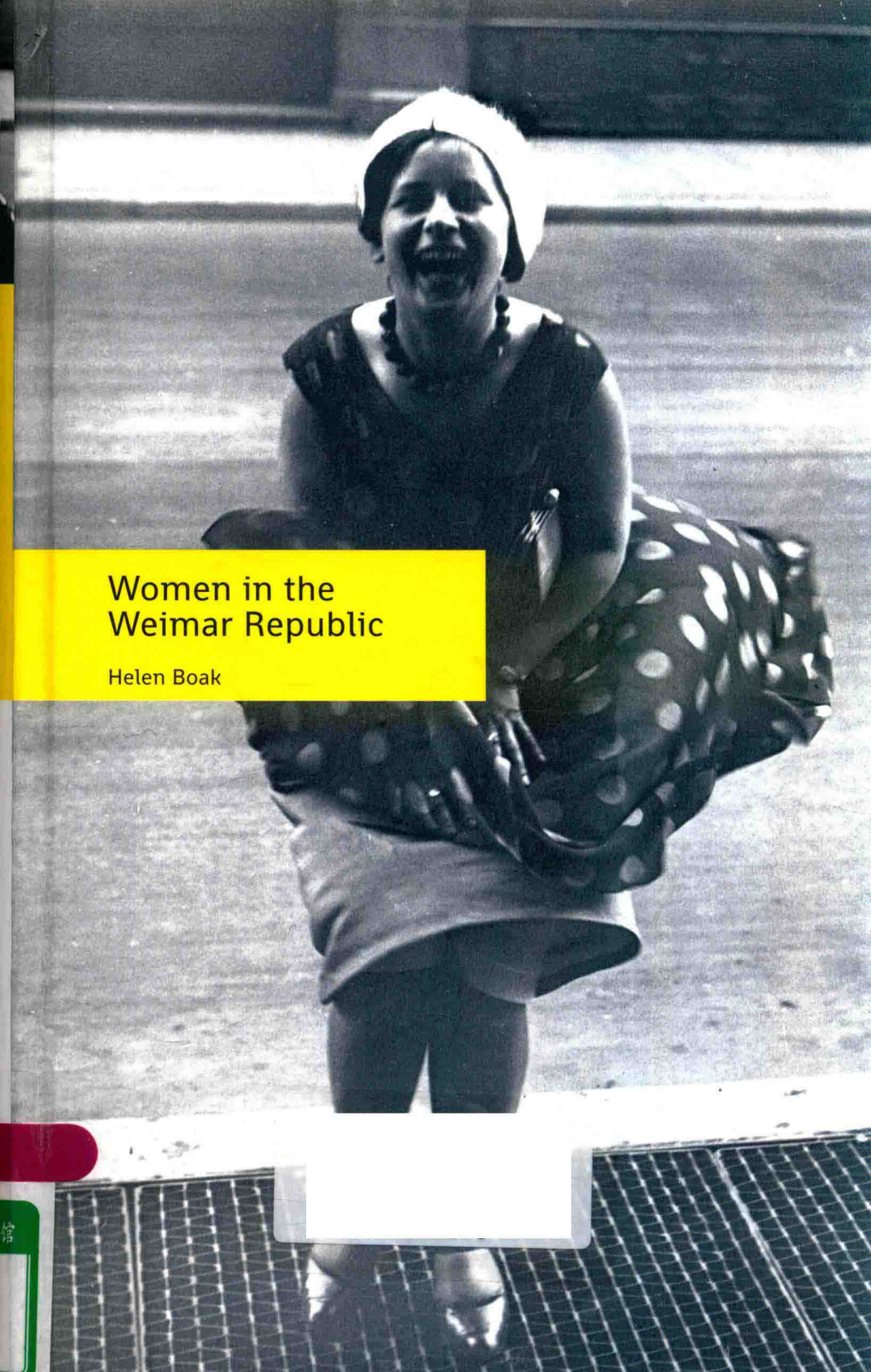

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Abbreviations

ADEF	Archive of the German Protestant Women's League, Archive of the German Women's Movement, Kassel
ADLV	General German Women Teachers' Association
AKDFB	Archive of the German Catholic Women's League, Cologne
BAB	Federal Archives Berlin
BAK	Federal Archives Koblenz
BdÄ	Federation of German Female Physicians
BdF	Federation of German Women's Associations
BfM	League for the Protection of Mothers
BKL	Queen Luise League
BVP	Bavarian People's Party
DAB	German Federation of Female Academics
DDP	German Democratic Party
DEF	German Protestant Women's League
DFBK	German Women's Committee to Combat the War Guilt Lie
DFK	German Women's Fighting League
DFO	German Women's Order
DNHV	German National Commercial Employees' Association
DNVP	German National People's Party
DStP	German State Party
DVP	German People's Party
GdA	Trade Union of White-Collar Workers
GLA	Generallandesarchiv, Karlsruhe
HLA	Helene Lange Archive, Berlin (in LAB)
ICW	International Council of Women
IFFF	International Women's League for Peace and Freedom, German branch

IWSA	International Women's Suffrage Alliance
KdF	Strength through Joy
KFB	Catholic Women's League
KPD	German Communist Party
LAB	State Archives, Berlin
NFD	National Women's Service
NLB	New Land Movement
NSDAP	National Socialist German Workers' Party
NSF	National Socialist Women's Organisation
RFMB	Red Women's and Girls' League
RNF	Ring of National Women
SdR	Statistisches Reichsamt, *Statistik des Deutschen Reiches*
SPD	German Social Democratic Party
StAH	Staatsarchiv Hamburg
StJhb	*Statistisches Jahrbuch für das Deutsche Reich*
USPD	German Independent Social Democratic Party
VEFD	Union of German Protestant Women's Organisations
VRT	Association of German Female Reich Postal and Telegraph Civil Servants
Z	The German Centre Party
ZdA	Central Union of White-Collar Workers
ZStA	Zentrales Staatsarchiv Potsdam

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Introduction

The Weimar Republic, fourteen years of turbulent political, economic, social and cultural change, has attracted significant attention from historians, primarily because they are seeking to explain the Nazis' accession to power in 1933. In their search for continuities in German history, German historians in the 1960s and 1970s espoused the view that Germany had followed a special path, a *Sonderweg*, in which, following the failure of bourgeois liberals to unify Germany in 1848, the German nation-state created by Prussian military might in 1871 remained a politically and socially backward country with an authoritarian monarch and influential pre-industrial elites as the country underwent rapid economic and industrial development.[1] The late Detlev Peukert challenged this view and emphasised Germany's modernity, rather than its backwardness. He portrayed the Weimar Republic as 'a critical phase in the era of "classical modernity"' which began in the 1890s, and as 'a crisis-racked, modernising society'.[2] As Edward Ross Dickinson has noted, 'Germany appears here not as a nation having trouble modernising, but as a nation of troubling modernity.'[3] Peukert's interpretation stimulated further historical engagement with the semantics and notions of crisis and, to a lesser extent, modernity, and as a corollary encouraged historians to explore the Weimar Republic for its own sake, rather than as a precursor to the Third Reich.[4] In 2005 German historians noted that the word 'crisis', which featured in the titles of more than 370 books published during the Republic, was understood by contemporaries to mean a 'time of decision', with a choice between possible outcomes, and this openness about the future was, according to Rüdiger Graf, fundamental to the Republic which he describes as 'an open space of multiple developmental opportunities'.[5] Peukert himself noted that 'in a mere fourteen years nearly

all the possibilities of modern existence were played out', and Peter Fritzsche has also referred to the Republic as 'a series of bold experiments' and as a time when 'nothing was certain and everything possible'.[6] This book seeks to explore the opportunities and possibilities that the Weimar Republic offered women.

Since the early 1970s, stimulated by the second-wave feminism of the 1960s, there has been a considerable increase in the number of works exploring women's experiences in the Weimar Republic, and many them have focused on the 'new woman'. For many, during the Republic and subsequently, the 'new woman' was a potent symbol of both Weimar's modernity and its crisis.[7] For some, she symbolised the opportunities offered by the Republic, for others its degeneracy, indicative of the contradictions inherent in modernity. Sporting a page-boy haircut, known in German as a *Bubikopf*, and a short skirt over her androgynous figure, she was economically independent and sexually emancipated. Her image featured prominently in popular culture, leading some to question to what extent the image reflected the actuality of women's lives during the Republic. Atina Grossmann is adamant: 'This New Woman was not merely a media myth or a demographer's paranoid fantasy, but a social reality that can be researched and documented.'[8] But who, precisely, was this 'new woman'? For Eric Weitz she was 'a class-bound image of middle- and upper-class women who had the independence and the means to pursue their interests and desires', while Grossmann comments: 'The "new woman" was not only the intellectual with masculine haircut and unisex suit or the young white-collar worker in flapper outfit so familiar to us from 1920s movies. She was also the young married factory worker who now cooked only one meal a day, no longer baked or canned, cut her hair short into a practical *Bubikopf*, and tried by all available means and at any price to keep her family small.'[9] Elizabeth Harvey has noted that 'any and every facet of "modern womanhood" became incorporated into the "new woman": "she" was both a devouring femme fatale and a cross-dressing lesbian, a sportswoman and an efficient housewife, a movie-going typist and a bluestocking student.'[10] Grossmann has seen in the 'new woman' a challenge to the 'old woman', who was the mother of several children, or the single feminist.[11] Cornelie Usborne, too, has emphasised the fundamental differences in the values and behaviour of women of different generations during the Republic.[12]

The proliferation and multiplicity of images of the 'new woman' in the middle years of the Weimar Republic attest to the increasing visibility of women in the workplace, outside the home, in the media, films, newspapers, illustrated magazines and political posters and on advertising hoardings. These images are more accessible to the historian than is the actuality of women's lives during the Republic, and this is one reason why there has been such a focus on the 'new woman' in the historiography and why cultural and art history studies of the representation and construction of women in popular culture abound, stimulated by Patrice Petro's exploration of the German cinema's attempt to address women as spectators.[13] The 'new woman', made flesh in the images of young, independent women working as shop assistants or typists and enjoying a myriad of leisure pursuits while being targeted by the advertising industry, was an urban phenomenon particularly prevalent in Berlin, a city which provides a wealth of resources for the historian. Julia Sneeringer's study of party-political propaganda aimed at women is based on Berlin, and Weitz has claimed in his history of Weimar Germany that 'Weimar was Berlin, Berlin Weimar.'[14] A concentration on Berlin downplays the significance of regionalism and religion in German history, and this book attempts to go beyond the boundaries of Berlin to seek evidence of the variety of women's experiences during the Weimar Republic, which were influenced not just by location, religion and age, but also by class, employment and marital status.

The 'new woman' is emblematic of a generation of young women who were able to take advantage of a range of opportunities and the relaxed social mores of the Weimar Republic to pursue the career of their choosing, to benefit from improved access to birth control so that they could control their fertility and plan their families, to venture unchaperoned outside the home, perhaps to partake of a range of recreational activities, to enjoy platonic friendships with members of the opposite sex, to talk openly about sexual matters with their partners and to participate fully in political life. The concept of the 'new woman' was a convenient target for those concerned about the continuing challenges to the pre-war gender order, which had first been undermined during the First World War, and in Birthe Kundrus's view, these challenges were perceived as 'an attack on male power and male identity'.[15] Other historians have alluded to a 'crisis of masculinity' brought about by the humiliation

of the defeat in the war, the physical and psychological scars caused by the war and fears and anxieties about the changes in the relationship between the sexes, in the home, the workplace and society at large.[16] The 'new woman' was also the target for nationalists who believed that her selfish reluctance to have children endangered the future of the German race.

Historians disagree on the extent to which the Weimar Republic was an emancipatory experience for women. 'Emancipation' is here understood to mean the setting free of women from all legal, moral and intellectual restraints which barred them from total equality with men. The early years of the Republic, 1918 and 1919, have been portrayed as a period of opportunity and great optimism for women, who now enjoyed full suffrage rights and whose equality with men was, in principle, enshrined in Article 109 of the Constitution of the German Reich of 11 August 1919.[17] This has been contrasted with both the 'intense unrelenting attack on women' towards the end of the Republic and the move to the right of the middle-class women's movement and the liberal parties.[18] With regard to employment, Renate Bridenthal believes that '"progress" for women in this era was dubious indeed', and that women were pushed 'even further toward the bottom of the skills-and-pay pyramid than before'.[19] She sees in the myth of women's economic emancipation a reason why women voted for conservative parties that promoted women's traditional role within the home. Elizabeth Bright Jones has linked women's economic exploitation to voting behaviour. In her exploration of female farm labour in Saxony she has noted how the government's failure to address the overburdening of farm wives was exploited by right-wing agrarian parties.[20] Jill Stephenson, Ursula Nienhaus and Doris Kampmann have explored the difficulties encountered by women wishing to pursue professional careers.[21] Historians who have researched population policy, abortion, contraception and sex reform have, however, highlighted the improvements in women's access to birth control and in their reproductive rights during the Republic.[22] Weitz regards the promotion of a responsible and pleasurable sex life for all as one of the Republic's radical accomplishments, though Grossmann has emphasised that most sex reformers were concerned primarily with improving the sex lives of married couples, attempting 'to reconcile the New Woman to marriage and motherhood by improving her sex life'.[23] They wished to stave off

the crisis in marriage and the family, as 'satisfying sex produced a better quality of offspring'.[24] Grossmann believes that 'birth control, abortion and sex education were first and foremost class and health issues, not women's issues'.[25] Julia Roos has, however, seen in the 1927 Law for Combating Venereal Diseases significant improvements in prostitutes' and women's rights.[26]

It is perhaps in the area of politics that most studies of women in the Weimar Republic are to be found. For many years Gabriele Bremme's 1956 study remained the only exploration of women's political role in the Weimar Republic.[27] In the 1970s historians began exploring the role of female politicians in the national parliament, the Reichstag, women's role in the German Social Democratic Party (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, SPD), the German Communist Party (Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands, KPD) and the pre-1933 Nazi movement, and the female vote, principally from the perspective of women's electoral contribution to the rise of the Nazis.[28] It was to be the 1990s before historians began investigating the role of women in the other major parties, the liberal German Democratic Party (Deutsche Demokratische Partei, DDP), the German People's Party (Deutsche Volkspartei, DVP) and the right-wing German National People's Party (Deutschnationale Volkspartei, DNVP).[29] In the 2000s several studies by female German historians focused on conservative women within the political parties and in nationalist organisations, and in his 2004 study of women within the DVP and DNVP, the American Raffael Scheck highlighted the differing responses of right-wing women to the rise of the Nazis, but noted that 'the efforts of DVP and DNVP women to mobilise conservative women for the nation and, in particular, the DNVP women's demonstrations that racial hygienic thought and Christianity were compatible may well have eased many women's decision to vote for the Nazis'.[30] In 2002 Sneeringer's study of party-political propaganda revealed how the parties constructed women as political actors, and Thomas Mergel explored the impact on Weimar's political culture of women's entry into parliament.[31] It is one of the aims of this book to provide a synthesis of recent research in German and to make it accessible to an English-speaking audience.

This book aims to build upon the existing scholarship to produce a comprehensive survey of women in the economy, politics and society of the Weimar Republic.[32] Eve Rosenhaft has suggested

that 'women *are* invisible unless we are looking straight at them',[33] and this book seeks to explore the diversity and multiplicity of women's experiences in Weimar Germany. The Republic was a post-war society, and an understanding of the significant impact that the First World War had on women and their roles in the economy and society is crucial for any interpretation of women in the Weimar Republic; this book, therefore, begins with a chapter on women and the First World War. It then seeks to explore to what extent the Weimar Republic was 'an open space of multiple developmental opportunities' for women and to consider the changes in women's roles, status and behaviour during the Republic and how these impacted on the gender order. Richard McCormick has argued that it was 'the blurring of traditionally gendered roles and behaviour' that 'was most emancipatory about Weimar culture', for women as well as men.[34] How accurate is Bridenthal's thesis that women actually made no progress, indeed went backwards, in the field of employment? What use did women make of their newly granted political rights? To what extent was the 'new woman' representative of women's experiences in the Weimar Republic? At its end, did German women experience the Nazi accession to power in 1933 as a rupture in their lives, as the outbreak of war in 1914 or its end and the revolution of 1918 had been? These are some of the questions to which this book hopes to provide the answers.

The archival material for this book has been collected over a number of years, principally from the Federal Archives in Koblenz and Berlin, the Zentrales Staatsarchiv Potsdam in the former German Democratic Republic, the Helene-Lange-Archiv, now housed in the Landesarchiv Berlin, the archives of the German Protestant Women's League, now housed in the Archiv der Deutschen Frauenbewegung in Kassel, the archives of the German Catholic Women's League in Cologne and a variety of smaller archives.[35] Historians of modern Germany are fortunate to have a range of official statistical publications at their disposal, and during the Weimar Republic several surveys, by professional organisations, trade unions and social scientists, were conducted into the lives of working women. In addition, numerous women's magazines give information about women's position in society, the activities of various women's organisations and issues of topical interest. These primary sources, together with the considerable number of second-

ary studies that have appeared since 1970, form the basis for this interpretation of women in the Weimar Republic.

Notes

1 The key text is H.-U. Wehler, *The German Empire 1871–1918* (Leamington Spa: Berg, 1985). The German edition appeared in 1973. Wehler's thesis attracted criticism from British and American historians: R. J. Evans (ed.), *Society and Politics in Wilhelmine Germany* (London: Croom Helm, 1978); D. Blackbourn and G. Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

2 Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, trans. R. Deveson (London: Allen Lane, 1991), p. xiii. For Peukert the Third Reich was 'one of the pathological development forms of modernity': Detlev Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life*, trans. R. Deveson (London: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 249.

3 E. R. Dickinson, 'Biopolitics, Fascism, Democracy: Some Reflections on our Discourse about "Modernity"', *Central European History*, 37:1 (2004), 5.

4 For the ambiguities of modernity see A. McElligott (ed.), *Weimar Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). See also P. Fritzsche, 'Did Weimar Fail?', *Journal of Modern History*, 68:3 (1996), 629–56.

5 M. Föllmer and R. Graf (eds), *Die 'Krise' der Weimarer Republik: Zur Kritik eines Deutungsmusters* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2005), p. 10; R. Graf, 'Either-Or: The Narrative of "Crisis" in Weimar Germany and its Historiography', *Central European History*, 43 (2010), 593.

6 D. Peukert, 'The Weimar Republic – Old and New Perspectives', *German History*, 6:2 (1988), 139; Fritzsche, 'Did Weimar Fail?', 633, 647.

7 A. Grossmann, *Reforming Sex: The German Movement for Birth Control and Abortion Reform, 1920–1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 5.

8 A. Grossmann, '*Girlkultur* or Thoroughly Rationalised Female: A New Woman in Weimar Germany?', in J. Friedlander, B. W. Cook, A. Kessler-Harris and C. Smith-Rosenberg (eds), *Women in Culture and Politics: A Century of Change* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), p. 64.

9 E. D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 307; A. Grossmann, 'Crisis, Reaction, and Resistance: Women in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s',