Gerhard on Goodbody, 'The Culture of German Environmentalism: Anxieties, Vision, Realities'

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In his Foreword editor Axel Goodbody promises that this book--a collection of articles discussing cultural, intellectual and social aspects of environmentalism in Germany--differs from existing studies of "Green" issues in German history. The reader will not be disappointed. The volume provides an innovative assessment of contemporary German environmentalism. Topics include the historical roots of today's Green politics, environmentalism as a social movement, changing attitudes toward the environment, and their expression in film and literature. Three common arguments tie the different subjects together. All authors presume that the environmental movement in Germany is in decline, and that the future of Green politics looks gloomy. In addition to political and economic aspects, the authors agree that cultural developments explain a specific German form of environmentalism. Culture, according to the argument, does not merely reflect our attitudes toward nature but actively constructs our perception of the environment and shapes our behavior toward it.

Goodbody briefly outlines these common threads in his foreword and then leaves the reader to tackle the first part of the book. Part One, *From the Practitioner's Standpoint*, includes two contributions. The first one by Eco-Journalist Juergen Kroenig makes a strong case for a current crisis of the German Green movement and of Green journalism. Even though Kroenig ends with the reconciling statement that the "Green beast is not dead" (p. 12), his essay is a critical account of the failure of the Greens to appeal to young voters, to implement Green politics, and to keep environmental issues in the public discourse. He sees a parallel to this failure in the development of Eco-Journalism, which has caved in to journalism dominated by the TV message "to be happy and consume" (p. 11) in today's materialist society. This chapter provides a somewhat abrupt beginning to the book, and the second contribution does not make it any easier for the reader. The interview between Goodbody and Carl Amery could be fairly hard to conceptualize for a reader unfamiliar with German Green writers and issues. Goodbody does a wonderful job explaining the significance of Amery's writing later in the book (Chapter Nine), but an introduction to Part One would have been helpful.

Part Two makes up for the open questions raised in the first section and helps the reader to see where the book's argument is heading. It consists of a single contribution, namely Axel Goodbody's chapter on environmentalism in Germany and its political, social and cultural dimensions. Goodbody convincingly describes the historical context of contemporary German environmentalism and distinguishes the current form from earlier movements. The new conservationist movement of the 1970s, according to Goodbody, was no longer looking to the past for a supposedly better status quo, which was a characteristic typical of earlier movements. Instead, the critique of current developments was based on scientific evidence. Furthermore, the protesters were prepared to make
sacrifices and participate actively—a sign for individual emancipation and participative democracy (p. 34). Goodbody also points out what he considers to be specific German aspects of this environmentalism. The legacy of the Nazi past and a national identification with the "natural" as opposed to the "artificial" civilization, that goes back to German Romanticism, caused a stronger concern in Germany than in other western industrial societies. In short, Goodbody's insightful discussion of the main themes addressed in the book should be read first.

Part Three examines the environmental movement in Germany in the past and present. Thomas Rohkraemer does an excellent job explaining why environmentalism since the 1970s is different from its predecessors. The changes in the material conditions and natural world, the international scope of new problems, and the science of ecology have changed the position from which environmentalists argue. Nevertheless, Rohkraemer states that it is possible to find roots in the past, since this is the only way to understand why German concerns about the environment appeared so quickly and powerfully in the 1970s. No discussion of contemporary Germany can be complete without considering the role played by the Third Reich, and this rings true for the environment. Recently, the topic of Nazism and the environment has caught the attention of historians and environmentalists. Exciting new research has helped to understand the relationship between the two in a much more complex way than claimed by Anna Bramwell's original thesis, which asserted that some Nazis were the first "Greens."[1] Rohkraemer concludes that one can find parallels between contemporary environmentalism and ideas in the Third Reich, yet this is the case in many areas and should not lead to hasty conclusions.

Juergen Hoffmann analyzes the emergence of the Green Party in the context of other, new social movements in the 1970s such as the anti-nuclear, ecology and women's movements. Hoffmann comes to the conclusion that, with the success of the Green Party and its professionalization, personalization and bureaucratization, the gap between the party and the ecology movement widened. With their transformation into a governing party, the Greens lost their political distinctness. Today the Greens, according to Hoffmann, face political ruin (pp. 75-76). This sharp critique could be explained further. The popularity and success of the Green Foreign Secretary Joschka Fischer seems to contradict this claim. It would also be interesting to hear how the author relates his argument to other Greens in positions of power, such as Juergen Trittin, Minister for the Environment, and Renate Kuenast, Minister of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture. Their inability, thus far, to implement far-reaching Green politics does not necessarily point at political ruin. Ingolfur Bluethdorn, in his chapter on the future of the Green Party, provides more evidence of how the Greens have missed opportunities and disappointed high hopes since their term in the federal government. His conclusion, however, is much less pessimistic about the future of environmental politics.

Anja Baukloh and Jochen Roose's analysis of environmental concern in contemporary Germany modifies these negative assessments. After carefully distinguishing between awareness, attitude, behavior and concern in regard to environmental matters, they provide data for actual environmental behavior such as waste reduction or changes in car usage. The degree of participation is relatively high in Germany despite the hardly surprising conclusion that behavior is more determined by economic considerations than by actual environmental attitudes. These findings do not support Bluethdorn's and Hoffmann's conclusions about the failure of the German environmental movement. How would Baukloh and Roose judge the overall achievements? This question is left open for further discussion.
The last part of the book takes up literary and filmic discourses on the environment. It starts with an excerpt and analysis of Amery's latest book, *Hitler als Vorläufer: Auschwitz—der Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts?* Amery's argument is challenging, however, it cannot fully be appreciated in this abbreviated form. The last three chapters are much more informative. Rachel Palfreyman, for example, examines the "Heimat" complex in German film and shows how more recent Heimat films, such as Edgar Reitz' saga *Heimat*, have tackled the loaded genre. Filmmakers like Werner Herzog and Reitz have produced films that, even though they can hardly be called Green films, clearly address human interaction with the natural environment. The discussions of educational children's literature by Dagmar Lindenputz and of East German poetry by Jacqui Hope add another dimension to the book and to the understanding of German environmentalism, as Goodbody promised in the beginning. In conclusion, the book is a great addition to the expanding field of German environmental history and can be recommended to scholars and students alike.

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