Introduction

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In the summer of 2011 I taught a course at the University of Paderborn titled "The Holocaust on Screen." The syllabus included the documentary *A Film Unfinished* (2010) by the Israeli filmmaker Yael Hersonski. This film, which incorporates a substantial amount of footage filmed by Nazi cameramen and which depicts the horrendous living conditions endured by Jewish prisoners in the Warsaw ghetto, was met with irritation. It seemed to me that the students resented the film to a greater degree than they would have resented a particularly dull exemplar of New German Cinema or the French New Wave. Why were they, they wondered aloud, required to look at these types of images? The response of this younger generation, nearly all of them born immediately before or after the fall of the Berlin Wall, surprised me. I had seen Margarethe von Trotta's *Marianne and Juliane* (1981), and, based on the responses to *Night and Fog* (1955) that it depicts, I expected that my students would come to me seeking out these types of films regardless of—or perhaps owing to—the inner turmoil that encountering them would cause. Did these students feel any obligation whatsoever to engage with images from the Holocaust past?

All but two of the theme-related articles that follow began as contributions to a conference held at the University of Paderborn in the summer of 2011. I translated the articles by Sven Kramer, Manuel Köppen, Alexandra Tacke, and Norbert Otto Eke in consultation with the authors and take responsibility for any errors. I am extremely grateful to Christoph Ribbat, the University of Paderborn, and the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst for helping organize the conference, for providing it a home, and for supporting it financially. I am also grateful to Franz Peter Hugdahl for his assistance in pulling this special issue together. His contributions were considerable, and his work remains appreciated. This issue is dedicated to his memory.

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That some would be reluctant to confront the past is hardly new. In 1957 Theodor W. Adorno referred to Germany as the house of the hangman, where one avoids mentioning the noose.[1] The survivor and scholar Ruth Klüger likewise refers to her Austrian birthplace, Vienna, as the hangman's house, despite the decades that have passed.[2] Many Germans, whether they are students or members of older generations, avoid confronting past atrocities directly. Where Jewish persecution is concerned, many openly or tacitly maintain Martin Walser's position, expressed in 1998, that the chief reason to mention National Socialist crimes has been to exploit Germany's shame for fashionable ends; commemoration of the past had become, as far as he was concerned, a uniformly applicable basis for intimidation, a moral cudgel or a compulsory exercise.[3] Exposure to the crimes connected with Auschwitz had become an obligation. Some hoped the past could be squared away, and the German idiom about drawing a *Schlußstrich*, or a "final line," beneath it was often introduced into considerations of the Holocaust, especially by those who wanted to cease examining culpability. Whether this kind of dismissal of the past was inevitable—whether it was indeed time to put the past in the past—was hotly debated in connection with Walser's well-publicized viewpoint.

Without a doubt there were many examples of the exploitation of memory at the end of the twentieth century, particularly the large-scale memorial and cinematic rewritings of the past that came after the Wall fell, all of which made Walser's point for him. Yet if there is a persistent disinclination to dwell on and address the preconditions and the aftereffects of that past—to speak of Wannsee and Auschwitz as parts of a process rather than as isolated episodes or operational accidents of history—that disinclination may stem from a fully explicable aversion to talking about things that hurt.[4] That people avoid open-

1. See Theodor W. Adorno, "Reply to Peter R. Hofstätter's Critique of *Group Experiment*," in *Guilt and Defense: On the Legacies of National Socialism in Postwar Germany*, ed. and trans. Jeffrey K. Olick and Andrew J. Perrin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 208. The "Reply" was originally published in German in 1957. Adorno also uses the phrase in the first paragraph of his essay "The Meaning of Working through the Past," reproduced in *Guilt and Defense*, 213. That essay first appeared in 1959.

2. See the first lines of her poem "Wiener Neurose" in Ruth Klüger, *unterwegs verloren: Erinnerungen* (Munich: DTV, 2010), 216. The poem appeared earlier under the title "Wien, Mai '97" in "Wiener Neurosen: Eine Rede," *Die Hören: Zeitschrift für Literatur, Kunst und Kritik*, no. 201 (2001): 21–29; here 23.

3. Martin Walser, "Erfahrungen beim Verfassen einer Sonntagsrede," in *Die Walser-Bubis-Debatte: Eine Dokumentation*, ed. Frank Schirrmacher (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999), 13. Walser does not use the word *Schlußstrich* in that text, although its reception suggested that he had.

4. The phrase "an operational accident of history" is borrowed from Jean Améry's chapter "Resentments" in *At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and Its Realities*, trans. Sidney Rosenfeld and Stella P. Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 79.

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ing a wound is not surprising, and to some extent it remains true today, seventy years after the liberation of Auschwitz. Yet talking about national trauma can be called healthy if one believes in psychoanalysis, and it can be deemed essential if one believes in education. In "Education after Auschwitz" Adorno appeals for a form of enlightenment defined by "an intellectual, cultural, and social climate in which a recurrence would no longer be possible, a climate, therefore, in which the motives that led to the horror would become relatively conscious."[5] Conscious comprehension of the mechanisms that made Auschwitz possible is thus necessary, "as is knowledge of the stereotypical defense mechanisms that block such a consciousness."[6] Education has the task of bringing the hidden preconditions of fascism into the light.

But how do you persuade people to revisit events that wound or hurt? Such conversations do not come about on their own, and people, in general, require provocation. Adorno, for one, had a plan to provoke: working with the Institute for Social Research, he presented groups of interview subjects with a fabricated letter ostensibly written by an American or British soldier who had participated in the occupation.[7] The letter was polite, but its putative author observed that the Germans still felt as though the world had done them an injustice, that they still harbored hostility toward the Jews, and that there was a risk that they would in the future be willing to follow "a Hitler or Stalin."[8] The letter, referred to as the "basic stimulus" (*Grundreiz*), rankled most of the German interview subjects. The project met with criticism, although Adorno sensed that "the criticism derived in part from the subject matter itself" and that "resistance to the study was fundamentally motivated by an attempt to whitewash the Germans."[9] The experiment was intended to trigger affect-laden utterances stemming from "deeper layers" of the respondents than those that could be mined by traditional interview methods.[10] The experimenters held the conviction that a type of truth is unearthed when subjects are in the company of other subjects. Individual hostility is one thing,

5. Theodor W. Adorno, "Education after Auschwitz," trans. Henry W. Pickford, in *Can One Live after Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 22.

6. Adorno, "Education after Auschwitz," 31.

7. The identity of the soldier was adjusted depending on where the study took place. See Olick and Perrin's note in *Guilt and Defense*, 45.

8. The letter is reproduced in *Guilt and Defense*, 45–47; here 47. The German version is reprinted in Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), 9.2:142–43.

9. See Peter Uwe Hohendahl, *Prismatic Thought* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 52.

10. Adorno, preface to *Guilt and Defense*, 49.

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but people become dangerous in groups. To see the danger, one has to scratch away at the surface.

Adorno's emphasis on collective response is one way to interpret his famous anecdote about a German woman who emerges from a stage production of *The Diary of Anne Frank* and concludes, "Yes, but that girl at least should have been allowed to live."[11] As Erin McGlothlin writes in her contribution to the present special issue, "The woman altogether misses the intended pedagogical point of the theatrical adaptation. . . . Rather than reflect on and express regret about the larger collective murder of millions of Jews of which Anne Frank can . . . function only as a metonymy, the woman focuses on Frank's death as an individual tragedy." Despite the important function the play serves in raising public awareness, the individual case becomes an alibi for neglecting a terrifying totality. One notes, moreover, that the remark was made after the performance of a play; the comment, in other words, came on the heels of a "stimulus." Film and theater productions, which are consumed collectively, can perform functions similar to those of false letters; they can be calculated accusations, and as provocations, they can prompt any number of inadvertently uttered truths.

An uncanny cinematic iteration of the false letter can be found in Thomas Mitscherlich's German documentary *Journey into Life* (1996).[12] In the film's opening minutes Mitscherlich introduces viewers to an invented, synthetic narrator he names Sergeant Mayflower, who was, we are told, a cameraman for the US Army and who is now returning to Germany after fifty years to revisit the camps he saw at the time of their liberation. The fictionalized Mayflower observes that after the war there was little interest in seeing his footage of Buchenwald and other camps. Because the Germans did not contest the veracity of the images, he explains, and because hardly any German who saw them experienced personal or collective guilt, why would anyone have bothered making films about their deeds? The question seems rhetorical—it goes without saying, perhaps, that the world needs films about such deeds—yet Mitscherlich then turns his camera's attention to the testimonies of Gerhard Durlacher, Yehuda Bacon, and Ruth Klüger, all of whom are Jewish survivors. The film, produced with the support of the Hamburger Filmbüro, Nord-

11. Adorno, *Guilt and Defense*, 225.

12. For a close reading of Mitscherlich's film, see Leslie Morris, "Berlin Elegies: Absence, Postmemory, and Art after Auschwitz," in *Image and Remembrance: Representation and the Holocaust*, ed. Shelley Hornstein and Florence Jacobowitz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 288–304. Morris describes *Journey into Life* as "a hybrid film that weaves together memoir literature, survivor testimonies, and documentary footage" (292).

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deutscher Rundfunk, and the Bremer Institut Film/Fernsehen, is less about the perpetrators' deeds than about the victims' experiences. The fictionalized voice that Mitscherlich adopts becomes a way to confront his German audience, and one might think of similar, subsequent attempts to confront that same audience such as Malte Ludin's documentary *Two or Three Things I Know about Him* (2004) in which Ludin is willing to display and incite dissent within his close-knit German family; of the images taken by Romuald Karmakar's deliberately naive camera as he pays a visit to the sites of former Nazi death camps in *Land of Annihilation* (2004); or of Michael Glawogger's feature film *Kill Daddy Good Night* (2009), which treats the concealed past as a contemporary oedipal murder fantasy. These are only a few examples of recent provocations discussed by Axel Bangert, Manuel Köppen, Norbert Otto Eke, and the other contributors to this issue.

A fabricated letter is a way to unearth collective opinion. In the case of the institute's experiment, it reveals latent psychological dispositions by awakening anger. A provocation is needed: *in ira veritas*.[13] In defense of his method Adorno writes that "utterances made in irritation" are hardly "random and irrelevant": "What an angry person says when he has lost rational control of his emotions is nonetheless a part of him."[14] Raising ire or provoking people was central to Adorno's sociological technique insofar as it revealed the core, or the true heart, of public opinion. Adorno expected that people would express feelings that remain otherwise disavowed for fear that they were socially unacceptable. The Freudian model—important for Adorno, however arbitrarily it was applied—is key.[15] Latency is, according to the Freudian system, the period during which drives are expressed in socially acceptable forms. It is a period of dishonesty to the extent that the subject's experience is repeatedly covered over and concealed from view. The social world becomes a constellation of defenses on which the subject relies in order to behave acceptably. Socially undesirable tendencies are present, but inactive. Social unacceptability, of course, cuts both ways where perpetrators and survivors are concerned, and either one can exhibit what appears to be inappropriate resentment. A survivor's resentment can be a tremendous transgression of etiquette, as Jean Améry

13. Peter R. Hofstätter uses the Latin phrase facetiously, suggesting that the "truth" exposed by the subjects' anger is actually a distortion. See Hofstätter, "On *Group Experiment* by F. Pollock: A Critical Appraisal," in *Guilt and Defense*, 191–93.

14. Adorno, *Guilt and Defense*, 52. The German appears in *Gesammelte Schriften*, 9.2:148.

15. See Hohendahl, *Prismatic Thought*, 56–57. Lorenz Jäger makes critical remarks about the institute's use of Freud in *Adorno: A Political Biography*, trans. Stewart Spencer (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 154–55.

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and Klüger have at various times asserted, and its expression usually awakens its powerful shadow: the perpetrator's tendency to hold victims responsible for their victimization. This describes the second-order anti-Semitism typified by the well-known joke that the Germans will never forgive the Jews for Auschwitz.[16]

People do not often find themselves prompted to speak about difficult topics, and here one might differ from Freud: what is buried can surely remain so, and what is latent may never find its way to the surface. Taking a Heideggerian approach to the concept of latency, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht's *After 1945: Latency as Origin of the Present* describes the German wartime past as something that, for the generation born immediately after the war, may or may not show itself. Likened to a stowaway on a ship, the past is somewhere on board, but it does not permit itself to be grasped or touched.[17] Gumbrecht eschews the term *repression*, sidestepping traditional psychoanalytic categories in favor of the concept of mood. He writes that after 1945, "the facts and memory of events did not vanish, but the sensations of pain and triumph—that is, the resonances of war—faded. As the feelings caused by irreversible destruction disappeared, a mood of latency quickly emerged."[18] Latency, described in this way, cannot be attached to a human subject. The elusive, untouchable past has neither voice nor agency. Like good or bad weather, it is a potential that might break through at any moment.

How can a stowaway embody an absent or nearly absent population, and under what conditions would such a stowaway emerge? If the stowaway is part of national memory—if it exists in the space reserved for collective pains and triumphs—then who determines the content of those national memories, and how are memory's legitimate passengers distinguished from its illegitimate ones? Writing with his German readers in mind, Reinhart Koselleck observes that "we" Germans can remember the victims we have murderously and technologically produced only by allowing ourselves to recall the perpetrators and counting them among our ancestors.[19] His "we," which is typically a gesture of exclusion, here contains an important attempt at inclusion: he admonishes his German readers to regard themselves as the perpetrators in order to remember

16. The "bitter joke" is referred to by Olick and Perrin. See *Guilt and Defense*, 31.

17. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *After 1945: Latency as Origin of the Present* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), 23.

18. Ibid., 22–23.

19. Reinhart Koselleck, "Formen und Traditionen des negativen Gedächtnisses," in *Verbrechen erinnern: Die Auseinandersetzung mit Holocaust und Völkermord*, ed. Volkhard Knigge and Norbert Frei (Munich: Beck, 2002), 29.

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the victims. Germans, even contemporary ones, have to take extra steps to make the victims part of the equation if the full story is to be told. True stowaways hardly ever appear among the paying passengers, at least not of their own volition; they are always in the position of having to struggle just to get on board. Anyone willing to acknowledge their existence has to circumvent a battery of self-interested concealments and stereotypical defense mechanisms. This struggle was perhaps best expressed by the plot of one of the most striking narrative films about the Holocaust: Andrzej Munk's *Passenger* (1963), in which a concentration camp tormentor, after the war, encounters a former prisoner on an ocean liner. The survivor's appearance first opens the door to the tormentor's self-serving lies about the past and then, owing only to extradiegetic interventions by the film's narrator, which undercut the protagonist's version of events, to the less convenient and much more brutal truth.

It is understandable that during the immediate postwar era Günter Grass and Heinrich Böll wrote about their own traumas—their own difficult military service and the distress caused by Germany's defeat—before they attended to those of others. Unresponsiveness to Jewish suffering was a prelude to the era that W. G. Sebald calls a period of self-regard in which Germans were enjoined to look forward and not back.[20] The historian Tony Judt describes how German public figures in the 1940s and 1950s avoided references to the Final Solution, and Nicolas Berg documents the failings that typified West German historiography's attempts to address the Holocaust subsequent to 1945.[21] Laura Jockusch writes about the lack of interest in listening to Jewish voices immediately after the war, pointing out that the ostensibly strange and often-cited silence about the catastrophe came mostly from non-Jews.[22] Finally, Thomas Kohut's recent study *A German Generation: An Experiential History of the Twentieth Century* relies on a large number of interviews to detail the wartime generation's lack of empathy for the victims.[23] One has to ask: given all these tendencies, under what circumstances would the memory of others' suffering have

20. W. G. Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction*, trans. Anthea Bell (New York: Random House, 2003).

21. Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin, 2005), esp. 809; Nicolas Berg, *Der Holocaust und die westdeutschen Historiker: Erforschung und Erinnerung* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2003).

22. Laura Jockusch, *Collect and Record! Jewish Holocaust Documentation in Early Postwar Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 191–92. On the "silence," see also Hasia R. Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust, 1945–1962* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

23. Thomas A. Kohut, *A German Generation: An Experiential History of the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), esp. 133.

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emerged? Why would it have been brought to light after the war, and who is making the choice to speak of it today? It is true: we have no reason to believe that what has entered a latent state is certain to show itself. For that reason the past, still today, requires advocates. Without advocates, silence creeps in, and along with it comes the diminished likelihood that the motives that once led to violence will be discussed, analyzed, and called to consciousness.

Film and television can play influential roles. Judt cites the 1978 miniseries *Holocaust* as a breakthrough. This imported American production motivated major discussion, public processing of the past, and an increase in Holocaust awareness in Germany.[24] It clearly helped shaped the course of the following decade of discussions. Widely released postmillennial German films such as *Downfall* (2004), *Before the Fall* (2004), and *The Ninth Day* (2004), which provide post-Wall narratives of the war for a younger generation that might find reductive explanations for the origins of Germany's East-West division useful, may have been provocations in their particular arenas, but none of those films pays particular attention to Jewish experience.[25] Narrating the war is common in German film, narrating the Holocaust is far less so. People tend to speak of others' wounds even less frequently than they speak of their own. More often than not, major provocations have come from outside Germany—from France, Italy, Israel, and the United States. For this reason, and still today, new films from Germany about the Holocaust, especially those made by Germans, call for attention and examination. The present issue analyzes films such as Harun Farocki's *Respite* (2007), Jochen Alexander Freydank's *Toyland* (2007), Ludin's *Two or Three Things I Know about Him*, and Robert Thalheim's *And Along Come Tourists* (2007), all of which are German attempts to think German narratives together with those of the victims. The need for such films certainly persists. Without them—without these false letters, the stimuli, or the incitements to call that aspect of the past to consciousness—only the most convenient and most conventional stories would get told.

24. See Judt, *Postwar*, 811. See the discussion of the program's impact in Andreas Huyssen, "The Politics of Identification: 'Holocaust' and West German Drama," *New German Critique*, no. 19 (1980): 117–36; and the collected documentation of the program's impact in *Im Kreuzfeuer, der Fernsehfilm "Holocaust": Eine Nation ist betroffen*, ed. Peter Märthesheimer and Ivo Frenzel (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1979); as well as Erin McGlothlin, "January 1979: West German Broadcast of *Holocaust* Draws Critical Fire and Record Audiences," in *A New History of German Cinema*, ed. Jennifer M. Kapczynski and Michael D. Richardson (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2012), 470–75.

25. On the elision of Holocaust imagery in *Downfall*, see Tobias Ebbrecht, *Geschichtsbilder im medialen Gedächtnis: Filmische Narrationen des Holocaust* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2011), esp. 241–44.

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