

the communist regime from the 1960s onwards, culminating in its eventual collapse at the start of the 1990s, was regressive so far as the memorialization of the women fighters was concerned. Films ceased to portray them as heroic revolutionary fighters in their own right; they were in turn transformed into enticing objects of male sexual desire, then demoted to the traditional roles of love interests for male heroes, and eventually portrayed as inferior, undersexed women in comparison to their non-communist counterparts.

At 269 pages, of which 45 deal with the post-war legacy, this is rather a short book for such an important subject. It could have been expanded to do more justice to the different ways in which the movement related to different categories of women: for example, women of different nationalities or religious denominations; urban vs rural women; and rank-and-file women of the resistance vs senior activists. Batinić has laid a solid foundation stone on which future scholars will hopefully build.

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***Spielplätze der Verweigerung. Gegenkulturen im östlichen Europa nach 1956.*** Ed.

Christine Gölz and Alfrun Kliems. Cologne, Germany: Böhlau Verlag, 2014. xvi, 506 pp. Notes, Bibliography, Index, Illustrations, Photographs. EUR 74.00, hard bound.

This volume of essays originates from a series of projects developed in a period of three years within the interdisciplinary research group on eastern Europe after 1956 at the Leipzig Humanities Center for History and Culture of East Central Europe. The focus was on the alternative and thus state-penalized, or at least not officially represented, cultural phenomena in eastern Europe since the failed revolution of 1956 in Hungary. The editors consider this “playground of denial” as “topographies and ways of staging a counter-public sphere in Eastern Europe” (10). Hence, the focus lies on those forms of resistance which by rejecting social conformity and obedience are deemed not as political manifestations, but mostly as personal options (11). With the support of various forms of art (literature, cinema, music, architecture) the authors explore cultural and social attitudes that were indeed subversive, yet without consciously seeking an impact in society. The time span studied is thereby explained, because contrary to the political opposition these forms of resistance persisted long after the political changes of 1989.

It is evident in the first chapter about everyday life, socialism and the underground, however, that the dichotomy between “official” and “unofficial” cannot be clearly defined: the boundaries are blurred. Positions could oscillate simultaneously from the state-sponsored sphere to the countercultural sphere. For instance, jazz music, which procured an appreciation for musical and political freedom on the one hand, and was employed by the authorities for propaganda purposes because of its popularity on the other, shifted between ludic refusal and state instrumentalization. A more evident relationship between the official and the unofficial can be traced in occurrences, such as the so-called *Pomaraneczowa Alternatywa* (Orange Alternative) in Poland: open and accessible to anyone, these events used to take place on the street, so that passersby, but also the militia forces, ended up playing a role both as observers and as performers. A potential for subversion remained in the denial of the conscience, understood as a self-assumed insignificance which would be publicized as “everyday poetry,” such as in the Czech literary magazine *Květen* (May).

The second chapter, with the title *Vergangenheit neu* (New Past) addresses the reinterpretation of the “communist heritage.” Whether the official partisan myth in Yugoslavia, the official culture of remembrance in Czechoslovakia, the canonical theater texts in Poland, or symbolic architectural works like the slab blocks or the Palace of Culture in Warsaw, the approach is always by strategies of rewriting, revaluation and often also vindication through art, which are, however, subject to criticism and even rejection in the new political reality. Therefore, the socialist past becomes in the post-socialist era a common ground for social reflection, and also not infrequently for adaptation to the new political and social circumstances.

The topic of absurdity is discussed in the chapter *Blödsinn* (“Nonsense”). As the title suggests, emphasis is given to the provocative subversion. Exemplified in cinema, literature and other artistic expression, the authors examine here the forms and functions of absurdity prior to and after the political changeover. The figure of the fool represents in all compiled texts a parody and a subversion of the sociopolitical reality, both with reference to the official art system during the socialist era and to the post-socialist consumer society.

The relationship between art and protest is addressed in the last chapter. The terms “active, critical, purchasable” are used to describe the tensions between the artistic and the political spheres, in particular if the latter could contain in itself a protest where the boundaries between culture and politics could be set. Irrespective of prose, cinema or pop culture, or of issues of social criticism as a path for social mobilization or political issues embodied in artistic or literary forms, it is always about the articulation of art forms that oscillates between art and politics.

The volume thus offers a broad perspective of counter-publics. What is remarkable about this book is, however, not only the transnational approach, but also the extension of the historical period covered, which allows portrayal of the continuity and/or fractures as well as the changes of strategies and formulas of refusal, of protest or withdrawal. Hence, the “resistance,” contrary to common belief, is not an impassioned opposition and dissidence with national range, but a multiform, multicolor phenomenon. Nonetheless, the diversity of the examples listed proves that the attempts at “resistance” were strictly of an urban nature, with the city serving as their setting.

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***Elusive Alliance: The German Occupation of Poland in World War I.*** By Jesse Kauffman. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2015. 287pp. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Photographs. Maps. \$35.00, hard bound.

Germany has a bad reputation as an occupying power. Its cruel and genocidal policy during the Second World War casts a long shadow over German history. The atrocities against Belgian civilians and the destruction of the library of Leuven at the beginning of the First World War were seen as a prelude to German war crimes 25 years later. It does not seem to matter that most atrocities in Belgium and Northern France happened in the first few months of the war and that there was no sustained, systematic terror against the civilian population. While the Western Front is well researched, relatively little is known about German policies in the occupied provinces of the Russian Empire. How brutal was the German occupation policy there? How strong are the continuities between German policies in the First and Second World Wars? Jesse Kauffman, assistant professor at the University of Eastern Michigan, addresses these