

Rudi Dutschke in Prague, Daniel Cohn-Bendit in Frankfurt, Tariq Ali at the International Vietnam Congress in West Berlin, and Herbert Marcuse hovering always above – these are the images most often conjured up to connect ‘transnational 1968’ to West Germany. Timothy Scott Brown has gone another route, one which emphasizes cultural history and helpfully expands the English-language material on the topic.

Given the abundance of literature in German on ‘1968’, it is remarkable how few English-language books address the West German case in detail. Apart from Nick Thomas’ 2003 monograph, the field has mostly been left to edited volumes and sweeping ‘international’ overviews. Brown draws on Thomas’ work, but, following recent historiographic trends, focuses on how West German experiences were part of global entanglements. In doing so, he offers an incisive critique of many supposedly ‘transnational’ studies published in the last decade, focused as they are on agentless processes, prominent ‘veterans’, or the additive accumulation of disconnected national studies. Relying primarily on German-language sources, Brown tells a story about ‘the intersection of global vectors across one local terrain’ (p. 5), bringing into focus the actions of a wide range of protagonists, including *Gammler*, pupils, and ‘hip capitalists’ as well as students.

Brown begins by situating German experiences of the global Sixties in ‘Space’ (Ch. 1) and ‘Time’ (Ch. 2). West Germany’s ‘1968’ was exceptionally transnational because of the country’s Cold War frontline status, but also because the Nazi erasure of competing political traditions forced the left to look abroad for ideas. That erasure, compounded by the perceived SPD abandonment of radical traditions, led to a specifically German preoccupation with ‘history’ and to the resurrection of pre-war icons (Luxemburg, Liebknecht) alongside Third World heroes (Che, Ho Chi Minh). The German past and the foreign present were thus complementary ‘source material’ that coloured the ideas and images of West Germany’s anti-authoritarian revolt.

After thus setting the scene, Brown turns his attention to cultural history for his central chapters (‘Word’, ‘Sound’, and ‘Vision’). Like others before him, Brown argues that ‘1968 in West Germany was a revolt of texts’ (p. 153), but he does not restrict himself to the usual towering intellectuals. Rather, these ‘texts’ were also found in the critical journalism of *konkret* and *Pardon*, in underground newspapers from the radical *agit 883* to the countercultural *Ulcus Molle*, and in books from both established publishers and alternative presses (März, Voltaire). The divergent perspectives of liberals, radicals, student intellectuals, and hippie dropouts within this readership proved complementary in building a *Gegenöffentlichkeit*, even if concrete political cooperation declined rapidly after May 1968.

Music, images, and ideas of course circulated transnationally, but Brown is particularly interested in the ‘active transnational’: those within West Germany who imported impulses from abroad. For example, the music journalist Rolf Ulrich Kaiser helped organize the *Internationale Essener Songtage* as a ‘European answer to the Monterey Pop Festival’ – but with a more ‘explicitly political’ bent than the original (p. 155-156). Like the poet Rolf Dieter Brinkmann (who brought Beat literature and its publishing practices to Cologne) or the artist George Maciunas (associated with Fluxus in New York and Düsseldorf), Kaiser was an agent of cultural transfer who brought foreign, mostly Anglo-American influences to West Germany and adapted them to local needs.

Whether imported or domestically produced, art and articles of consumption were infused with political meaning in ‘the global Sixties’. In some cases, those meanings were primarily projections that went well beyond any intrinsic political content. However, choices about consumption reflected the adoption or rejection of particular values, signified oppositional

belongings, and ‘served above all a *political* function’ (p. 232). To the many who took visual symbols seriously, commercialization represented a very real threat: advertisements hawking ‘Marcuse-red’ and ‘Mao-yellow’ jackets were not merely an affront, but could bring about ‘the death of the project’ that lay behind them (p. 226).

Brown’s closing chapters on ‘Power’, ‘Sex’, and ‘Death’ carry the narrative into the 1970s. Following the failure of the campaign against the Emergency Laws, ‘the dream of a revolutionary mass movement [was] exposed... as a fiction’ (p. 329), leaving its different fragments to develop along their own trajectories. As in most other studies, the emphasis here is on feminism and ‘terrorism’, but Brown adds valuable new material that shows how impulses associated with ‘1968’ persisted thereafter and reached other corners of society: *Basisgruppen* composed of student-theoreticians and potentially revolutionary workers experimented with new organizational models, secondary school pupils found their own voice in the *Schülerbewegung*, and the infrastructure of protest expanded through *Häuserkampf* in the cities and the back-to-the-land movement. The example of the drug self-help group Release – which also supported up-and-coming musicians and ran its own hostel, restaurant, and publishing house – demonstrates how seemingly ‘single-issue’ groups in the 1970s maintained ‘a broader mission... to create an alternative to capitalist society’ (p. 261).

The events that structure most chapters (the Kommune 1, International Vietnam Congress, *Tomatenwurf*, Buback obituary, etc.) will be familiar to most readers of German and many students of ‘1968’. The strength of Brown’s book is that he does not limit himself to these, but adds real depth to the discussions they open through additional primary sources that he has selected and analysed with great care. The book’s transnational claims do not always fare as well: for all his spot-on critique of the existing literature, Brown’s ‘transnational’ is overwhelmingly unidirectional, based on a transfer/diffusion/influence paradigm that tells us much about how Germans drew on ‘the global’ but very little about how they contributed to it. However, Brown shifts the emphasis from passive to active reception, looks for transnational agents beyond the usual student/intellectual suspects, and includes occasional comparisons to the GDR. Throughout the book, he shows a nuanced understanding of his protagonists (with the sole exception of the flat and undifferentiated *K-Gruppen*), and he lucidly analyses controversial matters such as the interface between politics and culture, tensions within APO, and motivations behind ‘terrorism’. This book does not constitute the final word on 1968, but it has certainly advanced the discussion.