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SPECIAL ISSUE FOR DAVID BATHRICK

HUYSSEN AND RABINBACH • *NEW GERMAN CRITIQUE* THE FIRST DECADE

MARTIN • THE WORK OF LOVE

ADELSON • THE TROUBLE WITH DAVID

HOHENDAHL • DISCOVERING THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

STEINBERG • A SEASON IN BERLIN

HERMAND • RE-READING DAVID'S DISSERTATION

BERGHAHN • APOPHTHEGMATA FOR DAVID

FEHERVARY • REGARDING THE YOUNG LUKÁCS

LIEBERT • RETHINKING CITIZENSHIP

HÖRNIGK AND HÖRNIGK • LETTER TO DAVID

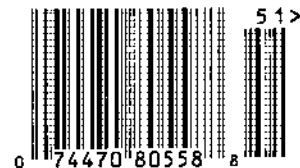
EMMERICH • (ME AND) MY AMERICAN FRIEND

MARSZOLEK • THE NAZI PAST IN POSTWAR GERMAN BROADCASTING

KOCH • TOWARDS AN AESTHETIC OF THE CROSS-CUT IN FILM

RENTSCHLER • DOUGLAS SIRK REVISITED

HANSEN • *POTEMKIN* AND GERMAN FILM THEORY



Zsn 43 144

NEW GERMAN CRITIQUE

An Interdisciplinary Journal of German Studies

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NEW GERMAN CRITIQUE

Number 95 Spring/Summer 2005

Special Issue for David Bathrick

- New German Critique: The First Decade*.....5
Andreas Huyssen and Anson Rabinbach
- The Work of Love.....27
Biddy Martin
- The Trouble with David: Reflections on a Champ.....37
Leslie A. Adelson
- Discovering the German Democratic Republic: April 1974.....43
Peter Uwe Hohendahl
- A Season in Berlin, or, Operatic Responsibility.....51
Michael P. Steinberg
- After Thirty Years: Re-Reading David's Dissertation.....67
Jost Hermand
- Aphorisms for David.....73
Klaus L. Berghahn
- Regarding the Young Lukács or the Powers of Love:
Anna Seghers and Thomas Mann.....81
Helen Fehervary
- What It Means to Be(come) a Transatlantic Citizen:
Rethinking Postnational Citizenship.....93
Ulrike Liebert
- A Letter to David.....106
Therese and Frank Hörnigk
- (Me and) My American Friend.....115
Wolfgang Emmerich

Zsm 43 144



"Join in, go ahead and don't remain silent...": The National Socialist Past And Reconstruction in Postwar German Broadcasting.....	122
<i>Inge Marszolek</i>	
Face and Mass: Towards an Aesthetic of the Cross-Cut Film.....	139
<i>Gertrud Koch</i>	
Douglas Sirk Revisited: The Limits and Possibilities of Artistic Agency.....	149
<i>Eric Rentschler</i>	
Of Lightning Rods, Prisms, and Forgotten Scissors: <i>Potemkin</i> and German Film Theory.....	162
<i>Miriam Hansen</i>	
List of Publications	183

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*“Join in, go ahead and don’t remain silent [...]”:
The National Socialist Past and Reconstruction
in Postwar German Broadcasting*

Inge Marszolek

A radio sketch¹ of Radio Bremen, aired on March 8, 1947, marks the transition from National Socialism towards an American-modelled democracy. In the sketch, a furious listener storms into the studio and protests against the “jungle music” — the prior song of a Bremen big band was called “Bedlam from Bremen” — because this music, like Nazi propaganda, anesthetizes listeners. The man stresses that he is quite decent, simply a *Mensch*, though he refuses to give his name. He is not old-fashioned, he states, but nevertheless, he wants to hear “sensible” jazz. After a song by the Alexander Ragtime Band (sung in German) is played to please him, he learns that this is “*Schunkel-Musik*,” the sort of music which stands for German folksiness, kindness, and cheerfulness. In this version of “Germanized” jazz, Radio Bremen promised its audience that the new times would be accompanied and moderated [*abgemildert*] by known and familiar tunes. This is just one example of a media-negotiated reconciliation with the new era.

The references to “decency” and “*Menschsein*,” to being simply a human being, as justifications for this fictional listener’s complaints are recurring topoi in many biographical narratives. The memories of how one allegedly had escaped the grip of the Nazi regime frequently provide a stylized basis for self-assertion against the demon of the past. Through the topoi of the “clean Wehrmacht” and the “decent soldier,”

1. “Bunter Nachmittag,” Radio Bremen (RB), 8 March 1947.

this construction became the dominant postwar narrative, frequently validated by media productions. But, in this respect, the radio is also self-referential. The listener explicitly refers to the radio’s prior function as an instrument of propaganda that anesthetizes the public, i.e. turns off its Reason. The author rather unconsciously picks up on an older image that determined the discourse of the 1920s, in particular, when broadcasting still was in its infancy. The radio was then regarded as a “*Geistzerstäuber*” [spirit dissolver], and women, in particular, were scolded as “radio idiots.”²

The widely distributed radio set of Nazi-Germany, the *Volksempfänger*, disappeared in both East and West after 1945. The radio slipped back from the vertical “tabernacle” to the rectangular box form known in the Weimar Republic and familiar to older contemporaries.³ In the West, the rectangular radio stood for democracy and normality, while the Nazi *Volksempfänger* inscribed itself in postwar memory merely as “Goebbels’s snout”: it became in memory purely an instrument of propaganda, an image that has dominated media history into recent times. Remembered is the *Volksempfänger*’s symbolic charge, its role as entertainer and accompaniment, but not the everyday routines of listening. Just as the *Volksempfänger* was revalued as a propaganda instrument of the regime, so too the audience, the *Volksgemeinschaft*, was revalued, no longer understood as part of the National Socialist regime. One can say that the separation of regime and society, a move dominant in both the collective and official politics of memory during the postwar period, found its expression in radio in the change from the “tabernacle” to the oblong radio receiver. Radio presented itself, and not only in this sketch, as a connection between the past and the present. The transition from Nazi Germany to the democratic (and the socialist) society was negotiated through, propagated and accompanied by media. Radio broadcasting played a special role in the process.

2. See Thomas Penka, ‘*Geistzerstäuber*’ *Rundfunk. Sozialgeschichte des Südfunkprogramms in der Weimarer Republik* (Potsdam: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 1999) and Eve Rosenhaft, “Lesewut, Kinosucht, Radiotismus: Zur (geschlechter-)politischen Relevanz neuer Massenmedien in den 1920er Jahren,” in *Amerikanisierung: Traum und Albtraum im Deutschland des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Alf Lüdtke, Inge Marszolek, and Adelheid von Saldern (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1996) 119-144.

3. Uta C. Schmidt, “Der *Volksempfänger*, Tabernakel moderner Massenkultur,” in *Radiozeiten. Herrschaft, Alltag, Gesellschaft (1924-1960)*, ed. Inge Marszolek and Adelheid von Saldern (Potsdam: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 1999) 136-159; 158f.

Reorganization and Denazification in Radio

The radio became an element of everyday life and a *Leitmedium* in National Socialist times. Audience listening practices and expectations were correspondingly effected. Different than as inscribed in memory, broadcasting did not present itself during National Socialism as “His Master’s Voice” to the extent that contemporaries later remembered. Even during the war music was played between 13 and 13 1/2 hours a day, interrupted only by regularly scheduled news reports and other programs. “Relief for the people’s soul [*Entlastung der Volksseele*]” was a top priority of programming politics, whereas representations of the Jews as the main enemy of the German people were reserved for occasional anti-Semitic tirades by Joseph Goebbels or Adolf Hitler. Moreover, under the direction of Goebbels, Nazi broadcasting developed into a most modern entertainment medium measured by international media standards. Programs like the “*Bunte Stunden*” (a mixed entertainment program) or, during the war years, the “*Wunschkonzert*” (a musical request program) and live reports during the Olympic games found a place in the audience’s memory and shaped expectations of radio entertainment after 1945.⁴

After the German surrender, the Allies took control of the medium. Lacking other media, radio functioned in postwar Germany as an official newsletter, an adviser, an information source in the destroyed cities, a search instrument for relatives, as well as both a tool for democratization and a simple distraction. Given the scarcity of paper, it often substituted for newspapers.

In the first program of Radio Bremen on December 23, 1945,⁵ a journalist emphasized the new and old meanings of the radio: “You press the button and turn the knob — and you sit at the world’s ear. It was completely out of your reach for a long time, and false magicians had built a wall around your country [. . .]”⁶ He assigned to radio broadcasting a decisive role in this time of radical change: “The broadcasting service of 1945 wants to and will help you find your way without blinkers

4. This is one of the central results of the research project conducted by Adelheid von Saldern and myself (Researchers: Daniela Münkel, Monika Pater, Uta C. Schmidt). The research results were published in *Zuhören und Gehörtwerden. Bd. 1: Radio im Nationalsozialismus Zwischen Lenkung und Ablenkung* and *Bd. 2: Radio in der frühen DDR. Zwischen Lenkung und Ablenkung* (Tübingen: Edition Diskord, 1998).

5. Radio Bremen started its program on December 23, 1945. They had two hours of broadcasting time daily, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

6. RB commentary, 23 Dec. 1945.

in this world [. . .]” From the beginning, reeducation in the West (indocination [*Umerziehung*] in the East) took place via radio. So, on every single day in 1946/47, the names of citizens who had to give information about their role in the Nazi regime to the denazification committee were read out on Radio Bremen, with the additional request that the listening audience pass information about these persons to the respective committees of the military government. The table of contents of the “*Nordwestdeutsche Hefte*,” a magazine which reprinted the text of radio shows, impressively demonstrates that denazification and information [*Aufklärung*] about National Socialism were central issues in commentaries and reports, at least of the years 1946/47.⁷ Christof Schneider points out that of the 118 journalists at work daily in the editorial offices of the NWDR (*Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk*, the combined radio stations of the British zone of occupation), 107 — or 90.7% of them — reported about National Socialism. The largest share of these reports were on the trials in Nuremberg (102 broadcasts by Andreas Günther and 40 by Kurt Martin) and Bergen-Belsen (21 broadcasts by Axel Eggebrecht).⁸

The NWDR broadcasting centers in Hamburg and Cologne were controlled by British broadcasting officers.⁹ Most of the journalists working in the editorial offices — almost all of them male — had prior journalistic experience during the “Third Reich,” either in newspaper (most of them) or else in radio. In principle, previous activity in propaganda was no impediment to getting a job in radio. Peter von Zahn, head of the department of “Talk and Features” in the Hamburg broadcasting center, can be mentioned in this context. Nevertheless, 14 authors were returning emigrants, approximately one-third of which had suffered from journalistic or professional restrictions under the former regime. Karl Eduard von Schnitzler became head of the department for “Political Commentary [*Politisches Wort*]” in 1946. However, he had to

7. Charles Schüddekopf, ed., *Vor den Toren der Wirklichkeit. Deutschland 1946-47 im Spiegel der Nordwestdeutschen Hefte* (Bonn: Dietz Verlag, 1980). The NWDR editors Axel Eggebrecht and Peter von Zahn were responsible for the magazine, which was published for the first time in May 1946. The magazine only published stories which had been aired on the radio. I thank Hans-Ulrich Wagner of the “Forschungsstelle Geschichte des Rundfunks in Norddeutschland” for providing access to the tables of content of all magazines as well as other sources. I thank him for all his references.

8. Christof Schneider, *Nationalsozialismus als Thema im Programm des Nordwestdeutschen Rundfunks (1945-1948)* (Berlin: Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 1999) 193ff.

9. Schneider, *Nationalsozialismus als Thema* 45ff.

quit in May 1947 because of his "one-sided political bias." Schnitzler also had learned his journalistic skills in propaganda; in 1944, he was taken as a prisoner of war by the British army and became a co-worker in the "German Service" for the BBC. According to Schneider, the dismissal of Schnitzler and other communist employees in 1947 marks a decisive shift away from the plurality of opinions expressed by NWDR and also in reporting on National Socialism. Generally speaking, politically reliable [*unverdächtige*] editors began to occupy news departments. However, this trend was not mirrored in the realm of entertainment. Popular male and female artists of the Nazi era, as well as the familiar voices of known radio announcers, were heard again by Summer. The reason for this was not only that the responsible persons in the military governments paid little attention to the realm of entertainment (in the broader sense), but also that sufficient, untainted professionals were simply not available.

Methodological Premises

This rough indication of some of the general problems of postwar broadcasting leads to the following comments on representations of the Nazi past, processes of negotiation, and on the central narratives in radio programming. In short, the discussion of the Nazi past on the radio of the postwar period was characterized, on the one hand, by the role and ability of the military governments and the developing political elites to actively (re)form the medium; on the other hand, one must consider that the program editors had gained their initial experiences in broadcasting during the "Third Reich" or in emigration (the latter being a rather small group). They were all quite conscious of how deeply the National Socialist worldview had penetrated German society — a point to which I will return. So, the "space of the speakable" has to be defined not only with regard to the authors of radio, but also with regard to the construction of publics through the medium and interaction with the listeners. During the Nazi regime, broadcast politicians, like Goebbels, had recognized quite early on that reception largely escaped their control. Hence, programs were periodically adapted to audience expectations. The same happened in the postwar era.¹⁰ To be

10. Regarding the significance of media history for contemporary history, see Axel Schildt, "Das Jahrhundert der Massenmedien. Ansichten zu einer künftigen Geschichte der Öffentlichkeit," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 27.2 (2001): 177-206 and Thomas Lindenberger, "Vergangenes Hören und Sehen. Zeitgeschichte und ihre Herausforderung durch die audiovisuellen Medien," *Zeithistorische Forschungen* 1/2004: 72-85.

sure, it is an inherent feature of the medium "radio" that it does not fundamentally change the narrative, but rather forms the available, covers the new with the trusted, and thus eases fears of change.

Therefore, I ask, on the one hand, after representations of the Nazi past, above all after representations of victims in the discussion of guilt, and, on the other hand, after the positioning of the community of perpetrators within the postwar order. From the perspective of media history, I work from three considerations:

1) A new history of communication should describe the medium in its complexity. This means a focus on institutions, technology, and programming, as well as on the mechanisms of acceptance and the development of user routines. Anglo-American Cultural Studies as well as younger ethnologists stress that media messages can be decoded only if the recipient is familiar with the central symbols and patterns conveyed, or if they are embedded in his world of experiences. At the same time, however, this process is obstinate [*eigensinniger*], sometimes subversive.¹¹ For an overall description of this complexity, Knut Hickethier introduces the idea of the media dispositive.¹² Hickethier refers to how sociability is always inscribed in the apparatus of electronic mass media. The focus on the dispositive order of apparatus, program, and listener/spectator helps take the perception of the medium into account and, along with that, its basic social constellations. The idea of the dispositive is further developed, in particular, by French film theorists who emphasize the function of the apparatus or the machine.¹³ Even if, in its reception, the impression arises that the connection between power and

11. A good survey of the Cultural Studies paradigm is Stuart Hall, ed., *Culture, Media, Language* (London: Hutchinson, 1980); Peter Dahlgren, "Cultural Studies as a Research Perspective: Themes and Tensions," in *International Media Research. A Critical Survey*, ed. John Corner, Philip Schlesinger, and Roger Silverstone (New York: Routledge, 1997) 48-64.

12. Knut Hickethier, "Kommunikationsgeschichte: Geschichte der Mediendispositive. Ein Beitrag zur Rundfrage 'Neue Positionen zur Kommunikationsgeschichte'," *Medien & Zeit* 2.27 (1992): 22-40; and Hickethier, "Apparat — Dispositiv — Programm. Skizze einer Programmtheorie am Beispiel des Fernsehens," in *Medien/Kultur. Schnittstellen zwischen Medienwissenschaft, Medienpraxis und gesellschaftlicher Kommunikation*, ed. Hickethier and Siegfried Zielinski (Berlin: Wissenschaftsverlag V. Spiess 1991) 421-448.

13. See Jean-Louis Baudry, "The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in Cinema," in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia UP, 1986) 299-318.

discourse fades into the background,¹⁴ the advantage of the model of the dispositive lies undoubtedly in its flexibility. It is all about the possibility of describing configurations, networks, and constructions out of which come media-historical changes as well as social changes coproduced by media.

2) Media representations of the past are neither reflections nor manipulations of memory processes. They are, however, elements of a permanently changing reservoir of pictures, representations, and models of cultural production. In this interactive process, various publics are constructed by both the media and politicians. At the same time, consumers decode the medium's messages and produce new meanings. These are integrated in partial discourses, or they create new ones that influence the dominant discourses in turn. This also applies to the communicative processes in which individual memories and the public politics of memory dovetail.¹⁵

3) The distinction between mainly medial storage memory and functional memory¹⁶ refers to two different things in this context: The National Socialist regime did not last long enough to erase cultural memory. The edges of functional memory, the connections of which to residual memory remained, could be mobilized after 1945, perhaps explaining to a certain degree why West German integration into the western value system proceeded rather smoothly. The radio is part of both storage memory and functional memory; it formats the permeability of the boundaries between both. In times of radical change, it therefore participates in the restructuring of interpretative patterns of functional memory. In particular, I refer in this context to the significance of sounds for memory processes, an aspect of memory that has hardly been researched.

14. Carsten Lenk, "Das Dispositiv als theoretisches Paradigma der Medienforschung. Überlegungen zu einer integrativen Nutzungsgeschichte des Rundfunks," *Mitteilungen des Studienkreises Rundfunk und Geschichte* 22.1 (1996): 5-17; also Friedrich Kitzler, *Grammophon, Film, Typewriter* (Berlin: Brinkmann & Bose, 1986).

15. Although, in the ample literature on memory, media are always seen as important components of cultural or collective memory, relatively few papers explore the function of media in individual memory and transition processes. Media are just as seldom considered as a mediator between memory and memory capacity. See Elisabeth Doman-sky and Harald Welzer, eds., *Eine offene Geschichte. Zur kommunikativen Tradierung der nationalsozialistischen Vergangenheit* (Tübingen: Edition Diskord, 1999); Welzer, ed., *Das soziale Gedächtnis. Geschichte, Erinnerung, Tradierung* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2001); Welzer, *Das kommunikative Gedächtnis* (Munich, C.H. Beck, 2002).

16. Aleida and Jan Assmann, "Das Gestern im Heute. Medien und soziales Gedächtnis," *Die Wirklichkeit der Medien. Eine Einführung in die Kommunikationswissenschaft*, ed. Klaus Merten et al. (Opladen: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 1994) 114-140.

However, because the persons who work in media are also contemporaries, it is the residua of storage memory that are primarily activated. This happens quasi naturally, but also in media specific ways. Precisely because listeners define themselves through the act of listening as publics, room for the speakable is restricted, its limits open for negotiation. From this perspective it seems necessary to examine the subtext of our engagement with representations of National Socialism, in part to let go of the implicit or explicit idea of a "right" or adequate confrontation [*Auseinandersetzung*] with National Socialism.

This ambitious design of a communication history is still little more than a programmatic call.¹⁷ Here it simply frames my text. I confine myself in what follows to a — quite selective — discursive interpretation of the texts of radio programs, on grounds that through these texts can be traced dominant discourses and narratives about the mental correspondence between listeners and the authors of radio texts.

Analysis of Selected Program Texts

Before I analyze exemplary texts from radio programs, I'd like to say a few brief words about the explicit intentions of the journalists. The programs produced in 1946/47 convey an obligation to the agendas of denazification and reeducation.¹⁸ The journalists wanted to educate their audiences about the Third Reich. According to Axel Eggebrecht, they wanted "to push open the gates to reality." As a supposedly democratic form of presentation, they elected the fictitious conversation with a listener or with a fictitious partner in the studio. They also opted for the emotionally appealing serial instead of the objective commentary, which was regarded as authoritarian. While, through 1947, their impetus can be described as an enlightened, antifascist pedagogy, emphasis soon shifted to reconstruction, the fragility of West German democracy, the

17. Konrad Dussel has pointed out how difficult it is to meet the demand of Cultural Studies to include the social practice of translating in a media history. Dussel, *Hörfunk in Deutschland. Politik, Programm, Publikum. (1923-1960)* (Potsdam: Verlag Berlin-Brandenburg, 2002) 23. Furthermore these three approaches are as yet still uncombined. In other words, Cultural Studies has negated the research on memory capacity until now.

18. In the realm of entertainment, which held the greatest share of programming in the postwar period, this of course was different. The familiar voices and tunes that accompanied the listeners throughout the years of National Socialism were soon heard again. For the significance of the radio as entertainment media, see Dussel, *Hörfunk in Deutschland*; also Marszolek, "Radio in Deutschland 1923-1960. Zur Sozialgeschichte eines Mediums," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 27.2 (2001): 207-239.

Cold War, and to the United States as a controversial role model. By the mid-1950s, the position of the Federal Republic in Europe and the western world had taken on increasing importance.

It is striking that, in most texts from the initial years of postwar broadcasting that I have looked at, the authors argue, either directly or indirectly, with their audience. As a rule, the authors use the "us" form of address, in other words, they signal to their listeners that they (the authors) too were part of National Socialist society. In this fashion they apparently hoped to overcome patterns of thinking [*Denkfiguren*] that had solidified, or at least to stimulate reflection. Speakable, narrow stereotypes apparently formed the parameters of identification. Phrases included:

- "The others have done exactly the same"
- "The competition of injustice"
- "The crimes of National Socialism as the enemies' propaganda"
- "The Nuremberg trials as show trials"
- "I had nothing to do with it [. . .]"
- "Stalingrad as betrayal by the generals and officers"
- "The soldier's death as the highest triumph of life"

Schnitzler's radio serial "The General" (July 27, 1947, 7:30p.m.-8:00 p.m.) is an account and harsh judgement [*Abrechnung*] of German militarism.¹⁹ In it, Schnitzler combines texts from Friedrich Schiller, Theodor Plivier, and also from the National Socialist author Will Vesper. This is a dramatic play, and the sound effects in particular are impressive. It opens with a poem from Klabund, entitled "The General." Before German militarism and World War II are discussed, the "narrator" speaks of the differences between German and other peoples:

But here we want to talk about ourselves, we want to hold up a mirror to ourselves instead of looking for excuses: 'The others do it exactly this way!' (3) [...] Certainly, other nations honor victorious generals, however, one honors them as heroes of peace, one honors them because they have brought peace (4).

An enumeration of the battles of World War II follows, ending with the Battle of Stalingrad: "The 240,000 soldiers did not die a soldier's death, but rather they perished miserably from cold, exhaustion, sores, lice,

19. WDR HA Sendefahrpläne, NWDR-Köln, Abt. Politisches Wort, Manuscript, 27 July 1947.

epidemics, horse flesh and human flesh." Schnitzler fades in a fictitious conversation justifying the events [*Rechtfertigungsgespräch*] among three generals: Paulus (swaying, quiet), Scherer (militarist of the worst kind), and von Seydlitz (insistent, pleasant). In this conversation, von Seydlitz uncovers the arrogance of the other generals and their obedience to Hitler. A general follows the path of least resistance, "he obeys and executes his orders and condemns the troops [. . .] we remain the executors of insane orders up to this day." The piece closes with a poem. To quote the last stanza:

[...] and if you see him again today,
the General smiles.
He is so glad that nobody shoots him.
And he doesn't care about the dead,
The dead amount to an enormous number,
Destroyed are country and nation,
Who remained? – The General,
He waits for his pension.

What follows are statements of generals from the Nuremberg trials. At the end, the narrator summarizes:

Enough is enough! History is the supreme judge. In our history, however, the generals have left behind one single and uninterrupted trail of blood. They are the ones who have made our history and, therefore, we have lifted them onto a pedestal [. . .]

This serial picks up on and continues with a reinterpretation of memory that had started already with, if not earlier in the war than, the defeat at Stalingrad. It evokes the "simple" soldiers as the real victims who were sent to the slaughter by the generals. Typically enough, the last comment is the only mention of the responsibility of all — at least in the active form of "us." At the beginning, when the narrator speaks of the special militarism of the Germans, it remains passive and abstract. The meaning of the sentence, "Therefore we have lifted them onto a pedestal" is undone by the repetition of Klabund's poem with its charges against the generals.

The effect of this play, only two years after war's end, when there was hardly a family that had not lost a member in one of its battles, in other words, when the wounds of war remained open, must have been

great. To the audience it offered emotional relief: The hierarchy presented here, the assignment of responsibility to the generals, reiterated an intervention in the discourse on victims, in which Stalingrad marked both place and time.

Furthermore, the text shows that, in the Soviet zone and later in the GDR, these exact defensive strategies were compatible with a dualistic conception of the world, one that characterized the confrontation with the National Socialist past much like it did the idea of society in general. In a commentary on "revenge and retribution in politics" on the program "Time and Life," aired on May 15, 1947, Schnitzler argued in more differentiated terms. Here, too, he sought to minimize the defensive stance [*Abwehrhaltung*] of his audience: "[. . .] and since everyone should first put his own house in order, the emphasis of criticism must be placed on ourselves without denying the guilt or mistakes of others. But at the moment the state of disorder in our house is larger."²⁰

In his commentary, Schnitzler criticizes the desire for revenge and retribution that had marked politics: The stab-in-the-back-legend [*Dolchstoßlegende*], revenge for Versailles, retaliatory weapons, but also domestic policies against Jews, Marxists, Jesuits, etc. — Schnitzler relates to the idea of forgiveness and asks: "Why shouldn't we try to evoke repressed memory of the injustice we committed to others and thus decide to forget things that happened in the eastern parts of Germany during the last phase of the war." Also included here are the air war and the meadows in the Rhine where the British had set up prison camps.

In conclusion, he pleads for understanding between East and West. On the one hand, the text clearly rejects any notion of exoneration, like that which dominated postwar society; on the other hand, he remains oddly vague as to the crimes of the National Socialists. Apparently, the broadcasts real concern was turning back the emerging East-West conflict: What remains at the end is only an attempt to give meaning. If the Germans initiate this process of forgiving, then this gesture would give rise to a certain hope: This active contribution would distinguish the Germans from other nations — an odd twisting of guilt and forgiveness.

Another production, also conceived as a serial, was broadcast on March 1, 1947, on the occasion of the 14th anniversary of the establishment of the first concentration camps on February 28, 1933.²¹ This

20. WDR HA 9355, NWDR-Köln, "Aus Zeit und Leben," Manuscript, 15 May 1947.

21. WDR HA 9317, NWDR-Köln, "Für den Arbeiter," Manuscript, 1 March 1947.

serial is also a montage [*Zuschnitt*] of poems — from Erich Mühsam and Alfred Kerr, among others —, of letters, and memories of former prisoners. Two elements should be noted:

First, Schnitzler, like the original texts, concentrates exclusively on political prisoners — the political opponents of the regime were indeed the first to be taken prisoner in Spring 1933 — and, second, he does not differentiate between prisoners any further. Along with Harro Schulze Boysen he mentions Kurt Schumacher, Ernst Saaiwächter and Hermann Fischer, the last two both Communists. He gives them the chance, in part, to speak for themselves. This community of victims is further levelled out in a poem with the refrain "and you, what did you do [...]" Here are named the dead of war, both on land and sea; the victims of the air war; the executed; the dead of the camps and prisons. The following narration makes clear that by the latter is meant primarily those who were imprisoned on political grounds. The speaker mentions victims of racial persecution only once — Schnitzler presents neither any original voices nor texts from Jewish prisoners, nor reporting on the persecution of the Jews.

On the occasion of the anniversary of the liberation of Bergen-Belsen, another text deals with the denial of what happened in the concentration camps.²² Rudolf Küstermeier, who was then chief editor of the newspaper *Die Welt*, spent eleven year in custody and experienced the liberation of Belsen. He refers to the arguments of "doubters": "Belsen? Listen, have you ever seen anybody who actually was in Belsen? There are supposed to have been gas chambers? Has a single one been found? [. . .] No, the English would have done better to spare us such stories. We've experienced enough propaganda [. . .]" Küstermeier tries to get to the bottom of the doubters' defensiveness. Behind it, he is convinced, is disbelief that human beings are capable of such crimes. He contrasts this with the experiences of camp prisoners who also had to confront the question of inhumanity. Küstermeier argues existentially and pedagogically: The unfathomable exists "also inside us," only hidden. Belsen becomes a cipher for uncoding of human existence. "What is a human being? That is the question. If we look at the SS, we look at ourselves. It would be a comfort if the unspeakably terrible could prove to be fruitful." In this fashion, a former prisoner defines, for himself, the space of the speakable: The sorrows are unspeakable, so too are the

22. Printed in Schüddekopf, *Vor den Toren der Wirklichkeit* 72-74.

crimes of the SS. Only if they are embedded within a philosophical narrative can they be given meaning, can they become speakable.

Beginning in the 1950s, so my thesis (which still requires further verification), debate over the Nazi past is pushed completely into the background. Increasingly, Germany's position in the West becomes a topic to be negotiated. Radio Bremen introduces the program "European Week" in 1950, which runs on the air until 1971. In turn, this program introduces the different countries of Europe. Each installment is accompanied by a booklet. According to Hans Arnold, the program's director:

The first of our 'Weeks' was an uncertain departure [. . .] an attempt to break through the wall of silence surrounding us. To say it with the one word that is used today by all of those for whom the Occident means something: Europe.²³

In this context one must remember that with the defeat of Nazi propaganda looming, there was propagated the idea of a *völkisch*, National Socialist Europe. Hence, the idea of a united Europe was already contaminated, just like the concept of the nation had already been contaminated by National Socialist ideas. Into this now Christian Europe will the lost Eastern regions be incorporated, and, with them, will Germany's spiritual [*geistig*] dominance over Central Europe be claimed. This is evident, for example, in a series of Radio Bremen, entitled "Unforgotten Landscape," which was broadcast for the first time in 1953. Here is but a quotation from the program about Silesia:

This trio [meant are Lessing, Kleist, and Nietzsche, I.M.] stands at the gates of Silesia, so that one must identify, above all, with the phenomenon of the Christian mission of the Germans.

Here is that noble profile of a landscape that looks at us full of sorrow and admonishes us, and everywhere in German countries it tests our hearts under the geographical term "Silesia." This profile is part of the magical Central European face, the eastern face of our Fatherland. It is the expression of the Germans' European mission, a marvellous plan of continental extent, of the Carolingians and Hohenstaufens — commenced 1000 years ago, fervently adored and striven for by all believers throughout the centuries — binding, in the truest sense, the East to the West.²⁴

23. Pressearchiv Radio Bremen, Program of the "Italian Week," 1953. Cited in Birgit Herbers, "Europa," in *Rundfunksendungen bei Radio Bremen in den Fünfziger Jahren*, unpublished Master Thesis (2002) 49.

24. RB WO 810, cited in Herbers, "Europa" 121.

Discursively, the East is written into the Christian Occident. At the same time, the formerly nationalistically-defined claim to an imperial, German *Kultur* — justified racially by National Socialism — is reformulated as a European mission of postnational West Germany.

This re-Europeanization is perpetuated in travel stories, among other broadcasts. No other than A. E. Johann, known for his book *The Country without Heart* [Das Land ohne Herz], an anti-American tract published shortly after the American declaration of war, was engaged by Radio Bremen in 1958 to write four episodes of "Journey around the World." In these broadcasts, about Latin America, about the Anglo-American world (The United States, Canada, New Zealand), the "Asian-African world," and the Soviet Union, it's all about positioning Europe's role, and above all that of the Federal Republic of Germany, in postcolonial times. The central theme of his thesis, which dominates the series, is that only Europe is able to help the people in the former and still existing colonies. The United States, which is really only an "offshoot" of Europe, may have forfeited its good will in the world, because it has yet to meet its own obligation to bring democracy and liberty to the world. It appears so patronizing and merely offers "zealous, unsuitable solutions." But looking at Europe, only Germany has a chance, because the other countries are either too insignificant or have discredited themselves as former colonial powers. In his broadcast, he (Johann) lets others, peoples of the former colonies, justify this role for Germany:

Since the war the Germans have proved [. . .] how capable they are. Other people say it to me again and again [. . .] You are just like us anyway. You were completely devastated [. . .] and then suddenly, after 10 years, you are wealthy again [. . .] you can do everything, you want nothing from us, you don't want to have colonies, you don't want to be our master [. . .] we're glad to do business with you.²⁵

Not only is the *Volks**gemeinschaft* here inscribed into the *Leistungs**gemeinschaft* [achievement-oriented community] of postwar reconstruction, but also propagated is the economic and moral superiority of Germany, charged with anti-Americanism. The essential role of the United States in (West) German reconstruction is downplayed, just as is Germany's colonial past.

A program of special note was the radio series "The Listener's Turn

25. RB WO 1837. Cited in Herbers, "Europa" 92.

to Speak," aired for the first time by Radio Center Cologne (It was previously broadcast from Hamburg.) on Sunday, May 29, 1949, and afterwards every Sunday in the early afternoon. Hans Otto Wesemann initiated and edited the show, with assistance from Hilde Stallmach.²⁶ This show was based exclusively on letters to the editor — the topics were provided by the editorial staff. As a rule, the letter's read represented the spectrum of opinion among listeners. There was one exception: when the predefined topic was anti-Semitism. In this case Wesemann toned down the statements of the audience. This material appears to be a still buried treasure for the social history of the postwar era. From the perspective of radio history, there is information about the audience's attitudes and its patterns of interpretation. Here we find relatively unfiltered elements of the ongoing process of negotiating the Nazi past during the 1950s. More than half of the letters are examples of still virulent anti-Semitism. Although Wesemann already pre-selected the letters, there were intense reactions, especially from Jewish listeners. Wesemann followed up with two more shows on this topic in which primarily the opponents of anti-Semitism had the chance to speak; a selection that did not correspond to the range of letters received.

In the following, I refer both to the letters and to the broadcasts. Noticeable is that the anti-Semitic letter writers came from all social classes. The vast majority of them thought it still opportune to criticize the murder of the Jews under National Socialism as "troublemaker anti-Semitism." Most letter writers argued that the Jews themselves were to blame for anti-Semitism: first, because they did not adapt to the "host people," they did not assimilate, and, second, because they considered themselves the chosen people and strove for world domination. The latter stereotype is often connected to the assertion that the Jews everywhere belong to the elite and thus prevent the ascendancy of a German elite. These partial discourses, which originate from the reservoir of older anti-Semitic discourses, were connected to others that arose from the experiences of the war and postwar periods. Some inscribe themselves into an anti-Semitic victim discourse, wherein the sufferings of the Jews is set off against the sufferings of the Germans during the war: "But I ask myself what is the difference between the deaths of thousands of defenseless Jews in the gas chambers and the deaths of thou-

26. For reference and help with the sources, I thank the Head of the Historical Archives at the WDR, Mrs. Witting-Nöthen. The following in WDR HA 4490.

sands of innocent women and children in the air-raid shelters, like rats drowned, in 1943" (January 13, 1957). In the letters, this line of argument is connected to the question of compensation [*Wiedergutmachung*] where, once again, an older metaphor of the greedy Jew is used: "What really surprises me is that Jews, who experienced so much injustice in Germany, feel so comfortable again here. Or is it the enormously large amounts of compensation that fuels the attraction of immigration" (December 21, 1956). Others argue that Jews are unpopular in all countries, that the 28,000 Jews who again live in Germany displace Germans and that the Jews live under a special legal protections in the Federal Republic.

Wesemann began the first broadcast (January 1, 1957) with an excerpt from a letter which remarked that it was no wonder that anti-Semitism had increased, because politics accorded with it: "Besides, our broadcasting services are again 100% under Jewish influence [*verjudet*]." Wesemann, who otherwise was very restrained in his short commentary, certifies to this listener's "stupidity," but also says that the tenor of this letter is typical for a certain group of letters received. He comments on another anti-Semitic letter as follows:

I believed, my listener, I was not supposed to withhold from you the omissions quoted in the last letter, so that one knows what kind of mischievous spirits still exist. Such products of a cloudy brain leave no room for objective discussion, although this says nothing about their appeal to simple-minded people [. . .]

While in the first show anti-Semitic letter writers said approximately as much as those of an opposing view, this was not the case in the two following broadcasts. An exact analysis of the letters of the latter group would be rewarding, because a definite philo-Semitism can be found in some of them, described by Frank Stern as wearing a "kindly-sewn star of David."²⁷

At this point I would like to say something again about the space of the speakable. These three broadcasts of "The Listener's Turn to Speak" are exceptions. The letters on the topic of euthanasia, for instance, differ completely from the majority of the letters discussed above. The

27. Frank Stern, "Ein freundlich aufgenähter Davidstern": Antisemitismus und Philosemitismus in der politischen Kultur der 50er Jahre," in *Modernisierung im Wiederaufbau. Die westdeutsche Gesellschaft der 50er Jahre*, ed. Axel Schildt and Arnold Sywottek (Berlin-Bonn: Dietz Verlag, 1993) 717-734.

authors argue in a highly differentiated fashion with reference to the Nazi euthanasia program.²⁸ The topic of anti-Semitism in this radio program seems to have constructed a space for the speakable for a short time. Merely the possibility of having anti-Semitism occupy public space, namely through the radio, reactivated partial discourses that had been hegemonic only a few years prior. The letter writers — and they thematized this often — had not accepted the silent agreement that anti-Semitism after Auschwitz was a taboo subject in the Federal Republic, an agreement which was accompanied by silence about participation in National Socialism. The radio had become a stage on which the editor became part of the production. Also, Wesemann's horror, his public indignation, is accompanied by an unintentional downplaying of anti-Semitism when he presents it simply as an expression of stupidity and simple-mindedness.

Conclusion

Here I come back to the question, asked at the beginning, whether we have not made it too easy for ourselves with the idea that after 1945 a "proper discussion" about National Socialism was at all possible and, at the same time, media transportable. On the one hand, one must consider that the editors mostly were socialized under National Socialism — even for them it was apparently necessary to integrate the experiences of everyday life and of the war. This generally worked only by giving meaning or by reverting to the realm of storage memory [*Speichergedächtniss*]. On the other hand, they knew of the opinions held and patterns of interpretation dominant among their audience — and of the difficulties in changing them. The taboo of anti-Semitic speech and the taboo of media representation were bought through public silence [*Schweigen*]. This silence was amplified by the dominant victim discourse, by the Cold War, and by a new positioning of Germany in the West and in Europe. But there, where the radio became the stage for what otherwise was not to be said, the silence and the taboo imploded.

28. WDR HA 4491, Broadcast on 26 March, 1950.