This readable and worth-reading volume presents a complicated image of contemporary cinema in Germany and Austria. We find ourselves, the collection’s authors argue, in a moment of remarkable cinematic innovation as well as one of deep-seated disenchantment. Mueller and Skidmore’s collection arrives at a fascinating time for cinema studies and not just within the examination of things German (and Austrian). Recent technological advances have changed the medium, its formal techniques, and the ways in which all of this can be received, viewed, and critiqued. The increasing, yet by no means universal, availability of digital cameras that produce high-quality footage combines with (sometimes) easier production via untraditional funding mechanisms (e.g., crowdsourcing) and distribution (e.g., on the Internet or on television). Some of these developments appear in the essay collection, although they are not treated in great detail. Taking a cue from Randall Halle’s important study German Film After Germany (2008), the editors do mention and engage with the idea, however, that film production and its associated funding structures have become ever more transnational in their composition and reach (2). As scholarship has done steadily in the past few decades, Halle’s volume included, the editors and some of the contributors question the usefulness of certain national rubrics when dealing with cinema. Nonetheless, Mueller and Skidmore position their volume in the landscape of other examinations of cinema, including Stephen Schindler and Lutz Koepnick’s volume The Cosmopolitan Screen: German Cinema and the Global Imaginary, 1945 to the Present (2007) and Brad Praeger and Jaimey Fischer’s The Collapse of the Conventional: German Film and Its Politics at the Turn of the
Twenty-First Century (2010). Like the work presented in these and other publications, Mueller, Skidmore, and the volume’s contributors examine to varying degrees the filmic legacy of, for example, the 1968ers and the New German Cinema in the development of post-1989 German (and Austrian) cinematic production and reception.

The contributors proceed from the understanding that cinema—German, Austrian, and European—has evolved dramatically in the past couple of decades, especially from its existence prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall, but also in the wake of Reunification. Despite and perhaps occasionally because of the evolving structures in its production and reception, cinema remains a medium through which filmmakers and audiences can engage with and critique their surroundings, including and especially the evidence of change for the better and the worse. The editors write that this volume joins other scholarship that positions cinema both “as a product and agent of social, political, and technological change” and “globalizing processes” (4, 7). Mueller and Skidmore note that the cinematic field in Germany—as Germany gets the most attention in this collection—has changed since the early 1990s, from Eric Rentschler’s coined term of a “cinema of consensus” to Sabine Hake’s understanding of what became a “cinema of dissent.” That is, German cinema expanded from what was primarily “popular, genre-driven, and box-office-oriented” to encompass more diverse works that also address and produce “explorations of a changing society” (3). Globalization gets a good deal of attention in this collection, as the editors concede that globalization, however controversial and variously defined, has contributed to, and continues to effect, a massive amount of fundamental change around the world. Approaching this changing cinematic landscape, the volume’s contributors ask direct and indirect questions about, for example, how
filmmakers perceive and represent the present and future, how the contemporary state of capitalism shapes the cinematic field, how place and location can inform and define filmic art, how anti-Semitism and German understandings of Vergangenheitsbewältigung can appear in film, and how difference can play a role in these questions.

The volume comprises fifteen chapters, including the editors’ introduction, which are divided among four sections (excluding the introductory chapter) and each of which is preceded by an abstract. These sections address “Challenging Viewing Habits,” “Reassessing and Consuming History” (the largest section), “Questioning Collective Identities,” and the one-essay section, “An Insider’s View.” Although the book’s title might indicate that a broader time span is analyzed here, most of the articles focus on films from the 1990s and early 2000s. Marco Abel’s essay argues that the Berlin School of filmmakers comprises a counter-cinema in its uses of formal style and aesthetics to reconceive neoliberal Germany’s present reality and future. In her chapter, Sophie Boyer approaches the work of Michael Haneke, reading through a lens of Baudrillardian theory and arguing that Haneke’s cinematic oeuvre engages viewers while also depicting a failure of communication. Morgan Koerner’s essay focuses on Christoph Schlingensief’s film Freakstars 3000 (2003), which, Koerner argues, raises ethical questions about depictions of disability while presenting a cultural parody and simultaneous intervention in the presentation of disabled persons in the media. Roger Cook’s chapter analyzes Das Leben der Anderen (2006) and its use of literary discourses to deliver its narrative about social control and individuality. In an examination of Edgar Reitz’s Heimat 3 (2004), Alasdair King shows how the film does work related to post-Wall social time as it shows images of historical and cultural importance. The legacy of 1968 appears in Joanne Leal’s
chapter, which focuses on three films (from 2000 and 2004) that engage in similar critiques to those delivered by the student revolts that have been seen with intense ambivalence. Mary-Elizabeth O’Brien’s essay focuses on two films (of 2004) that display a young German concern about the contemporary state of global capitalism and thus embody a kind of political and cultural engagement. In each of their chapters, Florentine Strzelczyk and Peter Gölz examine cinematic depictions of National Socialism, fascism, and specifically Hitler, analyzing instances in which humor and comedy are permitted in the wake of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. Myriam Léger analyzes *Ein ganz gewöhnlicher Jude* (2006), which uses cinematography to turn the viewer into a spectator of Jewishness. Jakub Kazecki examines the appearance of Poland and Poles in German cinema, illustrating a play with the porous border between the two countries. Michael Zimmermann’s essay engages the very transnational concept of migration and its role in the presentation of Turkish culture in Germany, particularly in the film *Brudermord* (2005). Alice Kuzniar argues for a more complex understanding of contemporary identity politics and legal rights in that she links globalization and queerness and sees alterity intersectionally. The book’s final chapter by Barbara Pichler (the director of Diagonale, the Graz Austrian film festival) aims to show the vitality and uniqueness of Austrian filmmaking in four case studies, while also noting the films’ connections to the work of Michael Haneke and Ulrich Seidl. The chapters are cogently written and mostly consistent in style and format. One criticism of the volume is that its contributors often work loosely with terms like “contemporary” and “recent.” There are also minor missed opportunities for the chapters to speak to each other, which would have made everything seem more cohesive.
Rounding out the book are a comprehensive filmography, biographic information on the contributors, and an index. The latter is oddly inconsistent (in the amount of detail afforded certain entries) and incomplete (in its exclusion of broadly applicable concepts like “gender” or “race” yet inclusion of the specific and one-page, for instance, “exilic and diasporic filmmaking”). It should be mentioned that the book contains sixteen handsome color illustrations, usually film stills, that add to the book’s attractiveness, although they are not always specifically referenced in the chapters.

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