of non-traditional sources, and even appropriate aesthetic and linguistic modes, for the holistic study of history and cultural formation of values.[14]

To some extent, Berta Lask and others through poetry, letters, and memoirs critiqued the war through the ideas of German Expressionism. Agnes Cardinal observes, "Indeed, the expressionist's way of communicating existential anguish through intense physicality of gesture and image was to offer a singularly appropriate aesthetic mode for all Germany's war poets." In addition, pacifist dissent by women socialists came from the analytical writings of Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxemburg and even a novel "Lay Down Your Arms!" (*Die Waffen nieder!*) by Bertha

[13]For example, compare the mass demonstrations by women in Berlin toward the end of the war, something the government could not ignore. Belinda Davis, *Homes Fires Burning: Food, Politics, and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

[14]Dorothy Goldman, ed., "Introduction," *Women and World War 1: The Written Response* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 1-13.

von Suttner.[15] These types of literature, an important record for historical discourse, reveal the feelings of those who generally have been silenced by status quo politicians.

Finally, there is considerable analysis from a variety of literary resources of the Third Reich and its politics and diplomacy, its social groups, and its cultural life.[16] Special concerns of women under Nazi rule and Russian occupation also are examined.[17] These well-written syntheses make use of primary sources such as government documents, books, diaries, memoirs, newspapers, and film. Mass media and visual representation in the twentieth-century gave governments, groups, and individuals more options regarding communication. Thus, Julius Streicher can spew venomous antisemitism not only in his newspaper *Der Sturmer* but also in a children's storybook he published titled *Der Giftpilz* (*The Poison Mushroom*).[18] And Bertolt

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[15]Agnes Cardinal, "Women on the Other Side," in Goldman, ed., *Women and World War I*, 31-50.

[16]See Gerhard L. Weinberg, *Germany, Hitler and World War II: Essays in Modern Germany and World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Marian Kaplan, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); George L. Mosse, *Nazi Culture: Intellectual, Cultural, and Social Life in the Third Reich* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003); Robert G. L. Waite, ed., *Hitler and Nazi Germany* (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1965).

[17]Adelheid von Saldern, "Victims or Perpetrators? Controversies about the Role of Women in the Nazi State," in David F. Crew, ed., *Nazism and German Society, 1933-1945* (Newburyport, Massachusetts: Routledge, 1994); Atina Grossman, "A Question of Silence: The Rape of German Women by Soviet Occupation Soldiers," in Nicole Dombrowski, ed., *Women and War in the Twentieth Century: Enlisted With or Without Consent* (Newburyport, Massachusetts: Routledge, 2004).

[18]"Der Giftpilz," The John and Molly Pollock Holocaust Collection, Centennial College Libraries (Toronto, Ontario: Centennial College, 2007), online at: <http://libraryapps.centennialcollege.ca/holocaust_pollock/selected_materials/before_the_war/der_giftpilz/her_giftpilz.htm> (accessed May 11, 2017).

Brecht can challenge Nazi propaganda in a series of playlets that powerfully expose what the Third Reich is all about–*Furcht und Elend* (or, fear and misery).[19] Just as Streicher's object lesson would appeal to all ages but especially to impressionable children, Brecht's plays would convey a sense of entertainment to the child's mind but profound lessons to those who cared to ponder their meanings. As mediums of communication, both storybook and playlet have the advantage of serving a dual role with surface and underlying meanings. And because each can conceal as well as reveal, they make the historian's task more challenging.

Literary works, as well as visual "texts" and artifacts, have become an important part of the historian's sources. The thorough researcher can no longer be content to examine only political texts for national histories. Literary works can open windows of meaning on cultural, economic, social, and even political aspects of a nation's past. In some ways, they may reveal more accurately what a nation as a composite entity believed and thought, and, consequently, why and how they acted.

[19]Bertolt Brecht, *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich*, trans. John Willett (London: Methuen Publishing, 2002).