

transported to exotic locales in *The Western Tradition*. He remains firmly entrenched behind the lectern back at UCLA. Each program opens with Professor Weber standing before a shadowy class of students as he proceeds with his analysis of western culture. So students viewing the television image are given a sense of intimacy with the instructor, given a sense of his persona as professor. In the course of the series they get to know his peculiarities of speech, and other eccentricities, that mark the inspiring teacher. So I think you do have here a very successful marriage between the intimacy and naturalness of a front row seat at a university lecture with television's ability to deliver the visual image. Slides, films, and audio segments form an integral part of every program.

Such a marriage is successful largely because of Weber himself. He possesses an engaging style, an aura of European culture, and humor, that does seem to hold the attention of students, including those who have only a minimal amount of interest in history. Indeed, I have had several students who initially thought he was Harvey Korman doing a European professor routine! Weber draws upon a lifetime of teaching and research for the presentation of fascinating anecdotal material that cannot be matched, yet he always keeps it within the context of a tight historical analysis. The series is also particularly strong in the area of social history, where so much new research has been done in the last 25 years. This fact would make programs in the series particularly appealing to those teachers who are not familiar with some of the new trends in scholarship, but desire to add some social history to their courses. However, the programs are a bit uneven. Program 41, "The Industrial Revolution," I found inspired and touching as Weber described famine in Europe when people simply fell dead in the streets or ditches, or tried to eat their own hands. I found Program 47, "The First World War and the Rise of Fascism," less than inspiring, but that might have been because I was expecting so much. That there would be some unevenness in the course of 52 programs is not surprising, but the overall quality of production and performance is excellent. Weber always remains within himself, never trying to be something that he is not, for instance, never worrying about breathing correctly so that you get a professional, "canned," narration sound. And I believe that this sincerity comes across to students.

The Western Tradition can be used as a complete college credit course, or as supplemental material for courses in western civilization, world history, literature, and art history. Personally, I have had a great deal of success using specific programs to give historical background in an interdisciplinary humanities course. Individual instructors will have to determine for themselves what programs work best for them. Jay Boggis, a novelist and Harvard University Ph.D in history, has written excellent, and very useful, student and faculty guides to accompany the course. In addition to the usual lecture outlines, test banks, and optional readings and activities, the faculty guide has suggestions for administrators about course promotion in the school and community. This innovative television course should make the teaching and learning of history at the college level more popular and interesting, without trivializing history.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1988. Pp. xi, 314. paper, \$12.95.

Juliet Gardiner, ed., *What is History Today?* Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1988. Pp. vi, 167. Cloth, \$39.95; paper \$12.50.

Oral history is the oldest variety of all, probably beginning with tales told around cooking fires in the era before written language. It went on to troubadours' tales, Norse sagas, and finally to well organized projects and archives of interviews. Paul Thompson, of the University of Essex, has now given us both a why-to-do-it and how-to-do-it book. Tracing the development of oral history, he shows us its value in various ways, even as a counterweight to official documents, commenting, "When social historians are reduced to writing history from the records of government spies, the constraints imposed are clearly extreme." With oral history one can go far beyond surviving documents (which have their own bias) and balance leaders' accounts with those of followers or bystanders.

Thompson moves on to explain how to interview people to get as much information and as much accuracy as possible, how to handle the emotions provoked by interviews (whether of

Armenians who survived Turkish massacres or survivors of the Holocaust), how to choose subjects, what kinds of questions to ask, how to use teamwork, what background information is necessary to make interviews meaningful, how to store and index information, how to get permission to use data, the difficulties in transcribing recordings, and how best to use the results (A sound medium only, possibly using parts of recordings? Portions of videotapes or still photographs in a visual presentation? Printed publication?). Finally, he suggests ways of verifying the data, looking for internal consistency, cross checking with other sources, and seeing if the data fit a known context.

At every step along the way Thompson is explicit and clear, and he offers many examples. Even a novice could do a creditable job by using this book. But there is more, almost thirty pages of valuable notes and suggestions for further reading and ten pages of model questions for interviews, ranging from childhood activities to political views. *The Voice of the Past* belongs in every university, high school, and public library, as well as in departments of history. My only personal regret is that Thompson did not use the works of Harvard psychiatrist Robert Coles (*Children of Crisis* and the next half dozen volumes).

What is History Today? contains thirteen chapters, each dealing with a variety of academic history: military, political, economic, social, religious, scientific, women's, art, intellectual, popular culture, diplomatic, European (but not American), and "third world." In each, four to six historians working in the field furnish their views of their specialties. Since each historian has but a page or two, the discussions are largely superficial, probably best aimed at bright undergraduates who want to explore in advance what fields might be interesting for further study. Too, since the historians are overwhelmingly British, some of their essays will seem a bit strange to American students. One might want to keep a copy of this book in departments of history, but few historians will get much out of it.

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Zev Garber, ed. *Methodology in the Academic Teaching of the Holocaust*. Lanham MD & London: University Press of America, 1988. Pp. xxvi, 327. Cloth, \$36.75; paper, \$17.50.

Charles S. Maier. *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity*. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1988. Pp. xi, 227. Cloth, \$22.50.

Although the two books under review both deal with the subject of the Holocaust, they are of a very different order. *Methodology in Teaching the Holocaust* is a collection of essays purporting to offer practical advice on teaching various aspects of the Holocaust. *The Unmasterable Past* focuses on the current historical conflict (*Historikerstreit*) in Germany over the place and memory of the Third Reich and the Holocaust within German history. Since the books are so different in their goals, I will treat them separately.

Maier's book, if less directly concerned with teaching, is the more interesting and stimulating work. Maier offers a comprehensive analysis of the historical debate currently raging among historians in Germany over how to deal with the legacy of the Nazi Third Reich. On the one hand, according to Maier, are the "revisionists" who, while not denying the horrors of the Nazi regime, seek to "historicize" them by comparing them to other twentieth-century atrocities, thereby denying their special character. On the other hand, critics like Jurgen Habermas, one of the leading philosophers and social thinkers of contemporary Germany, have charged that conservative German historians were seeking to "relativize" the Final Solution to create a new nationalist and conservative usable past. Thus, according to Habermas, these historians are distorting and politicizing history.

Andreas Hillgruber, a noted scholar of diplomacy and World War II, is among the most respected of these "revisionists." In 1986 he published a work in which he discusses both the shattering of the Third Reich and the end of European Jewry. In it Hillgruber justifies the Wehrmacht's bitter resistance against the advancing Soviet forces in the winter of 1944-45. He not only asks us to "identify" sympathetically with the ordinary German soldier and with the danger to the German population that might follow a Russian victory (rape, pillage, mass murder), but he argues that the only right action for a good German was to support the Fatherland against the gathering hordes. This at a time when resistance to Hitler might have meant the ending of the extermination of the Jews.

Indeed, Hillgruber groups the demise of the Reich with that of European "Jewry" as equivalent phenomena: in the one case the end of a state and national community with deep roots in East Central Europe, and in the other, the end of the corporate existence of European Jewry. As Maier