



PROJECT MUSE®

---

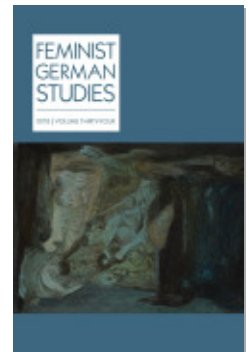
*Revolutionary Subjects: German Literatures and the Limits of  
Aesthetic Solidarity with Latin America* by Jamie H. Trnka  
(review)

Andreas Stuhlmann

Feminist German Studies, Volume 34, 2018, pp. 172-174 (Review)

Published by University of Nebraska Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/fgs.2018.0019>



➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/713323>

in the former and Uschi Obermaier in the latter. While McCarthy is interested specifically in how mainstream film represents these wild women through the lens of today's pop-cultural understanding of feminism, this chapter seems the least connected to the concerns of the book. Perhaps because the directors of both films are men, the idea of the mother-daughter dialogue inherent in feminism's evolution is missing here. The films discussed in chapter 5, *Die innere Sicherheit* (2000; *The state I am in*) and *Auf der anderen Seite* (2007; *The Edge of Heaven*, 2007), are also directed by men but thematically feature intergenerational conflict among women. Fatih Akin's *Auf der anderen Seite* is perhaps the best example for McCarthy's analysis of multigenerational feminisms. Her beautiful reading of the character Susanne, a white German mother, leads her to conclude that the film posits "women, bolstered by humanist and revolutionary ideals as well as psychic mother-daughter bonds that extend beyond a German frame, as the contemporary agents of '68" (196). In chapter 6, after an analysis of the conversations between *EMMA* and *Missy* magazines—roughly representing two different but not oppositional generations—McCarthy concludes: "In the best possible scenario, contemporary feminism consists [ . . . ] of [ . . . ] a rich variety of voices sustained by the dialogical dynamism of a long, rich history as living substratum" (213). For those who fear that neoliberalism is wreaking havoc on third-wave feminism (e.g., in the form of popfeminism or postfeminism), McCarthy's analysis reaches a hopeful conclusion.

This book is not for those new to these primary texts, but, for those who are curious about contemporary feminisms and their complicated, messy, and awkward expressions, it provides rich reading.

Alexandra M. Hill  
*University of Portland*

Jamie H. Trnka. *Revolutionary Subjects: German Literatures and the Limits of Aesthetic Solidarity with Latin America*. De Gruyter, 2015. 318 pp. Cloth, \$114.99.

*Revolutionary Subjects* explores the ways in which literatures in East and West Germany engaged with Latin American cultures, literatures, and revolutionary spirit during the 1970s and 1980s. The discourse around

Latin America in both German states was framed not only by the Cold War but also by an increasing interest in the continent as an artistic, social, and political laboratory of progressive ideas. Quoting Arjun Appadurai, Jamie H. Trnka refers to these imagined Latin Americas as a “staging ground for action” (50). She examines “aesthetic solidarities” as a practice in which the political, the ideological, and the poetic undergo a *Verdichtung* that “signifies both the increasing density of cross-border *relationships*” and “the aesthetic strategy of casting those relationships in poetic terms” (2–3). *Verdichtung* echoes Jacques Rancière’s claim that “the real must be fictionalized in order to be thought” (quoted in Trnka 291).

Trnka articulates a “need to intervene into cosmopolitan rights discourses that often bypass the international en route to the transnational and the global, discourses that attend inadequately to modes of thinking intersubjectivity that are solidary but not necessarily rooted in the kind of sympathetic imagination that is built on identification with an Other” (61–62). Stripping away all of what Susanne Zantop calls “colonial fantasies,” Trnka recognizes a Latin America that is decolonizing as a particular Other and challenges the hierarchical model that divided the globe into first, second, and third worlds. In Martha Nussbaum’s work, Trnka finds a model for identification with an Other and derives from it a “geo-cultural intersubjectivity” (272), providing depth of focus to the rights discourse, the identification through solidarity, and the de/construction of the Latin American revolutionary subject.

The analysis of the formation of the revolutionary subject and the exploration of literature’s capacity to expand the limits of aesthetic solidarity are woven in different ways into the case studies on Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Volker Braun, Heiner Müller, and F. C. Delius. Trnka interprets Enzensberger’s documentary drama *Das Verhör von Habana* (1970; *The Havana Inquiry*, 1974) in the context of his essayistic work for the journal *Kursbuch*. Enzensberger practices aesthetic solidarity as a translator and documentarist using transcripts of testimonies from the Bay of Pigs trial for his play. For her interpretation, Trnka draws mostly on Enzensberger’s essay series *Berliner Gemeinplätze* (Berlin platitudes), but it also would be interesting to confront the text with his essays on Weiss, his collection *Freisprüche* (Acquittals), and his other translations.

Braun’s “aesthetic battle” (166) in *Guevara oder der Sonnenstaat* (1976; Guevara, or Sun country) stands in sharp contrast to Enzensberger’s play. For Braun, the impossible yet necessary struggle of the revolutionary subject is located “at a geopolitical limit (Second World/Third World) that

Braun seeks to confront with a geocultural alternative that takes shape on the shifting ground” between German utopian thinking and Cuban revolutionary thought (166). Not surprisingly, Braun’s poetics reject East German social realist aesthetics and Soviet guidelines. His *Neuer Mensch/Hombre nuevo* appears as a possible synthesis of a critical dialectic and takes shape in the figure of Tania La Guerillera. “The New Man is a woman,” concludes Trnka (164).

In *Der Auftrag* (1979; *The Mission*, 1995), Müller places aesthetic solidarity within a larger narrative of revolution and resistance that erupt in “antisystemic and decolonial thrusts” (212) aiming to destabilize the geopolitical order of the Cold War and the European unified subject position. In Müller’s postdramatic aesthetics, historical characters are exploded, fragmented, reassembled, and the body becomes “a site of revolution and counterrevolution” (212). This aesthetic program of *Der Auftrag*, Trnka argues, is an overt critique of both the White Russian Revolutionaries and Stalinism.

Delius’s novel *Adenauerplatz* (1984; Adenauer Square) uses the lens of the German-Chilean Felipe Gerlach, who lives as a political refugee in Germany. The novel traces the topic of solidarity through the violent intertwined histories of Germany and Chile and the “transnational circulation of people, capital and commodities” that “interpolates the revolutionary subject of literature into an analogous process” (267). The constant breakdown of dialogue between the protagonists exhibits the loss of true exchange and their captivity within a culture of fetishized consumerism.

Jamie H. Trnka has written a book that is impressive in its scope and ambition and concise, timely, and rigorous in its execution. It is a model for German studies with comparative, interdisciplinary outlooks.

Andreas Stuhlmann  
*University of Alberta, Edmonton*

Jonathan O. Wipplinger. *The Jazz Republic: Music, Race, and American Culture in Weimar Germany*. U of Michigan P, 2017. 311 pp. Paper, \$39.95.

Jonathan Wipplinger presents a thorough analysis of the impact of jazz as a musical art form rooted in African American culture on the young democracy of Germany, specifically the city of Berlin. His research digs