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Lutz Rathenow: Berlin-Ost. Die andere Seite einer Stadt

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distant father, often accompanied by some (sexual) trauma suffered by The Homosexual at an early age. But at the same time they break that image. Where, for example, Lothar exults in his status as ex officio drag queen of the GDR and embraces life in Berlin, R. can't imagine living away from his farm and accepts the confines of his closet as a husband and father. Or the dichotomy is exposed within one man's life story such as Body's. He tells of bouts with alcoholism, incarcerations for assault, all stemming from his refusal to accept his gayness. A doctor (not the first, but the first "enlightened" one) finally helped him to give up drinking and find his own way of being gay.

We are shown a wide spectrum of experiences, among them: working class, married, closeted, openly gay, in long-term relationships, close to one's family, living in isolation, searching for a viable identity or community. But by reading these stories, one comes to realize that all these are only aspects of identities, not complete definitions. That realization begins to end the stereotypes which block real change.

As an American gay man, many of these experiences sound familiar. Some wonderfully so, like the discovery that love is possible or that unforgetable moment of one's first kiss ("Ich habe nie wieder so einen Atem gerochen." — R., 182). Some are all too horribly familiar, like the almost constant policing of your not butch enough wrists and hips for fear of That Secret being discovered. But there are also important differences between the cultural experience of being gay in the U.S. and in the GDR. Several men report on their personal experience of German fascism. While none of the men in the book decry the GDR, these older gay men describe how they welcomed liberation in 1945 and the founding of the German socialist state. Their experiences present important aspects of those years: two ended up in concentration camps, one was a teenager, and barely escaped being sent up at the end of the war. K. tells one of the several chilling anecdotes from that time. He was working as a pharmacist when, one day in the mid-1930's, a gay friend appeared at his drugstore and handed him a note: "'Man hat mich angeklagt wegen Paragraph 175. Du mußt mir Gift geben. Meine Schwester will das. Wenn du mir nicht hilfst, muß ich dich anzeigen'" (212).

The importance of workplace and colleagues strikes me as another significant difference. These seem to me to play a much more crucial role in the definition of self in East German society. Thus, the creation of an individual's gay identity is also shaped to a greater extent by that person's relationship to his colleagues, his ability to be open about his sexual orientation at work, etc. While some, like Volker or Bert, are quite open with their colleagues and willingly entertain their naive questions ("Wer ist der Mann? Wer ist die Frau?"), others reflect Joseph's attitude that "Die Gesellschaft hätte mehr von mir haben können" (163).

Societal homophobia, in a society where it was "legal" to "be gay," is described in, for example, the difficulty in obtaining an apartment when one is not attached to a heterosexual family unit. Even those who are open-minded on most matters have trouble when it comes to gays: "die meisten können sich vorstellen, daß zwei Männer es miteinander treiben. Daß sie zärtlich miteinander tanzen, weil es ihnen Freude macht, geht nicht in ihren Schädel. Das ist übrigens auch bei vielen verklemmten Schwulen so" (Bert, 273). What is perhaps more pernicious is that internalized homophobia Bert mentions that erects barriers which are almost impossible to overcome. Winne comments: "Ich bin fest davon überzeugt, Problem Nummer eins ist nicht unser Verhältnis zu den Normalen, sondern wie gehen *wir* miteinander um" (189). N., the second to last speaker in the book, has been practically immobilized by such homophobia. He revels in self-pity, whines about his "unattractiveness," and categorizes all gays as neurotic.

Bert, who speaks in the final interview, provides a wonderful burst of youthful optimism and joy in being gay. He describes his decision to leave small-town life for the opportunities of the metropolis (Berlin). Once there, he gradually created a life for himself that includes a lover, the lover's son, an entire apartment building of neigbors, many of whom have become good friends, and his own accepting parents. His story of how his parents reacted to news of his "Veranlagung" supplies a delightful mixture of relief, hope, and love: "Vater stand auf, holte den Bergmannsschnaps, nahm Gläser aus dem Küchenschrank und goß ein. Ich schaute aus dem Fenster, Mutter auf ihre Hände, bis Vater sagte: Also, Mutter, gut, daß er es uns gesagt hat. Prost" (271).

Through the contrast between such stories as N.'s and Bert's and the array of gay life which these men present to the reader, Lemke has provided a volume that marks a shift in East German cultural history. The silenced gay outsider has begun to find a voice. The stories are fascinating. The ones yet to be told—and lived—can only be more so.

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Rathenow, Lutz, with photographs by Harald Hauswald. *Berlin-Ost: Die andere Seite einer Stadt.* Berlin: BasisDruck, 1990. 133 pp.

Having run out of things to say about the political significance of the Berlin Wall, observers sometimes accorded it an almost cosmic meaning. Carl Jung, for example, saw the Wall as an expression of the schizophrenia of modern man, who insists on the separation of matter and spirit. This notion was stimulating, highly dramatic—and ridiculous! But, then, so was the Berlin Wall. Perhaps, a hundred years from now, some new Richard Wagner may write an opera about the Wall, with Ulbricht and Honecker among the characters. Right now, authors will be lucky to get a decent comedy.

Yet, like so many other preposterous things in our lives, the Berlin Wall was long taken for granted. By at least the mid-seventies, even the protests of East German dissidents seldom focused on the Wall. As the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe began to crumble, people suddenly realized how arbitrary the barrier was. As I write this, it is still only about a year and a half since the border between the two Germanys was opened, yet it seems like ages. A number of literary works—propagandistic pieces of Becher and Brecht, for example—that once seemed aesthetically fairly credible now sound positively absurd.

Other works, by contrast, have gained with historical distance. *Berlin-Ost: Die andere Seite einer Stadt,* with text by Rathenow and photographs by Hauswald, was first published in 1987 by Piper Verlag. Now BasisDruck, a press run largely by dissidents of the former East German state, has put out a revised and greatly expanded version. It includes two new chapters by Rathenow, about a score of new photographs by Hauswald and an afterward by Jürgen Fuchs.

Freed from the more immediate sort of political implications, the photographs by Hauswald seem more complex. One basic technique he uses repeatedly in the book is to take a pretentious building, statue or official spectacle, then contrast this with the expressions of casual people loitering nearby. Before the fall of the East German state, a reader was inclined to take such juxtapositions as ironic comments on society. Now, they suggest more universal themes, such as the tension between ideals and reality. One variant of this technique is a new photograph of birds clustered about the East Berlin television tower, where the artist contrasts ancient and modern symbols of freedom.

The great metropolises of the European continent were celebrated between the two World Wars, more than during any other period, before or since. The legend of romantic Paris continued during and after Nazi occupation, and it has died so gradually that few people even noticed. The legend of Berlin, by contrast, was not allowed to die a natural death, as the city became the Nazi capital and then the site of major battles. A recent segment of the American television show "60 Minutes" celebrated the newly united Berlin in stereotypical manner as heir to the Weimar Republic, a center of great wealth, vice, ferment, power and "divine decadence."

Rathenow and Hauswald, as residents of Berlin, know better. Berlin, like perhaps no other city in the world, has had a series of identities bestowed on it by politicians and journalists: decadent metropolis, Nazi capital, ruin, battleground of the Cold War and now the center of a new Europe. All of these conceptions, however, are superimposed on patterns of everyday life, which, though often disturbed, constantly reassert themselves, mocking ideological debates.

As East Berlin moves toward union with its Western counterpart, Rathenow seeks the increasingly elusive identity of the city in nuances of speech and behavior. Wary of generalizing in a period of transition, he records snatches of dialog overheard as citizens try to come to terms with the dramatic changes in their lives. A teacher, for example, warns her pupils that they could end up homeless, since laziness is not tolerated in a capitalist society.

As to the future, Rathenow can only speculate. Toward the end of the book, his vignettes become increasingly brief, until all our notions of the city are lost in the clear but fragmentary details. Only one thing is certain. The dissolution of Communist Europe has given us a different world, at once frightening and exciting, filled with unsuspected possibilities.

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Walther, Joachim et al. *Protokoll eines Tribunals. Die Ausschlüsse aus dem DDR-Schriftstellerverband 1979.* Reinbek: rororo aktuell 12992, 1991. 138 S.

Es sei kurz an die Ereignisse des Jahres 1979 erinnert, die zu den im Untertitel dieser Dokumentation erwähnten Ausschlüssen führten: Stefan Heym hatte seinen *Collin* ohne Genehmigung des DDR-Büros für Urheberrechte in der Bundesrepublik veröffentlicht; andere DDR-Schriftsteller hatten in einem der Westpresse übergegebenen Brief an Erich Honecker vom 16. Mai gegen die Unterdrückung kritischer Schriftstellerkollegen protestiert; noch weitere DDR-Schriftsteller hatten auf andere Weise Mißfallen bei der Obrigkeit erregt. So wurde dann am 7. Juni eine Versammlung vom Berliner Bezirksvorstand des DDR-Schriftstellerverbands einberufen, um an Kurt Bartsch, Adolf Endler, Stefan Heym, Karl-Heinz Jakobs, Klaus Poche, Klaus Schlesinger, Rolf Schneider, Dieter Schubert und Joachim Seyppel ein Exempel zu statuieren. Im Archiv des DDR-Schriftstellerverbands ist ein Wortprotokoll des Ausschlußverfahrens gefunden worden, das den Hauptteil dieser von Joachim Walther zusammengestellten Dokumentation bildet. Der Herausgeber, der vom Dezember 1989 bis zur Auflösung des DDR-Schriftstellerverbands ein Jahr später dessen Stellvertretender Vorsitzender war, hat dem Wortprotokoll einen Aufsatz mit dem Titel "Die Amputation" vorangestellt (Vorabdruck im *Spiegel* vom 24.12.90, Auszüge aus dem Wortprotokoll erschienen in der Nummer davor vom 17.12.).

Walthers Aufsatz erklärt und dokumentiert noch weiter die Vor- und Nachgeschichte der Ausschlüsse, so z.B. das Zusammenwirken der Abteilung Kultur des ZK der SED, der Zensurbehörde, des Schriftstellerverbands und der Staatssicherheit. Walther beschreibt, wie bei der Leipziger Buchmesse, in Renzensionen, in Dieter Nolls infamem Brief an Erich Honecker, in einer Präsidiumssitzung des Schriftstellerverbands und in einer Zentralvorstandssitzung desselben mit einem einschlägigen Referat vom Verbandspräsidenten Hermann Kant schon im voraus die Stichworte geliefert und die Mehrheiten für die Ausschlüsse gesichert wurden. Was die Zeit nach dem Ausschußverfahren betrifft, erwähnt Walther die Protestbriefe namhafter DDR-Schriftsteller, vieler Leser und von Schriftstellerverbänden im Ausland, die zwar nie in der DDR- Presse erscheinen durften, die aber in einem Aktenordner des Schriftstellerverbands aufbewahrt wurden. Weiterhin erzählt der Herausgeber von den Literaturpreisen, die die staatlichen Hauptakteure bei den Ausschlüssen in der Folgezeit noch verliehen bekamen, und von dem weniger günstigen Schicksal der Ausgeschlossenen, bei dem hörige Verlage mitwirkten. Zu den Ausschlüssen selbst resümiert Walther: "Eine niederschmetternd würdelose Veranstaltung. Die Partei und deren Vollzugsgehilfen im Schriftstellerverband hatten, so schien es, einen weiteren Sieg in der Klassenschlacht errungen. Die Literatur war der Verlierer. Und wenn schon 'Schlacht,' dann wurde an diesem Tag Pegasos geschlachtet" (16).

Dem Wortprotokoll der Ausschlüsse folgt ein "Dokumentarischer Anhang," der nicht wenige Texte zur bereits erwähnten Vorbereitung des Ausschlußverfahrens (u.a. das Referat von Hermann Kant), Walthers nicht berücksichtigten Redebeitrag bei den Ausschüssen und einige der Protestbriefe bringt. Das letzte Dokument im Anhang bildet der "Beschluß des Bezirksverbands der Berliner Schriftsteller vom 23. November 1989," in dem um Entschuldigung für "nicht wiedergutzumachendes Unrecht" gebeten wird und die Ausschlüsse annulliert werden. Die Vielzahl der Namen, die im Anhang und auch im Wortprotokoll des Ausschußverfahrens auftauchen, ist manchmal verwirrend. Abhilfe schafft aber ein zweiter Anhang "Zu den Personen."

In dem Wortprotokoll fällt zunächst einmal der penetrant vereinfachende Ton der einführenden Beiträge von Günter Görlich, dem Vorsitzenden des Berliner Bezirksverbands, und Helmut Küchler, dem 1. Sekretär