



The Miracle Years

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Stereotypical descriptions showcase West Germany as an "economic miracle" or cast it in the narrow terms of Cold War politics. Such depictions neglect how material hardship preceded success and how a fascist past and communist sibling complicated the country's image as a bastion of democracy. Even more disappointing, they brush over a rich and variegated cultural history. That history is told here by leading scholars of German history, literature, and film in what is destined to become the volume on postwar West German culture and society.

In it, we read about the lives of real people--from German children fathered by black Occupation soldiers to communist activists, from surviving Jews to Turkish "guest" workers, from young hoodlums to middle-class mothers. We learn how they experienced and represented the institutions and social forces that shaped their lives and defined the wider culture. We see how two generations of West Germans came to terms not only with war guilt, division from East Germany, and the Angst of nuclear threat, but also with changing gender relations, the Americanization of popular culture, and the rise of conspicuous consumption. Individually, these essays peer into fascinating, overlooked corners of German life. Together, they tell what it really meant to live in West Germany in the 1950s and 1960s.

In addition to the editor, the contributors are Volker R. Berghahn, Frank Biess, Heide Fehrenbach, Michael Geyer, Elizabeth Heineman, Ulrich Herbert, Maria Höhn, Karin Hunn, Kaspar Maase, Richard McCormick, Robert G. Moeller, Lutz Niethammer, Uta G. Poiger, Diethelm Prowe, Frank Stern, Arnold Sywottek, Frank Trommler, Eric D. Weitz, Juliane Wetzels, and Dorothee Wierling.

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