

suffered a psychic collapse and was diagnosed with bipolar II disorder, it is difficult to avoid psychological categories entirely when discussing his character. Without engaging in psychological reductionism, Muller sensibly argues that, before his breakdown, Taubes exhibited characteristics of a milder disorder, hypomania: “enhanced liveliness, interpersonal charm, and a high degree of perceptiveness, together with a sometimes uncanny ability to find vulnerable spots in others and to make use of them” (7); a strong libido and a taste for transgression of social norms; and, not least, “intellectual energy, creativity, and personal effervescence” (450-451).

Taubes’s relationships with women form a central theme, not a sideline, in Muller’s account. This aspect of his life, and perforce Muller’s account of it, is bound to remain a subject of fascination and controversy. Not the least reason is that the fiction and life of his first wife, Susan Feldman Taubes, are objects of interest in their own right; she committed suicide soon after the publication of *Divorcing* (1969), a roman à clef about their relationship. The old-fashioned phrase “compulsive womanizing” does not begin to do justice to Taubes’s infidelities and his sometimes plainly inappropriate relations with women, but neither does it cover them all. Here, too, Muller strives for nuanced and balanced verdicts that will nevertheless inevitably elicit disagreement.

Taubes’s struggles with his Jewish identity were one of the most revealing and complex aspects of his life, and Muller’s multifaceted, deeply researched account of his painful ambivalences is one of the great strengths of this book. By dint of his family background and intensive early studies, Taubes acquired an impressive command of Jewish learning that few of his interlocutors outside of Jerusalem could rival. He was also known by friends to be devout in some aspects of his religious practice, favoring Orthodox synagogues and praying fervently. Yet he was unable to reconcile his religious practice with his conflicted attitudes about the truth of Jewish beliefs. Revealingly, Taubes cultivated a lifelong fascination with the Apostle Paul, whom he saw as an antinomian revolutionary and the creator of a “new charismatic community” (252; also 89-90, 487-494); there was no small amount of identification and projection in Taubes’s version of Paul, the subject of his posthumously published lectures *Die Politische Theologie des Paulus* (*The Political Theology of Paul* [1993]). As Muller aptly describes the tension, Taubes was “an observant Jew with a strong Pauline streak” (108).

Jerry Muller’s lively, erudite, lucidly written study takes its place as the definitive biography of Jacob Taubes and as an important book about a chapter in the intellectual relationships between religion and politics in the twentieth century.

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## **Ein Mantel des Schweigens. Der Umgang mit der NS-Geschichte in Opfer- und Täterfamilien**

**By Johannes Reitter. Vienna and Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2022.  
Pp. 410. Cloth €45.00. ISBN: 978-3205215042.**

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Johannes Reitter’s meticulous study focuses on silence and intergenerational Holocaust memory in perpetrator and victim families in Austria and Germany. The book follows in the footsteps of Dan Bar-On, who, working with German families, identified “a double wall of silence” (15) built by both the wartime generation and their children. Taking oral

histories of descendants of the wartime generation as a vantage point, Reitter fills the void left behind by untold stories. Irrespective of their background in victim or perpetrator families, interview partners uniformly used phrases such as “He took that into his grave” (18), “Like a cloth draped over [the past]” (202), or “The silence remains until today” (384) to describe the failed transmission of memory in their families. In addition to unearthing these stories through interviews and painstaking archival research, Reitter also seeks to explain why families began weaving the “cloak of silence” mentioned in the book’s title.

Reitter’s research is especially valuable in exploring how guilt and shame caused intergenerational silence. A gripping example is the story of Herbert Kaar, who only after the death of his mother went on a ten-year quest to investigate the biography of his Jewish father. Archival evidence shows that he and his siblings were conceived out of wedlock, while his father maintained a relationship with another non-Jewish woman with whom he also had a child. It was this woman who filed charges against Kaar’s father in 1941, alleging that he had approached her for money. During his arrest, Kaar’s father attempted suicide. In a publicized show trial, he explained that he had sought out the woman to discuss child support payments, but having violated the infamous Nazi race laws, “he thought he was in for it anyway” (107). Kaar’s mother also had to appear before the court and confess her relationship with Kaar’s father while maintaining that he was a caring father. Sentenced to five years, he died in the Emsland concentration camp system. In 1949, the verdict against Kaar’s father was rescinded and Kaar’s mother received a modest pension. After years of resentment based on vague notions of the family’s alleged shame, Kaar finally reconciled himself with his unknown father after writing several books about his family’s story.

Analyzing stories such as Kaar’s, the book offers explanations for intergenerational silence. Reitter cites fear of re-traumatization, a desire to shield descendants from trauma, taboo topics such as Jewish or homosexual family members, or – as in the case of Kaar – relationships out of wedlock, and sometimes also the descendants’ lack of interest to learn about what they sensed was a difficult past. Silence in perpetrator families often stemmed from feelings of shame and guilt, a sense of loyalty towards one’s family, the potential for an indictment or having to return stolen Jewish property, as well as the attempt to protect descendants from the past.

While the book’s painstaking work in oral history and archival research are much appreciated, the book would have benefitted from engaging literature that suggests that survivors and perpetrators were far from silent. Annette Wieviorka labelled our time the “era of the witness,” in which survivor accounts are freely given and preserved for research and education (*The Era of the Witness* [2006]). The transmission of trauma within families even gave birth to the concept of postmemory as developed by Marianne Hirsch. Perpetrators, too, did not uniformly remain silent, sometimes giving apologetic interviews, like Frantz Stangl’s infamous justification that as a subordinate he lacked free will to be responsible for the crimes he committed. With respect to family memory, however, most lower-level perpetrators succeeded in hiding their crimes, although they became very vocal turning their stories into narratives of victimization. As the work of Harald Welzer, Sabine Moller and Karoline Tschuggnall shows, younger family members accepted such narratives or actively transformed them into more “usable pasts,” even if they knew or suspected these to be untrue.

Reading this literature on the transmission of memory against the silence encountered in Reitter’s research could have triggered questions on the nature and longevity of silence. Are there perhaps different kinds of silence, just as there are different kinds of testimony, for example court testimony, oral histories, diaries, letters, etc.? After all, the silence Reitter encountered was never complete and always selective. Many interview partners had already begun to research their past based on veiled remarks, documents they found, or outside influences such as books or documentaries. Thinking about different kinds of silence might have also allowed for questions on the impact of public memory, societal debates, justice, and compensation on intergenerational silence or dialogue. Lastly, a longer discussion of the oral history methods used and the composition of the research sample would have helped to place this work in the context of others and gauge how common silence in family memory was.

Given the ubiquity of testimony and postmemory as well as our insights into apologetic perpetrator narratives, Johannes Reitter's study is a welcome intervention reminding us of failed transmission of intergenerational memory that can lead to silence. The book rests on the painstaking preservation of the stories behind silence as well as the diverse explanations for silence in both victim and perpetrator families. That silence is never absolute, but permeated in different ways – more attention to this would have made this work an even more important contribution to postmemory.

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## Trading Power: West Germany's Rise to Global Influence, 1963–1975

**By William Glenn Gray. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. xiii + 498. Hardcover \$44.99. ISBN: 978-1 108424646.**

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Over the years, historians have examined the history of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) from different vantage points, including security (Eckart Conze, *Die Suche nach Sicherheit* [2009]) or fear (Frank Biess, *Republik der Angst* [2019]/*German Angst* [2020]). With his new book, William Glenn Gray makes a significant contribution to this growing body of work. Focusing on the period from 1963 to 1975, *Trading Power* examines the emergence of the FRG as a global player in the world economy and presents the reader with “an integrated view of major problems facing Bonn at any time” (5). Here, the particular focus lies in a “learning process” (2) that the consecutive governments under Konrad Adenauer, Ludwig Erhard, Kurt Georg Kiesinger, and Willy Brandt underwent to establish the FRG as a global “trading power.”

In fourteen chronological chapters, Gray covers key episodes of this learning experience, including both familiar areas such as transatlantic and Franco-German relations as well as tension between Atlanticists and Gaullists, *Ostpolitik*, or the role of the Deutsche Mark in forging the FRG's role as a leading export nation, as well as lesser-known (yet no less important) facets such as West German arms exports or Brazilian-German relations. Even where Gray addresses well-researched themes like 1968 as the year of global student and antiwar protests, he offers novel interpretations. In this particular case, the author observes that “what stood out at the time was Germany's remarkable stability” (196). In addition, *Trading Power* addresses issues off the beaten path, such as controversial weapons sales to the Greek military dictatorship and the Nigerian government during Kiesinger's tenure as chancellor or Bonn's quest to establish the German PAL over the French SECAM system as the main television standard in Europe.

As a result, *Trading Power* is not an exercise in orthodox diplomatic history but “rather a study of Germany in the wider world,” as Gray explains in the introduction (5). That the book is based on multi-archival research in Germany, the United States, and the United Kingdom underscores this point. Moreover, it relies on a large number of relevant printed sources and key historiography in English, German, and French. Throughout, the author places key episodes and moments in the period from 1963 to 1975 within their wider international and global contexts, providing the reader with in-depth analyses of key policy decisions by the West German government or the *Bundesbank*, and their reception in Europe and beyond.