

Michael P. Farrell, *Collaborative Circles: Friendship Dynamics and Creative Work* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 328 pp.

Written by a sociologist using “group theory” to explore the workings of circles—circles of writers, artists, social reformers, and others—this study argues that creativity is not a result of isolation and individuation or even of simple collaboration. The dynamics of peer groups (their formation, development, and decline) and of collective creativity are documented in cases ranging from the French Impressionists to Freud’s psychoanalytic circle to the women who led the drive for women’s rights in America in the 1850s. Not a compelling storyteller (despite fascinating stories here to be told), Farrell deploys a comparative method that results in considerable repetition. Nevertheless, the cumulative impact of reading about the various examples from which the model was drawn is to convince the reader of the benefits (and occasionally the perils) of collaboration.

—*Linda Hutcheon*

Michael Guyer, ed., *The Power of Intellectuals in Contemporary Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 459 pp.

Germans (especially German intellectuals) take their intellectuals quite seriously; perhaps more seriously than anyone else. So what did “the chattering classes,” above all in the East, make of the creation of yet another “new Germany” after 1989? What did they make of the “absorption” of the GDR, the stagnation and Europeanization of the German economy? (Many in the East can be excused for believing they fought to join the party—that other party—just when the band left and the bar closed.) How did they deal with the globalization of commerce and the Social Democrats’ shift to the political center? Intellectuals complain a lot, and mostly they held true to form in these cases: they complained, especially about what they perceived as their own growing irrelevance, particularly as they realized how much of the 1989 “revolution” was motivated by a nationalist version of collective identity and by a yearning for a consumer society (not exactly the intellectuals’ rallying cry). Guyer’s collection offers several thoughtful essays on the great peculiarities, ironies, and complicities of pre-1989 GDR intellectuals, and it covers a very wide range of phenomena manifesting the post-unification “free fall,” disorientation, confusion, memorialization, nostalgia, *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*—all as embodied in literature, theater, film, and other media (plus education). It’s quite a valuable survey.

—*Robert B. Pippin*