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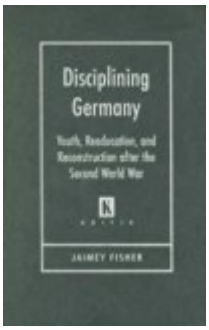
Jaimey Fisher. *Disciplining Germany: Youth, Reeducation, and Reconstruction after the Second World War.* Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007. 392 pp. $49.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8143-3329-7.



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Disciplining Germany aims to analyze youth as an idea and a class in popular culture in post-World War II Germany while distancing itself from the conventional association of youth with consumerism. With this book, Jaimey Fisher addresses the use of youth in public discussions in late-1940s Germany on the past and present. It is, therefore, less a study of popular culture than of guilt and memory and the way they were conveyed to youth in the public sphere of the U.S. occupation zone of Germany. Based on a variety of post-World War II media (memoirs, novels, and movies), Fisher's study may be divided into three parts. The first two chapters highlight the ruptures and continuities in the German government's use of youth from the Nazi regime to the post-World War II Western occupation zones. In the second part, Fisher analyzes the way in which the youth question and youth crisis were featured in the post-World War II literary landscape. The third part focuses on the representation of youth in post-World War II German movies.

In the first chapter, Fisher focuses on how the discussions about the Hitler Youth were a catalyst to "displace questions of the past and guilt for its crimes" (p. 21). In so doing, he offers a brief history of the Hitler Youth that he sees as the rightful heir of 1920s youth movements (p. 21). He sides with scholarly work that has concluded that the Hitler Youth were merely an organism living parallel to the rest of the Nazi administration, and "hardly the engine of Nazism" (p. 22). Analyzing Joseph Goebbels's novel *Michael* (1929), among others, Fisher comes to the conclusion that youth represents a "constitutive otherness" that offers an alternative model to bourgeois society (p. 26). In fact, Fisher argues that the concepts of "youth" and "generation" were used interchangeably in the first half of the twentieth century. These concepts shared a common denominator with which most of the population identified (unlike social class or political partisanship, which divided individuals in the time period), and set themselves in opposition to the bourgeoisie-driven German society.

In chapter 2 Fisher discusses the topic of "reeducation," debated in the immediate aftermath of World War II. According to his analysis of a few popular protests, the end of the Second World War launched a debate about German guilt, pitting older generations who admonished their fellow citizens to accept guilt for all Nazi war crimes against younger Germans who opposed repentance and shame. The youth became, then, "the new enemy after the Allies defeated [Germany]" and, by consequence, became the target of Allied efforts at reeducation of German citizens. Fisher defines reeducation as "the general term for the Allies' goal of democratization" (p. 62). He argues that youth and education were crucial to the reconstruction of German national identity: "In the postwar period, the emphasis on youth and education overlapped to bring to the fore anxiety about the stability of the patriarchal family, the security of society, and the continuation of culture" (p. 64). The youth problem was the meeting of two phenomena: the realization that German youth had been the most affected by Nazi ideology, and the high rate of youth crime. Part of Allied reeducation efforts involved the denazification of the staff surrounding youth (especially teachers). A report from the United States stated that the youth crisis was based on confusion caused "by the loss of authority and the persisting material emergencies since 1945, invoking an ideology of protection, assistance and supervision for the young" and a distrust of democracy (p. 71). The report recommended a reform in German schooling in order to break away from the previous system, which had constantly made the upper classes the ultimate elite model. Fisher cites Thomas Mann's novel, ***Doktor Faustus*** (1947), to support his theory that: (1) youth were at the center of the public sphere; (2) youth were the internal enemy of German rehabilitation; and (3) Allied and German adults worked together at creating a reeducation system.

In the third chapter, Fisher examines the voluminous published texts that addressed youth. He studies, in particular, Friedrich Meinecke's and Ernst Jünger's postwar publications, representations of the classical liberal and the conservative points of view. According to Fisher, Meinecke argued that the German youth was a "social threat" because "as modern society weakens, the young escape society's disciplines and becomes its excesses" (p. 98). That way, "he casts the young as the guilty but innocent perpetrators, and asserts an agenda for reconstruction that begins with the disciplining and education of the young" (p. 98). Jünger, on the other hand, demonized Hitler and victimized the youth, taking their eagerness to believe in Nazism and their quest for idealism as symptoms of modern society's weakness.

The fourth chapter is a continuation of the previous chapter, where Fisher highlights two more authors' discourse about youth: Karl Jasper and Ernst Wiechert. These intellectuals shared a common belief that German youth had the potential to cure German society of the shame and guilt of Nazism. Jasper believed in reforming the university system so that youth would play a main role in freeing themselves from the cognitive control of the Nazis. Jasper's point of view was unique in that he perceived students as individuals who sought education. He did not think of them as members of a dangerous crowd of impetuous and ideologically damaged minds. He recommended, though, the de-politicization of higher education. Fisher argues that Jasper and Wiechert understood youth as having an "outsider status" and he attempts to define that status and what it meant for the future of German society (pp. 130, 158).

In the last two chapters, Fisher compares the treatment of youth in the German film industry and U.S.-controlled German movies. The fifth chapter focuses on the German "rubble films," in which youth featured as a recurrent theme in order to address larger social issues. He notices that the youth crisis was a narrative touchstone for discussions of other social issues, such as the re-

turn of the soldier (***Heimkehrer***). According to Fisher, these movies also showed how disciplined youth were the backbone of bourgeois society (p. 182). These movies revolved around the lack of parental subjects and "feral children" justifying, in some sense, the German youth crisis (p. 188). German movies also addressed the generational conflict that characterized society in the post-World War II years.

The last chapter focuses on German movies produced after the Allied forces lifted the two-year ban on filmmaking (***Filmpause***) and established laws on new productions. The ***Filmpause*** enticed German movie personnel to move from big Hollywood productions to more realistic stories that did not revolve around well-known film stars. Fisher uncovers a paradox in the casting process that simultaneously "articulate[s] norms without obeying them" (p. 215). According to Fisher, the post-***Filmpause*** movies rejected that very contradiction that characterized Nazi movies, to underplay the fame of the celebrities and bring up their human flaws and weaknesses. Now, German film was less about closing the screenplays with happy endings than actually portraying real life.

Disciplining Germany succeeds at showing that youth and the youth crisis were prominent and recurrent themes in public. The book convincingly demonstrates that youth became a lens to address other social issues, such as guilt and the de-nazification of Germany. Fisher also underlines a paradox: German intellectuals did not actively seek to break with the Nazi tradition of using German youth in public relations. He highlights the ambivalent nature of youth: on one hand, they were central to Germany's future; on the other hand, they were also the source of irreverence and trouble. In doing so, Fisher's book differs from conventional history of education, whose scholars focus on youth and childhood in their usual school or family environments. His study uncovers many neglected types of relations that connect youth to (adult) society. By doing so, it suggests that youth should not be seen as an isolated part of society under the supervision of professionals such as teachers, educators, and doctors. On the contrary, Fisher portrays youth as an ever-present object of discourse in modern societies, especially in times of crisis.

Fisher's book is a powerful study of intellectuals' vision of youth in post-World War II Germany. Drawing from classic literature, Nazis' memoirs, and other intellectuals' essays as primary sources, Fisher targets the thought of educated, middle- and upper-class male subjects and studies youth of similar demographic backgrounds. While analyzing movies suggests a popular approach for addressing the meaning of youth amongst lower social classes in German society, the research fails to address the diversity of German society. For example, Fisher barely addresses gender; the majority of the characters are male.

Fisher neglects to provide readers with a clear methodological breakdown of his analysis, especially when he loosely uses concepts like "generation," "outsider status" and "reeducation." While he convincingly argues for "age" as a new analytical category, he does not clearly differentiate it from his use of "generation." Fisher also does not take a position on the literature on "reeducation" and disappointingly reduces the term to its general meaning: the forcing of an Allied version of democracy onto nations that fell into fascism. As much as this definition is correct, it masks the complexity of its application in German society.

Finally, it could have been productive to relate *Disciplining Germany* to other post-World War II studies of youth that focus on the same time period but different geographical areas. For example, Richard Jobs used similar concepts of youth, reeducation, and reconstruction when examining 1940s and 50s French youth in *Riding the New Wave* (2007). Both studies are reminiscent of each other as both use comparable primary

sources: novels, films, and essays. Both works also underline the ambivalent nature of youth as: simultaneously the means toward a better future and a source of crisis. Fisher states that youth-related discussions were part of a bigger debate about guilt over the Nazi regime. Yet Jobs finds that a similar discourse simultaneously occurred in France: the French youth-related debate was intrinsically connected to a need to discuss the failure to prevent the war and resist occupation by the enemy. In other words, it was about guilt, which leads to the following conclusion: bringing their youth to the fore of public debates was not exclusive to the "war-guilty nations" but common to all nations involved in World War II.