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# Kulturelle Repräsentationen des Holocaust in Deutschland und den Vereinigten Staaten, edited by Klaus Berghahn, Jürgen Fohrmann, and Helmut J. Schneider

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To explore the experience of military captivity in this way has required a breathtaking range of skills. The base of the study extends to archives in Austria, Germany, Russia, and the U.S., and it comprises sources in at least nine different languages. The author has read these sources with great circumspection and sensitivity to their context, function, and genre. The result is a superb piece of scholarship.

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*Kulturelle Repräsentationen des Holocaust in Deutschland und den Vereinigten Staaten.* Edited by Klaus Berghahn, Jürgen Fohrmann, and Helmut J. Schneider. New York: Peter Lang. 2002. Pp. 253. \$56.95. ISBN 0-8204-5208-4.

This volume brings together thirteen essays of varying length, focus, and quality that seek to shed light on the evolving representation of the Holocaust in Germany and the United States. Like many edited collections, *Kulturelle Repräsentationen des Holocaust in Deutschland und den Vereinigten Staaten* has its origins in an academic conference — this time in a series of workshops held at the University of Wisconsin, Madison and Bonn University between 1996 and 1997. The participants who contributed essays to the volume come exclusively from the field of German Studies rather than history — a fact that gives them an appealing methodological variety. At the same time, though, the volume suffers from the regrettable absence of any introduction or conclusion that might help place the contributions into a broader historical perspective.

While it is difficult to identify a unifying theme to the essays, the common focus is generally the representation of the Holocaust in the 1990s. Five of the essays — by far the largest number to focus on a common subject — address Steven Spielberg's 1993 film, *Schindler's List*. Many of these contributions are insightful, but will likely be regarded by most historians as excessively theoretical. Thus, Jürgen Fohrmann employs poststructuralist literary theory in comparing NBC's 1978 *Holocaust* docudrama with *Schindler's List* in order to show how the two films' refusal to wrestle with the theoretical question of the Holocaust's unrepresentability explains their greater popular success compared with such films as Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*. Ingeborg Harms, meanwhile, idiosyncratically utilizes Lacanian and Freudian theories of narcissism to interpret the characters of Schindler and Göth — only completely to shift gears at her essay's conclusion and explore issues of consumption, asserting that Schindler's heroic rescue of the Jews through his wasteful squandering of material resources

“provides the consuming, nation-less modern subject a good conscience” by sanctioning needless consumption (p. 67). Bettina Schlüter’s discussion of the “narrative function of music” in *Schindler’s List* will interest musicologists, though most historians will find her discussion overly technical. The most accessible contributions are those of Eckart Oehlenschläger, who contrasts Spielberg’s film with Thomas Keneally’s original novel to show how the former drastically simplified the far more nuanced and realistic narrative of the latter, and Helmut J. Schneider who contrasts Spielberg’s film favorably with the NBC *Holocaust* miniseries by praising its avoidance of the latter’s sentimentalized, redemptive, or otherwise consoling narrative framework.

Other contributions to the volume lack the same degree of topical unity, but are nevertheless linked by a certain interpretive trend — namely, an increasing tendency to question the virtue of a strictly moralistic approach to the representation of the Holocaust. Kathrin Bower challenges the virtues of moralism by showing how the negative German reaction to Agnieszka Holland’s 1990 film *Hitlerjunge Salomon* (which shows its Jewish protagonist in deheroized terms as collaborating with the Nazis) and the positive responses to *Schindler’s List* and Daniel Goldhagen’s book, *Hitler’s Willing Executioners*, reveals an enduring desire of German audiences for depictions of Jews that are simultaneously moralistic, but that also deny Jews any complex individuality. Jolanda Vanderwal Taylor historicizes the intricate process through which *The Diary of Anne Frank* took shape over the course of the postwar era and rejects the moralistic insistence of scholars that the diary be interpreted strictly as a Jewish text (rather than a more universalistic text that reflects, say, the traumas of adolescence), insisting that the latter kind of reading can provide a key point of identification for many readers that allows them a deeper appreciation of the human toll exacted by the Holocaust. Gerhard Richter, meanwhile, praises Art Spiegelman’s graphic novel, *Maus*, for refusing to portray Holocaust victims — most notably Vladek — in heroic terms. Finally, Jost Hermand challenges the moralistic insistence in the Holocaust’s uniqueness by showing how various German political factions have used the notion of its singularity to elide the historical magnitude of the Nazis’ historical crimes against other groups besides Jews.

The remaining essays in the volume cover a wide range of unrelated topics. The most closely linked are Jennifer Redmann’s and Rachel Brenner’s pieces, which do not so much discuss theoretical issues about representing the Holocaust as practical issues about teaching it in the university setting — the former being oriented toward preventing students from being dissuaded from studying German because of its associations with the Nazi past, the latter being interested in exposing students to the human tragedy of the Holocaust without demoralizing them. Klaus Berghahn’s essay, meanwhile, provides a broad and ultimately favorable evaluation of the United States Holocaust Memorial

Museum's attempt to represent the Holocaust in documentary fashion. Finally, Thomas Jung discusses the evolution of East German attention to the question of Jewish suffering in the Holocaust in literature and film.

Overall, *Kulturelle Repräsentationen des Holocaust in Deutschland und den Vereinigten Staaten* leaves the impression of being something less than the sum of its parts. Without an introduction or conclusion, the volume lacks an overarching interpretive thrust that would help place it in the increasing body of literature in the 1990s that has explored the subject of the ongoing confrontation with the Nazi past. Moreover, the volume's focus on such topics as *Schindler's List* and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum lends it somewhat of a dated feel. It is not that such sources are unworthy of continued study, but they have been investigated quite thoroughly and more originally by other scholars in recent years. This is not to take anything away from the individual contributions, all of which have something to offer. But as a broader exploration of its subject, *Kulturelle Repräsentationen des Holocaust in Deutschland und den Vereinigten Staaten* ultimately promises more than it delivers.

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*Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944–1948*. Edited by Philipp Ther and Ana Siljak. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield. 2001. Pp. 243. \$34.95. ISBN 0-7425-1094-8.

Use of the term "ethnic cleansing" to describe the expulsion of entire national groups from one country to another has become general only in the past decade, mainly in the wake of Yugoslavia's messy breakup. Previously, a variety of euphemisms, such as transfer, resettlement, or repatriation, were used to denote, or to obscure, what had actually happened. The present volume is an unusually good and valuable collection of scholarly work on history's most ambitious ethnic-cleansing project. The thirteen individual contributions are by scholars from six different countries, all currently active in the field, and most are able to draw on recent archival research; much of what they present has previously not been available in English. Although they treat historical events that still have their contentious aspects, they remain uniformly free of the polemical terminology, strained rationalizations, and recriminations that long dominated the discussion. Most importantly, this volume addresses a significant, but still relatively neglected historical problem; indeed, it is difficult to think of another aspect of the World War II experience that has had a comparable impact, but attracted less scholarly attention outside the circle of its immediate victims.