H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Paul B. Jaskot. *The Nazi Perpetrator: Postwar German Art and the Politics of the Right.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012. 288 pp. $30.00, paper, ISBN 978-0-8166-7825-9.

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Published on H-War (November, 2013)

Commissioned by Margaret Sankey (Air University)

The Second World War did not end when the fighting stopped. For West Germans in particular, after 1945, the confrontation with World War II had only just begun. For a long generation, everything West Germans did was overshadowed by the war, Nazism, and the Holocaust. Certainly this was true in the arts and in architecture, as Paul Jaskot convincingly demonstrates in ***The Nazi Perpetrator: Postwar German Art and the Politics of the Right***. From the 1950s until the1990s at least, hardly a picture could be painted or a building built in West Germany that was free from Hitler's shadow.

West German artists certainly understood that they could not escape history. But West German art historians, Jaskot argues, tended to think about art and architecture as if they were somehow immune to history, and therefore, Jaskot writes, "we have, at best, a partial history of modern art" (p. 8). The "one clear message" that provides the focus of Jaskot's book is that "scholars must treat the entirety of National Social Germany as much more central to understanding modern German art than has previously been assumed" (p. 10).

Jaskot argues that West German art and architecture were haunted by the "perpetrator," the archetypal Nazi criminal who might, or might not, be still at large in West German society. Jaskot develops his argument across five chapters. His first chapter discusses the ways in which the Nazis themselves engaged in cultural politics. Some Nazi ideas and practices are well known; the notorious "Degenerate Art Exhibition" of 1937 has long attracted scholarly attention. Others are little explored; Jaskot notes that "concentration camps have with few exceptions been almost entirely absent from the architectural scholarship on the period" (p. 31).

Jaskot's second chapter focuses on the early work of Gerhard Richter. Richter's paintings of family snapshots, done in his distinctively blurred, ghostly, eerie manner, paintings like "Christa and Wolfi" (1964), "Uncle Rudi" (1965), "Aunt Marianne" (1965) and many others, clearly

testify to Richter's worries about perpetrators among us. Jaskot carefully links Richter's images to contemporary concerns, triggered by the Eichmann Trial (1961) and the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials (1963-65), about Nazis in West German society and politics.

In chapter 3, Jaskot considers the work of the painter Anselm Kiefer. Kiefer is, Jaskot writes, "without a doubt the most prominent postwar German artist associated with the traumatic working through of the Nazi past" (p. 83). Kiefer's paintings reflect the intense debate, which began in the late 1960s and which stretched on well in the 1980s, about the nature of the perpetrator. The political Right, and older Germans, insisted that the circle of genuine perpetrators was very small and included only the most fanatical Nazis; everyone else, soldiers, former party members, and even members of the S.S., were innocents, patriots, or even victims. Chancellor Helmut Kohl dramatically expressed this perspective in his famous visit, with President Ronald Reagan, to the Bitburg Military Cemetery in 1985. Meanwhile, the political Left, and many younger Germans, insisted that virtually the entire older generation were perpetrators. This argument, in turn, raised questions not only about personal agency but also about culture and its symbols--themes powerfully represented in Kiefer's art.

Daniel Liebeskind's famous Jewish Museum, which opened in Berlin in 2001, must be understood, Jaskot writes, at least in part as a product of its specific historical era, 1990s West Germany. The 1990s were not only the euphoric years of reunification; they were also years shaken by neo-Nazi violence. In chapter 4, Jaskot shows how the 1990s debates about the revived radical Right and renewed anti-Semitism shaped Liebeskind's remarkable architecture.

Finally, in chapter 5, Jaskot investigates the long debate in Nuremberg about the fate of the Nazi Party Rally Grounds. The Nuremberg arguments demonstrate the waning of the impact of the perpetrator on German arts and architecture. At the same time, the Nuremberg debates, as well as the work of Liebeskind, Kiefer, and Richter, demonstrate, Jaskot concludes, that "the political debates about the Nazi perpetrator engaged postwar German art at many levels. The analysis of this fraught engagement moves us ... to a more compelling understanding of the potential for using art history to critique the circumstances that demarcate moments of political struggle and debate in any society" (p. 210).

Like all vigorous arguments, ***The Nazi Perpetrator*** raises more questions than it can possibly answer. Jaskot's conclusions come from in-depth interrogations of a few selected witnesses, rather than an encyclopedic survey of many. Jaskot clearly demonstrates both the varying understandings of "perpetrator," and the complex expressions of these understandings in the visual arts and architecture; one might ask how all this played out in, for instance, film, and literature. For years, East Germans and Austrians worked very hard to avoid any serious confrontation with their own Nazi pasts; one wonders how their belated confrontations compared to the West German experience. ***The Nazi Perpetrator***, carefully argued, clearly written, and based on a thorough mastery of both art historical and political material, is an important addition to our understanding of West German art and architecture, as well as the relationship among the arts and politics, trauma and cultural representation. Understanding ***Vergangenheitsbewältigung***, the way we "come to terms with our past," is an ongoing endeavor, and not just for Germans; ***The Nazi Perpetrator*** is a fine contribution to this fundamental human task.

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Citation: Robert Weldon Whalen. Review of Jaskot, Paul B. *The Nazi Perpetrator: Postwar German Art and the Politics of the Right.* H-War, H-Net Reviews. November, 2013.

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