

rule that excludes exceptions but rather the rule that invites further exceptions. Further engagement with the recent scholarship on localism in ancient Greece (e.g., Hans Beck, *Localism and the Ancient Greece City-State* [2020]) might add further texture to Esu's ideas about the local rather than universal significance of legal institutions.

Some of the technical epigraphic and legal terms and once-translated ancient Greek words may turn off some non-specialists, but the author's clearly signposted (if repetitious) chapter introductions and conclusions aid the journey. Reading this book in 2025 gave this reviewer much to think about concerning the state of democracy in the United States and around the world. It has further confirmed the notion of "crisis" in our current situation as we witness the erosion of our (albeit) separated powers and (perhaps) slip into autocracy—the paramount anathema of the ancient Greek (Aristotelian) political tradition. While not a call to action by any means (Esu only claims to contribute to "Greek institutional and legal history" and "unearth the nature of Greek political deliberation and a contribution to the intellectual and political history of popular power in antiquity" [13]), partisans of democracy and republicanism today might find inspiration for reinvigorating institutions again.

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**Stefanie Fischer and Kim Wünschmann.** Illustrated by Liz Clarke. *Oberbrechen: A German Village Confronts its Nazi Past*. Oxford University Press, 2024. Pp. 296. Paper \$50.99.

Within the dense historiographical landscape of Holocaust studies, unexplored topics continue to come into focus alongside methodological innovations, the use of more visual and similarly accessible mediums, and a greater emphasis on inclusivity and contemporary relevance. Stefanie Fischer and Kim Wünschmann's *Oberbrechen: A German Village Confronts Its Nazi Past* exemplifies all these developments. The newest title in Oxford University Press's Graphic History Series is a significant contribution to Holocaust and German Jewish studies, employing a microhistorical approach to the graphic storytelling format.

Using three distinct mediums, the book chronicles the events of the Holocaust and its aftermath in a small village in western Germany, largely through the everyday encounters of Jewish and non-Jewish (mostly Catholic) residents, across several decades and generations. There is "nothing particularly important" about Oberbrechen, nor do the authors believe the village is representative; but the study is, nevertheless, a meaningful account of how the persecution of German Jews

transpired in a rural setting and the lasting impact it had on community life (xi). Fischer and Wünschmann maintain that the history of the Holocaust is not solely a story of grand political narratives and centralized state actions but also one deeply embedded in the everyday lives and local dynamics of seemingly ordinary communities.

Illustrated by Liz Clarke, "The Graphic History" (Part 1) employs visual storytelling to vividly depict the experiences of the residents of Oberbrechen. It mostly revolves around two German Jewish families, the Sterns and the Lichtensteins, exploring their daily lives and relations with non-Jewish residents before, during, and after the war. Early antisemitism is investigated, as is Oberbrechen's participation in the Nazi dictatorship, which ultimately resulted in the end of Jewish life in the village by means of emigration, forced deportation, and murder. Most of the story, however, unfolds in the postwar period and centers on the so-called "Orange Book," a 1975 village chronicle written in part by Eugene Caspary, a non-Jewish teacher, to commemorate the history of Oberbrechen. Caspary's correspondence with former Jewish residents and his invitation to have them return to the village raises questions about complicity, memory, and the challenges of rebuilding community.

The book takes an actor-centric approach, one where Wünschmann and Fischer insert themselves into the story as a mechanism to critically examine their own biographical biases (Wünschmann grew up in Oberbrechen) and to ask underlying methodological questions, such as "shouldn't historians have some distance from their research?" (6), and "I'd guess that these sources don't give us the full picture" (11). Every page of the graphic history, and sometimes a single frame, engages with immensely important and complicated topics and themes, each with their own lengthy historiography—from Nazi collaboration to the whitewashing of family histories. The authors nevertheless avoid simplistic judgments. They portray the complexities of individual and collective behavior, resisting the temptation to paint a picture of either uniform guilt or universal innocence.

Part 2 is a catalogue of key historical documents (e.g., private letters, photographs) used by the authors to rebuild the story of Oberbrechen and its Jewish diaspora. Each of the thirty primary sources, many of which have never before been made available to an English-speaking audience, are translated, summarized, and placed in the appropriate moment of the graphic history. Student readers can easily engage with these sources, while gaining an understanding of the historical research process.

In Part 3, the graphic history is contextualized through a dense historical and historiographical survey. It covers tremendous ground, examining Jewish–non-Jewish relations in both Oberbrechen and

Germany, from the High Middle Ages through the Third Reich and into the postwar era. The authors move seamlessly between very specific events—ones relevant only to the story of Oberbrechen—and a broader history of Germany. They have done their due diligence in addressing the most recent scholarship on pertinent topics, such as denazification and Holocaust *Wiedergutmachung* (restitution).

The final part of the book (Part 4) is perhaps the most unique. Configured as a “conversation” between the authors and two of their colleagues, this section provides insights into how the graphic history was created. The reader learns more about the authors’ source base and methodology, as well as the challenges faced in producing graphics for such a complex and nuanced history.

Although never explicitly stated, *Oberbrechen* is primarily intended for college students. The book is incredibly accessible, and its multifurcated design and attention to primary source analysis, lends itself to the formulation of course assignments (there are even suggested essay questions in the appendix). However, this study is also an original piece of Holocaust and German Jewish history scholarship. It includes robust endnotes and a comprehensive bibliography, and the graphic elements are not merely decorative but integral to the book’s argument. *Oberbrechen* contributes to the wider historiographical trend to examine the Holocaust after the liberation and to not treat the immediate postwar merely as an “epilogue to catastrophe” (xii). Wünschmann and Fischer expand the history of the Holocaust to rural communities, but more importantly, they show that surviving Jews passively and actively engaged in the German process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the aftermath of the Holocaust). They were “not outside figures in the internal debate on Germans’ ‘collective guilt,’ but they actively participated in it” (220). To be clear, the book is not a history of the everyday lives of Oberbrechen’s non-Jewish residents. The story is about Jewish life, the experiences of the Stern and Lichtenstein families, and how the Catholic-majority town responded to and participated in the crimes of persecution and deportation and their memory.

*Oberbrechen* is an outstanding study of Holocaust microhistory, exploring how ordinary people experienced and navigated the Nazi regime and the complex ways postwar German society has grappled with the legacy of the Holocaust. The methodological approach is innovative and effective, and the authors have succeeded in offering readers a nuanced understanding of the Holocaust on the local level. *Oberbrechen* is highly recommended for both students and scholars of the Holocaust and anyone else interested in the history of memory and the challenges of confronting difficult pasts.

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**Sheila Fitzpatrick.** *Lost Souls: Soviet Displaced Persons and the Birth of the Cold War*. Princeton University Press, 2024. Pp. 352. Cloth \$35.00.

In *Lost Souls*, Sheila Fitzpatrick delivers a landmark study on the displaced persons (DPs) of the post-World War II era, masterfully combining narrative readability with analytical rigor. Through a dual-layered writing style, Fitzpatrick crafts a work that is equally compelling for informed general readers and seasoned scholars.

At the heart of this book are the experiences of Soviet DPs, whose plight became emblematic of the early Cold War’s political and humanitarian struggles. Numbering about one million, these individuals—originally citizens of the Soviet Union or its newly annexed territories—found themselves in the West after WWII and, in most cases, refused repatriation to the USSR. This diverse group included Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Balts, Jews, and many other ethnic and cultural groups who either fled or were taken to the Third Reich as forced laborers or prisoners. Fitzpatrick also includes often-overlooked groups such as Kalmyks and Turks, examining their racialization within the refugee system with scholarly attention and sensitivity.

The refusal of these DPs to return home sparked a major diplomatic conflict at the dawn of the Cold War. The Soviet Union demanded their repatriation, viewing them as state property, while Western Allies eventually redefined them as “victims of Communism,” paving the way for their resettlement in the United States, Canada, and Australia and bolstering the ideological arsenal of the West. Fitzpatrick’s account underscores how humanitarian policy and propaganda were not opposing but intertwined forces.

For a long time, Russian and Soviet DPs remained elusive figures in the historiography. Anyone who has conducted a literature review on DPs inevitably encounters this gap. Russian DPs were often absent from official records, as they deliberately avoided registration and remained off the radar. The seminal work addressing their history was *Pawns of Yalta: Soviet Refugees and America’s Role in Their Repatriation* by Mark Elliott, published in 1982, which focused primarily on those who were forcibly repatriated. Seth Bernstein’s *Return to the Motherland: Displaced Soviets in WWII and the Cold War* (2023), has offered a fresh account of repatriation efforts and experiences of DPs who returned to the USSR. Fitzpatrick brings nuance to the story of those who avoided repatriation and, departing from earlier interpretations, shows DPs not as pawns but as people with their own agency and complex personal stories and aspirations.

The title, *Lost Souls*, carries deliberate literary and historical resonance. For readers familiar with Slavic literature, the echo of Nikolai Gogol’s *Dead Souls*