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<i>ADDITIONAL NOTES</i>	

Review of *Disability in Twentieth-Century German Culture*, by Carol Poore

Carol Poore. *Disability in Twentieth-Century German Culture*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2007. Pp. xxii, 407. Pp. 432. Cloth \$70.

By Alan Rosenfeld

This ambitious study illustrates the analytical potential of disability when treated as a "category of human variation" on par with race, class, and gender (xvi). Carol Poore explores disability as a fundamental site of struggle over visions of normality, citizenship, and national identity throughout the twentieth century. The author conceives of her work as operating in two separate registers, as she focuses on the political efforts of disabled people and their allies while tracing evolving depictions of disabled people in the cultural sphere. In actuality, *Disability in Twentieth-Century Germany* surpasses these goals by revealing the inexorable links between the political and the cultural, both because disability continually has been "invested with meanings that are highly ideological" (237), and because the disability rights movement has featured a concerted effort to replace negative metaphors with more promising self-representations.

Although much of the terrain covered by the author in three chapters dedicated to Weimar and Nazi Germany has been explored elsewhere, Poore's study is unique in placing discourses on disabled bodies at the very center of Germany's political tumult. Interpreting disability was a crucial aspect of Weimar's culture wars, with bodies of veterans serving as omnipresent reminders of war and defeat. Poore points out that while expressionist artists and writers harnessed disabled bodies as a tool to undermine militaristic authoritarianism, their strategy actually precluded depictions of disabled people leading fulfilling and socially engaged lives. The ascent of the Nazis then transformed preexisting eugenic and eliminationist discourses into official state policy, while delineating distinct boundaries between heroic disabled soldiers and those the regime deemed hereditarily unfit. Poore's analytical framework allows us to recognize the Nazi era as a moment when the ongoing discursive struggle between disability and normality reached its unsettling zenith, and the author does well to suggest that representations of disability were just as fundamental to the state's propaganda efforts as its anticommunism and antisemitism.

Poore's chapters on Cold War-era Germany arguably constitute the book's most valuable contribution, as she juxtaposes discourse and policy in the Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic. The author argues that, at least in the case of disability, silence and repression prevented any meaningful *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* for decades. Instead, Poore chronicles the persistence of a "reservoir of pro-euthanasia attitudes" (168), which, rather than disappearing along with the Nazi regime, persisted in individualized and privatized forms. According to Poore, even a new generation of consciously antifascist filmmakers like Rainer Werner Fassbinder, who constructed disabled characters in the hope of exposing and condemning eliminationist sensibilities, tragically "perpetuate[d] the exclusion of difference" (206). As far as the GDR is concerned, Poore's examination of the state's handling of disability exposes the gulf between the promises and constraints of Eastern-bloc socialism. The presence of disabled bodies subverted policymakers' attempts to link citizenship to production, exposing the assumed "unity of interests between the collective and the individual" as a charade (234). Furthermore, the absence of a public sphere in the GDR channeled dissent into the literary sphere and thwarted the formation of a disability rights movement comparable with that of the FRG.

In the end, Poore should be commended for filling a conspicuous void in the scholarship on modern Germany. Her narrative circulates effortlessly among four separate German states, each of which she treats adeptly. Furthermore, Poore's investigation of the effects of reductive stereotypes on the everyday lives of disabled people opens up a promising path for subsequent studies. Her use of disability discourse as a barometer for democratic consciousness is certainly compelling, albeit with an important caveat. This formula, coupled with the author's description of the FRG as a disabled person's "prison" in comparison with the United States (333), might reify students' erroneous conception of an antidemocratic German essence. However, *Disability in Twentieth Century Germany* certainly has earned its place on the bookshelf as an indispensable reference tool.