1. General

A. Bammer, ‘Feminism, Frauenliteratur, and women’s writing of the 1970s and 1980s’, Catling, Women’s Writing, 216–32. *Literatur und Identität. Deutsch-deutsche Befindlichkeiten und die multikulturelle Gesellschaft*, ed. Ursula E. Beitter, NY, Lang, xi + 339 pp. A. Blioumi, ‘“Migrationsliteratur”, “interkulturelle Literatur” und “Generationen von Schriftstellern”’. Ein Problemaufriß über umstrittene Begriffe’, *WB*, 46: 595–602. Elisabeth Boa and Rachel Palfreyman, *Heimat. A German Dream. Regional Loyalties and National Identity in German Culture 1890–1990*, OUP, 234 pp., is a welcome contribution to debates about the nature of ‘Heimat’ and its significance in shaping identities, regional and national, in Germany. Although the volume adopts an interdisciplinary approach to the discourse of ‘Heimat’, which means that many elements of the study fall beyond the parameters of this review section, its broad cultural focus proves most stimulating, and it succeeds in laying solid foundations for ongoing investigations into what constitutes German identity. Especially valuable in this regard is the introduction, which delivers an historical and theoretical survey of the notion of ‘Heimat’, uncovering its myriad uses and meanings and indeed ‘mapping the terrain’ covered in the chapters that follow. Three factors are adduced to explain the growing importance of ‘Heimat’ in political debates from the 1970s onwards: the reconsideration of German national identity as the Nazi past grew more distant, the growing importance of environmental issues and the rise of the Green movement, and the impact of Ostpolitik and the thawing of the Cold War. Indeed, the text asserts that ‘Heimat was clearly “in” in the mid-1980s and can be seen in retrospect as a symptom of the great sea changes bringing the end of the Cold War and German Reunification’. The most provocative section of the introduction explores what it terms the ‘socio-psychic connotations and aesthetic contours’, which looks closely at the role ‘Heimat’ plays in identity formation. The definitions offered here will doubtless provoke further debate, touching on aspects such as the spatial and temporal contours, ‘Heimat’ as image, linked especially with photography, and in the most convincing section, on the deconstructionist notion of ‘Heimat’ predicated on the existence of its other or negative within it: ‘Who must be excluded and who can be integrated are as crucial to the definition of a community as who is
from the start included’. This reading seems especially apposite in the light of recent debates about the existence, or not, of a German *Leitkultur*, as well as more general debates about multicultural societies, not just in Germany. This last point is revisited in conjunction with the unification of the two Germanies in the volume’s thought-provoking conclusion, by looking at the work of Turkish writers such as Emine Sevgi Özdamar and Feridun Zaimoglu. In those chapters relating to the post-1945 period covered by the current review section, the representation of ‘Heimat’ in film constitutes a core interest of the study, with a detailed exploration of the post-war *Heimatfilme*, juxtaposed with those productions which sought to subvert the genre, and DEFA productions in East Germany. Quite naturally, there is also an excellent chapter devoted to Edgar Reitz’s epic *Heimat*. The chapter which explores *Heimatfilme* includes analysis of Martin Sperr’s bleak play *Jagdszenen aus Niederbayern*, the very antithesis of idyllic depictions of ‘Heimat’, and of Frank Xaver Kroetz’s attempt to appropriate the *Volksstück* as a political medium. The exploration of the work of both playwrights forms a striking and effective counterpoint to films such as *Wenn die Heide blüht*. Similar use of contrast is made in the chapter which focuses on the conflict between generations and their different perceptions of ‘Heimat’, with Siegfried Lenz’s *Deutschstunde* considered alongside the work of artist Emil Nolde, who served as the model for Max Ludwig Nansen in Lenz’s novel, and Michael Verhoeven’s *Das schreckliche Mädchen*, ‘which twenty years on takes up the story of young Germans exploring the Nazi past’. It is this comparative approach, teasing out the different ways in which the theme of ‘Heimat’ underpins German culture, which makes this study such a rewarding read. Lucidly written, it should prove to be a stimulating introduction for undergraduates of different disciplines to a complex, and vexed, topic.


1949/1989. *Cultural Perspectives on Division and Unity in East and West*, ed. Clare Flanagan and Stuart Taberner, Amsterdam–Atlanta, Rodopi, 297 pp., is a collection of 18 essays, collated from a conference at Bristol in 1998, exploring the two key coordinates in postwar German political and cultural history. The volume includes