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The Narcissistic Ethnic Community

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but he also criticizes the contention that the failure of Weimar democracy and the establishment of the Third Reich were somehow preordained by the specific contours of German political life of the previous century.

Retallack's study of Saxony in the Second Empire reminds us that the political situation of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was far more fluid and open to multiple possible outcomes than recent scholarship has been willing to admit. The final result is a reading of the recent German past that places Retallack's *Red Saxony* on the cutting edge of political history and how it should be written—with multiple methodologies, command of the sources, a sense of nuance and discernment, and a sensitivity to the different ways in which the material in question can be interpreted.

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FELIX RÖMER. *Die narzisstische Volksgemeinschaft: Theodor Habichts Kampf, 1914 bis 1944*. (Die Zeit des Nationalsozialismus.) Frankfurt: S. Fischer Verlag, 2017. Pp. 398. €24.30.

At first glance, Felix Römer's *Die narzisstische Volksgemeinschaft: Theodor Habichts Kampf, 1914 bis 1944*, is a readable and well-researched case study in two directions: First, it provides insights into a Nazi officer's reflections, experiences, and perceptions of the Wehrmacht's campaign in the Soviet Union, based on the 1,500 pages of a diary written between June 1941 and January 1944 by Theodor Habicht (1898–1944). This diary, kept in the Federal Archives of Germany's Department Military Archives in Freiburg, is already remarkable because it is so far the only known larger ego document written by a high-ranking Nazi from the eastern front. It is a pity that the whole text has not been edited until now and that so far just some pages have been published (301–327).

Second, Römer's book is a biography of Habicht, who is a relatively unknown yet typical and "ordinary" Nazi official—which allows for conclusions to be drawn about the Nazi elites in general. In July 1926, Habicht joined the Nazi Party and helped the Nazis to win elections in Wiesbaden. In July 1934, he was the mastermind behind the (failed) coup attempt in Vienna against the Austrian government, which led to the assassination of the Austrian chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss. Supported by Hitler, Habicht became mayor of the cities of Wittenberg and Koblenz. At the end of 1939, he was awarded the position of undersecretary of state in the German Foreign Office. Yet after Habicht had several conflicts in the ministry, Hitler finally dropped him. Habicht became one of the very few high Nazi officials acting as a front officer in the eastern campaign of the Wehrmacht. Between June 1941 and January 1944 (when he was killed near Nevel, Russia) Habicht wrote his diary.

In addition to researching Habicht's diary, Römer investigates various sources on Habicht's experiences at the front; he also examines Habicht's political career and brings together material from twenty-four archives and libraries. In three major chapters, Römer sums up his analyses: the first chapter reflects "the culture of narcissism" as a shadow over Habicht's life and career, also analyzing his self-staging, his attitude toward status, and his sense of entitlement; in the second chapter, Römer reflects on how this typical narcissism of many representatives of the Nazi elite fit into the system of *Volksgemeinschaft* (or the people's community) imagined as an egalitarian social and political principle; and in the third chapter, the author analyzes everyday life in the war and Habicht's perception of it.

At a second glance, Römer goes far beyond his case study; he delivers much more than another detailed account about the rise of the Nazi Party, its protagonists, and their later war experiences. He uses Habicht as an example to develop the thesis of the "narcissistic *Volksgemeinschaft*." Römer draws attention to a remarkable and fundamental paradox inside the Nazi principle of *Volksgemeinschaft*—a paradox that has been so far little discussed in previous research. On the one hand, *Volksgemeinschaft* was conceptualized as a way to elevate the idea of the collective as the highest social value, where the individual is nothing and where the collective "Volk," or people, is everything. On the other hand, many leading and outstanding members of *Volksgemeinschaft* shared a feeling of uniqueness and believed that they had "outstanding personalities" (11). However, this paradoxical tension and the associated inner contradictions did not undermine the principle of *Volksgemeinschaft*. On the contrary, and following Römer, narcissism was constituted by the intense social pressure of the requirements of belonging to the *Volksgemeinschaft*—such as the willingness of individuals to sacrifice themselves and to abandon individual claims. Even self-abandonment could be seen as an example for other *Volksgenossen* (national comrades), conveying to men like Habicht that they are outstanding personalities, role models, and leaders. With these assumptions, Römer supports and enriches Moritz Föllmer's previous reflections about the tensions of "conceptions of individuality and community ideology" as mobilizing social principles in Nazi Germany (33, my translation).

I have two critical points to address about this book. First, there are references missing to methodological reflections about the analysis of ego documents like Habicht's diary. More references to the research could help scholars reconstruct and investigate the cultural patterns, writing culture, and genres of diaries in Nazi Germany. Thus, Römer describes that Habicht communicated with his wife through his diary entries, a typical bourgeois practice of self-assurance, in which since the nineteenth century (as research on ego documents has

shown) social hierarchies, values, and gender roles have been negotiated. Although Römer refers to Ernst Jünger's 1920 *The Storm of Steel* (*In Stahlgewittern*), which could have been a model for Habicht's writings, Römer does not systematically pursue this observation. Intertextual analyses, however, would have allowed Römer to develop a deeper argument about the self-assuring strategies of the Nazi elite in the war.

My second point of criticism relates to Römer's handling of psychological and psychiatric labeling, and above all his handling of the label "narcissism." On the one hand, it is quite refreshing to read how Römer measures the psyche of his protagonist with the Narcissistic Personality Inventory or the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (12–19). On the other hand, this speaks to an affirmative and uncritical trust and belief in psychological diagnoses and measurements, which can be mirrored in remarks like "the narcissistic belief in one's self [would have been] an integral part of the charisma fundamental for the power techniques of Hitler and his followers" (29, my translation). These, and some more similar conclusions, bring Römer's analyses quite close to older, controversial, and nowadays quite outdated psychohistory.

These criticisms aside, Römer's *Die narzisstische Volksgemeinschaft* is a readable, fresh, innovative, inspiring, and well-researched and well-written book about the mental conditions of Nazis, which will—without any doubts—push forward future debates.

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ANDREAS KILLEN. *Homo Cinematicus: Science, Motion Pictures, and the Making of Modern Germany*. (Intellectual History of the Modern Age.) Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017. Pp. 268. Cloth \$69.95.

In *Homo Cinematicus: Science, Motion Pictures, and the Making of Modern Germany*, Andreas Killen brings together important but seemingly unrelated topics from the first few decades of the twentieth century in Germany—just as he did in his 2006 *Berlin Electropolis: Shock, Nerves, and German Modernity*. He draws important links between the "human sciences," documentary and feature film, cultural reform movements, traditional and alternative medicine, and censorship. The book begins with the development of film in the 1890s and ends with the Nazi regime's use of "scientific" films during World War II.

Conservative writer Wilhelm Stapel's 1919 concept of "homo cinematicus" serves as multivalent inspiration for Killen. On the one hand, and after the Great War, this particular euphemism for the "mass man" highlighted broad concern in Germany about film's suggestive power to weaken citizens (2). At the same time, the term invoked the expansive ability of film to

share scientific advancements that could improve the average German. This tension forms the book's core thesis. Cinema defined and reflected new scientific thought after 1900 but also served as publicly accessible means for judging or even rejecting science.

The book "connects the emergence of cinema as a social institution with an inquiry into the history of knowledge and theory production in the emerging human sciences" (16). Killen thus follows two strands of thought: the development of "new sciences" focused on human behavior (15), and cinema's growth into the leading form of mass culture. Killen uses several important films, various commentators, and government policies to connect these two developments. Overall the argument works well, even if it occasionally relies upon assumptive, associative links and makes a few leaps in coverage. Weaving together these two developments is the book's most important contribution to our understanding of modern Germany, and the conclusions apply to other countries as well. The book's argument about German political history—that the chaos of the Weimar Republic led to the regulations of the Third Reich—reinforces the broad contours of scholarship about interwar Germany. But Killen also demonstrates that this shift was neither inevitable nor complete. The chaotic and contested nature of opinions about film and science continued well into the World War II era.

Killen develops his analysis through a wide-ranging introduction, five chapters on specific topics, and a brief conclusion. The introduction, "Human Science and Cinema in Germany after the Great War," underscores the transformative impact of World War I on both film and human sciences. That transformation fused film and science in government regulation and popular imagination. Various agents—scientists, filmmakers, government policymakers—all used film to promote and adjudicate science as a means to regulate human behavior. Chapter 1, "Cinema and the Visual Culture of the Human Sciences," delves deeper into film's contested role in popular imagination. For example, the image of the scientist in German film from the 1910s to the 1940s remained potent yet ambiguous. Educational documentaries particularly helped bolster psychiatric science as a new way to regulate and improve human behavior. However, the recurring image of the "mad scientist" in feature film undermined this authority. That protean trope worked because it showed that nefarious scientists might use cinema to urge bad behavior—a fear reinforced by the social and political upheaval of the Weimar period. And the medium was the message: experts in lab coats could demonstrate science on screen, but they might also use film to influence or even hypnotize viewers. The distance therefore was all too short between the somnambulist feature film *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) and the Third Reich-sponsored eugenics documentary *The Inheritance* (1935).

Chapter 2 expands on the role of the scientific expert