

Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Das Ideal des schönen Lebens und die Wirklichkeit der Weimarer Republik: Vorstellungen von Staat und Gemeinschaft im George-Kreis* by Roman Köster, Werner Plumpe, Bertram Schefold and Korinna Schönhärl

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Empire in *Radetzky marsch*' (p. 92). Whereas her reading of the early novels largely dispels notions of Roth as a socialist writer, Tonkin's appraisal of *Radetzky marsch* does not reveal a novelist seeking nostalgic succour in the past. Instead she finds a historical novel in Lukács's sense, one 'that makes possible an understanding of the present through the portrayal of the past, of the different and specific [. . .] forms that contemporary problems took in earlier times' (p. 200). While in the earlier novels the 'socialist' Roth often observes the cyclical nature of history, the later, ostensibly 'conservative' writer is critical of figures such as Carl Joseph in *Radetzky marsch* who 'fall prey to the desire to rewrite history', failing to recognize 'its inexorable forward movement' (p. 201). In *Die Büste des Kaisers* (1935) the Polish Count Morstin, described as 'einer der edelsten und reinsten Typen des Österreichers schlechthin', acknowledges the forward momentum of history when he literally buries the past by consigning Emperor Franz Joseph's effigy to the grave.

By stressing the essential wholeness of his œuvre, Tonkin does a signal service to Roth scholarship in a book which never outstays its welcome. One small regret is that the author does not discuss *Tarabas: Ein Gast auf dieser Erde* (1934), where Roth's 'march into history' is extended to examine the figure of a modern military despot. This 'late' novel about a tyrant who turns his back on power and dies a God-fearing penitent appears to support the traditional view of Roth as a writer who, when confronted by a cruel present, retreats into a comforting fiction. I would enjoy reading Tonkin's assessment of this gripping and underrated novel, with its spine-chilling depiction of a Polish/Russian pogrom.

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ANDREW BARKER

*Das Ideal des schönen Lebens und die Wirklichkeit der Weimarer Republik: Vorstellungen von Staat und Gemeinschaft im George-Kreis.* Ed. by ROMAN KÖSTER, WERNER PLUMPE, BERTRAM SCHEFOLD, and KORINNA SCHÖNHÄRL. (Wissenskultur und gesellschaftlicher Wandel, 33) Munich: Akademie-Verlag. 2009. 280 pp. €49.80. ISBN 978-3-05-004577-1.

The title of this edited volume presents two conflict lines that the circle around Stefan George highlighted: between aesthetics (*schön*) and life (*Leben*), and between ideal life and reality. The volume explores how George's friends negotiated these conflicts in their aesthetic, political, and economic philosophies. The various contributions differ drastically in their aims and attitudes.

On the one hand, Bertram Schefold's introduction to George's poetic world, its social context, and its implications, and Wolfgang Vitzthum's biographical study of Berthold Graf Stauffenberg maintain that George's ideas should reinform contemporary scholarship and that Stauffenberg is an example of intellectual honesty and personal courage for our own times of crisis (pp. 229, 234). Vitzthum analyses how Stauffenberg, through serving the Republic whose institutions and principles he criticized, served a larger *Reich* and *Vaterland*. At the crucial moment, the negative pole of Auschwitz and the positive example of George came together to inspire the

coup attempt of 20 July 1944. Schefold stresses that the George circle is the only group that based its opposition to modern rationalization on poetry. He proposes that *schönes Leben* is an inward experience that can be realized in practice, and that receptivity to this experience can be taught (pp. xvii, xxxix; Carola Groppe makes a similar point in her article). In order to succeed on the way to both virtue and beauty, Schefold says, George had to be an educator mediating between tradition and rejuvenation, a poet capable of both criticism and song, and a friend inspiring admiration, affection, and faith. Groppe, in her innovative study, characterizes the circle as *bürgerlich*, based on its quest for the balanced unity of intellectual, creative, and emotional faculties, articulated in convivial, politically enquiring communities (i.e. manifestations of *Bildung*). A whole new concept of the 'circle' is proposed by Bruno Pieger, based on Hölderlin's idea of the 'sphere': an extensive but distinct realm formed around a centre, open for exchanges within itself and with others, subject to history and fragile, actualized only through participation. Pieger finds parallels in Max Scheler's philosophy of *ordo amoris* but not always in the views of George's own friends, including Friedrich Wolters. Wolfgang Christian Schneider traces Friedrich Wolters's writings back to Neoplatonism (Proclus), an ontology reliant on the very image of circles: a mediator close to the centre makes essential truths accessible through poetry. The advantage of this model is that relative centrality is based on receptivity to poetry (George made this point) and that the division between inner and outer circle becomes a matter of degree (Schneider's implicit argument).

On the other side of the debate, Gerhard Plumpe situates George in the context of the avant-garde's 'Furor des Futurs' (p. 74) which calls for a radical destruction of the past. Plumpe traces George's alleged 'contempt for real life' (p. 68) back to Schiller and seems to assume that 'life' and 'art' can indeed be strictly separated (a notion that George challenged). The danger of this approach is that all life is seen as the same and as unchangeable. Norton, in an equally dramatic gesture, pronounces that beauty never leads to virtue (any such idea 'ist falsch,' p. 123). In his view George, through Edith Landmann, aimed to establish beauty as the world's central regulative category, hoping thereby to conceal his own and his friends' pederasty and paving the way for an 'Eliminierungsschub' (p. 130) against 'the ugly'.

Several articles trace concepts of state and community in Weimar Germany, describing the *geisteswissenschaftlich* nature of many of sociology's and macroeconomics' central propositions (Harald Hagemann, Tetsushi Harada, Klaus Lichtblau). Gangolf Hübinger explains how far Ernst Troeltsch and Helmut Plessner developed their theories based on their critical perceptions of the George circle. While George had no interest in economics, a considerable number of his friends were economists. Korinna Schönhärl presents the opposing positions of Edgar Salin (anti-capitalist, statist, anti-democratic) and Arthur Salz (capitalist, individualist, liberal-democratic) and sees them converge on an abstract, methodological level: both conceive of the economy as a holistic *Gestalt*. Roman Köster discusses the differences between economic universalism (Othmar Spann) and *anschauliche Theorie* (Landmann) and states that, in spite of their structural similarities, access

to the truth is reserved to a select few in Landmann's theory while it is open to everyone in Spann's. The antagonism is perhaps overstated, given that Spann is concerned with principles and Landmann with pragmatics. Schiewer argues that there is a political philosophy inherent in Edith Landmann's theory of emotion. Informed by Gestalt theory, it postulates that things can never be separated from values; and that the value inherent in something can be determined objectively (which is not to say rationally). The state is called upon to safeguard spiritual values determined to be of particular significance by the 'right person'.

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*Visualizing the Holocaust: Documents, Aesthetics, Memory.* Ed. by DAVID BATHRICK, BRAD PRAGER, and MICHAEL D. RICHARDSON. (Screen Cultures: German Film and the Visual) Rochester, NY: Camden House. 2008. ix+336 pp. £40. ISBN 978-1-57113-383-0.

In the last ten or fifteen years the question of the ethics and epistemology of visual representation has come to the forefront of Holocaust studies. Marianne Hirsch's much-discussed paradigm of postmemory, the debate surrounding *Schindler's List*, and the use of photographs in the fiction of writers such as Sebald are merely some of the factors that have reignited interest in the permissibility of the aesthetic stylization of atrocity. This new volume seeks to explore recent debate in the field, bringing together a range of essays on the theory and practice of visual representation of the Shoah.

At the heart of the collection is inevitably the vexed issue of the *Bilderverbot*, the much-spoken-about 'unspeakability' of the Holocaust. To adapt the cinematic terms of Jean-Luc Godard, the debate oscillates between the two poles of *juste une image* and *une image juste*: to what extent is it even theoretically possible for an image to do justice to *l'univers concentrationnaire*? The best essays in this collection all revolve around this fundamental problem. Particularly noteworthy in this respect are those by Sven-Erik Rose on 'Auschwitz as Hermeneutic Rupture, Differend, and Image *malgré tout*' and Michael D'Arcy on 'Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* and the Intentionality of the Image'. Rose criticizes the differing, but (he argues) equally reductive rhetoric of Fredric Jameson and Jean-François Lyotard, both of whom tend ultimately towards 'a quasi-theological pathos of Auschwitz' (p. 124); against this, he sets Georges Didi-Huberman's rejection of 'the logic of all-or-nothing' (p. 129), whereby the Holocaust would be unrepresentable, since even the most revealing photographs can only portray a tiny portion of the experience. Didi-Huberman's insistence on the importance of 'lacunary images' (p. 130) resonates into D'Arcy's essay on Lanzmann's *Shoah*. Tracing its roots in 'post-war phenomenological film theory' (p. 150), D'Arcy turns aesthetics against ethics, arguing against Lanzmann's own insistence on the unrepresentability of the Shoah: 'while Lanzmann rejects iconic or representational evidence, his film embraces indexical signs' (p. 152).

This combination of close reading with theoretical meditation is characteristic