but also that only through German entanglement was Georgia's independence from Russia and Turkey possible.

Giorgi Astamadze's book provides a welcome, multifaceted, and archivally grounded perspective on the opportunities, challenges, and choices confronting German and Georgian leaders in that pivotal year. His work enriches our understanding of the tumultuous "continuum of crisis" faced by the Caucasian borderlands, as well as the possibilities – and limits – of new diplomatic alignments in the face of war.

doi:10.1017/S0008938924000244

Oswald Spengler and the Politics of Decline

By Ben Lewis. New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2022. Pp. 238. Hardcover $135.00. ISBN: 978-1800735743.

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After reading Ben Lewis's revealing book one might be tempted to refer to Oswald Spengler as the original *influencer* of the German right. An auto-didact and self-styled philosopher prone to vast generalizations, Spengler was not, according to Lewis, any lone brooder given to "quirks and idiosyncrasies" but was "one of the best-connected thinkers of his time" (25). Spengler was a "celebrity" and "networker within [conservative] circles" of the 1920s until his death in 1936 (115). Spengler made these connections based on the enormous success of his book *The Decline of the West* (two volumes, 1918 and 1922), which was "critically received and discussed by Theodor W. Adorno, Ernst Bloch, T.S. Eliot, Georg Lukács, Thomas Mann, Arnold Toynbee and many others" (1). By 1933, Spengler had enough intellectual and political clout to secure an audience with Hitler and to turn down jobs from the universities of Leipzig and Freiburg.

Lewis presents Spengler as a "*political philosopher*," for whom these "two facets of his thought are integrated" (119, italics are in the original). Furthering our "understanding of Spengler the politician" is the most significant contribution of Lewis's study, revealing Spengler to be a pragmatic and adaptable politician capable of withstanding and producing contradictions (174). However, in his attempts to situate Spengler within the entangled world of *völkisch*, antisemitic, and National Socialist thinking, Lewis does not reveal the same subtle understanding for the ideological tensions and contradictions which marked the German conservatism of Spengler's heyday.

Lewis speaks repeatedly of "a racist *völkisch* ideology" (123) and assumes that it is the precursor to the biological racism of Nazi Germany. Consequently, Lewis reduces the diversity of forms of Nazi racism and thus makes the shortsighted claim that Spengler's "theory of race [is] distinct from that of the National Socialists" (95). Nazi policy and propaganda cultivated at least three strands of racism, and Spengler aligns with two of them. In the Nazi era, many intellectuals adhered to a *völkisch* vision of racism that was, as Lewis describes Spengler, "historical-metaphysical" in nature (164). Second, there was the "skull-measuring racism of the National Socialists," which flourished alongside metaphysical-mystical racism under entities such as the *Ahnenerbe* foundation (164). However, as the contributors to the 2017 volume *Beyond the Racial State: Rethinking Nazi Germany* show, many Nazi leaders were skeptical of these biological conceptions of race. Third, there was the biopolitical racism of Nazism's

depopulation and repopulation projects documented by Götz Aly and Susanne Heim in *Architects of Annihilation: Auschwitz and the Logic of Destruction* (2003). Lewis acknowledges briefly that Spengler tied "fertility and birth rates" to the "'inner health and living body of the German people'" (19), yet fails to trace this strand of racism in the Nazi period, stating simply that "Spengler consistently rejected the biological anti-Semitism of many on the German right" (5). This only tells part of Spengler's story.

Spengler adhered to a metaphysical concept of race and a eugenic racism of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. In *The Hour of Decision* (1934), which Lewis analyzes at length, Spengler provides valuable theoretical resources for precisely the third type of populational racism:

> The trivial doctrine of Malthus, preached everywhere today, which extols barrenness as progress, only proves that these intellectuals have no "race". . . A woman of race does not desire to be a "companion" or a "lover," but a mother; and not the mother of one child, to serve as a toy and distraction, but of many: the instinct of a strong race speaks in the pride that large families inspire, in the feeling that barrenness is the hardest curse that can befall a woman and through her the race. (356)

Spengler here defends forms of racism and misogyny which are not *merely* National Socialist. However, there is no intellectually defensible definition of "Nazi" that does not include these aspects of Spengler's racism. Indeed, what is most troubling about Spengler's philosophy is that it could be at home under both fascism and democracy. It is thus shortsighted to characterize Spengler as the beneficiary of the "'blessing of an early death' . . . freed from the burden of having to make difficult moral and political choices" (23). Moreover, Lewis does not at all analyze the gendered notion of Spengler's "woman of race."

The most disappointing aspect of Lewis's book involves his treatment of Sebastian Maaß's 2013 work *Oswald Spengler. Eine politische Biographie*, published by the respected press Duncker & Humblot. In a 2013 review on the respected German-language platform H-Net, the historian Volker Weiß identified significant academic shortcomings in Maaß's historical methodology. Maaß, according to Weiß, primarily based his interpretation on the works of far-right publishing houses, rendering the book "a monologue among the extreme right." Consequently, Duncker & Humblot pulped the book. While Lewis briefly mentions this controversy, he quickly moves on and treats Maaß as an equal academic interlocutor. In a parenthetical remark, Lewis states: "(Weiß's accusation is certainly justified, but whether censorship is the most effective form of combating the ideology of a regime characterized by extreme censorship is another matter.)" (37)

Leaving aside the discussion of whether the affirmation of academic standards is a meaningful definition of censorship, Lewis's rehabilitation of Maaß raises fundamental questions. Certainly, the far-right reception of Spengler after 1945 deserves academic attention. Unfortunately, however, Lewis overlooks the reasons why Spengler would appear in volumes such as Mark Sedgwick's 2019 collection *Key Thinkers of the Radical Right: Behind the New Threat to Liberal Democracy* or the 1997 volume by Kurt Lenk et. al., *Vordenker der Neuen Rechten*. Spengler remains a fruitful intellectual source among far-right influencers who contribute to the conferences, journals, and published works of—to give but one example—the entities attached to the German *Institut für Staatspolitik*. Should not a full survey of the Germanophone and Anglophone literature on Spengler include the New Right's reception of Spengler?

Instead of providing such a survey, Ben Lewis merely rehabilitates Maaß's substandard work without taking it for what it is: the tip of a far-right iceberg. Among the Germanophone far right, Spengler remains the influencer extraordinaire precisely because he offers a population-level and metaphysical vision of race which—in the space of a motivated bad-faith discussion—can be presented as independent from National Socialism. Far from any form of censorship, Lewis could have undertaken the much-needed intellectual service of placing Spengler within a much longer arc of German conservatism, passing

through Armin Mohler and the postwar whitewashing construct of the Conservative Revolution to the contemporary far right.

doi:10.1017/S000893892400027X

In Hitler's Munich: Jews, the Revolution, and the Rise of Nazism

By Michael Brenner. Translated by Jeremiah Riemer. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2022. Pp. 392. Hardcover $35.00. ISBN: 978-0691191034.

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It is well known that there was a radicalization of antisemitism in Germany during and after the First World War. In his new book, Michael Brenner, the holder of one of the very few chairs for Jewish history and culture in Germany, provides a new history of this moment of accelerated antisemitism. Concentrating on the city of Munich, it is a welcome addition to literature on the Weimar Republic, antisemitism in Germany, and the longer-term origins of the Third Reich.

In Hitler's Munich begins with a chapter on the perspectives offered by a history of the 1918-1919 revolution that focuses on Jews. The author starts with careful observations about terminology and the problem of writing a history of identities that were in a state of flux. As Brenner points out, some of the key protagonists in the revolutionary experiments of 1918-1919 had little enthusiasm for their Jewish origins, while many Bavarian Jews aspired to the fullest integration within Bavarian and German culture. Some of them responded to their othering by pointing out that they spoke German with Bavarian dialects.

This conceptual work is followed by a succinct introduction to the history of Jews in Munich before the First World War. The book's second chapter is its longest: it offers a sequence of biographies of Jewish protagonists in the revolutionary period, introducing readers to the life histories of such key figures as Kurt Eisner, Gustav Landauer, Erich Mühsam, Ernst Toller, and Eugen Leviné, while also providing important contextual information upon Munich's Jewish communities' rejection of the councils' republic and Jewish roles in opposing it.

After introducing readers to Jewish involvement in the revolution, the next three chapters focus on the antisemitic backlash that followed. They are broadly chronological and cover events from 1918-1919 until 1923, the year when Thomas Mann famously defined Munich as the "city of Hitler." Much of the outline of the story these chapters tell is already known to specialists. But there is no single other work that brings these histories together in such a coherent manner. Brenner also draws upon original research to add important new details. His book is particularly good on the treatment of Jewish migrants, the so-called Eastern Jews (Ostjuden), who arrived in Munich during and after the First World War. Their presence in the city provided new layers to the racist scripts used to justify discrimination by Munich's antisemites. The increased antisemitism culminated with the deportation of Jews from Bavaria in the autumn of 1923. Brenner's account includes chilling analysis of unsuccessful attempts to oppose the rise in antisemitism. It is also filled with examples of