

## Introduction

David Bathrick and Anson Rabinbach

The essays in the present issue are from a two-day symposium organized by Dorothea von Mücke in May 2007 to celebrate the achievements of Andreas Huyssen as scholar and teacher on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday. The participating speakers as well as much of the audience were colleagues and former doctoral students from various fields who have had the privilege of working closely with Andreas over the years. It was no surprise that he chose that sort of venue, and those who know him well understood why. The event was not a conference, nor was it what the Germans call a *Tagung*. What it turned out to be, in a very moving way, was a genuine symposium, which, one definition tells us, is an academic event or a style of university class characterized by an openly discursive format, rather than a lecture and question-and-answer format. While he did not give a paper, Andreas was very much involved in doing what he does so well in such a setting, namely, sharing his extraordinary knowledge, listening to every word, taking issue when there was an issue to take, and, at the conclusion, summarizing and synthesizing what we had or had not achieved during the previous two days.

Certainly, these are traits that we, the other editors at *New German Critique*, have come to value and rely on over the years. Andreas joined and became a full editor of *NGC* not long after its founding in 1973. His first article ever in English, “The Cultural Politics of Pop: Reception and Critique of US Pop Art in the Federal Republic of Germany,” appeared in our fourth issue and was important, even prescient, for a number of reasons. First, it announced

themes and sensibilities that, with the perseverance of Andreas and Miriam Hansen, became fundamental to the journal's purpose. Our concern from the very outset had focused on the "historical avant-garde" of the 1920s and 1930s, seeing in the political and cultural implications of the Brecht-Lukács debate—as well as in the theoretical critiques of orthodox cultural Marxism in the writings of such thinkers as Karl Korsch (*Marxism and Philosophy*), the young Georg Lukács (*History and Class Consciousness*), Walter Benjamin, and Ernst Bloch—alternative possibilities for a revolutionary aesthetics. The virtue of Andreas's pop essay, however, was that it sought to widen our focus so as to mediate the seeming irreconcilable differences between the all-encompassing critique by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno of the capitalist culture industry and the more modulated efforts by Benjamin, Bertolt Brecht, and even Herbert Marcuse to develop an art and a politics from within contemporary mass culture. "Only from such a synthesis," writes Andreas in 1975, "can we hope to develop a theory and praxis leading eventually to the integration of art into the material life process once called for by Marcuse."<sup>1</sup> This focus on potentially critical and resistant dimensions of post-World War II culture was expanded with the special issue (no. 33 and way oversized) on modernity and postmodernity. As *NGC* developed its position in the debate about modernism and modernity in intense discussions over time, Andreas was crucial in conceptualizing and editing this influential issue, which went beyond the binary opposition between the Habermas and Lyotard camps so characteristic of the early 1980s. Both the essay on pop and the issue on postmodernism marked a trajectory of Andreas's work and of *NGC* that consistently pushed against the limits of traditional literary and historical studies and simultaneously challenged certain *idées reçues* of current theoretical discourse.

In the larger sense, Andreas's extraordinary ability to synthesize and, in so doing, remap whole areas of established knowledge has made him a giant in contemporary cultural and literary studies today. His work on postmodernism, memory, urban studies, and, more recently, global culture has quite simply shaped and in some cases initiated areas of inquiry in which we work.

Our symposium and the ensuing issue was designed as a forum in which to ask how one might think of German culture between 1945 and 1989 if one framed it as part of the larger issues of Cold War culture. How does the explicit

1. Andreas Huyssen, "The Cultural Politics of Pop: Reception and Critique of US Pop Art in the Federal Republic of Germany," *New German Critique*, no. 4 (1975): 95.

focus on the Cold War alter our understanding of post–World War II German culture? Can one get beyond the usual inward-looking focus of national literatures? Can this focus help us think beyond divisions by generations and political chronology: 1945, 1949, 1961, 1968, 1989? How does reframing the postwar period in this way affect our understanding of the legacies of modernism and the historical avant-gardes? These are some of the questions one might want to keep in mind while reading the following essays.

Eric Rentschler’s reading of Wolfgang Staudte’s *Murderers Are among Us* (1946), postwar Germany’s first feature film, focuses on a work situated at a moment prior to, but also on the cusp of, an emerging Cold War culture. Accepted by the Soviets after being turned down by both British and American approval agencies, Staudte’s attempt to confront the German past is remarkably devoid of the ideological constraints that soon impinged on filmmakers on both sides of the East-West divide. In the West we find a rapidly growing focus on German victimization in lieu of war crimes perpetrated by Germans. Within the antifascist cultural politics of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), there is a focus on communist victimization and a dearth of treatment of Jewish extermination.

Rentschler’s historicization of the imagery at work in *The Murderers Are among Us* reveals the extent to which this film revives long-standing German forms of mythical thinking that defer to fate and destiny rather than uphold the power of human agency. At the same time, Rentschler also acknowledges the extent to which this first “rubble film” addresses issues soon disavowed in a growing Cold War divide.

German filmmakers were not the only ones who made rubble films in Berlin. The German-born American director Billy Wilder made a love comedy situated in the rubble of Berlin. David Bathrick’s contribution examines three films that Wilder was involved in making during the early postwar period. The first, *Death Mills* (1945), was a short documentary he edited about the concentration camps. The other two, which he directed and coscripted, were the comedies *A Foreign Affair* (1948) and *One, Two, Three* (1961). Bathrick’s reading focuses on “what these films suggest about Wilder’s changing relationship to postwar Germany and how these changes dovetail with, in part resist but also give comedic articulation to, an emerging and then dominant Cold War culture.”

If Wilder’s two Berlin feature films both frame and grapple with the Cold War’s first stage, concluded quite literally by the building of the Wall in 1961, Thomas Pynchon’s look to the rubble of Berlin in *Gravity’s Rainbow* (1973) seems to evoke, so Eric Bulson asserts, its own historical contingencies.

Bulson excavates a convincing and potentially controversial reading of Pynchon's locus classicus as a book in which the fear of nuclear war in the future is played out in Pynchon's cities of the past. In dialogue with W. G. Sebald's lecture "Air War and Literature" (1997) as well as Jörg Friedrich's *Brand (Fire)*, (2002), Bulson suggests that there has been, among some critics, a tendency to downplay, perhaps even to ignore, the ways that Pynchon has dealt with ethical questions about the allied air raids. Bulson's "supernatural history of destruction" argues for the importance of literature and fantasy as a way to represent a specificity that is at once the past and the possible future of absolute annihilation.

David L. Pike's exploration of the "spatial metaphors" of Cold War Berlin includes a panorama of representations focusing vaguely on the Wall that defined both local and global division during the twenty-eight years of its existence and on the tunnels that were said "both to echo and to subvert that division." While this coupling of wall and tunnel will occupy what we would designate as the second phase of Cold War Berlin, Pike begins his essay with an intriguing look at the spy tunnels under Vienna and Berlin in the immediate postwar period. Not surprisingly, *The Third Man* (1949) helps create a metaphorical grid for an underworld that defies, corrupts, and even overcomes the surface mappings. The building of the Berlin Wall in turn calls into being two coexisting tunnel types: those used for escape and those used for gathering intelligence. Pike's encyclopedic knowledge of varying representations of tunnel and wall includes a wealth of interpretive efforts via novel and film to grasp this dimension of Cold War culture.

If the metaphors of Cold War culture are often articulated in irreconcilable binaries frozen in division—the iron curtain, the Berlin Wall, and the Cold War itself being their best-known articulation—it is indeed refreshing to come across an author writing in the 1950s whose literary habitus is grounded in "literary détente." The German novelist Wolfgang Koeppen is one such figure, argues Klaus R. Scherpe, who convincingly demonstrates how Koeppen's travelogues, based on trips to Russia in 1958 and the United States in 1959, communicate an openness of attitude by virtue of their style. Koeppen's travel prose is nonnarrative and descriptive in a nonjudgmental way; as Scherpe would have it, the narrative voice is "somewhat naive, apolitical, and always open to being astonished by what he sees." This in turn does not mean that he has no opinion about what he reports. Rather, "a sense of 'collective hallucination' . . . seems to emanate from the situations and processes themselves once they have been made the object of Koeppen's razor-sharp observational powers. They have been, so to speak, forced 'into the object.'"

Ulrich Schönherr's treatment of the ideological debates over serial music after 1945 in West Germany opens with a helpful account of the role of that form of music in the nation's coming to terms with Germany's Nazi past. While one might welcome the forceful invocation of a postwar modernist movement imbued with a deep "suspicion of ideology" (Hans Mayer) and, à la the Cold War, as an antidote to the Stalinist, antiformalist music aesthetic of the East, one can also argue, as Schönherr does, that "a musical praxis that sacrificed any artistic expression of remembrance (and mourning) in favor of an ideal of musical purity corresponded all too well with the social desire for collective forgetting."

As an example of such contradictory concerns, Schönherr offers a reading of Edgar Reitz's twenty-five-hour made-for-TV production *Die zweite Heimat* (*The Second Homeland*), a fictional "chronicle of a youth" that seeks to reconstruct ten years of German history from the perspective of young avant-garde musicians, composers, and filmmakers in Munich as they negotiate their relations to the growing political challenges put forth by the student, anti-Vietnam War, and women's movements of the 1960s.

Drawing on Andreas Huyssen's notion that the avant-garde of the 1960s and 1970s began to look to the past rather than to the future for utopian thinking and imagination, Devin Fore offers an insightful reading of Heiner Müller's rewrites of the classics from antiquity (*Oedipus Rex*, *Philoctetes*, and *Prometheus*) as "myths of labor" and "myth as labor." This interpretation argues against separating "production" from "mythical" plays in Müller's oeuvre as a whole, showing in particular how these categories work together in the playwright's magisterial epic drama *Zement* (*Cement*), based on Fedor Gladkov's novel. Where philosophy in general and the prevailing norms of socialist-realist culture policy specifically have often looked on myth as a barbaric form of prelogical and natural thought inimical to advancing the human spirit, Müller dialectically reverses such codes in his depiction of history as myth. In so doing, he offers a trenchant critique of East Germany's New Economic System of Planning and Control of the early 1960s that, in his mind, represented a restructuring of the GDR economy in accordance with post-Fordist methods of flexible production indistinguishable from state-administered capitalism.

In taking up "the late Cold War debate on memorials and monumentality" in the West, Esra Akcan draws an important distinction between more traditional triumphalist war memorials that can be seen as manipulating "collective memory by overemphasizing and stabilizing the dominant voice and thus by taking part in cultural repression," and what in the 1980s came to be

called countermonuments. The latter were seen “to have put an end to the assumed connection between authority and monumentality, between will-to-power and will-to-leave-traces.”

In answer to her own question as to whether in the post–Cold War period it is still possible to erect nontriumphalist memorials, Akcan provides “a rereading of the Berlin Jewish Museum in its broad cultural context.” Designed by Daniel Libeskind in 1988 and opened for viewing in 2001, the construction and its aftermath straddle as well as articulate the cultural-political antinomies of Cold War demise. Akcan’s “broad” analysis starts with a subtle study of the museum’s architectural configurations in their relation to the “voids” that seek to represent Jewish erasure because of Nazi perpetration. While the aesthetics of absence within the edifice of the building itself and in relation to the Holocaust might be seen as countermemorial, Akcan argues that Libeskind’s later reuse of similar themes and motifs in his design for the memorial to 9/11 in New York City not only seemed out of place but suggested a triumphalism at odds with the spirit of the earlier project.

Sjoukje van der Meulen’s essay on Vilém Flusser seeks to introduce to an English-speaking public a media theorist of the Cold War era whose work is well known in Germany and who has much to offer to contemporary U.S. debates on visual culture. While Flusser almost never thematizes the Cold War explicitly in his own writings, he frames his analysis of—and warning about—a society controlled by technical apparatuses as a theoretico-critical alternative to the dystopian scenarios produced throughout the Cold War. Here one might mention George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-four* (1949) or Stanley Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968).

In situating Flusser among the classical theorists of media theory, van der Meulen locates him between Walter Benjamin and Marshall McLuhan. Simply by virtue of when he was born, she argues, Flusser has superseded Benjamin’s narrower focus on film and the photo. Hence Flusser’s engagement with the “new media” necessarily has pushed him into dialogue with people like McLuhan. Yet Flusser’s firm disagreement with what he deems the Canadian’s uncritical approach to the whole environment of media in the Cold War period finds him, in the long run, deeply committed to developing a critical theory against McLuhan and in the spirit of Benjamin and Brecht.

The issue concludes with an essay by Andreas on the visual arts written after the symposium and first published in the catalog of the 2009 exhibition *Art of Two Germanies/Cold War Cultures*, held at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. While not intended as such, Andreas’s rich historical survey

of the visual arts in the Federal Republic of Germany and the GDR during the Cold War serves as an ideal closure to the present issue for two reasons. First, its broad cultural-political critique of the various phases of Cold War culture provides invaluable background material for and cross-references to many essays in this issue. Second, in its more limited focus, Andreas's contribution offers *in nuce* an exemplary version of the ground that his work in *NGC* has covered over the years.

