

BOOK REVIEWS

ULLA KYPTA, *Die Autonomie der Routine: Wie im 12. Jahrhundert das englische Schatzamt entstand*, Historische Semantik, 21 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 357 pp. ISBN 978 3 525 36723 0. €54.99

It is ironic that the first modern monograph-length study of the English Exchequer, that medieval English institution par excellence, should be published by a German scholar as a version of her doctoral dissertation. In British medieval historiography the Exchequer is nothing if not studied—many of the best medieval historians have cut their teeth on it. Its records are the pipe rolls, those financial accounts of allowances and debts paid and unpaid to the crown arising from its twice-yearly audits. These are nothing if not well used—a scholarly society exists for editing and publishing them. The Exchequer's principle 'manual', Richard of Ely's so-called *Dialogue of the Exchequer*, is nothing if not edited—it is the beneficiary of no fewer than four modern editions or revisions (1902, 1950, 1983, 2007). Yet extraordinarily, despite this, the last dedicated monograph-length study of the Exchequer is Reginald Lane Poole's of 1912. It could not be said that British medievalists have taken this massive continuous run of records for granted precisely (there is a continuous run from 1156 to 1832). But it might be said they have not stepped back to focus on them en bloc as they could have done. Today the pipe rolls and Bishop Stubbs's *Select Charters from the Beginning to 1307* do not dominate twenty-first century university teaching of British (English?) medieval history as much as in the twentieth, but it is true that for advanced students of English government, those older reference points and their successors remain basic givens in the historiography. The Exchequer and its records are part of the landscape. They are 'rather like Vesuvius . . . a grand object, never quite inactive, always plumed with smoke . . . but seldom in full-scale eruption', as R. W. Southern said of Magna Carta.¹ This can make it hard to see the

¹ R. W. Southern reviewing J. C. Holt's 1st edn of *Magna Carta* in *The English Historical Review*, 82 (1967), 342–6, at 342.

phenomenon in question afresh. *Die Autonomie der Routine* steps back to take a fresh look at this historiographical Vesuvius.

If, however, it is ironic that the first study since Poole's should be German, it is not at all unprecedented; indeed it is very fitting. One of the most distinguished dedicated studies of the Exchequer was the great Felix Liebermann's still valuable 1875 *Einleitung*.² So if it is striking that Kypta's is the most modern dedicated study of the Exchequer it is instructive for the following reasons. Much methodological water has flowed under the historiographical bridge since Poole, let alone Liebermann, wrote. While it would be quite unfair to suggest that approaches to the pipe rolls remain stuck in the 1920s, it would be fair to say that approaches drawn from socio-evolutionary theory, modern historical semantics, and systems theory have not been applied to them before (though Kypta is not alone in approaching the Exchequer from other instructive modern perspectives). As this implies, Kypta brings to her analysis a historiographical *Gestalt* quite distinct from most 'indigenous' Anglophone specialists in medieval English government. Her geographical and methodological detachment from the established British historiography on medieval government accordingly make her an interesting guide to it. For this British reader, partly if not formatively brought up within the indigenous historiography, Kypta's study is valuable and thought-provoking. Even—especially—where I would not agree with some of her stronger conclusions or methodological prescriptions, her account is a very useful one when thinking more widely about medieval institutionalization. It would be interesting to apply it to other record series, though difficult, as she points out, given the *Sonderfall* of English material.

Her argument in essence is as follows. It is fundamentally mistaken to think of kings and high-level administrators as the guiding hands and minds behind the innovative administrative developments of the Exchequer as a government department. (Kypta is brutally dismissive of those who would argue this.) They played no such role. Their presence correlates with no discernible patterns or changes in record-keeping practices. Rather, agency belongs anonymously to the humble clerks who, through their many, small, repeated actions and modifications, created the Exchequer-as-department,

² Felix Liebermann, *Einleitung in den Dialogus de Scaccario* (Göttingen, 1875).

the unintended longer-term consequence of those same actions and their development of the technical language needed to articulate it to one another. Similar but autonomous patterns can be seen in record-keeping elsewhere, suggesting wider social systems at work. This is the autonomy of Kypta's routine, which develops its own agency à la genetic mutations which are at once random and preserved as a function of their fit within their environmental context. The pipe roll clerk cannot see the pattern that his individual choices will retrospectively develop into. His retention or amendment of particular scribal or oral practices is rational in a limited way, but has no wider intentional game. Because these practices are fluid, multiple, and composite, the rules for playing the Exchequer's game as one of its clerks cannot be learnt from a rulebook. (The 1170s *Dialogue of the Exchequer* would be inadequate for this purpose Kypta argues.) Rather, you could only learn the game by playing it. Institutionalization starts here with the development of a routinized technical language, which leads to social differentiation between those who have and do not have that language, which finally hardens into a process of institutionalization-as-organization around those, by now, long-established practices.

As this implies, the book interestingly applies practices of historical semantics as being developed by historians such as Bernhard Jussen (her supervisor) and which themselves build on the *Begriffsgeschichte* of Reinhart Koselleck (and others). It also draws on organizational theory and ideas of socio-evolutionary thinking, a field of growing activity, partly through such theorists as Niklas Luhmann, who have used it to explain the complexity of social systems, partly through historians such as W. G. Runciman, who are exploring ways of doing history meaningfully with evolutionary models of causal agency. Kypta's argument is neatly aided by these theories. Agency is taken away from 'big men' and given to little ones. Intention with a small 'i' is permitted (the accretion of fluid clerical Exchequer practice over time) but teleology is thwarted because there is no master plan. ('Let's create a government department called the Exchequer!' – Kypta is sharply critical of those who assume an intentionally developing administrative process.) Complexity is maintained precisely because of the absence of intrusive executive interventions: the system maintains itself. She is careful not to fall into the trap of arguing that all evolutionary changes improve the system's efficiency, rather than (by definition) con-

tributing to its *reliability*. She is interestingly sceptical about how much technical semantic analysis can contribute to unearthing the origins of Exchequer procedure. She is good on the social divisiveness of specialized knowledge—an unintended consequence, she suggests—and good, too, on the self-legitimizing nature of a technical practice once established. Finally, Kypta elegantly ends by angling her account of a depersonalized, routinized administrative function which has decoupled itself from the king's person alongside narratives of the 'emergence of the modern state', narratives which are ultimately circular and teleological.

It is perhaps where analysis is pushed to wider forceful conclusions that one might raise some questions, mainly because Kypta appears to stress binary alternatives where I am not persuaded they are necessary. I will pick out two. In both cases an effect of the analysis is to produce a somewhat unpolitical picture, it seems to me, and a somewhat idealized account of administration, even if that idealization is to do with the processes not purposes of administration.

One is in relation to the respective agency of routines and people. One can see the attractiveness of socio-evolutionary theory in explaining the non-linear but rational (small 'r') logic underpinning the many changes in record-keeping across numerous fields. It means one does not have to explain every single change every time with reference to an individual's purposeful intervention. It means one can explain parallel but autonomous processes. More widely, it indeed makes a great deal of sense to stress the importance of aggregated routine-as-legitimacy in distinction to individuals' assertion of their own fiat. But I do not see that a wider individual intentionality *needed* to be excluded as a consequence of asserting the importance of routine-as-legitimacy. One does not have to go back to an old model of kings or chancellors 'running' government to think that the self-conscious, reflexive capacities of twelfth-century clerics, scribes (and, why not, kings) reached beyond the very limited intentionality Kypta is willing to concede. An awful lot of energy, effort (and money) was being allocated by these regimes to functions that, on this account, they were strikingly uncurious about. In this period any autonomous routine is always executed by people. It seems more likely that a perfectly 'automatic government' devoid of reflexivity will be as hard for humans to carry out as automatic writing is for writers trying to escape their own self-consciousness. Richard of Ely includes some

interesting comments in precisely this respect about Richard of Ilchester's meddling and unhelpful innovations. Part of the attraction of approaches such as Luhmann's is that they seek to defuse the need to stress 'big bangs' at the supposed origins of practices, and hence reduce the need to attribute significant agency to individuals. Notwithstanding the sophisticated ways we can attempt this defusion, the question persists for me about the role of humans in deciding that accounting action 'X' should take place, and then deciding to repeat it, and to repeat it, and to repeat it, and to repeat it—or not. Perhaps this is the incorrigible, irreducible, deluded humanist in me. (I think Kypta would say so and it is part of my point that ultimately some historians may disagree with her on philosophical grounds.)

In the second case one might wonder whether Kypta is warranted to see accounting as pure routine, devoid of ritual, ceremony, meaning—and politics—beyond the functional division of labour and formal process that is played out in the accounting process. Is ritual as polarized from routine as Kypta argues? Is the king's general absence from accounting practices also a sharp distancing of government from monarchy? On the one hand one would need to square this with the very ambiguous nature of what someone like Walter Map has to say about the anything but routinized, anything but depersonalized Angevin court more widely. One could argue that Map ostensibly exempts the Exchequer from the court's murkiness, yet Map only goes on to stress Henry II's watchful presence there, an irony which actually only deepens the murk. Likewise, if being an Exchequer clerk was as straightforwardly pragmatic as Kypta suggests, would such a clerk either need or be persuaded by Richard of Ely's elaborate intellectualized dialogue instructing them on the *habitus* necessary to carry it off, as she suggests? On the other hand, one might contrast Kypta's description of accounting as purely accounting with the 'play', ritual, and politics that a historian like Olivier Mattéoni has found in later medieval French accounting where one might have expected such procedures to be more 'bureaucratic'.³

An interesting comparison to think with here is the papal curia. It fits with some but perhaps not all of Kypta's analysis. Take Thomas

³ Olivier Mattéoni, 'Vérifier, corriger, juger: Les Chambres des comptes et le contrôle des officiers en France à la fin du Moyen Âge', *Revue historique*, 309 (2007), 31–69.

of Marlborough's account of bringing a case at Innocent III's curia. It conforms to a description of the on-going volatility of practice-based knowledge (Thomas has to keep up with a changing legal environment and an unclear set of protocols). But this need to engage with that mutability does not preclude 'static' booklearning (Thomas goes to Bologna for a crash-course in Roman and canon law to prepare himself for his case). Nor does the need to know the Roman rules of the game, at every level, result in a depersonalized environment (here are bribes, fainting fits, misjudging an audience, acerbic papal put-downs).

The importance of these questions and the chewiness of Kypta's answers is an indication of the usefulness of her enterprise, even where one does not necessarily agree. The British Middle Ages are too interesting and weird to be left to British historians, much as the German Middle Ages are too interesting and weird to be left to German historians. There is a very great value to be brought to a particular, technical, and sometimes introverted historiography by a skilled 'outsider's' reading of its material. It makes the *Heimisch unheimlich* and for historians this is always instructive, even if not always comfortable. Literate in but not a simple product of a historiographical tradition, such historians are able to bring questions and perspectives to bear that are harder to form within the tradition itself. A great virtue of Kypta's work is that she does not take the field's indigenous historiographical assumptions for granted and asks sharp questions that have not been asked often enough in British historiography. Precisely because such historiography is not comparative enough, often those questions have not been asked. It is very instructive to have them asked here.

Histories of institutional, organizational, and constitutional practices were once enthroned at the top of our historiographical hierarchies. Pushed from that pedestal they have dwelt in rather reduced circumstances within some increasingly shabby rooms of Clio's mansion for decades now. The critical interdisciplinary approaches that dominated European historiography after the Second World War could not see their way clear to give new and better accounts of these once canonical subjects. One can now see, however, particularly in British, French, and German historiographies, new, stimulating, and important accounts of these phenomena being offered by a range of young historians. Kypta's is one of these and historians of adminis-

BOOK REVIEWS

tration—English or otherwise, medieval or otherwise—will profit from it. It will make them think.

JOHN SABAPATHY is a lecturer in Medieval History at University College London. His book *Officers and Accountability in Medieval England, 1170–1300* (2014), a study of English officers in a European context, was awarded the Royal Historical Society's Whitfield Prize for 2015. He is currently working on a history of thirteenth-century Europe, *The Cultivation of Christendom*, a volume in the new Oxford History of Medieval Europe.

JUNE L. MECHAM, *Sacred Communities, Shared Devotions: Gender, Material Culture, and Monasticism in Late Medieval Germany*, ed. Alison I. Beach, Constance H. Berman, and Lisa M. Bitel, *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts*, 29 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), xviii + 310 pp. ISBN 978 2 503 54134 1. €85.00

The work under review is an expanded and posthumously published version of June L. Mecham's Ph.D. thesis (University of Kansas, 2004). The author was able to work on the manuscript herself until the beginning of 2009, and the editors handled the final publication.

The subject of the resulting monograph—in contrast to the impression given by the very general title—is the piety of the nuns of the so-called Heath Convents of Lower Saxony (Lüne, Medingen, Ebstorf, Walsrode, Isenhagen, and Wienhausen), with a focus on the Cistercian monastery of Wienhausen alongside the Benedictine house at Ebstorf. For comparative purposes Mecham draws on individual objects and texts from the monasteries of the Holy Cross in Rostock and Brunswick, from the house of the Poor Clares in Villingen-Schwenningen (the 'Bickenkloster'), and from St Agnes in Maaseik, a convent of Augustinian canonesses.

In a similar manner to Jeffrey Hamburger, Mecham seeks to use topography alongside visual and textual sources to reconstruct the performance of piety (in particular, the case of the Easter liturgy in ch. 2). She engages with the multimedia outfitting of the convents, and recognizes wall paintings, sculptures, tapestries, manuscripts and liturgy, devotional images, 'paradise garden' reliquaries, Christ-child dolls in cribs, and embroideries as equally significant works of art and sources (ch. 3). She attributes the vast wealth of the Heath Convents, especially in the period of reform during the last decades of the late fifteenth century, to the social status of the noble nuns on the one hand, and to the nuns' wealth on the other (ch. 4).

A focal point of the study (ch. 5) are the building activities and the private piety of Katharina von Hoya, abbess of Wienhausen (1422–37 and 1440–69), who made many architectural alterations and contributed furnishings to the benefit of both the convent and her private devotional practice. In a separate essay, published under her own

* Trans. Ben Pope.

auspices in 2007, Mecham had already discussed the chapel of St Anna founded by Katharina as a witness to her private devotion.¹

Mecham devotes chapter 6 to religious visual media in the fifteenth-century reform era, which began at Wienhausen under Susanna Potstock (1470–1501), following the ousting of Katharina von Hoya. Mecham is chiefly concerned here with the reconstruction of reforming networks which crossed regions and orders, and which can be deduced from the spread and reception of certain texts, such as the ‘Dornenkron’ and the ‘Ars moriendi’, from the exchange of manuscripts and movement of individuals, whether abbesses, nuns, or reformers such as Johannes Busch, and from the *Devotio moderna* and the Windesheim Congregation. I would doubt whether there really was a direct exchange between north and south German convents, as the reference to an indulgence from the Bickenkloster in Villingen suggests. But the close connections which Mecham observes within the north German and Netherlandish space have been repeatedly confirmed by studies produced during recent years in connection with the Herzog August Library at Wolfenbüttel.² Obviously none of these works could be considered.

Mecham offers an original study of the ‘Crown of Thorns’ (*Dornenkron*) (pp. 218–28), a meditative prayer by Dietrich Kolde (a cleric associated with the Windesheim Congregation), which survives both at Ebstorf (KE MS. IV) and in multiple manuscripts at Wienhausen (Mss 31, 60, 69). Mecham interprets this work as an expression of Passion-centred piety in late medieval female monasteries, and also of other typically female forms of piety, such as spiritual pilgrimages in the form of prayers for indulgence (pp. 228–39).

The author finds a pronounced Eucharistic piety in the Heath Convents during the reform period, which she associates with medi-

¹ June L. Mecham, ‘Katharina von Hoya’s Saint Anne Chapel: Female Piety, Material Culture, and Monastic Space on the Eve of the Reformation’, in Jeffrey F. Hamburger, Carola Jäggi, Susan Marti, and Hedwig Röckelein in cooperation with the Ruhrlandmuseum Essen (eds.), *Frauen – Kloster – Kunst: Neue Forschungen zur Kulturgeschichte des Mittelalters. Beiträge zum Internationalen Kolloquium vom 13.–16. Mai 2005 anlässlich der Ausstellung ‘Krone und Schleier’* (Turnhout, 2007), 177–85.

² On this see my survey: Hedwig Röckelein, *Schriftlandschaften, Bildungslandschaften und religiöse Landschaften des Mittelalters in Norddeutschland* (Wiesbaden, 2015).

tation on the *Dornenkron*, with the performative rites of the Depositio and Elevatio crucis, with the re-enactment of the Via crucis, with the Visitatio sepulchri, and the ubiquitous motifs of the Resurrectio Christi. The nuns, according to Mecham, identified themselves in these 'dramas' with the Virgin Mary, with Mary Magdalene, and with Veronica, and thereby created a greater nearness to Christ (p. 261). Through the manipulation of religious works of art and material objects alongside the sacral space, the nuns of the Heath Convents—according to Mecham's central thesis—dramatized themselves as brides of Christ and inhabitants of the Heavenly Jerusalem, generating a particular spirituality which was seen in a negative light by their (male) confessors. In the convents of the Windesheim Congregation, on the other hand, Mecham observes a leaning towards Marian devotion (p. 258).

Mecham makes frequent use of detailed studies by others, for instance, Tanja Kohwagner-Nikolai's investigation of the Wienhausen embroideries. It is greatly to her credit that she has extensively absorbed German-language research, given the widespread ignorance of this material in the anglophone research today. She also understands the relevant historical vernaculars—Middle High German, Low German, and Dutch—which enables her to study the original sources beyond the universal language of Latin.

The editors have inserted references to literature which has appeared since 2009, for example, the Niedersächsische Klosterbuch (2012) and Charlotte Klack-Eitzen, Wiebke Haase, and Tanja Weißgraf's work on Wienhausen's robe for a statue of the Virgin Mary (2013). Unfortunately there is no consideration of Katharina U. Mersch's dissertation (2012), which tackles similar issues to Mecham's work. The index is very patchy and shows little understanding of the subject. In contrast to Mecham's very substantial monograph, the index is best not relied upon.

HEDWIG RÖCKELEIN is Professor of Medieval History at the University of Göttingen. Her research interests are medieval religious cultures and women's and gender history in the Middle Ages, and

BOOK REVIEWS

she is currently investigating the relics of the Wienhausen convent. Her publications include *Schriftlandschaften, Bildungslandschaften und religiöse Landschaften des Mittelalters in Norddeutschland* (2015), and (as co-editor, with Thorsten Henke and Maria Julia Hartgen), *Der Gandersheimer Schatz im Vergleich: Zur Rekonstruktion und Präsentation von Kirchenschätzen* (2013).

STEFANO SARACINO, *Republikanische Träume von der Macht: Die Utopie als politische Sprache im England des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Schriften zur politischen Kommunikation, 17 (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2014), 366 pp. ISBN 978 3 8471 0283 0. €49.99

In this book Stefano Saracino investigates the importance of utopias in the political discourse of the Commonwealth, when England was ruled without a monarch. He also includes the preceding Civil War period and the beginning of the Restoration which followed it in his study. Saracino's analysis is based on the following works: *Macaria* (1641) by the circle around Samuel Hartlib; Gerrard Winstanley's *The Law of Freedom* (1652); James Harrington's *The Commonwealth of Oceana* (1656); the works and newspapers of Marchamont Nedham dating from Oliver Cromwell's rule; John Streater's *Government described* (1659); William Sprigge's *A Modest Plea for an Equal Commonwealth against Monarchy* (1659); and four works from the Restoration period under Charles II, *New Atlantis continued* (1660), Antoine Legrand's *Scytomedria* (1669), Margaret Cavendish's *Blazing World* (1666), and Henry Neville's *The Isle of Pines* (1668).

Saracino searches these works for rhetorical traces of republicanism and/or contemporary utopian ideas. Following in the tradition of research by John Pocock and Quentin Skinner, Saracino defines republicanism as a political language based mainly on references to political writings from Antiquity, their central terms, values, and world views. If authors during the Civil War and Commonwealth used these terms, values, and world views, they could be counted as belonging to the tradition of republicanism. In the case of contemporary utopianism, it is more difficult to establish this sort of textual commonality. Yet Saracino makes an attempt to describe utopianism as a political language by analogy with republicanism. Here, too, he identifies a canonical textual corpus. In the works he investigates, he looks for explicit or implicit references to utopian concepts in the writings of Plato, Thomas More, and Francis Bacon. What united these three classical authors was that they used comparable rhetorical devices in their utopian writings to develop political visions that contrasted sharply with prevailing social conditions. Whether there was also agreement among them relating to terms, values, and world

Trans. Angela Davies (GHIL).

views is discussed by Saracino. But what he really sets out to show in his study is that these two political languages—republicanism and utopianism—did not have to be mutually exclusive, as John Pocock explicitly pointed out in the case of James Harrington's *Oceana*. Rather, Saracino argues, they could enter into a symbiotic relationship, as he demonstrates using the example of Harrington himself.

In most cases Saracino plausibly shows that the texts under investigation can be read as political speech acts in which the authors addressed specific concerns and ideas for reform to political decision-making authorities with the aim of bringing about political change. During the Civil War and just before the return of Charles II, these were the English Parliament; under the Protectorate, Oliver Cromwell. Only the examples from the Restoration period do not fit into this picture. These are either panegyrics praising monarchy as the best form of state, or criticisms of the system of rule, to the extent that this issue figured prominently in them at all, which is doubtful, at least with regard to Cavendish's *Blazing World*. In any case, the analysis of Charles II's reign tails off by comparison with that of the years of Cromwell's rule and the Republic.

Less convincing, however, is Saracino's claim that utopianism was an independent political language. Sometimes he introduces other terms, for example, when he defines utopia as an 'independent space of political communication' (p. 65) without making clear how exactly this term differs from 'political language'. Chapter IV is entitled 'Functions of Utopias in Republicanism'. Here utopianism appears to be a rhetorical device for making republicanism possible, for example, by evading censorship or defusing potentially explosive political statements. In subchapter IV.1, however, 'The Semantics of Republicanism in Utopias', the relationship between the two seems to have been reversed. What makes me wary is that towards the end of his investigation, Saracino attributes modernizing qualities to utopianism without showing in detail how this worked. His examples are intended to demonstrate that 'the theory of the state was far ahead of practice' (p. 292), but they would make it difficult to provide any specific evidence, as none of the models of political reform was ever put into practice in England. In order to demonstrate that the English utopias 'anticipated the development of the state', Saracino devotes several pages to punishment practices. In addition to Foucault, he looks at a number of ritual punishments in seventeenth-

century England, and compares these with statements in the utopias he discusses. In these, however, the public humiliations of forced labour and slavery, following Thomas More's example, often played a greater part than the death sentence. How the thesis of a 'theoretical and semantic proto-modernity' (p. 316) can be derived from this finding remains a mystery to the reader.

Saracino's work provides plenty of evidence that he is much more familiar with the world of texts in England than with the political and social practices of the time. This starts with his rather casual use of terms that are increasingly considered, by historians, as requiring definition, such as, for example, 'Puritans'. Saracino uses this term frequently without attempting to clarify it, or even referring to what has, by now, become an almost endless literature on the subject. Important writers on the Civil War period are missing; as a representative sample I mention here only Nicholas Tyacke, John Morrill, Kevin Sharpe, Alexandra Walsham, Peter Lake, and David Colclough, all of whom have published significant work on themes that Saracino treats in his work. And the reader is also surprised to find several references to the *Common Book of Prayer* (pp. 20, 66) instead of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Not least, the author's lack of familiarity with England is revealed in his uncertainty about the dating of his sources. Thus he states that the publication date of 1644 given on the title page of the pamphlet *The Great Assises holden in Parnassus by Apollo* is wrong (p. 273), referring to Joad Raymond's important study of newsbooks in England, in which 10 February 1645 is given as the date of publication. He could have known that until the middle of the eighteenth century, the *mos Anglicanus* was followed in England, and that the new year only began with the Annunciation, on 25 March. Thus the date on the pamphlet's title page is not wrong; Raymond merely gives the date in today's terms, as is common scholarly practice.

On the whole, therefore, the work conveys a somewhat mixed impression. While Saracino's interpretation of the individual texts he investigates is convincing, the generalizing conclusions he draws from them are largely unsubstantiated and logically unpersuasive.

ANDREAS PEČAR is Professor of Early Modern History at the University of Halle-Wittenberg. His publications include *Die Ökonomie der*

BOOK REVIEWS

Ehre: Der höfische Adel am Kaiserhof Karls VI. (2003); *Macht der Schrift: Politischer Biblizismus in Schottland und England zwischen Reformation und Bürgerkrieg* (2011); and, as co-editor, *Repräsentation und Selbstinszenierung Friedrichs des Großen* (2014).

TODD H. WEIR, *Secularism and Religion in Nineteenth-Century Germany: The Rise of the Fourth Confession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), xv + 304 pp. ISBN 978 1 107 04156 1 (hardback). £60.00. US\$95.00

Religion and piety as topics long eked out a shadowy existence in research on nineteenth-century German history. Whether as political history in the narrow sense or social history more widely, the history of religion did not fit into the central paradigms of national historiography. In the meantime, the tide has turned, and the study of religion is currently experiencing a boom. One of the first among Germany's leading historians to recognize the significance of religion and its transformation in the second half of the nineteenth century was Thomas Nipperdey. In his masterly *Deutsche Geschichte 1866–1918* (1990–2), he considered the topic of religion and the church to be so important that he published the relevant chapter in advance as a paperback. In it, Nipperdey not only looked at the two major Christian confessions, but also pointed to the increasing significance of non-ecclesiastical religiosity (art as religion, theosophy, *völkische* mythology, and so on), for which he coined the term 'vagierende Religiosität' (peripatetic religiosity). In the meantime, much has been published on the individual groupings and overarching trends within the free religious movement, which flourished at the beginning of the twentieth century. It may, therefore, be justified to call the various forms of this non-ecclesiastical religion beyond Catholicism, Protestantism, and Judaism a 'fourth confession', as Todd H. Weir does.

In this book, Weir discusses the early history of peripatetic religiosity in the nineteenth century, and shows how it emerged out of a secularism that saw itself as essentially anti-church. Weir adopts the term 'secularism' from the English freethinker and social reformer George Holyoake as he finds it more suitable than contemporary German terms such as 'freireligiös' and 'freigeistig' to sum up the two essential elements that link the various groupings in this non-ecclesiastical and anti-church religiosity, namely, clear anti-clericalism and the claim to be replacing the traditional forms of religion with a new belief, for example, in a materialistic worldview or a universal ethical system. 'Secularism' thus denotes both a movement to

Trans. Angela Davies (GHIL).

dismantle the social and political privileges of the traditional confessions and a belief in the inherent progress of salvation.

Weir begins his account by looking at religious dissidents within Catholicism and Protestantism in the 1840s. Here it was the Protestant *Lichtfreunde* and the *Deutschkatholiken* in particular who radicalized the heritage of Enlightened, rational theology and, during the 1848 revolution, grew into independent, political and social opposition movements. The Prussian king reacted to the growing numbers of radical political and religious dissidents within the ranks of the two main confessions by granting the Religious Patent of 1847, which allowed his subjects to leave the church without joining another confession. According to Weir, Friedrich Wilhelm IV's intention was not to encourage religious freedom, but to open the floodgates so that religious dissidents would lose their place in Prussia's political and denominational system. In any case, the Religious Patent did nothing to undermine the idea of the 'Christian state', and, given the steep exit fees, many freethinkers chose to remain nominal members of their churches.

After the 1848 revolution, the free religious communities which had emerged from the *Deutschkatholiken* and the *Lichtfreunde* suffered serious repression by the state. None the less, church dissenters managed to reorganize themselves at local level. One of the most important free religious groups on German soil was the *Christkatholische Congregation* in Berlin, which in 1862 renamed itself the *Free Religious Congregation* (FRC). The following chapters of Weir's book are devoted to the history of this congregation, which grew out of the tradition of the *Deutschkatholiken* and the *Lichtfreunde*, but also drew on the new worldviews of materialism and monism. Weir does not write a chronological history of the FRC as such. Rather, concentrating on particular moments of its turbulent history, he investigates its place in the 'religious field' (Bourdieu), or, as Weir puts it more precisely, the 'confessional field' of the time. Drawing on police reports and publications from the FRC's milieu, Weir identifies the social position of the congregation's members. He also presents the dominant positions within the FRC regarding religious worldviews (materialism v. idealism), demarcation from other free religious groups (*Monistenbund*, *Gesellschaft für ethische Kultur*, and so on), and the 'Jewish question', which was highly topical at least from the time of Berlin's anti-Semitism dispute.

According to Weir, the FRC long retained the radical democratic heritage of its origins, but from the second half of the 1880s, it increasingly came under the influence of rising Social Democracy and highly materialistic Freethinking. One of its best known members, Adolph Hoffmann, later a co-founder of the USPD, became co-minister for science, art, and education in Prussia during the November revolution of 1918, and in this role abolished the supervision of schools by the church. During the Weimar Republic, the anti-church secularist movement became a mass phenomenon, especially when the Communist Party discovered the political potential of anti-clericalism for itself. At the height of the proletarian Freethinkers' movement—in 1930 it is said to have had more than half a million organized members—Helmut Schreiner, professor of Protestant theology, wondered whether, given these numbers alone, it was appropriate to speak of a 'fourth confession'.

It can be debated how appropriate it is to use this term for free religious and freethinking groups. Weir himself concedes that many members and sympathizers of these congregations and organizations remained nominal members of the main Christian churches. Added to this, there were internal disagreements and differences of opinion that make it difficult to speak of a common 'belief' among these groups: those who interpreted the world in a metaphysical and idealistic way could be found next to staunch materialists, defenders of the concept of a God of whatever nature co-existed with convinced atheists. Yet however heterogeneous this group may have been, to exclude it, as a *quantité négligeable*, from the religious history of the nineteenth century with its three major religious communities (Catholics, Protestants, and Jews) would not be doing justice to the dynamic of the religious field in Germany over the last two hundred years, as we know at least since Nipperdey. To this extent, therefore, it is appropriate in future to speak, as Weir does, of a quadriconfessional approach.

Weir's attempt to replace the structural-historical term 'secularization' with the actor-centred concept of 'secularism' is also worth noting. After all, the secularization of state and society was not just an anonymous, macro-structural process, but also had active advocates who, like Adolph Hoffmann, for example, did not hesitate to translate their secularist worldview into political decisions. Weir convincingly distinguishes his use of the term 'secularism' from Talal

BOOK REVIEWS

Asad's use of the same term. In the dichotomous view of global history put forward by Asad and other post-colonial thinkers, 'secularism' essentially stands for the subjugation of subaltern religious and political arrangements by Western liberals. Weir, by contrast, rightly shows how deeply 'secularism' was contested in the West itself, and that it was anything but a hegemonic concept. In its conceptual structure, therefore, the book goes far beyond the history of 'peripatetic religiosity' in nineteenth-century Germany.

KLAUS GROSSE KRACHT teaches modern history at the University of Münster and is currently a Research Fellow at the Cluster of Excellence 'Religion and Politics'. His major publications include *Zwischen Berlin und Paris: Bernhard Groethuysen (1880–1946). Eine intellektuelle Biographie* (2002); *Die zankende Zunft: Historische Kontroversen in Deutschland nach 1945* (2005); and *Die Stunde der Laien? Katholische Aktion in Deutschland im europäischen Kontext 1920–1960* (forthcoming).

CHRISTOF DEJUNG, *Die Fäden des globalen Marktes: Eine Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte des Welthandels am Beispiel der Handelsfirma Gebrüder Volkart 1851–1999*, Industrielle Welt, 85 (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2013), 516 pp. ISBN 978 3 412 20986 5. €59.90

Theories of the firm, in particular those relating to the significance of information and transaction costs, have been used effectively to sustain the view that merchant enterprises can successfully draw on their role as intermediaries to achieve continuing success and to manage the transition to global concerns. It is only recently, however, that attention has been focused on the operation and development of merchant enterprises in India during the nineteenth century and the emphasis, perhaps inevitably, has largely been on the role of British merchant houses. Within this context, Dejung's rigorous study of *Gebrüder Volkart*, based in Winterthur, is to be doubly welcomed. The merchant house of Volkart Bros. was founded in both Winterthur and Bombay by the brothers Salomon and Johann Georg Volkart in 1851. By the end of the nineteenth century it had already become one of the largest companies in South Asia and it remained a family owned concern which continued to be controlled by partners who were drawn from the Volkart and Reinhart merchant families of Winterthur. Dejung's study is important for two reasons. First, it extends our collective understanding of the key mechanisms that underpinned the success of individual merchant enterprises in India and the Far East in the period from the mid nineteenth century until the end of the twentieth century at a time of increased globalization and the rise of multinational firms. Secondly, by focusing on the history of a Swiss-owned firm which operated on a continent which was very much an integral part of the British Empire until the India Independence Act of 1947, the wider significance of socio-cultural factors in determining the success or failure of merchant houses can be analysed in a more nuanced and effective manner than would otherwise have been the case.

Three main themes inform the author's overall approach to the history of Volkart Bros. as a paradigmatic case study: the significance of personal interaction and networks for the expansion of world trade; the dependency of European merchant houses operating in India on efficient local networks based on production and trade; and the central importance of trust and social capital in structuring long-

term social relations within the firm. In the pre-colonial era, India and Southern Asia constituted one of the most developed economic areas in the world and cooperation between European trading houses and non-European merchants was only possible on the basis of a similar understanding of the underlying principles of business operations where honesty and reliability were essential prerequisites, while trust was easier to establish and consolidate in a family firm, irrespective of the nationality of its owners, where decision-making was based on shared economic interests and culturally structured attitudes.

The two founders of Volkart Bros. already had considerable experience and knowledge of the Indian market and its importance as a supplier of cotton and other raw materials. If the expansion of the railway network in the 1860s was followed by the establishment of a number of hinterland agencies, the company remained dependent to a large degree on Indian merchants and 'guarantee brokers' (shroffs). Mutual confidence and trust underpinned these business relationships and encouraged the Swiss merchant house to rely on individual Indian firms for decades. At the same time, the firm had to operate within the framework of British law and achieve a significant degree of integration within an Imperial culture structured around clubs, parties, social gatherings, and tiger hunts. The firm's ability to achieve these twin objectives, according to Dejung, rested on its hybrid mix as a family firm and managerial enterprise. It never faced any direct succession problems which might have jeopardized the retention of its traditional family model; it developed and retained a patriarchal structure until the 1960s; and placed considerable emphasis on the creation of a sense of solidarity and a spirit of service as the firm's 'guiding ideal'. Moreover, it is argued that this was not just rhetoric as there was a real commitment to maintain close contact with all employees within the framework of what was regarded by its owners as a 'company family'.

In covering the history of Volkart Bros. from its foundation in 1851 to the end of the twentieth century the author is required to cover a great deal of ground, primarily as a result of the extension of its business operations to other Asian countries, in particular, to China and Japan in the 1920s, and its strategy of product diversification, which led to its entry into the Brazilian coffee trade in 1942. However, the business model which had proved to be effective with-

in an Indian context, particularly at a time when political stability and legal security were provided by the British colonial government, proved to be far less successful elsewhere. The difficulties which the firm encountered in entering the Chinese market, the losses which it suffered for a long time in Japan with the Nichizui Trading Company, and the short-lived success of its Brazilian operation raises wider issues about the relevance of the 'company family' model with its specific value system and network embeddedness to different trading environments beyond the borders of India. Indeed, the portrayal of a merchant house whose success was predicated on a sense of solidarity within its workforce, irrespective of their ethnic origins or status, might well merit a more critical appraisal. Within the company there was an extended hierarchy of posts; Indian employees were prevented from acting as purchasers of raw materials or salesmen; and a 'conservative' remuneration policy meant that purchasing agents were still poorly paid in the period after the First World War. The company generated a very extensive archive, but the real views of the firm's employees were seldom, if ever, recorded and there is an implicit danger in relying too much on the stated expectations of its owners.

However, these points should not detract from an excellent study. It offers a detailed analysis of a specialized trading firm which came to occupy a central position in the international trade in raw materials. Apart from the two world wars, the nationality of its owners was less important than its capital strength and its long-term success can be attributed, at least in part, to the extent to which it was both culturally and socially embedded. Its extensive networks in India with agents, brokers, and shroffs continued to provide an effective operational framework which reflected a wider commitment to 'honourable merchant values'. To this extent Dejung has produced a major study of a Swiss-owned merchant house which complements recent research in this field and enhances our understanding of a range of key issues which influenced the relative success or failure of companies operating on an international stage.

ROBERT LEE is Honorary Research Professor, Department of History, University of Liverpool. His many publications include *The*

BOOK REVIEWS

People's Garden? A History of Crime and Policing in Birkenhead Park (2013); '“Divided loyalties?” In-migration, Ethnicity and Identity: The Integration of German Merchants in Nineteenth-Century Liverpool', *Business History*, 2/54 (2012), 117–53; and, as editor, *Commerce and Culture: Nineteenth-Century Business Elites* (2011).

NACI YORULMAZ, *Arming the Sultan: German Arms Trade and Personal Diplomacy in the Ottoman Empire before World War I* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2014), xvi + 349 pp. ISBN 978 1 78076 633 1. £68.00

‘All governments still believe in military preparedness as an essential of national life’, the American journalists H. C. Engelbrecht and F. C. Hanighen concluded in resignation, ‘hence they foster and aid the arms makers and cooperate very closely with them. Armament makers, on their part, woo the government and its officials, so that their particular company may be favored when government contracts are given out.’¹ As we learn from Naci Yorulmaz’s new book, this statement dating from 1934 also applies to relations between the late Ottoman Empire and German armament makers before the First World War.

Based on a Ph.D. thesis completed at the University of Birmingham in 2011, Naci Yorulmaz’s study asks how German arms producers became the dominant suppliers of the Ottoman arsenals in the second half of the nineteenth century, and how they succeeded in maintaining this position until the First World War. Drawing on a broad empirical basis, the author shows that this did not depend primarily on the quality or price of *matériel*. It was achieved by rigorous personal diplomacy, clever marketing, and manipulative methods.

Contextualizing chapters (1 and 4) illuminate the background to what the author calls the first two waves of German arms sales in the Ottoman Empire. According to Yorulmaz, Bismarck, initiating the German policy of commercial expansion towards the Ottoman Empire, understood that ‘international arms sales could be used as a significant symbol of support and a declaration of friendly relations’ (p. 37). The Chancellor intervened personally in the negotiations leading to a huge contract by which the Mauser company was to supply the Ottoman Empire with 500,000 rifles and 100 million cartridges. Moreover, Bismarck recommended the powder producer Duttendorfer with whom he had a personal relationship. Wilhelm II also strengthened the close relations with the Ottoman Empire under the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II, and it was in the context of the Kaiser’s *Orientreise* of 1898 that we can observe the second wave of

¹ Helmuth Carol Engelbrecht and Frank Cleary Hanighen, *Merchants of Death: A Study of the International Armament Industry* (New York, 1934), 143.

German arms sales. At that time, *matériel* (mainly rifles, artillery, and ships) made up more than one half of German–Ottoman trade. Like Bismarck before him, Wilhelm II intervened personally in the negotiations and promoted Krupp’s quick-fire gun.

Chapter 2 looks at the role of Germany’s military advisers. The first group of four was dispatched in 1882, and became highly paid military officers in the Ottoman army. Yorulmaz considers these Germans in Ottoman service as the ‘key instruments working for the sake of Germany’s peaceful penetration strategy in general and for the profit of the GAFs [German Armament Firms] in particular’ (p. 7). He takes a closer look at the most important figure among these actors, Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz (Goltz Pasha). Goltz succeeded in building up a network including high-ranking bureaucrats in the Yıldız Palace as well as young military cadets. He rigorously promoted German products, and, according to Yorulmaz, his lobbying work for the German armaments industry proved particularly effective in obtaining contracts with Krupp (for the fortification of the Turkish Straits with Krupp artillery) and the contract with Mauser mentioned above. Some doubts remain, however, about the author calling the military advisers ‘businessmen in uniform’. From this reviewer’s perspective, this might apply to some members of this group. The study itself reveals that a significant part of the first group of German military advisers proved to be rather ineffective for both the German and the Ottoman side. For example, one of them was said to have spent much of his time in the Janni Bier Halle in Pera.

The author also takes a closer look at the armaments orders (ch. 3). Focusing on the extensive arms contract with Mauser, he traces the drawing up of the contract in detail. This reveals the preparatory measures taken by the German side to avoid competition and demonstrates the personal factor in the outcome of this contract that was so crucial for the growth of the Mauser company and had such a lasting impact on the community of Oberndorf am Neckar.

In chapter 5 the author focuses on Sultan Abdülhamid and his bureaucrats; this change of perspective is particularly illuminating. The armaments contracts were not just part of a defensive military policy. For the Sultan, who was in urgent need of loans, they were also a way of tapping a new finance market and making his empire attractive to investors in countries that claimed no colonial interests in the Ottoman Empire. The main reason why Abdülhamid II decid-

ed in favour of Germany as his partner for military reforms and as his source of weapons was the Prussian military's good reputation and Germany's victory over France in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1. Nonetheless, Ottoman bureaucrats also analysed European literature, newspapers, and their envoys' reports in order to form their own, independent opinions of European military affairs. Although bribery certainly played a part in gaining access to the Sultan's bureaucrats and obtaining their favour, the author argues that its importance has been exaggerated in the literature. To maintain good customer relations with the Ottoman Empire, Paul Mauser developed more subtle strategies, such as providing lavish dinners for the Ottoman Inspection and Control Commission, constructing a special building for them close to his factory in Oberndorf, and organizing a charity collection among his company workers for the victims of the 1894 Istanbul earthquake.

A forward-looking final chapter traces how the preference for German suppliers of *matériel* survived the Young Turk Revolution and triggered a third wave of German armament sales. Price was more important now, however, and companies from other countries regained ground in the Ottoman Empire's arms market.

German–Ottoman relations before the First World War are well researched in the historiography, and the immense German–Ottoman arms trade has also attracted scholarly attention in the past.² Yorulmaz's study, however, offers new insights into the mechanics of this trade. By interpreting the German–Ottoman arms contracts as above all political acts, his study provides an excellent illustration of the potential importance of the arms trade for rapprochement and maintaining bilateral relations. The author emphasizes a 'German style of war business' that relied on a combination of state support, personal diplomacy, networking, and manipulative methods. This proves to be accurate in this case, but without a comparative approach it remains an open question to what extent this was a particular style within an imperialist context in which the merging of

² See, in particular, Jonathan Grant, 'The Sword of the Sultan: Ottoman Arms Imports, 1854–1914', *Journal of Military History*, 66/1 (2002), 9–36; Fahri Türk, *Die deutsche Rüstungsindustrie in ihren Türkeigeschäften zwischen 1871 und 1914: Die Firma Krupp, die Waffenfabrik Mauser und die Deutschen Waffen- und Munitionsfabriken* (Berlin, 2006).

BOOK REVIEWS

political and economic interests and the application of vigorous means to promote the nation's advantage were carried to extremes.

FELIX BRAHM joined the GHIL as a Research Fellow in August 2015. He received his Ph.D. from Humboldt University in Berlin for a thesis on the history of African studies in the era of decolonization. Before coming to London, he worked as an Assistant Professor (*Akademischer Rat*) at the University of Bielefeld in a team researching global history. His current project tackles the immense European-African arms trade in the second half of the nineteenth century.

ANTHONY McELLIGOTT, *Rethinking the Weimar Republic: Authority and Authoritarianism, 1916–1936* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 384 pp. ISBN 978 1 84966 472 1. £70.00

In the half century after 1945, the Weimar Republic was frequently depicted as an unloved, if culturally progressive, experiment in democracy, and one that was unlikely to survive in the long run. Since the turn of the millennium, however, historians have tried to escape this ‘glitter and doom’ paradigm to present Weimar as something other than a mere prelude to the horrors of the Third Reich. They have placed a heavier emphasis on the role of contingency in the Republic’s demise,¹ pointed to its achievements in building an authentically democratic civic culture,² and questioned the notion that 1920s Germany was pervaded by a sense of impending disaster.³

Locating Anthony McElligott’s book in this ‘new orthodoxy’ is no easy task. On the one hand, there is much here about the Republic’s success in establishing and legitimizing itself among the broad mass of the German population. But on the other hand, McElligott continuously brings attention to those authoritarian continuities that linked Weimar with the Third Reich, and he maintains throughout that the Republic was bedevilled by a fundamental and dangerous crisis of legitimacy. Indeed, this crisis is the focal point of the entire book—each chapter is organized around the central question of ‘authority’ and where it truly lay in Weimar Germany, a question which ‘remained unresolved throughout the 1920s’ and was the basic problem at the heart of the Republican project (p. 7).

The focus on contested authority is reflected in the timespan that the book covers. Rather than beginning with the war’s end in 1918

¹ Rüdiger Graf, *Die Zukunft der Weimarer Republik: Krisen und Zukunftsaussagen in Deutschland 1918–1933* (Munich, 2008) <http://sub-hh.cian-do.com/book/?bok_id=17869>, accessed 3 Oct. 2013.

² Manuela Achilles, ‘With a Passion for Reason: Celebrating the Constitution in Weimar Germany’, *Central European History*, 43 (2010), 666–89 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0008938910000750>>, accessed 29 Oct. 2015.

³ Moritz Föllmer, Rüdiger Graf, and Per Leo, ‘Einleitung: Die Kultur der Krise in der Weimarer Republik’, in Föllmer and Graf (eds.), *Die ‘Krise’ der Weimarer Republik: Zur Kritik eines Deutungsmusters* (Frankfurt am Main, 2005).

and finishing with Hitler's accession to the chancellorship in 1933, as do most conventional accounts, McElligott maintains that we must begin in 1916 and end in 1936, because it was during this twenty-year period that the question of who really held power in Germany remained unanswered and, at times, was violently contested. McElligott convincingly argues that this dynamic of uncertain and splintered authority was unleashed in 1916 by two developments which first compromised the Kaiser's pre-eminence: Hindenburg and Ludendorff's assumption of dictatorial powers; and growing social unrest and calls for constitutional reform within the Reichstag. However, the reason for choosing 1936 as the year in which this dynamic of contested authority was finally resolved is less clear and is, in fact, rather briefly addressed. McElligott suggests that only with the 1936 plebiscite in the wake of the remilitarization of the Rhineland was Hitler's 'unbounded authority' unambiguously recognized by the population of the entire Reich, but this (highly debatable) argument is not developed much beyond a few fleeting paragraphs.

The book treats the central theme of 'contested authority' in seven chapters, the first and last of which are chronological and deal with the Republic's beginning and end respectively, with the remaining five organized thematically. They focus in turn on foreign policy, the economy, the judiciary, culture, and the civil service. In each chapter, McElligott uses a consistent formula, first presenting the reader with the 'standard narrative' on whatever issue is about to be dealt with—that the judiciary, for example, was implacably opposed to the Republic—before challenging it, or at least drawing out some of its underlying complexities.

For the most part, this approach works well, especially where some of the striking continuities that linked the Republic with the Third Reich are identified. In chapter 3, which examines Weimar foreign policy, McElligott convincingly argues that German domination of central and eastern Europe was on the agenda long before the Nazis came to power. But whereas Stresemann had pursued this goal cautiously and peacefully, his successors (including, but not only, Hitler) 'threw caution to the wind' (p. 66), becoming increasingly aggressive and impatient in their striving for hegemony in the east. Chapter 6, which deals with Weimar's 'cultural authority', calls into question the classic portrayal of the Republic as a progressive staging ground for avant-garde artistic experimentation that was brought to

an abrupt end in 1933.⁴ Instead, McElligott emphasizes how stringent some of the censorship laws passed by Republican governments were, as well as the illiberal character of much of the Weimar state's pedagogical self-presentation. Focusing on competing visions of politics during the Weimar period, the author shows in chapter 8 that the seeds of Hitler's untrammelled authority after 1933 had already been built into the Weimar Constitution, which tried to marry elements of parliamentary democracy with more authoritarian ideas of plebiscitary, presidential rule.

But perhaps the most successful example of 'rethinking' in this book is chapter 7, which deals with the provincial councils and bureaucracies that effectively ran much of Germany. These institutions have frequently been depicted as, at best, lukewarm in their support for the Republic and, at worst, as conservative and reactionary outfits that did all they could to sabotage democracy from within. But McElligott shows that the pro-Republican political parties were remarkably successful at packing the German bureaucracy with their own supporters, despite some colourful examples of obstructionism from redoubtable monarchist civil servants such as Herbert von Bismarck (whose office continued to send out letters bearing the Imperial stamp throughout the 1920s).

There are other chapters where the attempt to 'rethink' historiographical orthodoxy is a little far-fetched, however. In chapter 5, which focuses on the 'authority of law', McElligott initially resolves to challenge the traditional thesis that the legal profession remained a bastion of authoritarian, conservative nationalism and bitterly opposed to the Republic throughout its lifespan. But much of what follows tends to confirm precisely this conventional narrative, though McElligott does succeed in laying bare some of the fluctuations in the severity of sentencing throughout the 1920s. In fact, the most interesting aspect of this chapter is yet again McElligott's unearthing of a striking historical continuity: 'special courts', set up during the First World War to try dissenters for undermining German morale, continued to be used extensively in the first years of the

⁴ This portrayal of Weimar culture is most commonly associated with two classic studies: Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York, 2001); and Walter Laqueur, *Weimar: A Cultural History, 1918–1933* (1st American edn. New York, 1974).

Republic, when revolutionary unrest was widespread, and were introduced again in order to quell political radicalism in Weimar's twilight phase after 1929. Remarkable, too, is that some of these 'special courts' remained operational and were used, to devastating effect, in the early years of Hitler's dictatorship. This singular organ of juridical authoritarianism thus connected the legal culture of the Kaiserreich with that of the Third Reich.

There are other instances where the opportunity to 'rethink' the Weimar Republic is surprisingly passed up. Chapter 4, which deals with 'the authority of money', includes a short section on the crucial question of who voted for Hitler, which largely amounts to a restatement of the traditional and long discredited thesis that the Nazi party was a movement of the disgruntled middle classes. But the last few decades of scholarship have shown how successful Hitler was at winning support from a remarkable cross section of German society, including among workers and even defectors from the Social Democrats. There is little mention of this, despite the works of Jürgen Falter and Conan Fischer appearing in the bibliography. Nor does McElligott adequately engage with the thesis, advanced by Peter Fritzsche and others,⁵ that Nazi successes after 1929 were less a short-term result of the Depression than the manifestation of a long-term process of mobilization within a largely Protestant, rural, and small town nationalist subculture that was visible by the mid 1920s at the latest.

None of this is to detract from the exceptionally thought-provoking nature of McElligott's contribution. All of the chapters are packed with provocative insights, for example, that the sudden explosion of the Nazi vote after 1929 was at least partly caused by a wave of nationalist euphoria triggered by the final withdrawal of French troops from the Rhineland. The central idea at the heart of the book — that the Weimar Republic's instability was ultimately the result of its imperfect and contested claim to 'authority' over the German body politic — is also useful and illuminating. Finally, McElligott's incisive unpacking of many of the authoritarian continuities that linked the Weimar period with Nazi Germany, especially those inherent in the

⁵ Peter Fritzsche, *Rehearsals for Fascism: Populism and Political Mobilization in Weimar Germany* (New York, 1990); Rudy Koshar, *Social Life, Local Politics, and Nazism: Marburg, 1880–1935* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1986).

RETHINKING THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

constitution and legal system, is a significant service to scholars of the period. Undergraduates and specialists alike will profit from reading this book.

ALEX BURKHARDT is working on a Ph.D. thesis entitled 'Democrats into Nazis? The Radicalisation of the *Bürgertum* in Hof-an-der-Saale, 1918-1924' at the University of St Andrews.

FLORIAN GREINER, *Wege nach Europa: Deutungen eines imaginierten Kontinents in deutschen, britischen und amerikanischen Printmedien, 1914–1945*, Medien und Gesellschaftswandel im 20. Jahrhundert, 1 (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2014), 520 pp. ISBN 978 3 8353 1502 0. €49.90

ARIANE BRILL, *Abgrenzung und Hoffnung: 'Europa' in der deutschen, britischen und amerikanischen Presse, 1945–1980*, Medien und Gesellschaftswandel im 20. Jahrhundert, 2 (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2014), 293 pp. ISBN 978 3 8353 1537 2. €36.00

'Europe' is a continent with unclear borders, a space of trade links and human exchanges, and now, in the form of the European Union, also a highly institutionalized political entity. This Europe has been imagined in multiple ways and used and abused for contradictory political objectives. Its different economic, political, and cultural aspects and connotations have been reported and commented on in public discourses including in the media. The two books by Florian Greiner and Ariane Brill focus on this latter dimension: interpretations ('Deutungen') of an 'imagined continent' in the press in (Western) Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States in two periods of the twentieth century, from the start of the First World War to the end of the Second World War in the case of Greiner's book, and from 1945 to 1980 in the case of Brill's.

The two books are Ph.D. theses prepared within the research programme 'Lost in Translation: Europabilder und ihre Übersetzungen', which was funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research from 2009 to 2012. Both authors contributed to part project C of the larger research programme, on press reporting, mutual perceptions, and possible resulting transformations of discourses about Europe. This project was headed by Frank Bösch, a leading contemporary historian of media and communication, who, since 2011, has been co-director of the Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung in Potsdam.

For his quantitative and qualitative discourse analysis Florian Greiner chose a combination of three times two newspapers covering the period from 1914 to 1945. For Britain he analysed reporting of European themes in the more conservative *Times* and the left-liberal *Manchester Guardian*. For the USA he used the *New York Times* and the pro-Republican *Chicago Tribune*, which was also highly isolationist. While choosing two newspapers with different political orientations

is a standard approach in media history research, Hitler's usurpation of power in 1933 clearly complicates the story for Germany. Here, the author used the *Kölnische Zeitung*, which continued to exist until April 1945, but adjusted its reporting entirely to the 'principles of National Socialist ideology' (p. 29) after 1933. In addition he chose the liberal *Vossische Zeitung* until its closure in 1934, and for the period after 1934 the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, which enjoyed some independence because of its international status, but lacked a 'European orientation' until it was taken over by the National Socialist Eber-Verlag in 1939. The progressive *Gleichschaltung* of the press in Germany nonetheless does not seem to constitute a methodological problem for the author in ascertaining 'German' imaginations of 'Europe'.

In his introduction to the book, Greiner competently covers the major developments in German comparative social (and cultural) history since the 1960s, from the Bielefeld School to the new cultural history and new political history, which has fostered research on the cultural history of politics, or the history of political culture in Germany in the last fifteen years or so. Somewhat surprisingly, in light of the project's overall focus on cultural translations, Greiner effectively asserts the primacy of the comparative over the transnational perspective, which, according to him, lacks conceptual and methodological sophistication. He develops a general notion of the 'constructed' character of images of 'Europe' and highlights the importance of 'alterity', and the perception of others, for identity constructions. However, the apparently central question of perceptions and interaction among the analysed newspapers and any resulting transformations in their reporting of European themes is already marginal to the introduction, and largely gets lost in the translation from the analysis to the writing-up of the thesis. It mainly features in chapter 3 with a focus on transatlantic dimensions of images of Europe, which follows chapter 2 on Europe as a continent of the 'second thirty years war'. The third substantial chapter (ch. 4) addresses Europe as a 'space of progress' and moves from economic and political themes to infrastructure connections and communication across borders as well as sport and tourism.

Relating to recent research on transnational social and cultural aspects of the history of technology, Greiner in this last chapter brings out clearly the often optimistic reporting of such forms of integration. This is true, for example, of increasing railway integration

and plans for a European motorway system launched before Nazi Germany embarked on its national programme after 1933. Air transport was another new sector which was integrated and facilitated fast transnational travel. Similarly, Europe as a communicative space, according to Greiner, also became denser in the way in which newspapers reported developments in other countries. In addition, radio and telephony created new means of communicating content with a European scope.

In conclusion, Greiner makes the point that the analysis of newspaper reporting does not corroborate what he sees as the prevalent view in the historiography of European ideas, namely, that the inter-war period was characterized by a perception of European crisis, as in Oswald Spengler's demise of the *Abendland* narrative. Instead, it also served as an economic and political 'Hoffnungsträger' (p. 457). Images of Europe did not develop in linear ways, but depended on changing historical context. Reporting even of some national events regularly took place within a broader European horizon. Transnational themes became more prevalent in newspaper reporting than they had been in the nineteenth century, and included more aspects of 'lived Europe' (p. 463), such as tourism, sport, epidemics, or the weather, for example, than before. The 'Europeanization' of forms of perception, spatial images, and everyday experiences, Greiner argues, did not begin with the end of the Second World War.

In her project sequel to Greiner's book, Ariane Brill covers the period from the end of the Second World War to 1980. Why 1980? Brill claims (without substantiating this odd claim) that this was a *Wendejahr* in Europe's political development, between the first direct elections for the European Parliament in 1979 and Greece's accession to the European Communities in 1981. As this choice indicates, Brill's approach is connected somewhat more closely to material developments in European integration after 1945 than Greiner's could be. Her four main chapters focus on questions of 'security and threats', 'Europe as a political and economic project', 'cultural Europe', and 'the continent from the perspective of travelling journalists'. This last chapter is quite different from the others, and from those in Greiner's book. Here, journalists who actually write newspaper articles feature more prominently as agents in the history of imaginations of Europe.

At 293 pages, Brill's book is not only substantially shorter than Greiner's at 520 pages; it is also conceptually and methodologically

more reductionist and appears to be pragmatically geared towards obtaining a Ph.D. rather than contributing substantial new knowledge to the historiography. Bizarrely, in view of the project's constructivist approach, she claims not to be very interested in 'political evaluations' of Europe and European developments, when one might expect the world views of editors and journalists to be one major factor influencing how they define editorial policy and write about Europe, or any other theme for that matter. Not being interested in such political worldviews entails the major practical advantage, however, that Brill can reduce her discourse analysis to just one newspaper per country. She studies the *Times* and the *New York Times* and, for Germany, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* except for the period up to its foundation in November 1949, for which she uses the more liberal *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. Why she does not use the latter for the entire period remains a mystery, but is probably a result of the FAZ's digitization, which makes it, like the English-language newspapers, more easily searchable.

For obvious reasons, Brill has to discuss European integration. Her newspaper analysis confirms that 'federation' was a widely used term in the first few years after the war in reporting on plans for integration, and often advocated as a panacea against the recurrence of national strife, ideological confrontation, and war. However, the newspapers were not very sophisticated or detailed (p. 108) in reporting on the various groups and plans for European integration. They did not pick up any fundamental differences between 'federalists' and 'unionists' with more intergovernmental preferences for integration, for example. Apart from that, Brill admits that newspaper reporting was 'quite disparate' and probably shallow, too. She refers to only two articles in the *Times* and the *New York Times* from different years—1950 and 1956—to argue that both newspapers shared the view that European integration was not comparable to US federalism. 'The German press' is even less comparable with British and American perceptions and reporting, first because the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* was so thin and had little space to report anything and later because the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* showed limited interest in the European movement. From the failure of the European Defence Community in 1954 onwards, Brill explains, reporting shifted very strongly to economic issues of integration including, in the early 1960s, the fragmentation of Western Europe into the Sixes and

Sevens, or the newly created European Economic Community and the European Free Trade Association, an issue that naturally concerned British and German newspapers because of its economic and political implications for both countries (p. 121).

In conclusion, Brill argues that newspaper reporting was 'largely synchronic' in its focus on major events. The British *Times*, however, increased its reporting of European themes after the United Kingdom's accession to the European Communities in 1973 (p. 265). Taking up a major theme from the project and Greiner's thesis, she claims that perceptions of the 'other' were important for self-perceptions of Europe and Europeans as reflected in the analysed newspapers. In the Cold War the Soviet Union and communism constituted the most significant 'other', of course. For the German and British newspapers, the USA was a largely positively perceived 'other' that had brought democracy and political stability to Western Europe. 'The European people' (p. 268) featured much more in reports about culture, sport, and tourism, but these topics nevertheless remained underreported compared with security, and economic and political issues of cooperation and integration in Western Europe.

The two books combined add a lot of detailed knowledge about press reporting of European themes beyond political ideas of 'Europe' or actual institutional integration. However, despite their apparent conceptual sophistication (especially in Greiner's introduction) they suffer from significant weaknesses. The first of these concerns the choice of countries and, in the case of Brill's book, newspapers. The combination of countries purports to integrate one external perspective (USA), one peripheral (UK), and one from 'core Europe'. In fact, Brill describes the Federal Republic of Germany as from the 'centre of Europe', which seems more informed by the present-day experience than the situation in 1949, except if the term is used merely as a geographical descriptor. But why integrate Germany into a study which extends across the regime change of 1933, when the choice of one conservative and one liberal newspaper makes no sense any more, even if the *Gleichschaltung* of the press was not completely systematic from the start? Why not compare press reporting in pluralistic democracies like France, for example; or, for that matter, in dictatorships? If the actual choice was the result of the language skills, or lack thereof, of the researchers, then this should be admitted as a limitation of the research design. The same is true for the com-

parison within each country, between newspapers with different worldviews, which largely disappears in Greiner's narrative when his favoured adjective becomes *facettenreich*; in other words, newspaper reporting is fragmented, covers all sorts of topics, and cannot easily be subsumed under particular headings or types of interpretation.

Both studies also engage in bland generalizations. Brill, in particular, constantly speaks of 'the German press', when all she has ever looked at for any one year between 1945 and 1980 is one, admittedly important, quality newspaper. Her design does not even allow for the importance of worldviews of editors or journalists for perceptions of Europe. For example, one might expect the *Frankfurter Rundschau* to have had a different view of the USA as the 'other' in the 1960s and 1970s. Similarly, the British tabloid press may well have conveyed different images of Europe, or other Europeans (especially the Germans), than the *Times*. Several of the larger findings of both studies are equally superficial. One wonders, for example, why we need to know that newspapers report about major events at about the same time, as Brill concludes (p. 265). Why should they, one might ask, report the signing of the Treaties of Rome in March 1959 instead of March 1957? In the end, both studies largely replicate the methodological problems of older research in the style of 'in the light of the British press', which basically ends up reporting what newspapers reported about what happened in the world. Conceptual ideas that different forms of reporting result from 'alterity', for example, look superimposed on the actual discourse analysis. Platitudes abound, including Brill's conclusion that Europe 'always remained an unfinished project' (p. 267).

Some of the deficiencies of both books actually derive from the traditional comparative conceptual approach. It would, of course, have been extremely interesting to learn more about how imaginations of Europe in one national press might have been perceived, transformed, and reproduced in a different context elsewhere. Both books have very little to say on this because they are largely restricted to a discourse analysis of the printed newspapers. They are not very sensitive to, and have almost nothing to say about, those who actually perceive, imagine, and write for newspapers. We learn next to nothing about the newspapers' owners, editorial policies and, most importantly, the home-based journalists or foreign correspondents who actually wrote the articles. Did they read the local press

regularly; did they move in transnational circles of friends including other journalists, which might have facilitated the exchange of ideas and notions of Europe; how did they 'translate' imaginations of Europe from one cultural context into another? In short, it would have been wonderful if the authors had discovered the role of actual people in producing and disseminating news—something that would have resulted in a different and arguably far more productive research design.

In part, the deficiencies of both books also reflect those of the German 'system' for producing Ph.Ds. For one, it is clearly crucial for both authors to relate to national German discourses in German about conceptual approaches to history which help them locate their work in a particular 'school', although this school may now be far more fragmented than it was twenty years ago. The authors' knowledge of the international historiography is far more limited. For example, the claim in Greiner's book that historians of European ideas have always conceived of inter-war Europe as a continent caught in a permanent mental depression is based on the reading of only one book (by Carl H. Pegg) published in 1983. Similarly, Brill displays very little knowledge of the more recent historiography of postwar European integration, and largely cites German textbooks for it.

Both books are also written in less than elegant German. Thus, to give but one example, Greiner defines 'mass public' as 'eine sich durch einen dynamischen Austausch prozessual ausbildende, nach innen medial durchaus plurale und heterogene Sphäre gewachsener kommunikativer Strukturen und Prozesse' (p. 391). Brill's narrative, in contrast, is characterized more by the use of simplistic categories such as 'the European people', whoever this may be (p. 268). In both books, too much detail obscures the findings, even if the results are not terribly surprising or exciting. In short, both books would have benefited from a clearer focus on the main findings, less detail, and a more accessible narrative.

WOLFRAM KAISER is Professor of European Studies at the University of Portsmouth. His many publications include, with Johan W.

PRESS REPORTING AND DISCOURSES ON EUROPE

Schot, *Writing the Rules for Europe: Experts, Cartels, and International Organizations* (2014); with Stefan Krankenhagen and Kerstin Poehls, *Exhibiting Europe in Museums: Networks, Collections, Narratives, and Representations* (2014); and ed. with J. Meyer, *Societal Actors in European Integration: Polity-Building and Policy-Making 1958–1992* (2013).

CATHERINE PLUM, *Antifascism After Hitler: East German Youth and Socialist Memory, 1949–1989*, Routledge Studies in Modern European History, 27 (New York: Routledge, 2015), xvi + 284 pp. ISBN 978 1 138 81535 3. £85.00

Twenty-five years of research on the history of the GDR have shown that communist rule in East Germany was not based on coercion and obedience alone. A number of recent studies have focused on the GDR's ideological dimensions, both exploring its meanings and paying specific attention to the ways in which socialism and antifascism were conveyed and adopted. These studies understand communist rule not as a one-dimensional top-down phenomenon, but as a multi-faceted process involving various actors with differing intentions and options.

This holds true for Catherine Plum's recent book *Antifascism After Hitler: East German Youth and Socialist Memory*, 'the first comprehensive study of youth antifascism in the GDR' (p. 1). Antifascism was not only the 'foundation myth of the GDR', in Herfried Münkler's words, but was also one of the most effective rallying points for the regime. However, only a few GDR citizens had any personal experience with the antifascist struggles throughout Europe during the 1930s and 1940s. Thus the ruling elites constructed a selective, highly stylized narrative of the antifascist struggle, directed to younger generations, that supported communist claims to political leadership. Drawing on a variety of sources such as oral histories, student letters, essays, yearbooks, youth magazines, and literature Plum traces the pedagogical and political challenges of this narrative-building effort, and the changes in youth antifascism over time. Instead of considering antifascist education as a mere tool of totalitarian oppression, she assumes 'a degree of compromise and negotiation between state representatives and average citizens' (p. 3) and highlights an approach that is 'sensitive to issues of age and generational cohort and includes the story of everyday life' (p. 7). Consequently, her research covers both the content of the official narrative as well as commemorative practices and does not focus on GDR children alone. She also takes into account parents, teachers, and so-called 'memory intermediaries', often but not always antifascist veterans themselves, who were 'youth group leaders, museum staff members and volunteers responsible for conveying stories and com-

memorative practices to generations who grew up after the defeat of fascism' (p. 3).

Plum regards antifascist education in the GDR essentially as a communicative process that involved various actors with different experiences and intentions. The dictatorial character of both the regime and the antifascist narrative it generated compelled every GDR citizen to individually master language nuances depending on context. In analysing these contexts—schools, youth groups, memorial grounds, and homes—and the actors involved, Plum takes a measured, systematic, and in-depth approach. She incisively observes that the demand to master different languages led to a form of 'Socialist double speak', although this raises the question of whether this demand affected only children and was only the result of this selective antifascist narrative. Studies by Alf Lüdtke and others have stressed that the demand for a 'Socialist double speak' not only resulted from a public sphere that was thoroughly dominated by SED politics, thus pointing to the dictatorial character of the regime, but also proved highly influential to the regime's eventual implosion in a historical perspective,¹ an assessment that is somewhat at odds with Plum's statement that 'toward the end of the dictatorship, the amount of double speak necessary may have lessened to some extent' (p. 207).

In line with her comprehensive account, Plum's first chapter looks at the various components that constituted the GDR's antifascist 'Youth Memory Landscape'. It introduces antifascist museums, monuments, and memorial grounds, antifascist literature and extracurricular activities (most notably the *Jugendweihe*), and examines youth antifascism in ritual and practice. The antifascist narrative promoted by the SED consisted of two components: it emphasized the efforts of German resistance fighters, which was important to represent the GDR as the 'better Germany', but it simultaneously depicted Soviet efforts as decisive to the defeat of fascist forces in Germany and all of Europe, thereby promoting 'a historical context and rationale for contemporary German-Soviet friendship' (p. 149). Consequently, chapters 2 and 3 are dedicated to 'Stories of [German] Resistance Fighters'

¹ See Alf Lüdtke, 'Sprache und Herrschaft in der DDR: Einleitende Überlegungen', in id. and Peter Becker (eds.), *Akten. Eingaben. Schaufenster: Die DDR und ihre Texte* (Berlin, 1997), 11–26.

and 'Tales of Soviet Heroes and Liberators' respectively. Plum, aware that the antifascist narrative promoted by the East German regime was highly intentional and selective, pays special attention to the 'Portrait of Non-Communist Resistance and Opposition' (in ch. 2) and 'German Nationalism' (in ch. 3). In chapter 4, 'Memory Intermediaries', she makes use of personal contacts and communication with antifascist veterans to explore the conflicts and difficulties these veterans faced when presenting their personal experiences in line with the official narrative. And although this narrative presented nationalism and socialist patriotism as mutually complementary ideologies, Plum demonstrates that portraits of and contacts with German antifascists received more attention than their Soviet counterparts. This preference did have pragmatic reasons, but it also points to private memories made in the wake of the 1945 'soviet liberation', which were strongly at odds with the official narrative and could not be voiced publicly. The impact of dissonant voices again plays a part in the fifth chapter, 'Parents and Pupils'. Here, Plum pays specific attention to stories told at home that did not fit into the official narrative, for example, when grandfathers retained a certain pride in their military service in the *Wehrmacht*. This seems to have happened quite frequently, as Plum stresses 'that children were essentially required to master two different languages: one language for use at home and one for school or work purposes' (p. 205).

Plum argues that despite a somewhat twisted adoption of the antifascist narrative, the 'campaigns . . . never degenerated into a completely "participation-less" movement' (p. 238). An epilogue on *Namensverleihung* practices, a public ritual in which schools received the name of an antifascist hero, after the *Wende* emphasizes 'a continued interest in historical antifascist resistance efforts' after 1990 and shows that 'many GDR commemorative traditions have been transformed and continued in altered form' (p. 271). Plum argues that in propagating an antifascist narrative that sought legitimacy for the government and their newly formed state in competition with West Germany, the East German regime primarily 'recognized the power of authenticity' (p. 256). Instilling socialist heritage and loyalty seems to have been most effective when connected with specific individuals, whether dead or alive. Meetings with those who had actively fought against National Socialism (or their relatives) were an integral part of antifascist education in the GDR. Antifascist veterans

spoke in rather 'intimate settings' (p. 180), reconstructed their stories 'in a realistic, authentic manner' (p. 181), and 'sought to give their listeners a sense of the challenges involved in opposition and resistance work' (p. 180), while presenting themselves as 'representatives of the working class' and showing a 'strong sense of collective identity' (p. 178). Drawing on the historical eyewitnesses' authenticity, based on experience and personal impressions, the regime thus promoted a strategy that provided youth with vivid recollections of the antifascist struggle and simultaneously promoted present socialist values.

While the regime's emphasis on 'authenticity' seems to have been successful in addressing the younger generations, however, it could never completely dictate how the 'memory intermediaries', often antifascist veterans, would recount their own stories. Furthermore, factors such as 'geographical location, the type of school, and, very importantly, the political climate at individual schools' (p. 255) influenced what narratives would be passed down to young people. Understanding antifascist education as a communicative process, Plum not only demonstrates the limitations of regime control but also reconstructs five categories of students' reactions to the antifascist narrative promoted in the GDR: 'antifascist enthusiasts, reserved antifascists, apathetic students, nonconformists and the . . . fascist enthusiast or devotee' (p. 219). Unsurprisingly, given the significance of a 'Socialist double-speak', Plum finds that the numbers of both antifascist and fascist enthusiasts were relatively small, but she is rather vague about the size and significance of the remaining three categories. Emphasizing the 'role of compromise and conformity among memory intermediaries and state administrators' (p. 256), she states that 'the history of communist resistance and the legacy of GDR antifascism live on' (p. 259) and concludes that the official education proved somewhat successful. While this conclusion seems justified with regard to the five categories made up by Plum it tells us little about the interplay between stability and crisis in the history of the GDR. If antifascist education had a share in legitimizing communist rule for almost forty years, how are we to explain the regimes' sudden implosion in 1989?

Drawing on generational analysis, as Plum does, seems promising in attempting to answer this question. She refers to the fact that the worldviews of those born before the foundation of the GDR in 1949 and those born afterwards were 'distinct and quite distant' (p. 197),

and stresses that the efforts of memory intermediaries were not sufficient to bridge this inherent divide. While these observations certainly hold true, it would have been interesting to see how what Lutz Niethammer and others have called a 'generational blocking',² affected the status of memory intermediaries. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, antifascist conviction enabled members of the younger generations to reach the highest echelons of GDR society, thereby associating antifascism with social advancement and success. But because these generations stubbornly insisted on their influence and power well into the 1980s, this was impossible for those belonging to the younger generations. Consequently, antifascism was no longer associated with success and social advancement, but with stagnation and the denial of power.

Nevertheless, Plum's comprehensive approach is a valuable study of youth antifascism in the GDR, extending scholarship beyond the level of the state by assessing the everyday contributions of different actors in conveying stories and commemorative practices to those born after the defeat of fascism. Her study not only gets to the bottom of its social and political relevance, but addresses crucial questions regarding the legitimization and institutionalization of communist rule after 1945 that depended on the mobilization of those generations that were too young to have participated in the antifascist struggle themselves. While Plum touches on some of the most important and still highly debated questions regarding the assessment of the GDR, for example, the role of history, and the nature of social relationships within state socialism, she is nonetheless less concerned with uncovering why the regime's emphasis on 'authenticity' proved so successful in conveying its antifascist narrative. One is tempted to ask how much this points to what scholars like Wolfgang Engler and others have called the intimate character of social relations in the GDR, that is, the strong desire for and special significance of personal and heartfelt relations among GDR citizens.³

² See Lutz Niethammer, 'Erfahrungen und Strukturen: Prolegomena zu einer Geschichte der Gesellschaft der DDR', in Hartmut Kaelble, Jürgen Kocka, and Hartmut Zwahr (eds.), *Sozialgeschichte der DDR* (Stuttgart, 1994), 95–115; Hartmut Zwahr, 'Umbruch durch Ausbruch und Aufbruch: Die DDR auf dem Höhepunkt der Staatskrise 1989', *ibid.* 426–61.

³ Wolfgang Engler, 'Die ungewollte Moderne', in *id.*, *Die ungewollte Moderne: Ost-West-Passagen* (Frankfurt am Main, 1995), 31–84.

How successful the SED was with its project of a 'different' Germany, and to what extent it created a society that was not apathetic but vivid and committed (to a certain degree) are the 'big' questions still highly debated among contemporary historians. Without explicitly positioning itself within these debates, Plum's study is nevertheless a valuable contribution that addresses crucial issues of legitimacy and participation, thus offering further insight on these big questions.

TILMANN SIEBENEICHNER is a Research Fellow in Modern and Contemporary History at the Friedrich Meinecke Institute, Free University of Berlin, and works in the Emmy Noether Research Group 'Die Zukunft in den Sternen: Europäischer Astrofuturismus und außerirdisches Leben im 20. Jahrhundert'. His publications include *Proletarischer Mythos und realer Sozialismus: Die Kampfgruppen der Arbeiterklasse in der DDR* (2014).