
Between Acceptance,
Exceptionalism and
Continuity: German Jewry,
Antisemitism and the
Holocaust

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Atina Grossmann, *Jews, Germans, and Allies: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 393 pp., \$27.95 (pb), ISBN-13 9780691143170.

Wolf Gruner, *Jewish Forced Labor under the Nazis: Economic Needs and Racial Aims, 1938–1944* (New York: Cambridge University Press, in association with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2006), 322 pp., \$29.99 (hb), ISBN 0521838754.

Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 390 pp., \$18.95 (pb), ISBN-13 9780674027381.

Robin Judd, *Contested Rituals: Circumcision, Kosher Butchering, and Jewish Political Life in Germany, 1843–1933* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 283 pp., \$45.00 (hb), ISBN-13 9780801445453.

Marline Otte, *Jewish Identities in German popular entertainment, 1890–1933* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 317 pp., \$101.00 (hb), ISBN 0521856302.

Helmut Walser Smith, *The Continuities of German History: Nation, Religion, and Race across the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 246 pp., \$22.99 (hb), ISBN 0521720250 (paperback).

Shulamit Volkov, *Germans, Jews, and Antisemites: Trials in Emancipation* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 311 pp., \$27.99 (pb), ISBN 0521846889.

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Michael Wildt, *Volksgemeinschaft als Selbstermächtigung: Gewalt gegen Juden in der deutschen Provinz 1919 bis 1939* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2007), 411 pp., €28.00 (pb), ISBN-13 9783936096743.

Over the last twenty years or so, a number of scholars of German Jewish history have expressed unease with the state of the field and have called for new approaches.¹ The critics do not all agree on symptoms, diagnosis and cure, but among the key ailments identified have been a lachrymose perspective bequeathed by pre- and post-war Zionist scholarship and by the Holocaust's overwhelming presence;² a tendency to create over-rigid binary categories of identity or assimilation, in part as a result of older controversies between Zionist and liberal historiographies;³ the ghettoising of Jewish history, whereby mainstream German history failed to include the Jewish presence, and Jewish history did not acknowledge the complexity of the society with which Jews interacted;⁴ finally, and closely related, a failure to recognise Jewish agency, particularly the degree to which Jews shaped German society rather than merely accommodating to it.⁵ The result of this questioning has been a burgeoning body of new work seeking to recover the richness and complexity of Jewish–non-Jewish relationships in Germany, to bring the margins of German society closer to the centre, as it were, and to emphasise Jews' impact on the world around them.⁶ The books on the pre-Nazi era under review reflect these trends. In the studies by

¹ Standing in for many: David Sorkin, 'Emancipation and Assimilation: Two Concepts and their Application to German-Jewish History', *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 35 (1990), 17–33, and the essays by Evyatar Friesel, Christhard Hoffmann, Samuel Moyn and others in the *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 41 (1996).

² Evyatar Friesel, 'The German-Jewish Encounter as a Historical Problem: A Reconsideration,' *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 41 (1996), 263–74.

³ The classic statement of the Zionist position can be found Gershom Scholem, 'Against the Myth of the German-Jewish Dialogue' (1964), repr. in Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis: Selected Essays* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976). For the critique, see Samuel Moyn, 'German Jewry and the Question of Identity: Historiography and Theory,' *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 41 (1996), 291–308; Scott Spector, 'Forget Assimilation: Introducing Subjectivity to German-Jewish history,' *Jewish History* 20, 3–4 (2006), 3–4.

⁴ Till van Rahden, 'Jews and the Ambivalences of Civil Society in Germany, 1800–1933: Assessment and Reassessment,' *Journal of Modern History*, 77, 4 (2005), 1024; Shulamit Volkov, 'Die Verbürgerlichung der Juden in Deutschland: Eigenart und Paradigma', in Jürgen Kocka, ed., *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert: Deutschland im europäischen Vergleich* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1988), 343–71.

⁵ Steven E. Aschheim, 'German History and German Jewry: Boundaries, Functions and Interdependence,' *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 43 (1998), 315–22.

⁶ For articulations and reviews of these new trends, see Steven E. Aschheim, *Culture and Catastrophe: German and Jewish Confrontations with National Socialism and Other Crises* (New York: New York University Press, 1996); Sharon Gillerman, *Germans into Jews: Remaking the Jewish Social Body in the Weimar Republic* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009); Neil Gregor, Nils H. Roemer and Mark Roseman, *German History from the Margins* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006); Christhard Hoffmann, *Preserving the Legacy of German Jewry: A History of the Leo Baeck Institute, 1955–2005* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005); Till van Rahden, 'Jews and the Ambivalences of Civil Society in Germany, 1800–1933: Assessment and Reassessment', *Journal of Modern History*, 77 (2005), 1024–47; Till van Rahden, *Jews and other Germans: Civil Society, Religious Diversity, and Urban Politics in Breslau, 1860–1925* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008); Michael P. Steinberg, *Judaism Musical and Unmusical* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

Judd and Otte, and somewhat unevenly in that of Volkov, and in much other recent work, the result has been to see the German–Jewish relationship, at least until the First World War, as more multifaceted and open-ended than we have been wont to believe, and far from simply a rehearsal for the Holocaust.

The period since the 1980s has been characterised also by intense activity in the field of Holocaust research. While German–Jewish historiography was long completely overshadowed by awareness of the Holocaust, until the 1980s the historiography of modern Germany was usually written, as Helmut Walser Smith puts it, towards the vanishing point of 1933 – the Nazis' seizure of power – rather than 1941 – the beginning of the mass murder of Jews.⁷ Gordon Craig's classic modern textbook on Germany, first published in 1978, never mentions the Holocaust at all.⁸ But from the 1980s onwards, research into the Holocaust by English- and German-speaking historians grew rapidly, coming to dominate thinking about the Nazi era. This research has shown among other things that a far wider set of intellectual and administrative elites and professional groups were implicated in Nazi racial policy than had previously been acknowledged. Leaving aside situational analyses by Omer Bartov, Christopher Browning et al. of behaviour at the grass roots,⁹ the interpretative framework for looking at this broad societal involvement in racial discrimination and persecution has tended to take one of two forms.¹⁰ Many historians have foregrounded the way in which technical elites made pragmatic, hard-headed calculations in which brutal mistreatment or even murder could seem logical and feasible.¹¹ Others, however, have highlighted the power of race-based or antisemitic thinking, and the willingness both of elites and of broad social groups to subscribe to such ideas and take them to their murderous conclusion.¹²

Recent trends in German–Jewish historiography and in history-writing about the Holocaust thus stand in some creative tension. The emphasis on breadth of involvement in the Holocaust evident here in the work of Gruner and Wildt, and particularly on the popularity and reach of Nazi racial ideology, as shown by Wildt and Herf, might well lead one to conclude that German society was powerfully

⁷ There were always exceptions to the rule, including, notably, the work of George Mosse.

⁸ Gordon Alexander Craig, *Germany, 1866–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

⁹ Omer Bartov, *The Eastern Front, 1941–45: German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, in association with St. Antony's College, Oxford, 1985); Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992).

¹⁰ For recent historiographical surveys, see the introductory chapter in Gerhard Paul, *Die Täter der Shoah: fanatische Nationalsozialisten oder ganz normale Deutsche?* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2002); Mark Roseman, 'Beyond Conviction? Perpetrators, Ideas, and Action in the Holocaust in Historiographical Perspective', in Frank Biess, Mark Roseman and Hanna Schissler, eds., *Conflict, Catastrophe and Continuity: Essays on Modern German History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 83–103.

¹¹ Among many other works see Christian Gerlach, *Krieg, Ernährung, Völkermord: Forschungen zur deutschen Vernichtungspolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1998); Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde: die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weissrussland 1941 bis 1944* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999).

¹² Ulrich Herbert, *Best: biographische Studien über Radikalismus, Weltanschauung und Vernunft, 1903–1989* (Bonn: J.H.W. Dietz, 1996); Michael Wildt, *Generation des Unbedingten: das Führungskorps des Reichssicherheitshauptamtes* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2002).

and exceptionally predisposed to this gigantic project of murderous antisemitism.¹³ Yet such a conclusion would lead in a different direction from the recent attempts to open up and de-exceptionalise the historiography of German Jews before 1933. Of course, there is more than one way of reconciling the two historiographies – by positing a break during and after the First World War, for example, or by emphasising the way in which a totalitarian system created something murderous and new out of a more passive cultural norm, as Shulamit Volkov and indeed Jeffrey Herf would argue. But it is also possible to claim that the breadth of societal participation in the Holocaust casts doubt on recent findings concerning Jews' place in the Kaiserreich. That is the premise of Helmut Walser Smith's new study, which argues for powerful continuities in a specific German antisemitism. Ultimately, the questions posed by the studies under review are about acceptance, distinctiveness, and continuity in the German–Jewish relationship.

Shulamit Volkov has played a major role in nudging the history of German–Jewry past the ghetto gates and into the wider historiography of modern Germany. The year 1978 saw the appearance of both her book on anti-modernism among Germany's master artisans and her seminal essay on antisemitism as cultural code.¹⁴ The former's achievement was not to study antisemitism in isolation, but to approach it through the social history of German politics. The latter's was to offer a sophisticated account of the way in which antisemitism became the entry ticket for membership of a broad coalition of right-wing anti-modernism. This influential and important work is revisited with a number of essays in the volume under review, particularly in section 2. One particularly well-taken point, given the current inflation of studies about racial thinking, is that what was new in the Kaiserreich was not the invention of a completely new kind of Judeophobia. The new term 'antisemitism' was often deployed with few distinctive connotations, and even Dühring possessed anything but a well-defined biological concept of race.¹⁵ Instead, what was distinctive, Volkov argues, was antisemitism's changed cultural function. Both in the 1978 essay and again here, Volkov makes the subtle point that from the 1880s onwards antisemitism emerged as the anti-modernist coalition's simple and visible badge of shared identity, even though for most of the parties involved it was not necessarily the number one priority. And thus antisemitism became a pervasive presence in German politics even while all the specifically antisemitic political parties failed.

Alongside her work on antisemitism Volkov has offered influential and important studies on Jewish emancipation and acculturation. An early advocate of locating the history of Jewish *Verbürgerlichung* within the context of the broader development of

¹³ An idea of course associated with Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Knopf, distributed by Random House, 1996).

¹⁴ Shulamit Volkov, 'Anti-Semitism as a Cultural Code', *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 23 (1978), 25–45; Shulamit Volkov, *The Rise of Popular Antimodernism in Germany: The Master Artisans, 1873–1896* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978).

¹⁵ See Peter Pulzer, 'Third Thoughts on German and Austrian Antisemitism', *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 4, 2 (2005), 137–78.

the German bourgeoisie,¹⁶ she also sought to surmount the bitter disputes between the older Zionist and liberal notions of integration and authenticity. The third section of *Germans, Jews and Antisemites* reprises work from the 1980s and early 1990s, offering a pleasing variety of alternatives to a simplistic notion of assimilation. Echoing a 1991 *Historische Zeitschrift* article, she explores also the way in which Jews consciously reinterpreted and reinvented Jewish traditions.¹⁷

Although Volkov's contribution to German-Jewish historiography has been sustained and profound, one misses engagement here with more recent work.¹⁸ Her lament, to take one example, that scholars of the 1848 revolution have neglected the remarkable number of anti-Jewish riots in the period, was justified in 1980, but not now.¹⁹ Gideon Reuveni recently argued that Volkov oversimplified the divisions within German society over the Jewish question,²⁰ and the anti-modern coalition that she describes no longer looks quite so clear-cut. For example, many of the Kaiserreich's critics cannot be described as anti-modernists.²¹ Even those movements once summarily decried by historians as irrational and romantically backwards looking, such as life-reform, have been shown by Jürgen Reulecke, Edward Ross Dickinson and others to be strikingly multifaceted and often progressive.²² Attitudes within this broad movement towards antisemitism were correspondingly varied.

Volkov's new collection is also unexpectedly ambivalent on the question of whether German-Jewish history was steering towards disaster from the nineteenth century onwards. In general, after all, Volkov is associated with a strong claim of discontinuity between nineteenth-century German antisemitism and National Socialism.²³ Yet this book is at the same time full of foreboding and doom. Speaking of a few German Zionists before the First World War, for example, she writes 'Such Jews, open-eyed and incisive, may have been able to sense the impending disaster', but goes on, 'But in the flourishing and smug Wilhelmine Germany, such Jews were very

¹⁶ Volkov, 'Verbürgerlichung'.

¹⁷ Shulamit Volkov, 'Die Erfindung einer Tradition. Zur Entstehung des modernen Judentums in Deutschland', *Historische Zeitschrift* 253 (1991), 603–28.

¹⁸ E.g. the work of Tobias Brinkmann, Uffa Jensen, Simone Lässig, Derek Penslar, Till van Rahden, Nils Roemer, Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, Helmut Walser Smith and many others.

¹⁹ On 1848 see Manfred Gailus, *Strasse und Brot: sozialer Protest in den deutschen Staaten unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Preussens, 1847–1849* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), and Stefan Rohrbacher, *Gewalt im Biedermeier: antijüdische Ausschreitungen in Vormärz und Revolution (1815–1848/49)* (Frankfurt and New York: Campus, 1993), as well as the introduction to Christhard Hoffmann, Werner Bergmann and Helmut Walser Smith, eds., *Exclusionary Violence: Antisemitic Riots in Modern German History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), and Rohrbacher's essay in the same volume.

²⁰ Gideon Reuveni, "'Productivist' and 'Consumerist' Narratives of Jews in German History', in Neil Gregor, Nils H. Roemer and Mark Roseman, eds., *German History from the Margins* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 165–84, 165 f.

²¹ Geoff Eley, *Reshaping the German Right: Radical Nationalism and Political Change after Bismarck* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980).

²² Diethart Kerbs and Jürgen Reulecke, *Handbuch der deutschen Reformbewegungen 1880–1933* (Wuppertal: P. Hammer, 1998); Edward Ross Dickinson, 'Reform and Reformers in Imperial Germany: Not So Scary After All?', unpublished paper delivered at the conference, 'Rethinking German Modernities', Cincinnati, 2007.

²³ Pulzer, 'Third Thoughts', 164–5.

rare, indeed' (p. 46). The conflicting narratives of destiny and discontinuity hinder efforts to write with precision about processes of change from the 1890s through to the 1930s.

In the books by Robin Judd and Marline Otte the atmosphere of doom is gone, and is replaced by a remarkable willingness to take pre-unification Germany and the Kaiserreich on their own terms. In both, questions about acculturation, assimilation and identity are no longer posed as such, replaced instead by much more context-specific and practical questions about communal initiatives, individual careers and societal interaction. Both shift the spotlight away from classic subjects of investigation – the Jewish intelligentsia or the Centralverein (CV) – and look, in the case of Judd, at the elites and institutions involved in debates about Jewish ritual practices or, in Otte's study, at Jewish involvement in the entertainment sector. Both are alive to the differentiated character of the non-Jewish world – this is particularly relevant for Judd, but is evident, too, in Otte's knowledge of the commercial realities of non-Jewish entertainment businesses. And in terms of their findings, both reveal a remarkably robust place for Jews even in a Wilhelmine Germany in which antisemitism was undoubtedly spreading, and both see the critical turn for the worse as coming later – after the First World War in Otte's view, and between 1930 and 1933 in Judd's account.

Looking at debates about circumcision and kosher slaughtering in Germany in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Robin Judd demonstrates the continuing significance of ritual questions in shaping the Jewish–non-Jewish relationship. The book opens in 1843, when a controversy broke out within the Jewish community over whether Jewish communities should accept into their ranks young men who had not been circumcised. It became entangled with the efforts by some state and municipal authorities to impose medical standards on ritual circumcisions. A new wave of debates followed German unification, this time centring on kosher butchery more than circumcision. As before, medical–scientific arguments were often involved – now in the form of a new mood of concern for animal welfare. Unification changed the form and content of debates somewhat, in that legal equality of men of all faiths was enshrined in the constitution, but the constitutionally protected special status of Christianity and the continuing role of the individual German states in religious questions meant that the exact parameters of that equality remained unclear. While protection of religious minorities was increasingly hard-wired into both law and administrative practice, challenges to Jewish practices and difference never disappeared from the public sphere.

The book's real heart is the radicalisation and proliferation of debates on ritual questions between the 1880s and the First World War. Three dense and fascinating chapters explore, first, the content of these exchanges – mainly concerned with kosher slaughter, but occasionally with circumcision, then the organisational forms and initiatives that accompanied them and, finally, the motives and positions adopted by the various Jewish defence groups. Judd argues that these debates are interesting, on the one hand, as windows onto the nature of communal relationships between Jewish and non-Jewish society, but, on the other, were significant enough in their

own light to help shape those communal relationships. In particular, the issue of ritual slaughter helped to give rise to organised communal defence some years before the CV emerged in 1893 to fight the new antisemitism. She is extremely good on at least three sets of complexities. First, not all scientific rhetoric about animal cruelty was antisemitic in intent, though some of the allegedly non-political movements that claimed no antisemitic motivation were in fact concealing their true affiliations. Second, non-Jews inclined to defend kosher butchery offered very different visions of religious toleration; in particular, many liberals were sceptical of the kinds of religious protection the Catholic Centre Party wished to advocate. Finally, Jews themselves differed strongly on the degree to which they wanted to emphasise Jewish difference.

Judd's book is methodologically significant, not least because it does not view treatment of Jewish issues merely as a product of attitudes towards Judaism and specifically of antisemitism. Both Jews and Christians were involved in thinking about the proper role of the state and the degree to which it should interfere in religious life. There was no monolithic German establishment – on the contrary, different municipalities and states took different positions. The presence of political Catholicism, with its commitment to minority rights, further complicates the picture. She shows, too, how complex were the Jewish positions taken, with a multi-hued vision both of the ends (how far Jews should acculturate) and the means (how best and how far to enlist state aid). While her coverage of the period after the 1880s on one level reaffirms the sense of a contradictory, indeed, polarised, political culture, it does underline the robustness of German institutions. For all the continuity, indeed growth, in antisemitic ideas, Weimar continued to protect the rights of religious minorities and began to give way only in its final years. There is no sense here, either, that this giving way was foreshadowed by earlier developments. The book's epilogue dramatically underscores the way in which Nazism changed the terms of public exchange. After 1933 there is no recorded instance of the Jewish community making arguments based on its right to religious freedom.

Marline Otte looks at the place of Jews in German popular entertainment. Her study focuses on three examples in which Jews played prominent or visible roles – the circus, jargon and review theatre, each of which offered different possibilities for Jewish involvement. Although broader claims about Germany and its Jews are nicely formulated in the introduction, it is the distinctive atmosphere in these understudied branches – particularly the circus and the jargon theatre – that makes the book a genuinely exciting read. As it turns out, Jewish troupes were among the best respected in German circus. They were a genuinely popular cultural form, drawing visitors from all classes, and celebrating diversity at the same time as unity. While Jewish circus families 'dominated and shaped circus entertainment throughout Central Europe', in Germany their presence was limited to the mobile circuses, while their new, big-city stationary counterparts were all in gentile hands.

Particularly impressive is the way in which Otte moves between the sociology, milieu and career strategies of the performers, the tastes and perceptions of their audiences, and the way in which the interaction between the two shaped the aesthetic choices made in each forum. For example, focusing on the most successful

of the Jewish circus troupes – the Blumenfeld family – she argues that the large, tight-knit extended family structure (a structure similar to that pertaining to the Jewish economic elite, but increasingly unusual in the broad Jewish middle class), coupled with the large number of children in each family, proved ideal to sustain the circus enterprise. In other words, it was precisely the non-acculturated extended family model that facilitated maintenance of a tight-knit troupe capable of travelling together and living together, and maintaining a vibrant, performing community. The Blumenfelds made economic and aesthetic choices that reflected their position as respected aliens. Large charitable donations and other gestures of social engagement were made to maintain the circus's reputation as respectable and worthy of respect. When most established gentile circuses refused to do so, the Blumenfelds were willing to work with established elites on charity performances. Their behaviour here, influenced no doubt in part by traditional emphasis on charity, echoed pre-modern Jewish relationships with state rulers. In its aesthetic choices, too, the Blumenfelds laid great emphasis on respectability, and it was the gentile shows that were more risqué.

If the work on the circus represents the most original part of the study, the evidence Otte brings to light on the 'jargon theatre', such as the brothers Herrnfeld and Folies Caprice, where light-hearted plays offered representations of Jewish middle-class life on the stage, is perhaps the most striking.²⁴ In contrast to other authors, Otte argues that a good part of the audience of these shows was non-Jewish. It is a remarkable thought that sizeable Berlin audiences could be found before 1914 enjoying witty accounts of Jewish struggles over integration and acculturation. The evidence on gentile participation is mixed, however. The police reports, which the writer uses to good effect, underline that this was a mainly Jewish audience – the question is, how significant was the remaining portion?

For Otte, the First World War was the decisive turning point, and Weimar's antisemitism largely killed off the happy coexistences described here. She certainly demonstrates that the Jewish circuses never properly recovered after the war. Blumenfeld tried to create a stationary circus, with little success. The jargon theatre also declined, with the Folies hanging on by offering increasingly coarse and sexualised productions. Yet antisemitism seems only part of the story. Some of the sources attributing decline to antisemitism, such as Gerda Blumenfeld's melancholy post-war reflection, are understandable, but we are not sure that they are really reliable guides. A great many enterprises, Jewish and gentile, struggled under the impact of war, inflation and social change. Tastes had clearly changed, and the gently risqué world of theatre and circus must have looked old-fashioned. In any case, telling Jewish jokes in public had always triggered unease among Jews.²⁵ Moreover, antisemitism notwithstanding, Jews did well in film during and after the war, though

²⁴ There has been more good work on Jewish theatre than on the circus. See Peter Jelavich, 'Performing High and Low: Jews in Theater, Cabaret, Revue, and Film', in Emily Bilsky, ed., *Berlin Metropolis: Jews and the New Culture, 1890–1918* (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1999), 208–35, and, as an example of outstanding recent international work on Jewish theatre, Jeffrey Veidlinger, *The Moscow State Yiddish Theater: Jewish Culture on the Soviet Stage* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000).

²⁵ Jelavich, 'Performing High and Low', 217.

Ernst Lubitsch, like the Folies, trod a fine line in his wartime roles between catering to antisemitic caricature and subverting it.²⁶ Jewish painters also continued to find their niche in Weimar culture, with Max Liebermann one of its most respected and prominent painters.²⁷ What Otte demonstrates is that the antisemitic threat in the 1920s presented itself as merely part of a broader upheaval, in which some doors were opening while others closed, and a lust for excitement was in the air, and so was a coarsening of tone.

Ever since the model of the ‘German special path’ or *Sonderweg* came to be so roundly challenged, historians have been wary of tracing Germany’s twentieth-century catastrophe back to earlier epochs or attributing it to enduring national characteristics. Helmut Walser Smith, who made his reputation with rich portraits of inter-confessional boundaries in the nineteenth century,²⁸ wants to readjust the historian’s viewfinder so as to increase the depth of field again; indeed he extends his range all the way back to the early modern period. Smith acknowledges that Daniel Goldhagen, with his brief foray into nineteenth-century antisemitism, tried recently to develop a long-range approach, and Smith has some of the most positive (and I think largely deserved) things to say about Goldhagen’s work to have appeared in scholarly print. But he argues that Goldhagen’s scope of vision was too national, his sense of causation too ‘muscular’, and his focus too heavily on sadism rather than on what Smith sees, following Hannah Arendt, as the key problem – namely how could a large group of people so lose sight of another group’s humanity.²⁹

This discussion of Goldhagen, offered early on, instantly raises in the reader’s mind what I think are the key questions about Smith’s own approach, namely, first, just how ‘effete’ is his non-muscular version of causation? How far does he really see the Nazis as a *product* of something long term and how much change to that long-term tradition was required along the way? Second, how specifically German is this? If it is in fact both long-term and European, how much explanation for the Nazis’ specificity are we being offered? Finally, how much sense does it make to define the problem in terms of a capacity to deny the other’s humanity? How sure are we that other trajectories – histories of violence, of technology, of fear or paranoia, for example, rather than of this particular conception – are not equally or more central to understanding the Nazis’ murderousness?

In pursuit of longer-term roots, Smith begins with the conceptual argument that a shared national experience existed long before nationalism become self-conscious. As

²⁶ Valerie Weinstein, ‘Anti-Semitism or Jewish “Camp”? Ernst Lubitsch’s Schuhpalast Pinkus (1916) and Meyer Aus Berlin (1918)’, *German Life & Letters* 59, 1 (2006), 101–21.

²⁷ See the essays in Emily D. Bilski, ed., *Berlin Metropolis: Jews and the New Culture, 1890–1918* (in conjunction with the exhibition ‘Berlin Metropolis: Jews and the New Culture, 1890–1918’, Jewish Museum, New York, 14 November 1999–23 April 2000) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

²⁸ Helmut Walser Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict: Culture, Ideology, Politics, 1870–1914* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); Helmut Walser Smith, *Protestants, Catholics, and Jews in Germany, 1800–1914* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001); Helmut Walser Smith, *The Butcher’s Tale: Murder and Anti-Semitism in a German Town* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002).

²⁹ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, 1951).

national movements emerged in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, they absorbed older memories and experiences. Smith's account of Fichte and of the new understanding of human perception and subjectivity that was midwife to the birth of national self-consciousness is fascinating in its own right. More central for our purposes, though, is Smith's contention that a key part of the national inheritance was the memory of the Thirty Years War, which, while it went underground for a while, occupied a potent place in German national memory. This 'memory' involved a 'forgetting' in the form of defusing the enmity that had once pertained between the Christian denominations. The ritual celebration of violence against Jews, however, was not suppressed. Particularly in Catholic Germany, local rituals and pilgrimages to sites where Jews had been killed drew large crowds in the eighteenth century and continued to do so in the nineteenth. In Protestant Germany, although the rites disappeared, almanacs and chronicles bore witness to continuing local memories there too.

Having made his pitch for longer-term continuities from the pre-nationalist era, Smith nevertheless argues that the later character of the German nation was decisively shaped by the circumstances under which nationalism came into being as a conscious movement in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It was crucial that Jewish emancipation was being discussed at the same moment as national formation, and that it was first mooted in the context of defeat, and imposed by Napoleon, an outsider. Anti-Napoleonic definitions of the nation, rejecting the alien, often included an anti-Jewish component. Smith never fully squares the deep structures approach with this emphasis on the decisive moment of nationalism's birth (except to argue that it was Fichte who made us forget about the deep continuities). He certainly does argue, however, that the older legacies were important when elite wrangles about Jewish inclusion or exclusion overlapped with older local anti-Jewish traditions. While new nationalist anti-Jewish pamphlets helped to incite anti-Jewish riots – for example the hep-hep riots – the riots themselves drew on longer-term rituals and enactments. Some 257 instances of antisemitic violence took place between 1819 and 1866 (two-thirds of them in 1848).

Smith now moves forward to the final quarter of the nineteenth century. He criticises existing attempts to seek precedents for the Holocaust in elite antisemitism and argues that it is rather in popular violence that twentieth century mayhem was foreshadowed. Smith reminds us of the waves of European anti-Jewish violence from 1881–1884, then in the 1890s, and then a much more violent wave starting in Kishinev in 1903. As in the earlier period, he shows some interesting transformations here, as the new political rhetoric of antisemitism intersected with older patterns of local anti-Jewish exclusion.³⁰ Fascinating and important though this all is, Germany now plays an extremely limited role. The violent riot in Neustettin in 1884 and the ritual murder claims in Xanten in 1891 and Konitz in 1900 (about which Smith has written so beautifully) were the last significant cases of violence in Germany until after the

³⁰ On this see the excellent essay by Christhard Hoffmann in Hoffmann, Bergmann and Smith, *Exclusionary Violence*.

First World War. In other words, this is a European story of transformation, with its pre-war heart in Tsarist Russia, its post-1918 locus in Poland and Ukraine, and the guiding inspiration to its interpretation John Klier's work on pogroms.³¹

Returning to the elite level, Smith argues that what happened to antisemitism in Germany was not that it became eliminationist – and indeed he follows Zumbini in arguing that the eliminatory antisemites were politically very marginal.³² Rather what happened was that thought on race evolved, initially in the colonial setting, but eventually bringing antisemitism into the *proximity* of eliminationist racial thinking. To explore these intellectual moves, Smith looks at Heinrich von Treitschke, Friedrich Ratzel, and at the liberal (and not antisemitic) Paul Rohrbach. Finally, Smith turns to the radical pan-German Heinrich Class, and his *If I Were the Kaiser*, in which antisemitism, racism and elimination of peoples were brought together. Again, though, although his examples here are indeed German, it is clear this is a trans-European (and indeed transatlantic) story, as the great powers made deposits and withdrawals from a shared bank of colonial knowledge, the 'colonial archive' as it has recently been dubbed.³³

With its mellifluous, concise prose, its only rarely mannered metaphors, its learning borne lightly and boldness shorn of bombast, Smith's book warrants inclusion as a stylistic exercise on every graduate student's reading list. We do take the historical persistence of antisemitism often for granted, and Smith's is a welcome invitation to widen our vista. Yet the book's shift of gravity from the 'deep structuring force' of a German antisemitism to a transnational exchange of ideas and practices is unsettling. If the story is transnational, then the logic of opening with the Thirty Years War is less clear. After all, the specifically German tradition of local violence becomes by his account only a tiny tributary of that broader European current that then flowed back across Germany. And once memory of the Thirty Years War ceases to be so central, then the way in which the inheritance from the birth of German nationalism is described here looks oddly partial. Why not consider the transmogrification of Christian tradition by the Enlightenment, as Jacob Katz has done?³⁴ Probably because Smith wants to foreground tradition and evolution, rather than radical rupture, he also underplays the transformative context of the First World War, when the displacement of bedraggled Galician Jews into Western capitals, the visible Jewish prominence in revolutionary movements, the home-front sufferings of the central powers and resultant grievances about economic speculation, for which Jews were made the scapegoat, the seemingly Jewish backroom manipulations

³¹ John Doyle Klier, *The Russian Press and the Anti-Jewish Pogroms of 1881* (Pittsburgh: University Center for International Studies, 1983); John Klier and Shlomo Lambroza, *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

³² Massimo Ferrari Zumbini, *Die Wurzeln des Bösen: Gründerjahre des Antisemitismus: von der Bismarckzeit zu Hitler* (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 2003).

³³ R. Gerwarth and S. Malinowski, 'Hannah Arendt's Ghosts: Reflections on the Disputable Path from Windhoek to Auschwitz', *Central European History* 42, 2 (2009), 279–300.

³⁴ Jacob Katz, *From Prejudice to Destruction: Anti-Semitism, 1700–1933* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980).

suggested by the wartime Balfour Declaration and more broadly by entente and central power wartime competition for Russian Jewish sympathy, the post-war drawing of new national borders through the east European Jewish heartlands, with all the questions of allegiance that threw up, and not least the English-language circulation of the forged Protocols of the Elders of Zion, together created for a few years a genuinely astonishing global paranoia about a global Jewish conspiracy.³⁵ In short, the transnational story in the second half of the book rather undermines the way the national story is told in the first, while the desire to maintain a picture of deep national continuity constrains the way the new global context is acknowledged in the second half.

A central theme of Wolf Gruner's work has been to identify the breadth and depth of administrative participation in the Holocaust. In his work on the progressive exclusion of the Jews from welfare provision, for example, Gruner identified the leading role of often non-Nazi local town bodies and their co-ordinating institution, the German Conference of Towns (*Deutscher Städtetag*). In the book under the review, Gruner shows similarly that policy and practice towards Jewish forced labour was often not the work of the SS or Nazi party organisations, but instead enacted by the labour administration as well as private and public enterprises and the Wehrmacht. More important for Gruner here is to challenge the established view that Jewish forced labour was either a brief transitional prelude to extermination or, indeed, a means of extermination itself. As Gruner shows, forced labour expanded as a policy option well before the Nazis took up mass murder as their preferred solution, and continued with fluctuating intensity through much of the war. It developed prompted by a number of different considerations, the most prominent initially being the desire to prevent Jews from becoming a burden on the welfare system when they had been denied access to almost all normal employment. Given the current acute labour shortages, Jews represented a coercible and cheap labour source for important infrastructural projects.

From autumn 1941 onwards, true enough, such utilisation contradicted the goal of deporting Jews rapidly from German soil; particularly after the 'factory action' of February 1943, only Jews in mixed marriage and mixed-race Jews remained within Germany. On various occasions, however, foreign Jews were brought onto German soil to perform forced and slave labour. Even when murder became the official policy, round-ups were frequently syncopated with military needs, particularly where heavyweight army agencies were able to liaise directly with the SS, and defer or filter deportations to the gas chambers. Sometimes this could lead to surprising reprieves, as when the Organisation Schmeldt, the special body tasked with using Jewish labour to meet infrastructure and armaments needs in annexed Silesian territory, stopped trains bound for Auschwitz and extracted healthy young men for its enterprises.

³⁵ For an excellent exploration of this context see Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878–1938* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

There can be little doubt, then, that the needs of industry and armament were not so cavalierly trampled upon as has been supposed, that civilian bodies, and particularly the labour administration, made the deployment of Jewish labour a primary and purposeful goal over an extended period, and that millions of European Jews experienced some form of coercive labour. For some it was the cause of death, for many others the miserable prelude to murder, but for those Jews who survived, it was often the fact of having been directed to engage in slave labour – rather than being scheduled for extermination – that protected them. Gruner, however, goes further, and in keeping with an important strand of recent research on the Holocaust testifies to the rationality of Nazi decisions. He argues, for example, that the ‘apparently irrational’ order to deport Jews from German soil in 1941 can be explained by the Nazis’ belief that millions of foreigners would be available to replace them. ‘Overall’, he concludes, ‘the leaders of the Third Reich approached anti-Jewish policies very pragmatically’ (p. 294). This is a striking conclusion, particularly when we are confronted in Jeffrey Herf’s *The Jewish Enemy* with the equally trenchant summary that Hitler and Goebbels ‘were indeed totalitarians and fanatics’ and that possession of power ‘only fed the radicalism of the two men’ (p. 271).

Jeffrey Herf first established his reputation precisely staking out this boundary line between rationality and irrationality in his *Reactionary Modernism*.³⁶ After transferring his attention to Nazism’s legacy in the post-war era,³⁷ he returns now to the Nazi years. In *The Jewish Enemy*, Herf argues that we have paid too little attention to Nazi thinking, and in particular to the way in which the Nazis conceived the Second World War as a Jewish war. His study makes particular use of the collection of Nazi press directives secretly collected by August Brammer and Theodore Oberheitmann and used in the trial and conviction of the Reich press chief, Otto Dietrich, at Nuremberg. Herf’s approach is almost the diametrical opposite of Gruner’s. He assumes that ideas matter and that they were framed and developed at the highest level – above all by Hitler – in ways that sometimes revealed, sometimes concealed, and always fundamentally shaped the policies of the Reich.

In common with the authors of some other recent influential work, Herf assumes that the Nazis believed their paranoid fantasies. Fritzsche, for example, starts his insightful recent analysis of Germany’s descent into racial war with Edwin Erich Dwinger’s *Death in Poland*, published in Germany in 1940. This popular fictional work portrayed a kind of Holocaust; only, in this case, the Germans were the innocent victims and the Poles the murderous aggressors, behaving almost exactly as was the SS in reality.³⁸ For Herf, it is the way in which the Nazis constructed the war as a Jewish war that explains their commitment to mass murder. While longer-term antisemitic traditions, he argues, might account for many of the actions of the 1930s and even

³⁶ Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

³⁷ Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

³⁸ Peter Fritzsche, *Life and Death in the Third Reich* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008).

the violence of Kristallnacht, it took a different kind of thinking to embark on mass murder – above all the vision of Jews as a global enemy rather than simply an alien race.

While one can certainly make distinctions between inherited antisemitic potentials and new directions in the Nazi years, as indeed Smith, Wildt and Herf all do, it is doubtful that one can make Herf's clear-cut distinction between the ideas that shaped the actions of the 1930s and those that precipitated mass murder. This does not, however, detract from Herf's thesis that the Nazis believed that world Jewry was a potent force conspiring against them, that this idea of a global conspiracy distinguished Jews from all other racial threats, and that the Nazis systematically set to work to convince the German public of the linkage between war and Jewish aggression. Far more than a racial theory, this was a politico-military conception of an organised enemy. Much of the book is given over to exhaustive description of the tropes, arguments and evidence used in successive press campaigns to persuade the German public that the Jew lay behind everything. Particularly striking is that the high point of this rhetoric came in 1943, as the most ferocious year of murder was tailing off and a good part of European Jewry was already dead. Evidently, the signs of defeat after Stalingrad and then the welcome evidence of Soviet brutality at Katyn gave the Nazis added impetus to spin the Jewish tale.

How, then, does Gruner's claim of rationality and pragmatism fare against Herf's emphasis on such pervasive and powerful paranoia? In what way do the two books shed light on antisemitism's place and power in Nazi Germany? We can easily accept from Gruner a more modest claim that, despite their extraordinary ideological commitment to annihilation, the Nazis had nevertheless not lost sight of all military and other logic. Indeed, both books demonstrate the regime's practical intelligence, be it in the deployment of disposable manpower or the careful dissemination of ideas. But again and again in Gruner's account the drive to remove Jews from German soil, to remove mixed-race Jews from the military, to break up established contracts with the military and other suppliers, appears to be the very opposite of pragmatic. One can see from his own material that the theoretical availability of foreign labour did not mean that the extraction of Jewish labour from Germany in 1941–2 was unproblematic. The continual destruction of Jewish working populations in Poland in 1942–4, while sometimes responding to the harsh logic that food supply was being diverted to Germany (and it would thus be desirable to have fewer 'eaters' in Poland), also continually jeopardised working relationships, even if with each wave of extractions a dwindling set of players was able to obtain reprieves for their workers. Nowhere is the question posed of whether labour was used efficiently. Much of the labour housed in camps was not employed under conditions likely to ensure sustained or motivated work, even when it became clear to the authorities that labour reserves were not infinite. Gruner attributes this to mismanagement and the SS belief in racial superiority at the camp level, but given the high-level decisions made about food, payment and so forth, Ulrich Herbert's arguments in relation to forced labour as a whole seem more convincing – that ideology powerfully shaped all aspects of policy and, indeed, that even when pragmatic concessions were made, they

were counterbalanced and often vitiated by new, ideologically driven rules.³⁹ Here Adam Tooze's magnificent recent study of the Nazi economy helps to fill the gap, showing that Hitler pursued a relatively coherent view of national expansion, but one linked to a belief that Jews were working in concert with Germany's enemies, and incorporating ferocious gradations in racial worth.⁴⁰

To what extent do these books suggest broad societal acceptance of Nazi values? We gain little sense from Gruner of what made the bureaucrats tick (though given Gruner's achievement in illuminating little-known policies and practices, and the destruction of labour administration sources, this can be no criticism), and Herf is rightly cautious about judging how the population received the regime's communications. Works that have recently attempted to ascertain the degree of popular knowledge and acceptance of the Holocaust have had great difficulty in reaching firm conclusions. Bernhard Dörner's heartfelt indictment of popular complicity, while voluminous, fails to convince as it moves from the undoubted evidence that the Allies broadcast a lot of information about Nazi atrocities to claims that the population heard and believed them.⁴¹ Peter Longerich's sophisticated analysis explicitly assumes that Nazi morale surveys actually reflected the reporting institutions' agenda rather than popular opinion.⁴² One of the many virtues of Michael Wildt's new book is that he explores the elusive intersection between authorities, Party and population on the street.

In contrast to Gruner's emphasis on pragmatism, Michael Wildt's oeuvre has foregrounded the ideological roots of societal participation in the Holocaust. In his much acclaimed study of the Sicherheitsdienst (SD) – the SS intelligence service and think-tank – and of the Reich Security Main Office into which the SD and the security police were merged, Wildt identified a cohort of bright young men who carried a radical *völkisch* ideology and habitus through from their student days in the 1920s to their SS posts in the 1930s and 1940s.⁴³ For Wildt, the radicalising impact of the First World War and defeat on the generation of those just too young to have been soldiers in 1914–18 was a key ingredient explaining the energy and commitment of Himmler's young henchmen. In the study under review, Wildt switches his attention to the street level and in particular to the role and character of popular antisemitic violence. In this he is aided by the discovery a few years ago in Moscow secret archives of the full files belonging to the Central Association of German Citizens of the Jewish faith (CV), whose members assiduously chronicled threats to their property and existence in the early years of Nazi rule. Using those sources, Wildt is

³⁹ Ulrich Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers: Enforced Foreign Labor in Germany under the Third Reich* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁴⁰ J. Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (London: Allen Lane, 2006).

⁴¹ Bernhard Dörner, *Die Deutschen und der Holocaust: was niemand wissen wollte, aber jeder wissen konnte* (Berlin: Propyläen, 2007).

⁴² Peter Longerich, *'Davon haben wir nichts gewusst!': die Deutschen und die Judenverfolgung 1933–1945* (Munich: Siedler, 2006).

⁴³ Wildt, *Generation des Unbedingten*.

able to reveal the disturbing breadth and persistence of local violence against Jews, documented particularly though not exclusively in smaller towns and villages rather than in the big-city Jewish concentrations. Nazi actions began seriously to alter the quality of local life after 1930. Well before the Nazi seizure of power, the CV declared Pomerania to be in a state of emergency. Waves of violence ebbed and flowed, but were far more persistent than had been claimed by the older literature. Local boycott actions continued all across Germany, despite the official end to the one-day boycott declared by the regime in April 1933. In many smaller communities, Jews discovered early on after January 1933 that they were completely defenceless against local attack. More powerfully than any author hitherto, Wildt shows also the dramatic increase in anti-Jewish action in spring 1935, a process culminating in some quite remarkable violence and the hugely visible campaign against 'race shame'. In 1933 and 1934, the Nazi Party's *Sturmabteilung* often played the leading part, but increasingly violence was perpetrated by members of the Hitler Youth. It is clear from all this that *Kristallnacht*, though dramatically exceeding anything hitherto, followed a long history of grass-roots violence and a shorter, more intensive wave during 1938.

Earlier historical interpretations saw grass-roots thuggery in the post-seizure of power era merely as a means for lower-level Nazis, frustrated at the lack of revolutionary change, to be allowed to let off steam. But Wildt argues convincingly that this violence was more meaningful and authentic than that. Local Nazis were seeking to realise central tenets of the Nazis' notion of people's community as it had emerged in the 1920s. Targeting Jews was about defining who was allowed to be part of the people's community, well before citizenship was legally changed at Nuremberg. For the Nazis, excluding Jews meant rejecting Weimar's notion of citizenship and asserting in its place the ethnically homogeneous people's community. Wildt shows brilliantly too that attacks on Jews gave local Nazis an opportunity radically to alter the atmosphere and feel of public spaces. Finally, the shared experience of street violence fostered among the practitioners a new kind of exclusionary community.

How broad and how deep was societal involvement in this violence? Particularly the race shame campaigns have left behind startling reports and images. Thousands of non-uniformed individuals participated in the brutal processions as the alleged perpetrators of 'race shame' or other crimes were paraded through town. Women with children on their arms stand by and grin, children precede and follow the hapless *Rassenschänder*, and only the victims' own fixed expression and hateful signboards betray the event's true brutality. Given such resonance, a simple division between perpetrators and bystanders is hard to draw. Unlike the later Nazi murders in the east, which took place whether seen by others or not, these shamings made sense only as public spectacle. Yet, as Wildt acknowledges, we do not know how many disapproved. Those who did so were well advised to keep their feelings to themselves. Gestapo reports on popular response are hard to read.⁴⁴ We do know that while *Kristallnacht* found many participants, it also met with widespread disapproval. No doubt the balance of approval and disapproval overall would have looked very different if the

⁴⁴ Longerich, '*Davon haben wir nichts gewusst!*'.

state had shown its opposition. But the police tended to step in only very late, and virtually never to punish the aggressors, merely to remove the victim from the crowd's reach before violence and spectacle turned to murder. There were deaths, severe injuries and long-lasting damage all the same. So whatever pre-existing public sympathies they were able to draw on, the Nazis rapidly altered the shared sense of what could be said and done.

For a brief paradoxical interregnum between 1945 and 1949, Germany was home to up to a quarter of a million Jews, a few of them surfacing from hiding in Nazi Germany, the rest east European survivors fleeing westwards, aided by a Zionist underground network hoping eventually to send settlers and fighters on to Palestine. Atina Grossmann's engaging study explores the triangular relationships between Germans, Jews and Allies in these years. Whereas other works have focused on the politics or on questions of identity,⁴⁵ Grossmann, herself the daughter of German-Jewish refugees, is more interested in the lives and encounters. Her exuberant and multifaceted account shuttles rapidly between several different levels. She deploys, for example, an extraordinarily rich array of diaries, newspaper reports, sociological surveys and interviews to offer vivid vignettes of personal experience and encounter. This is overlaid with evidence of more collective discourse and perception as represented in newspapers, the political sphere and film, and finally with a sophisticated reading of the historiography both of Germany's post-war development and of the post-Holocaust experience of Jews. Thus her chapter on 'gendered defeat' moves from statistics of rape and insights into the pervasiveness and character of violence against women, through the emergence in the historiography of an appreciation of the scale of the phenomenon, to the way in which female victimhood came to be seen by Germans as a metaphor for defeated Germany, and finally on to the wider story of fraternisation with the Allies, and the difficulty of reintegrating returning soldiers into stressed and broken families.

Two important strands emerge particularly vividly. The first is how Hitler's actions had created at least some shadow of the Jewish global force he had fantasised about (though obviously not with the malevolent ambitions attributed by him). US Jewish organisations, conscious of their failure to avert catastrophe, were now ready and eager to act. US Jewish soldiers and chaplains, shocked at the conditions they found, went into action to assist their European brethren, and dispatched powerful and moving letters back home about the squalid conditions in which survivors were forced to live. Army chaplains almost forgot their allegiance and acted to assist the Zionist underground. Back home, we can infer, the soldiers' letters made political waves, and the US political establishment began to respond to the needs and wishes of Europe's uprooted Jews. When Harry Truman's envoy, Earl Harrison, called for, in Harrison's words, 'Jews as Jews (not as members of their nationality groups)' to be given special treatment, he was making the radical move of defining Jews as a national collective

⁴⁵ For a brief survey see Michael L. Meng, 'After the Holocaust: The History of Jewish Life in West Germany', *Contemporary European History* 14 (2005), 403–14.

that could be treated as such.⁴⁶ The US army became, by and large, very supportive of the displaced persons (DPs), and the United States let the Germans know that their treatment of Jews was viewed by the outside world as the barometer of their own moral progress. The Jewish issue was not big enough to override the cold-war imperative of close US links to West Germany, but West German leaders were in no doubt that they had to be seen to do right in this area.⁴⁷

The book's other big theme, as befits an account written by one of the leading historians of gender in modern German history,⁴⁸ is how central were sex and gender to understanding the character of the period. For many Germans, the rape of German women, but also women's willingness to fraternise with Allied forces, encapsulated Germany's emasculation, and encouraged a narrative of victimhood. The moral and material claims of Jews were dulled and deflected by this discursive armoury of German victimhood, which only grew more impregnable as the occupation years wore on. Meanwhile, fraternisation between German Fräuleins and US GIs defied all prohibitions, and created an often mercenary but nevertheless intimate set of relationships between US forces and their former enemy. Initially, the survivors – unaesthetic and needy – found it hard to compete for sympathy. But as conditions in the DP camps improved, the survivors' drive to form relationships and families was unstoppable. The result was astonishingly high fertility and low infant mortality rates, but also the desire to take lots of photographs, so that the black and white rectangles of shining faces would convince their owners of what they did not yet really believe – that they were capable of living a normal family life. Other Jewish men sought illicit relationships with German girls. Grossmann is very good on the quiet satisfactions of tables turned, as Jews used German nannies or German doctors for their multiplying progeny on German soil or, indeed, as Jewish men slept with German women supposed never to be sullied by Jewish blood.

Over time, however, Germans grew confident in expressing their desire that the displaced persons be gone, and the DPs themselves grew ever more restive. 1948 saw the large majority of the Jewish DPs quit the country, and in 1950 the Central Committee of Liberated Jews held its last meeting. The Jewish DP era was officially closed. Even if it was symbolically significant for the two Germanys that some Jewish remnant persisted there and even if, more recently, the Federal Republic's wish diplomatically to 'offset' its open door for ethnic Germans from the former Soviet Union has led to a surprising new chapter of Russian Jewish life on German soil, Leo Baeck was surely right that Nazi Germany had destroyed the historical basis of *German Jewry*. In charting what happened up to and during that destruction,

⁴⁶ Dan Diner, 'Elemente der Subjektwerdung', in Fritz Bauer Institut, ed., *Überlebt und unterwegs: jüdische Displaced Persons im Nachkriegsdeutschland. Jahrbuch zur Geschichte und Wirkung des Holocaust, 1997* (Frankfurt and New York: Campus Verlag, 1997), 229–48, at 230.

⁴⁷ Jay Howard Geller, *Jews in Post-Holocaust Germany, 1945–1953* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁴⁸ Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann and Marion A. Kaplan, *When Biology Became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984); Atina Grossmann, *Reforming Sex: The German Movement for Birth Control and Abortion Reform, 1920–1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

however, the historiography, as the studies under review demonstrate, remains very much alive.

Returning to the creative tension outlined at the beginning, does the new work on the Holocaust really force us to put 'pain and suffering' back into the post-lachrymose historiography of German-Jewry in the Wilhelmine epoch, and does Helmut Walser Smith offer convincing long-term lines of continuity in response? One thing the books under review make very clear is that we are dealing with three separate phenomena – German Jewry, antisemitism and the Holocaust – that would eventually fatally intersect, but that do not stand in any simple relationship to one another. Smith's long-range lens notwithstanding, it is clear that antisemitism's place in the relationship between Jews and non-Jews changed dramatically in each of three very different epochs. Wilhelmine Germany offered its Jews some unsettling juxtapositions of acceptance and exclusion, and some potentially disturbing political realignments on the right. Yet a rich array of Jewish–non-Jewish relationships allowed a distinctive, self-confident German-Jewry to develop and thrive. In 1918, war, defeat, international upheaval, German society's very different sense of itself and its fate, and the specific international moment of Jewish hyper-visibility outlined above, together created a radically different climate. Even then, however, the sturdy defence of civil liberties persisted until the Nazis captured the state and created a whole new era. While the mobilisation of crowds for race-shame spectacles after 1933 says something very important about the Nazis' ability to conjure up an apparent antisemitic *levée en masse*, it also reflects the fact that the Nazis had dramatically squeezed the space left for non-Jewish Germans to articulate a non-antisemitic position. There is no easy story of continuity to be told.

Something notably evident in many of these studies is the ambiguity of their claim about German exceptionalism. Judd, for instance, asserts early on that Germany's debates about ritual practice were peculiarly protracted, yet in the end offers us a picture of a surprisingly robust German defence of minority rights and rites. Otte acknowledges the international links between circus families, yet does not pursue how Germany's experience of entertainment compared with its neighbours. Volkov argues that German experience of antisemitism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was very similar to the French, yet at the same time writes with a sense of an ambiguously located doom. Smith begins with a strong claim about German continuities, but switches to an increasingly European tale. The lack of clarity is no accident. Recent critiques offered by Nils Roemer and Vicki Caron of efforts to contrast the trajectory of Jews in modern France and Germany, for example, show how difficult it is, in fact, to tell any consistent story of uniquely national antisemitism or Jewish–gentile encounter for Germany.⁴⁹ France could match Germany for cultural codes of Jewish otherness, early-twentieth-century Russia obviously radically outdid it for anti-Jewish violence. If there is a difference between France and Germany, in

⁴⁹ See Caron's and Roemer's responses to contributions in Michael Brenner, Vicki Caron and Uri R. Kaufmann, *Jewish Emancipation Reconsidered: The French and German Models* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

particular, it seems to lie as much in the strength of republicanism in the former – a political spirit bolstered by the outcomes of the Dreyfus affair and of the war – as in any magic formula of Jewish inclusion. Acknowledging that difference would bring us back to the vanishing point of 1933, which surely must always remain as a counterpoint to 1941. In short, a truly convincing account of distinctive continuities in the German case has yet to be offered, but it will probably always have to be as much about broader political and cultural traditions as about the specifics of antisemitism.