

What the book offers is a series of in-depth and insightful looks at individual films and topics, all dealing with forms of cinematic construction of historical memory. Frey takes a clear, individual stance towards the films, presenting new takes on some of the most-discussed recent German movies, as well as obscure ones (he mentions that *Baader* only reached 27,570 theatre-goers). In addition, he situates them within a theoretical discussion of cinema and history, which pays attention to aesthetics as well as storytelling. The approach's limits become noticeable in relation to recent German cinema as a whole. Then the question of the status of the sample films becomes important, as does the lack of any criteria to justify the selection or exclusion of films. For example, one of the most talked-about recent developments, the so-called Berlin School, is hardly mentioned, although these films might be seen as prime examples of the representation of the past and present everyday life. While interesting in themselves, it is questionable to what extent the case studies can be seen as symptomatic of German society. Particularly the strong attention paid to *Baader*, while many of the other films on this subject are only mentioned in passing, shows that Frey tends to be more interested in aesthetic forms than popular impact. While films like *The Miracle of Bern* or *Good Bye, Lenin!* were highly successful, here too Frey tends to stick to close readings more than context, applying theory in a top-down fashion and marginalizing social context and issues of the film industry and audiences. These questions are only raised very late, in the conclusion and outlook. Here, the grounding of the films in the tenuous economy of German/European film production and funding are mentioned. Information on distribution, forms of production, and the relation of low-budget and art house productions to more popular, but critically dismissed attempts to create a German genre and star cinema would have been helpful in more depth and earlier in the book. Thus the aspects of production and reception remain under-developed, particularly unfortunate for a book investigating cinema history and cultural representations. Nonetheless, particularly with his attention to the intertextuality of new German historical films, Matthias Frey has contributed a new, insightful and critical perspective to viewing these movies.

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Im Anfang war das Experiment: das Weimarer Radio bei Hans Flesch und Ernst Schoen

SOLVEIG OTTMANN

Berlin, Kulturverlag Kadmos

440 pp., bibliography, EUR 29.80 (paper)

When it comes to German history, the Weimar Republic holds a position that is as prominent as it is ambivalent, it being both an achievement and challenge as the first democratic experiment and the apparently complacent precursor of dictatorship and the Second World War. That this character, in all its complexity, also

reflected itself in the cultural and media landscape is more than just a sublime aspect of Solveig Ottmann's book *In the Beginning there was Experiment: the Weimar Radio of Hans Flesch and Ernst Schoen*.

In Ottmann's book, as is both logically necessary and correct, the examination of the early days of radio broadcasting in Germany—following approximately 30 years of the cinema but nevertheless prior to the domination of television—captures a story of the protagonists as well as the circumstances under which they worked and manoeuvred. From 1923 to 1933, radio broadcasting was 'an experimental arrangement,' one which 'was neither technically nor conceptually sophisticated, and which demanded new artistic, social and political (media) concepts' (p. 9). The recognition of this, however, was not a matter of course, and thus it is thanks to the biographies of Hans Flesch and Ernst Schoen, among others, that radio broadcasting in the Weimar era didn't remain 'limited to the reproduction of existing art forms augmented by the acoustic means of the radio' and, instead, was to become 'an independent radio and, accordingly, radio broadcasting art' (p. 46).

Flesch and Schoen both began their career at the broadcasting company *Südwestdeutschen Rundfunk AG* (SWRAG), Flesch as the artistic director and Schoen as the artistic assistant and programme advisor. Hereby, they had jobs to which there were no established blueprints, in a medium that was decades removed from its ensuing familiar form—ubiquitous, up-to-the-minute and sometimes receivable across the country. Exactly how the two protagonists viewed this task—not least owing to their resumes as intellectuals, as Ottmann makes intelligible in noteworthy detail for about one third of the book—is distinguishable today largely due to the implementation as reflected in programming documentation and papers. Neither Flesch nor Schoen simply pursued their work; they pondered and reflected upon it, entering and spearheading a discourse that they apparently justified not just to themselves, but, in particular, to superiors and the political powers as well. For neither the radio as a technical apparatus nor radio broadcasting itself were grassroots movements for a few technophiles or creative souls, but were rather 'intimately bound to scientific, military, economic and national-political contexts and constraints' (p. 11).

In contrast to the United States, where radio broadcasting was subject to economic and above all military interests, the genesis of radio in Europe, particularly in Germany, took a different form. Here, the technology gave rise to a scientific discourse that was above all conducted at the universities, whereby the tenacious position of 'ethers' in the discourses on the new medium indicates how dubious and potentially dangerous radio in its early days appeared on the one hand, and how promising and auspicious on the other: 'And in the art critical or literary radio discourses as well, ether was a gratefully used metaphor to describe the spatially and temporally spanning dimension [...] and the thereby incomprehensibly expansive potential power of domination possessed by radiophonic communications' (p. 163).

Flesch and Schoen were aware of this potential, and both were also willing to use the instrument in their hands in this sense. In contrast to the perverted propaganda machine that German radio broadcasting was to mutate into under the National Socialists, however, Flesch's objective was to realize radio broadcasting as a 'medium with political and social functions' (p. 150). Ernst Schoen's motto from

1929 was as follows: '[Give] each listener what they want and a little bit more (namely, that which we want)' with the goal of 'enlightening, fully informing and educating the listener' (pp. 45 and 111).

What was novel with the medium of radio, essentially, was the 'bridging of the spatial and temporal distance,' which 'suddenly empowered people from one location to speak to any number of people at any number of locations in the world' (pp. 110 and 155). The corresponding implication is that through the listening to the programme, 'any and all genre and event' can be brought home and, by means of a technical apparatus, the 'intellectual and cultural horizons [can be expanded] beyond the everyday limitations,' directly and tangibly (p. 177). Withal, the technology itself, above all in the form of the interposition of an apparatus, was, as 'a third actor alongside the sender and receiver,' a decisive aspect of the medium: radio broadcasting is 'the intermediary of art, and not art itself' (pp. 180 and 190).

For a variety of reasons, in its early days radio was an almost purely dispatch medium (as it still is today). The recording and archiving of programmes was not only of low priority, but simply not technically practical. Thus, the answer to the question of just how diligently the programmatic theses of Flesch and Schoen were incorporated into a given programme cannot be gleaned by Ottmann from auditory documentary evidence but, rather, must be 'pieced together almost exclusively on the basis of written sources culled from the most varied materials' (p. 17). A given, however, is that new music played a substantial role in the programming, whereby the Frankfurt station was met with 'as little popularity as the avant-garde music itself' and provoked 'confrontations with audiences and radio broadcast critics' (p. 298). With this music, as well, care was taken not simply just to broadcast it—in this regard, Flesch referred back to the experience of the cinema: 'The cinema, when it began trying to replace the theatre, was logically enough ersatz, and ersatz can never be art' (p. 194). Accordingly, the use of 'music that is played nowhere' and that only 'works on the basis of electricity, tube technology and electromagnetic waves' is a consequent outflow of such a programme—and, accordingly, the origins of electronic music are thus positioned close to broadcasting (pp. 330–331).

Furthermore, the objective was less to educate the listener with biased content than much more to facilitate, through a programme structure of 'cycles, series and thematically complimentary and coordinated content' (p. 268), an enlightened maturity. In Schoen's opinion, there were three areas in which radio could particularly reveal its capabilities: 'The area of reporting, including talks and interviews,' 'artistic programming which, due to the works and performers, is satisfactory to the most demanding of listeners,' and the 'communication [...] of major events and important personalities,' both scholastic and artistic (pp. 341–342). To use explicitly political and especially up-to-the-minute content in the programming was, due to both technical as well political constraints, a challenge that was only confronted during the later course of the history of the medium: 'To include so-called "current" content in the programming [...] always also contained a political aspect, was always a political act' (p. 402).

The National Socialist's assumption of power of course abruptly terminated this brief period of experimentation most tangibly on three levels: the 'interexchange between leading personalities,' the 'restructuring of the broadcasting organization,' and the 'conversion of the programming' (p. 124). Flesch and

Schoen were dismissed. Flesch, a doctor, returned to practising medicine; he disappeared into the chaos of the war and was subsequently declared dead. Schoen, due to some rather dubious charges, ended up spending a short time in a concentration camp before he could flee to London. And although Schoen was given a minor position at the BBC and later, in 1952, returned to Germany, his career in radio was effectively finished with the end of the era of the Weimar radio.

Ottmann's meditation is particularly noteworthy for two reasons. For one, she focuses with never before achieved depth of detail on a period of broadcasting that, for all its ambivalence, still affects the gestalt of radio broadcasting in Germany today, the latter of which, as a medium on the one hand and a public service broadcasting institution with a cultural and educational mission on the other, must (not least now during that age of the Internet) ceaselessly justify and, possibly, reinvent itself. And secondly, the era of the Weimar radio and its experimental character proffers a practical case study of how a new medium—one of which is currently the topic on everyone's lips—can and must be presided to attain a justification transcendent of the purely technical attractiveness but inclusive of the media-specific content and which, flanked by structural and media-political decisions, can entrench itself in a sustainable manner. A condition, which, for some so-called new media, is still yet to be proven. In this regard, one could learn from Flesch and Schoen.

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Amazon Town TV: an audience ethnography in Gurupá, Brazil

RICHARD PACE and BRIAN P. HINOTE

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xi+224 pp., ill., index, \$55.00 (cloth)

In 1983, the anthropologist Richard Pace and the sociologist Brian Hinote began their study in audience ethnography of an Amazonian community based in Gurupá, in the state of Pará in Brazil. That year represents a benchmark for the area of Television Studies in Brazil as the project proposal, which is the basis of this book, was 'the first multisite study of television in anthropology, the first ethnographic study of television in Brazil, and the first television study anywhere incorporating quantitative methods (statistical analysis of over one thousand interview schedules)' (p. vii), and its additional value consists of its unique focus on the role of media, both in the imagination of new social vistas and in the construction of imagined communities.

The body of this book is divided into six main chapters, each one carrying a different perspective and different layers of depth, which take the reader on a progressive and gradual path that gives an insight into the lifestyle and the media consumption of the Gurupá community. The writing style alternates between a travel diary and an academic report, with a sensible balance of charts and original