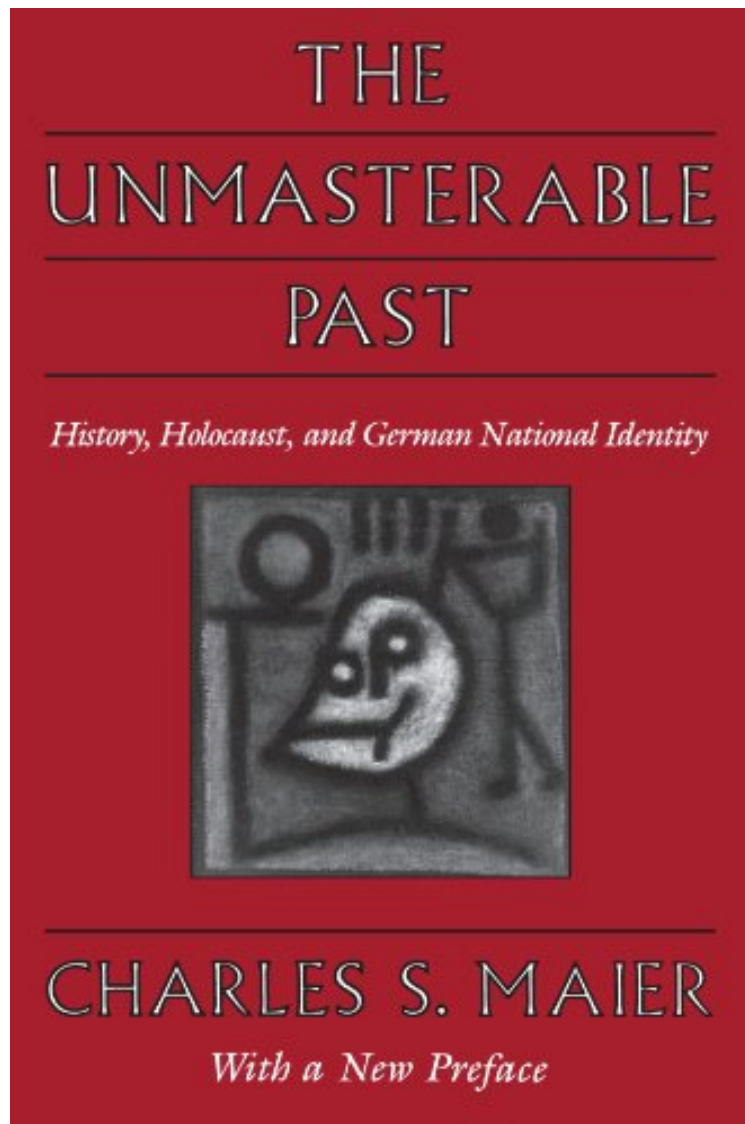


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The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity, With a new preface

Charles S. Maier

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#1054400 in Books Harvard University Press 1998-03-30 1997-11-03 Original language: English PDF # 1
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Charles S. Maier : The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity, With a new preface before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity, With a new preface:

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has received a great deal of criticism over the past couple of years for not being up to date, but has more to do with the fact that books, unlike our evergrowing knowledge, must be published at some point. Chapters three and five in this text have no equal that I know of, and few historians understand the historiography of Germany as well as Maier. Don't exclude this book from your reading just because it's not current, and fresh (how many historians are tossing their Collingwood or Croce?), but DO read it for it's remarkable scholarship and insight. 5 of 19 people found the following review helpful. An Unmasterable Book By Matthew J. Friday The Unmasterable Past is exceedingly deficient as an historical analysis of the post-war German historical question. Maier's book deals with how historians have viewed Germany after the war, that is, how should German history be viewed in light of the horrors of the holocaust and National Socialism? This book is an historiographical account of what had so far been said about how both conservative and liberal historians have viewed the complex issue of German history. Sadly, though, the book says absolutely nothing new on its own; that is to say, there are no new thoughts presented. The work is now seriously dated, as well. The text itself is quite poorly presented; the constant peppering of pages with words and phrases in myriad languages is not only confusing, it's just plain annoying. It is not all bad, however. It is worth mentioning that if you are looking for a well researched account of what was current in the field until 1987 or so, then you've hit a gold mine here. Otherwise, there are more current books out there worth reading.

Bringing his book up to date with reflections since its first publication a decade ago, Charles Maier writes that the historians' controversy gave Germany a chance to air the issues immediately before unification and, in effect, the controversy substituted for the constitutional debate that a united Germany never got around to holding. The premises of national community, whether formulated in terms of legal culture, inherited collective responsibilities, or patriotic habits of the heart, had already been subjects for vigorous discussion.

A full depiction of the continuing controversy within the Federal German Republic about the nation's murderous past and haunted present... For the very large segment of the American public that does not read German, the book is a discreet Baedeker to very unfamiliar--and often ugly--territory. (Norman Birnbaum The Nation) Maier has written what is the best book available on the tangled and acrimonious debate among the German historians. It is incisive in its analysis of the arguments on all sides of the debate and admirably objective in its assessment of them. (Gordon Craig New York of Books) A thorough and sensitive reflection on the 'historians' conflict' about the character and significance of Nazism that erupted in West Germany in 1986... [Maier contributes] to the understanding of how Germans are still trying to integrate the Third Reich into a vision of a democratic future, and into a cohesive national identity for Germany. (Leon Botstein The New Republic) About the Author Charles S. Maier is Leverett Saltonstall Professor of History at Harvard University and author of Dissolution: The Crisis of Communism and the End of East Germany.