

SACRIFICE AND NATIONAL BELONGING

in Twentieth-Century Germany

Edited by **Greg Eghigian** and **Matthew Paul Berg**



Introduction by John Borneman

Sacrifice and National Belonging in Twentieth-Century Germany

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SACRIFICE AND NATIONAL BELONGING IN TWENTIETH- CENTURY GERMANY

by Marcus Funck

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To
Bede K. Lackner
Colleague and Friend
UTA History Department
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Preface

This collection of essays first began as papers presented at the 34th Annual Walter Prescott Webb Memorial Lectures held at the University of Texas at Arlington in March, 1999. The idea for organizing a symposium and subsequent volume about "Sacrifice and National Belonging in Twentieth-Century Germany" emerged from a recognition that Germans from virtually all walks of life appear to have been unusually preoccupied with two interrelated problems over the course of the last century: forging a sense of national community and coming to terms with widespread suffering. It was within this context that the concept and ideal of "sacrifice" (in German, *Opfer*) played a pivotal role in modern German political culture. What was seen as literally a noble act that carried overtly feudal and religious connotations into the nineteenth century was quickly democratized and secularized in the twentieth. As these essays show, once the value of heroic national sacrifice was invoked during the First World War in order to mobilize German soldiers and civilians, it proved to be a remarkably persistent and resilient "mental tool" for understanding and responding to a variety of social dislocations.

It is not the intent of this volume to be comprehensive; one could well include essays on National Socialist ritual, the East German ethos of anti-fascism, or West German ideals of postwar reconstruction, among others. Rather, it is our interest to offer up possible histories of sacrifice. In other words, we hope to open new avenues for discussion of the history of German political life by suggesting ways of assessing the place of sacrifice in German discourse over national belonging.

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Greg Eghigian

Sacrifice and National Belonging in Twentieth-Century Germany

Introduction

John Borneman

German Sacrifice Today

■ Let us define sacrifice not in a purely religious sense, as an offering to a deity, but more abstractly and theoretically, as the constitution of a loss necessary for the creation of the sacred. Characterized in this way, it is both universal (as humans are always constituting losses in the pursuit of some purpose or goal) and culturally and historically specific (as this purpose or goal, the sacred, is contingent on place and time). The value of sacrifice is also relative in the sense that it varies by perspective—of the sacrificer, the sacrificed, and the analyst. The history of modern Germany presents this contingency and variability in its extremes, both in its most horrendous form as Holocaust—genocide in the name of the *Volk* (historical effects)—and in more benign versions—such as self-sacrifice for the construction of an inclusive national *sozialer Wohlfahrtsstaat* (social welfare state) or willingness to sacrifice for the ecological health of the planet.

The sheer weight and intensity of the effects of this term *Opfer* (sacrifice), what we might call the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of sacrifice in this century, has made Germany into a model of and for sacrifice. Today, of the many anthropological examples of communal sacrifice, Germany serves as a limit case: a model of the ways, for both good and evil, in which sacrifice has been practiced, and a model for other social groups by which they often measure, for both good and evil, their own constitution of losses and their own sacreds.

The essays in this volume trace aspects of the history of sacrifice in Germany from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. They serve as a kind of palimpsest, not only presenting the front-page stories of contemporary German sacrifice, which reached its zenith in World War II and the Holocaust, but also attempting to go beyond the exposed side to talk about the relation of the present to past engravings and alternative stories. From this perspective, sacrifice is practiced in a series of historical repetitions and displacements. At the end of this introduction, I would like to suggest one major form of displacement today—election rituals. For now, however, I might best orient the reader by reviewing three seminal works of early anthropological theorizing: E. B. Tylor, Sir James Frazer, and Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss.

Nineteenth-century British and Scottish theorists of sacrifice were concerned with understanding its cross-cultural aspects and hence focused on its morphological dimensions, which they then placed in an evolutionary sequence. Tylor and Frazer are generally credited with uncovering the two fundamental principles of sacrifice: substitution and the creation of sacred objects through the constitution of a loss. The principle of substitution, first explicated by Tylor, explained how either a part was substituted for a whole, such as a finger or a lock of hair for the whole person, or an object of lesser value was substituted for one of greater value, such as effigies for real victims.¹ The principle itself, Tylor thought, was indexical of a developmental sequence from primitive to advanced social types.

In 1890, Sir James Frazer elaborated Tylor's thesis and explained how groups arrived at this principle of substitution. He observed that sacrifice was a means of absorbing the qualities of a god or gods, in other words, the primary mode of creation of human sacrality, and he posited three traditions, or stages, in the evolution of sacrificial rites. The first tradition concerns the sacrifice of kings themselves, a practice designed, he says, to

spare society the spectacle and effects of the king's own physical decline. One of his major sources here were Icelandic myths, which contained the idea that the king himself was the sacred sacrifice, killed when his symbolic potency declined, usually after a nine-year reign. The second tradition concerns the custom of child sacrifice, frequently of the firstborn son, who is substituted for the king and then sacrificed in the name of the social whole, the function being to propitiate the vengeful gods and to prolong the reign of the father.² The third tradition concerns the substitute sacrifice of the socially expendable, people from the "poorer classes," "an ugly or deformed person," or "a condemned criminal."³

In sum, Frazer traces a movement: from the ancient sacrifice of declining kings, to the substitutions of their firstborn sons, to the sacrifice of marginal or alienable others. To paraphrase: from gods, to kings, to sons, to scapegoats. A key contribution in Frazer's theory is that he transforms William Robertson-Smith's image,⁴ developed in work on Semitic religion, of sacrifice as a gathering of harmonious and communal diners, to an image of sacrificial meals that are violent rites of self-dismemberment. At such meals "divinities have to take themselves apart to put a world together."⁵

French theorists were more concerned with the logical, as opposed to historical, priority of sacrifice and therefore shifted attention away from the religious (as in Robertson-Smith and Frazer) to the sociological character of sacrifice. Accordingly, Hubert and Mauss subsume the study of sacrifice under a functional analysis of ritual.⁶ Following Emile Durkheim's lead, they claim that sacrifice consecrates a profane character by establishing communication between sacred and profane worlds. Sacrifices are theatrical and festive, serving the functions of expiation in the sense of fulfilling an obligation to a god, a plaintive request for rewards or advantages, or a consecration in service of the momentary unification of worshipers with powers beyond their own control and comprehension. This last function, of consecration, heightens the spirituality of the community (or, by the nineteenth century, "society") through the sacrifice of divine blood. Periodic ritual sacrifice becomes a foundational social act, a means of spiritual sustenance, required by collective life to bring individuals into a relationship with something greater than themselves. Sacrifice, then, is no longer a stage in human history but a universal human ritual whose social and institutional form can be displaced but which can be eliminated only at the risk of dissolving the social.

I. *Histories of German Sacrifice*

Histories of German sacrifice, as illustrated in the essays that follow, provide ample evidence for each of these theoretical insights into the structure and function of sacrifice. But while German history supports the theses that sacrifice operates through the principle of substitution, and that it constitutes the sacred through losses, it has not followed any progressive scheme. Sequence is indeed important in understanding the types of sacrifice, but in German history the sequence has not followed evolutionary principles. Particularly important to observe are shifts over the course of the last two centuries in the nature of the sacred and its relation to the secular state. Increasingly invasive modes of governmentality, and growing belief in and hence power attributed to the social, paralleled the centralization of political power at the level of the state. Following the failure of the Weimar Republic, a religiously imbued and phantasmatic *Volk* became increasingly sacralized. And sacrifices entailing losses of ever-greater magnitude were needed in order to recreate this sacred.

Marcus Funck's essay, "The Meaning of Dying," traces the history of sacrifice through its meaning in East Elbian noble families from the end of the eighteenth century through World War II. He demonstrates how, in the course of the nineteenth century, Prussian noble families became progressively militarized: reduced to "pure military clans" that acted within Germany as "war tribes." Although most military families could trace their ancestors back several centuries, some to the thirteenth century, the Prussian "warrior caste" solidified only after 1890, much later than the Austrian or French. Essential to achieving this castelike solidarity were marital strategies that restricted spousal choice to members of other military families.

The two world wars of the twentieth century fundamentally changed this warrior caste, in both its internal composition and its function within German society. Prior to the twentieth century, a disproportionate number of their sons had entered the officer corps. Hence in World War I, when officers still led the charges in battles, the male ranks of these noble families were particularly decimated. In fact, the fatality rate of noble military families in World War I exceeded those from all other wars extending back to the time of the wars of Frederick the Great.

Military families cultivated the legend of a heroic self-foundation manifested in a readiness to use violence. Funck argues that the increasing euphoria for World War I was accompanied by the glorification of a vi-

olent death. Each individual male death in the "Great Sacrifice," as this war is called, was associated with the collective life of the family into which he was born. Surviving members of military families, who thought of themselves as having engaged in self-sacrifice by giving their men to the violent deaths of war, recuperated the loss of these individuals for themselves. They justified their social and political privileges through a willingness to exchange the lives of individual males. Their economic dependence on this military service reinforced their commitment to it.

Especially in the first phase of World War I, the military clans used the tremendous losses among the ranks of the officer corps to secure their survival through integration into a "national-folkish martyr complex." Prussian nobility had anchored sacrificial thinking in the individual family through specific types of memory and forgetting. The Spartan education of individuals in the family stressed "overcoming of mental and physical weaknesses," learning "to obey in order to rule," "iron discipline, hardness against oneself, selflessness, iron fulfillment of duties, martyrdom." This line of thought led to a new kind of treatment of fallen soldiers during World War I. Those who lay in hospitals were expected to suffer silently as they died. After battle, the idea of mass death was avoided and individuals were always named for use in heroic histories and war legends. Yet, in commemoration of the losses incurred in the war, there was "undifferentiated remembrances for groups of victims who had died under the most varied conditions." Mothers and wives were also cast as heroes for their preparedness to sacrifice sons and husbands. Slogans such as "Sacrifice for the clan, *Volk*, Fatherland" reinforced the view that sacrifice was a solution for the nation.

The battles of World War I extended this logic of sacrifice as a national solution, and therefore the pain of war, to civilians in a new way, with the use of new machinery of mass extermination. In this setting, German nobility as a class was seen as responsible for "collective memory" of the folk, a memory structured around hero and death cults. Heroic deaths as *Kriegsopfer* (victims of war) were then recuperated by entire families and integrated into their own histories. Funck demonstrates that the apogee of the nobility's death cult was reached in the forty years of peace after 1871, a period in which the nobility used their memory work to keep their status and in which bourgeois writers took them up as heroic characters in their stories. The subsequent decimation of its numbers in World War I did not change the nobility's dependence on the military because its social prestige and cultural privileges were tied to this institution.

World War II therefore provided another opportunity for what remained of the nobility to assert its prominence. But, in contrast to World War I, in World War II German nobility were not united in the forms of service and sacrifice to the *Volk*. Some were simply victims of allied bombs, others were killed in action or killed in service in the Waffen SS, and still others died in resistance to the Nazi cause. Following the war, the nobility appropriated all these causes without differentiating as to the kind of sacrifice for the nation. Subsequently, all aristocrats and highborn who died during the war have been memorialized as fallen national heroes who fulfilled the noble "ethos and duty regarding sacrifice." That is, regardless of cause or circumstance of death, all highborn deaths were recuperated as sacrifices and their deeds honored within genealogical archives. Funck concludes that because of its intimate links to military privilege and sacrifice, German nobility was unable to transform itself from a warrior caste into a "civil aristocracy." This family strategy resulted in decimating their ranks and has ultimately led to their demise.

Essays by Brian Crim and Greg Eghigian carry us deeper into the meaning of sacrifice in the interwar period, following the crushing defeat in World War I. Crim considers sacrifices of German Jewish veterans in light of the discourse on sacrifice during the interwar period. He is interested in how the memory of wartime experience is employed for arguments of inclusion or exclusion in the nation. German Jewish veterans appealed to their own sacrifices in the Great War to justify their claims to membership in the *Volksgemeinschaft* (folk community). Crim demonstrates that these veterans shared with other Germans "common values, a reverence for the war experience, and a desire to translate that experience into a political reality." In particular, the experience on the front became a symbolic focus around which memories of the war, and of the inclusiveness that could be claimed from the sacrifices, were structured. Central to this memory was the idea of "spilling blood [as] the ultimate sacrifice for the nation."

National Socialists also glorified the experiences of soldiers on the front, but they refused to acknowledge the sacrifice of German Jewish veterans. Instead they constructed Jews as scapegoats for the social and economic dislocations that characterized Germany in the interwar years. Common sacrifice of German Jews and Germans in the Great War as an argument for inclusion was turned into an argument for the necessity of sacrificing Jews and excluding them. In short, Crim demonstrates how the function of remembering this front experience was not to reconstruct the

past accurately, which would have recognized German Jewish contributions, but to shape the future community as one that required their exclusion.

Eghigian takes up the "ritual of national sacrifice" in the same inter-war period, but his focus is on analyzing the significance of "resentment" in structuring German political and moral culture. Specifically, he seeks to understand the use of "affective registers" in creating a "community of shared feelings." Resentment, he argues, is a response to questions of theodicy: "Who suffers? Why? To what, if any, end? Who or what is to blame? What is to be done about it?" He demonstrates how Germans appropriated the many meanings of and exploited the ambiguity within the concept of sacrifice (*Opfer*)—"victim," "casualty," and the constitution of "a sacred contract between the one offering the sacrifice and the divinity"—to reimagine themselves after the Great War "not as the sacrificers but as the innocent victims of an impotent ritual of an equally impotent state." The sacred object that is sacrificed shifts over time, from externalities (the French enemy, the Jew) to the German community itself as the sacrificial victim. The ensuing resentment, writes Eghigian, was a result of the "perceived failure of national sacrifice as theodician ritual in the wake of World War I."

In tracing the wider social implications of the link between resentment and failed communal sacrifice, Eghigian draws a novel connection between the growth of an attitude of social entitlement and "the institutionalization of injury compensation." A key to the successful organization of the social welfare state in Germany has been to turn a community of perceived sufferers, who identify only with themselves, into an identification with other sorts of victims. That is, individual risk of loss from injury is lessened by the assumption of collective liability by corporate instances, such as the state. At issue here is what others have called the "socialized management of risk," an assumption of collective liability that makes it no longer necessary to assess individual fault or liability. Social entitlement programs, such as the institutionalization of injury compensation, work precisely in this way, managing risk at the social level which in turn makes it frequently unnecessary to assess individual liability.

Eghigian points to a further effect of the expansion of social entitlements through protection against injury: it creates identification with other victims. The assumption of collective liability for injury creates solidarity among those insured. This logic is remarkably inclusive, and it has been crucial for the efficacy of the appeals to self-sacrifice that have played

a critical role in all German political regimes of this century. Eghigian traces the variations in arguments by different political groups (Communists, conservative, liberal, and eugenic critics, as well as the National Socialists) regarding entitlements to compensation by the social welfare state. All these political groups expressed their values through appeals to a common mythic narrative of sacrifice and victimization, which in turn bred resentment because of the absence of actual solutions during the great economic depression of the time. The success of Nazi appeals to moral resentment, he argues, rested on their embrace of a promise of social redemption "through moral renewal via sacrifice and self-sacrifice." They exhorted Germans to occupy positions of both sacrificer and victim, to feel themselves to be both victims and victimizers.

Finally, Eghigian asks, why the radical exclusion of some (Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, the handicapped) in a community that constitutes itself with such an inclusive narrative? In a community organized around suffering (*Leid*), what happened to empathy (*Mitleid*)? Why did this community based on social suffering end up inflicting such suffering on others? Eghigian argues that Nazis used resentment about the failure of sacrifices in the Great War to turn Germans away from their affective register of victimization of the interwar period to one of active sacrificers: "the national community was represented as a sacrificing community of common fate." Compassion for strangers was rejected in favor of "redemption through politically justified acts of sacrifice. Common struggle replaced shared suffering, and an ethic of total sacrifice became synonymous with active membership in the national community."

The significance of the *Volksgemeinschaft* in motivating sacrifice in World War II is again taken up in Michael Geyer's essay. What, he asks, "compels men and, indeed, entire societies to go to war and fight to death?" After carefully tracking the rate of death among the numerically largest victim groups in the war—German soldiers and civilians, Jews, Russians—Geyer finds that the most killing and death occurred in the last several years of war, from 1942 to 1945. In fact, "more German soldiers were killed in action between July 20, 1944, the failed coup against Hitler, and May 8, 1945, unconditional surrender, than in the entire previous five years of war between 1939 and 1944."

This is remarkable because it presents us with the paradox that the German leadership mounted a total war with the full knowledge that a German defeat was inevitable and that their casualties would parallel or

surpass those they inflicted on others. "The Wehrmacht fought for three long years," he writes, "the nation was mobilized in a total war effort notwithstanding the leadership's knowledge that this effort would not make a palpable difference in the eventual outcome of the war." In other words, only after the war had been strategically lost did the German mobilization reach its "peak numerical fighting power" and did killing fields proliferate, also reaching the home front. While the first part of the war "was motivated by haughty racial concepts of superiority and inferiority, the second phase entailed a systematic war against civilians in which racial ideology and military tactics fused in a lethal combination." Moreover, Geyer cites evidence that civilians also fought on, in the midst of their own deaths and the killing of others, despite knowledge that this mass sacrifice was futile. The enormity of this slaughter continues to boggle the mind: "Altogether, approximately 19 million men, women, and children were either killed or died as effect of the war."

Geyer explains this motivation to fight to death in terms of the meaning of sacrifice and defense of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Germans "thought that sacrifice in order to maintain community was a self-evident virtue in catastrophe, because they felt that survival depended on community and disaster came with dissolution." Three themes appear to justify the course of events in which German civilians, acting as sacrificers, ended up embracing their role as victims: "defense of community, the pursuit of unity, and self-sacrifice as a survival strategy." The fact that both sacrifice and victim are expressed in the same German word, *Opfer*, is no coincidence. For the leadership, moreover, even if the war and Nazi goals could not be won on the battlefield, a redeeming sacrifice might become an eternal source of memory. For them, "if only the sacrifice was great enough, memory would return to it time and again."

The final two essays, by Uli Linke and Silke Wenk, carry the analysis of sacrifice and community into the postwar and contemporary world. Uli Linke explores the violence of exclusionary practices in contemporary Germany through a close reading of metaphors of the body and the symbolics of blood, what she calls a "corporal topography." This topography is used to map refugees, immigrants, and those defined as Other. She finds that in Germany "the body is perceived as perpetually threatened by contagion . . . visions [of which] are rendered tangible through metaphors of blood." As blood imagery is frequently related through metaphors of liquidity to women's menstruation, misogyny becomes pronounced in the

German imaginary. As Others are transformed into women in order to exclude them, a particular metaphysics of place and geographical placement is reinforced.

Like Eghigian, Linke examines ideas of the German social welfare state. But her focus on the postwar period leads her to consider not compensation for injury but prosperity, which, instead of producing an inclusive narrative of collective liability, generates modes of self-enclosure. Foreigners are perceived as a threat to the "closed community" and hence as transgressive. The language of sacrifice is employed for this use, even when the word itself no longer appears. Linke demonstrates this use even when this language is at odds with the individual's own intent, as is often the case with postwar youths and the contemporary left. As a particular specification, she takes up the postwar history of nudity as a political practice, and then links this insightfully to "the commodification of the unclothed body" in German tourism. Linke concludes about postwar Germany: "national identity, the sense of national belonging, continues to be infused by a corporal aesthetic that demands the erasure of difference." Ultimately, then, her essay is a powerful argument for a continuity thesis in the "German national imaginary." Corporal aesthetics permits Germans "to exhibit race innocently, without having to publicly (or consciously) acknowledge participation in a racial mythology."

Linke's argument operates at the level of linguistic metaphors and demonstrates that there tends to be an unconscious continuity in the language of sacrifice. It remains to be seen whether this language has the same meaning in different social settings—whether, for example, sacrifice has the same referents in discourses about war and the military, taxation, public services, immigration, and art over time. We might refine this question by asking about the possibilities of historical displacement of sacrifice, whether and under what conditions in fact its mode changes.

Silke Wenk considers commemorative practices of Nazi genocide after German unification, with a focus on arguments and proposals over the last decade for a memorial for the victims of the Holocaust in Berlin. What are the strategies employed to remember publicly a regime of sacrifice, and how is this regime to be represented in art and pedagogy after the fact? Our attention is circled back to that of Funck's essay, away from private memory and the organization of victim groups to the creation of public remembrance: the place of memorials, museums, instruction, and the political organization of memory. This process of public remembrance is "deeply intertwined," she writes, "with the attempt to reconstruct a na-

tion that is both questioned and called on within the framework of European politics." How does one create a Germany without creating a Nazi Germany? "The reconstruction of a feeling of 'belonging'—a national belonging—collides with the insurmountable difficulties of constructing a single, unproblematic vision of a history that does not exist."

Some proposals for the Berlin Holocaust memorial think that the memorial should make "the hardly comprehensible paradoxes in the history of the city bearable." This wording, she suggests, indicates the difficulties and limitations of this task of public remembrance, for what is bearable or unbearable can never be answered forever and for all. She convincingly critiques memorials that attempt to create "a universe of victims (sacrifices)," where no group is prioritized over another in its suffering, or where all groups are subsumed under a specific representation, or where the focus is on the suffering of the Jews alone. Contemporary German memorials pose the question of how to re-emplot this history of the organization of death, of loss, and of sacrifice. Are they to offer the possibility for redemption, or are they merely warnings? Or punishments? Or demands for repentance?

At base is the choice between a desire to mourn and overcome the loss or to remember the loss melancholically forever. Of course, this choice elides the issue of agency: whose loss is to be commemorated? Sacrifice is purposeful and loss is inflicted by specific groups of people. Wenk cites a distinction made by the sociologist Michal Bodemann between the "mourning of a loss" and the "remembrance of a crime." Bodemann insists that because the two purposes are at odds, they cannot be brought together in the same site. The historical model for such conflated remembrance, Wenk argues, is the "Altar des Vaterlandes," a memorial which dates back to the time of the French Revolution. It is a model that eviscerates both the "loss" and the "crime" in that the state constructs an altar to commemorate sacrifices without distinction. Death in the name of the country is glorified, military triumphs are celebrated, but, Wenk writes, no place is available for the memory of loss and crime.

Yet, the Germany of the last decade of the twentieth century, post-unification Germany, seems precisely not to be caught in a choice between identifications with either rites of mourning or rites of commemoration. If anything, the two practices, of mourning and commemoration, are frequently part of the same daily itinerary of German tourists who come to Berlin to visit their new capital. Indeed in the new *Berliner Republik* both kinds of sites proliferate and constitute part of the symbolic

landscape of not only German but European history. Moreover, these rites appear to have had an especially marked effect on the significance Germans attribute to the memory of loss and crime. As was especially apparent during the ethnic cleansings of the 1990s in the Bosnian war and in Kosovo, the German State was extremely reluctant to send German soldiers to die in battle on foreign soil. Only after fulfilling a set of preconditions—extended public debate, intra-governmental unity of purpose, unity with European allies, definition of military missions solely in terms of prevention of massacre and peace-keeping—could the state again direct sacrifice in the name of the people.

Indeed, what has emerged from the Balkans conflict is not renewed national sacrifice or victory for Germans, neither the mourning of a loss nor the commemoration of a hero, but agreement on sacrifice for “human rights” for others. Protection of human rights has become the most readily accepted public reason to sacrifice in Germany. In debates about sites of commemoration, however, what is politicized, as Wenk demonstrates, are German sacrifices of the past and memories of this past; the ideal of human rights is never invoked. Perhaps this suggests something about the different modes in which memory is being deployed, sometimes to atone for the past, sometimes to assuage guilt in the present, other times to direct future behavior. Each of these modes performs differently while not necessarily being in contradiction to each other.

Rites of commemoration tend to heroize the past, or, as Levi-Strauss has argued, bring the past into the present, while rites of mourning may in fact lament loss by transporting the present back to the past.

Seen anthropologically, the remembrance of a crime and the mourning of a loss are not mutually exclusive but mutually communicative. Both bring the present and past into a dialectical relation with each other. But perhaps there is a third kind of rite, what we might call “rites of collective accountability,” of which we should be aware—public apologies, restitution, reparations, retributive acts and trials, investigatory commissions, the cultivation of critical historiography, public forums for discussion and debate, public elections. Such rites may also set up a dialectic between past into the present, but in addition they seek to liberate the present from history by signifying a caesura, a break from the past. This type of closure should not be confused with forgetting; rather, it is a particular reorientation of the past toward the future that affirms a caesura, a reinterpretation of one’s position in light of a changed historical trajectory.⁷

In any case, as Wenk writes, “The promise of redemption through sub-

ordination to the idea of nation seems tenable no longer in a united Germany." Here she is pointing to a singular achievement of postwar Germans, a displacement in the signification of sacrifice in commemorative and mourning rites. Germans today are dis-identifying with the most obvious national agents in their pasts: their grandparents and great-grandparents who fought and sacrificed for the nation. They are dis-identifying with the sacrifice narratives of the past depicted by Funck, Crim, Eghigian, and Geyer that had worked so effectively in both world wars, and particularly for the Nazis. Indeed, at a time of increasing "Europeanization" of much of national life, why should younger Germans be asked to identify themselves solely with the murderers of the national past?

The fear that such a dis-identification would mean a repression of past memories and lead to either a repeat of criminality or a shirking of responsibility has thus far not proven to be well founded. This singular break in identification, and the development of new rites of collective accountability, might in fact be a German contribution to the culture of remembrance that other groups with similar histories of victimization might learn from. It points to a present narrative whose intent is not reproduction of the group, and as such, it is an innovation in the means of collective remembrance and the working through of collective liability. Wenk concludes that the process of debating the Holocaust memorial has called into question "the fundamental possibility of a representation of the Holocaust" in Germany. At the level of representation, no single icon will do and, therefore, "no possibility of positive, unambivalent identification is to be found in history."

II. Elections as Contemporary Sacrifice

In this section, I suggest one domain in which it would be fruitful to explore a displacement of sacrificial rites: democratic elections. The historical legacy of the Nazi regime of sacrifice has largely delegitimated certain ways of constituting loss, but the social functions of sacrifice continue, though now in displaced forms. Some of this is evident in practices in domains that do not replicate conventional racial, sexual, or gendered exclusions. Democratic elections constitute one such ritual domain, and they correspond to the third type of rite previously mentioned, a rite of collective accountability.

Much has changed in governance since the two great wars, the first of

which is still called "the Great Sacrifice." Recall Frazer's typology of types of sacrifice: the ancient sacrifice of declining kings, the substitute sacrifice of the king's firstborn son, the substitute sacrifice of marginal or alienable others. The trauma of these wars has exhausted the second and third forms of sacrifice, or, to be more cautious, seriously limited the utility of the substitute sacrifice of sons or scapegoats. It is highly contentious, if not impossible, to constitute the *Volk* through such means. In fact such sacrifices, when they occur—as in the periodic persecution and murder of immigrants—appear to provoke a questioning of the sense and purpose of the Germans as a people, a discussion on the legitimacy of a *Volksgemeinschaft* and about possible alternatives to this form of community. In other words, such substitute sacrifice disintegrates the social instead of re-substantializing it.

Since 1945, conventional forms of sacrifice appear to have lost their ability to unite a people, not only within Germany but also within all of Europe. The link between sacrifices of sons and scapegoats and any sense of sacred, while not severed, is no longer convincing to most of the people living in European states. Evidence for this is manifold. For one, within thirty years of the end of World War II, Western European politicians, under pressure from "the people," severely curtailed the use of military force against external "enemies," and they eliminated the death penalty. For another, by the end of the war, the traditional warrior caste in all of Europe had lost most of its prestige and status. And then there is the fact of a marked development and extension of the principles of equality within the social body itself, defined above all as equal participation in the political system and equal access to public goods. Also observable has been a movement within Europe, true of both sides of the former cold war divide, toward equality within the highly authoritarian and patriarchal familial and social systems, a movement that in Western Europe alone cross-cut private life, civil society, and the state. Nowhere have these changes been more dramatic than in Germany.

This is not to deny the coexistence of exclusionary principles but simply to point to a postwar tendency toward elimination of conventional sacrificial modes within Germany specifically and Europe as a whole. My hypothesis is that these transformations were in part made possible through the reintroduction of the first form of sacrifice identified by Frazer: self-sacrifice of the ruler. In democratic political forms, this older form of sacrifice, such as when the Icelandic king sacrificed himself after nine years of rule, is now performed in ritual elections.

By democracy, I am following the minimalist conception put forth by Joseph Schumpeter that designates democracies as systems in which rulers are selected by competitive elections.⁸ Robert Dahl has rightly criticized this conception as an idealization that does not correspond to empirical reality.⁹ Other conditions—such as the equal access of candidates to voters, time-off to vote, minimal living standards, multi-party systems, impartial judiciaries, the rule of law—might also be necessary in order to guarantee that elections are fair and competitive.¹⁰ My argument is that the ideal, even if met only in a minimalist empirical form, institutionalizes a form of sacrifice that tends to replace the second and third form of sacrifice previously mentioned. In fact, there is a logical opposition, a permanent tension, between the self-sacrifice of the ruler and the substitute sacrifice (of sons or scapegoats) in the creation of the sacred.

To highlight the historical significance of elections in democratic polities in relation to other forms of sacrifice, we might recover from the Greek word *holokauston* its original meaning, which is a translation of the Hebrew term for “burnt offering.” A burnt offering was made to protect the sacrificer from the hostility of the deity. All deities, for the Greeks as well as the Hebrews, were vengeful gods that required periodic offerings. Since the latter part of the nineteenth century, in Germany *das Volk* (in much of the rest of Europe the “nation”) became a new deity, a god of a “loving” and pleasure-seeking sort; in Durkheimian terms, a *Volk* that worshipped itself. Great sacrifices—of sons and scapegoats—were made to this deity in the two world wars. But the sacrifices were always of a substitute sort, of sons in wars and racialized Others through demonization and persecution. Elections, when democratic, institute another kind of sacrifice where the people sacrifices itself as a body instead of an Other, and where the ruler/ruling party must eventually sacrifice himself/itself to the opposition by “losing” an election.

III. Four Elements of Sacrifice in Democratic Elections

In a democratic election, four elements of sacrifice are performed: (1) the periodic sacrifice of the ruler or ruling party, (2) the periodic dissolution of the people, (3) the electorate’s periodic sacrifice of time, and (4) sacrifice through ritual excess. Let me briefly go into each of these four elements. First, the ruler or ruling part must regularly risk being replaced; the longer the incumbent person or party remains in power, the less “democratic” a regime appears. The systems theorist Niklas Luhmann has ex-

plicated the regime particularity of the relation between ruler and ruled, arguing that democracy distinguishes itself by a particular code, ruling party/opposition. He writes, "perhaps the most important invention [in avoiding the arbitrariness of rule and control and in delimiting the domain of politics] resides in the institution of parliamentary representation with allowable opposition as the basis of the choice of government."¹¹ The ruling party remains legitimate only to the extent it maintains itself as distinct from a viable opposition. If societal interests and issues become political, they are taken up through this code, of government and opposition, which cannot be questioned if the political form is to be nominated as "democratic."

From Luhmann's perspective, the governed, or "the people," are necessarily separated from the state during everyday life, but they must re-enter the life of the state through the process of delegation in ritual elections. They enter not as "the people" but as disaggregated monads, individuals who can rethink—independent of enduring ties of alliance or affinity—their choice between ruling party and opposition. We can develop this insight by noting that democratic states must hold in tension the notion that the "people" both precede the state (the state lives for them) and are empty (a void needing to be continually re-constituted as an intersubjective group). Elections perform the work of constitution ritually, much like an initiation rite, by dissolving the people in order to reconstitute them as the symbolic focus of democratic government (of, by, and for the people).

This leads us to the second element: that in elections the "people" disaggregates itself, dissolves its unity into a display of signs of difference and social division. For a single day, all individuals are reduced to their "atomistic selves" and freed, if only for a utopian moment, from the totalizing pressures of all social groups and identifications. As Claude Lefort put it in his masterly analysis of democratic revolution: "the body politic was decapitated" and "the corporeality of the social was dissolved."¹² On election day, the head is put in limbo, if not removed and replaced, and the social body dissolved.

Following the election, the symbolic focus has been transformed from "the people as rulers" to the "delegates of the people" who now rule them. In a masterful essay, Pierre Bourdieu has addressed the function of political "delegation," which he identifies as a universal process of dispossession. He writes, "Individuals cannot constitute themselves (or be constituted) as a group, that is, a force capable of making itself heard, of speaking and being heard, unless they dispossess themselves in favor of a spokesper-

son."¹³ His point, undeniably true for any political form other than direct democracy, is that political groups, such as parties, obtain their power to represent the individual through an act of willed dispossession.

If we situate delegation within the specific electoral ritual process of democratic regimes, however, then the meaning of the operation of "dispossession" varies. In a democratic regime, the dispossession of voters through delegation of their power to the representative occurs through periodic elections. But these elections initially dissolve the social and thereby re-possess the individual, deliver back to the individual his or her authority, which means an opportunity to hold the delegate accountable. This is certainly a different and superior form of constructing representation to that where the delegate is never required to check-in. Bourdieu's universalism here obscures differences between democratic and totalitarian regimes. The major and perhaps most significant difference between the two regime types is that delegation in democracies articulates with principles of accountability that apply to the delegates.¹⁴ These principles have developed as the "rule of law," and they are embodied in codes that democratic political forms cannot do without.¹⁵

One of the most significant effects of constituting the people through this process of dispossession and repossession by delegation is to reaffirm the binary code government/opposition. This code represents not a united *Volksgemeinschaft* but a dissensual unity. Largely through this technique of ritual election, "democracy" is produced instead of competing forms of political organization such as despotism or monarchy. But also, democracy is produced instead of alternative forms of "systems," such as the economy (whose code might be profit/non-profit), or science (the code truth/falsity), or art (the code aesthetic/non-aesthetic), or sport (the code winner/loser), or entertainment (the code pleasure/non-pleasure).

Third, all individuals sacrifice "time," that most precious of modern commodities, to vote. Since "time" is regularly equated with "money," and democratic form exists in a tense relation with capitalist economic form, this sacrifice of time to vote is a direct valorization of participatory politics over economy, or democratic political form over capitalism. Hence, people commonly talk about having to vote as a sacrifice.

Fourth, and last, election rituals are burnt offerings, analogous to potlaches. They are rituals of excess that involve not only great expenditures of wealth but also large armies of volunteers, hired spin doctors, consultants, and pollsters to run a "campaign." Each campaign season appears with more social elaboration, requiring ever-greater public and private ex-

penditures of time and resources. That the content of elections appears to be less significant than the form, with electoral rhetoric often becoming merely a series of repeated platitudes, corresponds to a tendency observed in much ritual: the emptying of meaning through the institutionalization of repetition. Hence the actual outcome, who wins or loses, is frequently insignificant in that democratic elections are not legitimated by specific winners and losers or even necessarily by the subsequent outcomes of the policies of the victor. Rather, electoral legitimation rests on being loyal to the form of the performance, a form that requires the production of both a leader or ruling party (winner) and an opposition (loser) who acknowledge that this ritual of excess has reconstituted the social. The loser is not humiliated but turned into a worthy opposition. In these four senses, democratic elections constitute a loss in order to create the sacred, that sacred being the contemporary self-determining boundaries of a democratic polity.

Elections can also be seen as accountability mechanisms. In this sense, many political scientists understand elections in terms of responsiveness or representativeness of the new rulers to the preferences of the voters. There is an assumed connection between "voter preferences" and the policy outcomes of the electoral victor. For example, authors in a recent book edited by Bernard Manin, Adam Przeworski, and Susan Stokes examine the connections between democratic institutions, such as elections, and the way in which governments act.¹⁶ They ask whether governments are "responsive," "representative," or "accountable" to the preferences of an electorate after having won an election. Their conclusions vary widely, ranging from skeptical to clearly negative or positive assessments of the accountability or responsiveness of government. Yet, their findings tend to support my argument that the meaning of the election (its value or worth) is not directly tied to its outcome, however that is measured. In their words, the acceptance and legitimating potential of elections is not directly tied either to responsiveness, representativeness, or accountability as measured by the relation between voter preferences and actual policy.

Wherein then does democracy obtain its value? John Dunn, in an overview essay to the previously mentioned volume, reiterates that 'democracies, like other political systems, are about being ruled as much as about ruling (or indicating preferences); they are a rich "existential drama of trust and betrayal, pride and humiliation.'" He concludes, "To suggest that we can ever hope to have the power to make [rulers] act just

as we would wish them to suggests that it is really we, not they, who are ruling. This is an illusion, and probably a somewhat malign illusion, either a self-deception or an instance of being deceived by others."¹⁷

An anthropological account of this "existential drama," I am suggesting, might focus instead on the temporally specific meaning of electoral form as a ritual sacrifice. Such a focus might help us to understand why, despite the obvious limitations of elections—especially their susceptibility to the corruption of money and the manipulation of images in mass media—they have such a universal appeal. Why, specifically, are they considered a necessary mechanism in constituting democratic polities? Perhaps the answer rests in the promise of replacing more conventional forms of direct or substitute sacrifice.

IV. Electoral Sacrifice in Germany

In postwar Germany, as in much of Western Europe, elections indeed appear to have increasingly replaced large-scale substitute sacrifices. The Nazi regime, 1933–45, was characterized by a dictatorship whose explicit goal was anti-democratic: the elimination of any opposition. Both successor regimes, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR), represented themselves as democratic and institutionalized multi-party systems with ritual elections. Throughout the 1950s, however, the opposition in the GDR was slowly eliminated, and opposition parties were asked to serve alibi-roles of opposition under the leadership of the ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED). The increasingly farcical nature of elections was paralleled by a scapegoating (leading in its most extreme to imprisonment or sending into exile) of internal enemies.

During this same period in the FRG, for thirty-three of the forty-nine years of the *Bonner Republik*, the Christian Democratic-led (CDU) ruling coalition received its democratic legitimation in part from having an opposition, both in the form of a succession of social movements (anti-militarization, peace, youth, extra-parliamentary) and in the form of opposition political parties—e.g., the Social Democrats (SPD) and Free Democrats (FDP). After a short period of a "Grand Coalition" from 1966 to 1969 in which the Social Democrats ruled together with the Christian Democrats, the SPD formed their own ruling coalition, with the CDU moving into opposition. The SPD-led governments, starting in 1969, were replaced again by CDU-led governments in 1982. In the long period from 1982 to 1998, when the CDU again ruled in a coalition with the small

party of the Free Democrats, Helmut Kohl led as chancellor. The length of this period without the reversal of roles between ruling and opposition stretched the limits of the democratic system. And as subsequently revealed in the "Kohl finance affair," Kohl and the CDU had resorted to illegal means of raising money in order to stay in power. The "opposition" was regarded as an enemy rather than a necessary part of one's own legitimation. The 1998 election marked the first postwar German election where a new ruling coalition (the SPD and the Greens), and a new chancellor (Gerhard Schröder), was actually voted in, instead of just replacing the extant ruling coalition following scandal or resignation.

My point is that it is precisely only when elections function as a ritual of sacrifice that they become the key event in creating the symbolic form we call "democracy." As with all ritual, elections are demarcated from the everyday; they are set aside and appear timeless. But this break in the flow of time has a peculiar place in a democracy; it is not to reaffirm an order as much as to present the possibility to change it: hence the forced disaggregation and reconstitution of the people. Democracies, as a symbolic form of organizing a polity, require this rite of sacrifice, this reflex, whereby the powerful, the divine—meaning the people—take themselves apart in order to put their world together again. Rulers and ruled stage a ritual where the ruler risks his death, and the people are dissolved and forced to confront a possible departure from themselves. Therein lies a utopian possibility, a possibility of non-repetition, which other political forms do not offer. Elections are, of course, no guarantee. Other conditions are also obviously necessary, such as that democracies respect the rule of law in order to engage in a ritual cleansing of their own center, or that they require certain forms of networks of trust or equal access to certain activities.¹⁸

Earlier I referred to the modular stature for German sacrifice as a historical and historiographic entity. This modularity creates an unusual paradox for contemporary German people. They are largely captives of it, for to claim a break with its history brings with it a likely accusation of denying the *Last der Vergangenheit* (burden of the past). As the model of sacrifice, the history of German sacrifice is continually reexamined, not only to talk about the Germans of other times but also as a measure to talk about the Germans of today. As the model for it, Germans are constantly called on to perform for the present, to legitimate or delegitimize attempts by others to constitute losses in order to create other sacreds. To the extent that German people may want to break with this history and constitute themselves in a new way, or create new sacreds, they are admonished

with this burden of history that is always palpable because it is always being made present. Therefore Germans' views of themselves are part of a vicious circle, shaped by how they view how others view them. This politics of recognition is, of course, part of any self-definition, which is only possible through the mirror-imaging with a Third or an Other. It becomes problematic only when others view Germans and the German community as fixed, always already constructed, with no possibility of reinvention. To have arrived at this paradox is the meaning of sacrifice in Germany today.

Recall Walter Benjamin's inspiring interpretation of the image of the angel of history, taken from a Paul Klee painting, "Angelus Novus." She is blown into the future by a storm from Paradise, while looking backwards at the wreckage and ruins of the past. This storm Benjamin calls "progress." My more limited goal here has been to open up a theoretical consideration of contemporary sacrifice that does not contain it within the vision of the wreckage of this storm. In this, I am following Benjamin's spirit in brushing history—or contemporary interpretations of history's directionality—against the grain. Not all experience is to be understood in narratives of the return of the repressed, inescapable repetition, the return of ghosts, or the shock or the barbarism of history. Instead of seeing the German present as a necessary repetition, as an absence (waiting for another storm), or as caught between a dark past and looming future, we might see it as a series of ends and beginnings, a set of possibilities for departure. In Germany, if not in most of Western and Central Europe, the angel of history is no longer in awe of the ruins and sacrifices left behind; she no longer looks back in shock because she is conscious of something about this past, specifically about the barbarism and futility of certain forms of sacrifice. In the seventy years since Benjamin's death, that angel still cannot fly, but she sees and hears certain things she could not before see or hear. To be sure, the storm has not died, and there are blind spots that block vision, of which we are not aware, but all is not a blur.

NOTES

1. E. B. Tylor, *Religion in Primitive Culture*, vol. 2 (1877; reprint, Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1970).

2. Frazer finds two contradictory explanations for the sacrifice of the firstborn son; first, that firstborn sons were signs of great value and yet dispensable because they relieved the pressure of kings sacrificing themselves; second, the firstborn sons were threats to the

fathers' thrones, perhaps even reincarnations of grandfathers, who might demand the return of the throne, hence convenient sacrifices.

3. Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough, A Study in Magic and Religion*, vol. 3, *The Dying God*, 253 and 255, and vol. 9, *The Scapegoat*, 408–409 (1890; reprint, London: Macmillan, 1911).

4. William Robertson-Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, 2d ed. (1889; reprint, London: A. and C. Black, 1894).

5. Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, vol. 9, *The Scapegoat*, 69.

6. Henri Hubert and Marcel Hauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Functions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).

7. John Borneman, "Accountability as Rites of Collective Liability," talk at American Anthropological Association Meeting, San Francisco, Calif., November 15, 2000; "Can Apologies Contribute to Peace? An Argument for Retribution," *The Anthropology of East Europe Review* 17 (1999): 7–20.

8. Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942).

9. Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 8.

10. See the essays in Ian Shapiro and Casiano Hacker-Cordon, eds., *Democracy's Value* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), which explicate these other conditions, and the tensions between democracy and justice, equality, efficiency, and freedom. Especially see the contribution by Adam Przeworski, "Minimalist Conception of Democracy: A Defense," 51, in which he argues that democracies are more likely to "survive in wealthy countries," "when no single political force dominates," and "when voters can choose rulers through elections." He argues that the "quality of democracy" does not matter for its survival. I am in general agreement with him, that even though democracy can be and needs to be improved, it would be worth defending even if it could not be.

11. Niklas Luhmann, *Political Theory in the Welfare State* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1990), 139.

12. Claude Lefort, "The Image of the Body and Totalitarianism," in *The Political Forms of Modern Society: Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism*, ed. John B. Thompson (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press 1986), 303.

13. Pierre Bourdieu, "Delegation and Political Fetishism," in *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John B. Thompson; trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991), 204.

14. Bourdieu writes, "Consecration of an official marks a magical act of 'institution,' a transmission of political capital, 'investiture.' The institution invests in those who have invested in the institution, to which they owe everything. They were nothing outside the institution, now they cannot deny the institution without purely and simply denying themselves." This description holds for the apparatchik, the delegate in a totalitarian system where there is no institutionalized system of "recall" or accountability that involves periodic re-delegation by the people. Bourdieu, "Political Representation," in *Language and Symbolic Power*, 195.

15. John Borneman, *Settling Accounts: Violence, Justice, and Accountability in Postsocialist Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

16. Bernard Manin, Adam Przeworski, and Susan Stokes, eds., *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

17. John Dunn, "Situating Democratic Political Accountability," in *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*, 342-43.

18. Borneman, *Settling Accounts*, 20-25; John Borneman, "Reconciliation after Ethnic Cleansing: Listening, Retribution, and Affiliation," *Public Culture* 14, no. 2 (spring, 2002).



Marcus Funck

Translated by Cary Shockey

The Meaning of Dying

East Elbian Noble Families as “Warrior-Tribes”
in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

■ During Frederick the Great's search for his officer and childhood friend von Wedel on one of the battlefields of the Seven Years' War, the king is reported to have called out: "Wedel, where is Wedel?" This famous reply came from the rows of victims lying about: "Your Majesty, there are only Wedels lying here!" The anecdote continues: "Later, after the Seven Years' War, the king traveled through the territory of the Wedel family and asked where they all were, as the Wedels had earlier been found behind every bush in this region. The *Landrat* accompanying the king replied softly: 'Your Majesty, they are all deceased.' Seventy-two members of the Wedel family died in Frederick's wars."¹ The broadly extended von Wedel family, located primarily in Pomerania, was by no means dead at the end of the eighteenth century. Rather, with 217 officers serving from 1817 to 1914, including twelve generals, the family provided the greatest number of

military leaders of all Prussian noble families for the Prussian army. In the critical year 1913, 61 out of 128 male members of the Wedel family served as active officers in the Prussian army; counting the reserve officer corps members, the percentage of male members participating in military service stood at 80 percent. Between 1817 and 1914, eighteen deaths in the Wedel family resulted from wars involving Prussia, while in the First World War twenty-four family members were killed in action.² Such numbers, which could well be expanded to include many other noble families, might well lose a portion of their significance if one were to measure them in relation to the total number of war deaths. However, they underscore one of the central features of East Elbian nobility in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—i.e., the increasing limitation of professional activity to service as officers in the Prussian and German armies, the reduction of entire families to purely military clans, and the adjustment of their lifestyles and value systems according to military standards.

Although the effects of this long-term process of reduction of professional possibilities on military politics and the social structure of the officer corps have been treated in numerous studies, we lack investigations that take careful treatment of the intensity of the militarization of these families into account. This task seems to be of particular importance, as social historians have held the *Junkers*, the East Elbian Prussian landed nobility, were responsible for the militarization of modern German society and for the “particularly German” failings in the process of modernization, without systematically investigating the history of these families.³ There are two facets to this deficit. While one can no longer speak of a *terra incognita* in the case of modern histories of German nobility, for various reasons one could, until recently, observe a qualitative historicization of German aristocracy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries done in a piecemeal fashion.⁴ Historians are only now beginning to investigate the different noble subgroups in modern German history by employing more diverse historical approaches that simultaneously accept the peculiarities of noble existence and the necessity of bourgeois/noble elite-building in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁵ Likewise, military history now finds itself in an ongoing process of rejuvenation since its return to the academy. Encouraged by outside methodological impulses, military historians have entered into a process of self-reflection and have developed a series of new paradigms that reach far beyond the traditionally narrow confines of the discipline.⁶ With a balanced devotion to both approaches, this contribution seeks to connect a “military history,

that speaks about death"⁷ to a social history attached conceptually and methodologically to an historical anthropology of Prussian military nobility.⁸

At the forefront of this essay stands the basic premise of military service that spans the generations. The focus of my essay is the principle of killing and being killed.⁹ I will limit my efforts primarily to a discussion of the meaning of violent death. Insofar as an individual's act of dying is associated with the historical continuity and the future of the various clans, I will dwell on the specific connection between the living, the dead, and the survivors within the greater framework of the East Elbian noble family.

One can describe this threefold connection by means of the trope of *Opfer*, a term that means "victim" and "sacrifice" simultaneously. First, this can be seen as the essence of noble existence which, in an evaluative sense, increased in importance as a feature of distinction as noble families increasingly lost social prestige and economic privilege. This notion assumed greater importance after the political and social upheaval associated with the Napoleonic invasions. The demand for aristocratic service and obligation involved not only a willingness to serve as a paragon in life, but also in death.¹⁰ *The living demand the self-sacrificing man*. Second, the victimization theory is wedded to an often-ignored bloody reality, with all of its myriad influences on the structure and order of noble lineage. From the wars of Frederick the Great until the First World War, aristocratic military families sustained above average casualty rates, which in some cases actually led to loss of economic independence—or even to the demise of the clans themselves. *The men make the sacrifice*. Third, the notion involves a certain reproduction of memory; this act elucidates the sacrifice as a religiously sanctioned act, whereby the victims would be stylized as heroes, and the site of death on the battlefield would be demarcated as a newly designated holy place. Even in the twentieth century, the nobility maintained a remarkable capacity for achieving mastery of the process of public memory.¹¹ *The memory of the dead reproduces the idea of self-sacrifice*.

I.

Military service was by all accounts the oldest and, besides service to the crown and the church, the most honorable area of endeavor for the European nobility.¹² Thousand-year-old noble families as well as bourgeois

families of the nineteenth century raised to peerage traced their ancestry back to military service and, based on this record, established a large part of their social reputations. With the return to these myths of military heroics on the part of noble families, later members, in turn, underscored the inherited birthright of suffering and a measured, substantive claim to rule.

Virtually each individual ancient family cultivated the legend of a heroic foundation in the mists of historical time, a creation myth that could assume absurd forms, such as tracing their roots as Christian warriors back to the time of Roman Emperor Constantine the Great. However, a select group of ancient East Elbian aristocratic families possessed perhaps the most substantive and effective creation myth: the proof of their service as the "Shield of God," and the spearhead of Christian civilization as part of the forced Christianization and cultivation of the northern and eastern regions of the German-speaking world. The cardinal virtues of the old feudal militia of the Middle Ages such as chivalry, bravery, and loyalty were declared inheritable values of aristocratic being; the legacy of the family was maintained through administering violence as well as suffering violence.¹³

At the same time, the one-sided presentation of the military past in families of lower (old)-Prussian lineage was a phenomenon of the nineteenth century and in certain cases simply did not reflect reality.¹⁴ A military aristocracy in a singular sense—i.e., a life peerage created intentionally via dubbing ceremony—appeared in Prussia, in contrast to Napoleonic France and Austria, in credible numbers only after 1890.¹⁵ By contrast, since the late seventeenth century a kind of military nobility had developed from the lower landed Prussian nobility. This *Schwertadel* (nobility of the sword) was, of course, still intertwined with a land-owning nobility that possessed considerable property throughout the nineteenth century by means of narrow social contacts and carefully selected marital relationships. Because of the increasing imbalance between the number of male family members who (by virtue of their birth) were to be socially maintained, the available financial resources, non-military positions, and the persistent disinterest of East Elbian nobility in taking so-called "menial jobs" in the expanding bourgeois economy, a growing number of families from virtually all clans became economically dependent on the monarchic central state.¹⁶ In particular, one might refer to those relations who, having been affected by the relative "impoverishment" of the German aristocracy underway since the nineteenth century, had been espe-

cially hard hit and formed, after 1918, the basis of the large group of the so-called "noble proletariat."¹⁷ Ferdinand Tönnies noted in 1912 that, "Honor and advantage attract nobility,"¹⁸ and both of these qualities could be rather inexpensively obtained by these families in the officer corps, especially by means of the sacrifice of a few of their number. Of course, for these domesticated and partially declassé noble families, dependence on service to the crown was sweetened by a rigorous royal policy of protection of the nobility, especially in the officer corps. Under Frederick the Great, lower peerage was redefined by the state's ruling class, thereby permitting closure within the realm of military leadership. Owing to the continuing influence of the old Prussian nobility, this tendency could not be easily reversed. In both the rhetoric and policies of the Prussian military reformers after 1806, there was a clear alteration of the term *Offiziertum* (officerdom) that was clearly different from the older views of this *Stand* (caste) and opened the way for the modern Prussian military.¹⁹ However, the process of military modernization was neither linear nor one-dimensional. During the entire nineteenth century, indeed, up until 1916, the idea of a modern officer corps remained the subject of considerable debate—to such an extent, in fact, that several competing concepts of the officer caste and military leadership, in which the notion of "aristocracy" remained a point of orientation, could co-exist and compete with one other.

According to the *Allgemeine Landrecht* of 1794, "Nobility, as the first caste in the State, assumes, according to its status, the definitive duty of protecting the Nation, as well as the support of the external honor and internal substance of the aforementioned." Ten years later, the *Reglement über die Besetzung der Stellen der Portepeefähnriche und über die Wahl zum Offizier bei der Infanterie, Kavallerie und Artillerie*, fundamentally refashioned this law, stating, "Any claim to an officer's post in peacetime should henceforth be based on knowledge and education, and should, in wartime, be based on bravery. . . . All previous preferences regarding military service made according to class will thus end. . . ."²⁰ Although the military reforms shook the already eroded basis of the remnants of the Fredrickian army constitution and contained a potential for the "democratization of soldiering,"²¹ noble military families could make good the loss of their former privileges by means of cogent application of their leadership positions and profile within the army. The requisite proof of preferred ability for military service through competency evaluation rather than "natural abilities" let loose a veritable flood of newly created defini-

tions of military leadership and civil-military relations.²² During the Wars of Liberation, however, the old Prussian aristocracy proved itself astonishingly capable and passed the test of ability with ease, although not without considerable casualties. This was only accomplished with the aid of bourgeois soldiers who, in turn, made counter-demands on their officers. The noble military families thus garnered a measure of worth—often via clever transformation and a most likely painful reorientation, coupled with a parallel maintenance of tradition. This permutation, which altered the dreadful balance of defeat incurred at Jena in 1806, created a repository of support that lasted well into the nineteenth century, despite occasional crises of legitimacy. From this position of strength, high-born families could meet any and all military challenges, even if this involved loss of their elite social status. If in the crisis-ridden 1850s even the dumbest sons of Prussian nobility could receive a modest income in the officer corps, as Karl Demeter notes,²³ then one could assume that noble military families possessed suitable resources to remain situated in the officer corps. They were not, however, capable of obtaining other professional positions.

One particular reason for this astounding maintenance of the status quo may lie in the successful molding of *character*—i.e., the qualifications and values sought by reformers.²⁴ The emphasis on character remained wedded to the position that the value of the army officer could not be established with respect to a catalogue of either abstract or concrete qualities. Instead, only in the hour of truth, at the moment of sacrifice, could a decision on an individual's relative merit be rendered. This explains why reports concerning qualifications often remained flawed during peacetime.²⁵ Of course, the emphasis on character brought with it the risk of social heterogeneity, but the "democratizing" effect of this new edict was countered by two further developments. On the one hand, social background could easily be integrated into this program as a preserving inequality, which is why a process of social segregation in the officer corps began to appear after the 1870s. Thus, *individual* military values and abilities were not easily achieved or recognized, but instead remained attached to familial tradition and socialization. Reflecting on this policy, a conservative member of the *Reichstag*, Elard von Oldenburg-Januschau, argued on behalf of the "principle of nobility" in the Prussian Guards regiments in 1910: "Should someone come to the Prussian Guard regiments and state: Here you have my son, my great-grandfather died while serving in the regiment, my grandfather also died for the regiment, my father par-

ticipated in military campaigns, so take my boy, then it is perfectly clear that they will take the boy. . . ."²⁶ On the other hand, the officer corps increasingly defined itself as an ideologically based community in which the ethos of nation enjoyed paramount emphasis. This implied participation of the masses, who articulated their demands quite vocally in various national associations; however, their claim to leadership was channeled through and structured by the medium of national belonging.²⁷ It seems a far more significant development that character gained in stature among large sections of the educated population, and thus was projected into the national consciousness. New possibilities for the aristocracy, which had always maintained that it possessed character, became available in positions of charismatic leadership at the national level. Only later did the horrendous loss of officers during the opening phase of the First World War—i.e., the massive, anonymous dying at the front—alter the military nobility's previously maintained leadership position.²⁸ Such killing on a massive scale prompted social unrest and an irreversible trend toward total, industrial war.²⁹ After the national collapse and the experience of collective loss in the First World War, a continuation of these families as military clans was only possible by means of social inclusion in a nationalist community of sacrifice.

But what made noble military clans different from other manifestations of aristocracy and bourgeois military families that also clearly existed at this time? A lengthy commentary of the aging General Magnus von Eberhardt, written after the First World War, would seem to provide an initial answer:

I was born in Berlin on 6 December 1855, during the time of Prussia's struggle to establish a position of leadership in Germany. My father was a first lieutenant in the Guard Reserve Infantry Regiment, which, in 1860, was renamed the Guard Fusilier Regiment. My mother, formerly v. Reuß, was, like my father, born of German aristocratic families whose members had fought and bled on various battlefields throughout Europe while serving in the army. Similarly, my great-grandfathers, Friedrich Wilhelm Magnus v. Eberhardt, who died while commanding the Infantry Regiment von Gravert at Jena on 14 October 1806, and Heinrich v. Reuß, who, as a colonel, commander of Elbian Territorial Infantry Regiment, and Knight of the *Pour le Mérite*, was killed on 17 June 1815 while storming Namur, served in the army. My grandfather, Wilhelm

v. Eberhardt, at that time already a sergeant at age fifteen in the Infantry Regiment von Sanitz, received, as the only officer so decorated, the Pour le Mérite on 14 October 1806 at Jena. He subsequently lost his left leg at Leipzig, was active in the Cadet Corps, and rose to the rank of lieutenant general. My other grandfather, Heinrich v. Reuß, received the Iron Cross First Class while serving in the regiment led by his father. He, too, was later badly wounded on 16 June 1815 at Ligny. My great-uncles also fought and bled in the Wars of Liberation. This recollection had the deepest impression on me.³⁰

Inherent in von Eberhardt's recollection are notions of temporal depth, continuity, and quality of military engagement. In some noble families the panoply of military ancestors extended without interruption well back into the thirteenth century. Yet the family trees of such families could be documented back over several centuries in *most* instances.³¹ The Reichswehr general Joachim von Stülpnagel noted that his "family" (the von Stülpnagels, Bronsart von Schellendorfs, and the von Lossaus) continuously produced high-ranking generals over five generations, including two ministers of war.³² The so-called "Pour-Le-Mérite families" also repeatedly furnished highly decorated combat veterans. For example, the von Kleist family received the highest military honors of the Prussian state some thirty times in various wars between 1866 and 1918; additionally, the von der Goltz clan and the von Belows received commendations eighteen and sixteen times, respectively.³³ One noble commentator confused the cause and effect of these tendencies at the end of the nineteenth century when he argued that, "[N]obility, in the essence of its historical reproduction in the army, has always sought and found its second homeland. It let its sons become officers, because martial spirit had been passed on to it in flesh and blood."³⁴ However, he also noted that military clans had developed their own separate social practices and value systems and, although still linked to nobility through family ties, could well be described as a special class of nobility.

In contrast to the "propertied families," the military clans rarely possessed lands, and this created conditions of economic dependency. The various diaries of these officers are full of lamentations about the loss of their own property and lands, or about the alienation from their "homeland," although neither the somewhat extensive endowment nor the rather intimate spiritual connection to country life or the propertied exis-

tence of near relations changed much. As a result of their fathers' frequent service-related transfers, for the most part these men were not even born in the vicinity of their "native lands." Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck, a self-styled aristocratic rough-rider of the Mark Brandenburg and hero of Southwest Africa, spent his childhood in the industrial city of Saarbrücken, and only returned to the vicinity of his ancestral home when he entered the cadet academy in Lichterfelde. He did so without ever having visited the family estate itself.³⁵ The Prussian War Minister Karl von Einem, who came from Hanover, linked these "families with a heroic tradition"³⁶ to martial tribes in a speech before the Reichstag in 1909: "Whoever knows the history of the Prussian army knows the story of Prussian nobility as well. Prussian aristocracy has sacrificed life and limb while in military service, and the tradition of the army is not solely connected to rulers or battles, but also to the clans of these noble houses, who have sacrificed everything and have accomplished great things as leaders on behalf of Prussian kings and the Prussian State."³⁷ A relatively independent military nobility reflecting these conditions developed in the course of the nineteenth century in East Elbian Prussia, in contrast to other regional nobility in Germany—e.g., those found in the southern German principalities and Catholic Westphalia. But also very wealthy family members with extensive holdings entered military service. Owing to the massive expansion of the army in the 1890s, the relative number of land-owning sons in the officer corps sank to a minimal level. However, in absolute numbers, the propertied families provided a growing number of officers. Even for wealthy nobility and those sons who stood to inherit land, the military retained a certain attractiveness and guaranteed an enhanced social reputation.

A few years in the army, followed by a rather longer stint in the reserves, remained a viable form of service. The case of the von Arnim family, one of the most esteemed aristocratic families in the Mark Brandenburg, demonstrated that even the wealthiest branches maintained a continuous relationship with the armed forces. In one chronicle of the clan, 150 members of the von Arnim family served as active officers between 1626 and 1855. Under the regency of Wilhelm I, as many as ninety-seven members were officers. During the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71, forty-seven men served as officers, thirty-two received the Iron Cross (first or second class), and eight died in combat.³⁸

II.

In traditional aristocratic family units there existed a deeply anchored sense of sacrifice and self-abnegation that emphasized familial survival above all else. Individual members of a family had to submit to a particular order and subsume their own separate interests to long-term familial demands, all for the expressed purpose of "maintenance of the noble legacy and name."³⁹ This affected first-born sons, who had to be prepared to assume control of the familial lands and were raised accordingly. This belief system also extended to younger sons, who were obliged to pursue careers commensurate to their status. Finally, it influenced the lives of daughters, who, if unable to secure an acceptable husband, had to dedicate themselves "to the service of God" or lead a pathetic existence in the "spinsters' corner" of the family estate.⁴⁰

During the course of the nineteenth century, sublimation of individual professional ambitions suffered increasing criticism within noble circles. Many aristocratic sons and daughters first doubted, then ignored or avoided familial wishes—to such an extent, in fact, that the *Deutsches Adelsblatt* felt compelled to adopt the admonitory tones of a bourgeois newspaper and insist that the nobility "could only retain its aristocratic position by means of voluntary sacrifice of the individual on behalf of the family. . . ."⁴¹ In addition to such calls for sacrifice, the institutionalization of measures such as an endowment for the advancement of noble sons in preferred professions led to extensive limitations on the available occupations for young men. This trend, in part a reaction to the danger of familial and societal disgrace because of the possible choice of an "ignoble" career, continued after 1918, which marked the beginning of the decline of lower nobility in northern and eastern Germany.

For the families of military clans, the significance of socialization through the family unit, education, and "acceptable" professional activity cannot be underestimated. Indeed, attempts were made to pass on core values of nobility and corresponding forms of conduct. This was done by cultivating a firm mental disposition that was to be manifested in practice "with an aristocratic image in mind."⁴² The central features of this disposition concerned killing and were transmitted primarily through the initiatory rites of the hunt,⁴³ as well as the practice of renunciation and self-sacrifice. The latter case was illustrated by Paul von Hindenburg's memory of his first day at cadet school. The then ten-year-old boy held back tears, because no tears were to fall on "the king's raiment." "The idea of becom-

ing a soldier was not a decision of mine," he recalled, "but a matter that was understood."⁴⁴ In contrast to the bourgeois connotations of the term *Bildung* (education), the formalized dissemination of facts and knowledge according to dictated standards, this model of *Erziehung* (cultivation) focused on the formation of character and the development of a refined sense for situations and people.⁴⁵

The stated educational goals of aristocratic military families included the development of a consciousness of individual willpower and the overcoming of psychological and physical weaknesses.⁴⁶ In childhood reminiscences of both aristocratic officers and civilians, even to a certain extent independent of gender, one encounters praise of "Spartan education" and physical punishment by the father, the authority figure. Only "mamas' boys" and the "physically weak" suffered. Thus, one reads of a ten-year-old boy being threatened by his father with a knife, in order to teach him "bravery up to and including the flaunting of death." We also hear of children being taught horseback riding with blows of a whip, or even of youths being admonished for minor behavioral transgressions with slaps in the face or physical blows. Socialization of the nobility in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was one of violence in a dual sense, i.e., in its suffering and application of violent force.⁴⁷ This corresponded to the twin meanings of rule as dominance over people on the one hand, and service to entrusted individuals or the prince as the highest representation of the aristocratic hierarchy on the other.

Under the conditions of tradition in aristocratic family structures and the accompanying concentration on one's profession, lifestyles and forms of behavior were created that remind us of military demands, rather than necessarily of the wishes of the nobility. A "cultivation of service" emerged as a core element of this mentality, one that Thomas Carlyle (an author read widely and admired within East Elbian noble circles) celebrated in his lectures on heroes, hero-worship, and the heroic in history.⁴⁸ "Learn to obey in order to rule," a political adage that was stressed in education if not always in practice, became the leitmotif of the aristocratic military clans, even in the midst of the profound political changes occurring in the twentieth century. This fostered the creation of a series of images based on a special quality of service.⁴⁹ Nobility as the shield of the monarchy, protector of the state or nation, and leader of the people became a socio-political constant. Even in the 1950s, the landed noble and retired officer Magnus Freiherr von Braun described this culture of service as the essence of East Elbian aristocracy and the Prussian state. *The ability to*

*withstand difficulties, iron discipline, a physical and mental toughness, selflessness, a resolute sense of duty, and the spirit of sacrifice: "That is where the strength of old Prussia lay, not in gold or minerals."*⁵⁰

The omnipresent, living past unfolded itself in such conceptual fields. Conditions such as the lack of mineral resources and traits such as the simplicity of a modest lifestyle were thus connected to qualities such as a sense of duty, toughness, and a spirit of sacrifice.⁵¹ Remarkably, these images remained separate from the social and economic transformation then underway. In addition, both the self-descriptive passages and the ancillary attributes offered a specific image of men: the picture of nobility presented here is aristocratic, soldierly, and manly. An example from the reminiscences of the sex researcher Magnus Hirschfeld serves to illustrate the relationship between "officerdom" and a certain image of men: after a squad leader was suspended from service for "improper treatment of an enlisted man"—the euphemism for a sexual relationship with a soldier—the officer asked Hirschfeld to inform his mother. The officer's mother is said to have responded: "I thank you, but I must say as a mother of a Prussian officer . . . that I would have preferred that you would have brought me news of the death of my son, rather than news of his suspension."⁵² The myths of sacrifice and heroism were by no means purely domains of masculinity; indeed, both wives and daughters embraced these core values. For example, in matters concerning deceased officers from the various military clans, women demonstrated distance and strength as heroic mother or bride. They comported themselves in accordance with the necessities of familial circumstances. Even though the bourgeoisie had produced male heroes since the time of the Wars of Liberation, the obligations regarding sacrifice and heroism persisted among the military aristocracy. Moreover, the military clans could enhance the level of their acceptance in society, in that their intended spirit of sacrifice would no longer be understood as pure caste egoism, but rather be viewed as service to the nation.

Carlyle's construction of the hero also points to the direct connection between canons of personal morality and values espoused by East Elbian nobility and the warrior ethos of the military clans. Carlyle attached the preferred reference to honor, one of the central points of distinction in any aristocracy, to the willingness to encounter difficulties, danger, even death: "*Il faut payer de sa vie.*" This point is the true law of aristocratic existence. A man must continually 'pay with his life'; like a soldier, he must fulfill his duties at the cost of his life."⁵³ Whoever claimed preference and honor had also to be prepared to elevate himself above others. The diffi-

culty and danger of this task always remained under the threat of demystification and transmogrification, and were always in danger of giving up their natural claim to status in the lives of these men. This sense of self-sacrifice and denial of death in the military clans subsequently revealed itself in these terms: Whoever feared death and shied away from extreme danger lost legitimacy as a military leader. The various metaphors evoked by images of advancing on the front, attack, arising in battle, and ecstasy in the moment of danger sent a clear message;⁵⁴ they suggested that the individual had to actualize the idea of self-sacrifice at the moment of decision. He had to be willing to die, so that his family might live on. Such missives, like most, really never revealed anything about the fear of the individual soldier and the pain of the family, however. In a celebratory tone, Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck recalled the strength of memory concerning the continual sacrifice of his family, even though he himself owed his career in cadet school to his relations still active in the military: "The casualty list of our relatively small family is an example of the type of sacrifice the lower Prussian nobility made on behalf of the fatherland. At Negroponte two died, at Neerwinden one, Turin one, Torgau two, Soor two, Prague three, Maxen one, Zorndorf one, Leuthen six, Jägerndorf one, Wörth one, in the First World War six, and in 1940 two. . . . If cadets were asked about the status of their father, then they most often would respond with the remark: 'fell at Beaumont, Vionville, or St. Privat, and so forth,' and the entire row of great deeds of our army and the blood-sacrifices of its officers would appear in my mind."⁵⁵

After 1918 the demand for sacrifice became stock-in-trade in the anti-republican struggle of East Elbian nobility for re-acquisition of political and military leadership. In a speech held at his son's wedding in April of 1920, Dietloff Graf Arnim-Boitzenburg discussed an expansive program for recapturing leadership in the new state, one in which pointed references to historical sacrifice and uninterrupted willingness to offer one's life were very much in evidence:

A difficult time leads one afield from predictable and desired paths, and, moreover, in a manner that occurs more often than we would like. But these demands compel one to depend on one's own strength and ability. It may well be that such is the final goal of a difficult test, one involving character and the very future itself, and at such a monumental occasion, the youth of nobility can scarcely afford to be absent. It is good that the young men fight the good

battle during this time of our people's decline in mores and governance; it is also good that this youthful nobility, which has done its very best for hundreds of years and has sacrificed many of its finest men on behalf of our Fatherland's glory, should know the sting of the deeply painful status as a veritable pariah among its very own people. And yet this aristocracy shall not give up its existence and its belief in the future of our Fatherland, and thus it must maintain the old traditions that enabled our noble youth to lead, especially [with respect to] clearly delineated notions of honor, in the ideal conception of fulfillment of duty and willingness to sacrifice, in a conception of life encompassing high moral principles, in propriety of one's conduct, and last but not least underscoring the firm conviction of a life according to Christian principles.⁵⁶

Here the sense of obligation to sacrifice appears once again as an aristocratic claim to social leadership. By contrast, other less well-to-do nobles envisioned the creation of a separate *Stand* of leaders within the officer corps that would be largely independent of the nobility itself. They demanded of their brethren that they join together to serve as new leaders of the *Volksgemeinschaft* (national community).⁵⁷ From this point on it was but a small step to the next demand: the creation of a new aristocracy based on "blood and military calling," which essentially meant the elimination of the traditional nobility itself. Major General Rüdiger Graf von der Goltz (retired), who as deputy of the *Vereinigte Vaterländischen Verbände* had assumed a central role in organizing anti-republican movements and splinter groups and had promoted a harmonization with National Socialism, pursued this concept of nobility in an essay published in 1935 under the aegis of the central committee of organized German nobility. In this treatise, he demanded equality for the terms "Adel" and "Offizier." Because all officers in the First World War had fulfilled their duties and had "bled," the new aristocracy needed to be defined as a "racially dubbed nobility" and be especially cognizant of the families of officers who proved themselves at the front in the Great War.⁵⁸ In recognition of Friedrich August von der Marwitz's words from the Wars of Liberation that, from that point onward, the entire aristocracy had to be born soldiers, a self-styled "itinerant Pommeranian preacher," the author Claus von Eickstädt, presented the aristocratic officer corps as a "community of common ideals and blood," one that included all those willing to sacrifice themselves: "And if we, after all the experience of terror and all of the suf-

fering as a consequence of the Great War, have to demand the deepest seriousness of purpose and the highest feeling of responsibility from those whom we have chosen as leaders, and if the last historically decisive question must again be posed as a necessity and the *ultima ratio* of the German people, then we ourselves, together with our children and grandchildren, again and again ready ourselves for sacrifice, a matter for which nobility has always been called. 'Only by means of expiation can the nation be saved.'⁵⁹ Even the *Deutsche Adelsgenossenschaft* (DAG), an association with seventeen thousand members—one-third of the German nobility over eighteen years of age—in 1925 and also the most important organization of German aristocracy after 1918, pursued this very policy of involuntary self-marginalization in its aggressive, albeit unsuccessful attempt to regenerate the German nobility. Prince Adolf zu Bentheim-Tecklenburg-Rheda, a Westfalian noble, the "Marshall of Nobility" since 1932, did not view the National Socialist concept of "Adel der Arbeit" (nobility of work) as standing in contradiction to the ancient nobility founded in feudal concepts, as its work had always consisted of "sacrifice for clan, people, and the Fatherland."⁶⁰

III.

The historian enjoys no direct access to the battlefield, the struggle of men and machines, and to the moment of death. He remains dependent on images that people have created based on experience or assumptions about death in military conflict, or even images based on metaphors that describe death in combat. The dead remain silent; this state applies to dead noblemen as well, although their deaths follow a different pattern, one that this treatment will outline in due course. While it is true that the military clans had left "their finest sons" (as people were inclined to call them) in impressive numbers on the battlefields over the preceding centuries, these men had never died an anonymous, mass death. They never remained nameless, but instead were listed in compendiums of fallen heroes, and their countenances were carefully prepared for presentation in the family gallery of intrepid heroes. Nobility simply did not know of the "unknown soldier" before the First World War.

We seem to know a great deal about dead aristocratic figures on the basis of detailed listings of the fallen. However, their stories were always told effusively by the survivors as a part of a hero's tale, as accounts of war intended to legitimize their subject matter. Even if the deceased were the

subject of constant conversation, reminiscences offer little in the way of information about either the dead or what took place on the battlefield. Such accounts remain the object of a constant permutation, based on the ruling class's self conception. Nevertheless, from these retrospective views of battle it is, indeed, possible to discern how the self-sacrificing victim was to be presented in war, and with what expectations and beliefs those who would die went into battle. These convictions were by no means static; on the contrary, they became part of an historical transformation. The representations of death in the Great War contain especially poignant moments of pain, fear, and doubt hitherto unknown, and remind us of the discrepancy between the picture presented to these men and the reality of war, especially the collapse of aristocratic "knowledge of death" in the age of modern warfare.

Two tangible elements of a descriptive heroic death of a soldier can be derived from this picture. Within the confines of established convention the high-born officer (1) died with a specific physical and spiritual *deportment* and (2) he died as a *leader*. Even in the final, most extreme moments of life, aristocratic modes of behavior determined the physical and psychological attitudes with which one went to his death. Young lieutenants and aging commanders pressed forward toward the front lines in "joyful expectation," where they awaited the opportunity to prove themselves with "great joy." Even a member of a *Standesherren* family, one who was thus a part of the small and exclusive class of German high nobility, sought to live up to this expectation while serving in the capacity of commander of the Guard Artillery. He did so in order to prove his own honor and that of his oft-criticized branch of the service, the Guard Artillery Corps: "On 17 January 1871, I was drawn by a true longing back to the batteries, as I had not been under enemy fire in two days. There is a particularly special attraction involved in this. At the end of the day, one is grateful to the Almighty for having survived the conflict, but one longs for a new day of combat—especially if the order comes down to head to the front—and one fears that one would miss something if, per chance, circumstances caused an absence from the battlefield."⁶¹

Besides the quest for honor, a belief in the necessity of seeing one's commander during the battle as both leader and protector is reflected in this statement. The idea of *Führung* (leadership) appears to have been omnipresent. ". . . I should not unnecessarily over-exaggerate the matter, but it simply gave me no peace; I always had to advance in front of my men, so that they could see me while I waved, called out, and gave orders."⁶² The

image of the officer fulfilling exemplary leadership roles that somehow transcended a strictly military nature came, as it were, from the tradition of the warrior-prince, who often served as an example for his soldiers. This particular attitude and its military rationale are well illustrated in an anecdote from a certain Major von der Goltz during the Wars of Liberation, who is reputed to have galloped off to the front uttering the words "Everything depends upon example." We come to learn that "a moment later, a shell fragment struck him and knocked him off his horse, killing him instantly. The regiment remained at the front, because at the moment of his death, his men pulled together in an indescribable manner."⁶³ Even in the first few weeks of the First World War, it was reported that commanding generals, much to the dismay of their general staff, put themselves in harm's way "in order to be there when it matters most."⁶⁴

The emphasis placed on presence at the front during the height of battle demonstrated the aristocratic officer's leadership qualities. Further, presence on the battlefield manifested selfless fulfillment of duty—and thus, a special claim to military leadership—and it exemplified in particular the honor of one's person and one's family. In propaganda efforts on behalf of aristocratic war victims, analogous to earlier feudal descriptions of the relationships between noble lords and their peasants or serfs, nobility placed great emphasis on the claim to leadership and, just as importantly, the obligations to *caritas* (charity). A certain Graf Arnim is reputed to have died in such a manner in Southwest Africa during a 1907 battle "because he wished to assist one of his cavalymen who was bleeding to death. Notwithstanding all warnings to the contrary about useless sacrifice, he abandoned his young, happy, wealthy, and optimistic life without hesitation, calling out 'No one is helping you! Thus, I shall help you!'"⁶⁵

Although the battlefield was a realm where a new form of life could be granted when one placed one's existence in jeopardy, it was not the only place of honor for military clans. There is no question that there were other, perhaps more peaceful, possibilities of obtaining honor, but nowhere else was the "hardship post" so close to the "post of death," the point of greatest individual redemption. In exchange for the obligation to place one's life in danger and to eagerly risk life and limb, the aristocratic officer accrued a maximum amount of honor, which is why one heard the seemingly delighted cry, "Hurrah, I'm wounded! Long live the King," in the throes of combat.⁶⁶ This point was formulated in rather drastic fashion by Gottlieb Wilhelm von Platen, lieutenant in the Dragoons Regiment von Auer, when he shouted to a citizen of the city of Königsberg, "[Y]ou

bastards, the gods only love those who aren't afraid of danger."⁶⁷ The notion of courting danger in expectation of a divine judgment came, on the one hand, from the will to "conquer the world" and thus win back the ruling autonomy of the aristocratic individual. On the other hand, this interest in risk-taking stemmed from the belief in an attachment to a higher, more demanding, order—an order held together by an overarching monarchy as a guarantee of a royal world order and comprising a lengthy, continuous chain of symmetrically placed family members whose reputations one had to equal.⁶⁸ To die for the king was by no means an empty formula; instead, it was the most extreme payment of an ancient vow of loyalty. After a royal visit following the "sacrifice" of the Guards Corps at St. Privat in 1870, Prince Kraft zu Hohenlohe-Ingelfingen reported, "Tears streamed unceasingly from [the king's] eyes, and he bemoaned the terrible losses that the Guard Corps had suffered. I was also very moved to see him again, but said to him that the losses were not in vain. . . . He could barely speak above his own sobs, and could only say: 'But your Scherbening, your good, fine Scherbening!' 'He is to be envied,' I answered, 'because we all would gladly die for Your Majesty!' 'I know,' the king responded, 'and that is why it hurts me so much.'"⁶⁹

The concept of *Haltung* (deportment) involves more than just the mere sense of virtually unconditional obligation; it also required a certain style of self-sacrifice. During the battle and at the moment of death, the unshaken notion of "rising" and "advancing" indicate a dominant psyche and intact body, even when the soldier is reduced to a cripple: "He had a dreadful appearance. His gaunt face was torn and deformed by terrible scars. He received these in the Battle of Colombey, at which the First Rifle Battalion garnered great fame. He had advanced with great bravery far beyond the forward line. At that juncture, he received a bullet in the right arm. He switched his saber to his left hand. A second bullet smashed his lower jaw, so that the mandible was left hanging down from his face. He proceeded to bind his jaw to his shako and continued to advance. A third shot through the chest immobilized him."⁷⁰ In immaculate military staccato, Prince Friedrich Karl von Preußen lauded such aggressive virtues while observing the Austrian army in 1864: "Generals such as Reischach [advanced] waving their hats, shouting 'follow me,' until they were shot down. They brandished sabers, came from the best families, were fine gentlemen—they admonished their troops with brave speeches about casting caution to the wind against the foe."⁷¹ Obviously, the Prussian officers had learned another lesson only two years later while the Austrians

did not. Yet the image of the aristocratic warrior remained powerful on both sides, for it provided both meaning and structure to military violence in an age of modern warfare.

The psychological superiority of this mind-set became especially clear when the aristocratic officer advanced to certain death. The ability to remain tough and patient was repeated constantly in countless anecdotes. Self-discipline and silent suffering in times of death become the maxim of the hour. Bearing in mind the putative demand of Frederick the Great that "one should die quietly," a captain is reputed to have admonished the cadet von Löwenstein with the statement, "Cadet, shut your mouth!" when the young man shouted "Long live the King!" as he fell to the ground wounded. Such comments concerning personal hardiness were often employed as a means of demonstrating one's capacity for self-sacrifice during the First World War as well, as the following reflection on soldiers of various nationalities demonstrates: "There in the field hospital I saw German soldiers suffering and dying next to Frenchmen, Belgians, and Moroccans. *Only* our German men suffered in silence. The others whined and made thousands of requests."⁷² Of course, the new "culture of will" of Wilhelmine Germany could, in many respects, be connected to the military-aristocratic metaphors for toughness. However, the bourgeois-dominated discourse of durability dwelled at some length on those tendencies toward softness or femininity that many assumed existed within an exclusively aristocratic officers clique, a matter that was perhaps the case in certain Guards regiments and in the cavalry.⁷³

Nonetheless, it would most certainly be inaccurate to assume a discernible difference between a noble and bourgeois culture of will with respect to these soldierly attributes. Both offered concepts of masculinity and required a certain comportment of officers that were quite compatible. However, a rift ran through various fractions within these social groups as they were forced to respond to challenges to a nationally defined self-conception. The threefold shock of the Morocco crisis, the *Daily Telegraph* affair, and the Eulenburg scandal represented one of the most decisive turning points in this long-term process of change. The results of this change included a transformation within the courtly entourage, the cleansing of the officer corps of the Guards, and the "de facto abdication" of Wilhelm II.⁷⁴ In this sense, the concept of military leadership was altered by pressure from the national patriotic associations. Despite the increased value placed on noble officers after the War of 1870–71, the exclusive aristocratic claim to rule—already on the defensive—collapsed

completely. The idea of military service as a sort of exclusive celebration of demonstrative consumption of the wealthy in the interest of preservation and promotion of social status (one in which self-sacrifice played only a role in rhetoric, but not in reality) was reduced to minimal appearances at a threadbare level of existence. The *Willensmenschen* (men of will) of the East Elbian military clans had, on the contrary, demonstrated themselves capable of change consistent with their stricter image of virility—and had, thereby, contributed to this very doctrine.⁷⁵ While other segments of nobility (especially the Catholic, old Bavarian nobility) or specific aristocratic subgroups (the high nobility, the *Reichsritter*, and the Silesian magnates) were seldom part of the national patriotic fronts, the great mass of Prussian lower nobility, led by the East Elbian military clans, had given these newly formed radical movements both tone and direction.

Only one who understands violent death in combat as a willing sacrifice, one who at the same time understands this act as a manifestation of fate and as a service to the survivors, can embrace this act with quietude. As such, the sacrifice or blessed transformation mirrors the original sacrament of Jesus' self-sacrifice,⁷⁶ in martial society killing and being killed are sanctified, and a soldier's death assumes a pseudo-religious character.⁷⁷ Consistent with this conception of soldierly death, Lt. Gen. Karl von Roeder noted in his memoirs, written in the 1850s, that "a people, just like a single human being . . . can only lead a worthy life if they are prepared to sacrifice everything for their independence. They can also lead a good existence if their honor is more valuable than life, or even if they fear God more than all other people, and if they are willing to defend their God-given position to the end."⁷⁸

The notion "life lies in God's hands" illustrates the point that life is something granted, and therefore must be returned—that it belongs to a greater order. Any attempt to depart from this scheme represents an untenable exercise in personal hubris. One may note the influence of "aristocratic piety," an article of faith first rediscovered in Pomerania in the 1820s that conformed itself to prevailing conditions well into the twentieth century. In this particular movement, which influenced various features of the pietistic movement, the faithful combined Prussian nationalism, piety, and aristocratic conservatism under the twin banners of giving and self-sacrifice.⁷⁹ This religious revival movement strengthened the foundations of the East Elbian military clans through its rejection of public displays of wealth and leisure and the carefree, wasteful consumption of material goods on the one hand, and with its emphasis on service to the

community on the other. In an admonitory speech held at a benedictory ceremony for officers and soldiers of the Potsdam and Berlin Guards regiments in 1892, the high court pastor Frommel proposed something of an aristocratic maxim for dying: "May the sense of plain humility and true fear of God never disappear from your regiment. Go with God to your deaths, which means, do not die. . . ." ⁸⁰ After the experience of loss associated with secularization, the Protestant Church attached itself to the nation, added the notion of war to its creed of revelation, and championed the concept of hero-worship in its role as the patron church of Germany.

A report from a successful battle at Montoire on December 27, 1870, illustrated the connection between individual daring, divine judgment, and the pronounced expression of Protestant piety. Naturally, the representations in the regimental history and in historical accounts distributed by the Prussian General Staff offered a different picture. Nevertheless, the notations are most impressive:

I have never written you with such a moved and thankful heart, one directed to the Almighty. What a day it was yesterday! As a leader, I had full responsibility; I asked God that He grant me the power to render the correct decision, and He heard my prayer as never before. Thank God! Many, many thanks be to God! Oh, my darling, it was a horrible but beautiful day; I swear it to you, and to no one else, that I have no personal desire for special honor. I only prayed to my Heavenly Father that He bestow upon me the power of decision on behalf of my men. He stood at my side! . . . But we never could have achieved [victory] without the sacrifice and great courage of many officers and men . . . this glorious victory over an army ten times greater than ours, together with ten officers and 300 men as prisoners. It is scarcely believable. I, of course, did not do it [alone]. God in his grace stood at our side. ⁸¹

These impressions of death and survival in the death zone had, quite naturally, lost much of their normative strength during the course of the Great War. They simply disappear from view during the Second World War. Nobility did not remain untouched by the very real threat of extinction in the face of overwhelming, anonymous mass death in the trenches. According to Ernst Jünger, chivalric concepts of war were forever lost at the Battle of the Somme in 1916, and were replaced instead by the destructive force of mechanized warfare. ⁸² In World War I, thirty-three of 114 Bülow men, twenty-six Arnims, twenty-four Wedels, and 50 percent of the

Loopers (fifteen of thirty) who entered combat as either officers or soldiers perished. According to most estimates, Prussian aristocracy lost approximately 25 percent of its men "qualified to fight," while the average casualty rate for all other classes lay at 18 percent.⁸³ The traumatic results of this wholesale death can also be seen in a few comments made by officers in their testimonies. Such was the case of Lt. Bernhard von der Marwitz, who later died of war wounds in a military hospital on September 8, 1918. In a diary entry written in the early summer months of 1918, von der Marwitz noted, "The air shakes. Columns of smoke rise into sky. One hears screams and cries. One of our men picked up a dud and threw it away. An explosion followed shortly thereafter. Two men were torn to bits, three others were hideously crippled, and between six and eight wounded. A nightmarish scene. How many lives will you live, oh Fatherland, that you send us one after another to our deaths? There is something that is more sacred than this struggle, holier than our duty, which plays with our lives like some set prize! God, when will you deliver us?"⁸⁴ Here one finds one of the few expressions of uncertainty, if not despair, at the very moment that the aristocratic warrior is facing death. The notion of the battlefield as a holy site is threatened with collapse and dying for king or nation has lost its sanctified, heroic qualities. Indeed, this might have marked the beginning of the end of a specific cultural concept of aristocrat-as-warrior.

In earlier accounts of battle, moments of indecision and pain also appeared, especially when established traditions of warfare were violated. Already in 1871, Lt. Col. Constantin von Boltenstern observed that "war has assumed a new face, one which I never had thought possible in our civilized century. The illusion of an invigorating, joyous war is dead."⁸⁵ New types of weaponry with an increased degree of lethality, together with the expansion of warfare to include civilian populations and the concomitant use of weapons of mass destruction, destroyed the image of war as a knightly duel between two protagonists. As soldiers began to experience modern warfare as pure destruction, the aura of an intact warrior culture became even more critical. Thus, in the various memoirs of these officers, we find countless anecdotes in which the writers retained the calm illusion of war as an aggrandized duel while barely mentioning industrial war, mass death, executions, and penal battalions.⁸⁶ However, noble warriors were not immune to nervous tension and war neuroses, for they too had begun to realize the loss of their sense of personal superiority in the setting of industrialized war. Even more decisive was the recognition that staggering death tolls severed the ties between sacrifice and heroism. For

centuries, the reciprocal relationship between sacrifice demanded and offered, followed by the commemoration of sacrifice, was tied to aristocratic warrior culture. However, in the face of modern, mass death this relationship was fundamentally challenged; as a result, the subjectively experienced heroism at the front and the objective defeat of 1918 contradicted one another. The defeat was denied and repressed;⁸⁷ it simply could not be understood, for the futility of a hopeless, empty act of dying as the essence of modern war lay beyond the imaginative powers of the warrior and the warring society. The front generation, as the young von der Marwitz noted, had suffered for ten generations, and had continually produced heroes under the most terrible conditions by virtue of sheer willpower. Thus, they could not conceive of a conflict without victory at its conclusion.

Thus, for aristocratic warriors only a nostalgic flight back to the lost era of knightly combat remained—i.e., the mythical alteration of the themes of suffering and death.⁸⁸ This also expressed itself increasingly in the absorption of the former ruling sword-bearers into a racial-national warrior community, one in which society-as-sacrificial-victim established the parameters and aristocracy in and of itself had no redeeming value. To serve and sacrifice was viewed by Old Prussian noble circles as “the most honorable of tasks” (Fabian von Schlabrendorff) and was invoked as such by the living. This, in turn, had considerable negative effects on both the lower and upper nobility during the latter part of the nineteenth century and especially after 1918, even outside of Prussia. One notes the poignant impressions of mass death, even in the most martial memoirs of the First World War. These memories indicate both a radicalization and insecurity, and finally lead to an aggressive demand for a renewed sense of sacrifice, one in which war and violent death achieved an inherent value and became a matter for the entire nation: “We have been soldiers for three-quarters of a year, and we have forgotten that there was peace and quiet at one point, and that this was a time of roses and butterflies. . . . A nation of warriors was created from a land of workers. . . . And this war has taught us that we must be soldiers every day, that every day we will meet our foes, go into combat, and meet our fate, a fate which we must accept. . . . This war has indeed taught us that our lives are merely borrowed, that our future is based on the blood which we have received in obligation and give freely. We enjoy life with a burning passion, because we know that not one modest piece of life is worth anything if we have not given our best for the cause.”⁸⁹

After the transformation of aristocratic thought on sacrifice into a national ideology after the Great War and especially during National So-

cialism, the "return of belief" reappeared at only disparate moments—together with an understanding of self-sacrifice—as a holy, indisputable act in elements of the military-conservative resistance movement against National Socialism. In fact, one can find elements of aristocratic sacrificial images in the surviving diary fragments of the various conspirators. In a letter from Fritz-Dietloff Graf von der Schulenburg to his wife written shortly after his conversion from National Socialism to active resistance fighter, he placed a Christian ethic at the center of his conception of Prussia—and by extension, at the center of his very existence and as a justification for his actions. "I believe that I have found the path to God," he declared. "I believe even more strongly that Prussianism cannot be separated from Christendom, and that we require both—Prussianism and Christianity—now more than ever."⁹⁰ Helmuth James Graf von Moltke formulated this premise more clearly still when he maintained that one could find the requisite, unconditional basis for a conscious self-sacrifice in faith. "Perhaps you still remember that I mentioned in various conversations before the war that I believed faith in God was simply irrelevant. . . ." he wrote. "Now I know that I was wrong, completely wrong. . . . The elements of danger, coupled with a willingness to sacrifice oneself, matters which in these times—and perhaps in future days—are part of our very existence, require more than good, ethical principles."⁹¹ The traditional concept of *Haltung* shines through in such sentences, and reminds us of Thomas Carlyle's idealized readiness to be at "the post of tribulation and danger." Even here, the exalted social position achieved through nobility places demands on the individual, a burden he could only bear by understanding that he belonged to a higher, obligatory order. Henning von Tresckow described this as "the moment of decision made in front of the whole world and in the presence of history."⁹² A deep understanding of personal obligation arises out of this phenomenon, one connected to both the past and the future and expressed through proper aristocratic conduct.⁹³

IV.

A notorious critic of the "principle of nobility," especially as manifested in the Prussian officer corps, the one-time colonel and regimental commander Richard Gädke lamented in a 1908 *Berliner Tageblatt* editorial the discrepancy between the ways in which bourgeois and aristocratic sacrifices on behalf of the Prussian army were publicly commemorated.⁹⁴ He was reacting, of course, to one of the infamous parliamentary speeches

of the eccentric, self-promoting Junker von Oldenburg-Januschau who had emphasized the special spirit of sacrifice of the Prussian Guards (and thus the East Elbian Junkers) in the Battle of St. Privat on August 18, 1870. Moreover, von Oldenburg-Januschau connected that spirit with an unbroken claim to leadership on behalf of nobility within the officer corps.⁹⁵ At the end of his journalistic tilt against the "wretched falsification of history," Gädke commented with resignation: "Of course, their names [those of bourgeois origin] will never know historical greatness! For us, only the names of nobility remain, etched in stone, ensconced in the history books, and omnipresent in the chronicles of all of the ancient families. `Neither songs nor heroic tales mention the names of burghers.'" In a tally of victims from the Battle of St. Privat, Gädke proved that the balance of casualties (dead and wounded) between bourgeois and aristocratic officers lay at 469 and 426, respectively. Accordingly, he demanded an integrated national commemoration of officers, regardless of social class. The cult surrounding these dead men was not in itself the object of this particular criticism, but rather, the mnemonic egoism of the nobility.

The accomplishments of sacrifice rendered by East Elbian nobility produced a powerful sense of memory, one that bourgeois families sought in vain to mimic. Writing in the *Deutsches Adelsblatt* in 1866, Baron Clemens von Hausen argued that nobility viewed itself as a parapet erected against the ephemeral nature of memory in the new, educated age.⁹⁶ Some time later, in 1925, Maurice Halbwachs asserted that "the aristocracy was, for a long time, the underlying basis of national collective memory." Furthermore, he noted that nobility, in contrast to other social groups, possessed vast reserves of ancient traditions, a unique corpus of information about the past of each individual family or clan, and had the ability to connect social prestige with these hoary customs.⁹⁷

One important part of the aristocratic process of memory was the cult of death and the hero embracing all its fallen sons and the concomitant presentation of the various sacrifices of families spanning generations. In unpublished family histories, memoirs, in private remembrances, and in speeches held at family celebrations and on family days, members of the nobility recalled the deceased in the presence of the clan.⁹⁸ Thus, for a predominantly aristocratic public, publishers produced lists of victims in the genealogical handbooks of German nobility. Moreover, these same lists, highlighted by portraits and photographs, were published in magazines and in the so-called *Helden-Gedenkmappen* (commemorative heroic portfolios) aimed primarily at an aristocratic audience.⁹⁹ Finally, the aris-

tocracy recalled its capacity for and readiness to sacrifice in the countless autobiographies and memoirs written after 1918, as well as in special public reminiscences. For example, in 1921 the *Verein der Standesherrn* had a plaque placed in a public square in Nuremberg in order to commemorate the thirty-seven sons of high noble families who fell in the Great War.¹⁰⁰ Even today, we can find weathered memorials in villages dedicated solely to the sons of individual aristocratic families. Besides the historical depth of memory and the diversity of means of recollection, the memory culture of nobility can be defined in terms of its focused selectivity. Astonished by this predilection, Georg Simmel recalled that, "each individual personality in every aristocratic clan had, in his or her own values, a pride of place in the aura that the finest members of the family had achieved. . . ."¹⁰¹ The fame of sacrifices contributed by individuals was propagated on behalf of the entire family and integrated into its history, while those events that did not correspond to this preordained image were selectively deleted from collective consciousness.¹⁰²

Nobility also seems to have mastered the *ars oblivionalis* (art of forgetting) in brilliant fashion and employed the "uses of forgetting"¹⁰³ in special forms and under the most fascinating of circumstances. Specific types of memory and forgetting also permitted undifferentiated remembrances for groups of victims who had died under the most varied conditions. From among the fallen aristocratic commanding generals of the First World War who were subsequently enrolled in the heraldic lists, we find only two who died as a result of combat wounds. For example, two of the most prominent "war victims" who were included in this inflated compilation of heroes were Field Marshall General Hermann von Eichhorn, who was murdered by Russian social revolutionaries, and Field Marshall General Colmar Graf von der Goltz, who died of spotted fever.

In contrast to the former remembrances, the commemorative book of German nobility for the Second World War lists myriad fallen victims, including officers and men killed in action, resistance fighters put to death because of their activities, deceased members of the Waffen-SS, and—embellished with the special notation "died for Germany"—aristocratic victims of Allied bombing raids. One notes the significant number of nobles involved in the active conservative resistance movement directed against the National Socialist regime. Among one list of approximately 151 individuals who were killed as a result of their direct connections to the failed assassination attempt on Adolf Hitler on July 20, 1944, fifty-two were aristocrats.¹⁰⁴ As a result, since the 1950s these high-born victims have been

subsequently placed in the pantheon of tradition-rich heroes and festooned with honorifics that epitomized the noble "ethos and duty regarding sacrifice, one's antecedents, and those who passed on before."¹⁰⁵ Those who survived could place emphasis on the common denominator of class, regardless of cause or circumstances of death, and thus include these deceased members of the clan in genealogical archives. In this respect, we can accord Canetti a measure of credit when he describes the survivors as the true victors of the principle of "kill or be killed." Their fame springs from two conspicuous sources: first, they outlived the deceased, and thus they could recreate themselves as self-styled heroes (even if the dead were "the finest sons"), and second, these individuals could give the fallen heroes a fitting place in family chronicles, thus enabling them to live on.¹⁰⁶

The relative importance families placed on the existence of these heroes was linked with the need to produce champions—a phenomenon plainly seen in the case of Gen. Hugo Freiherr von Freytag-Loringhoven, whose son was killed in an airplane crash in 1911. The young von Freytag-Loringhoven was nevertheless declared a war victim by his parents.¹⁰⁷ Both the spirit of sacrifice among the East Elbian nobility and the familial and societal glorification of heroes and battles were considered as important as the preservation of memories of the fallen themselves. Only via identification, praise, and canonization of the deceased did the bloody reality of an individual clan member's violent death achieve a modicum of sense for both survivors and the dead. This, in turn, created a standard by which "the labors of generations" could be measured. Paradoxically, the notions of sacrifice and heroic existence became more important during a time when there was relatively little bloodshed. The watershed years of this movement lay, in the final analysis, in the forty-year period after 1871. If these families wished to maintain that they had little to recommend in defense of their privileged societal position except "the notice that, if war broke out, they had the right to be shot down in rows,"¹⁰⁸ then civilian society would have to be informed that this characteristic would have to be continually rejuvenated—and civilian society, we should recall, was one that originally placed relatively little value on these heroic exploits.¹⁰⁹

This question of evaluation leads us to yet another central, twofold aspect of the nobility's focus on memory, one which will have to be broached in a subsequent study: first, the nobility's ability to make these recollections credible among other segments of society, and second, its ability to seemingly assuage these groups' interests in self-representation. Even as criticism within middle-class circles became more vocal regarding aristo-

cratic exclusivity in the domains of sacrifice and hero-worship, we can observe specific tendencies among the educated bourgeoisie that suggest a need to witness sacrifice, which represented an integrating moment within society-at-large—and this in clear reference to the call to duty and spirit of sacrifice within nobility. Nobility could certainly not have trafficked in popular myths of sacrifice and heroes if it were dependent on itself alone. The sharp division between officer and citizen (i.e., the inability to unite military professionals with their civilian counterparts) had already begun to be questioned since the beginning of the nineteenth century.¹¹⁰ Finally, with the advent of a distinctly bourgeois militarism, both the flesh-and-blood production and literary construction of sacrifice and glorification of (national) heroes became mass phenomena.¹¹¹ Thus, it is hardly a coincidence that the most influential myth of atonement during the 1920s, the sacrifice at Langemarck, was put into motion by former veterans among the student corps and, in turn, promoted by middle-class writers.¹¹² Nevertheless, large segments of the civilian population required a continuous dosage of the rejuvenating elements of aristocratic military myths of heroic sacrifice. In the various tales and memoirs of “valiant families,” the bourgeoisie found a model of living, dying, and surviving that offered an attractive alternative to a crumbling middle-class value system and, moreover, lent their own, violent deaths a higher, heroic meaning.¹¹³

The ability to sacrifice on the part of the military clans remained a piece of symbolic capital well into the twentieth century. This significant source of strength provided a basis for self-preservation, especially at a time when society was becoming increasingly militarized. That which had defined aristocracy for almost one thousand years and that which had allowed the aristocracy to claim political power and economic advantage, as well as social prestige and cultural hegemony as “multi-faceted elites,”¹¹⁴ could no longer be exploited by military families. The processes of societal modernization begun in the nineteenth century limited access to these erstwhile carefully delineated prerogatives. For the corpus of German nobility, unable and unwilling to relieve itself of the burden of less-well-to-do if not impoverished families because of their awe-inspiring tales of their sacrifices, any possibility of creating a “civilian aristocracy” became a *cul-de-sac*. Finally, we might conclude our discussions by revisiting the opening query with respect to the Wedel family: an analysis of the membership roles of the NSDAP reveals that seventy-seven members of the family had joined the party—the largest number of any noble family in Germany.¹¹⁵

NOTES

1. Christian Graf v. Krockow, *Die Reise nach Pommern. Bericht aus einem verschwiegenen Land* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1985), 192. See also Friedrich Wilhelm v. Oertzen, *Junker: Preußischer Adel im Jahrhundert des Liberalismus* (Oldenburg: Stalling, 1939), 380f. I wish to acknowledge the kind assistance of Heinz Reif and Stephan Malinowski and to extend thanks to the participants of the graduate research colloquium at the Technical University, Berlin, for their edifying comments on this essay.

2. Compare the various service and death lists of Prussian officers from 1817 to 1914 organized by clan in the Bundesarchiv Militärarchiv (BA-MA) Freiburg, MSg 127/120 and 127/127. See as well the commentaries of Otto Graf Stolberg-Wernigerode, *Die unentschiedene Generation. Deutschlands konservative Führungsschichten am Vorabend des Ersten Weltkriegs* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1968), 198; Alexis v. Schoenermarck, *Heldengedenkmappe des deutschen Adels* (Stuttgart: Petri, 1921); and Oertzen, *Junker*, 385.

3. On the *Junkers*, see the classic Hans Rosenberg, *Bureaucracy, Aristocracy, and Autocracy: The Prussian Experience 1660–1815* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958); the rather polemical Francis L. Carsten, *Geschichte der preußischen Junker* (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 1988); and Hanna Schissler, "Die Junker. Zur Sozialgeschichte und historische Bedeutung der agrarischen Elite in Deutschland" in *Preußen im Rückblick*, ed. Jürgen Puhle and Hans-Ulrich Wehler (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht), 89–122.

4. See the programmatic essay by Heinz Reif, "Der Adel in der modernen Sozialgeschichte," in *Sozialgeschichte in Deutschland. Entwicklungen und Perspektiven im internationalen Zusammenhang, Bd. IV: Soziale Gruppen in der Geschichte*, ed. Wolfgang Schieder and Volker Sellin (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 34–60; and Hans-Ulrich Wehler, ed., *Europäischer Adel 1750–1950* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), 9–18.

5. Excellent examples of this tendency are manifested in Heinz Reif, *Adel im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1999) and Eckart Conze, *Von deutschem Adel. Die Grafen Bernstorff im zwanzigsten Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 2000).

6. Thomas Kühne and Benjamin Ziemann, eds., *Was ist Militärgeschichte?* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2000).

7. Michael Geyer, "Eine Militärgeschichte, die vom Tod spricht," in *Physische Gewalt. Studien zur Geschichte der Neuzeit*, ed. Thomas Lindenberger and Alf Lüdtke (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1995), 137–61.

8. Consider the argument presented in Wilfried v. Bredow, "Erkundungsziel: 'Militärwelt'. Vorüberlegungen zu einer ethnomethodologischen Erweiterung der Militärsoziologie," in *Militär als Lebenswelt. Streitkräfte im Wandel der Gesellschaft*, ed. Wolfgang R. Vogt (Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 1988), 171–79. See as well the rather less convincing comments of Werner Rösener in his treatment of the early modern period in Werner Rösener, "Adelsherrschaft als kulturhistorisches Phänomen. Paternalismus, Herrschaftssymbolik und Adelskritik," *Historische Zeitschrift* 268 (1999): 1–33.

9. These are some of the rather banal views that one would prefer to ignore. No better formulation of the essence of war is to be found: "In Kriegen geht es ums Töten [war is about killing]." Elias Canetti, *Masse und Macht* (Munich: Hanser, 1960), 77. One might add that war is also about being killed.

10. Consider also Heinz Reif, "'Adeligkeit'—historische und elitentheoretische Überlegungen zum Adelshabitus in Deutschland um 1800" (unpublished manuscript, 1997.)

11. Marcus Funck and Stephan Malinowski, "Masters of Memory. The Strategic Use of Autobiographical Memory by German Nobility in the 19th and 20th Century," in *Modern Pasts: The Social Practice of Memory in Germany*, ed. Alon Confino and Peter Fritzsche (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

12. Compare Dominic Lieven, *The Aristocracy in Europe, 1815–1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 181; Heinz Gollwitzer, *Die Standesherrn. Die politische und gesellschaftliche Stellung der Mediatisierten 1815–1918* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964); and Joachim v. Dissow, *Adel im Übergang. Ein kritischer Standesgenosse berichtet aus Residenzen und Gutshäusern* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1961), 117.

13. Consider the anonymous treatise "Schwert und Pflug," *Deutsches Adelsblatt* 8 (1890): 382f., 402–404, and 419–21, as well the controversial polemic about the self-referentiality of military nobility in light of knightly traditions in Franz Carl Endres, "Soziologische Struktur und ihre entsprechenden Ideologien des deutschen Offizierkorps vor dem Weltkriege," *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* 58 (1927): 282–319.

14. In actuality, references to ancient military ancestors were never absent in noble memoirs of family histories. In the case of autobiographical reflections by bourgeois military men, such authors often found it expedient to construct a military prehistory. An example of the latter case can be found in the artfully created life history of a general raised to the peerage in Bertold v. Deimling, *Aus der alten in die neue Zeit* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1930).

15. Georg v. Marziani, "Feudaladel, Militäraristokratie und 'moderner Adel,'" *Deutsches Adelsblatt* 6 (1888): 741. On the process of dubbing in Prussia, see Lamar Cecil, "The Creation of Nobles in Prussia, 1871–1918," *American Historical Review* 75 (1969–70): 757–95, and, more recently, René Schiller, "'Immer nach oben.' Elitenergänzung durch Nobilitierung—die Adelsverleihung der preussischen Könige und deutschen Kaiser zwischen 1798 und 1918 unter besonderer Beachtung des Großgrundbesitzes," in *Leben und arbeiten im märkischen Sand. Wege in die Gesellschaftsgeschichte Brandenburgs 1700–1914*, ed. Bernd Kölling and Ralf Pröve (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 1999), 49–89. On Austrian peerage, see Manfred Hochedlinger, "Mars Ennobled: The Ascent of the Military and the Creation of a Military Nobility in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Austria," *German History* 17 (1999): 141–76.

16. Again, the v. Wedell family gives a good example. While in 1885 thirty-five male family members owned about eighty thousand acres of land, two-thirds of the male family members served in the Prussian military. Obviously, the trias of landed property, military service, and devotion to the Prussian state is crucial for an understanding of the East Elbian nobility. For the figures, see Max v. Wedell, *Gesamtmatrikel des schlossgessessenen Geschlechts der Grafen und Herren v. Wedell* (Berlin: R. Eisenschmidt, 1886).

17. For insights into this heretofore ignored aspect of the history of nobility, see Stephan Kekulé v. Stradonitz, "Armut und Reichtum im deutschen Adel," *Deutsche Revue* 36 (1911): 35–42, as well as the hitherto unmatched study of Georg Kleine, "Adelsgenossenschaft und Nationalsozialismus," *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 26 (1978): 100–43.

18. Ferdinand Tönnies, "Deutscher Adel im 19. Jahrhundert," *Neue Rundschau* 23.2, I (1912): 1042.

19. See Michael Geyer, "The Past as Future: The German Officer Corps as Profes-

sion," *German Professions 1800–1950*, ed. Geoffrey Cocks and Konrad H. Jarausch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 183–91.

20. See *Allgemeines Landrecht für die Preußischen Staaten von 1794*, II 9 §1, ed. Hans Hattenhauer (Frankfurt/M: Metzner, 1970), 534; and Karl Demeter, *Das deutsche Offizierkorps in seinen historisch-soziologischen Grundlagen* (Berlin: Hobbing, 1930), 15.

21. Ute Frevert, "Herren und Helden. Vom Aufstieg und Niedergang des Heroismus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert," in *Erfindung des Menschen. Schöpferträume und Körperbilder 1500–2000*, ed. Richard v. Dülmen (Wien: Böhlau, 1998), 323–44. In this case, see page 338, where this particular usage appears three times.

22. Compare Ute Frevert, "Das jakobinische Modell: Allgemeine Wehrpflicht und Nationsbildung in Preußen-Deutschland," in *Militär und Gesellschaft im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Ute Frevert (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1997), 17–47.

23. Demeter, *Das deutsche Offizierkorps*, 20.

24. Consider the argumentation of Prince Wilhelm in the conflict surrounding the *Bildungsfrage* (question of education) in *Militärische Schriften Weiland Kaiser Wilhelms des Großen Majestät*, ed. Königlich Preußisches Kriegsministerium (Berlin: Mittler, 1897), I: 494. One should also note the tone of Wilhelm II's official statement of March 29, 1890: "Military commanders should be certain to observe that today, more than ever, it is vital that we find and foster character. . . ." in *Offiziere im Bild von Dokumenten aus drei Jahrhunderten*, ed. Hans Meier-Welcker (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1964), 197f. See also Demeter, *Das deutsche Offizierkorps*, 97f.

25. Heiger Ostertag, *Bildung, Ausbildung und Erziehung des Offizierkorps im deutschen Kaiserreich 1871–1918—Eliteideal, Anspruch und Wirklichkeit* (Frankfurt/M: Lang, 1990), 70f.

26. *Stenographische Berichte der Reichstagssitzungen*, vol. 259 (1910): 898.

27. See, for example, Roger Chickering, *We Men Who Feel Most German. A Cultural Study of the Pan-German League, 1886–1914* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1984).

28. Constantin von Altrock, *Vom Sterben des deutschen Offizierkorps* (Berlin: Mittler, 1922).

29. Michael Geyer, "German Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare, 1914–1945," in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Macchiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 527–97.

30. Magnus von Eberhardt, *Kriegserinnerungen* (Neudamm: Neumann, 1938), 13.

31. See, for example, Alexander Fürst zu Dohna-Schlobitten, *Erinnerungen eines alten Ostpreußen*, (Berlin: Siedler, 1989), 182; Rudolph-Christoph von Gersdorff, *Soldat im Untergang* (Frankfurt/M: Ullstein, 1977), 38; Erich von Manstein, *Aus einem Soldatenleben 1887–1939* (Bonn: Athenäum, 1958), 13f.; and Fedor v. Zobeltitz, *Ich hab so gern gelebt. Die Lebenserinnerungen* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1934), 34.

32. BA-MA Freiburg, Nr. 5/27, 1–5 (Nachlaß Joachim v. Stülpnagel), *75 Jahre meines Lebens* (1955), 9 and 252.

33. Ostertag, *Bildung, Ausbildung und Erziehung des Offizierkorps*, 55. See also Hanns Möller, ed., *Geschichte der Ritter des Ordens "pour le mérite" im Weltkrieg*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Bernard und Graefe, 1935).

34. "Weshalb der Adel für die Annahme der Militärvorlage sein muß!" in *Deutsches Adelsblatt* 10 (1892): 979. The continuous admonitions directed toward the sons of nobility concerning the necessity of maintaining military traditions suggest that the basic underpinnings of this ethos were beginning to crumble by this point. See also Graf

v. Bülow Dennewitz-Grünhoff, "Soziale Bedeutung und Aufgaben des Adels," *Deutsches Adelsblatt* 23 (1905): 761–65.

35. BA-MA Freiburg, Nr. 103/44 (Nachlaß Paul v. Lettow-Vorbeck), *Meine Lebenserinnerungen* (1955), 4f.; compare with BA-MA Freiburg, Nr. 491/1 (Nachlaß Alexander Graf v. Brandenstein-Zepelin), *Erlebtes und Erstrebtes*, unpublished manuscript, (1945), 1; Fabian v. Schlabrendorff, *Begegnungen in fünf Jahrzehnten* (Tübingen: Wunderlich, 1979), 12f.; and v. Manstein, *Aus einem Soldatenleben*, 15.

36. See BA-MA Freiburg, Nr. 280/167 (Nachlaß Walter v. Hülsen), vol. 3: Lecture Manuscript, "Vom Werden und Sterben der alten Wehrmacht" (1928), 6.

37. See *Stenographische Berichte der Reichstagsitzungen*, vols. 235 and 236, March 17, 1909. Consider also Karl v. Einem, *Erinnerungen eines Soldaten 1853–1933* (Leipzig: Koehler, 1933), 73 and the bourgeois-liberal criticism of the former by Richard Gädke, "Also sprach Herr von Einem," in *Berliner Tageblatt*, Nr. 151, March 24, 1909. On "martial tribes," see John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993).

38. BLHA Potsdam, Pr. Br. Rep. 37, Boitzenburg, No. 3356: *Gedrucktes Verzeichnis der dem Militär angehörenden Mitglieder der Familie von Arnim* (n.d.); and No. 4382: *Aufstellung über die Arnims in der brandenburgisch-preußisch Armee* (n.d.).

39. Heinz Reif, "'Erhaltung adligen Stamms und Namens'—Adelsfamilie und Statussicherung im Münsterland 1770–1914," in *Familie zwischen Tradition und Moderne. Studien zur Geschichte der Familie in Deutschland und Frankreich vom 16. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Neithard Bulst, Joseph Goy, and Jochen Hoock (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1981), 275–321.

40. Consider the treatment of the lives of the few "glorious" noblewomen in Christa Diemel, *Adlige Frauen im bürgerlichen Jahrhundert. Hofdamen, Stiftsdamen, Salon-damen 1800–1870* (Frankfurt/M: Fischer, 1998).

41. Rudolf Valdeck, "Adel und Aristokratie," *Deutsches Adelsblatt* 2 (1884): 412.

42. See Dankwart Graf v. d. Arnim, *Als Brandenburg noch die Mark hieß* (Berlin: Siedler, 1991), 108; Dissow, *Adel im Übergang*, 95.

43. See Hellmuth v. Gerlach, *Von rechts nach links* (Zürich: Europa, 1937), 41; Ernst Heinrich Prinz v. Sachsen, *Mein Lebensweg vom Königsschloß zum Bauernhof* (München: List, 1968), 35; and Ludwig Renn, *Meine Kindheit und Jugend* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1957), 145. See also the evocative passages on hunting in Arnim, *Brandenburg*, 99–106, as well as Alexander Prinz v. Hohenlohe, *Aus meinem Leben* (Frankfurt/M: Societäts-Druckerei, 1925), 160–83.

44. Paul v. Hindenburg, *Aus meinem Leben* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1920), 3. Compare with Zobelitz, *Ich hab so gern gelebt*, 34: ". . . I was supposed to be shunted off to the Cadet Corps. All the Zobelitzs had worn the king's tunic, and no one asked me [yet] if I had either the constitution for, or inclination towards, the military profession. I was ready for anything—I had just turned ten years of age."

45. See Marcus Funck and Stephan Malinowski, "'Charakter ist alles!' Erziehungs-ideale und Erziehungspraktiken in deutschen Adelsfamilien im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert," *Jahrbuch für historische Bildungsforschung* 4 (2000): 71–91.

46. The most prominent example of this type of behavior was Wilhelm II's "ability to overcome" his physical handicaps. Compare the detailed descriptions, diagnoses, and interpretations in John C. G. Röhl, *Wilhelm II. Die Jugend des Kaisers 1859–1888* (Munich: Beck, 1993) with Wilhelm's stylized depiction of his "Hinzpetererziehung" in *Ereignisse und Gestalten aus den Jahren 1878–1918* (Berlin: Koehler, 1928), 24–33.

47. Magnus Freiherr v. Braun, *Von Ostpreußen bis Texas* (Oldenburg: Stalling, 1955), 398; Oskar v. d. Lancken-Wakenitz, *Meine dreissig Dienstjahre 1888–1914* (Berlin: Verlag für Kulturpolitik, 1931), 31f.; Friedrich Franz v. Unruh, *Ehe die Stunde schlug. Eine Jugend im Kaiserreich* (Bodman/Bodensee: Hohenstaufen, 1967), 7f.; Ulrich v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Erinnerungen 1848–1914* (Berlin: Koehler, 1927), 58; Hanns v. Zobelitz, *Unterwegs im Knödelländchen und anderswo. Lebenserinnerungen* (Bielefeld: Velhagen und Klasing, 1916), 15f.; Hugo Graf Lerchenfeld-Koefering, *Erinnerungen und Denkwürdigkeiten* (Berlin: Mittler, 1935), 2f.; and BA-MA Freiburg, Nr. 5/27, 1–5 (Nachlaß Alexander Graf v. Brandenstein-Zeppelin), *Erlebtes und Erstrebtes* (1945), 18f.

48. Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1972). One can also read Carlyle as a pathfinder of a bourgeois, patriarchal hero culture, as Frevert does in "Herren und Helden," 323f. This interpretation fails to note that the entire literary corpus of the English "Bildungsbürger" Carlyle had a generic image of East Elbian nobility as its focus, however.

49. For an analysis of content and function of these self-made images, see Marcus Funck and Stephan Malinowski, "Geschichte von oben. Autobiographien als Quelle einer Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte des deutschen Adels in Kaiserreich und Weimarer Republik," *Historische Anthropologie* 7 (1999): 236–70.

50. Von Braun, *Von Ostpreußen bis Texas*, 49f.

51. The normal catalog of virtues can be found in virtually all memoirs, as well as in a few quasi-empirical publications. See, for example, Gerd Heinrich, *Geschichte Preußens. Staat und Dynastie* (Frankfurt/M: Propyläen, 1981), 22–26; and Giles MacDonald, *Prussia: The Perversion of an Idea* (London: Mandarin, 1995), 109–36. On the connection of *Boden* (soil) with *Blut* (blood), one need only note a specific anecdote. On one occasion, the empress, who came from England, mockingly queried whether there was anything else in the Mark Brandenburg besides sand, potatoes, and pine trees. The alleged reply was the addition "and heroes, Your Highness!" Quoted as per Charlotte Freifrau v. Hadeln, *In Sonne und Sturm* (Rudolstadt: Verlag der Fürstlich privaten Hofdruckerei, 1935), 288.

52. Magnus Hirschfeld, *Von einst bis jetzt. Geschichte der homosexuellen Bewegung 1897–1922*, ed. Manfred Herzer and James Steakeley (Berlin: Rosa Winkel, 1986), 153.

53. Selection cited is from a German-language compilation of Carlyle's works, Thomas Carlyle, *Arbeiten und nicht verzweifeln. Auszüge aus seinen Werken* (Düsseldorf: Langewiesche, 1904), 110.

54. BA-MA Freiburg Nr. 280/167 (Nachlaß Walter v. Hülsen), vol. 3: Lecture Manuscript, (ca. 1928), 5f.; compare as well Wilhelm II, *Ereignisse und Gestalten*, 190f.; Bernhard v. Bülow, *Denkwürdigkeiten* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1931), IV:145f.; Prinz Kraft zu Hohenlohe-Ingelfingen, *Aus meinem Leben* (Berlin: Mittler, 1897), 387. See as well Hohenlohe-Ingelfingen, 350, regarding a report on the Battle of St. Privat: "The relationship between the numbers of officers and enlisted men lost is shocking. We had only one officer for every 120 men, but we lost one officer for every twelve men. . . . This was so, because the officers never took cover, even after they had ordered their men to do so."

55. BA-MA Freiburg Nr. 103/44 (Nachlaß Paul v. Lettow-Vorbeck), "Meine Lebenserinnerungen" (1955): 5 and 23f.

56. BLHA Potsdam, Pr. Br. Rep. 37, Boitzenburg, No. 4369: *Reden Dietloff v. Arnim, Rede zur Hochzeit seines Sohnes Joachim mit Freiin v. Loen*, April 27, 1920.

57. Wilhelm v. Hagen, "Adel verpflichtet!," *Deutsches Adelsblatt* 39 (1921): 37f.
58. Graf Rüdiger v.d. Goltz, "Offizier und Adel," *Deutsches Adelsblatt* 53 (1935): 504f.
59. Claus v. Eickstädt, "Der soziale Beruf wahren Adels," *Pädagogisches Magazin. Schriften zur politischen Bildung VII*, Volkstum 7 (Langensalza: Beyer & Mann, 1926), 46f.
60. *Deutsches Adelsblatt* 52 (1934): 1; see also Kleine, "Adelsgenossenschaft und Nationalsozialismus," 117f. On the transformation of Catholic-conservatism after 1918, see Larry E. Jones, "Catholic Conservatives in the Weimar Republic: The Politics of the Rhenish-Westphalian Aristocracy, 1918–1933," *German History* 18 (2000): 60–85. For an examination of the relationship between the German nobility and National Socialism in general, see Stephan Malinowski, "Vom König zum Führer? Der deutsche Adel und die NS-Bewegung bis 1934" (unpublished paper presented at German Studies Association conference in Atlanta, Ga., October 7–10, 1999).
61. Hohenlohe-Ingelfingen, *Aus meinem Leben*, 387.
62. BLHA Potsdam, Pr. Br. Rep. 37, Gutsarchiv Werben I (v. Schönfeldt), No. 390: *Kriegserlebnisse des Oberstleutnants Heinrich Constantin Thurow v. Boltenstern 1870/71*, Brief Boltensterns an seine Frau vom 28.12.1870.
63. Friedrich Syben, *Offiziere. Anekdoten aus vier Jahrhunderten* (Berlin: Bernhard & Graefe, 1943), 161f. It is interesting to note that such heroes' tales reemerged in the final phase of the Second World War.
64. BA-MA Freiburg, Nr. 266–269 (August v. Cramon), "Meine Erlebnisse im Weltkriege. Frankreich 1914," 13.
65. Elard v. Oldenburg-Januschau, *Erinnerungen* (Berlin: Loehler & Amelang, 1936), 84; Richard Gädke, "Junker und Bürger auf dem Schlachtfelde," *Berliner Tageblatt*, February 13, 1908, (79). Gädke himself offered searing criticism of this action by noting: "What is all that supposed to mean? That in our entire army . . . the spirit of camaraderie and readiness to help, the notion of noble sacrifice, is still quite alive. Who would have expected otherwise! It is dreadful that one would fashion a form of adulation for a particular class of people from this act, and it is, moreover, appalling to glorify such class-related spirit of self-sacrifice! This is self-approbation!"
66. Hermann v. Chappius, "Bei Hofe" und "Im Felde" (Berlin: Mittler, 1902), 36.
67. Syben, *Offiziere*, 121.
68. Compare Joachim v. Winterfeld-Menkin, *Jahreszeiten des Lebens. Das Buch meiner Erinnerungen* (Berlin: Propyläen, 1942), 352, and Baron v. Reizenstein's 1931 speech: "You, my child, stand in a long row. You are part of a chain which holds you, one that you must continue to forge!" in *Deutsches Adelsarchiv Marburg, DAG-Bayern*, vol. 2, fol. "Protokolle," 9.
69. Hohenlohe-Ingelfingen, *Aus meinem Leben*, 326. According to another anecdote, Wilhelm I could not stand Heinrich v. Kleist's drama, "Prinz Friedrich v. Homburg," because the depiction of a Prussian officer fearing for his life was simply intolerable.
70. Hans v. Tresckow, *Von Fürsten und anderen Sterblichen. Erinnerungen eines Kriminalkommissars* (Berlin: Fontane & Co., 1922), 20. Consider also Chappius, "Bei Hofe" und "Im Felde," 34–36; Einem, *Erinnerungen eines Soldaten 1853–1933*, 27; Bülow, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, 145f.
71. Hugo Freiherr v. Reischach, *Unter drei Kaisern* (Berlin: Verlag für Kulturpolitik, 1925), 44f.

72. BA-MA Nr. 280/167 (Nachlaß Walter v. Hülsen), vol. 3, (ca. 1928), fol. 5. See also Bülow, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, 147.

73. Joachim Radkau, *Das Zeitalter der Nervosität. Deutschland zwischen Bismarck und Hitler* (Munich: Hanser, 1998), 357ff.

74. Compare especially John C. G. Röhl, ed., *Philipp Eulenburgs Politische Korrespondenz*, 3 vols. (Boppard: Boldt, 1983), I: 9–53. See as well Wolfgang J. Mommsen, "Homosexualität, aristokratische Kultur und Weltpolitik. Die Herausforderung des wilhelminischen Establishments durch Maximilian Harden 1906–1908," in *Große Prozesse. Recht und Gerechtigkeit in der Geschichte*, ed. Uwe Schulz (Munich: Beck, 1996), 279–88. Isabel V. Hull sees the meaning of the various affairs and crises of the years 1905 until 1911 in the dissolution of the civilian entourage surrounding Wilhelm II in favor of a military retinue. See Isabel V. Hull, *The Entourage of Kaiser Wilhelm II, 1888–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). Nicolaus Sombart, in his treatment of the fall of Wilhelmine Germany, underscores the factual abdication of the Kaiser and his royal state as a prelude to flight in 1918. See Nicolaus Sombart, *Wilhelm II. Sündenbock und Herr der Mitte* (Berlin: Volk & Welt, 1996).

75. For an exploration of various aspects of the "culture of will," see Ursula Breyer, Bernd Ulrich, and Karin Wieland, eds., *Willensmenschen. Über deutsche Offiziere* (Frankfurt/M: Fischer, 1999).

76. René Girard, *Das Heilige und die Gewalt* (Zurich: Benzinger, 1972).

77. Klaus Latzel, *Vom Sterben im Krieg. Wandlungen in der Einstellung zum Soldatentod vom Siebenjährigen Krieg bis zum Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Warendorf: Fahlbusch, 1988), 99.

78. Kurt Ihlenfeld, ed., *Preußischer Choral. Deutscher Soldatenglaube in drei Jahrhunderten* (Berlin: Eckart, 1935), 112.

79. The field lacks a seminal treatment of the rebirth of pietism in the nineteenth century. We remain dependent on two discussions of this phenomenon: Hartmut Lehmann, "Pietism and Nationalism. The Relationship between Protestant Revivalism and National Renewal in Nineteenth-Century Germany," *Church History* 51 (1982): 39–53; and Christopher Clark, "The Politics of Revival: Pietists, Aristocrats, and the State Church in Early Nineteenth-Century Prussia" in *Between Reform, Reaction, and Resistance: Studies in the History of German Conservatism from 1789 to 1945*, ed. Larry E. Jones and James Retallack (Providence/Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1993), 31–60. For an excellent study that focuses exclusively on the 1920s, see Shelly Baranowski, *The Sanctity of Rural Life: Nobility, Protestantism and Nazism in Weimar Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

80. Ihlenfeld, ed., *Preußischer Choral*, 162f.

81. BLHA Potsdam, Pr. Br. Rep. 37, Gutsarchiv Werben I (v. Schönfeldt), No. 390: *Kriegererlebnisse*.

82. Ernst Jünger, *In Stahlgewittern. Aus dem Tagebuch eines Stoßtruppführers* (Berlin: Mittler, 1922), 100.

83. Schoenemarck, *Heldengedenkmappe*; Oertzen, *Junker*, 385f.

84. Harald v. Königswald, ed., *Stirb und Werde! Aus den Briefen und Tagebuchblättern des Leutnants Bernhard von der Marwitz* (Breslau: Korn, 1931), 218f. One should note the reinterpretation of this artist's life as an avant-garde front-line fighter after 1918. The editor v. Königswald became particularly active in refashioning images of aristocracy after 1918, and again after 1945. Also see the nostalgic collection *Besuche vor dem Unter-*

gang. Aus *Tagebuchaufzeichnungen von Udo v. Alvensleben*, ed. Harald v. Königswald (Berlin: Ullstein, 1968).

85. BLHA Potsdam, Pr. Br. Rep. 37, Gutsarchiv Werben I (v. Schönfeldt), No. 390: *Kriegserlebnisse*, fol. 23.

86. Lerchenfeld-Koefering, *Erinnerungen und Denkwürdigkeiten*, 26; Einem, *Erinnerungen eines Soldaten 1853–1933*, 12; Oldenburg-Januschau, *Erinnerungen*, 129; v. Hindenburg, *Aus meinem Leben*, 332f.; Deimling, *Aus der alten in die neue Zeit*, 182; and Tilo Freiherr v. Wilmowsky, *Rückblickend möchte ich sagen . . . Aus der Schwelle des 150-jährigen Krupp-Jubiläums* (Oldenburg: Stalling, 1961), 36f.

87. Ulrich Heinemann, *Die verdrängte Niederlage. Politische Öffentlichkeit und Kriegsschuldfrage in der Weimarer Republik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983).

88. Bernd Hüppauf, "'Der Tod ist verschlungen in den Sieg.' Todesbilder aus dem Ersten Weltkrieg und der Nachkriegszeit," in *Ansichten vom Krieg. Vergleichende Studien zum Ersten Weltkrieg in Literatur und Gesellschaft*, ed. Bernd Hüppauf (Königstein/Taunus: Athenäum, 1984), 55–91.

89. Bogislaw v. Selchow, *Hundert Tage aus meinem Leben* (Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 1936), 257.

90. Letter of Fritz-Dietloff Graf v. d. Schulenburg to his wife, May, 1936. Quoted in Ulrich Heinemann, "Fritz-Dietloff Graf von der Schulenburg," in *Der Widerstand gegen den Nationalsozialismus. Die deutsche Gesellschaft und der Widerstand gegen Hitler*, ed. Jürgen Schmädke and Peter Steinbach (Munich: Piper, 1986), 422.

91. Letter of Helmuth James Graf v. Moltke to Lionel Curtis, 18 April 1942. Quoted in Freya v. Moltke, Michael Balfour, and Julian Frisby, *Helmuth James von Moltke 1907–1945. Anwalt der Zukunft* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1975), 176 and 184.

92. Quoted in Schlabrendorff, *Begegnungen in fünf Jahrzehnten*, 175.

93. Historians have never been particularly interested in specifically aristocratic elements relating to the resistance movement surrounding July 20, 1944. Instead, we find references to "national-conservative" or "military" resistance. Note especially the comments of Eckart Conze, "Adel und 'Adeligkeit' im Widerstand des 20. Juli" in *Adel und Bürgertum im 20. Jahrhundert. Entwicklungslinien und Wendepunkte*, ed. Heinz Reif (Berlin: Akademie, 2001), 269–95.

94. Richard Gädke, "Junker und Bürger auf dem Schlachtfelde," in *Berliner Tageblatt*, (79).

95. Oldenburg-Januschau, *Erinnerungen*, 83.

96. Clemens Frhr. v. Hausen, "Symbolik der Ritterwaffen," in *Deutsches Adelsblatt* 4 (1886): 5.

97. Maurice Halbwachs, *Das Gedächtnis und seine sozialen Bedingungen* (Berlin: Luchterhand, 1966), 307. See also Heinz Reif, *Westfälischer Adel 1770–1860. Vom Herrschaftsstand zur regionalen Elite* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 97 as well as Funck and Malinowski, "Masters of Memory."

98. Compare, for example, the memoirs of the v. d. Marwitz family with their detailed, yet rather macabre descriptions of the deaths of their "cousins": BLHA Potsdam, Pr. Br. Rep. 37, Friedersdorf, Nr. 259, fols. 105–20, and the somewhat briefer "Verzeichnis der dem Militär angehörenden Mitglieder der Familie von Arnim": BLHA Potsdam, Pr. Br. Rep. 37, Boitzenburg, No. 3356.

99. Note Schoenermarck, *Heldengedenkmappe*; and Matthias Graf Schweltow, ed., *Gedenkbuch des deutschen Adels 1939–1945* (Limburg: Starke, 1967).

100. Fürstlich Fürstenbergsches Archiv Donaueschingen, Kab. Sekr., Akte "Verein der deutschen Standesherrn." I wish to thank Stephan Malinowski for this particular reference.

101. Georg Simmel, "Exkurs über den Adel," in Simmel, *Soziologie. Untersuchungen über die Formen der Vergesellschaftung*, (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1958), II: 549.

102. Consider with respect to Marion Gräfin Dönhoff, *Kindheit in Ostpreußen* (Berlin: Siedler, 1988), 57.

103. Gary Smith and Hinderk M. Emrich, eds., *Vom Nutzen des Vergessens* (Berlin: Akademie, 1996).

104. WAA Münster, Lüninck, No. 915: "Liste der führenden Personen der Bewegung des 20. Juli 1944 soweit sie hingerichtet oder sonst zu Tode gekommen sind."

105. Oswald v. Nostitz, "Versuch über den Adel. Ein Vortrag," in *Präsenzen. Kritische Beiträge zur europäischen Geistesgeschichte*, ed. Oswald v. Nostitz (Nuremberg: Glock & Lutz, 1967), 237. See as well Lutz Graf Schwerin v. Krosigk, *Es geschah in Deutschland; Menschenbilder unseres Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Rainer Wunderlich Verlag, 1951). Von Krosigk states: "In all of Prussia's wars, members of this family have fallen on the field of battle. Ulrich Wilhelm Graf Schwerin v. Schwanefeld was raised in this spirit. The old aristocracy which, we should recall, was a large percentage of those executed after the 20th of July [1944], connected this spirit of sacrifice to the oldest traditions of its past and thus atoned for the collective responsibility for Germany's demise" (349). The treatment of dead noble resistance fighters by their families after 1945 is exemplified by the case of Albrecht Graf Bernstorff in Conze, *Adel*, 199–206.

106. Canetti, *Masse und Macht*, 267–72.

107. Hugo Freiherr v. Freytag-Loringhoven, *Menschen und Dinge wie ich sie in meinem Leben sah* (Berlin: Mittler, 1923), 161.

108. Krockow, *Reise*, 194. Based on a quote from Ernst Ludwig v. Gerlach.

109. But see René Schilling, "Die soziale Konstruktion heroischer Männlichkeit im 19. Jahrhundert. Das Beispiel Theodor Körner," in *Landsknechte, Soldatenfrauen und Nationalkrieger. Militär, Krieg und Geschlechterordnung im historischen Wandel*, ed. Karen Hagemann and Ralf Pröve (Frankfurt/M: Campus, 1998), 121–44.

110. Ute Frevert, "Das jakobinische Modell." Albrecht v. Roon emphasized the apparent dichotomy of middle class and military society in his famous treatise of July 21, 1858, which later led to the degradation of the bourgeois territorial regiments. See *Denkwürdigkeiten aus dem Leben des Generalfeldmarschalls Kriegsministers Albrecht von Roon, Sammlung von Briefen, Schriften und Erinnerungen* (Berlin: Trewendt, 1905), II: 530.

111. See Michael Geyer, "Kriegsgeschichte," in *Physische Gewalt*, 148.

112. See Günter Kaufmann, ed., *Langemarck. Das Opfer der Jugend an allen Fronten* (Stuttgart: Belsler, 1938), as well as Philipp Witkop ed., *Kriegsbriefe gefallener Studenten* (Munich: Müller, 1929). For a convincing reconstruction of the beginnings and reception of the previous work, see Manfred Hettling and Michael Jeismann, "Der Weltkrieg als Epos. Philipp Witkops 'Kriegsbriefe gefallener Studenten,'" in *Keiner fühlt sich hier mehr als Mensch . . .* *Erlebnis und Wirkung des Ersten Weltkriegs*, ed. Gerhard Hirschfeld, Gerd Krumeich, and Irina Renz (Frankfurt/M: Fischer, 1996), 205–34.

113. For a well-rounded treatment of the middle class search for new and complete concepts of life which later came to include radical, anti-bourgeois criticism in the late nineteenth century, see Manfred Hettling and Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, "Der bürger-

liche Wertehimmel. Zum Problem individueller Lebensführung im 19. Jahrhundert," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 24 (1997): 333-59.

114. See Karl-Ferdinand Werner, "Adel—'Mehrzweck-Elite' vor der Moderne?" in *Eliten in Deutschland und Frankreich im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert. Strukturen und Beziehungen*, Bd. I, ed. Rainer Hudemann and Georges-Henri Soutou (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1994), 17-32.

115. Bundesarchiv, Berlin-Zehlendorf, NSDAP-Ortskartei und NSDAP-Zentralkartei (Wedel).

2

Brian E. Crim

“Was it All Just a Dream?”

German-Jewish Veterans and the Confrontation with *völkisch* Nationalism in the Interwar Period

Far behind the gigantic cities, the hosts of machines, the empires whose inner bonds have been rent in the storm, await the new men, the cunning, battle-tested men who are ruthless toward themselves and others. This war is not the end but the prelude to violence. It is the forge in which the new world will be hammered into new borders and communities. New forms want to be filled with blood and power will be wielded with a hard fist. The war is a great school, and the new man will bear our stamp . . . The festival is about to begin, and we are its princes.

—Ernst Jünger, *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*

■ Jünger’s passionate embrace of war and its transformative effects on those who survived the “storm of steel” represents the militant nationalist interpretation of the First World War. He portrayed the front generation, the “new men,” as a triumphant and hardened race poised to lead Germany into a glorious future where technology and man were unified.¹ Front experience, the distinguishing feature of the new man, created an imagined community of veterans who firmly believed that the community formed at the front (*Frontgemeinschaft*) was the model for Germany’s postwar revival.² Veterans from various backgrounds mythologized the front and articulated programs for Germany’s moral and material rejuvenation based on the interpretation of front experience. Veterans’ conceptualizations of the nation, regardless of their political perspective, corresponded to Benedict Anderson’s argument that the modern nation was

conceived as "a deep, horizontal comradeship" irrespective of the presence of social inequality.³

Three brands of nationalism existed during the Weimar Republic. One was a liberal and tolerant nationalism present during the Wars of Liberation (1807–15), the Revolutions of 1848, and most clearly represented by the Weimar Constitution of 1919.⁴ The second was the militant nationalism represented by Jünger. The last was an increasingly more racially defined and unequivocal nationalism that emerged after the establishment of a unified industrial Germany in the late nineteenth century and flourished after the First World War. Contrary to the *Sonderweg* theory that states that German elites manipulated nationalism to maintain their power, the defining characteristic of German nationalism after unification was the extensive participation from the so-called "petty bourgeoisie" and lower classes in mass politics.⁵ It was nationalism as it developed by the late nineteenth century that threatened the civil status of the Jewish minority. The "Jewish Question," or the problem of defining the status of Jews within Germany, evolved into a conflict between tolerant nationalism and racial nationalism. The racial nationalism integrated the rhetoric of violence and rebirth associated with militant nationalism into its own discourse. Because Jews were generally hesitant to participate in a brand of nationalism that appeared intolerant and intrusive, the Right easily identified Jews as a natural enemy.⁶ The conflict over types of nationalism was most intense during the Weimar period (1919–33) because internal dissent manifested itself in official and unofficial political strife, often spilling into the streets.⁷ The First World War altered anti-Semitism, like most prewar issues, by changing the language and imagery associated with the debate and framing anti-Semitism and the Jewish response within the context of competing interpretations of the war's legacy.⁸ Leading the assault against Jews were veterans intent on refusing Jews membership into the national community (*Volkgemeinschaft*) for which so many Germans died. Equally intense were Jewish veterans' efforts to gain permanent and unquestioned entry into the national community based on their own sacrifice.

Jewish veterans struggled unsuccessfully to integrate into both the veteran community and national community because they placed their interpretation of the war experience under the rubric of liberalism, pluralism, and republicanism at a time when those values were being undermined by so-called *völkisch* nationalism.⁹ Jewish veterans agreed with their comrades that the war was the point of departure for Germany's re-

vival, but Jewish veterans' interpretation of the war experience vastly differed from the *völkisch* representation of the front community and the national community. This essay analyzes how Jewish veterans' reaction to anti-Semitism was a reflection of their memory of the war experience.¹⁰ Jewish veterans pursued what may be called a defense through education. By communicating a memory of the war experience that incorporated Enlightenment values, the leading Jewish veterans' association assumed that anti-Semitism would be disarmed if the truth was revealed. The first section places German Jewry in historical context and introduces the National Association of Jewish Front Soldiers (*Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten*). The second section addresses the style and content of the attacks leveled against the Jews by right-wing veterans' and National Socialist organs. The third section concerns Jewish veterans' political and social activity during the Weimar period, and the final section evaluates Jewish veterans' strategy after the establishment of the Third Reich. This essay examines a community where future victims and perpetrators shared common values, a reverence for the war experience, and a desire to translate that experience into a political reality.¹¹ Every organized veteran struggled for a society that incorporated values associated with the front experience, but the memory of the front was a construction of veterans more interested in shaping the future than accurately remembering the past.

Before discussing the German-Jewish community, it is necessary to understand *völkisch* nationalism and the significance of the category of experience for the veteran community. The most characteristic principle behind *völkisch* ideology was the belief that the human soul was connected to its natural surroundings, making the nation an historical entity whose members could claim a deep relationship to the soil. Hans Kohn noted that nationalism in Germany did not develop along rational, contractual, and certainly not popular lines, but "by traditional ties of kingship and status." German nationalism, writes Kohn, "substituted for the legal and rational concept of 'citizenship' the vaguer concept of 'folk'."¹² The racial nature of German citizenship made it difficult for minority groups, such as Poles or Jews for example, to ever assimilate fully.¹³ Just as it was common for Germans to believe that they had roots in German soil, so too was it common to oppose the presence of Jews within the nation. Jews were the symbols of modernity because they were viewed as promoting liberalism and benefiting from the new industrial economy, which was considered destructive to the *völkisch* way of life. A people without roots,

according to *völkisch* ideology, were determined to infiltrate healthy nations and feed off of them. The Jews were viewed as mastering modernity and using it to contaminate the purity of the German nation.¹⁴ From the beginning anti-Semitism was integral to *völkisch* ideology. What distinguished modern political anti-Semitism before the First World War and after was not so much its content, which was always *völkisch* in tone, but rather, its success.¹⁵

Front experience elevated the front community above any other category of war experience, specifically the plight of civilians. It was important for veterans to establish the incommensurability of experiences as a means to preserve the veteran's moral authority to lead in the postwar world. The front community was a popular postwar myth because it glossed over the contradictory experiences of those who served during the war and diverted attention away from the intractable problems plaguing the Weimar Republic.¹⁶ The belief that the "real" Germany served at the front, and that Germany's best had in fact died there, was an article of faith among organized veterans. The remnants of this front community were widely described as Germany's last hope.¹⁷ War experience was regarded as a personal rite of passage for veterans. Material goals were irrelevant to the veteran, what mattered most were the transforming effects of war on veterans poised to assume control of their flailing nation. Jünger encapsulated this belief when he quipped, "Essential is not what we are fighting for, but *how* we fight."¹⁸ Both the political Left and the Right embraced front experience as motivation to organize veteran adherents to their respective ideologies in unprecedented numbers. However, the National Association of Jewish Front Soldiers did not so much align itself with political parties as celebrate front service for the greater good of the Jewish community.

I.

Most German Jews believed that a genuine republican government accompanied by the dutiful pursuit of "emancipation ideology" was the proper path to acceptance within the nation. This ideology maintained that Jews deserved equal rights so long as they assimilated into the German nation and corrected "Jewish characteristics."¹⁹ Sociologist Werner Cahnmann noted that Jews in the modern period "became fervent patriots, attached more to the state than to the nation, because they knew that they owed their emancipation to government fiat in the face of popular re-

luctance."²⁰ As the nation increasingly responded to the *völkisch* nationalism that appeared in the late nineteenth century, German Jewry was more vulnerable to a concerted anti-Semitic attack because the state became hostile to liberalism, the ideology with which most Jews identified. The problem was that most Jews were unable to distinguish between the historic Christian anti-Semitism of the past and the modern, more insidious racism present during the two decades preceding the First World War.²¹

Most German Jews embraced the Great War as an opportunity to prove their devotion to the nation. On August 1, 1914, the largest secular Jewish organization in Germany, the Central Union of German Citizens of Jewish Faith (*Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens*), declared, "In this fateful hour the fatherland calls its sons to the banners. It is self-evident that every German Jew is prepared to sacrifice his property and blood as far as duty demands. Brethren! We ask you to devote all your energies to the fatherland above and beyond the call of duty. Rush voluntarily to the banners!"²² The Central Union recognized that Jews had to overcompensate if they were to dispel any doubts about Jewish patriotism, even in light of the Kaiser's declaration of an internal peace (*Burgfrieden*).²³

The fragility of that peace, however, was shattered by the infamous "Jew count" (*Juden-zählung*) of October, 1916. Responding to conservative demands in the Reichstag and pressure from unrelenting anti-Semitic organizations, the Prussian War Ministry initiated a census of Jews serving at the front to determine whether Jews served in proportion to their percentage of the population. The most frequently quoted statistics concerning Jewish participation in the war indicated that of the 550,000 Jews in Germany, 100,000 served in the armed forces (army, navy and the border guard) and 80,000 served at the front. Of the 100,000, 35,000 were decorated, and 2000 were officers.²⁴ The most controversial statistic after the war was an estimate of 12,000 Jewish casualties.

The initial response to the Jew count from Jewish organizations was outrage. In a letter to the Prussian War Ministry, the patriotic Association of German Jews (*Verband der Deutschen Juden*) declared the count an insult to Jewish military honor, citing the damage to morale. The Association concluded that "in every post that their superiors put them [Jews] they do their duty, whether at home, the front, or the rear."²⁵ The Central Union of German Citizens of Jewish Faith and other Jewish groups grudgingly approved the census, thinking it would silence critics, and although

the results were kept secret, it became commonplace to suspect Jews of shirking front duty and preventing victory.²⁶ With defeat in the fall of 1918 and leftist revolution (in some cases led by prominent Jews) sweeping across Germany, the Jewish front soldier was put on the defensive against his former comrades.

Born from this crisis atmosphere, the National Association of Jewish Front Soldiers assumed the role of protector and propagandist for German Jewry. Founded in January, 1919, the group called on all Jewish front soldiers to "band together for the struggle for our honor and rights as Germans and Jews!" In their first public announcement, members expressed their bitterness at the pervasive opinion that Jews were somehow responsible for Germany's defeat: "We were deluded into thinking that all classes and faiths, all religious prejudice would be extinguished. We have been deceived. All the danger, and all of our efforts experienced with non-Jewish comrades . . . all these sacrifices appear to have been in vain."²⁷ Sensitive about the "shirker" accusation, the National Association restricted its membership to Jewish veterans with proof of front service. The group's constitution specifically excluded any political and religious activity as well.²⁸ By 1930, despite these self-imposed limitations, the organization claimed 30,000 members divided into sixteen regions and 360 local branches.²⁹ The association represented German Jewry's expectation that spilling blood, the ultimate sacrifice for the nation, would guarantee Jews an unassailable *German* identity.³⁰ As an eclectic group of front soldiers, the organization aimed to rise above the divisions within the Jewish community. While both Zionists and *Freikorps* recruits were represented in the National Association, its membership mirrored that of the centrist Central Union. As a veterans' group, the former did not see itself as competing with organizations seeking broader goals related to assimilation. This limited focus explains how Zionists could reconcile their membership in the group with their deep animosity toward emancipation ideology. This is not to say that the National Association was a useless weapon for the German-Jewish community's struggle to overcome renewed anti-Semitism in the postwar environment.³¹ It is clear, however, that it limited its commentary to issues related to commemorating the war and assuring the prominence of Jews in veterans' issues. Only in the volatile 1930s did the group rescind its ban on politics in an effort to undermine National Socialism.

An indication of how members viewed their position within the German-Jewish community can be seen in their comparison of Jewish

front soldiers to the Maccabees, a popular reference for both Jews and non-Jews.³² Conjuring a mythic past was typical of *völkisch* parties, but the National Association used this tactic in an effort to demonstrate Jewish military prowess. It valued the Maccabee reference because it evoked connotations of defense and protection, the stated goals of the organization's constitution. Jewish veterans were German patriots first and foremost, but appealing to a proud Jewish history revealed the interest of many in maintaining their status as Germans of Jewish faith. Non-Jewish commentators, however, tended to employ biblical references like the Maccabees regardless of their specific meaning to Jews.

Aside from remembering the Great War as a national sacrifice whereby Jews proved their patriotism, the National Association urged German Jewry to follow the veterans' example and disarm anti-Semitic critics. It invoked war experience as justification for veterans' inherent right to lead. What distinguished the group from other veterans' groups, however, was its unwillingness to condemn the home front, and more specifically, the November Revolution. As supporters of the Weimar Republic, the members could not afford to reveal dissatisfaction with the status quo or question the legitimacy of the Weimar Republic. Numerous publications of the group catalogued the heroism of front soldiers, but they also lauded Jewish civilian participation in the war effort. Other veterans' groups created an identity partly in opposition to the civilian world that supposedly betrayed the dutiful front soldier. Yet, while members viewed themselves as an elite, as other veterans did, they did so as advocates of the German-Jewish community, not as detractors of a supposedly corrupt civilian regime.

The anti-Semitism facing the Jewish veterans had deep roots in European culture, but the Great War intensified the assault on Jewish communities across Europe, particularly in Eastern Europe and Germany. The obsession with racial pollution, combined with the deteriorating support for republican government, jeopardized Jewry because it removed the umbrella of state protection. The First World War and its aftermath was unsettling for those Jews who were deceived into believing that their legal equality meant that their assimilation was genuine. Werner Cahnmann noted that "the Jew" was assigned so many stereotypes that it became impossible for Jews to ever appease their critics. The Jew was "the merchant, the stranger, the wanderer, the magician from the East, the man who's everywhere and belongs nowhere. . . ."³³ For interwar anti-Semites the new rallying cry was the "stab in the back" legend maintaining that the

November Revolution left a victorious German army stranded in the field.³⁴ With the Weimar Republic despised by both the extreme Right and Left, and the population widely indifferent toward democracy, genuine tolerance informed by liberalism was unattainable. Within this environment the National Association adhered to the misguided theory that effective demonstrations of Jewish patriotism, as evidenced by the Jewish front soldier's service to the nation, would silence even the most irrational critics. What prevented acceptance was the group's continued association with liberalism and pluralism and tacit support for republicanism, all forces considered degenerate by *völkisch* movements. The National Association thus mirrored the Central Union and other Jewish organizations in devoutly believing Germany to be a nation of the Enlightenment, one embracing the values of tolerance, reason, cosmopolitanism combined with nationalism, understanding, and liberal humanism.³⁵

II.

The motivations of those assailing German Jews is important for understanding the *völkisch* worldview. Recent historiography is beginning to acknowledge the complex ideological background of the generation responsible for orchestrating the Holocaust. Ulrich Herbert portrays the Great War as the tie that bound together generations who either fought in the war or came of age between 1914 and 1918. The latter "war generation," born between 1902 and 1912, was drawn to politics in part because of the unity fostered by sharing the war experience.³⁶ It was this generation, Herbert maintains, that revived *völkisch* nationalism and elevated it to new heights in interwar Germany. Richard Bessel notes that the war generation exhibited a "widespread sense of guilt at not having shared the horrors of the trenches in a country where, increasingly, the exploits of the front generation were praised as the model of selfless heroism."³⁷ More so than the veterans themselves, the war generation glorified the war and mined the war's legacy for political capital. It is no surprise, Bessel argues, that those Germans too young to have experienced war firsthand were the ones who "could imagine war as something positive and unambiguous."³⁸

The war generation would find a comparable mission in the war against the Jews. The generation's attitude toward the Jews was marked by fear and revulsion, but not necessarily hate. Jews were considered biologically inferior because they were a people without a homeland. Purportedly, Jews stealthily penetrated the healthy German *Volk* and contami-

nated its superior genetic pool, thereby thwarting Germany's historical mission.³⁹ Finally, Jews, as a rootless and parasitic race, were believed to pursue international designs under the guise of capitalism and communism.⁴⁰ The rhetoric of destiny and historical mission was central to *völkisch* thought. Alfred Rosenberg, a leading theorist of the Nazi party, delineated the Aryan race's mission of world conquest, noting that "the 'sense of world history' has spread out from the North over the entire world; a sense that was borne by a blue-eyed, blond race which, in several massive waves, has determined the spiritual physiognomy of the world, while at the same time determining what aspects of it must perish."⁴¹ Rosenberg, like the SS officers Herbert has studied, confirmed that for the war generation of 1914 the metaphorical, and eventually literal, war against the Jews was not personal, but the logical outcome of history.⁴²

Prewar anti-Semitism could be intense depending on Germany's economic situation, but the most persistent discrimination was found in Germany's most sacred national institution, the army.⁴³ Exclusion from the armed forces was tantamount to stripping the individual of citizenship, or at least active participation in the civic community. For example, Jews were forbidden to serve as reserve officers even when the privilege was extended to the middle class in the late nineteenth century. The reason for this blatant prejudice was the historic Prussian insistence that only Christians serve a Christian state.⁴⁴ Critics of the exclusionary policy questioned whether religion was the motivating factor. A paper sympathetic to German Jews suggested that the true obstacle to Jewish inclusion was race when it presumed that "what actually made it impossible for Jews to belong to the officer corps in Germany until today is not their religion, but their [alleged] un-German spirit and diametrically opposed racial qualities."⁴⁵

The declaration of war in 1914 removed the obstacles to Jewish participation in the army, but questions surrounding Jewish loyalty and patriotism lingered. Jews served in every combatant's army, yet they were still viewed as one people.⁴⁶ The predicament of the Jewish soldier is dramatically recounted in the memoir of an Austrian-Hungarian Jew, Avigdor Hameiri. A patriotic journalist enthusiastic about the war, Hameiri recalled how the moment Austria-Hungary was committed to the conflict his friends and colleagues turned on him. After congratulating a coworker for volunteering, Hameiri received this response: "He surveyed me critically, his features betraying suppressed hatred, and fury mixed with scorn. He left me. I chuckled. He walked and then turned back toward me and

spewed out one word: 'Jew! How would *you* know what a Fatherland is?'" Hameiri eventually volunteered and made officer-aspirant. No matter what he accomplished in uniform Hameiri and his fellow Jews were widely suspect. On being asked by a superior whether Hameiri considered himself a good officer, Hameiri replied that he hoped so. The superior responded, "If that is so, then why do you compete with your comrades, and why do you glory so in your Jewishness? You'll have to throw that entire burdensome Jewish heritage into Hell and not stir up the whole world while you're doing it!" The depth of Austrian distrust was most apparent when Jewish soldiers performed heroically. While most soldiers received medals for bravery, Hameiri noted, Jews were insulted for performing well. Austrian troops commenting on Jewish heroism remarked that "they tricked the enemy at a psychological moment, just as they tricked the goy back home in business."⁴⁷ The prejudice Hameiri encountered revealed the fear that whatever skills Jews displayed on the battlefield were either accidental or an inherent treachery temporarily mobilized against something other than the host nation.

Although Austrian, Hameiri's memoir applies to the plight of German Jews under arms. The Jew count of October, 1916, sparked an immediate response from some field commanders who were apparently as suspicious as the officers in the Prussian War Ministry. The commander of a field artillery regiment ordered "that all writers, ordnance personnel and people working in similar positions, and under-officers of the Jewish faith be taken out of these posts and sent into the field."⁴⁸ The Jew count, even if the ministries involved denied it, irreparably harmed the reputation of Jewish soldiers regardless of where they served. In addition to suffering the indignity of the Jew count, an act specific to Germany, Jewish soldiers on the Eastern front were placed in uncomfortable proximity to the stereotype they worked so hard to dispel. Polish Jews under German occupation aroused conflicting emotions in Jewish soldiers who were both protective and resentful of their unassimilated brothers.⁴⁹ Some Jewish soldiers portrayed the *Ostjuden* (Eastern Jews) as pro-German by virtue of the Germanic roots of Yiddish. Once the specter of mass migration emerged, however, any German Jew sympathetic to the *Ostjuden* was accused of hastening Germany's postwar collapse. Alfred Rosenberg wrote that throughout history war endangered the Aryan race because "continuously new groups of the population were accepted as citizens. 'For lack of men' barbaric foreigners were accepted as Athenians; just as Eastern Jews later would be accepted as 'German' citizens."⁵⁰ For German Jews the halcyon

days predicted by the Central Union and guaranteed by the *Burgfrieden* were over once the promise of swift victory dissolved.

Völkisch movements, including National Socialism, directed their anti-Semitic attacks against the role of German Jewry during the Great War. The assault on Jewish veterans, however, posed a problem for right-wing veterans groups because it was impossible to completely dismiss Jewish participation in the war effort. The preferred method of attack consisted in questioning Jewish motives and discrediting statistical data. The vanguard of the National Socialist attack was the pornographic and crude journal, *Der Stürmer*. (Criticism from other veterans groups is discussed later in this essay.) The journal reveled in discounting the National Association of Jewish Front Soldier's claim that 12,000 Jews died in the war. *Der Stürmer* quoted its own statistics garnered from anti-Semitic sources and determined that if the Jews died in proportion to their percentage of the population then the number should have been 17,575.⁵¹ This number was based on a Jewish population exceeding 600,000 rather than the more accurate number of 550,000. Most Jewish casualties, the periodical claimed, derived from sickness.⁵² Even after National Socialism's victory the denigration of Jewish veterans continued unabated. On learning that an exhibition about Jewish soldiers was slated for Hanover's town hall, *Der Stürmer* decried the presence of a "foreign race" in a government building.⁵³ On the twentieth anniversary of the Jew count, it collected anecdotal "evidence" verifying that Jewish soldiers acted like cowards hiding, crying, and begging: whatever laurels Jews received were fraudulent, obviously the result of trickery.⁵⁴

Integral to the National Socialist memory of the Great War, aside from Jewish cowardice and incompetence, was the unshakable belief that the responsibility for the war, and therefore the German defeat, rested with the Jews. Erich Ludendorff, Germany's virtual military dictator between 1916 and 1918 and an early enthusiast of National Socialism, slandered the one hundred thousand Jewish soldiers who served him to the end: "Gradually I recognized the pernicious forces that had caused the collapse of a people, and in them the real enemies of the freedom of the German race . . . the secret supranational forces; namely: the Jewish people and Rome."⁵⁵ Adolf Hitler wrote the following passage nearly twenty years before the Final Solution: "If at the beginning of the war and during the war, twelve or fifteen thousand of these Hebraic corrupters of the nation had been subjected to poison gas such as had been endured in the field by hun-

dreds of thousands of our very best German workers of all classes and professions, then the sacrifices of millions at the front would not have been in vain."⁵⁶ In the face of this onslaught of anti-Semitism, with its appeal to *völkisch* nationalism, the National Association drew on its own war experience to buttress the fledgling Weimar Republic and work for a genuine national community where the criteria for membership was based on demonstrated patriotism, not the artificial category of race.

III.

Beginning in the early 1920s, the National Association of Jewish Front Soldiers launched a spirited and multifaceted counterattack against the forces of anti-Semitism. The principal mouthpiece of the group was the newspaper, *Der Schild* (The Shield). While *Der Schild* was primarily published for its members, the National Association printed numerous pamphlets for public consumption echoing the ideas expressed in the paper. It is clear that the organized veteran community was small enough that most groups read each other's publications and responded to one another in editorials. The publishers of *Der Schild* also distributed several publications highlighting Jewish military history and a volume of Jewish war letters from the Great War.⁵⁷ The association outlined a self-improvement program, exposed anti-Semitism as anti-German, catalogued and extolled Jewish heroism during the war, and validated the statistic of twelve thousand Jewish war dead. All this was designed to verify Jewish participation during Germany's most fateful hour. Such a strategy reflects confidence in an inclusive definition of the nation as embodied, at least on paper, by the Weimar Constitution.

The National Association was a strong proponent of overcoming artificial barriers to Jewish assimilation into the national community through the elimination of Jewish characteristics that supposedly provoked anti-Semitism. In this, it heeded the advice of Franz Oppenheimer, a sociologist who counseled that Jews turn to agriculture instead of urban professions in order to convince Germans that Jews have roots in German soil.⁵⁸ Leo Lowenstein, the highly decorated founder of the National Association, called for Jewish self-discipline. In an address to women, Lowenstein exhorted, "Out of the inns of gluttony! Away with the mad pursuit of pleasure! Down with vain baubles! Back to simplicity and serious living!"⁵⁹ The organization knew Jews were worthy of respect from

other Germans, but the veteran activists recognized that the Jewish community had to work under the assumption that "stepchildren have to behave twice as well."⁶⁰

Physical training was crucial to the Jewish Front Soldier's program, especially as it pertained to Jewish youth. A third of every issue of *Der Schild* was devoted to sport. Boxing, hiking, soccer, gymnastics, and weight lifting were promoted as means to create "muscle Jews" out of so-called "coffeehouse Jews." German culture associated strength and vigor with moral rectitude, while the nervousness of urban living was taken as a sign of degeneracy.⁶¹ The National Association posited the image of the "new Jew," a Zionist creation dating from the late nineteenth century, to counter negative stereotypes. Zionism was in itself a "blood and soil" nationalism directed toward the establishment of a Jewish nation. The group did express support for Zionist ideals, but its efforts were focused on greater inclusion within the German nation. For example, during the 1920s Jews were told to marry German peasant women to improve the race, revealing the extent to which Jews internalized negative stereotypes.⁶² Indeed, the association copied the style and dress of the youth movements of other veterans organizations, publishing group photos of strong men and women standing at attention and displaying German and organization flags.⁶³

Overall, the group devoted the least time to self-improvement programs: the more urgent matters concerned self-defense. The National Association framed its defense within its version of the front experience. Anti-Semitism was denounced as a new enemy worthy of destruction. According to *Der Schild*, the real danger was not anti-Semitism's diffusion within Germany, but the veterans' indifference to the association's agenda.⁶⁴ In an article titled "Are We Not Still Front Soldiers?" one author depicted the National Association as a band of eternal front soldiers wielding metaphorical weapons: "Against the poison of hate, the slander that attacks our honor as German front soldiers, there are no gas masks. With open breast, and only with the pure weapon of truth and justice, do we attack our insidious enemies."⁶⁵ The more difficult the situation appeared, the more the trench metaphor entered the discourse. Months before the Nazi seizure of power, editors of *Der Schild* issued an appeal to comradeship, stating that "we Jewish front soldiers again stand in the front." The article recalled the unifying power of the trenches and the naturalness of the front community.⁶⁶ Lowenstein asked Jewish veterans "to stand together again in an imaginary trench in order to rescue the Reich from its plight."⁶⁷ The Jewish Front Soldiers, like the *völkisch* movements,

did not want the war's sacrifices to have been in vain. They believed that a genuine national community free from artificial distinctions existed at the front. The principal postwar mission of the veteran was to recreate this community in a Germany dangerously close to internal collapse.

Answering critics consumed much of the National Association's energy. The most painful charges came from other veterans' organizations. Jewish veterans had grown accustomed to anti-Semitism from those who were not "there," but responses to other veterans groups suggest that they were genuinely perplexed by attacks originating from within the veteran community itself. The *Stahlhelm*, the largest and most politically active veterans group, excluded Jews from membership. Although politically conservative, the *Stahlhelm* gradually adopted some *völkisch* attitudes once it entered the political fray.⁶⁸ The National Association publicly and directly confronted the *Stahlhelm* whenever it was known to have uttered anti-Semitic remarks. In one instance, *Der Schild* cited an article in which the *Stahlhelm* stated that it fought "against international Jewry and capitalism." The *Stahlhelm* assured the veterans' group that such statements did not apply to German-Jewish citizens. Lowenstein replied that he would "take note of this distinction," although "we will continue to point out the baselessness of these stories."⁶⁹

The National Association was equally incensed by a joke allegedly spread by the *Stahlhelm* in which the veracity of Jewish casualties was questioned. *Der Schild* dedicated its front page to demanding an apology. The organization called the joke shameless, asking "how must a Jewish mother feel when she hears such a joke?" The article concluded by testifying to the nobility of the sacrifice, reminding critics that "the graves of our 12,000 dead sing the eternal song of love of home and loyalty to the fatherland."⁷⁰ One pamphlet featuring an etching of women weeping at a war cemetery exclaimed: "German women! Do not tolerate blind hate, so that the Jewish mothers will not be mocked in their pain."⁷¹ Despite condemnations, the jokes and insults continued.

The energy spent verifying and debunking statistics on both sides of the Jewish Question is an interesting chapter of Weimar history. The Jewish veterans were challenged by a host of right-wing groups and parties to prove their claim of 12,000 dead. The *Münchener Beobachter* bet the National Association 1,000 marks that it could not produce a Jewish mother who had had six sons at the front.⁷² The veterans group found several mothers, but the public accusation was damage enough. The bet was common knowledge; the association's victory was not. It ultimately

formed a committee for war statistics to collect information regarding the 12,000 dead and to validate the claim that 100,000 served and 80,000 spent time at the front.⁷³ The obsession with numbers even carried over into a zealous defense of British Jewish veterans undergoing similar credibility crises.⁷⁴ Over the course of several weeks in 1932, *Der Schild* printed the names of over 10,000 Jewish war dead. The list was published in a book presented to President Paul von Hindenburg on the occasion of his eightieth birthday. The cover page cites Hindenburg's thanks and his personal expression of a "respectful memory of the fallen comrades."⁷⁵

Preserving the memory of the fallen was integral to every veterans' organization agenda, and the Jewish Front Soldiers valued occasions where they could stand beside veterans from different faiths and political perspectives, even if for only a day. For on these occasions, the veterans appeared united. *Der Schild* mentioned a remarkable meeting in which leaders from the National Association, the *Stahlhelm*, and even more extreme right-wing groups sat down with government officials to plan the unveiling of a monument to the fallen.⁷⁶ The article claimed that despite obvious differences, the leaders were committed to properly honoring the dead. Such temporary truces were few and far between once the National Socialists participated in ceremonies. In 1929 violence marred the official day of mourning, orchestrated by National Socialists angered by Jewish participation. *Der Schild* condemned the disruption and the displaying of the swastika, calling the symbol an insult to the honor of Jewish front soldiers.⁷⁷

At a Jewish veterans ceremony in 1925, the editors of *Der Schild* announced that Germany needed unity during difficult times and that try as they might, anti-Semitic critics could not deny the Germanness of the Jewish front soldier. Ludwig Haas, an official of the National Association of Jewish Front Soldiers, declared, "I long for the day when the RjF [National Association] will not be necessary. As long as that day is not here, we must declare to the world that we were there as well."⁷⁸ Perhaps the association's tragic flaw was its stubborn faith that service guaranteed inclusion and that the Weimar Republic promised tolerance. Its careful attention to detail and its consistent recourse to educating its critics was a hopelessly inadequate strategy. The language of moderation sounded hollow in a Germany consumed by the fractious legacy of the First World War. The Jewish Front Soldier's references to the war were limited to proving Jewish participation, establishing the moral authority of the veteran, and citing war experience as a source of inspiration during trying times.

National Socialism, however, co-opted the rhetoric and imagery of the war into its dynamic ideology. National Socialism believed that the war signified the birth of an age where violence and politics were intimately linked and that the true legacy of the First World War was its serving not as a source of inspiration but also as a foundation for national regeneration. The National Socialist "New Man" took center stage. After 1933, the National Association was no longer combating the fringe, but rather, seeking reconciliation with the majority.

IV.

Despite years of restrained but consistent condemnation of National Socialism as a dangerous ideology, the National Association of Jewish Front Soldiers, at least in print, did not characterize the March, 1933, election as a decisive moment for German Jewry. The election did, however, mark a change in the group's strategy for achieving inclusion in the national community. Many Jews assumed that the new government would moderate its views over time and were willing to accept a reduced role in German culture.⁷⁹ The National Association continued to chronicle Jewish participation in the First World War, especially since the twentieth anniversary of the war coincided with the most egregious attacks on Jewish civil rights. What distinguished the post-1933 strategy was a measured cooperation with the new regime in exchange for an expected conclusion to officially sanctioned anti-Semitism. The Jewish veterans' group quickly adapted to Hitler's chancellorship, according him the respect conventionally due the office. Reporting on the famous Potsdam church ceremony, where Hitler paid homage to the old imperial army (specifically to Paul von Hindenburg), *Der Schild* expressed optimism in Hitler's reverence for the war's legacy. It publicly reminded Hitler that as chancellor he was obligated to respect and protect Jewish civil rights by virtue of Jewish service during the war.⁸⁰ Between early 1933 and late 1935, the National Association communicated extensively with the office of the Reich Chancellery in an attempt to arrive at an amicable solution to the so-called Jewish Question. In nearly every instance, the Reich Chancellery's response was as, "We have received your kind note and have taken notice of the contents." After passage of the Nuremberg Laws in September, 1935, the organization ceased its monologue with Hitler's office staff.

Leo Lowenstein tried to reach Hitler through a variety of appeals. The most common was an appeal to comradeship born from war. Lowenstein

sent issues of *Der Schild* to Hitler in order to demonstrate that the war was very much alive in Jewish memory, stating in a letter to Hitler's secretary that "we believe that the spirit and meaning of comradeship is unforgettable and unforgotten if we release in memoirs and documents the portrait of Jewish front soldiers in the German army." Aware of the regime's political inclinations, Lowenstein reminded Hitler that the National Association of Jewish Front Soldiers also struggled against "chaos and Bolshevism." The letter concluded that "a national community was created, but we are supposed to have no role in it."⁸¹

Most urgent for the veterans' group, as self-appointed defenders of German Jewry, was the worsening economic situation resulting from the boycott of Jewish businesses and the legal exclusion of Jews in certain professions. Officials in the association served as members of Jewish organizations that appealed to Hitler to lift the boycott not only to help the Jews but also to aid Germany's economic health. As productive citizens in an international economic depression, these interest groups could not understand why Jews were banned from the national community.⁸² The National Association, of its own accord, wrote Hitler a series of letters detailing the potential labor Jews offered Germany if Hitler were to grant the former the authority to organize the Jewish community. Lowenstein reported the group's success in training farmers and morally and physically training youth for technical jobs and artisan labor. The letters reveal an interest and empathy for Hitler's vision of a new Germany. Lowenstein wrote, "[W]e have the burning desire to be able to place our entire will, life, and work for the reconstruction of Germany." In fact, the National Association went so far as to condemn the boycott against Germany by foreign Jews. Lowenstein's letter to Hitler included a copy of one letter he sent to the U.S. embassy in which he called the boycott a terrible idea concocted by anti-German "Jewish intellectuals."⁸³

Lowenstein followed this report with an even more remarkable letter in which he explained how Jews could advance not only Germany's economic progress but Hitler's political goals as well. This letter included the National Association's detailed solution to the Jewish Question. The letter's first section outlined a political relationship between the Jews and the new German government. Lowenstein stated that Jews historically were in Germany since the fall of the Roman Empire, proving that Jews satisfied the *völkisch* requirement of acquiring roots. Even if this argument were rejected, however, he implied that the Jews could be a sympathetic minority in a fascist state. Lowenstein remarked that "the racial stance

does not contradict our demand for the equal rights of established German Jews." This seemingly incomprehensible sentence made sense to him because he regarded National Socialism as a variant of Italian fascism. Lowenstein noted that Mussolini also had strong racial views about the supremacy of Italians, but Jews played an important role in that state. Lowenstein believed that a similar relationship was possible in the new Germany. The remainder of the letter repeated previous proposals concerning training youth and promoting agriculture. A separate letter to the Reich Chancellery pointed out that the National Association sought and received the approval of other leading Jewish groups for the solution to the Jewish Question.⁸⁴ Max Naumann, the leader of the Association of German Jews, was even more direct in calling on Jews to "act . . . not for the supposed interest of the Jews, but for German *Kultur* and German future."⁸⁵

While Lowenstein worked for reconciliation, *Der Schild* continued its effort to unify Jewish veterans and publicize Jewish patriotism. Having been systematically removed from the Reich's public welfare rolls, the members of the National Association of Jewish Front Soldiers were instructed to aid disabled Jews.⁸⁶ As the situation worsened for German Jews, the organization increasingly focused on its own members. On the eve of Rosh Hashanah 1938, Lowenstein requested that all those Jews with means donate their wealth and time to the veteran community, which, as Lowenstein eventually concluded after fruitless attempts to reach Hitler, was "our narrow community. It should and must remain intact."⁸⁷ The action that mortally wounded the group was the declaration of the military law (*Wehrgesetz*) in March, 1935. Although the National Association applauded the renunciation of the Versailles treaty, the law's "Aryan paragraph" denied Jewish entry into the newly constituted armed forces.⁸⁸ The source of the Jewish Front Soldiers' moral authority, their veteran status, was permanently denied the next generation of Jewish men, threatening to make the association's members the last collection of German-Jewish veterans. Lowenstein sent an impassioned plea to the Reich Chancellery, repeating the now familiar statistics and a compliment about the Jewish soldier that former general and chancellor Kurt von Schleicher made on his reception of the National Association's memorial book.⁸⁹ Lowenstein noted that military service was the citizen's most noble obligation, and the Jewish Front Soldiers were dutifully training youth for this obligation. National Socialism also maintained that military service was the most significant citizen duty, but Jews were no longer to be considered citizens.

Twenty years before the *Wehrgesetz* the charge against the Jews was that they failed to fulfill their military requirements. After 1935, Jews were not considered worthy of conscription into the regular armed forces.

The anniversary of the start of the First World War was a welcome reprieve for the National Association, and an opportunity to critique the present by glorifying the past. The August 3, 1934, issue of *Der Schild* extolled the virtues of the *Burgfrieden* and portrayed the enthusiasm of fall, 1914, as an example of national unity at an important juncture of German history. Twenty years later, at another such juncture, Germany appeared to lack that national unity. "Was that all only a dream twenty years ago?" the author asked. "Have I not participated, no, lived, as part of the *Volks-gemeinschaft?*"⁹⁰ Nagging questions persisted as the political climate for German Jews turned unbearable. One article in March, 1935, recounts the story of a mother who saw a paper with the infamous National Socialist slogan "The Jews are our misfortune!" on the cover. She asked, what was the meaning of the sacrifice? "Did not my boy, did not my husband, did not my father also die for Germany?"⁹¹ The last issue of *Der Schild* was November 4, 1938, five days before *Kristallnacht*. The newspaper had become a glorified sports page by this late stage in the peacetime Third Reich, but one article was especially poignant. A young boy wrote the editors about how important it was to have Jewish heroes during difficult times. The boy cherished veterans' stories about the war because they taught youth about patriotism. He concluded the letter with the exhortation: "Everyone stand by the flag!"⁹² Five days later Germany erupted into a murderous frenzy against the Jews, and the National Association of Jewish Front Soldiers disbanded.

While some scholars may view Lowenstein's letters to Hitler as a betrayal of the liberal and pluralistic values the German-Jewish Front Soldiers apparently embraced, it is more appropriate to view the National Association's post-1933 strategy as a calculated reckoning with an uncomfortable reality. The struggle was over, and the group clung to the diminishing possibility of inclusion in the national community by offering cooperation. This postwar strategy, as well as some elements of the association's interwar activities, might lead one to conclude that it, along with the German-Jewish community in general, answered *völkisch* critics by imitating them.⁹³ The emphasis on "blood and soil" rhetoric, the obsession with sport, and the call for "simple living" were in part an attempt to appease anti-Semitic critics, but one forgets how attractive these ideas were for those easily disgusted with bourgeois society. There is no reason

to believe that German Jews were any less influenced by national sentiments than other Germans, given the Jewish community's constant refrain that German Jews were indistinguishable from everyone else. Veterans especially, regardless of background, exhibited distaste for a bourgeois lifestyle because it was foreign to the mythologized front community.

Sidney Bolkosky states that the German-Jewish response to anti-Semitism failed because German Jews projected their own values on all Germans.⁹⁴ The National Association of Jewish Front Soldier's failure was its strict adherence to a defense grounded in education. It argued that if Germany were only enlightened as to the multifarious ways in which Jews contributed to the nation, anti-Semitism would cease. Once the Third Reich was established, many Jews in fact viewed a military dictatorship as the last hope.⁹⁵ German-Jewish veterans were not alone in thinking Hitler would soften his image and, more importantly, restrain his underlings once in power.

Despite the change in the National Association's strategy during the Third Reich, continuity characterized the organization's nineteen-year existence. Throughout its publications and private correspondence, the group used war experience to frame its responses to anti-Semitism and National Socialism. Given the degree to which National Socialism celebrated violence and successfully monopolized the rhetoric of the front experience, the association's "enlightened" use of the Great War fell on deaf ears. George Mosse noted that the Jews "needed pluralism and liberalism, but these were seen as minimizing the war experience, so it was the war experience that attacked the Jews."⁹⁶ The war brutalized European sensibilities, threatening traditional forms of government, not to mention cultural expression, in several national contexts. Not only did National Socialism create its mythical national community, it did so by resorting to the very methods of total war first developed during the Great War. The leap from extolling the violence that galvanized the front generation, and eventually the war generation, to genocide was not substantial. "All that was needed was the will to act," Omer Bartov writes, "and by the end of the Great War there were not a few men who believed that their only escape from the hell of modern war was to subject others to the industrial killing they had barely survived."⁹⁷ Jewish veterans, however, subjected amorphous "isms" to violent metaphors and images, but they still clung to a democratically informed definition of nationalism whose fortunes rested with a precarious republic.

While every veterans' organization mythologized the war experience,

the National Association of Jewish Front Soldiers in addition to this mythologized the German nation's capacity to welcome Jews into the national community. The continued devotion to liberal values manifested by German Jews prevented significant Jewish participation in the sort of mass politics perfected by the Right.⁹⁸ Jewish veterans articulated a war myth in response to postwar challenges just as simplistic as the myth promoted by *völkisch* movements. The truth behind the existence of an inclusive front community where every soldier discarded prejudice in the face of a common enemy was as fanciful as the National Socialist position that Germany's problems were the fault of others and that the front generation was infallible. National Socialism was successful as a movement claiming to embody the war experience because it appealed to the belief that the war provided a purpose and unified a special generation. In other words, National Socialism understood what many people wanted to believe about the war and obscured the unsettling reality that the dizzying array of social and economic problems Germans faced represented the Great War's true legacy.⁹⁹ Jewish veterans were not included in the National Socialist war narrative, but Jews certainly were. In the National Socialist myth, Germany's plight was a Jewish creation that could only be demolished by those who had withstood previous trials by fire, the heroic front generation.

NOTES

1. The phrase "storm of steel" is the title of Jünger's popular memoir, *In Stahlgewittern* (Berlin: Verlag Mittler, 1922). Jünger was one of National Socialism's principal influences concerning the relationship between man and technology. His importance to Germany's "conservative revolution" is discussed in Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). See also Mathew Brio, "The New Man as Cyborg: Figures of Technology in Weimar Visual Culture," *New German Critique* 62 (1994): 71-110.

2. George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 99.

3. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 1991), 7.

4. The reality of 1848 was ambiguous because many members of the vaunted Frankfurt Assembly promoted an ultra-nationalist position, but German liberals considered 1848 a pivotal moment in liberalism's development in Germany.

5. See Geoff Eley, *Reshaping the German Right: Radical Nationalism and Political Change after Bismarck* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980). A case study of a right-wing association is Roger Chickering, *We Men Who Feel the Most German: A Cultural Study of the Pan-German League, 1886-1914* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1984).

6. George L. Mosse, *Confronting the Nation: Jewish and Western Nationalism* (Hanover, N.H.: Brandeis University Press, 1993), 124.

7. One of the most significant acts of violence was the murder of the Jewish Foreign Minister Walter Rathenau on June 22, 1922. Rathenau was murdered because he was a Jew and represented the *völkisch* movement's greatest fears with regards to Jewish influence in Germany. See Carole Fink, "The Murder of Walther Rathenau" *Judaism*, 44 (1995): 259-70.

8. This interpretation of the war's legacy differs from Jay Winter's recent work on supposed continuities between prewar European culture and postwar culture. Winter states that "the war gave a new lease on life to a number of traditional languages expressed both conventionally and in unusual and modern forms." Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 18.

9. In a sense this article is answering Mosse's acknowledged gap in his own work. Mosse wrote, "To what degree the Jewish war veterans' associations attempted to reestablish the lost comradeship, and to what extent it attempted to revitalize a shared myth once more—now *völkisch* more than Christian—must be left to further research." George L. Mosse, *Masses and Men: National Socialist and Fascist Perceptions of Reality* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1980).

10. A dissertation in progress examines Jewish veterans in relation to the German-Jewish community in the Weimar Republic. The author is more concerned with internal debates within the Jewish community than the legacy of the Great War. A summary of the dissertation is found in Gregory A. Caplan, "'Wir haben für Deutschland gekämpft!' Deutsch-jüdische Veteranen und die Neugestaltung des deutschen Judentums in der Zeit der Weimarer Republik," *Arbeitskreis Militärgeschichte* 7 (September, 1998).

11. A recent debate initiated by Omer Bartov concerns the applicability and malleability of terms like "victim" and "perpetrator." For example, National Socialists considered themselves victims of international Jewry even as they prepared to murder the European Jews. Omer Bartov, "Defining Enemies, Making Victims: Germans, Jews, and the Holocaust," *American Historical Review* 103 (1998): 771-816.

12. Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism* (New York: Macmillan, 1946), 331.

13. Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in Germany and France* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992).

14. George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1998), 7. See also Saul Friedlander, *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution, 1933-1939*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper Collins, 1997).

15. P. G. J. Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria* (New York: Wiley & Sons, 1964), 300.

16. See the last chapter of Richard Bessel's important work *Germany After the First World War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

17. One newspaper editorial declared that "Germany will be rebuilt by these men of the front, or it will not be rebuilt at all." Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), 63.

18. Jünger, *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis*, 76. Emphasis in the original. Jünger was referring to the pleasure of combat. This sentiment is what appealed to National Socialists interested in Jünger's work.

19. Sanford Ragans, *Jewish Responses to Anti-Semitism in Germany, 1870-1914: A Study in the History of Ideas* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1980), 3.

20. Werner Cahnmann *German Jewry: Its History and Sociology—Selected Essays* by Werner J. Cahnmann (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1989), 26.
21. David Joshua Engel, "Organized Jewish Responses to German Anti-Semitism during the First World War" (Ph.D. diss., UCLA, 1979), 18.
22. Quoted in Jehuda Reinharz, *Fatherland or Promiseland: The Dilemma of the German Jew, 1893–1914*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1975), 272.
23. The Kaiser announced that he no longer recognized parties, only Germans. Assimilationist Jews associated with the Central Union published several short books underscoring Jewish military contributions to Germany since the Napoleonic Wars. See Ludwig Geiger, *Die Deutschen Juden und Der Krieg* (Berlin: C. U. Schwetschke & Sohn, 1915).
24. These statistics were compiled by Jacob Segall, head of the Berlin Committee for Statistics on Jews in *Die Deutsche Juden als Soldaten im Kriege 1914–1918* (Berlin: Jüdischer Verlag, 1922). Other authors cite Segall as an authority. See Egmont Zechlin, *Die Deutsche Politik und die Juden im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969), 538, as well as Ruth Pierson, "Embattled Veterans: The Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 19 (London: Seckar and Warburg, 1974), 143.
25. An Verband der Deutschen Juden, December 24, 1916, Anlage 2, Hauptstadt Archiv Stuttgart (hereafter HstAS), M738/46.
26. For a discussion of the debate over the "Jew count" see Zechlin, *Die Deutsche Politik und die Juden im Ersten Weltkrieg*, 524–37. For a presentation of many of the relevant documents, see Werner T. Angress, "Das Deutsche Militär und die Juden im Ersten Weltkrieg," *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen* 19 (1976): 77–146.
27. "Erster Aufruf zur Gründung des RjE, Januar 1919" quoted in Ulrich Dunker, *Der Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten, 1919–1938: Geschichte eines jüdischen Abwehrvereins* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1977), 186.
28. "Satzungen des RjE," Bundesarchiv Koblenz (hereafter BAK), R43 II/600, 165–69. The ban on politics allowed for several Zionist members to join.
29. Pierson, "Embattled," 140. In a letter to Chancellor Helmut Schmidt in 1971, the Association for Welfare of Soldiers in Israel wrote that the National Association had fifty thousand members and five hundred local groups. See Bundesarchiv/Militärarchiv Freiburg (hereafter BA/MA), MSG 133/7.
30. Sidney M. Bolkosky, *The Distorted Image: German Jewish Perceptions of Germans and Germany, 1918–1935* (New York: Elsevier, 1975), 43.
31. The degree to which the National Association coordinated its efforts with other organizations is a topic that requires more research.
32. Pierson, "Embattled," 150. Zionism appropriated the Maccabees because it needed viable national symbols and, specifically, a warrior identity similar to European models of nationalism. Mosse, *Confronting*, 125.
33. Cahnmann, *German Jewry*, 71.
34. A pamphlet directly linking international Jewry to Germany's collapse was F. Schindler, *Deutschland = Kanaan* (Berlin: Widar, 1921).
35. Bolkosky, *The Distorted Image*, 10.
36. The postwar German fascination with the war generation and the special missions assigned to it is detailed in Wohl, *The Generation of 1914*, 63.
37. Richard Bessel, "The 'Front Generation' and the Politics of Weimar Germany," in

Generations in Conflict: Youth Revolt and Generation Formation in Germany, 1770–1968, ed. Mark Roseman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 133.

38. Bessel, *Germany*, 273.

39. The concept of racial pollution in European racism, especially with regard to the Jews, is discussed in Julia Kristeva, *Power of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982) and Sander Gilman, *Difference and Pathology*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985). See also Uli Linke's discussion of the topic in this volume.

40. Ulrich Herbert, "Den Gegner vernichten, ohne ihn zu hassen: Loathing the Jews in the World View of the Intellectual Leadership of the SS in the 1920s and 1930s," unpublished paper, 1999. A comprehensive case study is Herbert's *Best: Biographische Studien über Radikalismus, Weltanschauung und Vernunft, 1903–1989* (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz, 1996).

41. Alfred Rosenberg, *Race and Nation and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 41.

42. Herbert, "Gegner vernichten," 9.

43. George Mosse stresses the importance of the "war volunteer" in *Confronting*, 15.

44. Werner Angress, "Prussia's Army and the Jewish Reserve Officer Controversy before World War I," in *Imperial Germany*, ed. James J. Sheehan (New York: Franklin Watts, 1978), 94.

45. "Zu Frage der Juden im Heere," *Neues Tagblatt*, October 6, 1908, HStAS, M1/3, Württemberger Kriegsministerium Zentralabteilung.

46. John Weiss, *Ideology of Death: Why the Holocaust Happened in Germany* (Chicago: Ivan Dee, 1996), 207.

47. Avigdor Hameiri, *The Great Madness* (New York: Vantage Press, 1952), 12, 77–78, 186.

48. "Anlage 5, Bataillons Befehl vom 24 November 1916, 4. Feld Artillerie Regiment zu Magdeburg," HStAS, M738/46.

49. Steven E. Ascheim, *Brothers and Strangers: The East European Jew in German and German-Jewish Consciousness, 1800–1923* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 139–84.

50. Rosenberg, *Race and Nation and Other Essays*, 53.

51. The source was most likely Alfred Roth's (alias Otto Arnim) *Die Juden im Heere: Die Judenzählung beim Kriegsheer* published in 1919. Roth's statistics were supposedly leaked by a sympathetic general.

52. "Das Märchen von den zwolftausend gefallenen Juden," *Der Stürmer*, January, 1931, BAK, Zsg 103/1729. For a systematic discussion of *Der Stürmer* and its role in post-war anti-Semitism, see Dennis Showalter, *Little Man, What Now? Der Stürmer in the Weimar Republic* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1982).

53. "Juden in der Stadthalle zu Hannover," *Der Stürmer*, October, 1936, BAK, Zsg 103/1729.

54. "Jude als Soldat," *Der Stürmer*, October, 1936, BAK, Zsg 103/1721.

55. Erich Ludendorff quoted in Weiss, *Ideology of Death*, 212.

56. Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, trans. Alvin Johnson (1925; reprint, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1939), 984. Eberhard Jäckel, a convincing proponent of the intentionalist school, traces the evolution of Hitler's *Weltanschauung* in *Hitler's World View: A Blueprint for Power* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), 115.

57. Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten, *Kriegsbriefe Gefallener Deutscher Juden* (1935; reprint, Stuttgart: Seewald, 1961).
58. Donald L. Niewyk, *The Jews in Weimar Germany* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 22. Stamps featuring Jewish agriculture were issued by the National Association in 1925. See Dunker, *Der Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten*, 213.
59. Leo Lowenstein quoted in Niewyk, *The Jews in Weimar Germany*, 92.
60. Jacob Borut notes how prevalent this attitude was among Jews in Wilhelmine Germany. See "Jewish Politics and Generational Change in Wilhelmine Germany," in Roseman, ed., *Generations in Conflict*, 107.
61. Max Nordau was the first German-Jewish activist to promote physical fitness to ease assimilation. See Mosse, *Confronting*, 127.
62. George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University, 1996), 151–52.
63. It is interesting to note that the figures on National Association posters embody the same ideal German masculinity as *völkisch* groups. See Dunker, *Der Reichsbund jüdischer Frontsoldaten*, 214, for an example.
64. "Der Neue Feind!" *Der Schild: Zeitschrift des Reichsbundes jüdischer Frontsoldaten*, August, 9, 1922.
65. "Sind wir noch Frontsoldaten?" *Der Schild*, November 15, 1929.
66. "Kameradschaft," *Der Schild*, October 13, 1932.
67. Leo Lowenstein quoted in Pierson, "Embattled," 152.
68. Mosse, *Crisis*, 255. See also Volker R. Berghahn, *Der Stahlhelm Bund der Frontsoldaten, 1918–1935* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1966).
69. "Stahlhelm-Glogau an RjF-Glogau," *Der Schild*, November 29, 1926.
70. "Stahlhelm, Bund der Frontsoldaten!" *Der Schild*, February 1, 1925.
71. BAK, Zsg 1-E/93.
72. Ibid.
73. The statistics were the subject of numerous pamphlets in BAK, Zsg 1-E/93.
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77. "Die Hakenkreuzfahne: Unfriede selbst am Volkstrauertag," *Der Schild*, March 9, 1929.
78. "Jüdischer Frontsoldatentag," *Berliner Tageblatt*, October 9, 1925.
79. Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1985), 60–61. Saul Friedlander's *Nazi Germany and the Jews* stresses the centrality of the elimination of the Jews from the cultural sphere.
80. "Die Kameraden aus dem großen Kriege," *Der Schild*, March 23, 1933.
81. Letter from Lowenstein to the Reich Chancellery, August 15, 1933, BAK, R43 II/594, 29.
82. See letter from Zentralausschuss der Deutschen Juden für Hilfe und Aufbau, August 1, 1933, and letter from Reichsvetretung der Deutschen Juden to the Reich Chancellery, January 16, 1934, BAK, R43II/594, 26, 59.
83. Letter from Lowenstein to Reich Chancellery, April 4, 1933, BAK, R43 II/600, 36–40.

84. Letter from Lowenstein to Reich Chancellery, May 6, 1933, BAK, R43II/600, 141-49.
85. Max Naumann quoted in Bolkosky, *The Distorted Image*, 156.
86. "Die Betregung der jüdischen Kriegsopfer," *Der Schild*, February 2, 1934.
87. *Der Schild*, September 16, 1938.
88. "Wehrgesetz," BAK, R43 II/1273, 71-85. The law allowed for Jews to serve in labor battalions in case of emergency.
89. Kurt von Schleicher was assassinated by the National Socialist regime during the "Night of the Long Knives" in July, 1934.
90. *Der Schild*, August 3, 1934.
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95. George Mosse, *Toward the Final Solution: A History of European Racism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 182.
96. George L. Mosse, *Masses and Men: Nationalism and Fascist Perceptions of Reality* (New York: Fertig, 1980), 276-77.
97. Omer Bartov, *Murder in Our Midst: The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 50.
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3

Greg Eghigian

Injury, Fate, Resentment, and Sacrifice in German Political Culture, 1914–1939

■ It is said that Germany is a difficult Fatherland. There is, of course, an unavoidable problem that lies at the heart of modern German nationalism. It is, to paraphrase the title of a recent book on the subject, the question of how Germans were transformed into Nazis. The answers historians have offered might be placed into three categories. One, associated today with Daniel Goldhagen, implies that Germans as a whole did not need to be transformed, but in fact always harbored Nazism's violent anti-Semitic hatred. German racial resentments, informed by a traditional German predilection toward authoritarianism, militarism, and nationalist vanity, were presumably institutionalized by the early part of this century and found their eventual expression in Nazism's genocidal violence.¹ A second, more socio-economic view contends that Germans were first made resentful by the loss of World War I; the postwar occupation and

settlement; and the economic crises of inflation, stabilization, and mass unemployment. The implication of this perspective is that Hitler and the National Socialist movement provided politically engaged, yet frustrated, middle-class Germans with scapegoats for their misfortunes in the form of Jews, socialists, and degenerates, among others. Nazi paranoia therefore effectively channelled newly forged social resentments among Germans.² In recent years, a third narrative has emerged that emphasizes the broad appeal of Hitler and Nazism well beyond Germany's presumably resentful middle classes. Proponents of this view insist that National Socialism could not have enjoyed the success it did by appealing merely to the negative images and destructive antipathies of racism and red-baiting. Rather, many—maybe even most—Germans of the 1920s and 1930s were not bitter, impoverished, and depressedly nostalgic, but were actually quite progressive in outlook and buoyantly modern in their habits. The presumed allure of Hitler and his movement was therefore their ability to offer Germans “positive,” innovative sets of values around which to rally, ones that emphasized the unity, honor, and equality of all classes; a promise to reform corrupt politics “as usual”; and a commitment to job security, consumerism, and the leisure industry.³

In considering this distinctively twentieth-century German problem of national belonging and the way it has been discussed, it is worth noting two features that are common to all three perspectives. First, the problem of “Germans into Nazis” poses nationalism as a profound *moral question*. How did seemingly good people come to do evil things? Was there something inherently perverse or unusual about German nationalism? What happened to Germans' moral compass? Were Germans at the time misled? misinformed? reluctant? willing? consciously immoral? deludedly oblivious? fearfully amoral?⁴ Painful, horrible things occurred: why? Questions of theodicy stand at the center of being German in this century. Second, this moral quandry is posed as a *social fate* of early twentieth-century Germans. Why then *them*? Why them *then*? How did this happen? Was Nazi brutality a manifestation of singularly German social, cultural, and political impulses? Or were the atrocities of the Third Reich situational responses by “normal” individuals to universal social conditions?⁵

Morality and social fate are therefore inextricably bound up with twentieth-century German national belonging. I want to explore this problem of “Germans into Nazis” by placing the themes of morality and social fate in the foreground. What did Germans think happened to them in the

first decades of this century, and how did it affect their moral sensibility? To do this, I am going to resuscitate the now-somewhat-unfashionable notion of “resentment.” Recent literature is correct to question the conventional wisdom about resentful Germans, for many earlier histories never really explained in detail what forms these resentments assumed and in what ways they resonated with the changing values of German society. There is no need, however, as has been suggested, that we discard the notion altogether.⁶ Resentment need not be understood as a vague, undirected, and relatively amoral affect. Rather, if seen as assuming discrete forms, it appears rather specific in its targets and inflected by an often subtle sense of morality. Recent works by Richard Bessel and David Crew provide ample justification for using the term “resentment” to describe the widespread moral outrage, rooted in social and economic dislocation, expressed by many Germans during the interwar years.⁷ I therefore wish to use the notion of “resentment” as an explanatory device, not in order to revive old arguments, but to understand the very modern allure and innovation that National Socialism brought to German political culture between the First and Second World Wars.

The idea that a psychology of “resentment” exercised a powerful influence over social life dates back to the late-nineteenth-century philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche defined what he called *Ressentiment* as an habitual, ubiquitous emotional reaction to some perceived attack or injury, expressed in the form of an impotent desire for revenge, a global envy, and chronic suffering and hopelessness.⁸ While Nietzsche believed resentment to be endemic to the Western world and the direct result of Christianity’s “turn-the-other-cheek” prescription, the turn-of-the-century philosopher Max Scheler held that resentment was a decidedly modern mentality. In his view, resentment is a system of values and emotions all its own that is produced and reproduced in particular social settings whenever people feel injured, yet believe themselves powerless to obtain any justice. What results under these circumstances, according to Scheler, is a pattern of indiscriminate frustration that inexorably reinforces itself. “Revenge tends to be transformed into resentment the more it is directed against lasting situations which are felt to be ‘injurious’ but beyond one’s control—in other words, the more the injury is experienced as destiny. This will be most pronounced when a person or group feels that the very fact and quality of its *existence* is a matter which calls for revenge.”⁹

Scheler’s perspective is a good place to begin addressing the question

of what happened to German political and moral culture in the first half of the twentieth century. Resentment, he believed, was but one of a number of possible responses to human suffering and adversity that have historically existed.¹⁰ Going beyond Scheler, however, I want to suggest that German political culture between the wars *in particular* was dominated by a mentality of resentment, which operated as a powerful and readily available pattern of emotional life and values by which people could perceive, explain, and express the misfortunes that befell them. While I do not share Scheler's conviction that such resentment necessarily, or even primarily, revolved around fantasies of vengeance, he was correct in understanding resentment as a cultural working and reworking of the meanings of pain, suffering, and injury.

Resentment as such should be understood as a response to the profoundly moral question of theodicy.¹¹ Who suffers? Why? To what, if any, end? Who or what is to blame? What is to be done about it? These were among the most pressing questions in German political life between the two world wars. Everything from the Versailles Treaty to cuts in insurance benefits were debated in the terms of social suffering.¹² In this setting, resentment was a prominent and accessible "style of feeling and of willing based on feeling" by which millions of Germans could understand their claims on the nation-state.¹³

The idea that emotions, which are typically thought of as unruly and irrational, have histories that are relevant to national political life is not as odd as it might first seem. Anthropologists and historians have pointed out that communities regularly prohibit and promote certain types of emotion, regulate their expression in a variety of ways, and offer overdetermined "emotional packages" for general use.¹⁴ Moreover, in recent years, historians in France and Germany have begun collaboratively exploring the comparative history of the relationship between emotions and nations. How nation-states have mobilized people's sentiments and whether certain styles of emotional expression are specific to certain nations are among the issues these historians are raising.¹⁵ A "nation" can therefore be seen as a community of shared feelings (*Gefühlkultur*, *Gefühlsgemeinschaft*) that promotes a sense of belonging by playing on primarily affective registers.

It is at this juncture that the theme of sacrifice in general and national sacrifice in the twentieth century in particular become relevant to the history of German resentment. Since the French Revolution, European nationalisms have invoked the ideal of sacrifice (the Latin term *sacrificium*

means to make holy or sacred) as they have attempted to mobilize individuals and institutions.¹⁶ It has served as an effective means to give form to citizens' perceptions, values, and behaviors. During World War I, the German state very deliberately invoked the mythic ethos of sacrifice to mobilize its citizens, calling on them to make ever greater sacrifices on behalf of the Fatherland.¹⁷

But this choice was fraught with complications. In the first place, the German term *Opfer* has a number of meanings: it means "sacrifice," but also it means "victim" as well as "casualty." Reinforcing these connections is the fact that ritual sacrifice implies both a victim and constitutes a sacred contract between the one offering the sacrifice and the divinity. Causal efficacy is imputed to symbolic expression. Sacrifice is "a drama, which is believed by its performers . . . to work," and this means that the divinity (in this case, the nation-state), too, has reciprocal obligations.¹⁸

In the second place, however, something went terribly wrong with the ritual of national sacrifice in Germany during and after the Great War. The myth of national sacrifice, like most forms of sacrifice, promised restoration, redress, and regeneration through violence and bloodshed.¹⁹ But with the war lost, the economy in ruins, social hierarchies turned upside-down, and politics in a seeming state of disorder, it was not hard for Germans to relocate themselves in the ritual of national sacrifice—to now see themselves not as the sacrificers, but as the innocent victims of an impotent ritual of an equally impotent state.

The perceived failure of national sacrifice as theodician ritual in the wake of World War I, then, was the chief source of the German political culture of resentment. To illustrate this point, I will examine four inter-war political organizations and their rhetorics of social citizenship: the Social Democratic-leaning Central Association of German Invalids and Widows; the communist International League of Victims of War and Work; conservative, liberal, and eugenic critics of the German welfare state; and National Socialism (with particular emphasis on its so-called "Winter Relief Drive"). All four believed that having to bear sufferings and committing to self-sacrifice in times of crisis entitled one to certain social benefits and, by implication, to national belonging. But what I wish to highlight is the peculiar emotional registers and moral outlooks that their views on social citizenship reveal. In doing so, I believe we can better reflect on the question of to what extent Nazism deviated from conventional political and moral sensibilities of the twenties and thirties.

Injury, Sacrifice, and Social Pensioners

By 1924, around four million Germans received a social insurance pension because of the fact that they suffered from a work-related disability or that the breadwinner of their family was killed in an occupational accident. Such individuals were referred to as "social pensioners." Already by 1920, some within their ranks had formed a political lobbying group, the Central Association of German Invalids and Widows (*Zentralverband der Invaliden und Witwen Deutschlands*), which by the end of that year claimed three hundred chapters and sixty thousand members. Its aim, according to the association itself, was to organize "fellow sufferers" (*Leidensgenossen*) so that "no institution and no government will dare ignore the misery of those suffering and weak without their participation and without regard for their interests."²⁰

The idea of forming a political interest group on the basis of a sense of common suffering and disability was relatively novel. Since the mid-1880s, German social insurance offered pensions and/or rehabilitation to workers injured and to the families of workers killed in occupational accidents. This system, however, did not seek to compensate for emotional suffering nor to encourage collective solidarity among beneficiaries: on the contrary, social insurance awarded pensions on an individual basis and according to the estimated loss of an individual worker's income. Despite this, however, the institutionalization of injury compensation allowed late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century German workers wide latitude in appealing pension decisions. The claims process provided an arena in which workers could express, negotiate, and contest the personal meaning of their injuries and, in so doing, bred and proliferated an essential sentiment of social citizenship: a sense of social entitlement, a sense of deserving certain benefits in return for individual contributions to society.²¹

This attitude of social entitlement eventually led to collective political action with the increasing disillusionment with the war effort in 1917 and 1918. What marked this shift was not only the emergence of lobbying groups for disabled veterans, consumers, and social pensioners, but also a political language that stressed Germans' shared fates of pain, injury, and loss. The sanctifying rhetoric of national sacrifice heroicized and collectivized wounding, disfigurement, and death on the battlefield.²² At same time, women, men, and children back on the "home front" were also swept up in the call to self-sacrifice, asked to make due on paltry rations

and restricted social insurance benefits.²³ During the last years of the war then, the German state asked its citizens to postpone their demands for entitlement, with the promise of soon receiving their just rewards. Once the war ended, however, veterans, war widows, and war orphans found themselves demanding compensation for their sacrifices and losses from a bankrupt and defeated state.²⁴

Germany's postwar social pensioners were among those who began seeing themselves as a distinct community victimized by the political order of things. "We know from thousands of examples that the healthy individual cannot place himself in the position and frame of mind of an invalid, that decisions involving the interests of invalids lie fully in the hands of the healthy, and that this domination conceals dangers for us . . ." remarked the Central Association of German Invalids and Widows in 1920.²⁵ Social pensioners emerged in the twenties as a community of shared fate (*Schicksalsgemeinschaft*) forged by a political culture built around injury, pain, and loss. Their sense of mutual victimization developed out of a common set of existential (physical and psychological injury), social (poverty, loss of status, economic insecurity), and bureaucratic (fixed income, state-dependent) plights that were then filtered through the wartime promise of redemption through national sacrifice. Like conventional "war victims" (*Kriegsopfer*), social pensioners after the war believed that they too had sacrificed their bodies and spouses for the greater (economic) good of Germany, but they felt especially neglected by the state.

There was something to this, in that war veterans and widows were granted special benefits by a 1920 law.²⁶ "Why are we not awarded the same right as the war invalids?" complained one activist. "What is right for the one must be just for the other."²⁷ Resentment within the Central Association of German Invalids and Widows grew as an increasingly devastating inflation in the early 1920s threw most pensioners into abject poverty and even starvation. The stabilization of the German currency in the years 1924–28 did go some way toward mollifying the organization. Once the Depression hit in 1929, however, budget cuts soon followed, with the government slashing social insurance benefits once again.²⁸

Yet for all their expressed envy of veterans and war widows and frustration with the state, social pensioners remained wedded to a remarkably inclusive idea of social reform. Rather than simply seeking an increase in benefits for their constituency alone, pensioner groups called for the end of fragmented public assistance in order to provide equal and comprehen-

sive aid to all "the suffering and weak in Germany."²⁹ Indeed, already by March, 1923, the Central Association was calling for the reorganization of social insurance into "one large, uniform institution for social welfare, for all branches of existing insurance and welfare ranging from white-collar insurance to the poor relief inherited from the Middle Ages."³⁰

The International League of Victims of War and Work

The International League of Victims of War and Work (*Internationaler Bund der Opfer des Krieges und der Arbeit*) was founded in 1919 by the radical socialist Karl Tiedt. Linked to the German Communist Party (KPD) since its inception, the International League was firmly brought under the party's direction after Tiedt was replaced by Hugo Gräf in 1926. A 1921 survey by the Reich Labor Ministry estimated the organization's membership to be around 137,000.³¹

The League targeted the same group of pensioners as the Central Association of German Invalids and Widows. Unlike the Central Association, however, the League stressed the common plight of war victims and social pensioners. "Union of all war victims and social pensioners!" was the motto of the organization in 1923. "The war-disabled and surviving dependents of veterans," League leaders emphasized to local activists, "feel linked in fraternal solidarity with the victims of capital—the social pensioners—and are ready to work mutually toward bettering their condition."³² This was wishful thinking on their part, but it came from the group's belief that the First World War had always been a "capitalist world war," and thus both war victim and work victim were common victims of capital (*Kapitalsopfer*). A common plight implied a common bond and, along with it, a common responsibility. As Karl Tiedt expressed it, "The victims of the war must share the lot of the victims of work, of the work invalids and the unemployed."³³

Leaders of the League understood the organization to have a peculiar role to play in the politics of social welfare: the group was to serve as a vehicle of class consciousness and struggle. Following policies laid out by the KPD and the Comintern since 1921, the League saw its mission to be to organize and channel the popular resentments of both social pensioners and war victims under the banner of communism.³⁴ Like other self-professed victims' groups, the organization primarily attacked cuts in social spending. In a national strategy formulated in 1924, leaders called on activists to stage demonstrations and rallies against both national and lo-

cal retrenchment measures to which would be invited all working-class welfare groups.³⁵ Religious charities and "bourgeois" groups, however, were to be deliberately excluded. Revolution, not recompense and charity, were what the sacrifices of German war and work victims warranted. In how social suffering was to be defined then, the League saw itself in direct competition with religious and bourgeois charities.

This policy was rooted in the belief that the League must establish itself as the sole leader of a united front of all victimized comrades against the capitalist order. This position became even more entrenched after the Comintern formally abandoned any notions of cooperation with reform socialism in 1928. Between 1929 and 1933, the KPD adopted a thoroughly Stalinized agenda that, among other things, sought to overturn the existing state apparatus, dismissed all other parties as "counter-revolutionary" and "fascist," and called on members to wage a "united front (campaign) from below" against Social Democracy.³⁶ Following the party line, League leaders insisted that members work to outright oppose the efforts of all advocacy groups that were social reformist. "Our work," as one circular sent to members in 1929 stated it, "is the mobilization of a broad spectrum of organizations in the service of the struggle for their interests with the methods of class struggle, the production of a united front between the oppositional forces of these associations along with the International League, the propagation and the ultimate creation of a united class organization of war and work victims."³⁷ To this end, the League asked members to infiltrate competing organizations, such as the Central Association of German Invalids and Widows, in order to steer them away from reform and toward radicalism. In addition, members were instructed to remember that they were first and foremost Communists. "The war-victim factions," stated guidelines developed in 1929, "are not to be understood as factions simply within the war-disabled movement, but rather they are factions of the Communist Party."³⁸ Members of the International League were forbidden to also join any other war- or work-victim organizations. At the same time, regional leaders were enjoined to "liquidate" any and all splinter groups within the movement and to undermine the so-called "oppositional organizations" of "social reaction" such as veterans organizations, disabled veterans groups, and the Central Association of German Invalids and Widows.³⁹

During the Depression years 1930–32, the League stepped up its activities as part of the KPD's general effort to mobilize the unemployed.

This primarily involved three areas of work: (1) recruiting war and work victims through door-to-door visits, flyers, distributing newspapers, and holding gatherings; (2) running a winter assistance program that provided the indigent with wood and coal for fuel, warm housing, winter clothes, and cheap potatoes; and (3) demanding improvements in benefits for war and work victims.⁴⁰ Throughout these efforts, however, the League never lost sight of its perceived competitors, keeping tabs on and attempting to discredit reformist and National Socialist victim advocacy activities.⁴¹ To the very end, the League remained wedded to a class-exclusive and divisive rhetoric of social victimization.

Conservative, Liberal, and Eugenic Critics of the Weimar Welfare State

While those on the Left debated social reform versus social revolution, a strong backlash against Weimar social policy developed within conservative, liberal, and eugenic political circles during the second half of the 1920s. To be sure, there had always been cynics in these camps. But together inflation, stabilization measures, the rise of mass, chronic unemployment, and budget deficits underscored their ideas, giving them a timeliness that had always been missing.

These conservative-, liberal-, and eugenic-minded intellectuals agreed on one basic fact: that the German welfare state was having a corrupting, perverting effect on the German people. As Gustav Hartz, a widely published author active in nationalist circles, expressed it, the entire social insurance system had the moral effect of replacing responsibility, honesty, and loyalty with whining, treachery, and ingratitude.⁴² Such a way of life was, in his view, unmanly and corrupting. "The state is not the shaper of all individual fates and should not be a scapegoat for those who are unsatisfied with their fate," he emphasized in 1932.⁴³ Hartz was supported in this view by the conservative physician and eugenics-advocate Erwin Liek, who went on to blame the system for "longer and more incomplete recoveries, moral ruin, [and] the breeding of hypochondriacs."⁴⁴ The social insurance system itself, Liek held, constituted an injury, "an injury (*Schaden*) to the soul," by crippling the desire to work, save, and overcome defect.⁴⁵

Social policy was disparaged here in a peculiar moral idiom of sacredness and profanity that ridiculed the complaints of social pensioners. Per-

haps no one else demonstrated this more clearly than the philosopher Ernst Horneffer. Horneffer was a prominent member of the "conservative revolutionary" circle of intellectuals during the Weimar Republic.⁴⁶ To Horneffer's thinking, the war had revealed some basic pathological features of the German people. The underlying cause of Germany's wartime and postwar breakdown, he believed, was its social order, one that atrophied spiritual life by eliminating the incentives and spurs traditionally provided by competition, fate, misfortune, and poverty.⁴⁷ Public assistance programs were, in Horneffer's view, an "abomination (*Frevel*) against the people," for they destroyed the ethic of hard work and gave license to the abuse of public institutions and to anxiety, cowardice, and parasitism (*Schmarotzertum*).⁴⁸ Laying blame also on the "sentimental bourgeoisie" who had passed social legislation, Horneffer lamented what he referred to as the consequent "shameful effeminacy (*Verweichlichung*) of our time."⁴⁹ The newly created unemployment insurance, according to Horneffer, best demonstrated to what extent the concern for social security had come to pervert the natural order of things. Risk, danger, poverty, and hunger, he argued, were "the indispensable driving forces of human life," making it "tragic, painful, hard." By trying to avoid and overcome such sufferings, however, "one was simply attempting to wipe out this heroic character of existence, out of a mawkish softness (*in süßlicher Weichheit*) to make life pleasant, safe, and secure for everyone."⁵⁰

The mass of discontented pensioners, according to this line of thinking then, were indeed victims, but victims of an altruism gone wrong. Critics understood the very complaints of social pensioners and war victims as symptoms of a malignant approach to social suffering. The cure was equally clear to critics: what was needed was a dismantling of cradle-to-grave assistance and the creation of a system that emphasized self-help and family savings. Such sentiments rang especially true for liberals, who began suggesting a return to "the old bourgeois ideal" of savings or reliance on a voluntary system of insurance.⁵¹ Advocates of eugenics and race hygiene too favored deinstitutionalizing the social welfare system as a way to shift the burden of weathering adversity away from the state and on to individuals. For in their minds, the custodial welfare state had unnaturally perpetuated "life unworthy of life" and, in the process, weakened the race and overburdened the state.⁵² Eugenics and race hygiene thus shared with conservative and liberal criticisms of public assistance an outlook that understood life itself as an heroic, moral struggle for survival.

National Socialism and the Winter Relief Drive of the German People

Like the previous groups mentioned, the National Socialists placed great emphasis on the social suffering of Germans after the Great War. According to the foundational myth of the Nazi party, members of the national community of Germans (the *Volksgemeinschaft*) were long-suffering, taken advantage of by parasitic forces, and compelled to make enormous sacrifices with little gratitude in return. The movement's leaders laid blame for the plight of Germany's impoverished war victims, in particular, on the doorstep of the republican "system," whose inability to provide victims with sufficient benefits was believed to be the direct result of its compliance with reparation demands.⁵³

In the years before coming to power, Hitler himself emphasized three major themes in his discussions about the predicament of "the victims of war and work." First, he insisted that the sacrifices of soldiers and workers warranted recognition not only in the form of better material benefits but also in the form of greater honor and respect by society and state.⁵⁴ Second, Hitler firmly believed "that the fate of every individual was inextricably linked to the fate of [society as a] whole. There is no individual good fortune, no individual striving for happiness and welfare, the fate of the whole is the fate of every individual."⁵⁵ This was not just a prescription from his point of view. As he expressed it in a 1927 speech, the social misery that marked the lives of Germans in the twenties had de facto transformed them into a "community of common fate" (*Schicksalsgemeinschaft*).⁵⁶ Last, Hitler argued it was National Socialism's role to promote a "feeling of social justice" among the German people, to cultivate a pervasive "social conscience" that could be joined with a sense of national obligation.⁵⁷

These three notions—the honor of sacrifice, the community of social fate, and a social conscience of national belonging—were key elements of Nazi welfare policy during the Third Reich. An example can be seen in the regime's enormously successful annual "Winter Relief Drive of the German People" (*Winterhilfswerk des Deutschen Volkes*). The national collection of donations to help the needy with fuel, food, and clothes during the winter actually predated the Third Reich. The Red Cross and the German League of Charitable Welfare originally came up with the idea of a massive goodwill drive for the winter of 1930–31, but it only first got

under way for the winter of 1931–32 and ultimately collected around RM 100 million in donations. The National Socialists took over the campaign from the winter of 1933–34 and soon far outdid the efforts of Weimar charities by raising RM 358 million. By 1939–40, the Nazi Winter Relief Drive was taking in RM 610 million in donations.⁵⁸

The principles guiding the program were laid out by its commissioner Erich Hilgenfeldt in 1937.⁵⁹ The liberal social welfare of the Weimar Republic, Hilgenfeldt claimed, had been concerned exclusively with cash benefits. Lacking any overarching values, it was no surprise, in his view, that the system promoted fraud, an obsession with money, and dependency. “Self-help” and “responsibility,” by contrast, were the cornerstones of Nazi social welfare. This meant not merely providing for one’s self and family but also coming to the aid of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Sacrifice on the part of the haves for the have-nots was as sacred a duty as any soldier’s, according to Hilgenfeldt. “The powerful way to educate the *Volksgemeinschaft* will never lie in the simple word, but in constant deeds and sacrifice; just as the community of the front (*Frontgemeinschaft*) has grown out of the sacrifice of Langemarck, the sacrifice of the world war, so too has the *Volksgemeinschaft*.”⁶⁰ Volunteering for or donating to the Winter Relief Drive was nothing short of a “daily education in sacrifice” for the nation. The work of the program was therefore primarily, in his view, an “affair of the heart” (*Herzensangelegenheit*), one that established “the feeling of responsibility as the duty of every German, [one] which he has to his nation, his family, and the future.”⁶¹

Hilgenfeldt’s ideas reflected National Socialist welfare assumptions and policies. Since the Winter Relief Drive was treated as a seasonal and voluntary enterprise, its administration required annual and mass mobilization. On average, between one and one-and-a-half million Germans, many of whom were housewives, volunteered to work for the program every year. Donations, in the form of goods, services, and cash, were raised in a variety of ways: farmers, hunters, and grocers gave a fixed portion of their meats, vegetables, and fruits; blue- and white-collar workers agreed to have donations taken directly from their paychecks; volunteers solicited individuals at home and in restaurants and pubs for spare change; and during the winters, specific weekends, public events, and holidays were chosen for nationwide collection campaigns on streets and in public places throughout Germany. Those eligible for assistance from the drive were the conventional categories of “deserving poor”: the disabled unemployed, the underemployed, social assistance recipients, disabled veter-

ans, surviving dependents of soldiers killed in action, and social pensioners.⁶² All told, Nazi Winter Relief annually distributed aid to as many as 16.6 million Germans in 1933–34 and to as few as 7.9 million during the effort of 1938–39.⁶³

The Nazi Winter Relief Drive was an amalgam of nationalist, military, and collective elements given unitary form by the trope of sacrifice. In language and ritual, the campaign's administration was dominated by the ethos of sacrifice and victimization. Administrators spoke of helping "victims of work" (*Opfer der Arbeit*), demanding a constant "readiness to sacrifice" (*Opferbereitschaft*), seeking evidence of "joy in sacrifice" (*Opferfreudigkeit*), soliciting citizens "to give" (*zu opfern*) or "to bring an offering" (*ein Opfer zu bringen*), promoting "self-sacrificing activity" (*aufoferungsvolle Tätigkeit*), and asking for "self-sacrificing support for needy comrades" (*opferwilliges Eintreten für die notleidenden Kameraden*). Collection tins were adorned with the word "Give!" (*Opfert!*), and outside the municipal hall in Hamburg, the drive was monumentalized in the form of a "Sacrificial Pillar" (*Opfersäule*) ornamentalized with the words "Give to the Winter Relief Drive" (*Opfert für das Winterhilfswerk*) along the sides and an eternal flame on top. Indeed, as Wieland Elfferding has observed, the very act of collecting/giving a donation itself was a highly ritualized public event, a staging of individual concern for the whole that translated the discourse of the *Volksgemeinschaft* into an everyday practice.⁶⁴ In the Winter Relief Drive, the traditional Christian and humanist pathos of sympathy for the needy was appropriated for overtly nationalistic ends. To give, the Propaganda Ministry told its employees in 1933, "is a sacred duty for all those who have the good fortune to have work and bread, while millions of their fellow citizens still suffer in bitter misery through no fault of their own."⁶⁵

What is especially striking about the program, however, is the fact that officials appear to have been more interested in the effects of giving on the givers than on the recipients. In keeping with Hitler's desire to foster a "social conscience" of national belonging, the Nazi leadership embraced and expanded the Winter Relief Drive on the basis of its supposed pedagogical (*erzieherisch*) value in cultivating a sense of self-sacrifice, comradeship, and common purpose in the German people.⁶⁶ In this regard, it is worth noting that the whole operation fell under the jurisdiction of Joseph Goebbels and his Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda. The drive was intended to promote a feeling of collective commitment.⁶⁷ Officials proved keen on assessing this effect of the program. The Propaganda Ministry, for

instance, kept records on comparative levels of giving—"more than the minimum," "only the minimum," "less than the minimum," and "nothing"—among different categories of personnel, dividing them into white-collar workers; blue-collar workers; and lower-, middle-, and higher-grade civil servants.⁶⁸

A sense of belonging to the national community of givers was also reinforced symbolically. "We want to help!" was the motto of the first National Socialist campaign, and all those who donated a certain minimum were given posters imprinted with the motto to hang on their doors.⁶⁹ In addition, volunteers passed out Winter Relief Drive insignia pins to all those who donated during the monthly National Street Collections. It is estimated that between 1933 and 1940 some 800 million Winter Relief Drive pins were produced and distributed.⁷⁰

Giving and volunteering were believed to reflect on a person's character, and it was character that was the ultimate object of the program's edification. This is particularly evident in discussions between 1937 and 1940 over the creation of an award for meritorious service to the Winter Relief Drive. When mention was first made in 1937 of granting such awards for outstanding service, Commissioner Erich Hilgenfeldt was enthusiastic: "The creation of an award for those involved in the Winter Relief Drive would therefore be an external recognition of his [*sic*] readiness for duty and joy in sacrifice (*Einsatzbereitschaft und Opferfreudigkeit*)."⁷¹ Initially, Hilgenfeldt saw need for several classes of awards based on years (5, 10, 15, and 20) of uninterrupted service to the drive. In the two years before the war, debate revolved around just how many classes there should be and what criteria would be used for distinguishing them. But the most important reservations about creating such awards appear to have been voiced by Hitler himself, who was said to favor combining the service awards of the Red Cross, the National Socialist Public Welfare (including the Winter Relief Drive), and the Volunteer Health Care into one government award in order "to avoid the proliferation of medals."⁷² Hilgenfeldt, however, was adamant that the roughly 1.3 million volunteers who worked for the drive deserved "a special award," on par with kinds of honors already given to volunteer health workers and volunteer firemen.⁷³

Once Hitler finally sanctioned the creation of a new award, it was as a "Medal for German National Welfare" (*Ehrenzeichen für deutsche Volkspflege*). This still did not settle disagreements over what criteria were to be used in determining to whom the awards would be given. Eva von Schroeder, an official in the party Office of Public Welfare, nominated col-

leagues soon after the start of World War II on the basis of three criteria: their presence at the founding of the National Socialist Public Welfare (NSV) or the Winter Relief Drive, a record of uninterrupted service, or noteworthy accomplishment. One of her nominees was Frieda B., a fifty-one-year-old cleaning woman from Magdeburg who every year reportedly managed to raise around RM 12,000 for the drive by visiting public establishments in the evenings.⁷⁴ Commissioner Hilgenfeldt criticized Schroeder's recommendations, however, pointing out that with more than 1 million volunteers involved in relief work, it was important to be extremely conscientious about awarding people the medal.⁷⁵ More or less informal background checks on dubious nominations were thereafter conducted, in which the candidates' work habits, temperament, and enthusiasm were all evaluated. In the case of Frieda B., for instance, local officials reported back to Hilgenfeldt that awarding her a medal would prompt enormous outrage among personnel and volunteers in Magdeburg because she was widely recognized as a lazy individual who "has always declined to do even the slightest work during the summer."⁷⁶ The presence of such background checks demonstrates to what extent the Winter Relief Drive, for all its talk of volunteerism, remained wedded to the very coercive, regimental, and disciplinary techniques found throughout the Nazi party and state apparatus.

Leid and Mitleid in Interwar German Political Culture

As the examples of the Central Association of German Invalids and Widows, the International League of Victims of War and Work, critics of the Weimar welfare state, and the National Socialist Winter Relief Drive show, the themes of injury, fate, resentment, and sacrifice played a prominent role in interwar German political culture. All four political groups expressed their values in a mythic narrative of injury and unredeemed suffering that bred a resentment for which something must be done. In all the versions of this myth, *Opfertum*—simultaneously connoting injury, victimhood, and sacrifice—was the linchpin, with the national sacrifices of World War I providing the point of origin for all narratives. The rich, polyvalent trope of sacrifice provided a compelling heuristic by which perceived injuries and pains were able to be translated into a set of moral terms and claims. German political culture during 1914–39 challenges the common assumption that sacrifice in general, and German national sacrifice in particular, simply reflected a desire for engulfment and repre-

sents a renunciation of subjectivity.⁷⁷ Sacrifice in this context, on the contrary, served as an important symbolic resource for perceiving and justifying highly individual and personal demands on the community.

For all four political groups, their politics of resentment and sacrifice were couched in ways that linked the imagined social fates of their constituencies with a peculiar moral sensibility. The Central Association of German Invalids and Widows saw members as victims twice over, first disabled or widowed by an accident, only then to be abandoned by the government. Its understanding of moral obligation was highly statist, articulating a strong sense that it was the state's duty to justify through monetary compensation the sacrifice of social pensioners. The International League of Victims of War and Work, by contrast, believed the disabled and widowed to be first and foremost victims of capitalism. Their fates were a collective fate, a class fate. The League's moral sense of outrage, in turn, was thoroughly politicized, placed in the service of promoting a revolutionary class consciousness and an ultimately redemptive class struggle. Conservative, liberal, and eugenic critics of the Weimar welfare state departed from both victim lobbies in seeing fate as an essentially private matter (though supporters of eugenics believed it had public implications). That some in society become the victims of fate was, to them at least, existentially unavoidable. Indeed, bearing suffering at the hands of a remorseless fate served important spiritual and social ends. These critics directed their indignation at the modern social welfare system and hoped to re-privatize social fate by once again exposing citizens to adversity, compelling self-sacrifice, and thereby physically and spiritually regenerating German families.

Nazism's social and moral outlook was not so much a synthesis as an historically peculiar composite of elements from these competing sets of values. As the example of the Nazi Winter Relief Drive demonstrates, down-and-out members of the *Volkgemeinschaft* could be represented as victims of an impersonal, fortuitous, potentially universal circumstance: winter. Winter was, in effect, an accident that could happen to anyone, much like those that affected disabled and widowed social pensioners. What made Nazi social welfare different is that it nationalized, martialized, and collectivized this as well as other social fates: nationalized, in that it made social entitlement a function of citizenship; martialized, in that it envisioned helping in terms of struggle and battle-readiness; collectivized, in that it assumed personal fates had implications for the entire community. Nazi moral resentment, forged by the national sacrifices

of World War I, thus embraced the promise that social redemption could only come through a moral renewal via sacrifice and self-sacrifice.

The Nazis' world was therefore not only awash with victims to serve, but with victimizers to battle. This too was not original to them. As pointed out earlier, those debating Weimar social citizenship had their own list of agents of victimization: factory machines, capitalism, the Weimar state, socialists, social welfare. National Socialism appropriated all these and added some of their own. In particular, the Nazi *Volksgemeinschaft* was also assumed to be a racially exclusive community. By extension, the movement held a litany of groups responsible for imposing so many economic burdens and sacrifices on the German people in the first place: Jews, the congenitally deformed, the chronically ill, the mentally ill, the decrepit, criminals, and the homeless. For these individuals the Third Reich reserved the tactics of a negative eugenics. A host of Nazi campaigns, all initiated before 1941, brought the mass arrest and imprisonment of vagabonds, beggars, welfare recipients, "work slouches," and the congenitally disabled; the sterilization of hundreds of thousands of so-called "hereditary ill"; and the commencement of "euthanasia" programs that eventually killed more than two hundred thousand mentally ill, disabled, chronically ill, and racially undesirable men, women, and children.⁷⁸ Those believed to be redeemable were "rehabilitated" by being placed in highly regimented environments, typically special military units, work details, or work camps.⁷⁹ For the millions of others considered hopelessly incapable of joining the *Volksgemeinschaft*, extermination—another form of human sacrifice—was, of course, the regime's final solution.

In a political climate organized around so much pain and suffering (*Leid*) as Germany of the 1920s and 1930s clearly was, it is fair to ask what then happened to compassion, pity, sympathy, and empathy (*Mitleid*)? As Michael Geyer has insightfully observed, "it was the rejection of the possibility of human solidarity with strangers—the critical as well as moral presupposition of civil society—that the National Socialist regime made into the foundation for its existence."⁸⁰ Perhaps this provides us with yet another way to pose the "Germans into Nazis" problem with which I began. How did a society seeking to explain and ameliorate social suffering eventually produce such gross indifference to certain forms of social suffering?

The way in which German political debate of the twenties and thirties framed the possibility of *Mitleid* suggests at least one possible answer.

Käte Hamburger has pointed out that at the center of the phenomenon of *Mitleid* is one's relationship to the Other. How one in fact responds to another's suffering is a function of the epistemological, psychological, and ultimately ethical distances separating people. Any given moral outlook can be assessed, then, with reference to how it provides individuals the possibility to know the pain of others (how is their suffering represented?), feel the pain of others (how is their suffering supposed to be felt and experienced?), and arrive at a judgment about what to do about the pain of others (what lessons are to be learned from their suffering? What is to be done?).⁸¹

As the political discourses of the four groups examined here demonstrate, German interwar political culture offered citizens little by way of a language, pathos, or ethical code by which to imagine sympathy toward strangers. The Central Association of German Invalids and Widows came closest to achieving this. It represented suffering in the relatively expansive terms of meritorious sacrifice for society. Despite its rather inclusive understanding of social entitlement through sacrifice, the association's language nonetheless reveals a pathos that was primarily directed at the group's own constituency. The International League of Victims of War and Work articulated suffering in a Marxist-Leninist and materialist idiom. Distance characterizes its pathos, whereby the suffering of even workers was held at an instrumentalized remove. All forms of pain and sacrifice were evidence of alienation, to be used in order to promote class consciousness. The Weimar critics of the welfare state represented social suffering in spiritual, other-worldly, even abstract terms. Their discussions expressed an explicit contempt-at-a-distance for those who publicly voiced their agonies. In turn, they sought to reanimate a neo-Stoic attitude toward social suffering. National Socialism, finally, framed the suffering of others in terms of its bifurcated image of national sacrifice and community: there were those who suffered needlessly and those who had caused needless suffering. A somewhat intimate pathos colored the way in which the Nazis spoke about the former group. But such solidarity was couched more in terms of traditional *Gemütlichkeit* ("sociability") than anything else and, in any event, was overshadowed by the mythic and impersonal language of the military campaign, nationalism, and racial belonging.⁸² Yes, giving to those "deserving" Germans in need was supposed to make the giver a better person, according to National Socialism. But the recipient of the aid was merely an anonymous vehicle for self-improvement and community-building. The distance separating those who gave from those

who received was great, as of course was the distance between perpetrators and persecuted victims in the Third Reich.

National Socialism did succeed then in creating a language by which Germany's self-professed victims could translate their resentments into a sense of belonging and hope, but it was invariably at the expense of others. The national community was represented as a sacrificing community of common fate. In effect, Nazi ritual and practice returned Germans to their wartime position as authors of their own fates, as sacrificers and not victims.⁸³ In the drama of National Socialist sacrifice, however, Germans could only achieve this status by continuously offering sacrifices, i.e. by offering up to the Third Reich the victimizers of the *Volksgemeinschaft* as well as their own gestures of self-sacrifice. This had catastrophic consequences, as Jay Baird, Sabine Behrenbeck, Michael Geyer, and Yvonne Karow have all observed, ultimately translating into the apocalyptic wartime policies of mass murder and scorched earth.⁸⁴

In all of this, however, there was (officially at least) no place for *Mitleid*, for a genuine desire and ability to sympathize with the plight of strangers. Any such pathos was expunged from Nazi idiom as weak and sentimental. National Socialism, as Hitler himself characterized it, was not born out of a general morality of compassion (*Mitleidsmoral*), but rather out of an awareness for the necessity of a German morality of domination (*Herrenmoral*).⁸⁵ In a speech given in July, 1932, Hitler explicitly drew the connection between the social suffering of Germans after 1914 and the movement's rejection of *Mitleid*. Reflecting on the price Germany had had to pay to satisfy the victorious allies of World War I, he added: "Seven million unemployed, German farmers impoverished, the middle class exterminated, state and federal budgets decimated, everything bankrupt, in debt, what more do you want? . . . They should admit and stick to the truth, that they have failed us miserably, but not only economically; that they have above all else politically torn apart the German people and monstrously humiliated them. . . . We are torn apart with inner conflicts and, in turn, are impotent and weak, and the world has never yet treated a people well out of *Mitleid*. . . . An empire without power is unthinkable and power without strength is the same, and strength in human history is always tied to a people's roots, to its unanimity."⁸⁶

Hitler's conviction that only through strength and an iron will could a people achieve greatness eventually led him to turn on the German people. Goebbels noted in his diary in February, 1943, shortly after the military debacle at Stalingrad, a particularly ominous comment of

Hitler's: "If the German people were to refuse [to continue the fight], then it would deserve nothing less than to be wiped out as a strong people, then one could have no sympathy [*Mitleid*] for it."⁸⁷

In their renunciation of a morality of compassion, Hitler, the movement, and the regime drew from an already well-developed German discourse of resentment that defined identities in terms of injury, equated misfortune with persecution, and sought redemption through politically justified acts of sacrifice. National Socialism, however, was far more than a response to the expressed resentments of Weimar's citizens. Founded in 1919, it had no history before the interwar inflation of this political rhetoric of *Opfertum*. Its history was co-terminous with that of the politics of sacrifice and victimization. Nazism as such was the offspring of this politics, less a response to than an embodiment of interwar social resentments.

National Socialism, and especially the Third Reich, went beyond simply eliding or marginalizing *Mitleid*, however. They identified it as the polar opposite of that which defined the ethos of the movement and the regime. "We're here not to sympathize, but to fight alongside!" [*Nicht mitzuleiden, mitzukämpfen sind wir da!*"] was the motto of the National Socialist Public Welfare organization.⁸⁸ Common struggle was to replace shared suffering as the principle bond of social concern and social citizenship. National Socialism thus sought nothing short of creating an alternative moral sensibility of caring, an ethic of total sacrifice that by 1941 demanded total power, total war, and total annihilation.

NOTES

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6. Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis*, 161, 234–35.

7. See Richard Bessel, *Germany After the First World War* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); David F. Crew, *Germans on Welfare: From Weimar to Hitler* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

8. Esam Abou El Magd, *Nietzsche: Ressentiment und schlechtem Gewissen auf der Spur* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1996), 9–18.

9. Max Scheler, *Ressentiment* (New York: Schocken, 1972), 50. For a German edition of these essays, see Max Scheler, *Das Ressentiment im Aufbau der Moralen* (Frankfurt/M: Klostermann, 1978).

10. Max Scheler, "The Meaning of Suffering," in *On Feeling, Knowing, and Valuing*, ed. Harold J. Bershady (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 82–115. Others, Scheler contended, included objectification, resignation, toleration, escape, apathy, heroic struggle, justification as punishment, and denial and suppression.

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12. On the concept of social suffering, see Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das, and Margaret Lock, eds., *Social Suffering* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997).

13. The phrase comes from Scheler, "Meaning," 83.

14. F. G. Bailey, *The Tactical Uses of Passion: An Essay on Power, Reason, and Reality* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1983); Peter N. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns, "Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards," *American Historical Review* 90 (1985): 813–36; Carol Z. Stearns and Peter N. Stearns, eds., *Emotion and Social Change: Toward a New Psychohistory* (New York and London: Holmes & Meier, 1988); Elaine Hatfield, John T. Cacioppo, and Richard L. Rapson, *Emotional Contagion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Rom Harré and W. Gerard Parrott, eds., *The Emotions: Social, Cultural, and Biological Dimensions* (London: Sage, 1996).

15. The subject of emotion and nationhood has been the theme of a major conference sponsored by the Comparative Social History Group at the Free University of Berlin and the Marc Bloch Center, an edited volume, and an exhibition in 1998 at the German Historical Museum in Berlin. See Etienne François, Hannes Siegrist, and Jakob Vogel, eds., *Nation and Emotion: Deutschland und Frankreich im Vergleich, 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995); Monika Flacke, ed., *Mythen der Nationen: Ein europäisches Panorama. Eine Ausstellung des Deutschen Historischen Museums unter der Schirmherrschaft von Bundeskanzler Dr. Helmut Kohl* (Berlin: Deutsches Historisches Museum, 1998).

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17. See Robert Weldon Whalen, *Bitter Wounds: German Victims of the Great War, 1914–1939* (London and Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); Kathrin Hoffmann-Curtius, "Opfermodelle am Altar des Vaterlandes seit der Französischen Revolution," in *Schrift der Flammen: Opfermythen und Weiblichkeitsentwürfe im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Gudrun Kohn-Waechter (Berlin: Orlando Frauenverlag, 1991), 51–92.

18. J. H. M. Beattie, "On Understanding Sacrifice," in *Sacrifice*, ed. M. F. C. Bourdillon and Meyer Fortes (London: Academic, 1980), 33. See also Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Functions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).

19. Victor W. Turner, *The Drums of Affliction: A Study of Religious Processes Among the Ndembu of Zambia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 270–77; Michael Geyer, "The Stigma of Violence, Nationalism, and War in Twentieth-Century Germany," *German Studies Review* special issue (Winter, 1992): 75–110. See also the essay in this volume by Uli Linke.

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21. See Greg Eghigian, *Making Security Social: Disability, Insurance, and the Birth of the Social Entitlement State in Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), chapter 3.

22. Jürgen Gebhardt, "Symbolformen gesellschaftlicher Sinndeutung in der Krisenerfahrung," in *Kriegserlebnis: Der erste Weltkrieg in der literarischen Gestaltung und symbolischen Deutung der Nationen*, ed. Klaus Vondung (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), 41–61; Bernd Ulrich, "Die Desillusionierung der Kriegsfreiwilligen von 1914," in *Der Krieg des kleinen Mannes: Eine Militärgeschichte von unten*, ed. Wolfram Wette (Munich and Zurich: Piper, 1992), 110–24; Ulrich Linse, "'Saatfrüchte sollen nicht vermahlen werden!': Zur Resymbolisierung des Soldatentods," in *Kriegserlebnis*, ed. Vondung, 262–74; Bernd Ulrich, "'... als wenn nichts geschehen wäre': Anmerkungen zur Behandlung der Kriegsoffer während des Ersten Weltkriegs," in *"Keiner fühlt sich hier mehr als Mensch...": Erlebnis und Wirkung des Ersten Weltkriegs*, ed. Gerhard Hirschfeld, Gerd Krumeich, and Irina Renz (Frankfurt/M: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1996), 140–56.

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36. Siegfried Bahne, *Die KPD und das Ende von Weimar: Das Scheitern einer Politik 1932–1935* (Frankfurt/M and New York: Campus, 1976), 12–33; Hermann Weber, *Hauptfeind Sozialdemokratie: Strategie und Taktik der KPD 1929–1933* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1982), 13–79.

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38. BArch, RY 10/16/8, Bd. 1, Richtlinien für die Arbeit der Kommunisten in den Kriegsbeschädigten-Organisationen, [1929].

39. BArch, RY 10/16/8, Bd. 1, Satzung des Internationalen Bundes der Opfer des Krieges und der Arbeit, 1929; Bundesvorstand, Gräf to Ortsgruppen und Gauleitungen, "Arbeitsplan für Winterhalbjahr 1930/31," October 15, 1930.

40. BArch, RY 10/16/8, Bd. 1, Gräf to Ortsgruppen, October 15, 1930.

41. BArch, RY 10/16/8, Bd. 1, "Der Kampf gegen Rentenabbau in Paradeuniform," Informationsblatt Nr. 10, October, 1930, 23–24. These groups were typically denounced for following the "sacred tradition" of confessional charity. In particular, the League commonly portrayed National Socialists as working in cooperation with the government parties in supporting the dismantling of social benefits. It also singled out the Nazis for their support of compulsory labor service and euthanasia. See BArch, RY 10/16/8, Bd. 1, Referentenmaterial zur 3. Notverordnung vom 6. Juni; Sozialpolitischer Pressedienst Nr. 2, February 1, 1932.

42. Gustav Hartz, *Irrwege der deutschen Sozialpolitik und der Weg zur sozialen Freiheit* (Berlin: August Scherl, 1928), 14–18.

43. Gustav Hartz, *Die national-soziale Revolution: Die Lösung der Arbeiterfrage* (Munich: J. F. Lehmann, 1932), 128.

44. Erwin Liek, *Die Schäden der sozialen Versicherungen und Wege zur Besserung* (Munich: J. F. Lehmann, 1928), 41.

45. Erwin Liek, *Soziale Versicherungen und Volksgesundheit* (Langensalza: Hermann Beyer und Söhne, 1929), 33–54.

46. On the "Conservative Revolution," see most recently Stefan Breuer, *Anatomie der konservativen Revolution* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1993); Rolf Peter Sieferle, *Die konservative Revolution: Fünf biographische Skizzen* (Frankfurt/M: Fischer, 1995); Roger Woods, *The Conservative Revolution in the Weimar Republic* (New York: St. Martin's, 1996).

47. Ernst Horneffer, *Der große Wunde: Psychologische Betrachtungen zum Verhältnis von Kapital und Arbeit*, (Munich and Berlin: 1923), 82–83.

48. Ernst Horneffer, *Frevel am Volk: Gedanken zur deutschen Sozialpolitik* (Leipzig: R. Voigtländer, 1929). The term *Frevel* implies a sacrilege, crime, or outrage of some kind.

49. *Ibid.*, 17–18.

50. *Ibid.*, 41–42.

51. BABL, RAM, Nr. 4604, Bl. 180, "Eigentum statt Sozialrente! Die Gewerkschaften dagegen," *Deutsche Bergwerks-Zeitung*, September 30, 1928; RAM, Nr. 4604, Bl. 125, "Für die Zwangs-Sozialversicherung: Grieser gegen Erkelenz—Wirtschaft und Sozialversicherung bedingen einander," *Schleswig-Holsteinische Volkszeitung*, October 21, 1927.

52. Gisela Bock, *Zwangssterilisation im Nationalsozialismus: Studien zur Rassenpolitik und Frauenpolitik*, (Opladen: Westdeutscher, 1986), 21–58; Jürgen Reyer, *Alte Eugenik und Wohlfahrtspflege: Entwertung und Funktionalisierung der Fürsorge vom Ende*

des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zur Gegenwart (Freiburg im Breisgau: Lambertus, 1991), 57–59, 81–162; Young-Sun Hong, *Welfare, Modernity, and the Weimar State, 1919–1933* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 239–71. On some of the differences dividing eugenicists and race hygienists, see Robert N. Proctor, *Racial Hygiene: Medicine Under the Nazis* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1988), 20–45 and Schmuhl, *Rassenhygiene, Nationalsozialismus, Euthanasie*, 90–105.

53. "Deutsche Kriegsbeschädigte! Deutsche Kriegshinterbliebene! Deutsche Kriegerwitwen!" March 25, 1925, in *Hitler: Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen* (hereafter *HRSA*), ed. Institut für Zeitgeschichte (Munich, London, New York, and Paris: K. G. Saur, 1992–97), vol. 1, 59–60.

54. "Rede auf Versammlung der 'Nationalen Opposition' in Bad Harzburg," October 11, 1931, *HRSA*, vol. 4, pt. 2, 131; "Schreiben an Heinrich Brüning," December 13, 1931, *HRSA*, vol. 4, pt. 2, 284; "Rede vor dem Industrie-Club in Düsseldorf," January 26, 1932, *HRSA*, vol. 4, pt. 3, 95.

55. "Volk - Staat - Wirtschaft: Rede auf NSDAP-Versammlung in Hamburg," December 10, 1927, *HRSA*, vol. 2, pt. 2, 573.

56. "I therefore ask you to let go of the everyday troubles that torment you. Certainly these troubles are in large measure a function of the misery of our people. But it is because they are so closely tied to this great misery that it is necessary for you to forget about these small troubles, forget what oppresses and haunts you, forget to which trade or profession you belong. . . . I would like to ask you to keep only one thing in mind, that we thousands who are assembled here are only a fraction of our German people, a fraction who fights, works and will die in this situation, a fraction of seventy million people who are forced to live [as] a fraction of this great community of common fate [*Schicksalsgemeinschaft*]—that you let go of what you feel as an individual and put yourself in the place [*Schicksal*] of the millions of which you also are a small fraction." "'Zukunft oder Untergang': Rede aus NSDAP-Versammlung in Vilsbiburg," March 6, 1927, *HRSA*, vol. 2, pt. 1, 165.

57. "Rede auf NSDAP-Führertagung im Plauen i. V.," July 8, 1925, *HRSA*, vol. 1, 106–17; "Rede auf NSDAP-Versammlung in Hattingen," November 26, 1926, *HRSA*, vol. 2, pt. 1, 95–99.

58. Herwart Vorländer, "NS-Volkswohlfahrt und Winterhilfswerk des Deutschen Volkes," *Vierteljahreshfte für Zeitgeschichte* 34 (1986): 365; Florian Tennstedt, "Wohltat und Interesse. Das Winterhilfswerk des Deutschen Volkes: Die Weimarer Vorgeschichte und ihre Instrumentalisierung durch das NS-Regime," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 13 (1987): 157, 172–73.

59. Erich Hilgenfeldt, *Idee der nationalsozialistischen Wohlfahrtspflege* (Munich and Berlin: Franz Eher Nachf., 1937).

60. *Ibid.*, 11.

61. *Ibid.*, 12.

62. On average, for instance, 855,789 social pensioners received assistance during the drive months (October–March) of winter 1935–36. U.S. National Archives (hereafter USNA), RG 242, T-70/107, *Winterhilfswerk des Deutschen Volkes 1935/36: Rechenschaftsbericht*.

63. For the details of the program discussed here, see Ernst Wulff, *Das Winterhilfswerk des Deutschen Volkes* (Berlin: Franz Eher Nachf., 1941).

64. Wieland Elfferding, "Opferritual und Volksgemeinschaftsdiskurs am Beispiel des Winterhilfswerk (WHW)," in *Faschismus und Ideologie 2: Argument-Sonderband AS 62*, ed. Projekt Ideologie Theorie (Berlin: Argument, 1980), 199–226.

65. USNA, RG 242, T-70/29, Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda to Beamten, Angestellten, und Arbeiter des Hauses, October 12, 1933.
66. Vorländer, "NS-Volkswohlfahrt und Winterhilfswerk des Deutschen Volkes," 374.
67. Tennstedt, "Wohltat und Interesse," 174.
68. USNA, RG 242, T70/29, Zusammenstellung der Spenden für das Winterhilfswerk 1934/35, October 25, 1934.
69. USNA, RG 242, T70/29, Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda to Beamten, Angestellten, und Arbeiter des Hauses, October 12, 1933.
70. Wulff, *Das Winterhilfswerk des Deutschen Volkes*, 46–49.
71. USNA, RG 242, T70/48, Hilgenfeldt to Goebbels, September 18, 1937.
72. *Ibid.*, April 22, 1938.
73. USNA, RG 242, T70/48, Hilgenfeldt memorandum, ca. March–April 1938.
74. USNA, RG 242, T70/48, Evan von Schroeder to Ministerialrat Müller, January 22, 1940.
75. USNA, RG 242, T70/48, Hilgenfeldt to Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda, February 21, 1940.
76. USNA, RG 242, T70/48, Krüger, Amt für Volkswohlfahrt, Gauamtsleiter to Hilgenfeldt, February 19, 1940.
77. Compare my conclusion in this regard to Klaus Vondung, *Magie und Manipulation: Ideologischer Kult und politische Religion des Nationalsozialismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971); George A. De Vos and Marcelo M. Suarez-Orozco, "Sacrifice and the Experience of Power," in *Journal of Psychoanalytic Anthropology* 10 (1987): 309–40; Yvonne Karow, *Deutsches Opfer: Kultische Selbstausslöschung auf den Reichsparteitagen der NSDAP* (Berlin: Akademie, 1997).
78. Gisela Bock, *Zwangssterilisation im Nationalsozialismus: Studien zur Rassenpolitik und Frauenpolitik* (Opladen: Westdeutscher, 1986); Wolfgang Ayaß, "Asoziale" im Nationalsozialismus (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1995); Michael Burleigh, *Death and Deliverance: "Euthanasia" in Germany 1900–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1995); Henry Friedlander, *The Origins of Nazi Genocide: From Euthanasia to the Final Solution* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).
79. Rolf Valentin, *Die Krankenbataillone: Sonderformationen der deutschen Wehrmacht im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1981); Wolfgang Ayaß and Dan Silverman, *Hitler's Economy: Nazi Work Creation Programs, 1933–1936* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).
80. Michael Geyer, "Resistance as Ongoing Project: Visions of Order, Obligation to Strangers, and Struggles for Civil Society, 1933–1990," in *Resistance Against the Third Reich, 1933–1990*, ed. Michael Geyer and John W. Boyer, (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 341.
81. Käthe Hamburger, *Das Mitleid* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1985), 99–119.
82. See Klaus Heinrich, "Gemütlichkeit," in *Deutsche Stichworte: Anmerkungen und Essays*, ed. Horst Kurnitzky and Marion Schmid (Frankfurt/M: Neue Kritik, 1984), 47–53; and Karow, *Deutsches Opfer*, 64–70.
83. Elfferding, "Opferritual und Volksgemeinschaftsdiskurs am Beispiel des Winterhilfswerk (WHW)," 205; Volker Ackermann, *Nationale Totenfeiern in Deutschland. Von Wilhelm I. bis Franz Josef Strauß: Eine Studie zur politischen Semiotik* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1990), 169–76.

84. Jay W. Baird, *To Die for Germany: Heroes in the Nazi Pantheon* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 202–42; Sabine Behrenbeck, *Der Kult um die toten Helden: Nationalsozialistische Mythen, Riten, und Symbole* (Vierow bei Greifswald: S-H Verlag, 1996), 595–99; Karow, *Deutsches Opfer*, 181–87. See also Michael Geyer's essay in this volume.

85. "Rede auf Reichsführertagung in München," April 27, 1930, *HRSA*, vol. 3, 168.

86. "Rede auf NSDAP-Versammlung in Radolfzell," July 29, 1932, *HRSA*, vol. 5, pt. 1, 284–85.

87. Gerd Ueberschär, "Stalingrad—eine Schlacht des Zweiten Weltkrieges," in *Stalingrad: Mythos und Wirklichkeit einer Schlacht*, ed. Wolfram Wette and Gerd R. Ueberschär (Frankfurt/M: Fischer, 1992), 42.

88. Adelheid Gräfin zu Castell Rüdenhausen, "'Nicht mitzuleiden, mitzukämpfen sind wir da!'" Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt im Gau Westfalen-Nord," in *Die Reihen fast geschlossen: Beiträge zur Geschichte des Alltags unterm Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Detlev Peukert and Jürgen Reulecke (Wuppertal: Peter Hammer, 1981), 223–43.

4

Michael Ceyer

“There Is a Land Where Everything Is Pure: Its Name Is Land of Death”

Some Observations on Catastrophic Nationalism

■ “There is a land where everything is pure: Its name is land of death.” The prosaic translation hardly conveys the elegance of the German original:

*Es gibt ein Reich, wo alles rein ist:
Es hat auch einen Namen:
Totenreich*

The measured rhythm and the alliteration of *Reich* and *rein*, of *Es hat auch einen Namen*; the descent from high to low vowels; and the arresting reversal of the meter in the third line *Tótenreich*—the three lines of verse, written by Hugo von Hofmannsthal and given voice by Richard Strauß, are from one of the most beautiful and haunting and, indeed, beautifully haunting arias in twentieth-century operatic history.¹ These verses are so breathtaking that one might even want to believe the artists that

"there is a land where everything is pure," and surely one comes to believe Ariadne who is stranded on Naxos, bewailing her lost love, Theseus, and wanting to die. However, the entire story must be known in order to catch the meaning of the two lines that immediately follow:

Hier ist nichts rein!
Hier kam alles zu allem!

[Here nothing is pure!
Everything is muddled together!]

Ariadne's situation is desperate. She was dumped on the desert island of Naxos by the hero, Theseus, whom she had helped to kill her father in return for sex. With her father murdered and with her lover abandoning her, her life was in shambles, quite literally messed up with no way to go, or so it seemed, but into death. It is not that she could not survive on the island because the local nymphs took pity on her. But who would want to and who could possibly survive such catastrophe? Expelled from community (she ends up alone) and stripped of a liveable past (she had helped to kill her father) for her wanton desire, how could she possibly live on?

Messiness, writes Mary Douglas, is a condition when things get inadvertently put into wrong places, when actions pursued with the best of intents end up with horrendous consequences, when the ability to judge what is right and wrong fails or, alternatively, when fish crawl, loves fail, and wars are lost. Dirt is matter out of place in Douglas's famous words. Impurity derives from the inability to categorize things and acts because they fall out of the grid of perception with which we organize the world. Dirt is the product of everyday human existence, which we busily try to sweep away so as to ascertain order and thus recreate the architecture in which society can flourish. However, the essence of such order, purity, is achieved at the risk of death. Still, purity is what human beings seek. It is un-human to be pure because life is inherently untidy. Still, "chasing dirt . . . we are . . . positively reordering our environment."² And, altogether, that seems to be a good thing, Mary Douglas suggests, especially if we grant that the architecture of order may change over time. Because life is messy, it takes order for society to function.

Ariadne achieves purity notwithstanding her grievous history but only at the cost of death. In the end she is redeemed. The world is reordered. The curtain falls. In a way, this is what we have come to expect from women in opera. The reckless pursuit of female desire is redeemed through

death. Patriarchal order is restored. Or as Mary Douglas put it: "Ideas about separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing transgressions have as their main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience."³ In actual fact, the story line of *Ariadne auf Naxos* is a bit more complicated than that. But the story line will have to wait. What I want to test is whether, as Mary Douglas asserts, there is "nothing fearful or unreasoning" about this act of imposing system on a messy life or whether it cannot go woefully wrong and produce disaster on an extraordinary scale.

The opera itself is a case in point. The last time I saw *Ariadne auf Naxos* (at Chicago's Lyric Opera) it was performed for the entertainment of a somewhat incredulous audience led to think that it was an opera about the amorous affairs of gods, *Götterliebschaften*, which could be approached with a certain gaiety because it was opera. In a way the Chicago audience acted not unlike a certain Viennese professor Erwin Pirchan who proclaimed in 1939, in an essay with the same title, that "liberation" had come at last and that "German artists now could return to the great carnal themes of the Greeks without inhibition."⁴ Opera is permissive, and *Ariadne auf Naxos* stages a celebration of permissiveness. For the Ariadne story is only a tragic play within a play that is about performing an opera about the amorous affairs of gods and mortals for the amusement of a very rich man. Ariadne's purification is not really a clean affair.

So far, so good. What the program notes forgot to mention is the fact that the second and final version of *Ariadne auf Naxos* had its debut in October, 1916, at the height of World War I with the battle of Verdun just barely over and the battle of the Somme still raging.⁵ The opera, in other words, had its second debut at the very moment when events were taking shape that were creating a veritable land of death. If one thinks of it, the 1916 opera—much as Pirchan's comments—suddenly appears like matter out of place. Of course, one might categorically say that the two things, opera and war, do not belong together and should be kept apart, even if they occurred at the same time. It is one thing if a soprano, on the stage, extols the virtue of death for her persona. It is another thing for hundreds of thousands of people to die. And it is yet something else if Hofmannsthal and Strauß deliberately stage the entire act as a performance. But the problem with keeping these things apart is that they have a tendency of getting mixed up. To keep them neatly in their own respective compartments may assuage feelings and maintain a sense of order, but historical experience in this matter is inherently messy. The amorous affairs of gods have a way of intruding into the history of war. There are too many Ariadnes being puri-

fied, too many Ledas being mounted, and too many Europas being absconded during the great wars over the fate of western civilization to keep war and art apart.⁶

I came away from *Ariadne auf Naxos* incensed about the lack of history in program notes (my annoyance had its deeper roots in the Lyric's previous performance of Strauß's 1942 *Cappricio* with the explicit denial that history matters which seemed to me outrageous).⁷ By the same token, I am equally perplexed, turning to my own work—the history of war—by the lack of persuasive thought about what compels men and, indeed, entire societies to go to war and fight to the death. It stands to reason that keeping war and art apart has much to do with this lacuna. While it may not be opera, the spirit that informed operas such as *Ariadne auf Naxos* may well hold the key to why entire nations fight to the point of self-destruction. But before we enter this kind of debate, a comment about "fighting to the death" is in order. It is so much of a metaphor that we tend to forget it actually happened.

If 1916 was the year when catastrophe took shape in the human slaughterhouse at the western front, Europe's darkest moment came in the years 1942–45 when German war and occupation produced a vast zone of death and destruction and turned all of Europe into a killing field. To be sure, a genocidal war had been under way since 1939 (the war against Poland) and the politics of extermination, the Holocaust, had taken hold in 1941 after a long buildup. But between 1942 and 1945 the fury of destruction reached its zenith.

Nineteen forty-two was also the turning point of the war. While there is debate as to when exactly the war was won and lost respectively, it seems quite incontrovertible that the tide had irrevocably shifted against the German war effort in fall of 1942 at the latest—with the battle of Stalin-grad demonstrating the point. What is more, the German military and the Nazi leadership were perfectly aware of this situation. While the issue remains controversial, retrospective comments made by the chief of the Armed Forces General Staff, Gen. Alfred Jodl, are now taken more seriously. One of the last entries in the war diary of the Armed Forces High Command records Jodl saying: "When the catastrophe of winter 1941–42 broke, it became clear especially to the Führer but also to the Commander-in-Chief that, after this culmination point of early 1942, victory could no longer be achieved."⁸ The military effort of summer, 1942, to reverse this fate failed and hence the war was lost. Later, at Nuremberg, he would

sum up that "earlier than anyone in the world, Hitler anticipated and knew that the war was lost."⁹ There was a slim possibility that the enemy alliance might have split. The problem is that Hitler did not condone initiatives to that end.¹⁰ He was unwilling to negotiate. Hitler wanted "to fight to the death."

All this leads to the ineluctable conclusion that the machinery of destruction and annihilation went into high gear at the very moment the war was lost. The Wehrmacht fought for three years and the nation was mobilized in a total war effort notwithstanding the Nazi and military leadership's knowledge that this effort would not make a difference in the eventual outcome of the war. The consequences were enormous. For only now, after the balance of forces had decisively shifted against Nazi Germany, in Europe, the war reached its violent climax.

German armed forces during these years are often portrayed as undermanned and under-armed. But the truth here is relative. Allied superiority was achieved within the context of the expansion and intensification of the German war effort that began to stagger only in the last few months of the war in 1945. That is, while losing out ever more dramatically in the balance of forces overall and at each individual front and while having lost the strategic initiative, German military capability reached its zenith in absolute terms in 1943-44. While rapidly growing weaker relative to the allied forces and while having to disperse troops and firepower widely among its various embattled fronts, including the home front as the site for the air war and the occupied territories as site of partisan warfare, the German armed forces reached their peak numerical fighting power, in terms of personnel and materiel, only after the war was strategically lost.¹¹

As an indication of this development, manpower figures will suffice. At the beginning of the war, in 1939, the Germany military had 3.2 million soldiers in uniform of whom 2.7 million served in the army (30,000 in the *Waffen SS*), 400,000 in the air force and 50,000 in the navy. At its peak in 1943-44 the size had increased to 9.5 million with 6.5 million in the army, 2.1 million in the air force and 800,000 in the navy. At the end of the war there were still 7.8 million soldiers under arms of whom 6.1 million served in the army, approximately 1 million in the air force, and 700,000 in the navy. The actual fighting forces had diminished, but at the end of the war the army (and the *SS*) alone were more than twice as big as the entire armed forces at the beginning. At its peak, in 1943-44, the armed forces were three times their original size, despite horrendous losses that included the entire Sixth Army at Stalingrad.¹²

Simultaneously, casualty figures provide a dramatic account of the increasing intensity of fighting. War in Europe turned decisively more deadly in 1943 and was most lethal in 1944–45. Again, a few figures help to buttress this point. While the number of dead/missing soldiers in 1940 amounted to a "mere" 62,700/64,500, lethality increased to 291,400/319,200 in the wake of the attack against the Soviet Union in 1941. The following years saw a rapid increase in their number from 443,300/537,900 in 1942, to 449,100/792,700 in 1943, and 458,800/1,527,600 in 1944.¹³ Overmans, who has studied the entire issue in a stunning book, comes to the following conclusion that is worth citing in full: "If in January 1943 monthly casualties of approximately 200,000 men were the extreme exception, [it] becomes the average around mid-1944. As a result of the collapse of Army Groups Center and Southern Ukraine casualties reach, for the first time, the order of approximately 350,000 dead per month. After casualty figures leveled off on a very high level as a result of the stabilization of the front in the fall of 1944 and a reduction of fighting, casualties increased again from December 1944 on with the battle of the Bulge and reach their absolute maximum in January 1945 with approximately 450,000 men. Casualties only decreased below the 100,000 men threshold in May 1945."¹⁴ World War II ended with more than a quarter million casualties per month and nearly a half-million casualties in January, 1945, alone. As far as German troops were concerned, January, 1945, was the bloodiest month of the entire war. Overall, more German soldiers were killed in action between July 20, 1944, the date of the failed coup against Hitler, and May 8, 1945, unconditional surrender, than in the entire previous five years of war between 1939 and 1944.

Civilian casualties, while more difficult to ascertain, followed the same overall trend. Casualties resulting from the air war remained relatively small, despite heavy bombardment, into 1944, but then rose rapidly to culminate in the last half-year of the war. Their overall total is probably around 442,000 men, women, and children, although statistics range between 300,000 and 500,000.¹⁵ The flight of Germans from eastern territories in 1944–45 led to the death of at least another half-million people from late 1944 into early 1945. Until recently it was assumed that many more civilians died, approximately 2 million, but this number now appears distinctly too high.¹⁶ None of this takes into account the mass rape of women and girls as a further extension of the logic of destruction.¹⁷ Whichever way we count, the delayed evacuation; the military imperative to hold on to territory at all cost; the order that men, women, and children

hold out and defend territory, and the refusal of fortified cities (like Breslau) to surrender resulted in the single-most devastating losses of World War II, exceeding those of Stalingrad by far. While German civilian casualties did not surpass the military ones, as they did on the Russian side,¹⁸ they both rose in tandem to a level of carnage in war that was unprecedented in modern European history.

Notwithstanding the catastrophically rising death toll among German soldiers and civilians, the lethality of German force did not diminish and on the western front actually increased. The Soviet casualty figures are most telling in this respect. Although "irrecoverable losses" (which included prisoners of war) declined dramatically after the first and second quarter of 1941, the actual casualties did not decrease significantly. The year 1943 was the bloodiest year for the Soviet forces, with 1.8 million soldiers dead. The remaining years saw casualties of approximately 1.5 million. The first quarter of 1945 did not indicate any letup of the dying. During each of the first quarters of the years between 1942 and 1945, the months for Soviet offensives, well more than 500,000 soldiers were killed in action.¹⁹ American casualty rates pale in comparison with those of the Soviet side, but they further reinforce the main point. If we follow the monthly breakdown of American casualties in Europe, it is unsurprising that they rise steeply in July, 1944, (D-Day) to 61,000. However, they reached a peak only in December and January, 1944-45, when they climbed to 80,994 and 70,568, respectively. Casualty figures still hovered around 50,000 in March and April. While the number of soldiers killed in or as the result of action (15,333 in December, 1944, and 12,190 in January, 1945) was considerably smaller in each of these months, they conform to the overall pattern.²⁰ The bloodiest battles in Europe took place only toward the very end of the war, when all was lost for Nazi Germany.

This overall observation can be extended to the more uncertain terrain of resistance and partisan warfare on the one hand and to civilian casualties on the other. The problems here are immense. Suffice it to say that we know with certainty that the war on the eastern front killed many more, probably between two or three times as many civilians than soldiers. Altogether, approximately 19 million men, women, and children were either killed or died as effect of the war.²¹ Unfortunately, we do not yet know when and where they died. The prevailing perception attributes the high death toll to the initial genocidal onslaught in 1941, but occupation and exploitation, the slow retreat of German forces with systematic "scorched earth" tactics and extensive anti-partisan sweeps, and the inhuman treat-

ment of Russian and Ukrainian forced labor both at the front and in the Reich devastated the civilian population between 1941 and 1944.²² If the initial onslaught was motivated by haughty racial concepts of superiority and inferiority, the second phase of the war after 1942–43, the long retreat to the German border, entailed a systematic war against civilians in which racial ideology and military tactics fused in a lethal combination. Again, the situation in Western Europe was less severe, with the south (Italy) and especially the southeast (Yugoslavia and Greece) tending toward the Soviet experience. In all three areas, persecution, terror, and exploitation sharpened dramatically in 1943–44. Especially the anti-partisan warfare in the south and southeast took an extraordinary toll among civilians and declined only in the very last phases of the occupation. Yugoslavia, though, remained a deadly battleground to the very end. The ferocity of these regimes of occupation reached its peak between 1942 and 1944 when the German occupiers (and their local allies) fought an all-out war to keep the civilian population in check.

It is fitting in this context to mention the rapidly growing death toll among German civilians as a result of Nazi terror and persecution. The number of (non-Jewish) German victims of Nazi atrocities is commonly underestimated. The lack of open resistance against the regime leaves the impression of universal German loyalty. Nonetheless, approximately 300,000 and likely more Germans were put to death for treason, desertion, and signs of defeatism. The death toll from Allied bombing was only slightly higher. No comparison is intended here. Rather the point is to demonstrate the deadliness of the Nazi regime, especially in its final years.²³

There is a long and involved debate on whether or not the victims of mass murder should be put into this panorama of mass death. The premeditated murder of Jews after 1941 was institutionally and ideologically set apart as an act *sui generis*, expressed most clearly in the single-minded pursuit of killing any and all Jews in every part of the German zone of occupation—an effort that did not cease even when and where military concerns were affected.²⁴ However, the deliberate murder of the Jewish population was a central, if not the pivotal, aspect of the Nazi pursuit of war which, in any case, was always a war against entire societies and people rather than against an enemy state and its armies. Hence, it seems not just appropriate, but entirely necessary to include the deaths from deliberate Nazi Judaeocide in our overview. The persecution of Jews culminated in the murder of a minimum of 5.29 million and a maximum of somewhat

more than 6 million Jews, out of a population of approximately 9.5 million Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe. Approximately 500,000 Jews, mostly men, were killed in the initial onslaught. The Holocaust reached its omnicidal zenith only in the second phase of the war, between 1942 and 1944, when the killing facilities such as Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, Majdanek, and especially Auschwitz began to operate and were expanded. In Auschwitz-Birkenau alone, approximately 1 million Jews were killed between January, 1942, and November, 1944. This machinery of death worked ever more efficiently and was stopped only with the advance of the Red Army. But even when the factories of death were closed in 1944, the killing continued unabated and reached another peak with the death marches back into Germany. The killing continued to the very last day of the war, and, indeed, until the remaining unoccupied areas in Czechoslovakia and Austria were captured. The annihilation of Jewish victims did not come to an end until all of Germany had surrendered and was occupied and until the very last units of the Wehrmacht and SS surrendered.

The book of death in World War II thus reveals the extraordinary ferocity with which this war was fought. It points to the fact that this was a war fought against civilian populations as much as against armies. In Eastern Europe, it was fought as "civil war" with the destruction of entire societies as its main goal. Violence radiated out from within Germany, through the occupied territories, and all the way to the front lines. In this sense Judaeocide was the paradigmatic war the Nazis fought. The book of death also discloses that the war became much deadlier as it went on and that violence began to reverberate back onto Germany and the Germans. In contrast to Nazi war aims, the Allies were not out to destroy Germany and the Germans, but as a result of the ferocity of the war German society in its entirety came under attack.

This panorama of mass death leads to a conclusive argument. Initially, we were impressed by the extraordinary death toll among German soldiers and civilians, especially during the last phases of the war, when, for all intents and purposes, the war was lost. We discovered that the intensity of fighting, the tenacious resistance of German soldiers, and the all-out mobilization of civilians exponentially increased their chance of getting killed. But we also came to realize that the threat to the survival of civilians in the war zones and in the occupied territories increased significantly. Most of all, the all-out defense of territory in the slow retreat to the German borders sheltered genocide, murder, and torture of civilian populations, the Holocaust, the deliberate murder of any and all Jews, being the

signature of this war against civilians. In this manner, death as a result of combat on the one hand and of willful murder extended by a fierce defensive war on the other were inextricably linked to the very end of the war.

The sad progression of mass death hinged on the unflagging German pursuit of war. Had the German front, any of the fronts, collapsed, had German morale buckled, had there been a more sustained resistance, there still would have been the legacy of a genocidal war and of the Holocaust during the early phases of the war. But none of this happened and, hence, Europe turned into a vast zone of death and destruction with Germans in the role of vicious torturers and murderers, tenacious fighters, and hapless victims. German society, soldiers, and civilians, fought on long after the war was effectively lost and long after it had become apparent to everyone that the war could not but end in disastrous defeat. What compelled them to hold out? What sustained the fighting beyond the breaking point at which death became a threat for everyone?

There are a number of explanations, none of which is entirely wrong, although none of them fully satisfies. The most straightforward one points to the fact that there was "no exit" from the war. Where after all would civilians go and what could they possibly do? Informers were everywhere, distrust was rampant, and the harsh prosecution of treasonous talk cut deep into society. For soldiers it was difficult to desert or go AWOL because the military police, the dreaded *Geheime Feldpolizei*, was everywhere behind the lines, picking up voluntary and involuntary stragglers. The role of open terror especially during the last year of the war is well documented both in terms of a stream of blood-curdling orders that called for the instant liquidation of soldiers and civilians who tried to run away (or just showed signs of wavering) and in terms of the terrifying increase of actual executions which continued to the very last day of the war—and, indeed, beyond into the self-government of POW camps.²⁵ German soldiers and civilians, those who wanted out, were caught between a rock and a hard place.

But this said, the fact of the matter is that until the very last few months of the war morale did not break. By and large Germans did not seek a way out—otherwise the casualties would not have been so high. Soldiers may have loathed the *Geheime Feldpolizei* and civilians may have wished the intrepid fanatics in their midst to hell, but none of this lessened the fighting fury, the all-out mobilization for war, the genocidal use of forced labor in every factory and every town. None of this dimin-

ished the exorbitantly rising death toll among Germans which suggested that they continued to fight as hard as ever. The "no exit" argument does not quite suffice because even on the western front and in Italy few sought an exit until the very last months of the war.

What else could have compelled the German population to hold out, fight, and die in support of a genocidal regime? Ideological indoctrination is often used as another supporting argument.²⁶ Again, there is a point to be made. The Nazi leadership stepped up propaganda and the military formalized ideological indoctrination. Generally, one can speak of a re-ideologization of the German war effort, a heightened emphasis on ideological correctness and on movement type mobilization.²⁷ Wartime Germany experienced something of a "return to the roots" of the Nazi movement. But ideology worked best for that portion of society that was already committed. Propaganda did not sway the other part. Early on, the Gestapo picked up a sense of widespread disillusionment that gave way to a mixture of desperation and loathing during the last year of the war.²⁸ There is a good deal of agreement among historians that Germans did not head willfully into self-destruction and that brainwashing did not work.²⁹ Nonetheless, they continued to fight.

The problem lies with the many Germans, soldiers and civilians, who were desperate to get out but instead continued fighting or working in war industries and partook in a genocidal and slave labor regime as if it were second nature. These people were reported by the Gestapo as distrusting the new wave of ideology, looking through propaganda campaigns and disliking political officers, and staying away from Nazi rallies. The Gestapo considered them a growing threat. But there was only very scattered resistance against the regime, no groundswell of popular opposition and no recognizable voice that gave substance to the yearning for an end of the war. If the Gestapo reported with increasing frequency the desire of ordinary people to extricate themselves from the war, these yearnings remained muffled and without consequence. None of this sentiment had an effect on genocide and the Holocaust. Neither did it diminish the pursuit of war that reached its deadly crescendo because these disaffected German soldiers and civilians fought on.

Over the past few years, we have come to know this large group, perhaps the majority of ordinary Germans, quite remarkably well from their diaries, picture albums, letters, and other memorabilia.³⁰ What we discover is that, indeed, they were disgruntled and even desperate, but even in hindsight, when they were talking about the war, they could not con-

ceive of an exit. For the vast majority, it was just not an option. The main reason, however, is not propaganda and terror. Nor was it really the fierceness, imagined and real, of the enemy, although the latter is a factor to be considered more seriously. But in the first instance, they felt obligated to hang in there and grit their teeth, even if in growing despair, for the sake of community or group—be it the group they were in, their families and kin, or their "people." In so many ways they thought that sacrifice in order to maintain community was a self-evident virtue in catastrophe. Survival, they thought, depended on sticking together, while disaster came with the dissolution of bonds of belonging. They reckoned—and this kind of thinking proved to be fatal—that sacrifice was their survival strategy.

Sacrifice for the survival of the community was a familiar and cherished concept. Cultural historians have wondered about the power of community and communal thought in German life. They interpret it as rejection of individualism and an indication of delayed modernization. Military historians have debated the effect of small group cohesion on the fighting power of the German army. Historians of the Third Reich have endlessly argued about the impact of *Volksgemeinschaft* propaganda. We need not resolve these disputes, except to say that the ethos of community, the spirit of the group as opposed to the individual, was paramount to the German war effort. It was a shared, rather than imposed imperative. It was also part of a bargain that expected and, indeed, demanded protection in exchange for sacrifice.³¹ Long after the war, women held against the Third Reich that this bargain was forfeited. The idea that there could be something wrong with it in the first place was much harder to swallow and never very popular. By the same token, men felt that the regime had wasted them, put them into a position in which they could not possibly live up to their role. Both men and women ascertained that they had been treated like dirt.

But this attitude only came out after the war was over. During the war, the defense of community came both as small gesture, everyday considerations of a total war, and as grand oratory borrowing from history and myth. It is the small gestures that kept the war going, but these gestures always reflected world views that propaganda could utilize. Susanne zur Nieden, who has worked with diaries and letters written by German women in the last years of the war, has shown this phenomenon with insight and critical empathy.³² In the diaries and letters that she collected and evaluated, the virtue of community regularly appears as a powerful mobilizing force, but not at all as a terroristic or propagandistic imposi-

tion. Rather, the diary writers, called on as women to partake in the war effort, for the most part considered it the proper or "the right thing" to do. Whether or not they fell for Goebbels is one thing. They basically agreed with Goebbels that the people were in danger and that they should do their part to avert catastrophe. The matter-of-factness of this commitment is striking, particularly if one has the frenzied crowd response to Goebbels's call for total war in mind. "'Total war' requires tough measures. Everything that is not necessary must be canceled . . . Dr Goebbels has called upon all women in his grand speech to volunteer for service in the war effort."³³ By and large, this service was rendered. To be sure, it set in motion a scramble over what to do and where to go: white collar work? munitions factory? Luftwaffe auxiliary? or some more ideologically activist task in "the East"? Actual blue-collar labor led to a great deal of unhappiness and made the cohort of young women into one of the most obstreperous and restless groups in the Third Reich. But the call for service, even if involuntary, did not, in principle, elicit opposition and the restlessness of the auxiliary female labor force remained painfully subordinated to the call for community service.

Some of the women considered their sacrifice as an act akin to liberation and empowerment. Thus, a high school student, Edelgard B., wrote in August, 1944: "Lately there is a lot going on with the war. It goes ever wronger. . . . Now Dr. Goebbels has issued his proclamation for "total war". We, in our school, will probably be used for some sort of task as well. This would be absolutely right, because we must absolutely positively win. Better to give everything now than end up in Siberia."³⁴ Soon after, in September, she reiterated: "On the one hand, there is victory which has become ever more dubious. On the other hand, there is Bolshevism. But then it's better to sacrifice everything, absolutely everything for victory rather than Bolshevism . . . Why should I even bother to go to school, if I end up in Siberia anyway . . . Chin up! Let's trust our own will and our Führer!" The dread of Edelgard B. was as personal as it was political. It was a mild case of dread compared to what Goebbels's propaganda depicted as the fate of defeated German women. But being swayed by lurid propaganda is one thing. The readiness to act out on one's own, in September, 1944, is the striking message. Obviously, the young writer had not the slightest idea what to do. But she expected from herself action and performance (*Leistung*) and identified the latter with self-will. In her own adolescent way, Edelgard B. articulated one of the basic gestures that kept so many Germans going: Although she was clueless about what to do, she and the

Führer, in conjunction with everybody else, would set things right. In order to save herself, she was ready "to sacrifice everything" and found a certain satisfaction in giving "it" all (although one might note that she withholds herself from sacrifice). This is, as if in miniature, the worldview that makes wars continue long after they are lost.

Obviously, one should not make too much of the effusions of a single adolescent diary writer. However, the sentiments that this young woman expressed demonstrate a point that helps us understand self-destructive behavior. The diary notes were clearly influenced by propaganda or, in any case, by the oratory coming from above. But the more important message is that the oratory was broken down, as it were, into bite-size pieces which all amounted to the same thing: there was no alternative to and no future beyond the war. The nation, represented in an imagined Führer's will, was the only thing between survival and the abyss. The other, unimaginable future was "Siberia." This was a far cry from the pomp and circumstance of Nazi oratory and, yet, it translated perfectly what the latter was all about.

With Edelgard B. and her fellow diary writers in mind, let us switch genres and see how the same kind of thought was formulated by the top brass who ran the war, rather than being run by it. In the same exemplary fashion I want to highlight two themes that the diary writers also identified as crucial: the fear of revenge on the one hand and of internal division on the other. With these two elements in place, we can add a third that turned communal survival strategies on their head: the deliberate use of the readiness for sacrifice to push Germans into a war of self-destruction.

Fear was one of the great mobilizers during the second part of the war. We need not repeat in detail the lurid propaganda images of the deadly threat that public as well as leadership opinion saw emanating from the enemies of the Reich. Hitler's blunt statement in 1945 puts them in a nutshell: "Men and children are murdered, women and girls are humiliated as whores, the rest marches to Siberia."³⁵ The vast majority of Germans shared these fears with the Nazi leadership. What made these images stick is, in part, long-standing prejudice that predated the Nazis. There was an inventory of stereotypical hatreds and prejudices that propaganda could easily tap. However, stereotypes as such did not mobilize. The fear of "revenge" on the other hand did. This fear was omnipresent. It is a curious fear because neither propaganda nor public opinion ever cared to spell out what "revenge" might be for. Rather, the notion of revenge was left free-standing, as if everybody understood. Propaganda presumed or, as may be,

insinuated a preceding violation, even if it never spelled out what it might be all about. The secrecy of the guilt only heightened the fear.

This was exactly where the head of Nazi propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, wanted the Germans to be. The unacknowledged source of guilt made the fear of revenge universal which, in turn, could only lead to a desperate continuation of war. Goebbels knew what he was talking about. After a crucial meeting with Herman Göring about total mobilization, on March 2, 1943, he noted with satisfaction: "Göring is perfectly aware of what would happen to all of us, if we were to become weak in this war. He has no illusions about it. Especially as far as the Jewish question is concerned, we are so distinctly committed that there is no escape for us. And that's good that way. A movement and a people who have burnt the bridges behind themselves will fight much more relentlessly than those who still have a chance for a retreat."³⁶

A nation that had committed atrocities and genocide was not likely to sue for peace. It could not but fight—and would fight to the point of self-destruction for fear of revenge. The Nazi leadership bet on the widespread fear of revenge in order to maintain an ever more desperate fighting spirit in the midst of rising defeatism. In 1942–43 we enter the mirror stage of the war. German soldiers and civilians fought so hard, because they had fought so mercilessly before. As if completing this mirror-scape, Nazi propaganda now accused the "enemy" of what they, the Nazis, had done. Nazi propaganda agitated relentlessly over "crimes against humanity," against "slavery," and against "extermination," even as it camouflaged its own crimes on all these counts.³⁷ "There is no crime against humanity, culture, and civilization that the enemy has not committed in this war. They are so morally corrupt, that they even brag about it . . . they murder women and children in droves because they hope by this godless barbarism to weaken their husbands and fathers in their will to fight. They treat the sacred cultural endowment of two thousand years as nothing more than plunder and set fire to it with bombs and phosphorus canisters . . . Who has the right to speak of war crimes? We, or the enemy?"

It is commonly overlooked that the notion of *Menschheitsverbrechen* (crimes against humanity) was in use by the Nazis long before it entered the Nuremberg trials through the backdoor. It was part and parcel of a relentless strategy of mirror-imaging which was meant to trap Germans into fighting a lost war: because they had murdered, they would be murdered in turn. Nazi propaganda reflected German deed back on the Ger-

mans. They had been sacrificers and now became victims. The German language calls both by the same word: *Opfer*.

The second theme that recurs with great frequency is the imperative need for unity. Its opposite was a potent fear of dissolution that could assume sexual as well as historical overtones.³⁸ In case of doubt, the top brass professed to fear history rather than sexuality. When General Jodl, the chief of the Armed Forces General Staff, was called upon to deliver a briefing in front of the assembled *Gauleiter* on November 7, 1943, he delivered lessons drawn from what he considered a national history that teetered at the edge of dissolution. His point of departure was not Germany's miserable strategic situation, but the Italian secession. The latter was so deep a shock for the German leadership because it triggered memories of 1918 when, according to the military's own stab-in-the-back-legend, German defeat was sealed with the collapse of the home front in revolution. However, Jodl's horizon of history typically extended far beyond 1918. When he revisited his *Gauleiter* talk in prison, in 1945, he expanded on his fear of internal collapse. The syndrome of 1918, he explained, was Germany's historical condition. It was Germany's predicament which reared its head in 1943 as it had done in what he considered to be a long history of civil war and discord: "These dangers [of internal collapse] existed in Hitler's state as much as in the one of Wilhelm II. Hitler could not shake off the very weight of the historical past. Instead of territorial sovereigns we now had *Gauleiter*; the racial and religious war was generated by the [Nazi] Party itself; and the differences between parties were replaced by similar occurrences between various Party functions."³⁹

This was a rather adventurous reading of Germany's problems in 1943 to say the least. It makes sense only if we realize that the acute disaster of Germany's strategic situation was projected into a catastrophic history. Behind 1943 stood the revolution of 1918, and behind 1918 loomed the scepter of the Thirty Years' War—all of which was read against a biblical and mythical background of internecine, fratricidal enmity. The fear of fratricide is one of the most persistent themes in the massive propagandistic mobilization during the second half of the war. Beyond that, it may well be considered Germany's myth-history. For although German history had its heroic traditions, it was also perceived as a long history of failure—an idea that became a veritable obsession with the defeat in World War I.⁴⁰ It is worth recalling that Siegfried, the Wilhelmine hero *par excellence*, was killed in a family feud.⁴¹

The deep-seated sense of endangerment fed on popular tales about the struggle of Germanic tribes against the Roman Empire, their frequent defeats because of their rivalry, and their rare and bloody victories. Heinrich von Kleist's play *Hermannsschlacht* (1809) is possibly the most famous text in this tradition. It was staged widely during the interwar years. No less a director than Max Reinhardt incorporated the play into his German cycle in 1916–17 and it became a staple of the National Socialist stage.⁴²

There is some second thought about Kleist's intentions.⁴³ But there is little doubt about the message of the wartime and interwar performances. They focused on Kleist's catastrophic vision of the past in which discord led to enslavement and, in turn, was overcome in savage, all-out destruction that began with an act of self-sacrifice.

*A war I will inflame, by god, that will spread, rustling
through Germany like through a dry forest; a war that
will light up to the skies . . .*

*Until the thief's lair [imperial Rome] is destroyed and nothing
but a black flag hangs over a deserted wasteland.⁴⁴*

The relentless dialectic of self-destruction and extermination made Kleist's play a prime example for the idea of a "war of annihilation" long before its time.⁴⁵ Even after the cataclysm of 1944–45 Jodl invoked a language of self-destruction for which Kleist's drama *Hermannsschlacht* (1809) provided the model. Irrespective of what Kleist had in mind, the play became the model for a catastrophic nationalism that led into real-life disaster in order to avoid mythical catastrophe.

In Jodl's version of history, the Prussian ascent culminating in the "wars of liberation" against Napoleon had recovered a unity that had been lost in grievous religious wars and had led Germany into an age of captivity. This "national liberation" was once again threatened in a world in which only super-nations or empires survived and in which alien ideologies threatened the integrity and unity of the nation from within and without. Germany had entered a new round of "culture wars" in the twentieth century, not unlike the religious wars of early modern times, they thought. Historical *Angst*, ideology, and realpolitik were inextricably bound together in averting disunity as the main source of historical catastrophes. "There is only one thing that is sure: we will never stop fighting, because world history is shaped by the iron law of progress and ascent. Europe has led [this march of progress] and Germany is Europe's vanguard. A Europe under the knout of American Jews and Bolshevik commissars is unthink-

able. . . . [W]e will defend our homes to the last bullet, because it is a thousand times better to live in ruins than in bondage. [W]e will win, because we must win; for otherwise world history has lost its meaning."⁴⁶

The quest for unity and the fear of dissolution formed the core of a claustrophobic and, indeed, paranoid worldview. It reflected an imagination in which the nation was always already threatened by catastrophe and teetering on the brink of disaster. This threat was conceived as simultaneously internal and external to the nation, which is why every exertion to retain the unity of the nation was directed both inside and outside. Internal and external wars were two sides of the same coin. Indeed, if unity was the only hope for victory, internal war became the cornerstone on which the ability to wage external war depended. Mobilization and ideologization on the one hand, terror and genocide on the other are thus intrinsic aspects of a war fought under the black flag of catastrophic nationalism.

Did anyone, except the diehards, believe this kind of stuff? The short answer to this question is to say that there were enough fanatics to make a difference for all others, to silence doubts, and to terrorize those who disagreed. The more complicated and long-winded answer brings us back to the likes of Edelgard B. It is not simply that they got bits and pieces of a catastrophic imagination floating in their mind. Above all, they did not want to lose the war. It hurt their pride and it awakened dark fears of revenge. But once all this is spelled out there is the peculiar paradox that the majority of people considered sticking together and sticking it out a survival strategy. For them unity was the only guarantee to make it. If unity was lost, community dissolved and disaster beckoned. And, it is true, it took cliques, groups, and communities in order to survive in the dog-eat-dog world of the last two years of the war. But the will to stick together, could not but extend the war, put into practice what a Goebbels preached and a Jodl demanded, and thus could not but exacerbate the catastrophe. It also excised all those who did not belong, who were ready to give up or, for that matter, who were too weak to continue.⁴⁷ The exertion to avert a cataclysm, got Germans into unprecedented calamity. Struggling to survive, they brought home the very real catastrophe of mass murder and mass death so that in the end they became quite literally sacrificers and victims in a spiral of violence that had no end because they kept turning it.

There is a third element involved in Jodl's reading of events in 1943–45 that is worth a somewhat more extensive discussion. The "will to fight,"

he explained to the *Gauleiter*, depends on the "will to resistance of the people in their entirety." Modern wars were fought with a different rationale. People only fight, Jodl argued, if they think of themselves as personally involved, which was to say that they would only fight if their "liberty" was threatened. "For us there is no higher law and no more holy duty than to fight for the liberty of our people to the last breath."⁴⁸ We may wonder about the liberties that Jodl promised here, but that is for another occasion. We should rather pay attention to the afterthought that the people would "fight to the last breath." The idea of fighting to the last breath sounds trite. It has been said too many times in too many places. However, there was more to this phrase than meets the eye, and it is not just that the Nazis typically acted out what a lot of people said. For Jodl it was clear that the nation would fight for the death rather than surrender. For the Nazi leadership the pursuit of self-destruction was the only remaining strategy to snatch victory from what they knew was certain defeat.

Military thought on this matter was quite straightforward. If wars are fought by a people in its entirety, they come to an end only with the collapse of community (or as the effect of inner discord). People's wars ended by their very nature not with conventional military victory or defeat, but with the (self-)destruction of entire nations. Modern wars thus became a zero-sum game in which the survival of the nation was wagered. This is, in any case, the lesson the German military drew from World War I. Already in 1938, a memorandum of the Armed Forces High Command explained: "Investment, gain and loss increase in an unprecedented fashion [in modern war]. At the end of a lost war, not only injury, but annihilation of the state and of a people beckon. Hence, every contemporary war becomes an emergency of the state [*Staatsnotstand*] and a fight for survival [*Existenzkampf*] for each individual. Since every individual has everything to win and everything to lose, everybody must wager everything."⁴⁹

When Nazi and military leaders attempted to compel German soldiers and civilians to fight to death, they most commonly appealed to family values. The single most common theme to exhort an overwhelmed and despairing soldiery was to remind them of their role as protectors of (their) women and children. This could come in the form of a simple exhortation: the war was now about protection, the national cause had become personal. But more commonly it was tied to a rhetoric and, for that matter, a violent practice of shame and shaming: soldiers could not possibly show weakness, if women and children withstood the terror of bombing. Goebbels made this theme into a stock phrase in his talks and editorials.

And if indeed they showed weakness and were caught escaping the war, they were hanged with a cardboard sign around their neck denouncing them as cowards. In a more sinister fashion, the threat to women and children was tied to the brutalization of war: because the enemy was killing women and children, soldiers were called on to respond in kind against anyone who would not conform and, hence, did not belong. Sacrifice became a license to kill and a post-facto justification for genocide. But most of all, death was talked up as the only way for soldiers to redeem themselves in the eyes of their women and children. In the cruel metaphysics of the Third Reich, the only way to be a man was to be dead (or to be a killer) and, while this was wildly overwrought, the kernel of this death-talk, family values and the link of protection and manliness, was not. It took a long time until German men came to live down their inability to protect women and children and may well be considered the (male) German wartime trauma. No amount of grandstanding after the war, in the celebration of frontline heroism, could undo the fact that they had utterly and completely failed. The fallout of Nazi death-talk could be felt long after the Nazis were gone.

The same may be said for a second consideration that informed Nazi death-talk—the belief that in the face of defeat collective death was the only way to survive because it guaranteed immortality. This quest for immortality was so entirely tied up with Hitler's own pathology—and, perhaps, the pathologies of World War I veterans—that one easily overlooks the cultural building blocks that gave it resonance in the first place both within Germany and beyond. Collective death as a deliberate gambit to ascertain immortality was very much at the heart of the Nazi politics of self-destruction. It was the main reason why the Nazi and the military leadership wanted the people to fight to their death.

General Jodl's apology for Hitler, in 1945, serves as a good starting point. In defending the continuation of war long after it was lost, Jodl developed an idea that it is worth quoting at some length. "But can you give up an empire and a people, before you have [actually] lost a war? A man like Hitler could not do that. [Of course,] he should have fallen in battle, instead of choosing death by his own hand. He wanted to do it and would have done it, if he had been strong enough physically to do it. Thus, he did not choose the easier death, but the more definite one. He acted like all heroes have acted in history and like they will always act. He had himself buried on top of the ruins of his empire and his hopes. May anyone who wishes condemn him for that—I can not."

Jodl insisted that Hitler knew that the war was lost but that surrender was no option for him. He tried to develop a military rationale for Hitler's choice, but although he referred to Clausewitz over and over again, his argument frankly did not amount to much more than saying "it ain't over until the fat lady sings." In his own diction: since there was always another chance in war, one could not stop before one was dead. This, of course, was not strategy, but the abandonment of military thought. Intuitively and metaphorically, though, he grasped the purpose of fighting to death. Defending the suicide of Hitler as an expedient measure, he insisted that Hitler had to be dead because it was the only way his dreams and aspirations could survive defeat. The most important element of Jodl's defense of suicide was the image of the hero buried on top of the empire of his dreams. For one thing, this image was common currency. For another, the politics of the funeral pyre was meant to produce immortality. In his defense of Hitler, Jodl revealed a strategy for myth-making as the main purpose of waging war after it had been lost militarily.

This strategy of myth-making can be traced back to late 1942, when, according to Bernd Wegner, Hitler acknowledged that the war could no longer be won.⁵⁰ It came to be articulated in the elaborate propaganda campaign that surrounded the battle of Stalingrad.⁵¹ Herman Göring captured the spirit of this campaign in a speech on January 30, 1943, which provides us with a passkey to the Nazi quest for immortality. On the eve (!) of the surrender at Stalingrad, he used the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Nazi seizure of power in 1933 in order to broadcast an obituary for the heroes of Stalingrad—for those who had died and for the survivors whom he rather wanted to see dead than alive. In an oft-quoted passage he exclaimed: "And among all these gigantic battles, one gigantic monument, Stalingrad stands out—the battle of Stalingrad. Once upon a time this will have been the greatest of the heroic battles which will have ever happened in our history. . . . We know a mighty heroic epos of a battle without comparison; this is the 'Battle of the Nibelungs.' The Nibelungs as well stood in a hall of fire and flames and quenched their thirst with their own blood—but fought and fought to the last. This kind of battle is fought again today at Stalingrad, and every German, a thousand years hence, must speak the word with holy dread—and remember that this is where in the end Germany set the stamp for final victory."⁵² Victory had become an ambivalent thing. Was it that the military debacle at Stalingrad could yet be turned into a victorious outcome of the war? Or did victory consist in the projection that in a thousand years hence Stalingrad would still be

remembered? One thing was clear, only a battle to death (which is why Nazi propaganda wanted the soldiers in Stalingrad dead) would make those who fought there immortal.

Göring used the fiery end of the Nibelungs as myth-making prop in order to extol the virtue of heroic death. In its version of Stalingrad, the SS newspaper *Das Schwarze Korps* elaborated a variant of the same idea: "They came from the high mountains as well as from the wide, fertile plains of our country. Some [came] with a poor background [*Lebensgrund*], others with a rich inheritance. Some of them were dreamers whose life was filled with the soft melodies of a flute, while others were adventurers [*Stürmende*] who were on the look-out for the grand vistas life had to offer. From their visions of life they passed on to present another image that shows us their faces emerging from the bloody mist of Stalingrad. Their passage is like the path into a land from which there is no return. This is their call: that we all proceed into the land in which they dwell."⁵³ The "sacrifice" of those who had died obligated the survivors to fight to the death as well. Sacrifice always entails an act of exchange: you give a gift in order for the gods to give in return. You give your life or that of your substitute, the victim, in order to renew life. This is the order of sacrifice.⁵⁴ But in the catastrophic version of the SS "sacrifice" obligated the living to die. What the SS sold as "sacrifice" was, in fact, a curse. The dead had come to rule the living. "We cannot even imagine today the powers which the dead possess over the living," extolled Goebbels in December, 1942.⁵⁵

Goebbels and Hitler deliberately prepared for death—their own and that of the nation—on the funeral pyre made of the ruins of their imperial dreams. Their strategy of mobilization and ideologization during the second half of the war served the purpose of preparing the nation to die. Cinema served as one of the most prominent vehicles to express their fantasy of death and resurrection. Goebbels released his cinematic epos of resistance, *Kolberg*, in January, 1945. Ever since he conceived of the idea, in 1943, he made no bones about the fact that "his" film was not meant to substitute for heroic death, but it was meant to make it happen. The nearly two-year story of the production of the film and the wrangles about editing are still subject of some controversy, but they reveal Goebbels's intent. Basically, Goebbels complained in 1943 that the director, Veit Harlan, did not make enough of a Hollywood film, not enough "intimate scenes" like *Mrs. Minniver* (1942) in order to make the film enticing. When in December, 1944, the film was still not released, he sounded off that Harlan had further "coarsened the scenes of chaos and destruction" and as a result the

viewing public would refuse to see it “in the current situation.”⁵⁶ Goebbels complained that the images were too brutal. He wanted a sweeter, less violent movie in contradistinction to the starkly realist scenes that Harlan featured.⁵⁷ However, Goebbels wanted the sweetness in order to convince the Germans that they must die—and since they did not do it on their own, they had to be seduced. Because, in Goebbels’s view, collective death was the only chance to triumph despite defeat. The image of the funeral pyre, the ordered self-destruction, the incitement to fight, the shaming of all those who sought an exit—all this served one and only one purpose: to produce a memorial so that the living would renew the fight whenever they recalled the past.

The politics of the funeral pyre was a strategy not only to snatch immortality from defeat through a heroic gesture but also to incite the mobilization of generations to come. Collective-death-as-memorial was a theme that Goebbels planted systematically since late 1942, that is, coincidental with what Hitler perceived as the turning point of the war. His train of thought was as simple as it was poisonous. To die meant to be remembered. To be remembered, entailed being avenged. “Our consolation in this hour of remembrance is our unalterable faith, that one day the shining hour of victory will rise from the graves of our dead, our noble fallen. This victory will be crowned with the miraculous blessing of the sacrifice of these men and women, for whom we grieve today. . . . The heart of the dead is not silent, but continues to beat, especially in the youth of Germany, who cannot wait to avenge the great sacrifice of your loved ones with an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. The hour of revenge has begun! We must see inscribed over the caskets of our fallen the old call to action: Germany must live—even if we must die.”⁵⁸ The Nazis attempted to compel the nation to self-destruct so that future generations could not but revenge the dead. Lest we forget, the grim intent of this “sacrifice” was spelled out in Hitler’s testament: “Centuries will pass, but out of the ruins of our towns and of our art the hatred will be renewed against the people who in the last instance are responsible and whom we can thank for all of this: International Jewry and its auxiliaries.”⁵⁹

The Nazi leadership and their allies in the military and in the civilian population set out in 1944–45 to deliberately destroy Germany. By hook or crook, with terror and propaganda, they pushed Germans into death in the name of self-defense. They knew that they had lost the war and only a miracle could save them. But they were confident that they would win the battle over memory. They reasoned if only the sacrifice was great enough,

memory would return to it time and again—and thus give Nazi ideology new life. In 1945, the Nazi leadership, defeated militarily, opened up the battle over memory.

At this point it may seem outright frivolous to return to *Ariadne auf Naxos*. The entire reference appears to be miscast. How could one possibly frame a recounting of Germany's darkest hour with a piece of beautiful operatic fluff? Maybe, the Chicago Lyric Opera was right in eliding any references to the historical context of its performances of Strauß operas? I think not. But then, how could one bring together opera and mass death?

In the first instance, there is the peculiar coincidence of the debut of the opera and the most deadly battles of World War I, whether or not we think of these battles as the prelude to World War II.⁶⁰ Of course, this might just as well be an unfortunate coincidence, two artists getting caught with their prewar sexual fantasies of death and immortality in the midst of real war. It is, after all, the second debut of a revised score. Blissful death in sexual union had been the wet dream of the Wilhelmine age. Blissful death in war is also what patriotic organizations extolled as manly virtues. Much can be made of so much rapture in an otherwise grossly material age. But obviously such fantasies ran into the reality of mass death in World War I, and it seems only appropriate to think that these fantasies shattered. The opposite was the case. *Götterliebschaften*, the amorous affairs of gods, had never been more popular than they were in wartime. During World War II, and particularly after 1942, they became a veritable fad. The sexual union of mortals and gods, we are told, was a favorite motif for sculpture during the war years and particularly after 1942.⁶¹ The sculptures—they mostly portray Jupiter-as-swan entering a reclining Leda—are so striking because they leave nothing to the imagination. Hitler bought the by far most explicit one for his Obersalzberg domicile.⁶² As photographic replica, it was distributed widely in an edition printed for soldiers. Sexual union became a widely circulating and evidently quite popular metaphor for death and redemption. It came into vogue at the very moment when the war turned into a disaster, when Europe became a zone of death.

The second reason, why this opera and war go together has to do with the main element of the *Ariadne* theme, redemption. *Ariadne* pleaded with death to take her because death would redeem her life that had gone bad. In death she could return to her better and more authentic self. The dirt of real life becomes purified in the "realm of the dead."

*Du wirst mich befreien,
mich selber mir geben,
dies lastende Leben,
Du nimmst es von mir.
Ach Dich werd ich mich ganz verlieren,
bei Dir wird Ariadne sein*

[Thou shall liberate me
give me to myself;
this burden of being,
you take it from myself.
In thee I will lose myself,
with thee Ariadne will be.]

Ariadne dies and is redeemed. However, she meets death in the shape of a god, the still young and beautiful Bacchus, whom we must imagine quite the way the Austrian artillery soldier Fritz Lang sculpted him in late 1915 just after having been decorated for bravery (one of several decorations) and well on his way to being promoted to reserve officer for wartime valor. Lang created a youthful, wistfully smiling, and altogether contemplative young god not unlike the one Hofmannsthal had in mind.⁶³ The latter's Bacchus approached Naxos escaping the sorceress Circe on a nearby island who had failed to turn him into the proverbial swine. Gods are pure after all, whatever it is they might do. They cannot be turned into dirt and surely not into a pig—the quintessentially dirty animal in that it escaped classification in Mary Douglas's diction. Being pure, gods remain untouched by dirt and have the power to redeem the unclean. In the opera, Bacchus transports Ariadne into seventh heaven. Their union turns her into an immortal star. Both Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Richard Strauß were perfectly attuned to the sentiment of self-sacrifice, to the yearning for death as the un-mixing of messy lives, to the rapturous transcendence into purity and truth.

The dream of purity also haunted Nazi art, which is beset with neo-mythical images of redemption. The prize of redemption is death. Its goal is immortality, which only the pure can achieve. Its metaphor in art is sexual union. The difference is that, in Nazi wartime art, it is men who die to be saved. At the moment of utter catastrophe, of mass death and mass murder, Nazi art appealed to rapturous death as a redeeming sacrifice. Thus purified, the dead could become the source of eternal memory—and of revenge.

The Nazi leadership wagered that there was no escape from the sacrificial bargain. How could one? *Ariadne auf Naxos* is so telling a wartime

opera because it articulates the prevalent twentieth-century antidote to the reign of the dead. It is not that Hofmannsthal and Strauß approved of it, although they seemed to be tempted in 1916, but they made sure that the provocation could not be missed. The opera is actually an adaptation of Molière's *Bourgeois Gentilhomme*. It tells the story of a rich Viennese tycoon, the richest man in town who threw a dinner party with live entertainment, ending in fireworks. The idea was to stage both a tragedy (*Ariadne*) and a piece of comedic fluff (a *comedia del' arte*) after dinner and before the fireworks. However, because the guests lingered over dinner and the main act—the fireworks—could not be delayed, the wealthy patron decided to have tragedy and comedy all in one. This is how the tragic Ariadne meets the comic Zerbinetta—and with Zerbinetta meets the twentieth-century reality principle. Zerbinetta thinks nothing of "languishing in passionate longing and praying for death." She tells Ariadne, get real and get yourself a life. Don't curse men—just have more than one of them. To be sure, Hofmannsthal suggests that there is another, less frivolous, more womanly woman behind the mask of Zerbinetta. She gets her own aria, no less beautiful than that of Ariadne, in which she tells about the pains of love in the fast lane and her yearnings for a more authentic life. But before the womanly dialogue can come to an end, our *bourgeois gentilhomme* returns, and just when Bacchus embraces Ariadne—*Dein herrlich Wesen ganz zu fassen!//Die Glieder reg ich in göttlicher Lust*—the fireworks begin. Ariadne becomes the immortal star as the glimmer of a bourgeois firework. Would the "cult of distraction" fend off the ghosts?⁶⁴

The ancients saw it differently. In order to bring sacrifice to a closure, in order for the victim to be assuaged, it takes an act of catharsis, the Greek term for the ritual of atonement. Without catharsis, sacrifice, however bountiful, is cursed. Instead of protecting home and hearth, it makes the sacrificer forever homeless. The story of Cain (and for that matter Homer's tale of delayed homecoming after war, *The Odyssey*) still have to tell us one or the other thing about sacrifice and belonging: there is no homecoming without atonement and no memory of the dead without catharsis.

NOTES

1. Richard Strauss, *Ariadne auf Naxos: Oper in einem Aufzuge nebst einem Vorspiel von Hugo von Hofmannsthal*, op. 60 (1916; reprint, London: Fürstner, Boosey & Hawkes, 1943).

2. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London and New York: Ark Paperbacks, 1966), 2.

3. *Ibid.*, 4.

4. Andrea Theresia Schwaiger, "Weibliche Bestformen: Das Bild der Frau in der NS-Malerei," in *Kunst und Diktatur: Architektur, Bildhauerei und Malerei in Österreich Deutschland, Italien und der Sowjetunion 1922–1956*, ed. Jan Tabor (Baden/Austria: Verlag Grasl, 1994), 2:550–53, here page 553.

5. *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Stagebill, 44th International Season: Lyric Opera of Chicago, 1998–99.

6. Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst (NGBK) ed., *Inszenierung der Macht: Ästhetische Faszination im Faschismus* (Berlin: Dirk Nishen Verlag, 1987) started an ongoing debate on the subject.

7. *Cappriccio*, Stagebill, 40th International Season: Lyric Opera of Chicago, 1994–95.

8. *Kriegstagebuch des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht (Wehrmachtführungsstab), Studienausgabe* (hereafter *KTB*), vol. IV/8, ed. Percy Ernst Schramm (Hersching: Manfred Pawlak, 1982), (May 15, 1945), 1503.

9. Alfred Jodl, *Der Einfluß Hitlers auf die Kriegführung (Eine skizzenhafte Betrachtung Hitlers als Stratege)*, *KTB* IV/8, 1721.

10. Bernd Wegner, "Hitler, der Zweite Weltkrieg und die Choreographie des Untergangs," in *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* (forthcoming).

11. John Ellis, *World War II: A Statistical Survey: The Essential Facts and Figures for all the Combatants* (New York: Facts on File, 1993) is a good overview. I would debate that the argument about increased German fighting power can be maintained, even if one considers "effective strengths." It should be clear, though, that the difference between German and Allied fighting power grew even faster.

12. Manpower, of course, is not identical with actual fighting power; the latter is measured by the ability to replace casualties at the front. For one thing, soldiers are not trained overnight and, for another, key age groups suffer incommensurately higher casualties. Hence, there is a continuous complaint over understaffed and, indeed, depleted units, while the number of men in the armed forces actually increases. Also, the men who were drafted in the second half of the war did not or were unable to muster the same kind of fighting spirit as the front soldiers during the first half of the war—at least, this is the way the military command assessed their troops.

13. *Statistisches Jahrbuch für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, ed. Statistisches Bundesamt (Stuttgart and Mainz, 1960), 78.

14. Rüdiger Overmans, *Deutsche militärische Verluste im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1999), 238–39.

15. Olaf Groehler, *Bombenkrieg gegen Deutschland* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1990).

16. Rüdiger Overmans, "Die Toten des zweiten Weltkriegs in Deutschland: Bilanz der Forschung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Wehrmacht- und Vertreibungsverluste" in *Der Zweite Weltkrieg: Analysen, Grundzüge, Forschungsbilanz*, ed. Wolfgang Michalka (Munich and Zurich: Piper, 1989), 858–73; Rüdiger Overmans, "Personelle Verlust der deutschen Bevölkerung durch Flucht und Vertreibung," *Dzieje Najnowszye Rocznik* 24.2 (1994): 51–65.

17. Helke Sander and Barbara Johr, *Befreier und Befreite: Krieg, Vergewaltigungen, Kinder* (Munich: Verlag Antje Kunstmann, 1993).

18. Michael Ellman and S. Maksudov, "Soviet Deaths in the Great Patriotic War: A Note," *Europe-Asia Studies* 46.4 (1994): 671–80.

19. Col. Gen. G. F. Krivosheev, *Soviet Casualties and Combat Losses in the Twentieth Century*. trans. L. Leventhal (London: Greenhill, 1997), 94–99.
20. U.S. Adjutant General's Office, *Army Battle Casualties and Non-Battle Deaths in World War II: Final Report* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Adjutant General, 1953), 5–6, 32–33.
21. Ellman and Maksudov, "Soviet Deaths," 671–74.
22. Christian Gerlach, *Kalkulierte Morde: Die deutsche Wirtschafts- und Vernichtungspolitik in Weissrussland 1941 bis 1944* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999).
23. Manfred Messerschmidt and Fritz Wüllner, *Die Wehrmachtjustiz im Dienste des Nationalsozialismus: Zerstörung einer Legende* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1987).
24. On the following, see Wolfgang Benz, ed., *Dimensionen des Völkermords: Die Zahl der jüdischen Opfer des Nationalsozialismus* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1991).
25. Günter Saathoff, Franz Dillmann, and Manfred Messerschmidt, *Opfer der NS-Militärjustiz: zur Notwendigkeit der Rehabilitierung und Entschädigung* (Cologne: Bundesverband Information & Beratung für NS-Verfolgte, 1994).
26. Omer Bartov, *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis, and War in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).
27. Hans Mommsen, "Die Rückkehr zu den Ursprüngen: Betrachtungen zur inneren Auflösung des Dritten Reiches nach der Niederlage von Stalingrad," in *Geschichte und Emanzipation: Festschrift für Reinhard Rürup*, ed. Michael Grüttner et al. (Frankfurt/M and New York: Campus Verlag, 1999), 418–34.
28. Marlis Steinert, *Hitler's War and the Germans: Public Mood and Attitude during the Second World War*, trans. Thomas E. J. de Witt (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1977).
29. Ian Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political Dissent in the Third Reich: Bavaria 1933–1945* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984).
30. See Walter Kempowski, *Das Echolot: Ein kollektives Tagebuch, Januar und Februar 1943* (Munich: A. Knaus, 1993) and Walter Kempowski and Dirk Hempel, *Das Echolot: Fuga furiosa. Ein kollektives Tagebuch, Winter 1945* (Munich: A. Knaus, 1999).
31. One might add that exchange as the foundation of sacrifice is well known from all manner of theory on "sacrifice." There is nothing unusual about it.
32. Susanne zur Nieden, *Alltag im Ausnahmezustand: Frauentagebücher im zerstörten Deutschland, 1943 bis 1945* (Berlin: Orlanda Frauenverlag, 1993).
33. Susanne zur Nieden, "Chronistinnen des Krieges: Frauentagebücher im zweiten Weltkrieg," in *Ende des Dritten Reiches—Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges: Eine perspektivische Rückschau*, ed. Hans-Erich Volkmann (Munich and Zurich: Piper, 1995), 835–60.
34. *Ibid.*, 848–49.
35. Walther Hubatsch, *Hitlers Weisungen für die Kriegführung, 1939–1945. Dokumente des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht* (Frankfurt/M: Bernard & Graefe, 1962), 311 (Hitler's Weisung of 15 April 1945).
36. Joseph Goebbels, *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels: sämtliche Fragmente, 15 vols.*, ed. Elke Fröhlich (Munich and New York: K.G. Saur, 1987), II/7: 454.
37. The weekly editorial of *Das Reich*, 2 January 1944, quoted in Jay W. Baird, *To Die for Germany: Heroes in the Nazi Pantheon* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 237.
38. Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, vol. 1: *Women, Floods, Bodies, History*, trans. Stephen Conway (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).
39. *KTB IV/8*, p. 1712–13, n.1.

40. Hellmuth Petriconi, *Das Reich des Untergangs: Bemerkungen über ein mythologisches Thema* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1958).
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43. *Ibid.*
44. Heinrich von Kleist, "Die Hermannsschlacht: Ein Drama," in *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe*, vol. 1., ed. Heinrich von Kleist (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983), 533–628, here page 628.
45. Jan Philipp Reemtsma, "Blutiger Boden: Streifzug durch ein Textgelände." *Mittelweg* 368, no. 3 (1999): 3–48.
46. *KTB*, IV/8, p. 1562 (*Gauleiter* talk).
47. For a discussion of this phenomenon, see Detlev Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life*, trans. Richard Deveson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).
48. *Ibid.*
49. International Military Tribunal, *Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal, Nuremberg: 14 November 1945–1 October 1946*. Vol. 38. Nuremberg: [s.n.] 1947ff, Dok 311-L, 36–39.
50. Wegner, "Hitler, der Zweite Weltkrieg und die Choreographie des Untergangs."
51. Jürgen Förster, ed., *Stalingrad. Ereignis, Wirkung, Symbol* (Munich: Piper, 1992); Antony Beevor, *Stalingrad: The Fateful Siege: 1942–1943* (New York and London: Penguin Books, 1998).
52. Peter Krüger, "Etzels Halle und Stalingrad: Die Rede Görings vom 30.1.1943," in *Die Nibelungen: Ein deutscher Wahn, ein deutscher Alptraum*, ed. Joachim Heinze and Anneliese Waldschmidt (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1991), 151–90, here 180.
53. Michael Kumpfmüller, *Die Schlacht von Stalingrad: Metamorphosen eines deutschen Mythos* (Munich: W. Fink Verlag, 1995), 71.
54. René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).
55. Sabine Behrenbeck, *Der Kult um die toten Helden: Nationalsozialistische Mythen, Riten und Symbole 1923 bis 1945* (Vierow bei Greifswald: SH-Verlag, 1996), 530.
56. David Culbert, "Kolberg (Germany, 1945): The Goebbels Diaries and Poland's Kolobrzeg Today," in *World War II, Film, and History*, ed. John Whiteclay Chambers II and David Culbert (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 67–77, here page 72.
57. Peter Paret, "Kolberg (Germany, 1945): As Historical Film and Historical Document," in *World War II, Film, and History*, 47–66.
58. Baird, *To Die for Germany*, 240.
59. Behrenbeck, *Der Kult um die toten Helden*, 587.
60. Omer Bartov, *Mirrors of Destruction: War, Genocide, and Modern Identity* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Daniel Pick, *War Machine: The Rationalization of Slaughter in the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).
61. Silke Wenk, "Götter-Lieben: Zur Repräsentation des NS-Staates in steinernen Bildern des Weiblichen," in *Frauen und Faschismus in Europa: Der faschistische Körper*, ed. Leonore Siegele-Wenschkewitz and Gerda Stuchlik (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus-Verlagsgesellschaft, 1990), 181–210.

62. Andrea Theresia Schwaiger, "Weibliche Bestformen: Das Bild der Frau in der NS-Malerei."

63. Jure Miku, *Fritz Lang: Skulpture/Sculpture/Culture* (Ljubljana: Slovenska Kinoteka, 2000).

64. As a point of departure for discussion, see Miriam Hansen, "'With Skin and Hair': Kracauer's Theory of Film, Marseille 1940," *Critical Inquiry* 19.3 (1993): 437-69.

5

Uli Linke

The Violence of Difference

Anti-Semitism and Misogyny

■ According to Michel Foucault, the thematic of blood, specifically a sanguine aesthetic of race, had its origin in a pre-modern age, in which the genealogical principle (with its emphasis on birthright, descent, and kin) had maintained the ancient forms of rank and privilege. In the twentieth century, as Foucault observed, the blood myth was disinterred to serve the political interests of a modern state apparatus: "Nazism was doubtless the most cunning [in its deployment] of the [old] fantasies of blood [and] power. A eugenic ordering of society, . . . in the guise of an unrestricted state control, was accompanied by the oneiric exaltation of a superior blood; the latter implied both the systematic genocide of others and the risk of exposing oneself to a total sacrifice."¹ While no longer endorsed as an official ideology after 1945, the blood mystique was often visibly inscribed on the historiographic surface of postwar Germany. Residing at the

margins of awareness, fantasies of blood were rendered visible in fragments, each appearing by itself.

How do we explain the persistence of a cultural imaginary saturated with memory templates of bloodshed and violence, which infiltrate everyday understandings of national belonging, body, and race? Seeing nationalism as a generalized condition of the modern political world, Liisa Malkki suggests that "the widely held commonsense assumptions linking people to place, and nation to territory, are not simply territorializing but deeply metaphysical."² This essay is a schematic exploration of further aspects of this metaphysics. I examine the ways in which specific national identities are dissociated from the fixities of place and geographical emplacement that are normally associated with the modern nation-state. The formation of German nationality is complicated by a corporeal imaginary: blood, bodies, genealogies. My intent is to show that the naturalizing of the links between people (the national community) and the state is routinely conceived in specifically organic metaphors. German images of "the national order of things" rest on metaphors of the human organism and the body.³ Among the potent metaphors for the national community is blood.⁴ Nationality is imagined as "the flow of blood," a unity of substance.⁵ Such metaphors are thought to "denote something to which one is naturally tied."⁶

Much recent work in anthropology and related fields has focused on the process by which such collective representations are constructed and maintained by states and national elites.⁷ Here I focus on powerful metaphoric practices in everyday life, and I examine how media discourse and political language are deployed to understand and act on the aberrant boundary conditions of blood and nationhood in postwar Germany. I examine the location of violence in German political culture and inquire how subaltern bodies, as racial constructs and potential sites of domination, are imagined in public discourse. My aim is to shed light on postwar Germany, where the feminized body of the outsider (foreigner, refugee, Other) has been reclaimed as a signifier of race and contagion; where violence defines a new corporeal topography, linked to the murderous elimination of refugees and immigrants; where exterminatory discourses have once again begun to colonize the national imaginary; where ordinary citizens with divergent political beliefs participate in the reproduction of cultural violence; and where notions of racial alterity and gendered difference are publicly constructed through iconographic images of blood and liquidation.⁸

The cultural premises which structure the historic significance of blood are grounded in schematic images of the volatile body: both as embodied subjectivity and corporeal projection, the body is perceived as perpetually threatened by contagion. In the texts I examine, these visions are rendered tangible through metaphors of blood. Blood appears as an organizing metaphor in allegories of the European male body; the virile (lifegiving) body of mythical protagonists; the medieval body of Christ in Central Europe; the medicalized (purged) body of men in early modern Germany; the twentieth-century fascist body with its militarization of male flesh; and the citizen's body in postwar Germany with its nationalistic emphasis on interiority, closure, and cleanliness. This type of body, which essentializes masculinist corporeality, stands opposed to the liquid female body with its imputed contaminating influences. This imagined feminine threat appears in early European texts in menstrual metaphors; in mythical renderings of women's bleeding bodies; in the medieval and modern German visions of Jewish bodies; and in the symbolization of the immigrant body in contemporary Germany, defined by abject qualities of wetness, liquidity, and dirt.

I have traced elsewhere the transformation of these conceptual models from antiquity through modern times, thus illuminating the historical emergence of European (and specifically German) ideas about racial purity and contamination.⁹ Here I ask how images of gendered violence and violence toward women are reproduced in the German imagination as central icons of a symbolic universe of nationhood that works to suppress difference. German racial ideologies are not just radical interpretations of the Other. They are connected to male repulsion toward and dominance of women through metaphors relating to blood imagery. Working historically, I document blood and liquidation imagery in the development of anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish violence, linking images of menstruation to the emasculating potential bound up with female sexuality—which then become the legitimating basis for violence against women and against all things female in modern Germany. My work suggests that metaphors of liquidity also apply to the contemporary public discussion of immigration, thus opening up the potential for “othering” non-Germans once again. In this essay, I link the “rationality” of ordinary political discourse on national immigration policy to the “irrationality” of a racist and misogynous discourse, suggesting that they are cut from the same cloth. I propose that modern forms of violence are engendered through regimes of representation that are to some extent mimetic, a

source of self-formation, both within the historical unconscious and the fabric of the social world.

I begin by drawing attention to the racist biomedical visions of blood that emerged under fascism. The representational violence of such blood imagery, which entered the popular imagination through political propaganda, emerged as a prelude to racial liquidation. Genealogies of blood were medicalized, conceived as sources of contamination that needed to be expunged through violent bloodletting. Documenting cultural continuities after 1945, I explore the implications of a racialist politics of blood for the German nation-building process in the postwar period. I analyze more closely the linkages of blood to gendered forms of violence, focusing on the central role of masculinity and militarism for a German nationalist imaginary. Images of women, blood, and contagion became fused in the fascist visions of the corporeality of German nationhood. I explore the metaphorical extensions of a "symbolics of blood" in postwar German culture, and I show how easily a misogynist militarism is reconfigured to (re)produce a violent body politic that legitimates the brutalization of immigrants and refugees. Throughout, I emphasize the interplay of race and gender against the background of medical models, documenting how fears of natural disasters (women, Jews, refugees) and medical pathologies like dirt and infection (that is, bodily infestations) are continuously recycled to reinforce a racialist postmodern.

Within this symbolic universe, however, the ethnicization of undesirable Others by blood and dirt occurs simultaneously with the ethnicization of German nationals: the mythographies of exclusion work concurrently with an imaginary of inclusion; historical differences between peoples are unremembered and supplanted by ethno-racial ones. In postwar Germany, the visions of a national interior are configured through icons of the body: the solid, the natural, the pure. While such corporal landscapes of nativity (and citizenship) are forged in the course of political battles over history and memory, genocide and victimhood, sacrifice and national belonging, the recuperation of the German body is synchronous with the racial logic of exclusion. The first part of this essay traces the symbolics of blood to a discourse of misogyny: feminization, liquidation, and the anti-immigrant imaginary. The second part is devoted to a complementary formation of postwar German national identity: embattled masculinity; public nudity; white bodies; and the heterodox imaginary of nature, nation, and nativity, which produces a masculine/normative corporeality of Germanness. The final section emphasizes the complex in-

terconnections: the phantasms of alterity and the difference (femininity, blood, carnality, dirt, hunger, deterioration) are staged against the mythographies of nationhood (masculinity/normativity, white skin, nudity, the sublime, clean, eternal) and both are synchronized in highly complicated ways.

The Symbolics of Blood

The production of death and the erasure of Jewish bodies were central to the fascist politics of race. The aim of genocide was to maintain the "health" of the German body politic by enforcing a strict regimen of "racial hygiene."¹⁰ German political mythography employed a model of race in which the images of difference were not visibly written on the skin but had rather to be carefully constructed in order to identify the Other.¹¹ The axiom for this construction of ideas of difference derived from a typology of blood. Race, disease, and infection were imagined through blood metaphors. Blood became a marker of pathological alterity, a signifier that linked race and difference.¹² The attempt to expunge the racial subaltern (specifically, Jewishness) was thus imagined as a multilayered discourse of "liquidation": death and the reduction to blood. Images of blood were invoked both through the genealogical ordering of society, in which blood functioned as a verbal signifier of descent and citizenship, and through the violence inflicted on undesirable bodies, thereby effecting the transfiguration of the linguistic construct "race" into its physical signs: blood, contagion, anatomy. Imagining racial differences through the blood motif became a prologue to extermination, effectively feeding the political rationalizations of death. I suspect that these visions of blood (much the same as the visions of fire and burning bodies) existed as a core fantasy of fascist violence—a way of publicly imagining (and visually anticipating) the dissolution of bodily reality, the termination of identity and difference in a river of blood: liquidation.

The construction of this idea of genocide, the very discourse of liquidation by blood, has analogues in the postwar German understanding of alterity, an understanding shaped by a deep-seated revulsion to racial difference and facilitated by a vocabulary of race that originated during the Nazi period. For instance, in fall, 1991, the prime minister of the state of Schleswig-Holstein, Björn Engholm, a liberal Social Democrat, referred to persons seeking political asylum in Germany as a threatening "counter race" (*Gegenrasse*) whose continued existence "had become a question of

survival for Germany."¹³ Around the same time, the mayor of Vilshofen, a member of the conservative Christian Democratic Party, announced his opposition to Germany's constitutional guarantee to protect political refugees: "Today we give the asylum-seekers bicycles, tomorrow our daughters."¹⁴ German politicians are surprisingly candid in their articulation of these ideas about the dangerous Other. A councilman from the city of Dormagen thus explained his position on German refugee politics in 1991: "Some people talk . . . about integration, others about amalgamation. I speak about the adulteration and filthy mishmashing of blood" (*Blutverpanschung und -vermischung*).¹⁵ In November, 1988, Bavaria's then minister of the interior, the conservative Christian Social Union member Edmund Stoiber, claimed that Germans were becoming "hybridized and racially infested" (*durchmischt und durchrasst*) by the influx of foreigners and those "not of the blood" (*blutsfremd*).¹⁶ In painting a picture of a "mongrelized society," Stoiber, who became Bavaria's head of state, not only naturalized but also sanctioned xenophobic tendencies as necessary for German ethnic well-being.¹⁷ Popular notions of "genetic identity" are here subsumed by fears of racial impurity. For Stoiber, the racial/blood purity of the German people is threatened by the mere presence of ethnically diverse groups. His assertions are deeply embedded in biological images of difference: blood and blood contamination. According to Stuttgart's former mayor Manfred Rommel, such notions of blood origins, that is, concerns about "where the blood comes from" (*woher das Blut kommt*), are at work in the determination of racial otherness in contemporary German popular culture.¹⁸

This vocabulary of blood as an index of difference and genealogical placement is used not only by political conservatives. Derived from a West German understanding of the past, the language of race appears in the public discourse of liberal politicians and, sometimes, even the more radical Left. At a January, 1989, working dinner with representatives of the major political parties in Berlin, Gabi Vonnekold, the evening's Green/Alternative spokesperson, declared that Germany's politics of repatriation (which actively encouraged the return-migration of ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe and elsewhere) were legitimately based on ideas of "blood right" (*Blutrecht*). Ethnic Germans, she asserted, were granted citizenship because of their "blood ties" (*Blutsbande*) to the German nation. Supporting similar statements made by the other politicians, Vonnekold argued that such verbal images had no racial connotations because they originated in the commonsense reality of kinship. She noted that it was

this meaning of "blood relatedness" or "kinship by blood" (*Blutsverwandtschaft*) that had been adopted as law by the postwar West German state. Several weeks later, after a successful election campaign for the Berlin Senate, a militant faction of the Green/Alternative party (*Gruppe Grüne Panther*) distanced itself from Germany's policy of repatriation. The practice was denounced in a public forum, however, without making the concepts of blood right and citizenship through blood a critical issue.¹⁹

In the German political imagination, cultural and ethno-national differences tend to be constructed as differences of blood. For instance, a commentary by Herbert Gruhl, one of the conservative founders of the Green Party, is suggestive of the habitual infusion of ethnicity and nationality with biological overtones. In Gruhl's opinion, most refugees are essentially or organically incompatible with Germans. In a 1990 interview, in which he outlined his differences with the Greens, Gruhl stated: "If one thinks ecologically, one must acknowledge that there are organic peoples, languages, and cultural communities. The Greens, on the one hand, consider all human beings in the world to be interchangeable, like numbers. That is unacceptable. It simply is not true that everyone is the same. If someone comes from India, South America or the GDR [East Germany], it makes a big difference. . . . It is, after all, most natural that one accepts those with whom one already shares a common historical fate and with whom one even has direct blood ties."²⁰

Apparently exempt from critical inquiry in political debates, the judicial field of German nationality seems to have rendered "normal" a modern conception of race: the citizenship law of the Federal Republic determines national membership through the idiom of descent, as expressed by the Latin term *jus sanguinis*, "power/law of blood." Enacted in 1913—and still in effect today—the German citizenship law permits, and even encourages, the nation's racial closure. German nationality is determined by an understanding of a community of descent, shaped by an "ethnocultural" or "ethnonational" perception of statehood. Deeply embedded in Germany's imperial history, the blood principle of citizenship is defined by racial premises, which were established at the turn of the century.²¹ Once inserted into the German legal system, the concept of the modern nation as a "reservoir of blood" was rendered unremarkable.²² Such a concept of nationality, which enunciates the proposition that citizens are interrelated by blood or should form a circle of extended kinship, promotes a logic of racial ethnicity.

How can immigrants become German citizens when nationality is

rooted in descent by blood? This question became a public issue in 1998, when the current leftist coalition government made a concerted effort to reform naturalization practices. Chancellor Schröder wanted "to create an open society, with flexible borders, to make Germans capable of joining the European Union."²³ The nation's racial closure was perceived as incompatible with the requirements of global economies, mobile populations, and supranational alliances. The attempt to reform German citizenship by eliminating the blood principle of nationality was unsuccessful. A subsequent proposal, introduced under the heading "dual citizenship for children," seemed more palatable, because it accentuated the foreignness of foreigners; binationality was to create a hyphenated identity for young immigrants by appending German citizenship to the one of foreign origin.²⁴ The proposal confirmed the privileged status of native-born Germans. As citizens by hereditary sanguinity, German nationals remained members of a racialized ethnic community, whereas immigrants (as transient bodies in political space) merely gained an identity supplement: citizenship by *ius soli* (territory/residence) can be read as a signifier of alterity, of displacement and uprootedness. The legal reform instituted a two-tiered, caste-like system of national belonging: one German, rooted in blood (natural, authentic, hereditary), the other foreign-German, rooted in space (artificial, inauthentic, unnatural). Given the underlying racial paradigm, it seemed only logical that the citizenship status of foreigners be temporary: in its current form, German nationality is revocable upon the child's entry into adulthood.

Liquidation: Regimes of Feminization

The German iconography of nationhood, defined by a symbolics of blood, has retained its association with sacrifice, violence, and racial contagion. In the German imaginary, the invocation of blood, whether in the context of genealogy or racial liquidation, presupposes an act of violent transformation. This violence is aimed at producing a particular condition of the racial body: its dissolution, liquification, and reduction to blood. Such a transformation of the body is probably intended as a form of cleansing, a sacrificial libation, connected to the expectation of a rebirth, the beginning of a new era without the threat of "blood contamination" (*Blutverschmutzung*).²⁵ Coordinating attitudes of violence with fears of pollution and dirt, the German discourse of death requires the transfiguration of racial Others into blood, an act of ritual purging.

In Germany's racialist mythography, the external production of blood takes place within a particular field of meaning. On the one hand, blood loss through violence is perceived as cleansing: a release, a sacrificial libation, which purges the body of ritual impurities. But blood effusion takes on sexual connotations whenever this image of the bleeding body is symbolically connected to the periodic emission of women's menstrual flow.²⁶ This analogic affinity of menstruation and blood spillage confirms the metaphorical linkage between "sexuality and those diverse forms of violence that invariably lead to bloodshed."²⁷ Masculinist ideology can thus reconfigure the flow of blood as a social threat, an attack on manhood and the national body politic. On the other hand, blood spilled by violence is read as a stigma, a red stain of contagion: it contaminates, inundates, and subsumes everything with which it comes in contact. This discourse of blood is formative within a particular regime of representation: "When violence is [unleashed], . . . blood appears everywhere—on the ground, underfoot, forming great pools. Its very fluidity gives form to the contagious nature of violence. Its presence proclaims murder and announces new upheavals to come. Blood stains everything it touches the color of violence and death."²⁸

The flow of blood thus visibly exposes or unmasks everything that is undesirably different—i.e., women and women-associated Others (for example, Jews, revolutionaries, homosexuals). Blood metaphors establish a "sanguine connection to sexuality, gender identity, and the biologization of the Jew."²⁹ Moreover, violent bloodshed creates an observable physical condition: liquidity, sexual contagion, and carnal femininity. The bleeding body (in much the same sense as the menstruating body) becomes a mark—a stigma—of femaleness, a (dangerous) liquid corporeality. The German discourse of liquidation (in both its genealogical and its violent forms) is thus integrated into a pattern of domination that transforms the racial Other into woman.

Imagining Jewish Bodies

The feminization of the racial subaltern, particularly the Jewish body, emerged as a construct of the European cultural and religious imagination. Assumptions that Jewish males menstruate, for instance, can be traced to medieval notions of difference that continued at least into the late nineteenth century.³⁰ Likewise, the existence of the presumed link between blood, ritual periodicity (or cyclicity), and Jewish sexuality has been

chronicled through centuries of European history, from medieval Christianity to twentieth-century Germany.³¹ Fears of sexual degeneracy and bleeding male bodies merged in the modern German mythographies of race: "Here it is necessary to point out that the stereotyped depiction of sexual 'degenerates' was transferred almost intact to the 'inferior races,' which inspired the same fears. These races, too, were said to display a lack of morality and a general absence of self-discipline. Blacks, and then Jews, were endowed with excessive sexuality, with a so-called female sensuousness that transformed love into lust. They lacked all manliness. Jews as a group were said to exhibit female traits, just as homosexuals were generally considered effeminate."³² Furthermore, the development of modern scientific disciplines in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with their allegedly objective epistemic discourses, provided these constructions of difference with a new form of legitimation. The emergent sciences offered a grammar of truth that treated the reproductive system and the female body as a language through which difference could be expressed as "a fact of nature."³³ This emphasis on reproduction led to representations of the "abnormal" that were increasingly biologized. Femaleness and difference were now defined by a medical model.³⁴ Through the ascription of disease and pathology, the female body became a repository of sexual identity (perversion) and race (contagion).

The medical model, which defined Germany's nationalist agenda in the early twentieth century, was anchored in the complementary discourse of descent and reproduction; blood was the common icon. Encoded with qualities characteristic of the ideological construct "woman," blood became the iconic marker of pathological difference, a signifier of sexual disease and racial contagion.³⁵ These fantastic images found political expression in the 1930s, when the promotion of glorified hypermasculine values, and an emphasis on proficiency in physically aggressive activities like sports and warfare, were intertwined with a fear of pollution from "bad" blood. In the late 1930s, German fascism became obsessively concerned with controlling both women and reproduction. Politically effective images of difference were drawn from fantastic fabrications about female carnality and visions of the destructive power of the vulva and its fluids. Society's energies were subsequently directed inward toward "containing" the penetration of the masculine (political) body by racial impurities. The eradication of racial difference, through the evisceration of the feminized Jews, thus emerged as a central template of violence in Nazi Germany.

Racializing Female Bodies

The violent obsession with the female body, and its reduction to blood, is documented in Klaus Theweleit's *Male Fantasies* (1987–89). Mapping the collective unconscious of the proto-fascist German warrior during and after the First World War, Theweleit examines motivations for terror against women and the linkages between racial hatred and male power. Theweleit focuses on the fantasies of a particular group of men: members and officers of the *Freikorps*, the private, mercenary armies that fought the revolutionary German working class in the years immediately after World War I. In several cases, these men emerged as key functionaries in the Third Reich. Indeed, Rudolf Höss, a former *Freikorps* officer and influential Nazi, became commandant of Auschwitz.

The excavation of *Freikorps* literary remains, of novels, letters, and autobiographies, uncovered the terrifying visions of these proto-fascists, visions of hatred and fear in which women were reduced to a series of blood images: the red tide, the red flow, a sea of blood. Women, perceived as sources of contagion, were equated with dirt, pits of muck, effluvia. The nature of femaleness and womanhood, envisioned in terms of bodily emissions or secretions (blood, mucus, excrement), was experienced as menacing. The *Freikorps* soldiers hated women, specifically women's bodies and sexuality. Their hatred surfaced in an endless series of liquid images, in which women were associated with everything that threatened to flood or deluge the boundaries of manhood. It was a dread, ultimately, of dissolution, of being swallowed, annihilated.

Fascist soldiers always depicted women and female bodies through a lens of violence. The woman is reduced to a pulp: a shapeless, bloody mass, trampled flesh. This same imagery appears in narrative descriptions of women's bodily remains: a blood-drenched mass, naked and cut to pieces, a pulp of blood and excrement. The soldiers' reduction of the murdered woman to a "reddish slush" meant that the victim had lost her outlines: her solid body, her identity. Her wounds were no longer discrete entities nor was the body to which these wounds belonged. Fascist violence was preoccupied with this dissolution of the body and of the woman as bodily entity. The soldiers' attacks fit into a series of repeated attempts at exposing the woman in the body: through the infliction of wounds (i.e., bleeding vagina) and by the production of blood (i.e., the menstrual flow). In the violent imagination of the fascist soldiers, women's bodies had to be transfigured into a deluge of blood, causing total obliteration.

The *Freikorps* soldiers' fear of and revulsion toward women manifests itself in the incessant invocation of metaphors of an engulfing fluid or flood, the terrifying deluge. Fearing that which they both see and expose (the erotic female Other), the men want to be freed from all that could be identified with women's bodies: liquidity, emotional warmth, sensuality. Theweleit believes that this desire gave rise to a fascist body politic that tried to elude and repel feminization. The hardened male body with its stiff military pose became the armor men used to protect their inner selves. Repulsed by their own corporeality, the *Freikorps* soldiers attempted to subdue and repress the woman within: it was she, or what she stood for, that constituted the most radical threat to the men's own integrity. "[T]he most urgent task of the man of steel [was] to pursue, to dam in and to subdue any force that threaten[ed] to transform him back into the horribly disorganized jumble of flesh, hair, skin, bones, intestines, and feelings that call[ed] itself human."³⁶ The soldiers' repudiations of their own bodies and of femininity became a psychic compulsion that equated masculinity with hardness, self-denial, and violent destruction.

The armored organization of the male self depended on the use of violence to maintain its integrity. In the act of killing, the corporal boundaries of the victims were transgressed while the inner cohesion of the male self remained intact: by penetrating and dismembering women's bodies, the men's own bodies became armored and whole; by liquefying female bodies, theirs become hard. The men's destructive impulse derived from their inability to feel or sustain any sense of bodily boundaries without inflicting violence. The symbolic construction of the dangerous female Other, and her eventual obliteration, served as a mechanism of self-cohesion. Threatened by imaginary "floods," "torrents," and "raging waters," the men stood firm against these onslaughts of surging womanhood. Hardened by military procedures, the male body was transformed into a machine, the man of steel.

To the *Freikorps* soldier, communists, like individual women, were an undifferentiated force that sought to engulf: "a sea of blood, a flood, a swamp, a tide, a threat that came in waves."³⁷ His fear that contact with women would make him cease to exist as a discrete entity was here reproduced as a fear of being inundated, flushed away, dissolved. The dread of women, which existed at the core of the fascist movement, was thereby linked to anti-communism as well as race hatred. "All that [was] rich and various [had to] be smoothed over (to become like the blank facades of architecture); all that [was] wet and luscious [had to] be dammed up and

contained; all that [was] 'exotic' (dark, Jewish) [had to] be eliminated."³⁸ In the end, it was the men's battle against feminization that led to the use of violence, and ultimately murder.

Theweleit's work suggests that the militarization of German society was accomplished by incorporating, and often intensifying, existing notions of misogynist masculinity. Fascist soldiers, who used terror against women as a strategy of war, were dependent on peacetime constructions of society and gender.³⁹ German fascism created a culture of terror by accentuating the everyday forms of violence against women, privileging those cultural images of masculinity and manhood that were driven by a desire for bloodshed: the brutalization of woman, her reduction to a bloody mass, was fundamental to the making of the German fascist. Using the soldiers' revulsion toward women as a starting point, Theweleit's work uncovered what Cynthia Enloe has subsequently referred to as the "military's heavy reliance not just on men as soldiers, but on misogynist forms of masculinist soldiering."⁴⁰ In fascist Germany, as in other modern nation-states, military violence, militarization, and everyday cultural practices shared resonances that mutually reinforced these masculinist visions of power.⁴¹ Sexual violence and female mutilation were fundamental to fascist militarism because such physicality, the imagery of broken bodies, was also a cultural phenomenon. Blood (bleeding corpses, menstrual flows, a threatening *fe/maelstrom*) existed as a dominant metaphor for the German body politic.

The Threat of Foreign Bodies: Blood, Flood, Contagion

Soon after 1945, the spatial proximity and mingling of racialized bodies emerged again as an unresolvable dilemma. In the postwar period, during the era of economic reconstruction, German cultural politics continued to perpetuate racial prejudice, invariably keeping the Other at a distance, "under control"—a recipe for psychological terror. Relations between Germans and racial Others were again socially and legally regulated.⁴² Economically, foreign workers and immigrants were needed, even as politically the German state sought to eliminate them. Feeding on images of otherness and difference and ultimately taking control of them, German capitalist culture nourished these symbolic constructions for its own ends. The postwar German state thus depended on racial otherness as an ideological and structural phenomenon that it simultaneously sought to exploit and destroy.

Beginning in the 1960s, German industry attempted to alleviate its temporary labor shortages by recruiting foreign workers. These migrant laborers (brought from southern Europe and its immediate periphery) were hired on short-term contracts. They were employed in the service sector or in production, there taking on the unskilled, manual, and often most dangerous jobs.⁴³ "Initially called *Fremdarbeiter*, foreign workers, in a carry-over from the forced laborers imported during the Third Reich, they were quickly rechristened *Gastarbeiter*, 'guestworkers.' [Most] Germans believed that these guests, who were considered *Ausländer*, foreigners, would eventually return to [their home] countries."⁴⁴ Inserted into the capitalist economy, migrant workers were soon reduced to the function of surplus labor. After the onset of the energy crisis in 1973 and a deepening economic recession, West Germany closed its borders to foreign workers, initiated elaborate (and costly) programs of repatriation, and tightened its laws concerning refugee and immigration rights. This period of state repression and racial tension persisted through the 1980s.

Germany's closure of national boundaries was complicated by a legal system that defined political asylum as a basic human right. In deference to the terror and dislocations caused by the war, fascism, and the concentration camps, the West German state had made the protection of refugees an integral part of its judicial foundation. This foundation, the very basis of postwar German state authority, was deemed threatened, attacked "at its core," in the early 1980s, when German officials observed a sudden increase in refugees from Africa and Asia who, as victims of political persecution, were seeking asylum in Germany.⁴⁵ Administration officials interpreted this influx of refugees as a direct result of attempts by foreigners to circumvent the state's increasingly restrictive immigration policies.

In discussing the influx of foreign peoples, German politicians began to conjure images of an invasive "flood" of bodies, a "rising tide" that threatened to inundate the country. "A hundred-thousand, perhaps more, foreigners are expected to enter the Federal Republic this year and appeal to the constitution which promises asylum for victims of political persecution. . . . [T]his stream of foreigners pouring into Germany is regarded as a wrong. Politicians acknowledge this by talking about dams that should be raised against the 'flood of asylum-seekers'."⁴⁶ German politicians envisioned the threat of alien bodies as a liquid mass—inundating, flooding, surging. Their terror of and revulsion toward this liquid Other continued to find tangible expression in the compulsive use of metaphors that described political events as natural processes.

By the early 1980s, refugees were thus reconfigured as a menace, a "deluge" of unimaginable proportions: "The stream of asylum-seekers [is] pouring in," a "human flood";⁴⁷ a "rapidly rising stream of foreigners,"⁴⁸ which "pours into the Federal Republic";⁴⁹ the "river rose to nearly fifty thousand immigrants";⁵⁰ "West Germany [is] inundated by a wave of foreigners";⁵¹ a "torrent," a "river";⁵² a "deluge," "streaming into the country."⁵³ There is "wide-spread uneasiness about the foreign flood" in Germany;⁵⁴ "the flow of refugees";⁵⁵ the "rising tide," the "wave," the "in-pouring of foreigners";⁵⁶ "the stream of asylum seekers into the Federal Republic."⁵⁷ It is an "untamed stream";⁵⁸ a "dangerous surge of foreigners";⁵⁹ a "fearsome flood."⁶⁰

These same images of Germany's inundation by asylum seekers reappeared in 1990 after unification. Germans began to "fantasize about an invasion by millions, the flood of refugees, that threatened to subsume them."⁶¹ These signifiers functioned to prefigure public images of refugees as a negative, dangerous presence. In public speech, discussions about asylum seekers were "often coupled with nouns denoting some natural and/or uncontained disaster: flood (*Flut*), river (*Strom*), mass (*Masse*)."⁶² The natural energy of this torrential flow was encoded as "foreign"/"Other," untamed, dangerous, and destructive. Its manifestations inspired terror as well as repugnance. Mighty streams were supposedly pouring out over Germany, transforming it on contact, leaving it substantially altered.⁶³ "Does the Federal Republic have the strength to cope with the so-called 'economic refugees' who are inundating the country? At the moment, these problems are still manageable. But how will it be in three, four years, if the river pouring into Germany remains constant or becomes even greater?"⁶⁴ The terror of the external invasion was combined with a fear of dissolution. Contact with the "flood" engendered fears of death; it posed a threat to the nation's bodily integrity.

Within this roaring cauldron, the politicians' own bodies appeared—struggling to contain the terrifying deluge—but also a larger, external body: the metropolis. The city was conceived as a human body (perhaps even a female body) inundated, depleted, weakened.

The rising stream of foreigners into the Federal Republic is taking on precarious forms. Many cities are literally flooded by the refugees. . . . The German council of mayors urged the Federal Minister of the Interior, Gerhard Baum, to correct the processing of refugees. If it proved impossible to dam the flood, then the bearers

of public responsibility at all levels might no longer retain control of the events [*Herr des Geschehens bleiben*].⁶⁵

Metropolitan centers like Stuttgart, Frankfurt or Berlin no longer have the strength to handle the surging flood of asylum seekers. . . . The Eritreans have reduced the city of Leinfelden-Echterdingen to such a state of desperation that the Lord Mayor threatened to issue a temporary decree of emergency unless the government agreed to move the Eritreans out into other communities, beyond the inundated city: "If the state does not take charge of a larger proportion of the refugees, then emergency in-take camps must be constructed in order to retain control of the human flood [*der Menschenflut Herr zu werden*]."⁶⁶

The flood metaphor is abstract enough to allow processes of extreme diversity to be subsumed under its image. Their common linkage is the politicians' fear of transgression, which threatens to destroy the cohesion of the nation, cities, and the German body. The symbolism of the foreign "flow" provokes (or agitates) particular racial and historical memories: it "unleashes" something that has been forbidden.

Germany's political men demanded that "something be done" about the "mighty stream": they wanted to stop the flood, "dam up" and "contain" the flow, "stem the tide," "halt" or better yet, "reverse the flow" of immigrants.⁶⁷ Gerhard Baum, federal minister of the interior, wanted "to dam up the tide of refugees with his emergency program."⁶⁸ Former chancellor Helmut Schmidt was quoted as wanting "to dam and contain the rising stream of foreigners by changing the constitutional right of political asylum."⁶⁹ Herbert Ehrenberg, minister of labor, apparently intended "to stop the Turkish invasion," the "surge of foreigners"; while the German government promoted such efforts as a form of "self-defense" (*Notwehr*).⁷⁰

The spatial proximity of refugees has inspired growing fears of "overforeignization" (*Überfremdung*).⁷¹ The term, conjuring an undesirable transgression of race, refers to the estrangement of a people from their cultural or genetic heritage through the superimposition, a "grafting on," of alien bodies. "The refugees were soon so numerous," according to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, "that for every village dweller came one asylum seeker" (*so daß auf einen Dorfbewohner ein Asylsuchender kam*).⁷² Germany was, it continued, "'overpopulated' and 'racially inundated' by foreigners" (*von Ausländern übervölkert*).⁷³ Such visions articulate a fear of "racial inundation" that appears to be resilient, persisting

after 1990.⁷⁴ Frankfurt city councilman Daniel Cohn-Bendit, a prominent member of the leftist Green Party, received hate-mail letters that accused him of being an "enemy of the German people" because he did nothing to prevent "the over foreignization" (*Überfremdung*).⁷⁵ By contrast, the conservative Steffen Heitmann, who had declared his candidacy for the German presidency in 1993, promised to "protect the nation from racial superimposition by foreigners" (*Überfremdung*).⁷⁶ In southern Germany, the Christian Social Union party (CSU) renewed its commitment to transform the German fear of "over-foreignization" into a political platform. The former head of the same party, Theo Waigel, affirmed that the "threat of foreign inundation" would become a central campaign issue in the forthcoming election.⁷⁷

These anguished visions of the foreign "flood" are governed by recurrent images of weakness, disorder, and loss of control. Germany's politicians here articulate their fears of extinction through images of emasculation and impotence. Control of the foreign "invasion" is construed as an assertion and display of manhood: to "remain a man/master/ruler over the events" (*Herr des Geschehens bleiben*), "to become the man/lord of the human flood" (*der Menschenflut Herr werden*). The common German title *Herr* means both "man" and "master," in the sense of "lord," "ruler," "head." The plural form of this term is linked to expressions of racial superiority; e.g., German *Herrenrasse* means "master race." It refers (quite literally) to a "select breed of men." In the German imaginary, the subduction of the foreign flow, its containment and annihilation, is perceived not only as a rightful assertion of masculinity but also as an act of racial domination.

Defined as a threat against the German state, the containment of refugees was thought to require "drastic measures": the construction of "camps for foreigners" (*Ausländerlager*), "residency camps" (*Wohnlager*), "emergency in-take camps" (*Notauffanglager*), "the setup of mass camps" (*Massenlager*), "federal internment camps" (*Bundessammelager*), "internment" or "concentration" camps (*Sammellager*), that is, the "placement [of refugees] in fenced barracks with armed guards."⁷⁸ The language we encounter in these political visions curiously resembles that of the *Freikorps* soldiers: perceived reality is annihilated and reconstituted in order to preserve an ideational representation and to "see" reality in terms of an existing paradigm. The hated foreign Other is feminized by reduction to a series of liquid images: a "flood," a "tide," a "deluge," a "dangerous flow" of bodies. The images that vivify these fantasies of extinction

are few and almost always the same ones. The racial subaltern is equated with the destructive potential of "woman" and is reduced to her bodily functions, a beast of consumption capable of producing much waste and devastation.

German politicians communicate the "feminine" threat through the affective intensity with which they talk about the imminent catastrophe: the coming of the racial Other who seeks to inundate, engulf, swallow. Like their fascist counterparts, they feel threatened by the "natural" manifestations of devouring "femininity," her flooding, surging, streaming. The refugees, according to media depictions, exhibit signs of unrepressed (and uncontrolled) consumption: the nation has been "ravaged" by a wave of foreigners that was "hungry" for it.

The source of this dangerous (all-consuming) torrent can thus be localized more specifically. It seems to flow from inside those foreign bodies: their yearnings, their wants, and their insatiable "hunger" for a better life. "There is the growing realization among politicians that the rising stream of refugees . . . is driven by the desire to improve their standard of living . . . to find in the Federal Republic of Germany the promised land: work, high salaries, security, generous financial support, and carefree leisure."⁷⁹ This image of the flood represents a maelstrom of terrifying desires: the emotional, the irrational, the uncontrollable, and the female.⁸⁰ Its significance lies in its ability to convincingly displace the exaggerated desire for consumption on a fantastic (and nightmarish) manifestation.

Refugees, as depicted by the German media, possess a voracious appetite for wealth, money, and status, and an unquenchable craving for power and Western affluence. German image makers presume that the foreign "flood" is solely driven by economic interests: "to find work or to receive social welfare payments"; to "open the flood-gate to the land of economic miracles," to enter "the promised land"; to find an "economic paradise."⁸¹ This process of inverse projection transforms the German nation into "the object of longing by millions of people."⁸² Reconfigured by alien desire, the German nation is equated with the sensual and the feminine. Picturing the nation as "female" makes it seem so much more vulnerable to conquest: "[M]any of those, who set out from far-away lands, are economic refugees, enticed in their home countries by the reputation of the Federal Republic as an island of the blessed, where one can easily gain a foothold."⁸³

Shaped by these visions of foreign desire, the German nation is consistently described as "a utopia," a "paradise," a "garden of delights," an

"island," a "treasure mountain," a "resort." The naturalism and eroticism of these cultural themes provide the German imaginary with the elements of powerful stories about the origins and rationality of gender and race distinctions: refugees, equated with the category "woman," are perceived as devourers, pleasure seekers, freeloaders.⁸⁴ Such a configuration of the racial Other as "consumer" is no less fantastic or violent than its literalization in the *vagina dentata* myth, for it is a conception that functions to erase the true labor, the true productivity of "woman" or her symbolic stand-in: in this case, the refugee, the foreign worker, the immigrant.⁸⁵ Yet this erasure forms the very possibility of exchange.

It is ironic that these conceptions of the racial Other were unwittingly encoded in the German constitution, or "basic law," which was drafted shortly after 1945. In these legal documents, victims of political persecution were described by a language saturated with consumer images. According to the juridical rhetoric, the right of asylum was granted unconditionally. Political refugees were entitled to protection: they "enjoyed" (*genießen*) the right of asylum. The German term *genießen* means "relish," "taste," "enjoy," "consume." It refers to the pleasure and sensual gratification that a person derives from acts of consumption. More specifically, it conveys a sense of the experience of "partaking" in cultural commodities, an experience that is centered in the body: the sensuous immersion of the inner "self" in things of pleasure (leisure, food, travel, sex). The choice of this term (which rarely appears elsewhere in the German constitution) suggests that in the judicial and political imagination of the German founding fathers, the right of asylum was conjured as a commodity, a gift of leisure (and value).⁸⁶ Such a conception of political refugees (as unproductive, anti-social labor) facilitated the revival of the Nazi racial aesthetic: conventional notions of race and difference were patterned by a booming German postwar economy and linked to a nationalist aesthetic of consumer culture. Images of the materialist behavior and devouring promiscuity of foreign refugees came to be identified as perhaps the most radical threat to Germany's attempts at national reconstruction.

Out of the experience of war and defeat, Germans had generated a story of their own postwar victimization. According to John Borneman, the state re-emploted these experiences into a romantic, future-oriented narrative. The appeal to tradition, virtue, and assimilation into a prosperous community of Germans became an antidote for this sense of victimization.⁸⁷ The state's master narrative was restoration. By the 1950s, the propagation of consumer images and the stimulation of consumer desire

were encouraged as an integral part of the reformation of German national identity.⁸⁸ Western democratic freedom came to be identified with material prosperity and consumer choice.

Thus, postwar West German governments desired the integration of German citizens into consumer culture. The state's official narrative encouraged participation in the economic miracle of the 1950s by buying consumer goods as a reaffirmation of Germanness. "Prosperity forms the integument of West German identity, enabling them to erase their past, both in memory and physically, and to allay their fears of disorder and dirt."⁸⁹ Work and prosperity were the central organizing tropes of their life constructions: they saw virtue in work; pensions and free time were understood as rights earned in exchange for labor.

In Germany's postwar economy, conspicuous consumption became emblematic of a national "birthright": it was a symbol of nationhood and citizenship. Attempts by foreigners to partake in these privileges of a "closed" community were experienced as transgressive, as a threat to German personhood and statehood. By conjuring images of refugees as "economic parasites" (*Wirtschaftsschädlinge*), Germany's politicians have fostered an atmosphere that legitimates the use of racial violence. German public discourse imputes criminal intent to applicants for refugee status: fraudulence, illegality, corruption, and a fierce materialism are among the inherent traits ascribed to Third World or Eastern European peoples.⁹⁰ Foreigners are transformed into villains as politicians attempt to tear the masks from their faces and the disguises from their bodies, thus revealing their duplicity and deception. In doing so, they seek to justify the persecution of the "pretend-refugees" (*Scheinasylanten*); the "non-authentic asylum seekers" (*unechte Asylanten*) possessed by economic self-interest; the "economic refugees" (*Wirtschaftsflüchtlinge*) marked by their illicit appetites, unrelenting materialism, and grotesque bodies.⁹¹

On closer inspection, German politicians began to "see" the foreign flood as an indistinguishable tangle of bodies, a mass of brown flesh. Foreign corporeality was deemed a racial threat, which was connected to feelings of repugnance toward disorder and dirt. Housed in public facilities, refugee bodies invaded the nation's interior spaces: schools, gyms, lecture halls, and hotels were now occupied, seized, and appropriated for alien purposes. In the German imagination, the proximity of racialized bodies was linked to processes of deterioration and filth: "[G]overnment officials discovered houses in the inner city, in which Pakistanis and Indians had been packed together, houses in a state of disrepair and decay."⁹² "Where

there had been 60 available openings there now lived 160 foreigners."⁹³ Crammed into impossibly small spaces, those foreign bodies evoked images of dirt, improper hygiene, the grotesque: they were "anti bodies." Refugees, defined as "matter out of place," were conceived and experienced as sources of contagion.⁹⁴ "Officials wade through unbearable hygienic conditions, spray can in one hand and notepad in the other. But, on occasion, people lie there packed together so tightly that the door does not even open and the official inspectors cannot advance into the rooms at all."⁹⁵ The inspectors were standing "in filth," disgusted. Direct physical contact with "dirt" (the contamination of the bodies' peripheral areas) rendered them "lifeless": they are felled, cut down, knocked unconscious (*Das haut uns schlicht um*).⁹⁶

The consequences of Germany's "racial inundation" are closely connected to processes that occur within the human body. Dirt dwells in the depths, in the bowels of the body: there, nothing is solid; everything is sloppy mush. According to media depictions, the nation's interior had become a morass. And the morass became simply human filth, a pit of liquid manure teeming with bodies. This type of contamination "seeped" through the walls of judicial containment, seeking to subvert the German legal system: "Most of the applicants for refugee status spill into the black labor market."⁹⁷ According to German political commentators, the implementation of more restrictive immigration laws or even constitutional changes was unlikely to prevent desperate individuals from entering Germany, thereby exacerbating the nation's problem with illegality and the perception of refugees as criminals.⁹⁸ During political debates concerning German refugee laws, Konrad Weiss, an elected member of the leftist Union Greens (*BündnisGrüne*), formulated this possibility in a 1993 parliamentary address: "Human beings, who as asylum petitioners are still tolerated today, at least for a while, will soon vegetate in the underground [the black labor market]—in a gray zone of illegal work and criminality that we will no longer be able to control. This pre-programs the rise of serious social conflicts compared to which today's situation will appear harmless."⁹⁹ Equated with illegality and unlawful practices, foreigners were presumed intent on disappearing, "diving below the surface of detection" (*versinken, untertauchen, wegtauchen, abtauchen*), seeking shelter underground in cellars and sewers, roaming in darkness and in dirt: slowly "seeping" (*versickern*) into the German body like a toxin that permeates the soil.¹⁰⁰

The government's task was to get rid of any "dirt" that settled on the "body of the nation." The political order thus appeared to take on the same

function as the fascist soldiers' body armor: it became a protective enclosure that "bottled up" the nation's seething interior. German politicians, like their fascist predecessors, took comfort in imagining themselves and their nation as an "armored enclosure" preserving a "pure interior." In the everyday experience of these men, the "wave" of refugees had managed to break/transgress their defensive barriers: the nation's interior fell prey to erosion, becoming "hollowed out" by the torrential foreign flood.¹⁰¹ Weakened by the foreign onslaught, the integrity of the law and the strength of the state were perceived as threatened.¹⁰² Defense was now located in a social body whose protective armor had been ruptured, its interior contaminated, flowing with filth and dangerous water. "Excrement poses a threat to the Center—to life, to the proper, the clean—not from within, but from its outermost margin. While there is no escape from 'excrementality,' from mortality, from the corpse . . . the (social and psychological) goal is to get rid of it quickly, to clean up after the mess."¹⁰³ Violence, even murder, could be imagined as a viable form of defense against this threat.

Social Bodies

In contemporary Germany, we see the conflation of foreignness with femininity: refugee bodies are depicted as wet, devouring, filthy. Media images of "invading masses" are transformed into a public discourse about dark-skinned Others, a racial threat. The language of German politics contrasts the "femininity" of the foreign "mass" with the need for a rigid, hierarchically structured whole: assertions of manhood and state authority are translated into images of control, mastery, containment, law, strength. In these images, race is always a subtext.

Such allegories of gender and race are implicated in the murderous elimination of subaltern bodies in contemporary Germany. In the 1980s, racial violence defined a new corporeal topography: the purging of foreign bodies from German territory. Such a "cleansing" of the national landscape, the erasure of refugees and immigrants, emerged as an indispensable element in the recolonization of the physical interior of the modern state, and of German manhood.

This iconography emerges most explicitly under German fascism. The corporeal metaphysics of the fascist soldier were encoded in two basic types of body. The first type was the soft and liquid female body: a quintessential negative Other, lurking inside the male body, a subversive source of contagion that had to be expunged or sealed off. The second was

the hard, phallic body, devoid of all internal viscera, which found its apotheosis in the machine. This body-as-machine was the acknowledged ideal of the fascist warrior.

While the peculiar characteristics of these imagined bodies were forged and culturally encoded by the gendered world of fascist politics, images of the unaesthetic racial Other have reappeared in postwar Germany, albeit displaced on a different field of relevance. Like the fascist soldier's fear of his inner body, with its inchoate mass of entrails, and his terror of women, Germany's political men transformed their revulsion with physicality into a repugnance toward otherness, specifically the "feminized" racial Other. During the 1980s, almost forty years after the last world war and the end of Nazism, we encounter the vision of the armored (male) body and the inundating (female) flood in the purely civilian context of German racial politics.

In the German imaginary, the fundamental tension is between corporeality and liquidation. The potential site of confrontation is the body. Its solidity, its physical boundaries, and its internal integrity are perpetually deemed threatened by dangerous internal or external flows. The aim of German political practice appears to be focused on tightening the boundaries of the national body and to eliminate or at least minimize the influx of contaminating matter.

The anti-immigrant discourse, with its iconographic evocations of blood, contamination, and race stands opposed to a corporal aesthetic that articulates German self-identity through public nudity, body exposure, and a "white" body armor, icons of a natural, clean, and authentic national interior. The terror of liquid corporeality, the fear of undesirable Others, and all things female coexists with an iconography of Germanness that idealizes a solid corporeality, a material body with firm physical boundaries.

Nudity as a Political Practice

The West German revival of body consciousness received its initial impetus from the student rebellion of the late 1960s: nationhood was reconfigured through the icon of the naked body. During this era of leftist political protest, public nudity became a central emblem of popular opposition. The unclothed body signified liberation in several ways: it symbolized freedom from the moral constraints of a capitalist economy that relied on

the recruitment of foreign workers as cheap labor; it suggested disengagement from the materialistic values of a society that equated postwar democratization with commodity choice and conspicuous consumption; and it facilitated deliverance from the burden of German history—the reality of fascism and genocide, which had been excised from cultural consciousness by a booming postwar economy. In rallying against a seemingly repressive and inhumane society, and by defending a new openness of life styles, student radicals adopted public nudity as a crucial signifier of their political activism. Such a showing of naked bodies gave rise to a corporal aesthetic of Germanness that staged national privilege in relation to society's salient victims: the murdered Jews, archived as mountains of emaciated corpses, and foreign workers, imagined as a dark-skinned mass of subjugated bodies.

The rejection of consumer capitalism and the promotion of new lifestyles were, as Dagmar Herzog notes, "closely intertwined with efforts to bring the subjects [of Nazism] and the Third Reich into public discussion."¹⁰⁴ Disillusioned (and angered) by their parents' inability to acknowledge the murder of millions, student protesters used public nakedness as a symbolic expression of their own victimhood and shame.¹⁰⁵ Although this iconography of public nudity greatly facilitated the students' self-representation as victims of Nazism, as Herzog's analysis suggests, full body exposure also provided a metaphor for the attempt to uncover the past by stripping Germany's murderous epoch of its protective and defensive armor. Public nudity was fiercely politicized. Driven by a programmatic call for sexual liberation, the act of becoming naked in public signified a return to the authentic, the natural, the unrepressed, that is, to a way of life untainted by the legacy of Auschwitz. Displays of public nudity were perceived as liberatory, both in a social and historical sense. By rejecting the cultural machinations of a murderous civility (clothing, commodities, memories), leftist political activists were rendered "free" of shame. Public nakedness emerged as an attempt at restoration, setting into motion a collective healing process.

While "church and political leaders [presented] sexual sobriety as the most effective cure for the nation's larger guilt and moral crisis," the New Left focused on Nazism's sexual politics as "inseparable from the other crimes."¹⁰⁶ "Throughout their programmatic writings on sex," as Herzog documents, "members of this postwar generation returned frequently to the problems of genocide and brutality within the concentration

camps, . . . suggesting that it was [male] sexual repression that engendered the Nazi capacity for cruelty and mass murder."¹⁰⁷ The "fierce anti-fascism" of the German New Left was centrally preoccupied with "assaults on male sexuality," specifically because of the perceived connection between men's "release of libido" and "evil," according to Herzog: "One noteworthy feature of so many of the debates within the Left scene about sex, and about sex and fascism" was thus "their focus on the male body, and male desires and anxieties in particular. In postwar West German struggles over the various sexual lessons of Nazism, male bodies were called to a kind of public visibility and accountability that most scholars of the history of sexuality generally assume to be reserved for women."¹⁰⁸ Remarkable is "the obsessiveness," says Herzog, "with which [this post-war generation] tried to make public some of the most intimate ways [in which] men . . . related to their own bodies and the bodies of others."¹⁰⁹ The public exposure of the male body, including men's sexual desire, became a political agenda in leftists' attempts to reform gender relations and revolutionize the bourgeois/fascist individual. By 1968, various socialist collectives, including the infamous *Kommune 2* in West Berlin, had integrated radical male nudity both into their domestic lifestyle and their public political program (figure 1).¹¹⁰

The West German Left had initiated such nudist body practices in part, as Herzog put it, "to strengthen their case for sexual liberation with the most shocking metaphors available. . . . One group that did so—with spectacular flair—were the members of the *Kommune 1*, a small but endlessly publicized and debated experiment in communal living . . . launched in Berlin in 1966. A classic example of the *Kommune 1*'s provocative style was provided by the photo of its members—including one of the two children living with them—distributed by the members themselves on a self-promotional brochure."¹¹¹ What was the subtext of this portrait of collective nudity?¹¹² In 1988, as noted by Herzog, the former leader of the Socialist Student Union (*Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund*—SDS) Reimut Reiche interpreted the photo as follows:

Consciously this photo-scene was meant to re-create and expose a police house search of *Kommune 1*. And yet these women and men stand there as if in an aesthetically staged, unconscious identification with the victims of their parents and at the same time mock[ing] these victims by making the predetermined message of the picture one of sexual liberation. Thereby they simultaneously



Fig. 1. "Naked Maoists Before a Naked Wall": Members of the *Kommune 1*—A Socialist Collective of Young Maoists, West Berlin, 1967. Photograph courtesy Thomas Hesterberg. (English caption from Herzog, 1998, 405.)

remain unconsciously identified with the consciously rejected perpetrator-parents. "Sexuality makes you free" fits with this picture as well as "Work makes you free" fits with Auschwitz.¹¹³

Commenting on this persistent tactic by the New Left to represent instances of its own political victimization in terms of Judeocide and Auschwitz, Dagmar Herzog observes: "The apparent inability to leave the past behind—indeed, the apparently unquenchable urge to bring it up over and over again precisely in the context of sexual relations—not only reveals how intense was the felt need to invert the sexual lessons of Nazism drawn by their parents' generation but also, and perhaps even more significantly, suggests something about the difficulty of theorizing a sexual revolution—of connecting pleasure and goodness, sex and societal justice [i.e. nudity and freedom]—in a country in which only a generation earlier pleasure had been so intimately tied in with evil."¹¹⁴

Public Nudity as Counter-Cultural Practice

The program for such a body politic, which employed public nudity as a means for transforming German historical consciousness, was first launched by members of the radical New Left. Advocating a lifestyle opposite to that of the Nazi generation, these new leftists or "68ers" attempted to eradicate the private and "hidden" in favor of a public intimacy: "to be able to sleep with anyone; to be able to show oneself naked in front of everyone; to be honest without restraint and willing to speak one's mind without hesitation; to call a spade a spade, never to keep anything to oneself, and never to withhold or repress anything."¹¹⁵ Honesty, truthfulness, sexual freedom, and social equality were among the values that governed the new cult of nudity. The democratization of the German body politic was to be achieved by the public shedding of clothes: "bare skin" emerged as a new kind of uniform, an authentic body armor unmediated by the state or history.

Encoded with these messages of opposition and rebellion, public nudity was soon employed by many young Germans as a personal gesture of cultural protest: seemingly unconventional and provocative, the practice of disrobing in public was widely adopted as a pastime with counter-cultural significance. Offering a "language of commodity resistance," and inverting the logic of capitalist consumption, public nudity signified freedom from the constraints of modern German society.¹¹⁶ Anti-consumption, through the motif of nakedness, was employed by some (especially young) Germans as a means to challenge older models of gender and national identity.

In West Germany, political membership and national identity continued to be visually encoded, physically grafted on the skin.¹¹⁷ However, as we have seen, notions of citizenship were mediated by a consumer aesthetic that encouraged conspicuous displays of self. In this context, according to Heide Fehrenbach, public nudity began "to articulate an alternative model of democratic freedom" focused on personal choice and desire.¹¹⁸ The naked body came to symbolize freedom from the deceptive armor of clothing. Stripped of its materialist trappings, the nude body was purged of the artificial, the illicit, the erotic. The open display of the naked body was contrasted with images of political order, bourgeois authority patterns, conformity, and consumption, that is, tropes of the Nazi state and the economic structures that produced fascism.

Encoded with these meanings, the public exposure of bare skin was soon adopted by many young Germans as a personal means of cultural

protest: stripping the body of valued commodities signified choice and democratic freedom. In the early 1970s, public nudity emerged as a popular outdoor activity, and as urban parks were increasingly thronged by those who preferred to sunbathe without clothes, full-body exposure became commonplace. Around this time, when naked German bodies took possession of urban centers and white nudity was brought to public visibility, West Germany closed its borders to foreign workers, initiated elaborated programs of repatriation, and tightened its laws concerning refugee and immigration rights. This period of state repression and racial tension, framed by a deepening economic recession, persisted throughout the 1970s. With the reduction of the resident foreign population and the forcible removal of immigrant bodies from the public domain, the icon of the German body assumed center stage. By the late 1970s, nudity in public parks was so pervasive that local prohibitions against body exposure were no longer enforced unless "it caused offense" and naked sunbathing was exempt from public indecency codes.¹¹⁹ The public display of naked bodies, in particular the public viewing of nude men, was rendered acceptable by severing the links with historical memory. Confined to natural settings, the naked body seemed devoid of sexual and erotic meaning. Defined as a natural icon, the historiographic surface of the unclothed body was rendered free of shame.

This perception was contested in 1981, a time of heightened anti-immigrant sentiments: media images of an invading foreign mass, an inundating flood, fabricated a public longing for a German body that was armored, immutable, and uncontestably authentic. Such a desired imaginary of German corporeality was rendered problematic when public nudity moved beyond conventional urban spaces. Transgressing the designated boundaries of "nature"—that is, parks and park-related green space—nudists began to congregate along river banks, on beaches, in playgrounds, swimming pools, and cemeteries, even city centers. In downtown Munich, for instance, nudes were now often sighted in historic fountains, on streetcars, and in shopping centers.¹²⁰ Such a migration of nude bodies into the metropolis, the apparent escape of nakedness from "nature," provoked among some segments of the German public deep anxieties about unfettered sexuality.

At issue was the naked male. Exposed masculinity was met with suspicion and unease. Uncovered male genitalia, the public sight of "dangling and swinging penises," was experienced by many Germans as a threat.¹²¹ The open display of the phallus was traditionally prohibited, a thematic

much belabored by the cultural critics of the 1960s. Among leftists, male nudity had been encouraged as a way of promoting sexual liberation, but "in order to experience corporal freedom, the unclothed [man] often long[s] to walk upright [thereby exposing himself and his sex], something which is still taboo." When voicing their discomfort, passersby conjured visions of rape and sexual violence. "I have to look at that," shouted a sixty-three-year-old housewife when encountering a naked man in public, "and I know what is to come after."¹²² As suggested here, public body exposure, specifically that of men, was read through images of sexual deviancy and unacceptable behavior.¹²³ In German popular consciousness, the shedding of clothes signified a release from civil restraint, an incitement to general rebellion and political unruliness: the naked male was judged capable of anything.

In order to preempt such anxieties, public displays of nudity had to be carefully packaged to seem "natural" or artistic: the inoffensive naked body stood outside of history, uncontaminated by society and memory. Such a management of nakedness had several unintended consequences. Although awareness of the sexual side of nude bodies could be repressed by confinement to natural settings, this naturalness had to be rendered civilized and aesthetically pleasing. "Today nobody cares if thousands take off their clothes in the English Garden [in Munich]. But those thousands, who unintentionally walk by, are forbidden to look. Shame works the other way around: nakedness must be clothed—by beauty."¹²⁴ This emphasis on nature as an aesthetic construct worked by exclusion. The naked/natural body was idealized by juxtaposition to the biologically "ugly": "[German] public nudity always implies a privileging of the beautiful and youthful body. The display of nakedness in parks or cafés creates a situation of merciless scrutinization that intensifies the social marginalization of those who are physically disadvantaged: the fat and the overly thin, the misshapen or disfigured, and the handicapped."¹²⁵ In West Germany, public nudity came to be governed by an ideology of difference that celebrated the unblemished body as a natural symbol. Naked "nature" was to be rendered free of the unsightly. Natural nakedness, as a quasi-mythical construct, could not be tainted by physiological markers of age, death, or history. Public nudity, like nature, was to present a facade of eternal beauty, unmarred by signs of physical weakness. Such iconographies of essentialized perfection (youth, beauty, and health) were integral to a postwar aesthetic that sought to rehabilitate the broken body after Auschwitz.

Not surprisingly, the construction of national identity in postwar Germany came to be governed by familiar visions of the racial body. The social geography of bare skin, with its symbolic emplacement of German identity and selfhood, made use of iconographic representations of undesirable difference. The public display of naked German bodies was symptomatic of a return to a corporal aesthetic that celebrated the essential, natural, and authentic.¹²⁶

Commercializing Nudity: German Tourism

During the mid-1970s, the West German aestheticization of white nudity took on another political dimension. Around this time, at the height of the energy crisis and a growing economic recession, when the Federal Republic had closed its borders to migrant laborers and immigrants, the naked German body first appeared as an important motif in contexts of tourism: "nude hippie beaches" sprouted along the Sinai peninsula; "sex tourism" made its way into Turkey and Greece; nudist colonies were established in southern Italy, France, and Spain; and naked white bodies began to populate Mediterranean tourist resorts and north African beaches.¹²⁷ Such a commoditization of the unclothed body (not unlike the use of erotic nudity in West German marketing and advertising) ameliorated the decline of consumer capitalism and reduced the threat of economic recession. By eroticizing travel and geographic mobility, the German fetishization of nudity nurtured a modern Western quest for authenticity and pleasure.

The sudden emergence of a multi-billion dollar tourist industry, which explicitly promoted white nakedness, was, however, also a political issue. Sex tourism and nudity were engaged in the (sometimes unwitting) construction of racial and national stereotypes. The exposure of white bodies/breasts on foreign beaches constituted a reaffirmation of Germanness as imagined at this point in time: signifying prosperity and leisure, nude sunbathing abroad enabled West Germans, as Borneman suggests, "to erase their pasts, both in memory and physically, and to allay their fears of disorder and dirt." Driven by the demands of commodity capitalism, such exhibition of white nakedness in foreign countries became a terrain for the mediation of national identity, by "showing someone who knows the world well through traveling, and has the money to see it."¹²⁸ In part a display of self, the nude white body was configured as a site of representation, an assertion of Germanness and citizenship. As a sign of wealth and natio-

nal identity, symbolizing the political privileges of a powerful West German state, public nudity tended to reify a sense of national self.¹²⁹

Racializing Nudity: The West German Media

In West Germany, during this same period, beginning in the early 1970s, the formation of white public space was further enhanced by "a specific capitalist form of pornography-based sexuality" and by the officially sanctioned use of erotic nudity in West German advertising.¹³⁰ In these sexually charged media representations, we observe a different "framing" of the unclothed body. No longer concealed by placement in a natural setting, the nude body was made visually accessible to arouse commodity desire. During the 1970s, marked by a persistent economic crisis, anti-foreign sentiments, and increasingly repressive laws against immigrant residents, the media promoted the sale of consumer goods through an eroticization of the German public sphere.

Such a liberation of body practices, which had begun in the late sixties, when it was driven by the German student movement and its demand for "sexual revolution," became an integral part of mass culture in the early seventies. Prior to this period, throughout the 1950s and the early 1960s, sexual bodies had been tightly controlled, and the free use of sex was taboo.¹³¹ Until the seventies, media depictions of nudity in connection with prostitution or other assertions of female sexual independence were linked to moral degeneracy and public shame. For instance, as Fehrenbach shows, cinematic representations of unregulated female sexuality, construed as an expression of excessive materialism and dangerous individualism, caused deep disturbance among conservative political and religious leaders.¹³² During the fifties and sixties, the mass-mediated production of erotic female agency was not only perceived as a challenge to patriarchal authority but also as a threat to the normative social order. Opposition to these repressive cultural conventions, which were perceived as a continuation of fascist order and morality, was first launched by members of the radical student movement. Their militant, and sometimes violent, advocacy of alternative lifestyles and sex practices did result in a dramatic shift in public attitudes and norms. But by the early 1970s, a period of economic decline, such a general sexual liberation of West German public culture took a surprising form. As anthropologist John Borneman notes, "Even as social authorities tried to restrict the sexual practices of [the postwar generation], to hold what people heralded as the 'sexual revolution' in

check, a sex wave hit the press, especially the right-wing, conservative tabloids. Popular illustrated magazines such as *Bild* and *Stern* began at this time to show nude women on their covers. A specific capitalist form of pornography . . . based on the public sale of women's services, quickly established itself in the middle and upper-middle classes of large cities, epitomized in the ubiquitous 'Sex Shop' to be found in every business or non-residential area of West Berlin [and elsewhere].¹³³ Such a sexualization of public nudity was soon framed by racist iconographies. In postwar West Germany, the erotic exposure of naked bodies came to be governed by a specific racial aesthetic: the hierarchization of color (privileging white skin) and the construction of difference between bodies of color (devaluing the black icon). In the pornographic fantasies of German image-makers, "whiteness" was evaluatively contrasted with "blackness." Through the medium of commercial images, nude white bodies were exalted and magnified, even adored, as cultural artifacts that could be transformed and perfected by acts of consumption.¹³⁴ Nude black bodies, in contrast, were packaged as commodities, imagined in white erotic fantasy as bodies with a performative function: the provision of labor—physical, erotic, and material.¹³⁵

The Return of the Aryan Aesthetic

In the early 1980s, when immigrants and refugees were depicted as an inundating biological threat, an indistinguishable mass of liquid bodies, useless social labor, German commercial culture began to display white bodies through images that idealized, visually sculpted, the nude flesh. Often stripped of carnal sensuousness and raw sexuality, the visual desirability of white skin relied on image constructions that made such bodies appear inaccessible, distant, unattainable. Invigorating visions of white superiority, the naked but fortified body, the Aryan male, stood firm against the feminine onslaught—the foreign flood (figure 2).

This is suggested by a series of West German advertisements for men's cologne, in which complete male nudity took center stage.¹³⁶ Adopting the pose of classic statues, the male models were typically clad only with the scent of the commercial product. The advertisement text reiterates this point: "He wears Care" and "Care Allures/Attires" (*zieht an*). The classic beauty of the male nude, with his fortified and hardened body, seems impervious to seduction by the spectators' gaze. Standing immobile, upright, and somewhat remote, the nude model resembles a white

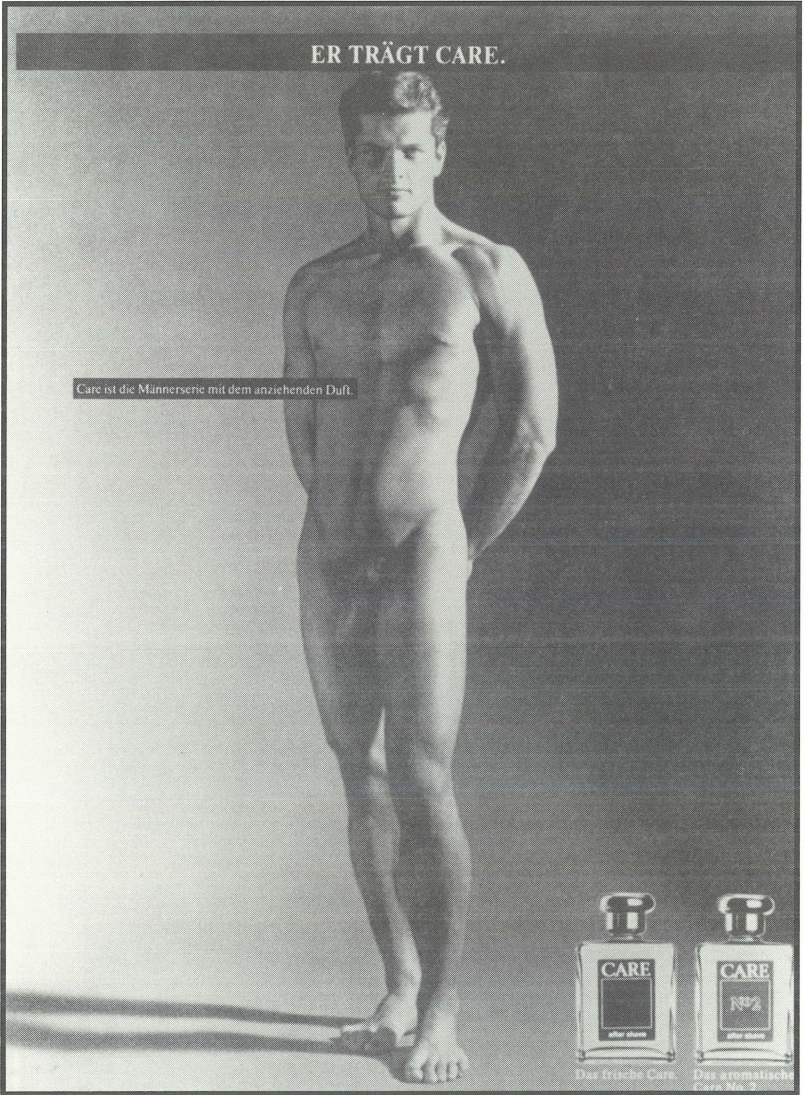


Fig. 2. "He wears Care": *Naked Male Bodies as Commodity Fetish*, West Germany, 1985–87. In *Jahrbuch der Werbung*, vol. 24, edited by J. Jürgen Jeske, Eckhard Neumann, and Wolfgang Sprang (Düsseldorf: ECON Verlag 1987), 41. Photo courtesy ECON Verlag GmbH.

marble statue, a perfected masculinity reminiscent of the classic/Aryan ideal.

These images of male nudity were introduced by German advertisers as a cultural provocation: the naked man had market value and effectively supplanted the standard fetish of the female nude.¹³⁷ Working against the public perception that mass media was productive only in its creation of fantastic falsehoods, of imaginary worlds and illusory needs, West German image makers "began to produce a new materiality, a new essentialism; terminating all artificiality, . . . [there] stood suddenly the naked, unadulterated human body . . . the naked man . . . a signifier of . . . fundamental transformations . . . In our Care campaign, we could finally unveil the monument for the postmodern man in its entirety . . . an entire naked human being/man, but rendered particular through the unveiling of the most distinctive of male body parts—the penis."¹³⁸ But in West German advertising, such a novel exposure of naked masculinity, the denuding of the phallus, was immediately aestheticized through familiar iconographies and images: "Whatever was unthinkable a few years ago, has today become a matter of course . . . The borders of shame have shifted. A segment of the male population has been exposed . . . These men show themselves as they are . . . naked, and bare . . . All obtrusiveness has been removed; their bodies have been dipped in soft light, providing their contours with a gentle, blurred hue. These men appear removed from the world and introverted . . . Sun-tanned and smooth . . . Beautiful, perfect, and immaculate . . . staged to perfection . . . The male body has been cleverly positioned like an antique statue . . . the pose is unmistakable. . . . The image toys with our memories."¹³⁹ The aestheticization of male nudity, by a reliance on the mimetic tools of classic iconography, with the corresponding emphasis on marble, rock, and art, liberated the naked body from its sexual and political history: it became a "timeless" image, a "natural" artifact, which could be put on display without evoking traumatic memories of male libido and violence.

*Essentializing Whiteness: Nudity in West German
Environmental Politics*

In West Germany, these formations of white public space were further complicated by the sudden re-emergence of nudity in radical political discourse. By the middle of the 1980s, the public display of naked bodies emerged as an instrument of contestation in the West German environ-

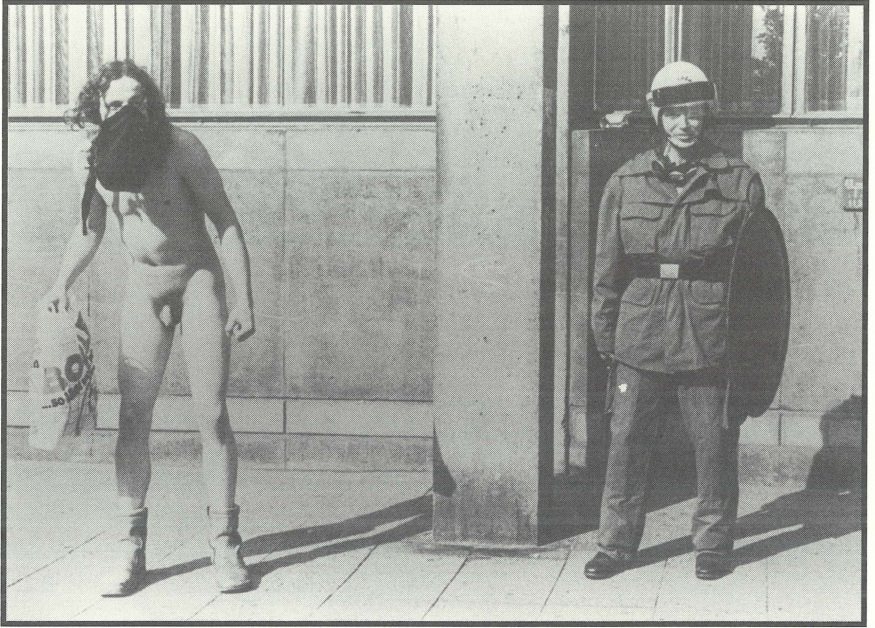


Fig. 3. “Proclaiming Opposition through Male Nudity”: Using Their Bodies as Performative Icons, Leftist Activists Rally against City Government (TUWAT Demo—Rathaus Kreuzberg), West Berlin, 1981. Photograph courtesy Voller-Ernst Agentur für komische und ungewöhnliche Fotos, Berlin/Germany.

mental movement. The public exposition of white nakedness became a strategic form of counter-cultural and anti-capitalist protest. The naked body, during such moments of popular rebellion, was configured as a shared cultural symbol, an authenticating sign, a truth claim, that was pitted against the facade of the state (figure 3).

A series of examples from West Berlin captures the symbolic focus of such protests. Unclothed male activists used their nude bodies in their dramaturgical battle against police brutality and neo-Nazi incursions: an unmediated national interior that stood opposed to the monopoly of state violence. Leftist criticism of global capitalism featured male nudity as a form of ridicule, a message of debasement and negation: the unclothed male body stood as an oppositional sign, posted against market-driven forms of inequality and violence.¹⁴⁰ Using their naked bodies as performance icons, unclothed male activists protested a variety of urban inequities: their volatility was staged in opposition to the protective armor

of state police.¹⁴¹ Stripped to their undergarments, student activists in Bonn protested the shortfall in state funding for education.¹⁴²

Nudity in these instances was mobilized as an authentic truth claim, a signifier of the irrefutable reality of an oppositional national interior. Green protesters adopted public nudity as a site for the representation of counter-cultural imaginary. West German activists relied on the imagery of the naked body as a strategic symbol. Displayed not as a concrete expression of the state (as during Nazism), nakedness was instead exhibited in opposition to the political establishment, as an icon of victimhood.

Green political activists used public nudity to demonstrate their commitment to democracy, freedom, and equality. The bare/exposed white body, a tangible icon of the physical world ("nature" and the "natural environment"), was equated with physical vulnerability and victimization: environmental issues like pollution, ozone depletion, and deforestation as well as concerns about economic deprivation and male domination were publicized through open displays of the unclothed human body. For instance, in Frankfurt in 1981, environmental activists opposed the destruction of urban woodlands by a planned airport expansion by protecting the endangered trees with their bare bodies, heightening the public's awareness of the forest as a living organism. In West Berlin, several hundred men and women assembled in a protest march against air pollution by displaying their nude bodies (figure 4). The naked body thus became an organizing icon of victimization by the state's indifference to global ozone depletion.¹⁴³ Such a strategy (with its appeal to universal human values) unwittingly subverts recognition of racial inequality and difference. Green/environmental activists invested naked bodies and white physicality with meanings that had significance for the larger German body politic.

Conclusion: The Symbolic Economy of Dark Skin

The German integration of nudity with nature (and natural signifiers) moved the body out of history, denying the possibility of history as process. The aestheticization of nudity transformed racialized bodies into natural entities, whereby the de-historicization of whiteness is rendered uncontested. This denial of history, these attempts to suppress or control fields of memory through corporeal aesthetics seem to be a retreat, a regression, into a mythic past, permitting Germans to exhibit race "innocently" (even after the Holocaust). Such a reinvigoration of the German



Fig. 4. "Marching against Air Pollution": Green Environmentalists Protest Global Ozone Depletion by Displaying Nude Bodies, West Berlin, 1989. From *die taz*, 27 January 1989. Photograph courtesy AP/Wide World Photos, New York.

racial aesthetic is particularly significant in a global world order: placed within the context of transnational economies, transnational commodity culture, and guest-worker immigration, German nakedness is once again becoming "white." In turn, this form of racialization echoes tropes of an earlier era, a circumstance that may well be suggestive of the (re-) emergence of the Aryan body in a postwar German nation—a nation in which national identity, the sense of national belonging, continues to be infused by a corporeal aesthetic that demands the erasure of difference.

These formations of white public space, linked to sentiments of national belonging after 1945, rely on constructs of the unaesthetic. In contemporary Germany, refugee and immigrant bodies are depicted as wet, devouring, filthy, with insatiable appetites for impermissible pleasures. Media images of "invading" masses are transformed into a public discourse about dark-skinned others, a racial threat. In media images, bodies of color are always shown in transience: placed in an empty room, an airport terminal, a train station; immigrants are shown sleeping, sitting, waiting—idling between spaces. Rarely are ethnic Others portrayed as performing socially useful tasks. In these racially charged photographs, white German

bodies simply disappear, thereby removing the possibility of a conflictual relationship to emerge visually. Refugee bodies are seemingly driven and held in place only by their longings. The fluid depictions of their desires and needs are countered with assertions of German manhood and state authority: strength, hardness, order. Subaltern bodies are placed against solid (inanimate) structures: brown human flesh is pressed against modern installations. It appears as if these foreign bodies must be fenced in and contained. They are described as a flood, a deluge, a surge, a contagion, which threatens to submerge the country's interior. Framed by familiar points of reference (buildings, walls, transport technologies, men in military uniforms), these visual contrasts allow the German public to confirm the sources of their political privilege. In these images, race is always a subtext.

Although the peculiar characteristics of these racialized bodies were forged and culturally encoded by the gendered world of fascist politics, images of the unaesthetic racial Other have reappeared in postwar Germany, albeit displaced on a different field of relevance. After the Second World War, during the era of economic reconstruction, German cultural politics continued to perpetuate racial prejudice, invariably keeping the Other at a distance, "under control"—a recipe for psychological terror. Relations between Germans and racial Others came to be socially organized and regulated, the object of laws. Economically, foreign workers and immigrants were needed, even as politically the German state sought to eliminate them. Feeding on images of otherness and difference, ultimately taking control of them, German capitalist culture nourished symbolic constructions for its own ends. The postwar German state depended on racial otherness as an ideological and structural phenomenon, which it simultaneously sought to exploit and to destroy.

Beginning in the late 1960s, when white public nudity first appeared as a strategy of political/commodity resistance, German industry had begun to rely on the recruitment of foreign workers to alleviate its temporary labor shortages. These "migrant laborers" (brought from southern Europe and its immediate periphery) were hired on short-term contracts. They were employed in the service sector or in production, taking on there the unskilled, manual, and often most dangerous jobs. Thus inserted into the capitalist economy, migrant workers were reduced to surplus labor. After the onset of the energy crisis in 1973, and a deepening economic recession, when the sexualization of mass-media images was deemed legitimate; when the eroticization of geographic mobility, travel, and sex tourism first took form; and when nude sunbathing in public parks was of-

ficially sanctioned; West Germany closed its borders to foreign workers, initiated elaborate (and costly) programs of repatriation, and tightened its laws concerning refugee and immigration rights. In the early 1980s, when the media promoted the perfected male nude, and when Green/environmental activists first embraced white nudity as a symbol of counter-cultural protest, German officials began to criminalize refugees, interpreting the increased influx of asylum seekers as a direct result of attempts by foreigners to circumvent Germany's restrictive immigration policies. In commemoration of the terror and dislocation caused by the last world war, Nazism, and the concentration camps, the West German state had incorporated the "right of asylum" as an integral part of its judicial foundation. This foundation, the very basis of postwar state authority, was deemed threatened in the early 1980s, when German officials noted the sudden increase of refugees from Africa and Asia, who sought asylum in Germany as victims of political persecution. At this time, the public iconography of naked bodies asserts the solidity, the natural authenticity, the material boundaries of white masculinity, and of white bodies in general.

These body images were of course not promoted uniformly without some differentiation in symbolic emphasis. While the culture industry and media makers promoted visions of the phallic male, the naked body armor, enhanced and perfected by consumption, leftist protesters relied on a different symbolic repertoire for conveying their political agenda. The anti-consumerist and anti-establishment rebellion of the German post-war generation invoked images of nature and authenticity to articulate a counter-cultural vision of German national belonging. Although similarly preoccupied with body exposure and public nudity, the unclothed body was staged in opposition to the requirements of consumer capitalism. In the center stood not the sculpted (classic) body, beautifully perfected, but the normal body as an authentic, natural artifact. This body, untainted by history or shame, was nevertheless perceived as perpetually under attack. At a time, when German politicians conjured images of immigrants as a natural menace, a flooding, a streaming, a contaminating foreign mass that inundated, ravaged, and poisoned the country's interior spaces, leftist activists presented their naked bodies as volatile and threatened—as endangered by natural disasters, by pollution, and by various environmental hazards to physical health. Whether conceived as armored enclosure or natural artifact, the naked body was integral to a symbolic system that worked to anesthetize history in the construction of a new universe of victimhood and sacrifice.

In discussing the influx of foreign peoples, German politicians conjured images of an invasive "flood" of bodies, a "rising tide" that threatened to inundate the country. Germany's political men envisioned the threat of alien bodies as a liquid mass—inundating, flooding, surging. Their terror and revulsion of this liquid Other continued to find tangible expression in the compulsive use of metaphors that described political events as natural processes. Once again, the nation's defense began to be "located in a white body whose periphery had been de-eroticized, its interior incarcerated and objectified as flowing with filth and dangerous water."¹⁴⁴ By the late 1980s, continuing after German unification, when the aestheticization of white skin and the de-aestheticization of dark skin was most closely coordinated in public space, racial violence defined a new corporal topography. Linked to the murderous elimination of immigrant bodies, the naturalization of the white body emerged as an indispensable element in the "purging" and "cleansing" of the physical interior of the German state.

This denial of history, these attempts to suppress or control fields of memory through corporeal aesthetics seem to be a retreat, a regression, into the past to regain a lost sense of safety, innocence, and lack of shame. In the German postwar period, white nudity thus gained an added dimension. It permitted Germans to exhibit race "innocently" without fear or guilt and without having to publicly (or consciously) acknowledge participation in a racial mythography, the Aryan aesthetic, which continues to colonize the German national imaginary even after Hitler.

NOTES

This essay builds on some of my earlier works, notably *Blood and Nation: The European Aesthetics of Race* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999) and *German Bodies: Race and Representation after Hitler* (New York: Routledge, 1999), however, with revisions and updates. Different versions of some text passages appeared in *American Anthropologist* 99 (1997): 559–73 (copyright *American Anthropologist*) and *Transforming Anthropology* 8, 1–2 (1999): 129–61 (copyright *American Anthropologist*).

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61. Ursula Kreft, "Alles mit Mass und mit Ziel," *Konkret* 11 (November, 1991): 28.
62. Mattson, "Refugees in Germany," 66.
63. Fluid metaphors also appear in the American media, but without the corresponding expressions of repugnance and nationwide catastrophe. For example, descriptions of the influx of Haitian refugees into the United States abound with references to "the tide," "the flood," "the flow," which "comes," "surges," "rises," and "swamps." See Stephen Greenhouse, "Haitians taking to the Sea in Droves," *New York Times*, 28 June 1994, sec. A1 and "As Tide of Haitian Refugees Rises," *New York Times*, 30 June 1994, sec. A3. But an earlier analysis of American media images and political metaphors of Cuban refugees in 1980 suggests that such liquid metaphors and underlying fears of immigrant "waves" were linked to perceived threats of sexual attack. See John Borneman, "Emigres as Bullets/Immigration as Penetration Perceptions of the Marielitos," *Journal of Popular Culture* 20 (1986): 73–92; and C. Nadia Seremetakis, "In Search of the Barbarians: Borders in Pain," *American Anthropologist* 98 (1996): 489–511.
64. "Der Bundesrat will allem zustimmen 'was ein Stück weiter führt,'" *FAZ* (May 29, 1980).
65. "Die Flut der Ausländer überfordert viele Städte," *Rhein-Zeitung* (April 2, 1980).
66. Birkenmaier, "Asylrecht," 3.
67. Lewis J. Edinger, *West German Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 56–57.
68. "Baum will mit einem Sofortprogramm die Flut der Asyl-Bewerber eindämmen," *FAZ* 128 (June 4, 1980): 1–2.
69. "Deutschland: Da sammelt sich ein ungeheurer Sprengstoff," *Der Spiegel* 23 (June 2, 1980): 17.
70. *Ibid.*, 18.
71. The initial use of this word can be traced to the 1930s and 1940s, when it carried anti-Semitic connotations.
72. "Soviel Asylbewerber wie Dorfbewohner," *FAZ* 146 (June 27, 1980): 1.
73. "Frankfurt will kein Lager für Asylbewerber," *FAZ* 152 (July 4, 1980).
74. Peter Schütt, *Der Mohr hat seine Schuldigkeit getan* (Dortmund: Weltkreis, 1981), 65.
75. Archiv für Sozialpolitik, "Jeder ist uns der Nächste," *Konkret* 5 (May, 1994): 38.
76. Archiv für Sozialpolitik, "Jeder ist uns der Nächste," *Konkret* 11 (November, 1993): 23.
77. Archiv für Sozialpolitik, "Jeder ist uns der Nächste," *Konkret* 3 (March, 1994): 32.
78. "Deutschland," *Spiegel*, 18; "Änderung," *FAZ*, 2; Birkenmaier, "Asylrecht," 3; "Finished," *Spiegel*, 32; "Bonn sorgt sich über die steigende Zahl von Asylbewerbern," *FAZ* (March 1, 1980); "Deutschland," *Spiegel*, 18. In a technical sense, the word *Sammel-lager* should be translated as "assembly" or "internment" camp. German *sammeln* means gather together, assort, collect, assemble. But *Sammellager* can be read, I believe, as a postwar locution for *Konzentrationslager* (concentration camp), a term whose usage is categorically taboo except as a historical signifier. The current German use of *Sam-*

mellager represses this reference to murder entirely. By a shift of meaning to "rounding up" or "amassing" people, it prevents the disturbing evocation of the past. Nevertheless, the intent behind such camps is not entirely benign. As suggested by the semantic field of *Sammellager*, the internment of refugees is perceived as a means to "regain composure," to achieve "a state of tranquility or repose," and to become "self-possessed" (e.g., *sich sammeln*), meanings that hint at a cultural desire to purge the troublesome and foreign. See for instance, Ursula Münch, *Asylpolitik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Opladen: Leske und Budrich, 1992), 73; and Rudolf Wassermann, "Plädoyer für eine neue Asyl- und Ausländerpolitik," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte (Beilage zur Wochenzeitung Das Parlament)* 9 (February 21, 1992): 16.

79. Fromme, "Dämme," 10.

80. See Catherine A. Lutz, *Unnatural Emotions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Susan Stewart, *On Longing* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).

81. "Änderung," *FAZ*, 1; "Deutschland," *Spiegel*, 17, 18; See Klein, "Asyl-Sorgen."

82. "Änderung," *FAZ*, 4.

83. Fromme, "Suchen," 1.

84. Catherine A. Lutz and Jane L. Collins, *Reading the National Geographic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 153.

85. See Stewart, *On Longing*.

86. For a closer reading of the legal semantics, see Grundgesetz und Landesverfassung, *Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland und Verfassung für Rheinland-Pfalz* (Mainz: Hase & Köhler, 1971), which I consulted. In German legal rhetoric, basic rights are typically granted through the invocation of phrases like *Anspruch auf, Recht auf, hat das Recht*—has a right to or can insist on (28, 32, 120–21).

87. Borneman, *Belonging*; and Borneman, "State."

88. Heide Fehrenbach, *German Body Politics: Image and Identity after Hitler*, Post-Doctoral Fellows Project, Rutgers Center for Historical Analysis, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995).

89. Borneman, *Belonging*, 236.

90. Mattson, "Refugees in Germany," 69.

91. See, for instance, Klein, "Asyl-Sorgen"; Philipp, "Asylmissbrauch"; and Fromme, "Dämme." For a more extensive discussion of the negative connotations of terms like "refugee" and "asylum seeker" in German, see Ute Gerhard and Jürgen Link, "Kleines Glossar neorassistischer Feinbild-Begriffe," in *Buntesdeutschland*, ed. H. Boehncke and H. Wittich (Reinbeck: Rowohlt, 1991), 138–48; Margaret Jaeger, "Sprache der Angst," *die tageszeitung* (March 24, 1993); Jürgen Link, "Asylanten, ein Killwort," *kultuRRévolution* 2 (February, 1983): 36–38.

92. "Aufstieg," *Rhein-Zeitung*.

93. "Finished," *Spiegel*, 35.

94. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 1980.)

95. "Finished," *Spiegel*, 35.

96. *Ibid.*

97. Fromme, "Suchen," 1.

98. Mattson, "Refugees in Germany," 80–81.

99. Konrad Weiss, "Untitled," *Das Parlament* (June 11), 4. Quoted in and translated by Mattson, *New German Critique*, 80.

100. See Fromme, "Suchen," 1.

101. See Alfons Heutgen, "Eine Schutzstätte wird geplündert," *Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt* 7 (June 22, 1980).

102. "Deutschland," *Spiegel*, 7.

103. Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 207.

104. See Dagmar Herzog, who developed this point as a central analytic theme in her article "Pleasure, Sex, and Politics Belong Together: Post Holocaust Memory and the Sexual Revolution in West Germany," *Critical Inquiry* 24 (Winter, 1998): 393–444, here 394–95.

105. For recent works on the problem of collective memory in German postwar politics, see Klaus Naumann, "Die Mutter, das Pferd und die Juden: Flucht und Vertreibung als Themen deutscher Erinnerungspolitik," *Mittelweg* 36 (August–September, 1996): 70–83; Robert G. Moeller, "War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany," *American Historical Review* 101 (October, 1996): 1,008–48; Andrei S. Markovits and Simon Reich, *The German Predicament: Memory and Power in the New Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Robert G. Moeller, ed., *West Germany under Construction: Politics, Society, and Culture in the Adenauer Era* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997); Herzog, "Pleasure, Sex, and Politics Belong Together."

106. Herzog, "Pleasure, Sex, and Politics Belong Together," 397. For an in-depth analysis and discussion of this issue, see Herzog, who painstakingly details the recurrent coupling of politics and sex in the debates of the late sixties. For a contemporary view on those debates, see Fritz Wolfgang Haug, "Vorbemerkung," *Das Argument* 32 (1965): 30–31.

107. Herzog, "Pleasure, Sex, and Politics Belong Together," 397. Also see Eckard Siepmann, ed., *CheSchaShit: Die Sechziger Jahre zwischen Cocktail und Molotov* (Berlin: Elefant, 1984); Ulrike Heider, "Freie Liebe und Liebesreligion: Zum Sexualitätsbegriff der 60er und 80er Jahre," in *Sadomasochisten, Keusche, und Romantiker: Vom Mythos neuer Sinnlichkeit*, ed. Ulrike Heider (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1986), 92–109; Ulf Preuss-Lausitz, "Vom gepanzerten zum sinnstiftenden Körper," in *Kriegskinder, Konsumkinder, Krisenkinder: Zur Sozialisationsgeschichte seit dem zweiten Weltkrieg*, ed. Ulf Preuss-Lausitz (Weinheim: Beltz, 1989).

108. Herzog, "Pleasure, Sex, and Politics Belong Together," 397–98.

109. *Ibid.*, 399.

110. See C. Bookhagen, E. Hemmer, J. Raspe, E. Schulz, and M. Stergar, *Kommune Zwei: Versuch der Revolutionierung des bürgerlichen Individuums* (Berlin: Oberbaum, 1969), 92; Hans Peter Dürr, *Nacktheit und Scham: Der Mythos vom Zivilisationsprozess* (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 1994), 418–20.

111. Herzog, "Pleasure, Sex, and Politics Belong Together," 398, 404–406.

112. As Herzog points out in "Pleasure, Sex, and Politics Belong Together," 405, "this photo has been reprinted many times—usually in a spirit of humor and/or nostalgia—and now counts as one of the icons of this era." The photo appeared in German newsmagazines but was radically retouched to erase all bodily signifiers of gender and sex. This was the case with reprints in *Der Spiegel* in 1967 as well as in the Berlin daily *Tagesspiegel* in 1997. See Stiftung Haus der Geschichte, Bonn, *Bilder die lügen: Begleitbuch zur Ausstellung im Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1998), 49. The photo in figure 1 is a reprint of the original.

113. Reimut Reiche, "Sexuelle Revolution—Erinnerung an einen Mythos," in *Die Früchte der Revolte: Über die Veränderung der politischen Kultur durch die Studentenbewegung*, ed. Lothar Baier (Berlin: Wagenbach, 1988), 65. Quoted from and translated by Herzog, "Pleasure, Sex, and Politics Belong Together," 405.

114. Herzog, "Pleasure, Sex, and Politics Belong Together," 400.

115. Bernd Guggenberg, "Die nackte Wahrheit ist nicht immer das Wahre. Über die Grenzen zwischen Intimität und Öffentlichkeit," *FAZ*, Beilage: Bild und Zeit, 177 (August 3, 1985): 1.

116. Arjun Appadurai, ed., "Introduction," in *The Social Life of Things* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 30.

117. Gilman, "Plague."

118. Fehrenbach, *German Body Politics*, 4.

119. Peter Brügge, "'Braun wennst bist, hast überall Kredit.' Über die Münchner Kulturrevolution der Nacktbader," *Der Spiegel*, (August 5, 1985): 149.

120. Peter Brügge, "Nächstes Jahr mackert in d'Oper: Über den Münchner Streit zwischen Katholiken und den Nackten," *Der Spiegel* 34 (August 17): 150–51." and Brügge, "Braun."

121. Brügge, "Nächstes," 150.

122. *Ibid.*, 151.

123. Guggenberg, "Die nackte Wahrheit," 1.

124. Dorothea Friedrich, "Not der Augen: Die Nacktheit oder der nackte Körper nackt," *FAZ*, Beilage—Frankfurter Magazin, Heft 341, 211 (September 9, 1986): 50.

125. Guggenberg, "Die nackte Wahrheit," 1.

126. Such visual displays of natural bodies are linked to notions of nativity and national belonging. In one example [See *Wahlprogramm der Alternativen Liste* (Berlin: Alternative Liste, 1989), 25], a photographic glimpse of a public park in West Berlin, two naked Germans—a man and a woman—are enjoying the tranquil outdoors: domesticated nature. Positioned against a canvas of trees and bushes, the couple is sitting in the shady cover of the foliage. This display of nudity draws on existing social fantasies of "paradise," as indicated by the graffiti on the park's sign. Nakedness and body exposure are staged as a consumerist retreat. Leisure, experienced as an escape from the collective social world, is displaced to a domesticated natural interior—a primordial garden.

127. Smadar Lavie, *The Poetics of Military Occupation: Mzeina Allegories of Bedouin Identity Under Israeli and Egyptian Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Armin Ganser, "Nacktbaden ist nichts Besonderes mehr," *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 112 (May 15, 1984): 42; Armin Ganser, "Immer mehr Strände für die nackten Deutschen," *Die Welt* 126 (June 1, 1979): Reise, v; "Europas Strände öffnen sich den Nackten," *FAZ*, Reiseblatt, 153 (July 5, 1979): 3; Armin Ganser, "Nackt unter Palmen—ohne Entblößungspflicht," *FAZ*, Reiseblatt, 46 (February 24, 1977): 10; Gert Kreyszig, "Immer mehr ziehen sich aus, um sich auszuziehen: Hüllenlos in Jugoslawien," *Stuttgarter Zeitung* 170 (July 27, 1978): 23; Armin Ganser, "Wenn auch die letzten Hüllen fallen," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 92 (April 19, 1980): 71; Jochen Meyers, "Nacktheit ist nichts Besonderes mehr an südlichen Stränden," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 187 (August 14, 1984): 42.

128. Quotes from Borneman, *Belonging*, 235.

129. It is important to note that the "white" body or "white" identity, in the German national imaginary was not constructed from a racially bifurcated dialectic (e.g., white agency and black Other), as in the American case. It is a construction of whiteness in which all that is non-white—the dark-skinned (black) Other—emerges as a highly amorphous and imagined ensemble of a multi-racial and multi-ethnic configuration, which includes Jews, Gypsies, Turks, Slavs, Southern Europeans, Asians, and blacks, as well as migrant laborers and refugees. The German nation/state was envisioned as a homogenous

ethno-national community, a vision materialized in 1945, through the effects of genocide, and the perpetual closure of political boundaries to immigrants, especially after World War II. The white space of German politics was thus not built on cross-racial symbiosis, but a self-referential imaginary of whiteness.

130. Jürgen J. Jeske, Eckhard Neumann, and Wolfgang Sprang, eds., "Diskussion: Das Nackte in der Werbung," *Jahrbuch der Werbung in Deutschland, Österreich, und der Schweiz* 24 (1987): 39–55; Borneman, *Belonging*, 265.

131. See Herzog, "Pleasure, Sex, and Politics Belong Together."

132. Heide Fehrenbach, *Cinema in Democratizing Germany* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 92–117.

133. Borneman, *Belonging*, 265–66. For further elaboration on the sexualization of the German public sphere, in particular the creation of sex shops and pornographic advertising, see Hans Otto Eglau, *Die Kasse muß stimmen* (Düsseldorf: Econ, 1972), 215–30; "Beate-Uhse-Sexhandel: Stramme Pflicht," *Der Spiegel* 23 (June 4, 1979): 207–10; "Sex Sale Appeal," *Time* 117 (April 13, 1981): 82; Claudia Pai, "Sex Shops: Als Novität ein Gummi-Mann," *Die Zeit* 12 (March 13, 1985): 40; Beate Uhse, *Mit Lust und Liebe: Mein Leben* (Frankfurt/M: Ullstein, 1989), 215–30; Stephen Kinzer, "A Curator Who Doesn't Blush," *New York Times*, 30 January 1996.

134. Jeske et al., "Diskussion," 41; Jürgen J. Jeske, Eckhard Neumann, and Wolfgang Sprang, eds., "Körperpflege und Pharmazie," *Jahrbuch der Werbung in Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz* 24 (1987): 423.

135. See, for instance, Willie Schalk and Helmut Thoma, eds., untitled article, *Jahrbuch der Werbung* 30 (1993): 256, 287.

136. Jeske et al., "Diskussion," and Jeske et al., "Körperpflege," 418–23; Michael Schirner, "Hatten Sie schon mal den Weltgeist als Kunden? Das Nackte in der Werbung," in *Jahrbuch der Werbung in Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz* 24 (1987): 39–41; Heide Soltau, "Erotische Irritationen und heimliche Spiele mit der Lust: Das Nackte in der Werbung," in *Jahrbuch der Werbung in Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz* 24 (1987): 42–50.

137. Michael Köhler, "Stimmen zu Nacktheit und Sex in der Werbung: Eine Dokumentation," in *Das Aktfoto*, ed. M. Köhler and G. Barche (Munich: C. J. Bucher, 1985), 274–81.

138. Schirner, "Hatten Sie schon mal den Weltgeist als Kunden?," 39–41.

139. Soltau, "Erotische Irritationen," 42–43, 44–47.

140. Elkebarbara Mayer, Martina Schmolt, and Harald Wolf, eds., *Zehn Jahre Alternative Liste* (Bremen: Steintor, 1988), 97, 138.

141. Ernst Volland, *Gefühl und Schärfe* (Bremen: Rixdorfer, 1987), 20.

142. "Hochschulen: Bis aufs Hemd," *Der Spiegel* 52 (1998): 62.

143. "Volks-frei-tag vor der Wahl," *die tageszeitung* (January 27, 1989): 16; Wolfgang Pohrt, "Stop den Mob," *Konkret* 5 (May, 1991): 27.

144. Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, vol. 2, 278.

6

Silke Wenk

Translated by Matthias Schneider and Herbert Mehtens

Sacrifice and Victimization in the Commemorative Practices of Nazi Genocide after German Unification— Memorials and Visual Metaphors

■ For more than ten years now, the construction of a “Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe” (*Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas*) in Berlin has been discussed in Germany, and it seems that the debate will go on. Two artist competitions have taken place so far: more than five hundred artists participated in the first. Hardly any competition for art in a public space—not even a memorial for the victims of the Nazi government—could have expected to receive such a response. This demonstrates the broad interest within the Federal Republic in the memory of the Holocaust. However, this first competition was not successful; neither of the two favorite proposals was carried out.

After a public exhibition of all competitive outlines in Berlin and after the jury’s announcement of its decision, a widespread and very controversial discussion developed.¹ This debate took place in both the feuilleton

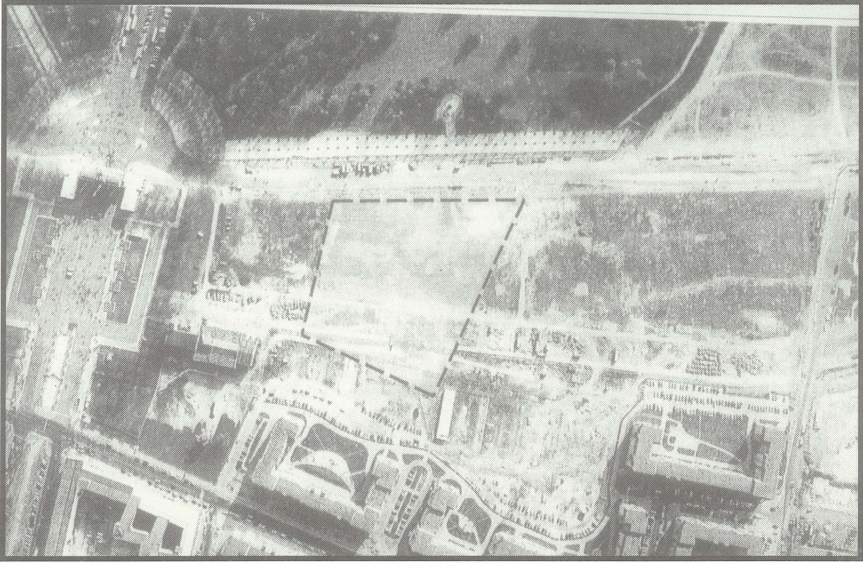


Fig. 1. The planned building site for the "Memorial of the Murdered Jews" in the vicinity of the Brandenburg Gate. Aerial image, 1992. From *Künstlerischer Wettbewerb Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas*, Kurzdokumentation, ed. Senatsverwaltung für Bau- und Wohnungswesen (Berlin, n.d.).

and political sections of newspapers, on public TV and to lesser extent cable TV, and in many public forums in and outside of Berlin. In these discussions, not only the two favored proposals but also the chosen site for the memorial (figure 1) and the fundamental possibility of a representation of the Holocaust were called into question. Three years later, in autumn 1997, a new competition was announced. Generally the task remained the same, but this time selected artists were invited to participate. Four proposals were shortlisted. They were submitted by artists who had gained their reputations from art projects in public space or state-funded architecture (Gesine Weinmiller, Jochen Gerz, Daniel Libeskind, and with an associated project, Peter Eisenman and Richard Serra). The proposal of Eisenman/Serra was very prominent and highly praised—a proposal that was later revised by Eisenman alone (Eisenman II, so to speak). The Eisenman/Serra project proposed the erection of about four thousand pillars of concrete in the same width but in various heights (up to seven meters) lined up straight on a grid field. The Eisenman II project (figure 2) reduced the number of pillars to 2,700 and their height from zero up to four meters.

This concept seemed to unite many of the formerly skeptical critics

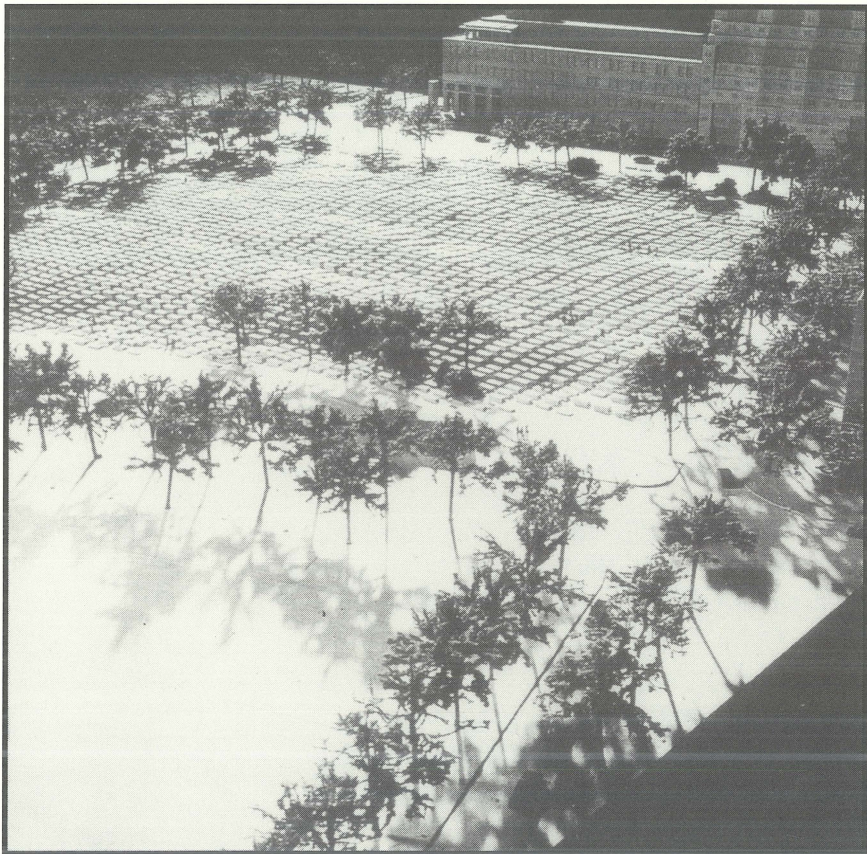


Fig. 2. Completed draft presented by the Eisenman architects for the shortlist selection process. From *"Erläuterungsbericht des Verfassers," Kommentar des Künstlers zur Ausstellung des Entwurfs* (Berlin: August, 1998).

and those who had voiced fundamental doubts concerning the ability of art to come up with an adequate representation of the mass murder. Regarding this proposal, the topic of the "strong suggestion" of the columns came up: the visitor is "not the object of mental acrobatics and didactic procedures. Here, art dominates the perception."² The art historian Eduard Beaucamp was of the opinion that the proposal "makes the hardly comprehensible paradoxes in the history . . . [of Berlin] . . . bearable." It includes "a universe of victims."³ The debate seemed to have found its conclusion.

Months later, however, the argument flared up again. After the change of government in autumn 1998, Culture Minister Michael Naumann,

who had earlier harshly criticized the project of a central "Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe," worked out yet another plan together with Eisenman. The plan was presented in January, 1999.⁴ The field of pillars was to be reduced and complemented by a "Museum of Remembrance" (*Museum der Erinnerung*).

The argument had shifted from the discussion of three years prior—concerning the fundamental question of the possibility of representing the Holocaust—to a new debate: the (earlier supported) architect Eisenman was now accused of a compromising approach that did not conform to "real" artistry, while the Culture Minister was reproached for his tendency toward mass education. Moreover, the legality of the competition's procedure was also being questioned by artists whose proposals were shortlisted. (How could it be, they asked, that the plan of a museum was also being carried out, although the terms of the competition only included a memorial?) Another question has been that of authorship and plagiarism.⁵ The fronts multiplied, and the cause that was the actual focus of the entire debate, the "Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe," was now in danger of being pushed into the background. One could almost come to the conclusion that the entire debate was about who would be the new "state artist." And it appears that the controversy has still not been resolved.⁶

The "Memorial for the Murdered Jews in Europe"—which has often been called a "Holocaust Memorial," a problematic term because of its reference to sacrifice⁷—is to be the second central memorial in the reunified Germany to be built in its new capital, Berlin. The first memorial was the "Central Memorial for the Victims of War and Tyranny" (*Zentrale Gedenkstätte für die Opfer von Krieg und Gewaltherrschaft*) in Schinkel's "New Guardhouse" (*Neue Wache*). Even this project did not begin without public controversy.⁸ I will describe the events surrounding the memorial as a prologue, or *Vorgeschichte*, in my analysis of the current debate.

The debates about both of these memorials are in many ways interesting and instructive. On the one hand, the difficult nature of a culture of remembrance—in a country which is guilty of the systematic mass murder of Jews, the Romany and Sinti, of homosexuals, and the disabled—can be read in the arguments. On the other, the arguments show that there are no easy answers or solutions in this debate on the culture of memory and remembrance. The problems and events are deeply intertwined with the attempt to reconstruct a nation that is both questioned within and central to the framework of European politics. Until the year 1989, most of the

residents of West Germany still accepted the existence of two German states as if it were natural. The concept of a German nation was hard to credit after National Socialism and was discredited by twentieth-century German history.

Monuments and memorials always tell us about those who erected them and—perhaps I should add here—mainly about how they saw themselves and what they wanted to say. In the controversies and the widespread interest in the central memorial for the murdered Jews, one can clearly see how the reconstruction of a feeling of “belonging”—a national belonging—collides with the insurmountable difficulties of constructing a single, unproblematic vision of a history that does not exist. Even here, it seems that myths of victimhood and sacrifice again fulfill a function, just as they have so many times in the construction of the “imagined communities” that are modern nations, following the well-known analysis of Benedict Anderson, who, by the way, did not look very closely at the role of sacrifice.⁹

The Current Controversy and its Problems

There are many weighty arguments against the Naumann/Eisenman plan to reduce the number of pillars and add a museum to the memorial. A very important concern is the existing memorials in and outside of Berlin. On the one hand, there are memorials for former concentration camps around Berlin which, critics skeptical of the central memorial concept have long asserted, should have priority funding. On the other hand, there are already museums in the middle of Berlin that deal extensively with the central theme of the suggested “Museum of Remembrance.” There also exists the “Topography of Terror” (*Topographie des Terrors*), a permanent exhibition that was conceptualized as an international center for scholarly and personal research on the historic grounds of the Gestapo, SS-Leadership, and the main headquarters of the Reich’s Security (*Reichs-sicherheitshauptamt*). Since 1987, the exhibition has presented an exhibit about the history of the National Socialist machinery of persecution and extermination on the very property of the perpetrators. There is also the Jewish Museum, opened in the Daniel Libeskind Building in autumn 2000. With the plans for a state-subsidized *Museum der Erinnerung* in the center of the capital of Berlin, the already existing memorial sites are threatened with marginalization.¹⁰ The enthusiastic supporters of Eisenman’s last proposal (Eisenman II) have recently put forward the objection that art (“real” art, without any compromise) is more effective and more important than a

presentation of history in a museum, which they polemically dismiss as "mass education" (*Volkspädagogik*).¹¹ This objection does not invite a discussion—which it undoubtedly should—about the difficulties, limits, and problems of a representation of the Holocaust in a museum but asks instead for art to offer a definitive solution to the problems that have surfaced over the many years of controversy. There is danger not only in this group's objection that the responsibility of overcoming and representing history is given to "the artist," whom they perceive in the classical, traditional ideal of the artist-as-genius. But, at the same time, there is also danger in that such artistic representations of the Holocaust will be beyond any objective criticism and analysis. The problem is that works of art may also come to share the same problems faced by educators and museum exhibitions, namely that art works can promote consternation (*Betroffenheit*), instead of reasoning and understanding, and fail to serve as a necessary venue for facts to be presented from differing perspectives.

Even artists are part of and influenced by collective memory, a form of memory in which what is remembered and the signification of remembrance are connected with other pieces of memory and, by this process, the fragments are made coherent (*sinnhaft*). Collective memory lends itself to coherent interpretation and unity, according to Maurice Halbwachs, in order to secure shared identities.¹² Simultaneously, however, there is the danger of rejecting, forgetting, or repressing anything that may be perceived as threatening to this unity.

The Difficult Meanings of the German Term "Opfer"

This problem can be seen in the current description of Eisenman's proposal. The proposal "makes the hardly comprehensible paradoxes in the history of the city bearable."¹³ What are these paradoxes? Does it mean that in Berlin, as the capital of a united Germany, we are reminded of the history of National Socialism by the many traces of it all over the city, traces that are difficult to erase? Does it mean that those symbols that have served the Nazi state for its representation, such as the Brandenburg Gate, are well received and used today in the new Berlin Republic? Does it mean that the historical space of Berlin-as-capital functions as a fund of controversial and difficult memory? How could these contradictions be bearable? The critic continues that the proposal of the memorial includes "a universe of victims" (*ein Universum von Opfern*).¹⁴ It is still unclear who establishes the comprehensive totality. Does the term "victims" here

include the murdered homosexuals, Romany and Sinti, and the political opponents of the Nazi state, as well as the murdered Jews? Could it be that this proposal leads tacitly to an extension of the former exclusive purpose of a memorial for the murdered Jews? The author does not give any hints for such a conclusion. Do "the victims" also include Germans? Is it now possible for those who put up the memorial, who belong to the land of the perpetrators, to line up alongside the victims? The self-victimization of the Germans has already been described many times as a strategy to deflect responsibility and guilt after the collapse of the National Socialist state. That was also the criticism against the "Central Memorial" in the building of the *Neue Wache* on the boulevard Unter den Linden (opened in 1993). In this case, its official name, *Zentrale Gedenkstätte für die Opfer von Krieg und Gewaltherrschaft*, was considered too murky: critics asked that it be more precise, to speak of the murdered, gassed, killed, missing, and those who disappeared—instead of "victims"—in order to forget neither the way they died nor who bore responsibility for their fate.¹⁵

But the German term *Opfer* does have other meanings besides victims (see also Greg Eghigian's essay in this volume). One can translate it as "casualties" as well as "sacrifice" (the Latin term *sacrificium* means "to make holy"). The English language offers three words for which the German language has some variants, but *Opfer* is the dominant word, a term that encompasses all three different meanings.

Therefore, one could translate Eisenman's proposal as one that would include "a universe of sacrifices." Senseless mass murder is given a "meaning." The murder of the Jews and others could be interpreted in a way such that they would become a sacrifice for the new future of Germans, or a sacrifice for the founding of the Berlin Republic. The language, with its lack of differentiation, does leave the various interpretations open to speculation and, thus, the murder could possibly be received as a form of sacralization. Only the term of *Gründungsopfer* (founding sacrifice), introduced into the debate by the critics of the Berlin project years ago, has offered a chance to be precise.¹⁶ However, this opportunity was not (or at least hardly) seized by the dominant discourse, as we can read in the current descriptions of the proposals.

Through examining language and that which is tacitly, indeed thoughtlessly, perpetuated, it might become clear how mythical concepts (the sense and, perhaps, even the necessity of sacrifice) remain implicit in the politics of culture, and how they are cemented in the collective memory by simple repetition without any conscious understanding. This ap-



Fig. 3. *Pietà and Photographer*, in the *Neue Wache*, Berlin, Unter den Linden, 1993. Photograph by Paul Langrock.

plies even more strongly to images, to visual articulations of history as part of the practice of remembering, and to the given environment of a stony memory—or the memory of stone—of a city.

The First Central Memorial in the New Capital: “Die Neue Wache”

Before I come back to the proposals for the Central Memorial, let me first explain the problem of the discourse of *Opfer* with the example of the *Zentrale Gedenkstätte für die Opfer von Krieg und Gewaltherrschaft* (figure 3). It is, as I noted earlier, the first memorial that was built as a central site for remembrance in Berlin after the Wall came down in 1989–90 and following German unification, which is why it is worth discussing in the context of the proposals. In addition, the controversies surrounding the building layout of the *Neue Wache* cannot be overlooked as part of the whole debate on the plan for a central memorial for the murdered Jews. Still another reason for discussing the layout of the *Neue Wache* is the fact in the center of the memorial is a sculpture by the artist Käthe Kollwitz, enlarged to five times its original size. Kollwitz’s original sculpture created in 1937,

is 37 cm tall and bears the title "Mother with Dead Son" (*Mutter mit totem Sohn*) (figures 10 and 3). We see a squatting and bundled figure of a woman. We also see a naked male figure lying in her lap, as if looking for protection in his mother's lap, becoming almost one figure with his mother.

The erection of the Kollwitz sculpture in the newly designed *Neue Wache* was harshly criticized for many reasons. First, the sculpture of the *Mutter mit totem Sohn* was interpreted as pietà and therefore as a Christian icon. This may neglect followers of other religions, particularly Jews, who would be excluded from the new site for German remembrance. Second, critics maintained that the selection of this sculpture would cement the ideal of the woman as a person prepared to make sacrifices (*Opfer-Bereitschaft*), an ideal frequently invoked in times of war.¹⁷ Finally, it was argued that the *Opfer* (in the sense of sacrifice) of the murdered—either at the military front or in the gas chambers—was being linked to the symbol of woman as mother, as nature, and as well as of the nation as *Heimat* (home).¹⁸

The last two sets of criticisms show that the figure of the pietà has not exclusively belonged to Christian iconography. The message of the mother of Christ mourning his death on the cross and whose sacrifice promises redemption was secularized in the course of the twentieth century. We often find, for instance, the image of the mother mourning her son killed on the battlefield in war memorials, especially those erected after World War I. The transfer of the pietà into national iconographic representation implies a particular focus on a visual message: dying in war for the nation is comparable to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Dying as a sacrifice is reasonable and it promises redemption, and this also applies to soldiers in the same way: the sacrifice of Christ is considered as one worthy of emulation.

This suggests we speak, in this case, of a secularized religion or "redemptive narrative"¹⁹ that was preserved as an image and that has been passed on without notice or questioning. But it is not only a part of the German culture of remembrance. There is the obvious example of the Vietnam Women's Memorial in Washington, D.C., that was created in 1993 and follows the bequeathed ideal of the pietà.

The enlarged Kollwitz sculpture that was placed in the redesigned, post-unification *Neue Wache* rests where a number of special altars have stood. During the Weimar Republic, after the building lost its original purpose, it was decided to designate the building as a memorial to the soldiers who died in World War I. After a competition in which many well-known architects (such as Peter Behrens, Hans Poelzig, and Mies van der Rohe)



Fig. 4. *Neue Wache*, the redesigned inner room, 1931. Photograph courtesy Brandenburgisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege, Meßbildarchiv Berlin, Waldstadt.

took part, Heinrich Tessenow's proposal (figure 4) was selected: an altar-like block was set in the otherwise empty room. This particular form derives from a long tradition that goes back to the French Revolution. At the "Altar of the Fatherland" (*Altar des Vaterlandes*), the oath of national loyalty was sworn—the fatherland or death.²⁰ In the propaganda of the First World War, the altar played an important role, and in 1931, a golden wreath of oak leaves presented in a ray of light produced by a round opening in the roof was placed on the altar, thus sacralizing the room through a suggested connection to heaven. In 1933, a cross was attached to the wall behind the altar after pressure from the so-called *Volksgemeinschaft*. Tessenow's sacred room was thus made Christian again. In this design, it also served as a demonstration of power for the Nazi state.

After World War II, the *Neue Wache* was redecorated in the GDR as a memorial for the "Victims of War and Fascism" (*Opfer von Krieg und und Faschismus*) (figure 5). In 1962, a cut-glass cube with an eternal flame for the *Opfer* was installed where the altar with the wreath was formerly set. Of particular note is the fact that this flame had its counterpart in the western part of Berlin. On the extension of Unter den Linden, west of the Brandenburg Gate, there are two other flames. We find one at Theodor Heuss-Platz (figure 6) in a bowl for placing offerings whose flame is fuelled by gas. The flame was lit by the so-called *Heimatvertriebenen* (expellees from former Eastern German provinces) and was supposed to burn until the day of reunification. The other flame is a sculpture by Bernard Heiliger that also bears the name *Flamme* (flame) (figure 7). Erected in 1962, it was dedicated to "the spirit of freedom" and its "blazing work," as the critics remarked on the day of its unveiling.²¹ As an abstract sculpture, its significance is ambiguous. Its meaning however, alludes to tradition: flames, fire as symbol and medium of purification and renewal, a fire for sacrifice. One can say that a visual metaphor of sacrifice is cast here in bronze. Nevertheless, it is also noteworthy that a figure about to break out of the flames can, from a certain perspective, be recognized. It is reminiscent of Nike of Samothrace (figure 8), the traditional allegory of victory, who as a female figure has acquired a new meaning after the founding of nation states in Western Europe and in the United States.²²

This leads us back to the site of remembrance beyond Brandenburg Gate. Close to the *Neue Wache*, on a bridge (the *Schloßbrücke*), there is one among a series of sculptures from the 1850s that adopts the allegorical tradition of victory and, simultaneously, refers to the modern, secularized form of the pietà: it is "Nike carries the fallen warrior to Olympus"



Fig. 5. "Memorial to the Victims of Fascism and Militarism," in the *Neue Wache* after 1969. Photograph courtesy Landesbildstelle Berlin.



Fig. 6. "Memorial to Expellees," Berlin, Theodor-Heuss-Platz, 1955. Photograph by Silke Wenk.



Fig. 7. "Flame," by Bernhard Heiliger, Berlin, Straße des 17. Juni, 1962. Photograph by Silke Wenk.

(figure 9). We have a constellation similar to the Kollwitz figure: a female representation of the nation embraces the dead warrior, who seems to have found redemption in death. There is a marked difference between this sculpture from the time of a newly founded nation that used triumphal, female images of victory as memorials and the pietà of Kollwitz in the *Zentrale Gedenkstätte für die Opfer von Krieg und Gewaltherrschaft*. Obviously, in the last decade of the twentieth century there was no justification for a revival of the classical triumphant imagery. The promise of redemption through subordination to the idea of nation seems no longer tenable in a united Germany. There is no direct representation of a soldierly and heroic masculinity, as is apparent in the group of sculptures on the Schloßbrücke.

The silhouette of the female figure dominates Kollwitz's figure in the *Neue Wache* (figure 10). She offers the main plane of projection. The dead son appears to melt into the embracing figure. Death is not transfigured with victory. Nevertheless, the figure offers an idea of death as a form of being at home, in mother's lap. The former chancellor Helmut Kohl and his advisor Christoph Stölzl (then-director of the German Historical Museum), who were responsible for the erection of the sculpture, described



Fig. 8. "Nike of Samothrace," second century A.D. Photograph courtesy Bildarchiv Marburg.



Fig. 9. "Nike Carries the Fallen Warrior to Olympus," by August Wedrow, Schloßbrücke, Berlin. Photograph by Silke Wenk.



Fig. 10. "Mother with Dead Son," by Käthe Kollwitz, 1937. Enlarged version in the *Neue Wache*, 1994. Courtesy Deutsches Historisches Museum–Bildarchiv, photograph by A. C. Theil, Licht und Schatten GmbH.

the figure as being "sentimental."²³ Presumably they referred to the comforting feature of the image, the offer of security in a symbiotic relationship that need not accept any distinction. This sculpture's offer, which took the place of the altars of the fatherland, can be interpreted as an offer to imagine oneself as victim or as suffering, and, simultaneously, to feel secure in a union. This visual message, however, contradicts an additional text on a wall beside the entrance initially installed in response to protests, that refers to all the different kinds of *Opfer* as murdered (see previously, "The Difficult Meanings of the German Term 'Opfer'").

The Central "Denkmal für die Ermordeten Juden Europas"

The erection of the *Neue Wache* as a central memorial was the beginning of the reconstruction of the capital of Berlin and its center (*Mitte*). The construction of a monument for the murdered Jews of Europe has to be seen in this context (figures 11 and 1). The government's involvement



Fig. 11. Site plan. Courtesy *Der Spiegel*, Nr. 15, 1997.

in this second monument in the center of Berlin is a result of the debate surrounding the *Neue Wache*, requested by Jewish lobbyists as a counterpoint to the latter. However, the *Vorgeschichte* started at a different point. Let me summarize this story very briefly.

The first initiative for a monument to the murdered Jews of Europe began in 1988, at a time when nobody knew that the Berlin Wall would come down. A group of West Berlin intellectuals called "Perspektive Berlin e.V." strongly supported building such a monument for the murdered Jews in various publications.²⁴ In 1988 the question of a site for the monument remained open. The fall of the Wall was about to answer this question. With the unification of Germany, the plan for a central monument emerged, and it was here that the real problems began. It was problematic in so far as the descendants of the perpetrators wanted to create a monument to the victims that was to serve simultaneously as a national monument.²⁵

The installation of a monument on the ground of a former strip of the Wall near Brandenburg Gate was the contentious issue from the beginning. The choice of a site near the location of Hitler's former bunker and situated—according to the chief proponent of the site, Lea Rosh—"next to the former [*Reichskanzlei*] where the murder of the Jews had its origin," was criticized by various parties. The mythic dimension of this choice was clear: the myth of the Führer is inherently rewritten. "Nicht ich, Adolf Hitler ist es gewesen" ("It wasn't me, but Adolf Hitler who did it")²⁶ is the catchphrase that best summarizes the strategy that has been part of a general collective repression since 1945: dictator-as-seducer, on the other side, the people-as-victims. This was an integral part of the widespread "inability to mourn" following the Third Reich which has been analyzed by Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich.²⁷

There are similarities with the case of the *Neue Wache*. However, after German unification, something new occurred. The plan for the monument for the murdered Jews on a central site in the middle of Berlin signifies several things. It not only camouflages the history of the city's division (accomplished by covering the strip of the Wall) but also reestablishes the former significance of the capital's center. The notion "central" implies that everything else belongs to the periphery, a problem that is further exacerbated by the Naumann/Eisenman concept. The choice of the site for the memorial for the murdered Jews integrates it into a historical system of significance, and it is, in turn, determined by the environment of historical significations not easily rewritten or erased. Let us visualize the chosen site: it is next to the Brandenburg Gate and the old East-West axis

whose value was increased by the building of the central memorial at the *Neue Wache* in a united Germany. And it is near the point where the North-South axis was supposed to intersect with the other axis, according to Nazi plans. Thus, old images of *Mitte* (the city's center) determine current urban planning, planning that had already been part of the Nazi redesigning of the *Reichshauptstadt* (Reich capital). The point where two axes cross can be interpreted as the navel of a place, corresponding to "Omphalos" and belonging to ancient concepts of city planning.²⁸ The navel, so to speak, as the place of origin to which we should always be able to return is the place of the community, where people can reassure themselves of their belonging.

National Socialist urban planning referred to the signs of Berlin-as-traditional-center-of-power by surpassing its monumentality with an even greater monumentality. By constructing the *Reichskanzlei* near the point where the two axes cross, the Nazis tried to gain historical legitimacy. In their gigantomaniac buildings the *Volksgemeinschaft* was to find its identification, its "navel." Current plans are in danger of perpetuating this narcissistic structure. The tradition of the architectural and sculptural system of signs is not questioned. The artist Horst Hoheisel drew attention to this fact by his contribution at the first competition. His proposal referred to the initiators' demand for the *Bußbereitschaft* (readiness to atone) of Germans.²⁹ The Brandenburg Gate was to be demolished, the stones to be ground up, and the dust to be sprinkled on the site of the memorial. His proposal disposed of one of the most important, older national symbols that had been valorized with new significance by German unification. Hoheisel asked: "[W]ould the nation of perpetrators be ready to sacrifice this national symbol?"³⁰ The question was intended to subvert the language of "Opfer," of sacrifice and victim, and it could find only one answer: No. The irony of this question made it clear that it was not intended to prove in practice the *Bußbereitschaft* of Germans, but rather to draw attention to a symbolic policy within and concerned with an important grouping of signs that might be visited by tourists and presented by politicians.

The "Memorial for the Murdered Jews in Europe" is supposed to be central and German, and therefore a sign of German identity. This identity, however, cannot be developed through a national history that also includes the genocide of the Jews and others. Such a project can only produce problematic solutions. Characteristically, the U.S. Holocaust Museum in Washington and Yad Vashem in Jerusalem were mentioned as models for

the German project in the lead-in to the competition.³¹ "We want to have precisely what Israel has": this was a reason that was mentioned again and again, but it was generally ignored and is still ignored in the current plans for connecting a memorial and a museum. More prevalent, however, is the sentiment that there necessarily has to be something else in the country of the perpetrators in contrast to the state of Israel or the United States. It becomes clear by the reference to the models in Israel and in the United States that a construction of a new memorial that is received as being a national monument cannot refer positively to German history. Its history does not offer the possibility of a reconstruction of an unbroken national identity. Coping with that trauma by imitating the victims demonstrates both helplessness and flight into arrogance.

This problem also came up with the proposals that were submitted for the first and the second competitions. There is a tendency among the second, and even the third, postwar generation in the land of the perpetrators to identify with the persecuted and murdered victims. Critics such as Eike Geisel have spoken of a tendency on the part of the descendants of the murderers to annex the signs of the murdered. He calls them *Erbschleicher* (legacy hunters) who misappropriate the tradition of the "adopted/annexed ancestors" (*annektierten Vorfahren*) for a "collective self-therapy" (*kollektive Selbsttherapie*).³²

An excellent example of this is the original design of Christine Jakob-Marks et al., (figure 12) a monumental tombstone that was to cover the entire site, which received first prize in the initial competition in 1995.³³ It called for stones from Massada to be placed on a large memorial slab. After a while these stones were removed from the proposal. But it would be useful to discuss how it was possible to advance a proposal that placed stones from Massada in the center of Berlin in the first place and why this proposal was not found spurious earlier. When a German identity cannot be built out of German history, references to other histories become necessary; signs of the murdered Jews and their culture seem to take the place of it. Some of the proposals give voice unintentionally (almost as Freudian slips) to such attempts of appropriation in the service of founding a distinctive identity grounded in history. For example, we see variations on the Star of David or a simple mixing of alleged "Jewish" symbols with Nazi symbols that have themselves become clichés. As such, the latter are therefore not useful in rethinking history but rather are themselves perpetuating myths about Nazi politics.³⁴ A quite extreme example, which has the merit of making much of this visible, is the proposed memorial



Fig. 12. Draft of memorial by Christine Jakob-Marks et al., sketch in the exhibition of proposals in the first competition, 1995. Photograph by Silke Wenk.

from the group of artists working with M. E. Nobbe.³⁵ They planned a path in the shape of a swastika, edged by a thorny hedge of red roses. At the western end, one would step onto a piece of pavement from Auschwitz. Walking over this swastika-shaped path could be interpreted as the stations of the cross, thus making it possible for the members of the nation of perpetrators to find redemption for German history through a symbolic performance of suffering.

It is possible to analyze such proposals as Freudian slips or as parapraxes that are, according to Freud, produced by contradictory intentions interfering with one another. That the planned memorial for the murdered Jews should be both central and German alone makes for contradictory intentions. Attempting to make these conflicting desires compatible produces slips of the (visual) tongue, comparable with the juggling act involved in transposing the wish for German identity onto philosemitism. In that sense, most of the results of the competition for the Berlin memorial are inevitably "embarrassing" (*peinlich*) or obscene (as critics continually emphasized). They make visible the longing for a coherent and unbroken national identity for a country where no possibility of positive, unambivalent identification is to be found in history.

There also exists in the memorial proposals a specific form of fascination with metaphors of catastrophe. Visual metaphors such as deep water, big holes, or craters may be read as attempts to represent the unrepre-

sentable, but they are not only problematic in their confusion of catastrophes in nature with historical and social events. They are also problematic because they imagine situations in which people could become victims of incomprehensible circumstances or find an imagined community in the experience of horror. For instance, one memorial proposal shows a Ferris wheel consisting not of gondolas but of freight cars like the cattle trucks used to transport victims to concentration camps.³⁶ Such examples reveal the wish to imagine oneself in a situation outside history or time, the only place where an unbroken national identity can be conceived.

These non-figurative proposals are comparable to the Kollwitz sculpture at the *Neue Wache*. They all seem to share a kind of negative utopia leading to a regression beyond guilt. Not only can a continuity of the tendency toward a German self-victimization be identified, but also a remarkable shift: rearticulating the history of the land of the perpetrators as the history of victims seems to be obsolete. It rather seems that a vanishing point beyond German history is sought. However, such a space beyond cannot be disconnected from German history. This is the problem found in almost every submitted proposal: history is about to repeat itself in this (self-)identification with the (Jewish) victims by obscuring the party of the perpetrators. "The Jews" and their culture are about to be used again in the articulation of the German self. This time, it is not done by exclusion and extermination but by appropriation of the signs of the victims. And this tendency toward appropriation can live on in various visual—and also spatial—metaphors.

Victimization and Sacrifice

I would like to give another and final example from the first competition. This example makes clear how self-victimization can also include a tendency to sacralize the murdered. The proposal of the architect Simon Unger (figure 13) was awarded the second-place prize at the first competition.³⁷ The proposal works without standard iconlike signs or symbols, but it presents an architectural conception. A cubic space that is accessible from all sides consists of 85-meter-long walls (about 280 feet) made of girders. The names of the extermination camps are perforated into these girders. One has to pass underneath the girders to go upstairs, onto an elevated platform, where one can then read the names directly and not in mirror images, as is the case from the outside.

Clearly, this proposal is designed in the tradition of sacred buildings. It

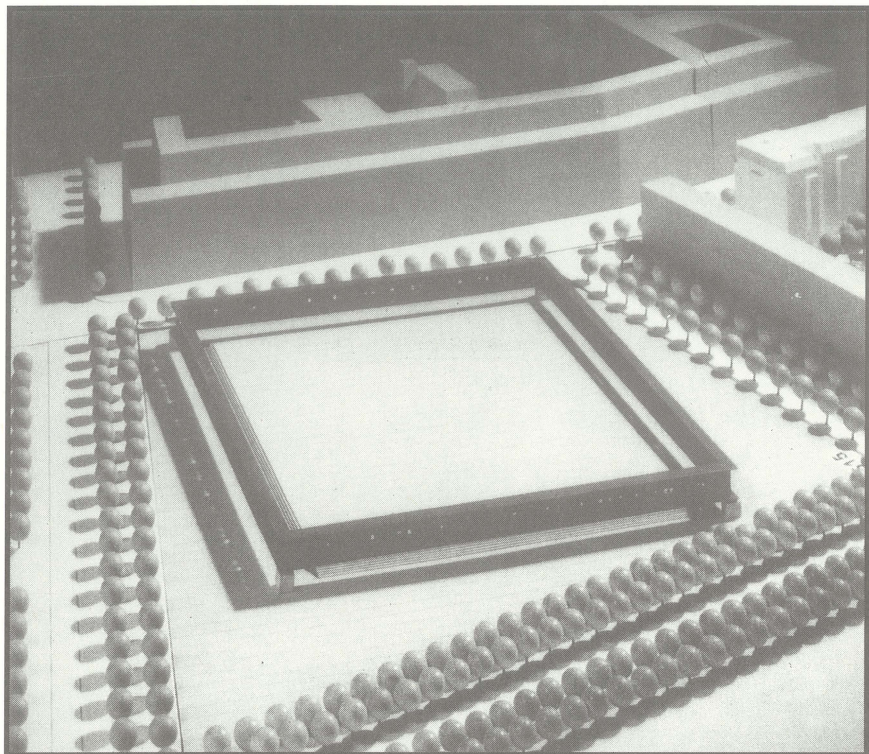


Fig. 13. Draft of memorial by Simon Unger et al., first competition, 1995. Photograph of model courtesy *Künstlerischer Wettbewerb Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, Kurzdokumentation*, ed. Senatsverwaltung für Bau- und Wohnungswesen (Berlin, n.d.).

takes up elements of the classical temple architecture that served time and again as part of the self-representation of the modern nation-state. It is the tradition of the "Altar of the Fatherland" (*Altar des Vaterlandes*) that I referred to earlier. This tradition was simply cultivated by the citation of the monumental temple architecture from a certain time period. The same applies to the period of National Socialism, for example Paul Ludwig Troost's "Temple of the Eternal Watch" (*Tempel der Ewigen Wache*) at Königsplatz in Munich and the proposal for an "Honorary Memorial of the Reich" (*Reichsehrenmal*) by the Nazi architect Wilhelm Kreis. Dead German soldiers were to be commemorated here as a sacrifice for the German Reich.

In Unger's proposal, those murdered by the Nazi state take that place.

Moreover, the sacred space that is cut off from profane city life offers visitors the opportunity to assume a position that blurs the difference between being a victim and sacrificing others. Walking up, visitors enter the sacred, limited, and elevated space after leaving behind the present and the future; up there they are confronted with the names of the locations of extermination, above history, under the open sky. The commemoration of the murdered becomes comparable to an offering at an altar. In this space, cut off from everyday life, the murder can be celebrated as a *sacrificium* for the future.

But this proposal was not carried out either. Only invited artists were allowed to participate in the second competition, and the winner was the Eisenman proposal mentioned previously. And thus I return to my starting point.

Victim and Sacrifice as Being Part Of Nature

The Eisenman proposal (figures 14 and 2) seems to be beyond any problems and embarrassment, provided that the critics are believed. There is no appropriation of signs of the murdered, no repetition of visual metaphors of abyss or catastrophe—at least, so it seems at first sight. Nevertheless, a supporter mentioned that the form of the site's design, using pillars of various height, would include a "Universe of Victims/Sacrifice" (*Universum von Opfern*).

It was often said with regard to the proposals of Eisenman and Serra that individuals feel reminded of a Jewish cemetery. Eisenman rejected this association. He said he had never visited a Jewish cemetery and certainly not the one in Prague that was often mentioned.³⁸ It is known that intention and effect do not have to correspond. And yet, this association only represents one layer of meaning. Another supporting voice speaks of there being an association with the forums of Roman emperors. The Eisenman field of pillars is almost "an expanse of rubble from the time of antiquity." With it we would be confronted by "fragments of a destroyed culture" (*Torsi einer untergegangen Kultur*).³⁹ Another author wrote of an "archaic primordial phenomenon" in the Eisenman proposal.⁴⁰ It is known that a site of such ancient or "archaic" remains not only is a favorite place for tourists to visit but also has always played an important role as an allegedly authentic remnant of a culture and referred to as its "origin." In this way, the murder of the Jews and the destruction of their culture would be cast off to a faraway past. At the same time, there is the question of whether it can be consid-

ered as a positive point of reference for a future to be defined anew, just as Western European myths of origin have turned to classical antiquity, for instance the Roman forum, as the "cradle of civilization."

Consequently, the visual metaphor of the field of pillars articulates its search for identification according to yet another (national) narrative of origin. By appearing as archaic or ancient, the mythic location of origin stays uncertain and, simultaneously—at least at first sight—unproblematic. And yet, a metaphoric form of appropriation of the culture of those murdered can be identified here as well. The murder of the Jews seems to become a cause around which Germans reconstruct their own myth of the past. The field of pillars, it has been said, reminds one of the "loss" (*Verlust*). The historian Y. Michal Bodemann has complained that the Berlin project for a memorial is not so much about the remembrance of the crime, but rather about mourning a loss, the "loss of a human resource for culture and economy."⁴¹ Placed in the context of an historically developed culture of remembrance, the Eisenman proposal and its reception only confirms this criticism (figure 14).

At the same time, this very "loss" appears to be articulated in a comforting or reconciling way, as if all *Opfer* are included. This is most evident in the metaphors repeated throughout the description of Eisenman's concept: "field" of pillars. Field is not only a makeshift expression for the site but also a productive metaphor determining the form of commemoration itself. This can be seen in the subsequent association with wheat in *Weizenfeld* (wheat field),⁴² and in the idioms *wogendes Feld* (waving field), *wogendes Säulenfeld* (waving pillars on a field), and, finally, *Wogen der Erinnerung* (waves of memory).⁴³ Moreover these images can be easily transformed into a short story about nature: "pillars that stick out in a wavelike fashion, as if the wind had blown over a corn field."⁴⁴ The displacement and condensation in moving from a description of the arrangement of pillars to metaphors of nature should make us think. We are led from the mass murder of the Jews to the field of pillars, and, finally, to comforting descriptions of the cycles of nature. Murder becomes sacrifice, a naturalized sacrifice, eternally demanded by nature in its rhythm of death and rebirth.⁴⁵

In *Masses and Power*, Elias Canetti has characterized wheat as "symbol for the masses" (*Massensymbol*):

Corn is in many ways the reduction of a forest . . . It is as flexible as grass. It is unprotected from the wind. Every stem gives way to



Fig. 14. "Waving Pillars on a Field," Eisenman draft proposal. Photograph courtesy *Der Tagesspiegel*, Berlin, August 26, 1998.

the movement of the wind, the whole field seems to bend at once. It is pressed down by storm, and it stays like that for a long time. But it has the mysterious ability to stand up again. And if it is not too worn out, it is suddenly up again, the whole field. Whatever happens, it happens to all of the stems. Mankind's equality in the face of death is often expressly read into the image of corn. But it collapses *at once* and reminds therefore of a quite specific death: their common death in a battle, as whole rows are thinned out—the field as a battlefield.⁴⁶

It was often mentioned, especially after the years of 1989–90, that Germans after 1945 experienced a certain "negative nationalism." By this was meant that it was only possible to think of a German nation within the context of the crimes of the Nazi period. However, the expression "negative nationalism" elides a profound problem. It is the problem of constructing any nation, any "imagined community" and its foundational, uninterrupted history, in order to establish a common identity in face of destruction and murder in history as it really happened. In such construc-

tion, myths of sacrifice have always played an important role. Although this is not characteristic only of German history, in German history it has become especially obvious and stark.

Postscript

In June, 1999, the German *Bundestag* finally decided on the establishment of a memorial for the murdered Jews of Europe. A large majority (314 representatives) voted in favor of the Eisenman plan *as well as* for an information center. Exactly 209 representatives voted against the Eisenman plan and fourteen abstained. Among those speaking on the matter, only two voted for a total renunciation of a memorial for the murdered Jews.

A *Bundestag* resolution entrusted a public foundation with all remaining design questions. Alongside the latter organization, the state government of Berlin and the *Förderkreis zu Errichtung des Denkmals* with Lea Rosh are also supposed to be involved. In the fall of 1999, the Naumann plan became a new point of contention for the foundation.

On the occasion of the *Bundestag* decision in June, 1999, Culture Minister Naumann had spoken of beginning construction in January, 2000. On January 27, 2000, construction began, albeit as a purely symbolic act. Actual construction at the site only began in October, 2001. In November, 2001, the "Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas" organized an interdisciplinary symposium about the "Ort der Information" (Information Center). The controversy continued, this time regarding the design of the Information Center situated below the Eisenman pillar field. A publication is scheduled for summer, 2002.⁴⁷

NOTES

1. The entries of the first competition from 1994 are published in *Künstlerischer Wettbewerb Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, Kurzdokumentation*, ed. Senatsverwaltung für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, Abteilung Städtebau und Architektur, Referat III D (Berlin: Senatsverwaltung für Bau- und Wohnungswesen, n.d.). For the discussions see also *Der Wettbewerb für das "Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas". Eine Streitschrift*, ed. Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst Berlin (Berlin: Verlag der Kunst, 1995); Michael Cullen, ed., *Das Holocaust-Mahnmal. Dokumentation einer Debatte* (München, Zürich: Pendo Verlag, 1999); Ute Heimrod, Günter Schlusche, and Horst Seferens, eds., *Der Denkmalstreit—Das Denkmal? Die Debatte um das Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas* (Mainz: Philo Verlagsgesellschaft, 1999).

2. Eduard Beaucamp, in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, November 18, 1997.

3. *Ibid.*, February 3, 1998.

4. See the documentation including an interview with Michael Nauman and Peter Eisenman in *Die Woche*, January 22, 1999.

5. Jochen Gerz, "Systematischer Ideenklau," in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, January 29, 1999.

6. In summer of 1999 the Deutsche Bundestag had to decide on six motions—three supported the Eisenman proposal, one supported the proposal to build a sign with the inscription *Du sollst nicht töten* (You shall not kill) in Hebrew (a proposal that was made years ago and was intensely criticized because of its presumptuousness), one motion to build a memorial for all murdered victims of the Nazi state, and finally a motion proposed by a group of parliamentarians belonging to the CDU (Christian Democratic Union) and the CSU (Christian Social Union) renounced the idea of a memorial altogether—*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, May 7, 1999.

7. "Holocaust" means *Brandopfer* (burnt offering) and "means sacrifice, God, purpose." See Omar Bartov, *Murder in our Midst: The Holocaust, Industrial Killing, and Representation* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 58.

8. See Akademie der Künste Berlin, ed., *Streit um die neue Wache. Zur Gestaltung einer zentralen Gedenkstätte* (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, 1993); Daniela Büchten and Anja Frey, eds., *Im Irrgarten deutscher Geschichte: Die Neue Wache 1818–1993* (Berlin: Schriftenreihe des Aktiven Museums Faschismus und Widerstand in Berlin, Vol. 1, 1994).

9. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), as well as Peter Berghoff, *Der Tod des politischen Kollektivs: Politische Religion und das Sterben und Töten für Volk, Nation und Rasse* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1997).

10. Cf. the statement of the "Arbeitsgemeinschaft KZ-Gedenkstätten" in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 3, 1999. See also Volkhard Knigge in *Die Tageszeitung*, February 24, 1999; Michael Naumann, "Blick in die Tiefe der Täterschaft," in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 1, 1999.

11. For example, see Stefan Reinecke, "Die falsche Idee, elegant umgesetzt. Der neue Kompromißentwurf für das Holocaust-Mahnmal," in *Die Tageszeitung*, January 20, 1999.

12. Maurice Halbwachs, *Das Gedächtnis und seine sozialen Bedingungen* (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 1985).

13. Eduard Beaucamp in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, February 3, 1998.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Reinhard Koselleck, in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, August 23, 1993.

16. See for example Kathrin Hoffmann-Curtius in *Colloquium Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas. Dokumentation*, ed. Senatsverwaltung für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Kultur (Berlin: Senatsverwaltung, n.d.), 9–10.

17. See the articles of Kathrin Hoffmann-Curtius and Viktoria Schmidt-Linsenhoff in *Streit um die neue Wache*, ed. Akademie der Künste Berlin (Berlin: Akademie der Künste, n.d.).

18. See Silke Wenk, "Die 'Mutter mit totem Sohn' in der Mitte Berlins" in *Käthe Kollwitz—Schmerz und Schuld: Eine motivgeschichtliche Betrachtung*, ed. Gudrun Fritsch (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1995), 84–93.

19. See Dominick La Capra, *Representing the Holocaust. History, Theory, Trauma* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1994), 171–72.

20. See Kathrin Hoffmann-Curtius, "Altäre des Vaterlandes. Kultstätten nationaler Gemeinschaft in Deutschland seit der Französischen Revolution" in *Anzeiger des Ger-*

manischen Nationalmuseums (Nürnberg: Germanisches National Museum, 1990), 283–308; Kathrin Hoffmann-Curtius, "Opfermodelle am Altar des Vaterlandes" in *Schrift der Flammen: Opfermythen und Weiblichkeitsentwürfe im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Gudrun Kohn-Waechter (Berlin: Orlanda Verlag, 1991), 57–92.

21. See Silke Wenk, *Versteinerte Weiblichkeit: Allegorien in der Skulptur der Moderne* (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau, 1996), 221–68.

22. *Ibid.*, 47–130.

23. See Christoph Stölzl, ed., *Die Neue Wache Unter den Linden: Ein deutsches Mahnmal im Wandel der Geschichte* (Berlin: Koehler & Amelang, 1993).

24. See Förderkreis zur Errichtung eines Denkmals für die ermordeten Juden Europas e.V., ed., *Ein Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas* (Berlin: Bürgerinitiative, n.d.); Bürgerinitiative Perspektive Berlin e.V., ed., *Ein Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas: Dokumentation 1988–1995* (Berlin: Bürgerinitiative, 1995).

25. Lea Rosh, *Ein Denkmal*, ed. Bürgerinitiative, (Berlin: Bürgerinitiative, n.d.), 6.

26. I quote the title of a stage play by the Theater zum Westlichen Stadthirschen, Berlin.

27. Alexander and Magarete Mitscherlich, *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern* (Munich and Zurich: Piper, 1977).

28. See Bruno Kauhsen Omphalos, *Zum Mittelpunktgedanken in Architektur und Städtebau, dargestellt an ausgewählten Beispielen* (Munich: Scaneg, 1988).

29. See Rosh, *Ein Denkmal*.

30. Horst Hoheisel in *Künstlerischer Wettbewerb Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, Kurzdokumentation*, No. 1352, first round of the competition.

31. See Rosh in *Künstlerischer Wettbewerb Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, Kurzdokumentation*, No. 1352, first round of the competition.

32. Eike Geisel in *Konkret* 5 (1995).

33. See *Künstlerischer Wettbewerb Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, Kurzdokumentation*, No. 1150, last round of the competition.

34. For example, see the entries of Dani Karavan et al., *Künstlerischer Wettbewerb Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, Kurzdokumentation*, No. 1356, third round of the competition; of Erika Klage, *Künstlerischer Wettbewerb Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, Kurzdokumentation*, No. 1279, second round of the competition; of Heribert Heere et al., *Künstlerischer Wettbewerb Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, Kurzdokumentation*, No. 1050, first round of the competition; and of Evangelos Sanganas et al., *Künstlerischer Wettbewerb Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, Kurzdokumentation*, first round of the competition.

35. Michael Eduard Nobbe et al., *Künstlerischer Wettbewerb Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, Kurzdokumentation*, No. 1365, first round of the competition.

36. Richard Gruber et al., *Künstlerischer Wettbewerb Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, Kurzdokumentation*, No. 1456, first round of the competition.

37. See *ibid.*, first prize.

38. See Thomas Rathnow, "Fülle ohne Lehre, Diskussion mit den Mahnmal-Künstlern Eisenman und Serra," *Der Tagesspiegel*, February 15, 1998.

39. Heinrich Wefing, "Triumph über den Kleinmut. Friedhof einer ermordeten Kultur: Eisenmans überarbeiteter Entwurf des Holocaust-Mahnmals," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, August 26, 1998.

40. Eduard Beaucamp, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, August 16, 1998.

41. Y. Michal Bodemann, *Der Tagesspiegel*, November 1, 1997.

42. *Der Tagesspiegel*, February 15, 1998.

43. Ibid.

44. Harald Fricke, *Die Tageszeitung*, January 16 and 17, 1999.

45. By the way, the metaphor of the field for a memorial of the Holocaust is not new at all. In the first competition, a proposal by Hermann Pohlman was submitted that already suggested the installation of a cornfield that was supposed to be affiliated with a research institute for the history of the Holocaust.

"The corn field is understood as an image of the organic growth and passing away of nature, as 'image of innocence,' as image of the bread that gives life. It calls for contemplation of original, natural and all common values." See *Künstlerischer Wettbewerb Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, Kurzdokumentation*, No. 1062, first competition round. However, this proposal was not singled out in the first round by the jury. The same was true of "Blutacker" (field with blood): "A field with waves as red as blood, always in movement . . . The monument consists of a corn field and of a lighted hall underneath it." This proposal by Martin Rosenthal and others was at least discussed by the jury until the third round (*Künstlerischer Wettbewerb Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, Kurzdokumentation*, No. 1105, third round of the competition).

46. Elias Canetti, *Masse und Macht* (Frankfurt/M: Fischer, 1996), 98-99.

47. It will be published as volume 1 of the "Schriftenreihe der Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas."

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