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it is understandable that poetry as a genre in the Soviet zone and early GDR, and therefore Huchel's own writing, is given only marginal treatment in Brockmann's book. This applies even more to Huchel's discovery of Johannes Bobrowski, whose house in Berlin became a contact point for 'formalist' and 'non-formalist' writers from both sides of the Iron Curtain in the early 1960s. However, while the almost complete absence of poetry from *The Writers' State* is to some extent a logical consequence of the book's focus, the absence of Huchel in his role as the editor of *Sinn und Form*, including the absence of his name from the index, is somewhat questionable. In addition, while the role of Berlin as a still relatively open place of exchange between writers from the eastern part and colleagues from the West in the late 1940s and early 1950s is addressed to some extent, this would have merited further exploration. Overall, however, *The Writers' State* offers a highly convincing and much-needed insight into the context in which better- and lesser-known authors in East(ern) Germany worked, how they positioned themselves in this context and, through this, took part in the construction of a new state in the early post-war years. Brockmann carefully explores the importance of their individual experience of National Socialism and the pressures of the Cold War in this process, as well as the contradictions inherent in the ruling Socialist Unity Party's cultural politics, and how individual writers, editors, and critics addressed these.

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*Heiner Müller's Democratic Theater: The Politics of Making the Audience Work.* By

MICHAEL WOOD. Rochester, NY: Camden House. 2017. xiv+225 pp. £75.

ISBN 978-1-57113-998-6.

Michael Wood's monograph on the East German dramatist Heiner Müller (1929–1995), the first to appear in English in two decades, is a strong historical study in a flimsy theoretical casing. Much of it consists of careful, insightful, well-informed documentation of inarguably significant events in the theatrical career of the most prominent and influential German theatre figure after Brecht. Unfortunately, the book's thesis—that 'throughout Müller's entire career [. . .] his concern for democracy' in reality and theatre was 'paramount' (p. 155)—is not made credible because the range of texts and productions Wood examines is too narrow to justify his comprehensive claims.

The book's focus is Müller's landmark 1988 production of *Der Lohndrucker* at the Deutsches Theater in Berlin. Asked to direct one of his plays during a season dedicated to Lessing, Müller, long out of official favour but recently embraced by the GDR regime, surprised the theatre's leadership by proposing this early 'production play' (written 1956–57) about the complications of building socialism in the newly founded GDR. Set in a nationalized foundry under heavy pressure to meet state quotas in 1948–49, the play dramatizes conflicts between a worker-hero, who risks his life to increase production, and his far less motivated colleagues, some former Nazis bent on sabotage. Cultural apparatchiks in 1987 presumed that such an old play would be politically 'harmless' and quickly approved it.

Müller's production turned out to be surprisingly edgy and provocative. His staging, in its design and handling of movement and speech, emphasized the artifice of socialist myths and foregrounded questions about obligatory homogeneity among the GDR public. He also combined the *Lohndrucker* text with two shorter and more critically explicit works he had written in later periods: *Der Horatier*, a *Lehrstück* parable about individuals sacrificed for the sake of groups, written as a reaction to the suppression of the Prague Spring in 1968; and *Kentauren*, an acerbic satire about calcified Party functionaries, written in 1986 in response to the GDR government's rejection of Gorbachev's glasnost reforms.

Wood excels at explaining how Müller's directing choices opened these works to multiple interpretations, modelling a theatrical circumstance that could legitimately be called 'democratic', whereas convention and official policy always supported closed forms that delivered singular authoritative meanings and promoted ideological homogeneity. Müller's staging, says Wood, sought 'to redress the lack of political agency presented on stage and experienced in reality' (p. 57). Wood carefully reconstructs the production, parsing its diverse artistic strategies and examining programmes, production scripts, reviews, and publicity photographs, as well as a fascinatingly complex lobby exhibition that accompanied it. The accuracy of the reconstruction and insights drawn from it are especially impressive given that Wood was presumably too young to see the production live (this study was his doctoral thesis).

Wood also reconstructs several important earlier productions of *Lohndrucker* and *Horatier* by other directors, using them as foils to demonstrate the importance and impact of Müller's artistic choices in 1988. The discerning discussion of the cultural-political contexts of these very different eras benefits from some assiduous archival sleuthing: Wood has unearthed two revealing letters, for instance, in which Alfred Kurella, cultural secretary of the GDR's ruling Communist Party, admits the government goal of an ideologically homogeneous public. All of this represents exemplary dramaturgical scholarship, a valuable body of reliable background information assembled to preserve and illuminate an ephemeral theatre event whose enduring scholarly interest the author makes clear.

The problem is that Wood was evidently unsatisfied with that accomplishment. He tried to use his documentation to prove a general thesis about Müller's career that could not be supported by such a small body of evidence. The book contains no sustained discussions of any of the plays that established Müller's international prominence—such as *Hamletmaschine* (1977), *Der Auftrag* (1979), *Quartett* (1982), *Verkommenes Ufer Medeamaterial Landschaft mit Argonauten* (1983), or *Bildbeschreibung* (1985). These works represented his shift to a Western avant-gardist idiom following travels to the United States in the 1970s. They made him a star in the West in the 1980s and 1990s. He always insisted that he remained loyal to the GDR's socialist mission, but these later works, widely produced in the West, sparked an explosion of criticism that read them variously as a new fusion of Brecht and Artaud, a newly potent postmodernism, a freshly virulent brand of

Warholesque cynicism, aesthetic terrorism, bourgeois hypocrisy, and much, much more.

Wood ignores this entire elephant, as it were, considering instead only a handful of works that most specialists deem subsidiary. He makes no effort to explain how the *œuvre* as a whole fits his theory that democracy was Müller's prime artistic directive and seems to believe that the ideological eclecticism other critics see is a mere illusion: 'This book attempts to tie down the politics of Müller's theater' (p. 1). Such a monochrome, restrictive theory overlooks the complicated trickster nature of this artist, not to mention the strong Nietzschean strain that made him once tell an interviewer: 'My main interest in writing plays is destroying things' (Heiner Müller, *Gesammelte Irrtümer: Interviews und Gespräche* (Frankfurt a.M.: Verlag der Autoren, 1986), p. 102). When Wood stresses his desire to 'locate a positive notion [. . .] of Müller's politics' (p. 13), convinced that the works promote 'the positive utopian potential of democracy' (p. 3), he makes Müller sound like a wholesome, socialist Rotarian.

Its narrow view of Müller's *œuvre* aside, the book also has a crimped view of late twentieth-century experimental theatre, and of democracy. Other than Robert Wilson, it mentions none of the many other respected artists who similarly pursued non-authoritarian approaches to theatrical performance in the same period. More egregious, its introductory section on the concept of democracy consists of three pages filled mainly with quotations from Brecht, Müller, and a handful of other East Germans. Wood never mentions, say, the Enlightenment ethos of fair play that undergirds the common modern understanding of the term, or the deliberately hollow and cynical uses of the term by authoritarian regimes such as the German *Democratic Republic* and the *Democratic People's Republic of Korea*. Such matters surely merit a passing nod in a book asking us to appreciate a particular democratic theatrical technique as a means of 'creat[ing] space for the generation of utopias' (p. 99).

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*Erzählte Entgrenzungen: Narrationen von Arbeit zu Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts.* By

IUDITHA BALINT. Paderborn: Fink. 2017. 215 pp. €59. ISBN 978-3-7705-6265-7.

The notion of the 'Entgrenzung der Arbeit' is based on the premiss that work in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries has burst its traditional spatio-temporal boundaries, seeping into and perfidiously invading the sphere of non-work. Owing to new communication technologies, enhanced competition in a globalized market, the rise of the service and finance industries, and a raft of neo-liberal deregulation and efficiency-enhancement policies, the ever more exhausted and resource-strapped working subject is now expected constantly to self-motivate, self-optimize, and self-exploit. Flexible working, once celebrated as an achievement, has in fact turned into a curse, as email, social media, and mobile phones result in