Weizmann's courting of British backing for a Jewish state during the [sic] World War I)” (p. 44).

In fact, there is probably a more visceral and personal reason for his refusal to meet Weizmann. Willstaetter was most likely referring not so much to Weizmann's lobbying on behalf of Zionism, as to his work for the British war effort in developing more powerful acetone for explosives. He may not have liked him, but he knew him well. It was an even more intimate, and complicated world than the one ably rendered by Dippel.

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West Germany under Construction: Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era. Edited by Robert G. Moeller. Series: Social History, Popular Culture, and Politics in Germany. Geoff Eley, Series Editor. Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press. 1997. Pp. ix + 462. $24.95. ISBN 0-472-06648-X.

This is a reader. The chapters are not original contributions. They have appeared in journals or as chapters of books; all but two of them have been available in English. As such, this is an impressive and very well edited volume. Every one of the essays is of high quality and has made a significant contribution to our understanding of West Germany in its first decade and a half of economic reconstruction and democratization under Konrad Adenauer and Ludwig Erhard, 1949—1966. Moeller's introduction provides an excellent overview over the development of the historiography on West Germany.

A good reader, in my mind, should have one of two qualities—or both: it should have good thematic or interpretative coherence and/or it should offer clear lines of debate on the most important issues in the particular subfield of history. This book meets the first criterion beautifully. Moeller set out to present to readers the most important innovative approaches to West German history of the last dozen years. He believes that the most notable feature of this generation of West German histories is that they have moved beyond the “narrow” confines of foreign policy and political institutions to a politics of society and culture, which seeks to identify the lines of domination and social struggles underlying the political, social, and cultural power structure. The central task of the new generation of historians is, he asserts, “the critical exploration of how West Germans confronted—or failed to confront” the “enormous problems of social inequality among classes, between men and women” and “the continued presence of racism” (pp. 1 & 2).

The structure of the book follows these postulates with rigorous consistency. Readers are first led through the unrepentant whining of postwar
Germans over Soviet rapes (Atina Grossmann), the refugees’ loss of homeland and natives’ resentment of the newcomers (Rainer Schulze), and the disastrous defeat, which Germans blamed on anyone but themselves (Josef Foschepoth). The next part highlights the persistent barriers of ingrained patriarchal-authoritarian-warrior habits against reforms of the rights/position of soldiers/veterans (James Diehl), women (Moeller), and public service personnel (Curt Garner). The third three-chapter block amplifies how minimally and reluctantly German attitudes changed from the old anti-Semitism (Frank Stern, Constantin Goschler) and homophobia (Moeller). The fourth section continues to stress the dominance of traditional values, but relates them to growing pressures for change, generated by the very success of the conservative reconstruction for labor (Mark Roseman), in popular film (Heide Fehrenbach), for women as increasingly important yet still confined consumers (Erica Carter), and in both East and West German cultural identities, shaped in confrontation with the pervasive American pop culture (Uta Poiger). Only the last chapter, set apart in its own section, centrally explores how this 1950s system of conservative stabilization in fact enabled a remarkable modernization in West Germany. It is Moeller’s special merit that he makes available here for the first time a summary of this important work of Axel Schildt and Arnold Sywottek in English.

Contrary to what one might expect from the title and subtitle, however, the book does not give readers a sense of the most important issues and debates in West German history of the reconstruction years. It does not encourage students, presumably the primary audience for this work, to question and debate, because the essays’ strong interpretative consistency does not reveal the main lines of debate in the field. The book is, rather, largely an argument for one type of interpretation. That does not reduce the quality and value of the collection, but it is not a balanced selection on the “Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era,” as the subtitle claims, nor can it serve “as an introduction to the growing body of scholarly work on the history of the Federal Republic of Germany,” as Moeller asserts in the foreword. The editor instead shaped the selection of essays to promote a “critical reexamination” of the “problems in the early history of the Federal Republic” that have resulted in “the continued presence of racism and aggression toward foreigners” in present-day Germany, as he put it in the introduction (p. 1, 2). Such causal links are at least questionable, and they lead to a narrow view of Adenauer Germany. There is no question that a “critical reexamination” must be a part of a balanced history—and the individual contributions in this collection make stimulating contributions to this effort. But it is not defensible to exclude from an introduction to scholarly work in the field the most remarkable feats of that era in German history: namely the successful democratization, the integration of a fourth of the population who were newcomers (is that not more remarkable than the early frictions?), and the extraordinary mitigation (not elimination) of class conflicts in
industrial relations, bitter religious divisions, and the chasm between former Nazi collaborators and opponents. A great deal of major innovative work has explored these central issues in the last dozen years. In this volume Diehl and Roseman point to the strong integrationist commitment of postwar German political, industrial, as well as former military leaders. Diehl links this specifically to the successful democratization and contrasts it to Weimar, while Garner, who notes the change, attributes it to the economic miracle.

The chapters most likely to stimulate debate are the first and last chapters—for very different reasons. As the title for the last, one-chapter section suggests, Schildt/Sywottek set out to answer a question, namely, how a conservative system could produce such remarkable modernization; and they present a strong, effectively structured argument why the two were intrinsically interconnected. In the lead chapter, on the other hand, it is Grossmann's strident judgments that are bound to evoke strong reactions. She is quite aware herself of the fundamental contradiction he faces as an avowed feminist historian when she sets out "deessentializing and historicizing" the rapes of (German) women. The reason she gives is as logical as it is repugnant: since German Nazi SS, soldiers, and too many others brutalized Jews and others in Eastern Europe, (Soviet) rapes of random German women (most of whom, to be sure, had happily lived on in Nazi Germany) became somehow less abhorrent because this violence "signaled the defeat of Nazi Germany—a historical event I learned to call Befreiung (liberation)." Grossmann therefore relativizes the rapes at least in part as "historically constructed" (p. 37), even leading her to claim that: "Women recorded brutality, but also, at times, their own sense of confusion about the fine lines between rape, prostitution, and consensual (albeit generally instrumental) sex" (p. 37, 43). Wow!

This is an important collection of individually high-quality articles, skillfully edited to emphasize largely (though not exclusively) the problems of a period of German history that laid the foundations for genuine democracy. As an excellent collection of that side of German history, the book belongs in library collections. As a reader in a comprehensive course in the field, it will need to be balanced by other reading.

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Die Grenzen der Diktatur: Staat und Gesellschaft in der DDR. Edited by Richard Bessel and Ralph Jessen. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht. 1996. Pp. 341. DM 48.00. ISBN 3–525–01359–0.

The essays in this volume originated as papers for a 1994 conference surveying "first results" in the social history of the German Democratic Republic. They skillfully synthesize a wide range of new materials and