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Review of "German National Identity after the Holocaust" by Mary Fulbrook

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Mary Fulbrook. *German National Identity after the Holocaust*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999. Pp. viii, 248. Paper £14.90.

Mary Fulbrook's useful new study explores the postwar evolution of German national identity by examining the traumatic impact of the Nazi past and national division upon the development of the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic. Her main argument, developed through focused comparison of the two nations in a variety of cultural and political realms, may be summed up with her observation: "[while] West Germans continued to be obsessed with an unresolved past, East Germans ... suffered more immediate problems with a divided present" (177).

In an introductory chapter devoted to exploring recent theories of nationalism and national identity formation, Fulbrook defines nation as "a self-identifying community of common memory and common destiny..." (21). It is this definition that provides the broad outline of her book's larger organization and narrative. Following the introduction, the majority of *German National Identity after the Holocaust* (chapters 2-6) focuses on the contested memory of the Nazi past in such areas as the urban landscape, war crimes trials, commemorative ceremonies, and historiographical disputes. Chapters 7-9 shift the attention to Germany's destiny, focusing on contemporary issues, such as citizenship and differences in national identity at the level of everyday life. Throughout the chapters on memory, Fulbrook covers familiar terrain, discussing such topics as the East and West German governments' postwar transformation of the Buchenwald and Dachau concentration camps, the presence of ex-Nazis in the postwar West and East German political establishments, and the eruption of such controversies as the Bitburg Affair and the *Historikerstreit*. Fulbrook does not match the depth of previous scholars who have written more extensively on these individual topics, but her discussion of them (and of East German matters, which take up much of the book's latter chapters) is distinguished by a welcome degree of comparative rigor. Indeed, it is her inclusion and analysis of issues that are usually discussed separately within a single synthetic volume that is the book's chief virtue.

Yet, while the book's broad focus provides a useful overview of postwar trends, its inevitably selective approach leads to certain errors. For example, the second chapter, "Landscapes of Memory," focuses quite narrowly on a small number of concentration camp sites, a choice which Fulbrook seems to justify with the puzzling observation: "what was striking ... in pre-1990 West Germany was the almost startling absence of real ... physical reminders of, or signposts, to the past" (36). In fact, within German cities themselves, the quantity of memory sites—monuments, historically significant buildings, even topographical features—was plentiful, even if their quality has been admittedly uneven. Where Fulbrook does mention a few examples of such sites, her claims are sometimes mistaken, as where she declares (on page 37) that "nothing" was done after the war to alter the

Reichsparteitagsgelände in Nuremberg (in fact, Albert Speer's Märzfeldtürme were entirely, his Zeppelintribüne was partially demolished in 1966-67, while didactic indoor and outdoor exhibits at the site were established beginning in the mid-1980s). Moreover, she mistakenly claims that "Hitler's Brown House in Munich ... [was] subsequently used as a music school" (in fact, the Brown House was torn down in 1947, while the building that became the music school was the adjoining "Führerbau" on the Königsplatz). These errors and others do not detract unduly from what is generally a well-organized and nicely condensed survey of major postwar trends in the evolution of German national identity in East and West. Those who will profit most from the book, however, are less likely to be specialists in modern German history than their undergraduate students, for whom this book is best suited as an excellent introduction.

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Elisabeth Domansky and Harald Welzer, eds. *Eine offene Geschichte: Zur kommunikativen Tradierung der nationalsozialistischen Vergangenheit*. Tübingen: Edition diskord, 1999. Pp. 192. Paper DM 28,—.

Just when we thought that the process of coming to terms with Nazism in postwar Germany has been studied from every possible and impossible perspective, this unassuming volume exposes an important gap in our knowledge about Germany's collective memory. *Eine offene Geschichte* brings together recent studies on the representations and recollections of the Third Reich in the everyday life of divided and unified Germany and, in the process, delineates an exciting area of research. The concern with what I would term the *Alltagsgeschichte* of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* is pursued by way of two different research strategies: oral history and media history.

Most contributors to the volume explore the role of history in everyday life through biographical interviews, often from a comparative perspective which contrasts developments in both Germanies. Alexander von Plato uses interviews to illustrate the changing public esteem in East and West Germany of Holocaust survivors and former inmates of Soviet *Speziallager*. Dorothee Wierling describes the history of a specifically East German pact between war and postwar generations which protected the integrity of the parents' private stories of their suffering during the war. As a result, until 1989 the parents were only perceived as victims of Nazism and never as its perpetrators and willing supporters. Sabine Moller and Karoline Tschuggnall illustrate how subsequent generations interpret and filter their parents' war stories according to general narrative topoi, for instance, the topos "luck in times of war." Thus children actively participate in the construction of cleansed family histories by eliminating critical story elements which do not fit that frame, including information about war crimes committed by their fathers.