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Carol Anne Costabile-Heming, Rachel J. Halverson, Kristie A. Foell, eds. *Berlin–The Symphony Continues: Orchestrating Architectural, Social, and Artistic Change in Germany's New Capital.* Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2004. x + 328 pp. Euro 88.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-3-11-017723-7.

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Berlin: The Fascination Continues

This book's title tempts the reviewer to judge its harmony or cacophony, or at least to make some statement about Berlin as a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Instead, let it be said at the outset that the subtitles are misleading to the extent that the book is a collection of narrowly focused essays that do not pretend to assess Berlin's culture (or cultural politics) or to engage other recent treatments of the city. Nor does the book make a case for Berlin's importance as an object of study; the book's readers are expected, like its authors, to take for granted the fascination it exudes.

The book's fifteen essays are divided into three sections on "physical space," "experiential space," and "representation." The looseness of this classification is illustrated by the fact that all three include essays on Berlin films. The other main category of subject matter, literature, is mostly found in the third section. Although the editors boast of the "variety of disciplinary perspectives" (p. 4) and diverse geographic origins of the authors, most are based in German departments in the United States, and the research is mainly limited to the analysis of literary, cinematic, and architectural texts.

The only real introduction to Berlin is offered by a collection of photographs by Gary L. Catchen, most showing well-known sites and accompanied by some basic explanatory text. The book's format and paper restrict the quality of the reproductions, however. Other treatments of "physical space" include Eric Jarosinski's examination of the metaphor of transparency and the Reichstag's glass dome, on which he casts a skeptical eye, with reference to the theories of Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno. Simon Ward's discussion of the new central rail station also takes note of the extensive glass surfaces that reveal and celebrate local traditions of mobility. The new station sits astride the old east-west S-Bahn line, a local landmark which is the subject of Karein Goertz and Mick Kennedy's essay. They discuss the view of the city from the S-Bahn mostly in general and theory-laden terms, adding a few detailed descriptions of particular sites along the way.

The most stimulating essays are the polemical ones. Stephen Brockmann contrasts Peter Schneider's novels *Couplings* and *Eduard's Homecoming* unfavorably with his earlier *Wall Jumper*: "because of their self-absorbed and narcissistic single narrators and closed narrative structure the two later novels are significantly less successful at addressing the complexity of problems in Germany and Berlin" (p. 224). Brockmann fears that "the simple-minded and unproblematic nature of the normalized German identity depicted by Schneider" (p. 242) might explain Schneider's prominence as an interpreter of Germany for the American public–although Schneider owes that prominence less to his novels than to his journalism, which Brockmann does not examine.

Signs of a smug or complacent German identity worry other contributors as well. Evelyn Preuss argues that the critical perspectives on German history and the Berlin urban landscape offered by numerous 1990s films

have been jettisoned in the more recent *Berlin Babylon* and *Berlin: Symphony of a City*. The problem, she contends, lies not in the content but in the form of the films. Their use of montage "constructs homogeneity and asserts totality" (p. 131); that is, it creates an illusion of historical and spatial seamlessness and thus disarms critics of German normality.

It is hardly surprising that recent Berlin filmmakers would evoke the rich cinematic heritage of the Weimar years, but in this collection those historical references are usually grounds for critical comment. Preuss sees in them a further tendency "to erase the specifics of the German past and press it into a timeless mold" (p. 138). That is the thesis of Sunka Simon's contribution, which finds that the films *Comedian Harmonists* and *Nachtgestalten* "both utilize Weimar-era aesthetics for specifically German identity-forming purposes" (p. 302). Mila Ganeva's examination of several 1990s Berlin films offers a more positive spin: although her theme is the "depoliticization and dehistoricization of post-Wall Berlin film" (p. 263), she finds that the filmmakers' work is enriched by their inevitable failure to avoid echoing characters and aesthetics of both Weimar film and the New German Cinema of the 1970s.

Examinations of nonfiction writing include Rachel J. Halversen's essay on recent autobiographies by East Germans, who use memories of events and places to portray the politicization of everyday life in the German Democratic Republic. She compares the sites and images invoked by three writers from different generations: GÃ¼nter de Bruyn, Christoph Hein, and Stephan Krawczyk. Margit M. Sinka makes a case for the importance of the sociologist Heinz Bude's concept of a "Berlin generation," a notion that may have little resonance with those not already immersed in German intellectual life.

The persistence or transformation of Eastern and Western identities is the central topic of several essays. The anthropologist Jens Schneider conducted ethnographic interviews that yielded, as one would expect, a complex sense of Germanness that has grown out of Easterners' and Westerners' diverse interactions and the resulting difficulties of integration and understanding. Elizabeth Janik's essay is the only one whose subject we might call cultural politics. She offers a balanced overview of post-Wall controversies over the reunification of Berlin's two Academies of Arts and three opera houses. The former case offers painful lessons about the disentangling of cultural institutions from politics, while the latter opened a debate about, among other things, the old topic of Germanness in music. Kristie A. Foell set out to find fictional East-West love stories, but found mostly confused identities and unfulfilled longings. Carol Anne Costabile-Heming surveys recent short fiction. Paying little attention to plots or characters, she is able to distill observations about Berlin from many stories and tries to identify a diversity beyond the expected East-West dichotomy. Barbara Mennel looks at cinematic portrayals of West Berlin both before and after the Wall came down, looking at shifting attention to places such as Potsdamer Platz, once a marginal place and now a central one.

The book's audience is not obvious. Most of the essays are clearly written, but they do not add up to an introduction to or an assessment of Berlin. Its use in courses would make sense only if the course reading and viewing was chosen with the book's essays in mind. What they do offer, taken together, is a sense of the ways personal and collective identities continue to be chewed over by Berlin intellectuals and foreign scholars alike.

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