the Almighty God” (p. 245). In certain cases he describes the natural beauty of central Mexico, specifically the “good province” of Xochimilco (p. 181) and the “nearby garden” of Chapultepec (p. 182). From some of his references it is clear that Chimalpahin was also well-read. He claims that the Chichimeca were “courageous like the Arabs” (p. 145); he references the “god of Bacchus” in ancient Spain (p. 158); and he says that Cortés was “another Alexander the Great in his munificence” (p. 307). Other additions focus on indigenous customs. Chimalpahin details the artisanship of the Mexica (p. 184), and he provides an explanation of the “texamal leaves” used to make paper (p. 126). But a significant amount of his insertions deal with indigenous nobility, the most interesting example being the extended list he includes of Indian nobles who were taken to Spain with Cortés (p. 420).

Chimalpahin’s Conquest places all of Chimalpahin’s deletions in brackets and his additions in bold letters. The hybrid nature of his transcription is easily followed, and the translation reads smoothly. Although Lesley Byrd Simpson had already translated López de Gómara’s history into English in 1964, he edited out all of the chapters in La conquista de México that deal with indigenous customs. This important section forms part of Chimalpahin’s Conquest, but it is unfortunate that the final 23 chapters of López de Gómara’s history were not included, even though they are missing from the Browning Manuscript. Despite the fact that there are helpful footnotes, a glossary, and a bibliography, it is a shame that a map indicating the plethora of place names in the text was not included to guide the reader through the itinerary of “conquest.” Notwithstanding these minor criticisms, Schroeder, Cruz, Roa-de-la-Carrera, and Tavárez have produced a fine piece of scholarship that further complicates the Spanish narrative of the “conquest” of Mexico-Tenochtitlan. Chimalpahin’s Conquest highlights the multi-ethnic voices of the colonial era in one text, forcing one to move beyond the “vision of the vanquished” and some of the other “myths of the conquest” to see indigenous people as conquerors in their own right.

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German historians once routinely built their explanations of the Third Reich and its genocidal policies on the foundations of deep historical continuities. In their narratives of the Nazi regression into barbarism, they variously emphasized the legacies of late mediaeval anti-Semitism, the inherited traditions of Prussian militarism, the enduring streams of post-Enlightenment “anti-modernism,” or the persistence of pre-industrial, anti-democratic aristocratic elites and Germany’s
“special path” (Sonderweg) of socio-political (mis)development. In the 1980s, however, David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley deconstructed the Sonderweg thesis and other arguments about long-term continuity, identified the considerable scope of bourgeois social and political influence in imperial Germany, and pointed out that the most aggressively authoritarian forces in early-twentieth-century Germany were largely middle-class and self-consciously “modernizing,” rather than aristocratic or backward-looking. In the wake of this critique, German historians have turned to conjunctural or shorter-term explanations of Nazism and the Holocaust that focus on cultural-political transformations associated with what Detlev Peukert called the “classical modern” in the early twentieth century or on the perpetrators and agencies responsible for National Socialist anti-Jewish and mass extermination policies during the Nazi era itself. Indeed, in the most important recent attempt to take stock of the German twentieth century, Konrad Jarausch and Michael Geyer emphasize the profound discontinuities of Germany’s “shattered past” and locate the impetus for the Holocaust in the explosive fusion of “catastrophic nationalism” and virulent anti-Semitism in the aftermath of the First World War.

Taking the beginning of the Nazi campaign systematically to murder Jews in 1941 as his point of orientation, Helmut Walser Smith rejects the views of these “chronologically myopic historians” (p. 3) and argues that the nature of the Holocaust can only be properly understood if we acknowledge its connections to the long arc of religiously motivated violence against Jews in Europe since the late mediaeval era. Early outbreaks of Christian violence dating back to at least the fourteenth century throughout “Germany,” Smith maintains, were memorialized in Christian art and iconography, re-enacted in Christian festivals, and “rooted in popular consciousness” (p. 215) well into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Following a similar pattern and script, which variously invoked accusations of ritual murder, host desecration, Jewish betrayal, and unfair Jewish privilege, they found expression in events as distant in time in Germany as the Hep Hep Riots of 1819, the campaigns against Jewish emancipation in 1848–1849, the Scheunenviertel riots in Berlin in 1923, Nazi attacks on Jews and synagogues in November 1938, and the mass executions carried out by the SS beginning in 1941.

These anti-Jewish rituals and attacks became “modern,” according to Smith, when they were re-directed by nationalism and racism during the long nineteenth century. The German nation as a concept, he argues, was “discovered” as early as the sixteenth century by map-makers charting the geography of central Europe. But it was transformed in the early nineteenth century as German philosophers and nationalist intellectuals authored an “epistemic shift” that displaced earlier Renaissance understandings of the nation as a collective identity manifested in material conditions external to the perceiving subject — that is, in the cities, towns, forests, lakes, rivers, mountains, and language encountered in the world — to a post-Kantian idealist definition of the nation as the collective expression of a self-contained, self-determining, and interiorized human subjectivity. The emergence of this constructivist definition of nationhood, which Smith traces in
relation to the writings of Johann Gottlieb Fichte after 1807, figured an organic unity of character, “general Christianity,” and language that subordinated the individual to the nation and rigidly excluded non-Germans, including Jews, to the point of contemplating their expulsion — an exclusionary perspective that elevated still-intact forms of traditional anti-Semitism to the larger community of the nation.

The “eliminationist racism” of the latter half of the nineteenth century effected a similar redirection by subjecting long-standing practices of “ethnic cleansing,” which began with the “expulsion of Jews from late medieval and early modern cities and territories,” to new racist “rationales and possibilities” (p. 169) for the complete annihilation of whole peoples in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Smith argues that we can see this process at work in the published writings of the historian Heinrich von Treitschke, the geographer Friedrich Ratzel, and the colonial publicist Paul Rohrbach, who raised the possibility of extermination in relation to the colonized peoples of German Southwest Africa but stopped short of actually advocating it. Ultimately, it fell to the Pan-German Heinrich Class to combine a virulent anti-Semitism and eliminationist racism in his book entitled *If I were the Kaiser* in his explicit call for the removal of populations from Germany and its borders in 1912. Nationalist and racist doctrines, therefore, pushed long-standing anti-Jewish rituals and furies across a new “threshold,” making genocide possible for the first time. In doing so, Smith concludes, they eroded the fundamental bases of human community — compassion, friendship, and solidarity — and paved the way for the Nazis, who adopted the impulse to exclude and expel “non-German” populations and capitalized on this latent potential to “sever ties to others” (p. 233) in their exclusionary and murderous designs on Jews during the 1930s and 1940s.

Smith’s willingness to take on big historiographical questions is certainly admirable, but this book falls short on several counts. Despite reassurances to the contrary, Smith presents a narrative of continuity that is curiously teleological and “theological” (p. 10): teleological in the sense that it explains the salient features of early-modern and nineteenth-century anti-Semitic actions or nationalist texts not in relation to the immediate signifying practices and contexts that produced them but, rather, in relation to twentieth-century anti-Semitic nationalisms and their texts to come; and theological in the sense that it characterizes twentieth-century forms of Nazi anti-Semitic violence *in essence* as reiterations of Christian anti-Jewish pogroms from previous centuries. Both are related to the a-historical pull of Smith’s methodology, which assumes the stability of ideas or “symbolic forms” and their meanings across vast stretches of time, even as they appear in new or different symbolic frameworks. Rather than demonstrate meaningful connections between anti-Semitic actions from 1350 to 1941 empirically, Smith posits them on the basis of formal resemblances and assertions about continuous memory. This approach requires that he rather awkwardly expand the scope of his analysis of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to include the Russian empire, which witnessed much greater levels and vastly more numerous outbreaks of anti-Jewish violence, in order to sustain his argument about the continuities of Christian anti-Semitism in Germany. Conversely, Smith’s treatment

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of the development of racism in Germany is too narrow, ignoring the longer histories of European racisms and the evidence produced by his own reading of Rohrbach’s texts, which reveal that annihilationist biological racism emerged not from early modern traditions of anti-Semitism but from German (and European) efforts to colonize non-European peoples and lands abroad.

Finally, Smith’s central argument that Nazi exterminism was the outcome of a long line of Christian anti-Jewish hostility is un-evidenced and untenable, primarily because he does not examine in any detail the anti-Semitism of the Nazi movement itself or the nature of anti-Jewish violence during the 1930s and 1941. Smith’s claim that the genocidal campaign begun in 1941, including the death camps, reactivated “archaic forms of murder” (p. 213) obscures the highly organized nature of SS and police killing units, which operated with military support, and the network of state agencies and party enterprises required to identify, transport, incarcerate, and murder Jews in the camp system, all of which took place as Germany waged a world war. Above all, it fails to grasp the horrifying novelty of Nazi exterminism, which insisted that all Jews, defined as an existential racial threat, must die so that the “Germans” or the German “racial body” (*Volkskörper*) might live. The effort to identify this rationale for genocide in a general collapse of human solidarity or loss of friendship in the nineteenth century only gets us so far. The Nazis mobilized their own solidarities in part by inviting their “racial comrades” to participate in the assault on their political opponents, the persecution of stigmatized “others,” and the expulsion and killing of Jews. If we are to understand the nature of this kind of violence, we need to centre our explanation on the historical agents who conceived it and set it in motion: that is, on the activists and the many supporters of the early-twentieth-century German Right.

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