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The People's Game: Football, State and Society in East Germany by Alan McDougall (review)

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The People's Game: Football, State and Society in East Germany. By Alan McDougall. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. Pp. v + 362. Cloth \$125.00. ISBN 978-1107052031.

In *The People's Game*, Alan McDougall analyzes football in order to explore relations between state and society in socialist East Germany. Rejecting a dichotomized state-versus-society model, McDougall makes three principal arguments about how the study of football illuminates everyday life in East Germany. First, football constituted a site of *Eigen-Sinn* (self-assertion) for East German citizens, enabling them to cultivate identities—individual, local, regional, national, and international—which both contradicted and sometimes existed alongside the identities laid out for them by the state. Second, football showcased the state's limits and dysfunctionality, especially as it often failed to direct football towards desired political ends. Third, football functioned as a “liminal activity” (30), creating a “contested space” (54) where the interests of citizens and the state sometimes came together, sometimes diverged, and often involved substantial “give and take” (151).

McDougall shows how football in East Germany was at once unsuccessful internationally for both the national team and club teams, yet vibrant and dynamic regionally and locally, featuring heated competitions and loyal and engaged fans. Semiprofessional and recreational footballers alike had no choice but to reckon with the state, depending on it for access to athletic facilities and opportunities. Likewise, the state, in its efforts to co-opt football towards socialist goals, had to adapt to the genuine and long-standing popularity of football at the grassroots. Yet, to McDougall, football “retained an ungovernable core” (11) that rendered it a site for autonomy, particularly in encouraging nonsocialist values such as local patriotism and individualism.

The People's Game is impressive both in chronological scope, covering the entire history of East Germany, and in topical coverage, featuring substantive, multilayered discussions of players, fans, and recreational football. The book is densely researched, using state and party files from the Bundesarchiv in Berlin and from regional archives in Dresden, Brandenburg, Erfurt, and Halle; fan surveillance records in the Stasi archives; files of the East German Football Association (DFV); periodicals including the football publication *Die Neue Fussball-Woche*; and fourteen oral-history interviews, primarily with fans and recreational players.

Readers see state efforts to monitor and shape football most clearly in the section on national and club football players, which closely examines both the challenges that shaped their experiences, such as Stasi surveillance and pressures to maintain a certain “socialist” moral profile, and the opportunities afforded them through participation, including material perks and individual recognition. Yet, the state's influence had limits. As highly fraught transfer politics reveal, players, clubs, and officials often

successfully resisted state efforts to manage football and footballers. Moreover, the national team fostered an East German identity that existed alongside, rather than replacing, a broader German identity. Many football fans, who watched both West German and East German club football on television, developed dual loyalties. Fans simultaneously rejoiced in Jürgen Sparwasser's decisive goal in the 1974 World Cup match against West Germany, while also celebrating the overall victory of the West German team and admiring its captain Franz Beckenbauer.

McDougall provides further evidence of divergence from proscribed doctrine/nonconformity by explaining in detail how fans often failed to embrace the dictates of proper socialist spectatorship. Some, clearly rejecting communist behavioral norms, became hooligans. Common fan activities such as writing fan letters primarily "conveyed the normal pleasures of watching football" (191) rather than referencing socialist ideals or the state. Independent fan clubs also emerged, despite state efforts to co-opt them by offering subsidized tickets and train trips to away matches to officially registered clubs. Many fans also watched televised football in the privacy of their own homes, where they could drink alcohol and cheer for their teams without state monitoring. Scores of fans also wrote petitions to the government complaining about matters as varied as the design of trophies to bad referees. Particularly striking was fan anger about perceived referee bias towards the Stasi football team, Berliner FC Dynamo (BFC). McDougall notes that the outcry over BFC was larger and more public than the 1980s peace and environmental protests, showing the often overlooked power of football to shape citizens' increasingly frustrated attitudes towards the state.

McDougall's final section on recreational football, or "the people's game," drives home his central argument about football as a facilitator of local and individual rather than state and socialist identities. As he shows through several case studies, recreational football functioned as a "site for ordinary social relations, building friendships, and sharing experiences" (252). Here McDougall also explores the inadequate state support for athletic facilities and equipment. The countless volunteer hours necessary to make facilities semiacceptable increased citizen frustration with the state and reinforced the local identities that the state found so troublesome. This section also examines women's football, classified as a recreational and not elite-level sport in East Germany. Women footballers received little support, and the state only decided to support a national championship in the waning months of its existence. Based on local initiative, skilled women's teams such as Turbine Potsdam nonetheless emerged and enjoyed considerable grassroots autonomy and success.

The People's State is an excellent and comprehensive study of East German football, offering a nuanced and compelling picture of relations between state and society. Moreover, it nicely balances the flavor, texture, and detail of a popular work of sports history with the sophisticated analysis of an academic tome. The book, although a

bit lengthy, is engagingly written and should interest upper-level undergraduates, graduate students, and scholars interested in postwar German history, the history of state socialism, and football history more generally.

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Remembering Africa: The Rediscovery of Colonialism in Contemporary German Literature. Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture. By Dirk Göttsche. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2013. Pp. viii + 485. Cloth \$95.00. ISBN 978-1571135469.

Der an der University of Nottingham lehrende Germanist Dirk Göttsche ist einer der besten Kenner der deutschsprachigen zeitgenössischen Literatur, insbesondere der literarischen Texte, die sich mit dem kolonialen und postkolonialen Afrika auseinandersetzen. Er hat bereits zahlreiche Zeitschriftenartikel und Beiträge in Sammelbänden zu Einzelaspekten dieses Themas vorgelegt, die in diese ausführliche Monographie eingeflossen sind und zu einem wissenschaftlich hochkarätigen Standardwerk beitragen, das souverän einen Korpus von etwa fünfzig Texten vorstellt, gegeneinander abwägt, deren ästhetische Strategien aufzeigt und sie in ihrem historischen Kontext interpretiert. Dabei geht Göttsche thematisch vor, indem er nach einem Eingangskapitel, das auf seine methodische und literaturwissenschaftliche Verankerung in dem Dreieck von postkolonialer Theorie, interkultureller Germanistik und Gedächtnisforschung reflektiert, zunächst die literarischen Texte in eine Gruppe zusammenfügt, die sich mit der Erinnerung des deutschen Kolonialismus auseinandersetzen. Hier findet man Analysen von Uwe Timms *Morenga* (1978), Gerhard Seyfrieds *Herero* (2003) und Alex Capus' *Eine Frage der Zeit* (2007), aber auch von weniger bekannten Texten, die noch nicht in den etablierten Kanon zeitgenössischer Literatur eingegangen sind, wie zum Beispiel Patricia Mennens *Der Ruf der Kalahari* (2010), Beatrix Mannels *Der Duft der Wüstenrose* (2012) oder Ilona Maria Hilliges' *Ein Kind Afrikas* (2009). Da der Fokus auf Vollständigkeit und Verortung in einem Feld von thematischen und ästhetischen Fragestellungen liegt, hat das zur Folge, dass die Analyse von komplexeren und anspruchsvolleren literarischen Versuchen der Erinnerung an die deutsche Kolonialzeit manchmal zu kurz kommt und neben eher populären Genres steht, so dass von der Gewichtung her möglicherweise der Eindruck entstehen könnte, sie seien vergleichbar in Anspruch und Durchführung. Dem wirkt Göttsche effektiv entgegen einmal dadurch, dass ein Werkregister die Leser auf die jeweiligen Passagen, in denen Einzelwerke kommentiert werden, hinweist, und ein andermal dadurch, dass er immer wieder Bewertungen der jeweiligen ästhetischen Strategien und ethischen Probleme bei der Behandlung von kolonialen Themen einfließen lässt und somit seine Position deutlich macht.