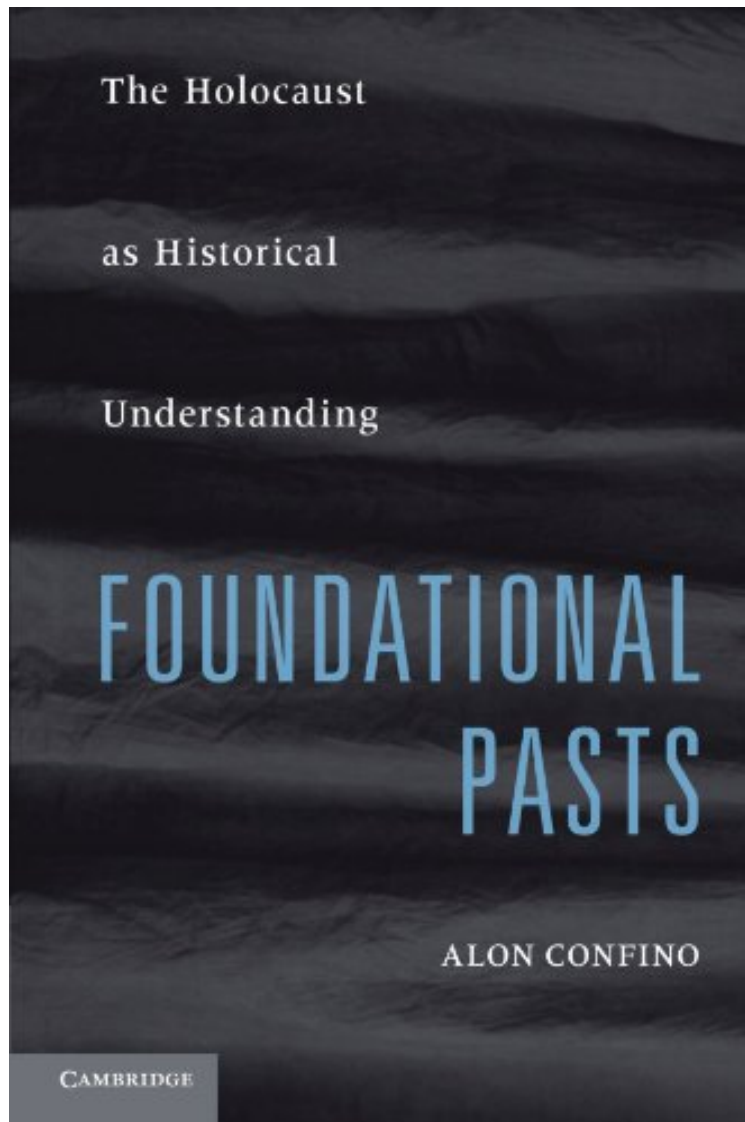


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Foundational Pasts: The Holocaust as Historical Understanding

Alon Confino

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#666584 in Books Cambridge University Press 2011-09-30 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.98 x .43 x 5.981, .60 #File Name: 0521736323192 pages | File size: 17.Mb

Alon Confino : Foundational Pasts: The Holocaust as Historical Understanding before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Foundational Pasts: The Holocaust as Historical Understanding:

Alon Confino seeks to rethink dominant interpretations of the Holocaust by examining it as a problem in cultural

history. As the main research interests of Holocaust scholars are frequently covered terrain - the anti-Semitic ideological campaign, the machinery of killing, the brutal massacres during the war - Confino's research goes in a new direction. He analyzes the culture and sensibilities that made it possible for the Nazis and other Germans to imagine the making of a world without Jews. Confino seeks these insights from the ways historians interpreted another short, violent, and foundational event in modern European history - the French Revolution. The comparison of the ways we understand the Holocaust with scholars' interpretations of the French Revolution allows Confino to question some of the basic assumptions of present-day historians concerning historical narration, explanation, and understanding.

"One of the most thoughtful, exciting, and original responses to the Holocaust to have appeared in years, *Foundational Pasts* is a concise and trenchant study that opens up new ways of conceiving of the Nazi genocide of the Jews. With its emphasis on Nazism and the Holocaust as problems of cultural history, Confino's book will generate much discussion and will be a major stimulus to further reflection on how the Holocaust should be interpreted by historians." Dan Stone, Royal Holloway, University of London

"The Nazis claimed to replace the 'ideas of 1789' with those of '1933'. Provocatively using the French Revolution as a historical foil, Alon Confino contends that the Nazis' exterminationist fantasy about Jews was at once rooted in German-Christian culture and a revolutionary attempt to inaugurate a new temporal order. This erudite, calm, and accessible meditation challenges contemporary explanations of the Holocaust by showing that, while genocide may be rationally approached, its irrationality and emotionality threaten to elude our analytical grasp." A. Dirk Moses, European University Institute

"*Foundational Pasts* is a brilliant, lucid, and accessible meditation on interpretations of the Holocaust and suggestions on the limitations of that research and new directions to be pursued." Michael N. Dobkowski, *Jewish Book World*

"*Foundational Pasts* is not a 'comprehensive' but rather an 'evocative' (ix) account of Holocaust historiography, which invites historians to probe their traditional ways of reconstructing the past. It is very successful in that endeavor, but will not be the last word on patterns of Holocaust narratives." Thomas Khne, *German Studies*

"Alon Confino's *Foundational Pasts* is a deeply ambitious and very welcome historiographical intervention into the field of Holocaust studies ... Exploring the conceptual and methodological frameworks of Holocaust historians from the inside out, Confino lays out his case, skilfully and meticulously arriving at his substantive conclusions regarding Nazi motive with impressive argumentative and analytical skill. His book is a tour de force of originality and erudition, providing us not just with a masterful discourse of the most important currents in Holocaust scholarship, but also with an indication of the most urgent questions that future research may soon seek to answer." Richard Steigmann-Gall, *German History*

"Confino's short *Foundational Pasts* is a masterpiece, a sublime and thought-provoking book which challenges us to think differently not just about the Holocaust but about the ways in which we conceptualize history." *Journal of Contemporary History*

About the Author Alon Confino is a professor of history at the University of Virginia, where he has taught since 1993. He has written extensively and influentially on historical memory, historical method and German history. Among his books are *The Nation As a Local Metaphor: Wrttemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871-1918* (1997) and *Germany As a Culture of Remembrance: Promises and Limits of Writing History* (2006). As a visiting professor, Confino has taught at the Hebrew University, Tel Aviv University and cole des Hautes tudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris, and was recently a visiting fellow at the European University Institute in Florence. He has received grants from the Fulbright, Humboldt, DAAD, and Lady Davis foundations, the Institute of Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University, the Social Science Research Council, the Israel Academy of Sciences, and the Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington.