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The Jewish Kulturbund Theater Company in Nazi Berlin by
Rebecca Rovit (review)

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What, then, is Radziwill's legacy today? How do we view his hyperrealistic but deeply enigmatic depictions of industrial urbanity, cutting-edge transportation technologies, idyllic flowers and countryside sceneries, withdrawn human faces, and death-ridden war zones in the context of our own art-aesthetic programs and painterly practices? How do his artistic achievements, his aesthetic idealism, political short-sightedness, and post-1945 self-defense resonate in the period after Germany's cold-war division and national reunification? Van Dyke briefly summarizes the debate, in 1986, between Peter Ludwig, founder of the important museum in Cologne (which displays Radziwill's painting *The Street* [1928] in the context of avant-garde, Modernist, and postmodern artists), and the art professor Klaus Staeck concerning the historical and ethical implications of exhibiting work of artists prominent during National Socialism (18–19); consequently van Dyke calls for a more critically explanatory historicization of the political art history (19–20). But no clear picture emerges as to Radziwill's overall presence in Germany's diversified museum culture today. And what are the wider implications of the curatorial policies, archival preservation activities, and exhibition and symposia initiatives of the Franz Radziwill Society, founded in 1986? Acknowledging the assistance he received from the painter's daughter, the author and filmmaker Konstanze Radziwill, as well as their "strong and persistent differences" in assessing the artist's career and work (v), van Dyke reprints an extensive statement offering her side of the debate. In particular, she believes van Dyke's assessment—while Radziwill produced no idyllic "blood and soil" or heroic warrior pictures, he made "something like atypical Nazi art"—to amount to an "artistic and political-moral evaluation" that she deems "disputable" (172). Based on the very criteria also highlighted by van Dyke—the inherent ambiguities and stylistic shifts of Radziwill's work—she emphasizes its "decisive difference to Nazi art, even if it uses the same symbols" (172), claiming that it "remains unmistakable in its pantheistic essence and its message of civilization critique" (173). The differences between her opinion and van Dyke's own probably merit further analysis than he may have deemed appropriate—they seem to be indicative of a decisive split between official representation and scholarly assessment that may shed light generally on far-reaching issues of coming to terms with controversial artists of the Weimar Republic and the National Socialist period. In this sense, van Dyke's study raises crucial questions about the dialectical interplay of a critical reconstruction of the troubling past and its actualizing assessment for the present that may deserve further inquiry.

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—Rolf J. Goebel

The Jewish Kulturbund Theater Company in Nazi Berlin.

By Rebecca Rovit. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2012. xii + 287 pages + 22 b/w illustrations. \$41.00.

Rebecca Rovit's monograph sets out to introduce its readers to the theater work of a very controversial cultural association that existed in National Socialist Germany between 1933 and 1941: the *Jüdischer Kulturbund Berlin*. Founded by members of the Jewish community, the association was readily embraced by the new German au-

thorities as a means to counteract negative propaganda about Germany's treatment of the Jews. Rovit's book focuses on "the everyday life that the *Kulturbund* Jews continued to live despite the restrictive laws" (8) passed against them and "encompasses the complex interplay between history and human lives" (9). By explaining in detail the *Kulturbund*'s organization and goals, Rovit charts "the path that the theater company took to make art amid prejudice and censorship" (9) and shows how both the management and the artists continuously (re)negotiated their principles and compromised some of their ideals when faced not just with pressure from the Nazi authorities but also from within their own community. Ultimately, Rovit wants to provide answers to questions that have haunted the *Kulturbund* since its inception: what was the significance of the *Kulturbund*? How are we today to understand the attempt by a small group of Jewish artists to perform theater within a dictatorship that threatened the very community to which they belonged? Rovit claims that her study "raises questions about the fluidity of cultural identity and ideology under duress" as she points out that the *Kulturbund*'s management did not want to "create a solely Jewish culture." Self-preservation forced it to find means to keep the association alive, which leads her to conclude that this "self-protective instinct reveals something about the restorative nature of performance, especially under extreme conditions" (212).

This book complements previously published works by Herbert Freedman (*Jüdisches Theater in Nazideutschland*, 1964/1985), Geisel and Broder (*Premiere und Pogrom*, 1992), Akademie der Künste Berlin (*Geschlossene Vorstellung*, 1992) and Corina L. Petrescu (*Against All Odds*, 2010). It marks the culmination of Rovit's engagement with the topic, as she began publishing on the *Kulturbund*'s theater in the mid-1990s and has since contributed immensely to the discussions about its role. She has drawn from primary sources as varied as newspapers, production photographs and scripts, letters, memoirs, and archival materials from the Reich Ministry of Propaganda and Enlightenment, and has conducted interviews between 1995 and 2010 with Jewish émigrés from Berlin and former members of the *Kulturbund*.

Rovit's book stands out through its very detailed analysis of the *Kulturbund*'s productions (for example: *Nathan der Weise* 37–40, *Jeremias* 56–60, *Jaákobs Traum: Ein Vorspiel* 64–66, etc.), but also of the negotiation processes between the association's management and the National Socialist authorities. Her focus on the productions rather than the individual fates of *Kulturbund* members not only differentiates her from some earlier scholarship; it also allows her to show the extent to which the intentions of the *Kulturbund*'s organizers and those of the Nazi authorities collided, with the latter politicizing the *Kulturbund* from its beginning "by enforcing ethnic policies that squelched the spirit of inclusion for anyone who was not born Jewish" (29). The author shows how ambiguous the process was of separating Jewish from German culture with respect to the repertoire choices made by the management but also those approved by the authorities (73). She also draws attention to the highly problematic linguistic choice of the *Kulturbund*: the theater performed in German because that was the only language both all its members and audiences understood, making it clear from the beginning that, "[u]nlike the natural cultural communities developing in the Hebrew-language community in Palestine and the Yiddish-speaking East Europe, the *Kulturbund* emerged only because its artists and audiences were identified as Jewish and thus un-German" (97). The author furthermore illustrates how staging strategies were used to help convey the message that corresponded best

to the situation of the Jews at the time of a particular performance without provoking the authorities (138–139). Rovit pertinently shows how what happened internationally—the fate of the S.S. *St. Louis*, which was refused entrance both in Havana and Miami in May 1939 and had to return its Jewish passengers to Europe (157); and events in Palestine and the Arab world (136–137, 139–140)—influenced the fate of Jews in Germany in order to place the *Kulturbund* in the larger context of Jewish existence worldwide at the time.

All of this said, this reviewer wishes that the author had elaborated more on the claim that in 1938, when he left for the USA, Kurt Singer, the *Kulturbund*'s founder, was looking to transfer the association to this country (142). Rovit provides no sources for this information and her mention of it seems casual in comparison to other, less surprising aspects of the book that are meticulously documented. Moreover, the following statement begs clarification: “With the start of 1941 German soldiers in occupied Romania began mass killings of Jews there” (187). In 1941 German troops did not occupy Romania; they were stationed there as allies of the Romanian state. Also, the perpetrators during the January pogroms of that year were members of the Iron Guard, the local fascist party in power at the time, not German soldiers.

In its detailed analyses, the monograph is inspiring. It provides a valuable resource for graduate students and scholars in German, Jewish, and theater studies by problematizing the existence of the *Kulturbund* anew and suggesting topics for further research that would help better understand the rationale behind it: (1) exploration of the mechanisms by which victim-artists negotiated with their oppressors; and (2) a comprehensive analysis of the National Socialist Theater Chamber investigating the interplay between collaboration and state censorship within Germany and its occupied territories (212). The work is a valuable contribution to cultural criticism that will facilitate and stimulate future research, recognizing the cultural and social significance of the *Kulturbund* at the time of its existence.

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—Corina L. Petrescu

Bloch-Wörterbuch. Leitbegriffe der Philosophie Ernst Blochs.

Herausgegeben von Beat Dietschy, Doris Zeilinger und Rainer Zimmermann.

Berlin und Boston: de Gruyter, 2012. xxv + 744 Seiten. €229,00.

Dies ist kein Wörterbuch nach Art von Rudolf Eislers *Kant-Lexikon*, sondern ein Handbuch der “Leitbegriffe der Philosophie Ernst Blochs,” wie der Untertitel ergänzend festhält. Behandelt werden Grundbegriffe der Philosophie Blochs, wie sie schon in seinem *opus magnum Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (1959) thematisiert werden, um dann als Leitmotive sein Gesamtwerk zu strukturieren. Alphabetisch geordnet, werden in sechszwanzig Kapiteln Blochs zentrale Kategorien kommentiert und historisch eingeordnet. Am Ende eines jeden Artikels wird die wichtigste Forschungsliteratur erwähnt, und es wird auf verwandte Grundbegriffe verwiesen, was zum Kreuz- und Querlesen einlädt.

Ernst Blochs *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* ist im Grunde auch keine Monographie im herkömmlichen Sinne, sondern ein Mosaik von in sich abgeschlossenen philosophischen Abhandlungen, das durch das Prinzip Hoffnung gleichsam als Zement zusammengehalten wird. Bloch zerfällt seine Grundbegriffe, um sie immer wieder in neue