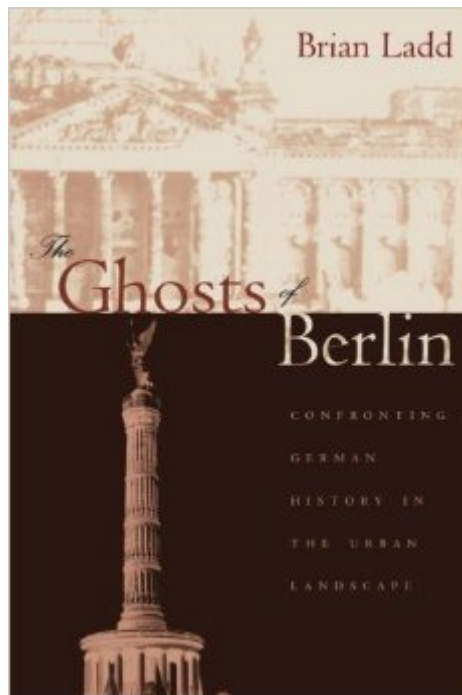


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The Ghosts Of Berlin: Confronting German History In The Urban Landscape



Synopsis

In this compelling work, Brian Ladd examines the ongoing conflicts radiating from the remarkable fusion of architecture, history, and national identity in Berlin. Ladd surveys the urban landscape, excavating its ruins, contemplating its buildings and memorials, and carefully deconstructing the public debates and political controversies emerging from its past. "Written in a clear and elegant style, *The Ghosts of Berlin* is not just another colorless architectural history of the German capital. . . . Mr. Ladd's book is a superb guide to this process of urban self-definition, both past and present." — Katharina Thote, *Wall Street Journal* "If a book can have the power to change a public debate, then *The Ghosts of Berlin* is such a book. Among the many new books about Berlin that I have read, Brian Ladd's is certainly the most impressive. . . . Ladd's approach also owes its success to the fact that he is a good storyteller. His history of Berlin's architectural successes and failures reads entertainingly like a detective novel." — Peter Schneider, *New Republic* "[Ladd's] well-written and well-illustrated book amounts to a brief history of the city as well as a guide to its landscape." — Anthony Grafton, *New York Review of Books*

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Customer Reviews

This book was on the short list of texts my German language/culture study abroad course required. As far as the architectural culture went, this book was all you needed to taste the essence of the capital. It was better than any guide book out there, especially relating the tumultuous past with what you were seeing with your own eyes as an urban landscape. Berlin is complex, historically and

culturally - from its imperialist days to Hitler's capital to the scarred divided city just now seaming together. Germany is the embodiment of ambiguity - which is made abundantly evident by its very structures throughout the wide city. Brian Ladd's photography is unobtrusive and tasteful, illustrating his thoroughly researched work. He compares an old photograph to one taken recently by him to study, at one point, how unchanged some parts of the city have been in the midst of constant upheaval in the last century. It is remarkable how entertaining the book is, as well as its vitality in its examination of Berlin. It was, quite simply, such a pleasure to read. *The Ghosts of Berlin* takes in the large picture, of a country uniting, political ideologies - past and present, and the significance of massive structures - standing and ruined. It also encompasses details in exquisite ordinariness, like street corners, department stores, and public transportation. All this is told in an appealing style that is accessible (so you don't need any background in Germany or Berlin), but not overly casual (Ladd is informed and comprehensive).

This is a brilliant book that looks at a remarkable city after the fall of the Berlin Wall and asks the question: How to come to terms with the monuments of the past? The Brandenburg Gate? Hitler's Bunker, etc. Should they be torn down, the stories they embody erased? Or should they stand as a legacy of German culture, however tainted it may be. A remarkable book about a remarkable city. Do read it.

Brian Ladd helps the reader to look at Berlin's many monuments and buildings from a critical point of view. He helps one realize that there is more to a city than stone and cement. After reading this, you can never again look at any city, Berlin in particular, the same

In this dated history of Berlin, the author posits the idea that buildings, statues, ruins, and architecture in general matter. Yes, they do. Places like the Berlin Wall, the Reichstag, Hitler's chancellery, Prussian palaces and street names reveal a lot about the citizens of Berlin. Especially in how these places' history and present and future are debated. I am reminded of the phrase that nothing is as dated as yesterday's vision of the future. So while this book excels in recapping the history of particular sites, especially the debates about reconstruction, the book itself is hopelessly out of date. A lot has happened in Berlin in the past twenty years. And some of the debates of the book are settled. This book needs a serious update to reflect the landscape of Berlin in the 21st century. The author does a good job of injecting the voices of the debate into his story at the beginning of each of the chapters through the use of quotes. But he also has a tone and a

pessimism that is a bit off-putting, especially when he states "Politicians and architects who want to put to rest the ghosts of Berlin are probably doomed to failure." I disagree. Vehemently. The author should go to Berlin today in 2016 and see if still agrees with that statement of his. Still, there was a lot of good material and the author captured a snapshot of a time now long past. Thankfully. I am quite happy that the Berlin of the 21st century is a dynamic city that is once again capturing the imagination of the world.

I read *The Ghosts of Berlin* for a college course. When Americans say "this place has such a rich history," it brings a chuckle from me and is reinforced by books such as this. The book focuses on the last 125 years or so of Berlin's extremely diverse and chaotic past. Ladd writes in a very detailed, yet concise manner. Berlin has had virtually every type of government known to man rule over it and an entire chapter is devoted to the most vital eras in the city's history; namely, the Imperial City from the late 19th century until the end of WWI, the Weimar republic in the '20s, Nazi Germany from 1933-1945, the divided city during the Cold War (with an entire separate chapter dedicated to the Berlin Wall), and the capital of a reunified Germany. The focus is as much on the changing architectural styles as well as the social and political outlooks of the day. There is much symbolism in the buildings Ladd writes about and we get a great interpretation of what they mean. Ladd illustrates his work with some nice black and white photos, so we do not have to rely on his descriptions alone. While this book isn't quite a tour book regarding which restaurants to visit or tourist attractions to avoid, it is a great book to learn about one of the most prominent European cities. So why only four stars instead of five? Well, I did have a deadline to meet and had to rush through this book in about 2 days. Maybe I didn't appreciate as much as I should have.

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