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TRIUMPH AND TRAUMA

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Contents

15. Max Weber was probably the first to have pointed to this institutional logic of modern administration, see especially Weber (1978, vol. II, chapter 9).

16. Cp. Katz (1994, vol. I, chapter 11).

17. Marsh (1961) uses a lot of historical data to investigate the effects of family position and other factors on elite mobility in China during the Qing dynasty. See table 4, p. 80, and table 5, p. 82.

18. The doctrine of tyrannicide has a long history in Europe. It grew out of the medieval notion of a "contract" between the ruler and subject and the idea of a system of preexisting legal rights. However, it was John of Salisbury who articulated a doctrine of tyrannicide: The ruler who broke the law could no longer claim to be a legitimate sovereign, and thus could be deposed and executed (Gough 1961).

19. For the "Glorious Revolution" and the parliament see Gralher (1973).

20. The trial and execution of Charles Stuart in 1649 stands out in Western history. Charles I was the first European monarch to be put on trial for his life in public by his own subjects (Mayfield 1988). But Charles's execution has not left the same traces in the English national memory as the execution of Louis XVI in the French collective memory. The English saw themselves as getting rid of one wicked prince. For the French, monarchy itself was "an eternal crime" (Dunn 1994).

21. See for example the scandal about the famous Diamond Necklace affair in prerevolutionary France (Maza 1993).

22. Although the Enlightenment was a discourse all over Europe, there were differences in the social position of the supporters and their communication (Darnton 1982; Wuthnow 1989; Albrecht 1995).

23. For the increasing differentiation between the *public* and the *private*, see Giesen (1998b, pp. 228) and Brewer et al. (1996).

24. See, for example, the French Revolution (Lottes 1991).

25. Marxists and non-Marxist scholars agree that there is a close alignment between revolutionary culture and cities. See the essay of Ragan (1999) who reviews the studies of Malcom Crook (1991) and Ted W. Margadant (1992). See also Sutherland (1986) who extends Tilly's (1976) perspective to view the Revolution as a process brought about by conflict between the revolution, located primarily in urban France, and the counterrevolution, mostly based in rural areas.

26. But in the later Middle Ages the pressure on the rural population sometimes got so high that it resulted in several peasants' revolts, which culminated in the German Peasants' War of 1525. Thereby the peasants' movement developed an altogether revolutionary potential. The connection of rural and urban unrest in 1525 was very close; often the rebellious peasants outside the town gave the final impulse for urban unrest. See, e.g., Blickle (1993). However, Rammstedt (1975) denies a very close connection between the Peasants' War and urban unrest.

27. Such movements tended to become more frequent with the Industrial Revolution in England in the century's closing years. In the course of such riots, attacks on industrial property and machinery outweighed assaults on persons (Rudé 1966: p. 47; Hobsbawm 1952).

28. See Rudé (1966, p. 47): "[...] the policing of large cities, though grossly inadequate by nineteenth-century standards, was taken far more seriously than that of country towns. This was particularly true of Paris; so much that a chronicler of the early 1780's wrote that, while London might be wracked by serious civil commotion, in Paris this was almost impossible to contemplate."

29. Rudé (1966, p. 84), in his masterly account of the masses in the French Revolution, estimates that 80 percent of the total population of Paris belonged to groups that formed the *sans-culottes*. See also Soboul (1962) and Tilly (1976).

30. Schiller and many other German authors distinguished strictly between writing for a market and the true poetic work (Giesen 1998a).

CHAPTER 4

The Trauma of Perpetrators

The Holocaust as the Traumatic Reference of German National Identity

INTRODUCTION

No construction of collective identity can entirely dispense with memory. Memory supports or even creates the assumption of stability that demarcates identity in distinction to the incessant change of the phenomenal world. Triumphant or traumatic, memory marks the center of identity and sets up a horizon that delineates the space of possible pasts. Identity is constituted by the very conception of the past as traumatic or triumphant; trauma and triumph are liminal experiences of individual, as well as collective, subjects. There is no way to imagine a land beyond the liminal horizons, but memory strives to reach out for it, to cope with it and to relate and to adapt the movement of history to it. It can be spoken out or silenced; it is always there, enabling us to represent and present the past as our history.

In the preceding chapters, we have outlined three basic references to the past: the triumphant memory as embodied in the figure of the hero, the traumatic memory as embodied in the figure of the victim and the ambivalent reference as embodied in the figure of the tragic hero who was defeated by the adversity of this world. In the following chapter, we will deal with the traumatic memory of the perpetrators. Freud's and Breuer's original treatment of the trauma issue focused on the trauma of perpetrators (J. Assmann 1999c), but today—in contrast to a vast range of studies investigating the individual and collective trauma of victims—there are relatively few scholarly treatments of the trauma of perpetrators who, by their own decision, dehumanized other subjects and, in doing so, not only perverted the sovereign subjectivity of the victims, but also challenged their own sacredness. If a community has to recognize that, instead of being heroes, they have been perpetrators who violated the cultural premises of their own identity, the reference to the past is indeed traumatic. This holds true not only for those who were involved in the killing of others, but also for the bystanders who knew about the crime or watched it being done without intervening or preventing it. The active perpetrators rarely speak out their guilt. They remain mostly mute and try to hide their identity. In contrast, the bystanders' ambivalent position between guilt by non-action, voluntary inattention and lack of courage is especially prone to a collective trauma.

The historical paradigm case the following chapter deals with is the construction of German national identity after the Holocaust. Since the turn of the century, German national identity has been treated as the result of a *Sonderweg* to modernity, and this German exceptionalism, originally coined by German historians such as Meinecke, has been reaffirmed by recent publications pointing, although in a quite different way, to a primordial German national character that is seen as bound to the death camps (Goldhagen 1996; Greenfeld 1992). Like other constructions of national identity too, the thesis of German exceptionalism stresses Germany's uniqueness and inimitability in distinction to other nations. The Holocaust represents this uniqueness in an exemplary way and has to be regarded as the traumatic reference for German national identity after 1945. The thesis of this chapter, however, is to elaborate how it also gave way to a new pattern of a universalistic identity.*

We will present this new paradigm of universalistic identity as one of several modes of coping with the trauma of postwar Germany. In order to understand the case of postwar Germany, however, we have to briefly address the historical context of German national identity as it emerged in the nineteenth century. The following outline of different historical codings of the German nation will be patterned by the typological distinction between primordial, traditional, and universalistic constructions of collective identity.[1]

Primordial identities refer to sharp and exclusive boundaries based on natural distinctions; they imagine the outsider as a superior demon that cannot cross the boundary and never should. Traditional identities insist on continuity between past and present and are based on the routines and practices of local life worlds. Their boundaries are gradual transitions between inside and outside; in principle they can be crossed, but it takes time and a certain cautiousness to approach the traditional community. The outsider is treated as a stranger who is neither superior nor inferior, but difficult to communicate with.

In contrast to primordial and traditional communities, universalistic constructions open their boundaries for the inclusion of outsiders. Universalistic identities are based on the tension between the sacred and the profane. They claim a special link between the community and the realm of the sacred and transcendental. They try to establish a radical discontinuity between the past and the future.

Social constructions of national identity are never unanimous, nor are its modes of remembering the past. Instead, they are prone to conflicts and subject to public debates; they vary according to the life world of the social carrier group and

*A shorter version of this chapter is published in Alexander et al. (2004)

are transformed by the turnover of generations. Rituals can bridge the cleavages of political conflicts and public debates, but they also sometimes cause public controversies. Although the perspectives may shift and the evaluation may differ, the institutional arenas may vary and the rituals may change, constructions of national identity cannot escape from an orientation toward the past, which does not pass away, whether traumatic or triumphant. Traumas and triumphs constitute the "mythomoteurs" of national identity (Barthes 1996). They represent liminal experiences and ultimate horizons for the self-constitution of a collective subject—like birth and death providing the ultimate horizon for the existential experience of the individual person. Only by reference to the undeniable fact of birth and the inescapable prospect of death is the individual person able to construct an encompassing identity beyond shifting encounters and experiences.[2] In a similar way, by referring to a past as a collective triumph or a collective trauma, contingent relationships between individual persons are transcended and forged into a collective identity. Triumphs are moments of "effervescence" in Durkheim's phrasing, or of "Charisma" and "*Verzauberung*" ("enchantment") in Weber's. Even if an event that is recalled as a triumph was not experienced as an extraordinary moment at the time it occurred, the collective memory glorifies it and imagines it in retrospect as a moment of utmost intensity, and it is this lack of awareness and consciousness that has to be coped with by ritually re-enacting the triumph, by annual celebrations, by mythologization and narration. The trauma is constructed according to a similar logic. Traumas remember a moment of violent intrusion or of the collapse of meaning that the collective consciousness was not able to perceive or to grasp in its full importance when it happened (Caruth 1995). They represent the rupture of the web of meaning, the break of order and continuity—a dark and inconceivable boundary that provides the frame for the construction of meaningful histories, but has no meaning by itself. Only later on, after a period of latency, can it be remembered, worked through and spoken out. Both imaginations of a collective origin, triumph as well as trauma, refer mostly to an act of violence that breaks down and reconstructs the social bond. Thus triumph and trauma refer to a source that constitutes the social order but that has its own origin beyond and before this order.

Collective identity is never exclusively triumphant or traumatic; it is never based only on an imagined homogeneity of insiders or only on the excluded otherness of outsiders; it is never driven only by Eros or only by Thanatos—it is always both, but the balance may be disturbed and the levels may differ (Smelser 1998a).

The following remarks will outline a repertoire of German identities that respond to three—predominantly traumatic—marks of German history: the belated origin of the German nation state, the lack of a successful revolution in Germany and—most importantly—the Holocaust. We will address the first two German identities only briefly and focus on the modes of coping with the Holocaust in postwar Germany.

Lost Paradises: Germany as *Naturnation*

Nations that cannot look back to a long political history as states, or that cannot ignore the discontinuities in their history, face special problems in constructing memories to support their identity. The emptiness or the evil of their recent history fosters an escape to a timeless mythical past in which culture and nature are merged and blended in harmony. This primordial unity of culture, nature and community is usually considered to be lost in the course of history—culture and community were alienated from their natural base, but the people kept a memory of their origins embedded in nature. Looking back to the primordial paradise fuels energies to overcome decadence and disease, artificiality and pollution in present societies, or it provides a claim on a homeland, thus bringing the community back to its natural roots.

From this perspective, the continuity between the present and the remembered past is seen as interrupted by a long history of alienation and opposition. Here, national identity is not constructed by reference to a recent historical past that is available in the form of witnesses or written reports, but is formed by imagining a timeless past that is seen as the origin and source of identity, as the horizon of history, and as the ultimate goal of collective action.

Even more than other forms of memory, the representation of a lost paradise is a social construction of the present. It comes as no surprise that primordial conceptions of an ethnic identity resonated well with the new nations that emerged in middle and Eastern Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The old nation-states in Western Europe, too, were not entirely immune to these primordial constructions of ethnic origins, even if they could look back to a firmly established republican tradition. Indeed, France as well as England and the Netherlands had their own myths of ethnic origins, their own racism and anti-Semitism. Their political traditions dating back to prenineteenth-century roots prevented, however, these primordial ideas from becoming more than influential intellectual heterodoxies (Sternhell 1996). In contrast to its western neighbors, the national identity of Germany is frequently seen as founded in natural or primordial structures.[3] Indeed, Germany may be considered the paradigm case of a latecomer in political modernization and nation-state building (Plessner 1992; Bendix 1978; Hobsbawm 1990). It was only in 1871 that—after centuries of fragmentation and division—the scattered political map of two large princely states and many small ones was replaced by the unified nation-state of imperial Germany. For centuries, the Austro-Hungarian Empire had been a major player in European politics, and Prussia had ascended in the eighteenth century to the status of a military superpower and a focal arena of European enlightenment, but the German nation was imagined, not as a political community, but as a cultural one. When the German nation-state was finally realized in 1871, it lacked political traditions. This situation fostered the imagining and invention of primordial paradises.

These primordial constructions of a German identity are not immutable or invariably connected to the essence of the Germans; instead they result from a repertoire of societies' ideas about their relationship to nature as provided by history. Even nature, which is usually considered as objectively given, does not exist in a self-evident and socially unmediated way. Instead it is a cultural construction reflecting the particular setting of a society. Imagining the outside as a demonic threat that has to be fought or fled from, as a wilderness that requires taming and civilizing, as a resource or a property that can be used and traded, as an object that can be investigated by the methods of science, as a bodily existence that is at risk of disease and finally as a precious garden that has to be protected against pollution and destruction—all these conceptions hint at particular patterns of social interaction and community. Our idea of nature reflects our own situation and our longing for a lost paradise—which attempts to reconnect culture to nature—and is no exception from the embeddedness of our images of nature in society (R. Groh and D. Groh 1996).

The constructions of German national identity have been influenced by four different models relating nature to the social community. All of them emerged in situations of crisis and rapid change and focus on an alienation from nature. Nature is perceived here rather as an issue of identity than as a field of resources to be used and exploited. A discourse about purity and pollution supports these constructions of a lost paradise, but the level of discourse has varied from ambitious philosophical reasoning to trivial novels.

The German Romantics conceived of national identity in an ambitious philosophical way. It was considered as an inalienable natural individuality exempted from ordinary communication and the varying tides of history. Responding to the trauma of the French occupation, the Romantic intellectuals discovered a sublime essence, that is, a national identity of the Germans concealed and hidden by layers of foreign influences; this identity could be disclosed and approached only from an aesthetic point of view—for example, by looking at medieval ruins, which in their very decomposition reunited and merged culture and nature. Only art or infinite longing that conveyed a radical distance from the realm of the ordinary and above all from the world of power and money could provide access to the sublime primordial identity of the *Volk*. Particular rituals of discourse, like Romantic irony and the exaltation of sentimental life (love, madness), reflected and reinforced the detachment from idle business and ordinary society and the orientation toward the sublime. This ambitious conception of national identity as the sublime ineffable essence set the stage for the subsequent imagining of German primordial identity reducing *demos* to *ethnos* and politics to aesthetics.

The *Völkische Bewegung*[4] in the second half of the nineteenth century revived these Romantic ideas in a trivialized way. Again, the movement was propelled by heterodox intellectuals who marked their distance from the center of imperial Germany. Like the Romantics, the *völkische* intellectuals, such as Dahn, Freitag, Lagarde and Langbehn, and their petit-bourgeois audience opposed the world of art to the world of money. Instead of focusing on sublime essences, however, they had more tangible and earthly matters in mind. Between 1880 and 1910, Germany underwent a process of accelerated modernization and mobilization. Every third German changed residence, mostly from the rural areas to the emerging large cities. Germany became the leading military and industrial power on the continent, challenging even Great Britain. The intellectuals of the *Völkische Bewegung* reacted to the rapid social changes by depicting the idyllic life of free Germanic peasants and warriors, who were seen as sane, vigorous, and bound to the natural soil.[5]

The lost ethnic paradise was contrasted to the decadent, unhealthy, and alienating world of the large cities (Bergmann 1970; Lees 1979). Criticism of modern decadence and disintegration was combined with a longing for a primordial, but lost, unity between body and land, blood and soil.

Outside of intellectual circles, the attempt to get rid of the decadence of modernity and the disruptive forces of industrialism led to particular forms of retreat and special patterns of ritual purification. New rural communities revived seemingly ancient Germanic forms of economy without money, and worshipped the sun or other Germanic or natural deities. Reform movements promoted vegetarian diets and so-called natural clothing; nudism gained followers and was practiced with almost religious devotion; youth movements like the *Wandervogel* sought to flee the cities and to live in close contact with nature.[6] Public discourse was preoccupied with sexual diseases and decadence; the ambitious reform movements in music (Richard Wagner) and art (*Jugendstil*) found widespread attention. All this was patterned by a discourse about purity and pollution and aimed at reconstructing indisputable boundaries in a society where traditional structures were blurred and dissolved.

In the third model, merging culture, community, and nature was also based on a discourse about purity and pollution, but it was not moved by nostalgia for a bygone folklore. Instead of pursuing the sublime, it was couched in the objectivist language of scientism. At its core was a quasi-scientific conception of racial differences. Distinctions between races had been quite common in intellectual discourse since the eighteenth century, but now they were based on biology instead of culture and were thoroughly medicalized. At the end of the century, this new racism merged with anti-Semitism and the eugenics movement.[7] It attempted to organize societies around the order of nature as revealed by science. The recalling of lost paradises consists here mainly of the statement of the primordial purity of the Germanic or Aryan race, which was endangered by migration and lost in the increasing mixture of races.

The Nazi ideology blended this racism with elements of the *völkische* movement[8]—in particular with the cult of the heroic warrior whose superiority and dominance over others was considered as natural, original, and unalienated. Again, the everyday life of liberal capitalist democracies was seen as decadent and artificial and contrasted to the natural harmony between the people and the land, the primordial violence of the Germanic hero, and invested the triumphant beast with sacred qualities.

A fourth model of a primordial harmony between nature and culture can be seen in the ideas of ecological fundamentalism, which has an extraordinary strong resonance in Germany (comparable to the wildlife protection movement in the U.S. or the animal rights movements in Britain). Although the political orientation of its social carriers shifted from the right to the left, ecological fundamentalism clearly uses, not only elements of Romanticism, but also motifs of anti-industrialism and radical "retreatism" that could also be found in the heritage of the *Völkische Bewegung* (Knaut 1993; Linse 1986). Evidently and understandably, any reference to this heritage is taboo in Germany. When Rudolph Bahro, one of the most popular fundamentalist intellectuals of the German Greens, mentioned this heritage in an affirmative way, he provoked a public scandal and was immediately excluded from the Green Party.

German ecological fundamentalism pushed the contrast between past and present even further than the *Völkische Bewegung*; it is not only the primordial purity of a particular nation that is at stake but the fate of humankind in its entirety, and it is not only the primordial paradise of preindustrial life but nature itself that is endangered and jeopardized by industrial society. As in preceding imaginings of a lost paradise, nature is here considered as the nonmalleable fundament of identity. It will decay when subjected to exploitation and instrumental use. Again, these fundamentals of identity are approached mainly from an aesthetic point of view—but in a trivialized form. The Romantic wilderness is intentionally produced and carefully preserved in the suburban gardens of the ecologically minded *Bildungsbürgertum*, the most important supporters of the German Greens.

Nevertheless, the striking continuities between nineteenth-century and contemporary imaginations of a lost paradise should not blur a very important difference: Although local, regional and occasionally even national boundaries show up in the discourse of ecological fundamentalism—when, for instance, foreign plants and animals are banned from the territory as polluting the original ecosystem—the national coding of the lost paradise is here clearly replaced by a global horizon. Ecological fundamentalism is a global movement and aims at a global scenario; national boundaries appear only as differences of sensitivity with respect to ecological issues. The strength of the ecological movement in Germany and the Netherlands can thus be contrasted to its relative weakness in Italy and France, for example.

Failed Revolutions: Democracy without a Triumphant Myth

More striking than these memories of a primordial paradise, however, are social rituals that try explicitly to revive the memory of a particular event of the historical past: days of remembrance and monuments, dates and places of memory visited and venerated by members of a community, pictures and narrations presenting the past for the following generations and the presentation of its relics in museums for the educated public. Even rituals that construct and continue a tradition emerge not as effortless and evident remembrance of an unquestionably given past but as a social construction that may be in principle objected to, debated, and questioned. Outsiders do not have to share these conceptions of the past, and their presence in rituals of remembrance is often seen as disturbing or even offensive—it is our own past and we consider ourselves sovereign with respect to our common memories.

This is especially true with respect to the triumphant memory of past victories and acts of liberation, by which a political community construes its own origin. Liberation from foreign domination, the birthday of the ruler, or the enactment of a national constitution are ritually remembered and celebrated; monuments recall the victories of the nation over its enemies; poems and anthems praise the great deeds of the sovereign or the liberation of the country; public marches and rallies revive the triumphs of the past.

Even the seemingly unprecedented rituals of modern revolutionary movements that attempt to establish an entirely new society and intend not to repeat the past but to accelerate into an open and undetermined future—even these rituals are founded in memories, consciously or unconsciously. The rhetoric of the great French Revolution recalled the republicanism of Roman antiquity,[9] the European revolutions of the nineteenth century took over the symbols of the French Revolution, as well as the national traditions of citizenship and bourgeois self-consciousness, the Russian Revolution referred to the patterns of the preceding revolutions in the nineteenth century, and so on. After defeating the *ancien régime,* the revolutionaries strongly traditionalized their own historical success; the French, as well as the American and Russian, revolution quickly spawned annual memorial celebrations.

Such highly elaborated rituals of remembering the revolution are not mere folklore and remainders. Instead, the triumphant memory of the revolution must be considered indispensable for the construction of a modern *demos* (Eisenstadt 1976). Only if the people can imagine themselves as rebelling and rising up against the personal regime of the prince, is a nation constituted as a sovereign political subject. Hence, remembering the revolution provides a ritual basis for a democratic identity. In order to create such a triumphant collective memory of revolutions, even relatively harmless insurrections and upheavals are hailed as heroic actions—the famous seizure of the Bastille by a large street crowd liberated only a dozen apolitical prisoners. Consequently, the French king could write in his diary on the evening of the *Quatorze Juillet*: "*Aujourd'hui rien.*"

Indeed, it is not the factual political success but the collective memory that constitutes the triumphant origin of a nation. Only in exceptional cases like the American, the Russian, or the Chinese revolution can the uprising of the people really establish a relatively continuous and uninterrupted new government. The French revolutions of 1830 and 1871 failed in this respect, and—strictly speaking—even the great French Revolution of 1791 cannot be regarded as successful. But their factual success and uninterrupted continuity are less important than their perception in cultural memory. The collective memory of the French Revolution is marked by a deep divide between trauma and triumph that was at the core of French politics in the nineteenth century. The *gens de robe* and the upper bourgeoisie perceived the reign of the *sansculottes* between 1792 and 1793 as a trauma, whereas the petite bourgeoisie and the emerging working class remembered the revolution as the triumphant beginning of a republican tradition. This class coalition was the major carrier of the long-lasting Third Republic and could hence treat the return of the *ancien régime* as an interruption of its own successful tradition.

In contrast, the German revolutionary uprisings not only failed to establish a lasting regime but also to engender a memory of a triumphant constitution of the nation. The short-lived Weimar Republic and the enduring Bonn Federal Republic were both the result of defeats after devastating wars that had caused millions of victims. Hence, the beginnings of democracy were remembered as trauma rather than triumphs. In this respect, they continued a tradition of traumatic origins that started with the Thirty Years War that had devastated Germany three and a half centuries ago. A third of the German population died in the confessional war, and the always fragile unity of the Holy Roman Empire of German Nations was dissected into a multitude of princely states, most important among them, Austria and Prussia. While England and France emerged out of their bloody confessional wars as powerful nation-states based on the dominance of one confession, the same turn toward monoconfessionalism decided by the ruler, the same expulsion or repression of religious minorities, and the same legalist modernization of the state occurred in Germany on the level of small princely states.

Therefore, the revolutionary constitution of a national demos in 1848 was not framed by an already existing nation that just had to decapitate its ruler, but, to the contrary, it had to create the nation state by itself. In its desperate attempt to catch up with the Western lead, the German revolution in 1848 even considered establishing a national monarchy—not the decapitation of a king, but the very creation of one was one of the solutions debated in the German parliament in Frankfurt. The radical left opposed this turn backward toward monarchy. Instead, it suggested replacing the traditional rivalry between Prussia and Austria with embedding the German nation in a European conflict between the culture of the West (which included Poland and Hungary) and the "barbarism of the East," which means Russia. A century later on, new national mythologies could refer to this opposition again.

Overly burdened with the task of establishing the state and forging the identity of the nation at the same time, the revolution of 1848 collapsed; its radical continuation in the southwest was soon crushed by Prussian troops. More important than its factual breakdown, however, was its failure to give rise to triumphant memories. Disappointed and traumatized by their political failure, the carriers of the revolution, the German *Bildungsbürgertum,* left the country or converted their former enthusiasm into cultural oblivion and even into contempt for the idea of revolution.

In contrast to 1848 and 1918, the wars of liberation against the Napoleonic occupation could well be regarded as a successful revolt of the people and could have become a powerful founding myth for the German national movement. Although its initial impact was limited, it nevertheless preluded the military defeat of the French emperor some years later. The democratic potential of this movement faded away, however, in the course of the nineteenth century, and the final realization of the German nation state by Bismarck would dispense with any kind of democratic legitimization.

In imperial Germany, the myth of the wars of liberation fuelled hostility against the archenemy *Frankreich* rather than supporting democratic constructions of identity, and this hostility was reinforced by the defeat in the First World War.

Thus a connection between the first German democracy in 1918 and the revolution that had failed seventy years before was hard to establish. When the *Arbeiter und Soldatenbewegung* entered the stage in 1919 as a new carrier of the revolutionary project, the educated bourgeoisie refused to join the ranks of the revolutionaries—the class that had achieved 1848 felt that it had lost control over the project of revolution and even adopted a hostile attitude to it. The democratic uprising of *les classes dangereuses* did not give birth to a triumphant founding myth; instead, it was held responsible for a military defeat (*"Im Felde unbesiegt. . ."*).

In addition to this shift of the carrier group, the frightening example of the Russian Revolution, its turmoil and chaos, deterred even Social Democrats from supporting a radical revolutionary course. Finally, the level of economic, social and even political modernization to which Germany had advanced by the turn of the century alleviated the fundamental tension that is at the core of successful revolutions. Whereas in 1848 the lack of the nation-state prevented the revolutionary constitution of the demos, in 1918 it was the existence of a relatively modern state that weakened its thrust. The revolutionaries could only extend the already existing institutions by establishing the women's right to vote or they could radicalize the revolutionary project according to the Russian project and opt for a global revolution—a turn that not only affected their support but also failed to support a specifically German demos. The revolution collapsed and was remembered as a failed local rebellion instead of a triumphant uprising of the German people against the reactionary imperial rule.

There was only one German "revolution" that can claim to have established a new regime which endured for some years: National Socialism. The Nazis—like the Italian Fascists before them—presented and remembered their seizure of power as a *völkische* revolution. They considered their regime to be the reconstruction of the free German nation, constituting itself by violence and heroism, triumphantly rising over the forces of decadence, of money and of foreign repression. The Nazi "revolution" claimed to reverse the defeat of World War I and to abolish "the shame of Versailles." Consequently, their rituals of remembrance focused on the triumphant rebirth of the nation out of the sacrificial death of the heroes of the past (Mosse 1991; Connerton 1989).

But the rituals of the Nazi revolution not only remembered the fallen soldiers of the First World War and the casualties of their own early years, but reached also—especially at the end of their rule—back to the wars of liberation against the Napoleonic occupation (e.g., the movie *Kolberg*). Because of its tight connection to the Nazi cults, the memory of the wars of liberation disappeared with the collapse of the Third Reich. The very fact that the Nazis could claim their regime to be a revolutionary rise of the people contaminated the idea of a triumphant self-constitution of the nation—in particular after the defeat of 1945, when a new democratic government was founded. This new German democracy did not result from a revolutionary upheaval of the people but was decreed by the Allied forces. It ran counter to the conception of a people determining its own fate, empowering its own government and defining its own identity. Indeed, only a small part of the German population considered their military defeat to be a liberation from repressive rulers.

In this embarrassing situation, the various resistance movements against the Nazi tyranny (the Munich students around the Scholls, the Kreisauer Circle and, most prominently, the coup d'état of July 1944) were used as a substitute for a people's revolt. Thus the German nation that—at least in the western Federal Republic—tried to enter the political arena as a sovereign democratic subject could uphold an image of innocence: Not all of them had been collaborating with or tacitly accepting the criminal regime, but quite the contrary—the good German people were forced to keep their mouths shut by the Nazi tyrants.[10]

In this construction of a substitute resistance, it was widely ignored that many members of the German resistance against Hitler (e.g., Stauffenberg and Moltke) did not have democratic ideas in mind when they planned for the new Germany to come after the successful overthrow of Nazi rule. Also ignored was the brutal fact that the good German people had voted Hitler into power by democratic elections and that a majority of them supported the Führer *"in Treue fest,"* even when the prospect of military defeat could hardly be ignored.

In the following sections, we will outline a repertoire of responses to the German trauma of 1945. They are presented in a sequential order, and, indeed, there is a certain inherent logic of succession in these responses to a cultural trauma. It is difficult—if not impossible—to arrive at the subsequent stage without passing through the preceding ones. Some stages may be passed so quickly that it will hardly be noticed in the historical record later on, and there is no guarantee that a society will proceed to all stages of the sequence or do so in a coordinated and simultaneous manner. Instead, different forms of response may coexist in the same society—"early" patterns of response may remain dominant in certain social groups while others proceed to a subsequent pattern. For the sake of clarity, however, we will disregard these coexistences and present the responses in a sequential order. Passing from one stage to the other is frequently, but not always, related to a generational turnover and a change in the mode of memory—from direct personal memory to public reconstructions or historical research. These connections between modes of coping with a trauma, generational turnover and shifts in the mode of collective memory are at the core of the following chapters.

The Denial of the Trauma

The defeat of 1945 and the disclosure of the Holocaust resulted in the ultimate trauma of recent German history. First were the obvious and catastrophic German losses—more than ten million Germans lost their lives as soldiers on the battlefield and in prison camps, as casualties of the Allied bombing raids or as refugees on the trek westward to escape the Red Army. In the bombings of Dresden and Hamburg, tens of thousands died in a single night. More than two million Germans were killed as victims of ethnic cleansing in the lost eastern provinces after the war (Naimark 1997); hundreds of thousands of women and girls were raped; twelve million refugees were displaced in the wake of Russian invasion or expelled from their homes in the eastern provinces; most German cities were turned to ruins. At the end of the war, the *Großdeutsche Reich* was in shambles and most survivors had to face atrocities just to save their bare lives. All these experiences were traumatic in their own right, but amazingly they did not engender a broad public movement of mourning or public rituals of collective memory. Hannah Arendt (1950) noted early the remarkable absence of mourning about the devastations of the war in Germany.

As horrible as defeat and death in war may be, their atrocity would have been alleviated by the moral triumph of a collective project that could have persisted even after a defeat and could even have earned the tacit respect of the victors—a heroic war of liberation and independence, for example. But moral justification of the war was entirely and radically denied for the Germans. The aim, the form and the circumstances of war were criminal and were so-labeled by the victors. The shame connected with the German name from then on was a matter of collective identity. The trauma of 1945 resulted, not only from ruin and rape, death and defeat, but also from the sudden loss of self-respect and moral integrity. The utmost barbarism had happened in the nation that had previously grounded its identity on *Kultur* and that, at the beginning of the century, could claim to have furthered and supported Jewish emancipation more than its European neighbors (Diner 1988). The triumphant notion of a German *Kulturnation* was replaced by the traumatizing disclosure of the Holocaust; the nation that gave birth to a prodigious *Weltliteratur* had procreated also the unspeakable and inconceivable horror of the extermination camps. Faced with Auschwitz, there was no place left for poems, Adorno (1992) wrote.

The coalition of silence

Traumas result from a sudden unmediated conversion of inside and outside, good and evil, security and destruction. In the Freudian tradition, they are defined as violent events that were ignored or disregarded at the time when they occurred—the individual mind cannot perceive the possibility of its own death (Caruth 1996, p. 60). In a similar way, collective consciousness tends to reject perceiving the actions of its own community as barbaric in the moment when the barbaric violence occurs. Therefore collective traumas, too, require a time of latency before they can be acted out, spoken about and worked through. Postwar Germany responded to the disclosure of the Holocaust by an "inability to mourn" (Mitscherlich 1994) or "communicative silence" (Lübbe 1981) about the unspeakable or inconceivable horror, the dark abyss into which the German nation had been precipitating. There was no way of telling a story as to how it could have happened. Nobody could bear to look at the victims. All those who had devoted years of their lives to a movement whose members had to consider themselves as collaborators in a mass murder could not repair their ruined moral identity, even if they had been ready to confess their guilt: There would be no second chance, life is spoilt. The trauma is insurmountable. As a moral subject the person is dead. He or she can only remain mute, look away, turn to other issues and hope that nobody will ask the wrong questions. A tacitly assumed coalition of silence provided the first national identity after the war. Everyone assumed that the others, too, had supported the Nazi regime and would therefore agree to be silent about their common shame. No one mentioned his or her relationship to the Holocaust in informal communication—even if their involvement was only that of bystanders of history who never knew exactly what was happening. This muteness and silence contrasted to vivid informal communication about the personal involvement of the war. Even experiences like the escapes from the eastern *Heimat,* the nights in the bomb shelters and the struggle at the *Ostfront* during the last month of the Third Reich could be addressed by those who did not suffer personally from traumatic shocks. But only very few spoke even of their responsibility as bystanders, collaborators and party members with respect to the Holocaust; those who had directly participated in the genocide, obviously, kept their silence in order to avoid imprisonment. Neither the individual trauma of rape, death and dehumanization, nor the collective trauma of guilt and defeat could yet be turned into the theme of conversation. There was a moral numbness with respect to the horror.

The postwar coalition of silence extended to two subsequent generations, both of them entangled in the Nazi regime, but with different perspectives on it. The first generation consisted of those who were born between the turn of the century and the First World War. They had experienced the economic crisis of 1929 in their most formative years, some of them had memories of the First World War, they had voted Hitler and his party (NSDAP) into power and they provided the backbone of the NSDAP before its seizure of power, but also during the war. Most younger leaders of the party and most of the SS leaders were members of this generation. For them, Hitler was the political redeemer who miraculously solved Germany's economic malaise and wiped out the "shame of Versailles." Their family backgrounds, however, were not yet patterned by Nazi ideas and, hence, they had memories of a different social and cultural world, not yet dominated by Nazism. But many also despised this world of their parents who were related to the assumed decadence of the *Weimar* republic. Some had turned at the end of the twenties to radical racism and anti-Semitism and regarded themselves as a radical avant-garde devoted to a mission of saving the world from the "Jewish disease." In contrast to this generation that grew up in a Germany of deeply divided camps, the generation born between 1920 and 1933 were raised in a world that provided few alternatives to National Socialism. In a certain way, they had few choices to oppose Nazi power. This generation of *Hitlerjungen, Flakhelfer* and young soldiers was shaped by the war experience, educated in a radical militaristic system and considered themselves frequently to be the charismatic carriers of a future Nazi Germany. For them, the defeat of 1945 resulted in a sudden and radical breakdown of a taken-for-granted worldview. For the first time, they were faced with a world that was not totally dominated by the Nazi ideology.

As differently as these generations may be related to the regime and ideology of National Socialism, they responded to the disclosure of the Holocaust in a very similar way: The generation of 1933 remained muted because they had backed the Nazi regime although they could have known better, the *Hitlerjungen* generation, in contrast, remained silent for the very opposite reason—they could not have known better; their world had collapsed, many of them felt betrayed and abused.

If the unspeakable issue could not be avoided in informal conversations among Germans, those who had been enthusiastic followers of National Socialism could sometimes cope with the trauma of total defeat and the dismantling of the horror only by simply denying obvious facts—they considered the documentary evidence to be faked by the Allied forces. Others tried to separate the program of National Socialism from its realization or insisted that *"der Führer"* did not know about the Holocaust. At the beginning of the fifties, a shocking figure of almost forty percent believed that the merits of National Socialism outweighed the damage it had done to the German people (Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach 1950). The vast majority maintained that they had not known anything about the mass murders or that they had been too preoccupied by mere survival to care about the monstrous rumors. *"Wir wussten von nichts. . ."*

Most of the horrors certainly were concealed from the German public.[11] But even if the "final solution" was declared to be *"Geheime Reichssache,"* thousands of Germans participated directly in the genocide, the anti-Semitic rhetoric of the Nazi press continuously increased its fervor, rumors were spread, and questions could have been asked even by those who were not directly involved in the deportation and killing (Mommsen and Obst 1988). Few knew all the horrible facts, but almost everybody knew something. Most Germans deliberately or inadvertently avoided focusing their attention on the disappearance of the Jews from public life. They did not want to get involved in piercing moral questions, for fear, negligence or resentment. Thus, what, later on, became the crucial challenge for the German self-consciousness was removed to the diffuse and dim periphery of awareness and perception.

In some respects, the silencing of the past after 1945 continued the ignorance and disregard that existed before 1945. And, to a certain degree at least, this coalition of silence included even the victorious allies (Laqueur 1980). Neither in the Soviet Union nor in the United States was the Holocaust centered in public debates during the fifties. An increasing awareness of the immensity of the genocide did not start before the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem.

The coalition of silence was not limited to informal communication in intimate spheres shielded from public control but left its traces also in the political rhetoric of Germany's public discourse (Dubiel 1999; Herf 1997). The German chancellor Adenauer, a sober and pragmatic politician, mentioned the Holocaust only rarely in official speeches. On the few occasions when he addressed the Holocaust, he referred to it in the passive mode as "the immense suffering of the Jewish people" and did not mention the perpetrators. The Judeocide was, of course, not denied, but it ranged among other victims like fallen soldiers and refugees (*Vertriebenen*) who had lost their eastern *Heimat.* Instead of mentioning the crimes directly, the political rhetoric referred to the past as the "dark times of the recent past," as the "time of unfathomable barbarism," as the "catastrophe of German history" (Dubiel 1999). And even the German movies and TV series in the fifties and early sixties focused much more on the fate of prisoners of war in Siberian camps than on the Holocaust. One of the most popular series was *Soweit die Füße tragen* ("as far as the feet will carry you"), which presented the story of a German soldier escaping from a Russian prisoner camp and trying to return to Germany.

Thus, the crimes and their perpetrators were removed to a realm of unreal nightmares beyond conception and description. Similar to the period of latency in the case of individual traumata, here, too, the traumatizing event—the Holocaust—is removed from collective consciousness and shifted to the level of haunting dreams which occasionally found their way into cultural representations—the popular movies about Doctor Mabuse, who uses men like string puppets to commit horrible crimes, hinted at the collective nightmare, but never spoke out its direct reference.

Blaming the outside: The demonization of Nazism

Not everyone, however, consented to the coalition of silence. Some intellectuals raised their voices and asked the inconvenient question, "Where have you been, Adam?" (Böll 1972). Some situations required an explanation to outside observers, to schoolchildren, foreigners and those Germans who never supported the Nazi regime. Faced with these outside observers who could not be co-opted into the coalition of silence, Germans required a new exculpatory narrative. Postwar Germany constructed this narrative by primordializing the opposition between oppressors and the people: The Nazi rulers, Hitler in particular, were depicted as insane barbarians, as wild beasts, as satanic seducers who had approached the good and innocent German people from outside and deprived them of their common sense like a drug, a disease or a diabolic possession. The criminal domination was represented as pathological, inescapable and fatal, whereas the people were imagined as seduced into blindness, as unsuspicious and completely ignorant of the atrocities of genocide. Demonization of Nazi rule removed the nation from the realm of moral responsibility and culpability. This reference to intoxication, seduction, and blindness allowed Germans even to regard the German nation as the true victim of Nazism. This narrative of victimization was not only limited to the first postwar years. In 2000, a documentary series on German television had the title *The Refugees: Hitler's Last Victims* (this demonization of the Nazi rule was, of course, not supported by the approximately fifteen percent of the German population that, even in the early fifties, considered Hitler to be one of the greatest German politicians of the century [Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach 1950]).

In this new exculpatory narrative, primordialization was again used to exclude the outsider, but its direction was radically reversed: Before 1945, anti-Semitism considered Jews to be poisonous demons secretly invading and seducing the German nation; now the same primordial exclusion and its rituals of purification and decoupling (*Abspaltung*) turned on the Nazis themselves. Hitler, once the charismatic redeemer and savior of Germany, was converted into a devil, a crazy epileptic, a monster, the immense misfortune of German history, an alien demon seducing the innocent German people. In a way, the demonization of Hitler continued his previous position as a fascinating superhuman individual beyond the ordinary rules, powerful and dangerous, mad and seductive—but the hero was converted into a demon, a sorcerer, a devilish monster. The charismatic hero of Nazi Germany had turned his followers into victims who, awakening from a dream, had to recognize that his crusade had left nothing but ashes and ruins. Demonization is reversed heroification; it keeps the superhuman individual as a reference of historical meaning, but it demands radical conversion on the part of his or her previous followers—what has been the embodiment of the sacred before is now turned into the embodiment of the demonic.

The pattern of radical conversion was put to the extreme by Nazis who tried to change their personal identity, assumed new names, and after several years re-emerged into public life as faithful and respected democrats, supporting social democracy and taking over important public offices before their former identities as SS officers were disclosed (Leggewie 1998).

Decoupling: Expelling the perpetrators

The Nazi demons were usually regarded as figures of the past, but some of them had undoubtedly survived undercover or even under their proper names as respected persons of postwar society. If their Nazi past was publicly disclosed, the German nation could not simply fall back to the narrative of demonization. They had to be expelled from civil society in order to reaffirm the boundary between the majority of decent Germans on the one side and the few surviving monsters on the other. A new narrative was needed. It was provided by the model of individual criminal guilt. The Nazi consociates could not be considered as alien monsters—instead they appeared as individual perpetrators who had committed horrible capital crimes and had to be treated as criminals and sentenced to prison according to the rules of law that were proclaimed in the name of the German

people "*Im Namen des deutschen Volkes.*" In the narrative of individual criminal guilt, the German people were no longer in the position of the victim, as they were in the narrative of demonization. Instead, they took the position of the third party, defining the relationship between perpetrators and victims with respect to impartial rules of justice. In this narrative, the collective trauma was moralized, but there was no acceptance of collective guilt yet. To the contrary, the public discourse of the fifties insisted on a strict rejection of any idea of collective guilt and a strict boundary between the few unquestionably criminal perpetrators and the majority of seduced citizens and soldiers.

Of course, the position of the boundary was debatable. The oppositional Social Democrats were willing to include a larger group of higher officials in the circle of perpetrators—targeting especially Globke, the previous commentator of the "*Rassengesetze*," now a member of the government. In contrast, chancellor Adenauer—unquestionably an anti-Nazi himself—and his conservative coalition insisted that, although the criminal perpetrators should be punished, there should be no distinction between two large classes of Germans—those with blemishes and those without (Dubiel 1999). Sometimes, even the leading generals of the *Wehrmacht* who had been sentenced to prison and the young soldiers who did their military service in the *Waffen-SS* were included in the community of abused people.[12] Despite dissents and debate, most politicians of the new democracy agreed in the denial of any collective guilt of all Germans and supported the new narrative of individual criminal guilt. The parliamentary debates about de-Nazification, about wearing military decorations in public, about paroles for mass murderers and the end of prosecution of Nazi crimes, and even about the Auschwitz trial in the early sixties, aimed at demarcating a clear boundary between the majority of normal and "decent" Germans on the one side and the few criminal perpetrators on the other (Dubiel 1999).[13] This demarcation not only allowed for a new construction of national identity but also stressed, by expulsion and oblivion, the radical newness of the political system and the departure from totalitarian rule. Expelling the condemned perpetrators from civil society and ending the prosecution of newly discovered Nazi crimes represented just different sides of the same thrust to get rid of the past.

The law court was the institutional arena where the demarcation of individual criminal guilt was staged, ritually constructed and reaffirmed. Although in the early fifties the imprisonment of Nazi criminals at Landsberg and the related trials was still much criticized by the conservative right, there was no way to avoid the trial if discontinuity between past and present was to be constructed. Here, the roles of the accused perpetrators and the accusing public represented by the prosecutor were strictly separated, just as the rules of law on the one hand and the criminal action on the other were clearly distinguished. Both oppositions supported the demarcation between an innocent nation and treacherous criminals.

Denying any collective responsibility, the ritual of trials confined the question of guilt strictly to individual acts, in particular, as testified by formal decisions within organizations. But even if crimes were committed beyond any doubt, the perpetrators tried to relativize their guilt by referring to the inescapability of military orders: *Befehlsnotstand.* Even the commanders of Auschwitz and Treblinka presented themselves as performing strictly within their formal competences; they emphasized that they never participated in personal cruelties (which was a lie)—these, they argued, were committed by subordinate *Kapos* from Ukraine, Lithuania and Poland (in passing the blame, they adapted their contempt for the Slavic *Untermenschen* to the new situation) (Langbein 1965).

Demarcating the perpetrators and denying one's own involvement and guilt was not only the Federal Republic's way of coping with the past. It was also used in the new socialist republic of East Germany. Here, the founding myth of the new state focused on the idea that the repressed German people had—assisted by the glorious Red Army—succeeded in overthrowing the fascist regime. The boundary between the past and the present was declared to be radical and insurmountable, "*der neue sozialistische Mensch*" (the new socialist human being) had nothing in common with "Hitlerism" and "fascism." The socialist rhetoric carefully avoided speaking of "National *Socialism.*" Any traces of continuity between past and present were shifted across the border to the "revanchist and fascist" Federal Republic of West Germany. The Federal Republic, indeed, could not deny that it was the legal successor of the Nazi state, because it had to provide a legal basis for the citizenship of refugees and for its claim to represent the entire Germany. The new German Democratic Republic (GDR) considered the Federal Republic to be a fascist society in bourgeois disguise. This demarcation between good, antifascist and socialist east and the fascist and capitalist west was also used to deny any responsibility for the survivors of the Holocaust—hence no restitutions and reparations were paid (Lepsius 1989). The public rituals of the GDR focused on the fascist barbarism of the past and the heroism of antifascist resistance, but the Judeocide was rarely mentioned. Based on the antifascist ideology and the constitutional rupture between past and present, the politics of the GDR did occasionally even take an anti-Semitic turn. In socialist East Germany, the Stalinist waves of purging in the early fifties targeted Jewish communists like Paul Merker and Leo Zuckermann who, after returning from a Western exile, had tried to merge antifascism and socialism in the new Germany. Like leading Jewish members of the communist parties in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia, they, too, were accused of "cosmopolitanism" and secret espionage with imperialist and bourgeois forces (Herf 1997).

In a similar and even more self assured way, Austria tried to get rid of its Nazi past. Austria's founding myth turned the *Anschluß* of 1938 into a military occupation by foreign forces and tried to position Austria among the liberated nations like Czechoslovakia, Holland and Denmark as "Hitler's first victim." Here too, responsibility and guilt for the Holocaust was simply pushed across the border and the perpetrators were defined as non-Austrian outsiders, and its own people were seen as "innocent perpetrators" (Wodak 1990). And here, too, decoupling the new nation from the history of guilty perpetrators weakened its alertness with respect to new anti-Semitism.

But the thrust to shift the guilt across the border and to turn collaboration into victimization was not limited to German-speaking nations. Italy rapidly forgot its own fascist past and its complicity with Nazi Germany and presented itself as a nation of resistance heroism; the Flemish, the Slovakian and the Croatian participation in the *Shoah* was blurred because they were parts of new nation-states that emerged out of anti-Nazism resistance movements.

And even within Germany, the process of coping with the past by expelling the perpetrators was repeated half a century after the Holocaust: The "destasification," which took place in East Germany after the German unification in the early nineties, shows a striking similarity with the de-Nazification of the late forties. Again, the issue was to demarcate the line between the perpetrators and the majority of the decent Germans who had suffered from repressive rule, but this time it was even more difficult to turn the filthy grayish web of collaboration into a clear-cut black-and-white picture of guilt and innocence: Almost a third of the entire population had been involved in *Stasi* activities, and the system of surveillance and control had expanded during four decades to reach a perfection the Gestapo never achieved. However, the Communist system in East Germany did not produce genocidal practices comparable to the Shoah or to the Stalinist mass murders.

The pattern established in the postwar period was to be repeated; the disclosure of previous Stasi collaboration and the public debate about it were in many respects similar to the earlier de-Nazification. It ousted many rising political stars from office but kept some of the former collaborators (such as Stolpe) in prominent positions. A successor party of the old regime, the PDS (like the Deutsche Reichs-Partei in the fifties) could profit from the resentment of the old elite now deprived of their old power and privilege. Rumors about clandestine networks of the old secret police spread.

And even the militant members of the 1968 revolt—who had tried to disclose the hidden "fascist" heritage of postwar Germany—could not entirely escape this pattern of decoupling and expulsion with respect to the evil of the past. In 2000, they, too, became the target of public debates and some of them—now in their fifties—had to show up in court. After coming of age, many of them had become members of the Green Party and some of them even succeeded in taking important public offices, like the popular German foreign minister Joseph Fischer or his colleague Jürgen Trittin. The public disclosure of photos showing the young Fischer as a street fighter battering a policeman triggered off a public debate about the violence of the militants twenty years before. This time it was the generation of '68 that had to publicly denounce and outdistance its past. Leading members of the militant movements pointed to the spirit of the time and recalled the best intentions of the "revolutionaries," and those in public office stressed again and again in public that they had never consented to violence against human beings. Again, a strong demarcation was publicly staged between those who remembered their past as democratic revolutionaries and those who engaged in terrorism and criminal activities. Thus the attempt of the generation of '68 to cope with the Nazi past became itself a paradoxical issue of contested memory.

Withdrawal: The timeless German virtues

Excluding the perpetrators by legal trials continued the de-Nazification—originally decreed by the Allied forces—as an autonomous act of the German nation, but it did not provide a positive, let alone triumphant, construction of identity. Still, the collective trauma could not be addressed directly. Any prospect of a unified German nation state seemed to be barred by the stable partition of Germany. Like traumatized individuals withdraw from active engagements that presuppose a basic trust in the environment, traumatized communities, too, can withdraw from risky and threatening engagements to a secure realm of identity. Thus, postwar Germany turned from its recent past to timeless German virtues as the core of a new sober national identity that blended traditional and primordial elements.

These virtues varied depending on social carrier and context. The generation of *Hitlerjungen* who were raised in a militaristic life world and who were returning from the prison camps in Siberia stressed the discipline and the spirit of sacrifice of the German soldiers and disregarded entirely the ideological context in which these virtues were used. They felt betrayed and abused and remained deeply suspicious toward the lure of ideologies. But they kept the practical virtues that provided the backbone of their wartime experience. The petite bourgeoisie focused on honesty, reliability, and industriousness, virtues that fit the functioning of modern organizations but do not ask for a legitimization of their aims (Bauman 1989). In a weird way, the shift to discipline and work as the core of national reconstruction inadvertently continued the Nazi cult of the *Volk* as the merging of "*Arbeiter der Faust und der Stirn,*" and hinted even at the infamous slogan "*Arbeit macht frei*" (Hamacher 1996). The culture of the "economic miracle" (*Wirtschaftswunder*) was predominantly of petite bourgeois origin, carried by craftsmen and clerks, holders of minor public offices and skilled workers.

These German virtues seemed to be exempted from the changing tides of history, the decay of the German nation state and the shame of Nazism. They were strictly decoupled from the historical context that could question and discredit them and separated from the level of state and politics. Thus the new narrative of national virtues fostered the creation of a German nation that lived below the level of politics and the state in associations, enterprises and neighborhoods.[14] The German mark became the cultural symbol for this prepolitical identity of the *Wirtschaftswunder.* In a certain way, this turn toward the sober virtues of working citizens could even be regarded as a belated Westernization of Germany—no high-flung political Romanticism any more, no nostalgic look backward, just practical reasoning about rebuilding the cities and integrating the refugees. Based on and backed by this new self-consciousness, the Germans could even—albeit indirectly—face the survivors of the Holocaust. The Adenauer government decided relatively early to pay large sums to Israel (till 1995, almost 100 billion German marks) as restitution for Jewish property and reparations for the crimes.

But retreatism from politics was not only a matter of the petite bourgeoisie, of ordinary people. It extended also to the traditional *Bildungsbürgertum.* The educated classes emphasized *Bildung* (education), *Innerlichkeit* (sensitivity) and *Unbestechlichkeit* (impartiality and devotion to public office) and cultivated a new *Biedermeier,* which did not challenge the political rule. Retreatism also marked the attitude of those intellectuals who—in the case of Nazism, as well as under the Communist regime—frequently sought refuge in so-called "inner emigration." This inner emigration was essentially apolitical, and many of the prominent emigrants who returned from their American exile after 1945 detached themselves explicitly from politics. Thomas Mann is one of the best known examples of this detachment from and despise of politics.[15]

Their melancholic abstention from politics continued a tradition of the German *Bildungsbürgertum,* which during its formative century was excluded from official politics and confined to the realm of culture and reason. Its intellectual leaders converted abstention into a virtue. From Kant, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche to Ernst Jünger and Carl Schmitt, German intellectuals rarely accepted regular politics, which they found a tiresome, mundane chore. The educated and cultivated person had to detach himself from the superficial exaltations of politics, as well as from the banal calculations of money and markets. Politics could attract attention only if it appeared as an extraordinary charismatic event challenging the heroic individual. In revolutions and wars, the *Bildungsbürgertum* discovered situations in which the sublime and the sacred invaded and overwhelmed the mundane and profane field of everyday business. As soon as political decisions lost their extraordinary charismatic character and gave way to routinized craftsmanship and professional skills, they were treated as dirty business—character and identity are spoilt by politics and compromise.

In the fifties, the concept of a subpolitical, associational German identity responded to the exigencies of the day as well as to the trauma of the past. Because the nation was seen as based on kinship and neighborhood, and not as a territorial state, it was able to integrate millions of refugees from the lost eastern provinces and even an increasing stream of migrants from the second German state. Because the people considered themselves to be innocent victims betrayed and abused by the Nazi rulers, the new German identity between *Goethevereinen* and *Wirtschaftswunder* had to keep its distance from politics. Nobody wanted to repeat the fatal mistake of a strong ideological commitment in the political arena.

The same coping strategy applied to the situation after 1989, but with different results. This time, the retreat to personal networks gave way to a cleavage between East and West Germans and the construction of a particular eastern identity of common memories and lifestyles beyond politics and public discourse (Engler 1999).[16]

Changing Sides: Public Conflicts and Rituals of Confession

Generational conflict and collective guilt

The fragile combination of a new political start and the enduring identity of decent Germans, who considered themselves to be the true victims of the catastrophe and just wanted to be proud of their economic miracle, persisted until the sixties, when a new generation entered the political stage. This generation was born after the war. The young men and women of this generation did not have personal memories of the Nazi past; they broke the coalition of silence and faced their parents with inconvenient questions that until then had been the mark of outsiders. In their zeal to find out about the guilt of their parents, they constructed the boundary between insiders and outsiders in the midst of their own families. The trauma was now considered from an outside perspective. It became the stigma of the entire German nation. The new generation did not want to be a part of this nation that bore the stigma of perpetrators—they shifted sides and identified with the victims; it became fashionable to give children Jewish names. Thus, the repressed otherness of the victims not only had a voice again but was represented by personal names within the German nation. This advocacy for previously excluded otherness extended to political opposition. In contrast to the *Hitlerjungengeneration* who, returning from the Russian prison camps, could effortlessly continue their hostility by focusing on Soviet totalitarianism, the new generation turned enthusiastically to socialist ideas—they not only attacked their fathers' fragile constructions of national identity but also became the declared ally of the enemy. Partly because the young Germans felt the stigma of collective shame and guilt, they did not want to belong to their fathers' nation; they favored everything foreign and were afraid to be treated as typical Germans abroad.

The students' rebellion of 1968, however, was not only a generational revolt or protest. Its anger and rage addressed the traumatic origin of German national identity and it tried to reconstruct this identity. Suspicious of remainders of the old fascism and hidden signs of a new fascism in the Federal Republic, the new *außerparlamentarische* opposition responded to the trauma by repeating furious hallucinations of the event that had caused the collective trauma and the collective fright. But it also spoke out the trauma and crushed the carefully constructed boundaries surrounding the postwar identity of Germany. The angry young men and women attacked the myth of a democratic start, brought the issue of guilt to the fore of public debates and replaced the narratives that had presented the Germans as the victims of Nazi tyranny with a charge of tacit and overt collaboration. It was, of course, not their own guilt that required reassuring illusions, but the guilt of their fathers, from whom a moral distance must be constructed. The new narrative turned the trauma into the stigma of an entire generation. Beyond the narrow limits of individual criminal guilt, the preceding but still present generations, the voters of 1933 as well as the *Hitlerjungen,* were considered collectively responsible for the national trauma—voters, party members, bystanders, collaborators, fanatic supporters, as well as all those contemporaries who had not prevented the horrible crime that was committed in the German name. In stigmatizing the generation of their fathers, the young Germans were not entirely impartial—they represented the victims and in doing so they could cut the links to the nation of perpetrators that was identified with the preceding generation.

The tension between the generations produced a merciless public investigation and, for the first time, a clear public statement of a collective German guilt. More than ever before, the Holocaust entered the institutional arena of public debates in which every citizen could partake, in which secrecy and silence hinted at hidden crimes and in which the privilege of personal experience did not count anymore. From now on, the crime of the past was directly referred to, the silencing and ignoring, the covering and disguising of the crimes, were replaced by a dismantling of collaboration. The circle of perpetrators was widened to include the entire generation of fathers and mothers and the boundaries of the nation were changing.

Like other major changes of boundary construction also, this shift resulted in strong political conflicts and produced deeply entrenched political camps opposing each other in public (Dubiel 1999). Whereas the conservative camp insisted on an unmasked pride of the economic miracle and tended to render the past to oblivion, the New Left (that carefully avoided referring to the past as "National *Socialism*") used the term "fascist" sometimes as a rude club to crush the civil reputation of its opponents. Even some of the most ardent followers of the '68 rebellion got lost in the outland of violence and capital crime: in the end, the *Baader-Meinhof* group and the so-called Red Army Fraction (RAF) constituted their sovereign subjectivity no longer in pursuing an enlightenment vision of society but in trespassing the law. Their aim was to be persecuted as enemies of the state.

Although it was unquestionably the New Left that established the Holocaust as an issue of public discourse in Germany, its radical zeal was not without ambivalence with respect to the Nazi heritage. Habermas and Marcuse, themselves intellectual leaders of the New Left, accused the radical left of "*Linksfaschismus*" (leftist fascism) and, later on, the political center insisted that the totalitarian character of the militant left was strikingly reminiscent of Nazi politics. Moreover, the strong antifascist move of the new left did not prevent the leftist movement from opposing the state of Israel, which was accused of Zionist imperialism with respect to the Palestinians.[17] In response to this anti-Israeli turn of the New Left, some liberal Jewish intellectuals in Germany could not deny being afraid of a new anti-Semitism—this time from the left.

Twenty years later on, some of the leading actors of the militant left even changed sides and became right-wing radicals. Horst Mahler, a former member of the RAF, declared on German television: "The young people of the *Waffen-SS* and the RAF have a lot in common" (ARD Panorama, Sept. 2, 1999); Reinhold Oberlercher, once a leader of the '68 Hamburg student movement, advocated in 1999 the Fourth Reich that bans foreigners and excludes them from the labor market;[18] Rainer Langhans, previously a member of the *Berliner Kommune,* now warns against "be-devilishing" Hitler, whom he regards as a spiritual person, etc.

The shift to a public discourse about the Holocaust was closely associated with a change in the construction of memories. The first postwar generation still had immediate experiences and strong personal memories, which persisted and were sometimes traumatic. They did not need an explicit discourse to revive and reconstruct the Nazi past. Tiny hints in the informal conversations between them were sufficient to recall the past and to signal the side they had been on with respect to Nazism. Recalling the past was not their problem—it was always lingering, haunting their memories. These personal memories were missing in the new generation; they had to rely on an elaborate public discourse to cope with the Nazi past. Hence, it was not only the conflict between generations, but also a shift from personal memories, silenced or reconstructed in microconversations, to the remembrance of the past by public discourse carried by those who did not take part and could not refer to personal memories.

Accepting the guilt of the nation: Rituals of confession

The new narrative of the collective guilt of an entire generation changed the notion of guilt. It was no longer limited to the voluntary acts of individuals who decided deliberately to violate the basic moral rules of a community. Instead, it now extended also to those members of a political community who, although not actively engaged in crimes, did not prevent these crimes that were committed in the name of the community. Because the new narrative decoupled the collective guilt of a political community from the active involvement of each individual member, it allowed for a ritual admittance of guilt by representatives who were innocent as individual persons. Rituals reconcile and reunite oppositions and ruptures and provide ways to overcome traumas and losses (Soeffner 1992). Public rituals of confessing guilt for the Holocaust were performed rarely in the fifties and early sixties—and they addressed mostly a limited audience. The only exception was the German president Heuss's speech at the memorial site in Bergen Belsen in November 1952. This ceremony was broadcasted, reported in the national press and attended by several representatives of Western nations. Here, Heuss spoke the famous phrase "*Diese Schande nimmt uns niemand ab*" ("None will lift this shame from us"). But Heuss remained—in spite of all his reputation—in the position of a respected critic, rather than being carried by a majority movement (Herf 1997, p. 327). Other gestures, like the visit of ambassador Allaert to Auschwitz in March 1963, were barely noticed by the media.[19]

More important in this respect was certainly the famous kneeling of the German chancellor Willy Brandt in Warsaw in 1970. In a spontaneous gesture, the head of the German government visiting the monument for the victims of the Ghetto uprising against German occupation knelt down in silence and remained so for some minutes. This representative confession of collective guilt was no longer relativized by reference to the sufferings of the Germans or to a fatal blindness and seduction. Neither could it be seen as a youngster's untamed revolt against his or her parents' generation. In distinction to the generational revolt that established a cleavage between the carriers of collective guilt and the accusing generation, Brandt took the burden of the collective guilt of the nation although he was innocent as a person (he was persecuted by the Nazis and joined the Norwegian resistance army). Thus he enacted a new narrative that confessed the collective guilt of the German nation with respect to the Jewish victims facing an international public that acted as a third party.

This narrative of national guilt was not presented in a public speech but as a spontaneous and mute gesture that did not require further explication and did not allow for objections and criticism. There was no public announcement or plan to perform this gesture; even the personal staff of the chancellor did not expect it, and no large Polish audience attended it. But by its very unexpectedness it was globally noticed and immediately reported on the front pages of the major Western newspapers: The *New York Times* as well as the *Corriere della Sera* or the *Daily Telegraph* and other foreign newspapers showed on their front pages the picture of the German chancellor kneeling at the Ghetto memorial. Their comments stressed unanimously the importance of the gesture: This "touching incident" overshadowed the signing of the German-Polish treaty on the same day (*New York Times*); it was "*il momento culminante*" ("the peak moment") of Brandt's visit, "*un nuovo rituale*" ("a new ritual") that marked a turning point in German postwar history (*Corriere della Sera*).[20]

Although the issue of the Holocaust had been addressed already in public by some political representatives of the Federal Republic (for example, by President Heuss, Mayor Reuter of Berlin, and Schumacher, the leader of the Social Democrats), it was the kneeling of Brandt in Warsaw that became an icon of recent German history—like the mass rallies of the Nuremberg *Parteitage*, the Soviet soldiers erecting the red flag on the Brandenburger Tor in 1945 or, later on, the fall of the Berlin Wall.

This global resonance was not only due to the context of an official visit abroad. More important was the fact that it added an innovative element to a well-known ritual. Visiting the monuments of unknown soldiers who sacrificed their lives for a nation was nothing new. Originally it was performed only by the representatives of the nation to which the dead belonged. Later, it became part of the rituals performed by heads of state visiting another state and paying respect to the dead of the host nation. In this ritual, the fallen soldiers who were revered as heroes before are regarded as victims and the hostility of the past is blurred in a common act of mourning.

Brandt's kneeling transformed this ritual in a profound way. It added a gesture of repentance with respect to victims killed by the chancellor's own nation. Unlike the famous gestures of reconciliation performed by the French president Mitterand and the German chancellor Kohl at the cemeteries of Verdun later on, Brandt's gesture did not ignore the difference between perpetrators and victims. Although the monument of the Ghetto upheaval in Warsaw depicts a heroic act of failed resistance, it was not the death of soldiers who were casualties of a war, but the death of innocent victims that he was mourning.[21] But it clearly differed also from a simple Canossa ritual or a voluntary personal humiliation of a repenting individual who is personally guilty. When guilty people repent in public they can never avoid the suspicion of hypocrisy. Brandt's Warsaw kneeling separated the individual guilt of the ritual actor from the collective guilt of the German nation. It could be performed and was beyond suspicion of hypocrisy for the very reason that Brandt was innocent as an individual person. He was believable as the representative of the German nation because he had no personal interests or past involvements to be disguised and masked by this gesture.

The decision to humiliate oneself and take on the burden of collective guilt gained immense respect for the individual person of the German chancellor and gave way to a reconciliation between Germany—the nation of the perpetrators—and the nations of the victims. It ended the postwar period. This gesture, not the many announcements of German politicians, ended the status of moral occupation for the Federal Republic and opened the path to a new political identity recognized by its neighbors. It substituted the missing revolution and prepared the ground for a new German identity, one not imposed from outside but emerging from representative acts of the nation defining itself and accepting its guilt. Thus it is no coincidence that the chancellorship of Willy Brandt also gave way to a normalization of relations between Germany and its eastern neighbor states and that the new *Ostpolitik* supported Germany's entry onto the stage of global politics. The public confession of the guilt of perpetrators even opened up a path to a rebirth of the nation.

Three decades later, remembering the thirtieth anniversary of Brandt's kneeling in Warsaw, the commentaries in the German media almost unanimously proclaim this rebirth of Germany as a consequence of the Brandt gesture: Instead of questioning it as a moment of public humiliation like thirty years before when it was referred to as a "Canossa ritual," it was celebrated as Germany's reentry into European politics. The trauma of perpetrators who confess their guilt was turned into a triumph that could even be regarded as a new model for public politics.[22]

The extraordinary media resonance of the Brandt kneeling was not only due to the particular historical setting in which it was performed. It was also related to a deeply rooted cultural pattern of self-humiliation and self-sacrifice in the Christian tradition. In this tradition, an innocent person can, in an extraordinary public act, humiliate himself in order to relieve the burden of collective guilt from his people. Although this mythical pattern can be found also in Mesopotamian cultures, the most famous elements of this tradition are the idea of the original guilt as elaborated by Augustine, the sacrifice of Isaac and the self-sacrifice of Christ. Christ is the ultimate innocent individual, the king of divine descent, the hero who is killed in order to save his people. Christian liturgical rituals remember or even repeat (cp. the Catholic ritual of transsubstantiation) this sacrifice of the innocent: Jewish and Christian symbolism represent it by the figure of the innocent lamb that replaces the human sacrificial object; early Christian martyrs and, later on, religious virtuosi accepted suffering and death in order to do penance for the sins of others and to repeat the model set by Christ. This cultural pattern of Christomimesis underlies also the confession of collective guilt by political leaders, although they might be raised in a largely secularized environment like Willy Brandt. Myth and ritual form and guide our actions in liminal situations, even if we are not aware of the original version of the mythological or ritual pattern—like a rule of grammar that structures and directs speech acts also for those who are unable to name the rule. This holds true not only for the performing actors, but also for the audience.

It may be revealing to compare Brandt's gesture in Warsaw with the famous ritual of remembrance performed by Reagan and Kohl in 1985 at the German war cemetery in Bitburg, where soldiers of the German *Waffen-SS* were also buried. This ritual of remembrance was staged to support the postwar demarcation between the few Nazi perpetrators and the innocent German people—this time, however, not only the regular soldiers of the German *Wehrmacht*, but also members of the Waffen-SS, were to be included in the immense group of victims. Even if not all of its members had joined voluntarily the Waffen-SS, the sign of the SS was rightly seen as the epitome of Nazism—it marked a monstrous elite corps of mostly cold-blooded murderers.

Consequently, the international community was outraged by the ritual at Bitburg. Beyond a vivid sensitivity toward the symbols of Nazism, this response also indicates the clash between two general tendencies. On the one hand, the construction of victims is bound to inclusion. More and more new groups are included in the mass of victims. On the other hand, this construction of victims cannot dispense with perpetrators; it is ritually staged by public acts of repentance and accepting collective guilt. The Bitburg ritual was incomplete in this respect: A repenting actor representing the group of perpetrators was missing. Noting that both representatives, Kohl as well as Reagan, were personally innocent missed the point. In contrast to the Brandt gesture in 1970, Kohl did not take on collective guilt but tried to disperse it in the untraceable space of history, or to charge it to demons, thereby reviving the postwar narrative of the seduced nation. But remembrance and repentance cannot be separated if the collective identity of perpetrators is involved.

Representing the nation in a ritual of repentance in a believable way is fostered by the innocence of the representative as a person. Kohl failed to see the opportunity in what he presented as an excuse.

But the heritage of the Brandt ritual of atonement and repentance prevailed. Shortly after the visit to Bitburg, the German president Weizäcker gave one of his most impressive memorial addresses on the occasion of the fortieth commemoration of May 1945; solemnly, he recalled the different groups of victims, most prominently among them the Jewish citizens. Ten years later, at the fiftieth commemoration, thousands of Germans attended observances at the memorial sites of the concentration camps, and the 27[th] of January, the day when the camp of Auschwitz/Birkenau was liberated, was officially instituted as a German memorial day for the victims of Nazism.[23]

The Objectification of the Trauma: Scholarly Debates and Museums

In the first postwar period, the trauma was embodied in haunting personal memories. (see, for example, Mitscherlich's book *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern*, 1994). The "inability to mourn" resulted in public silence and the social expulsion of the perpetrators. The institutional arena where the Holocaust was spoken out was the law court. In contrast, the second period was patterned by political conflicts and public debates carried by a generation who had no personal memories anymore, and by public confessions of guilt. Its arena was the political space of civil society. Every citizen could participate, engage in ardent debates, be a passionate partisan on the public issue, and join political camps. It was national identity that was at stake and—even if the participants try to surpass each other in laying claims on the issue—there are no a priori privileges in defining collective identity in public discourse. But claims to be close to the moral core of collective identity will be raised and contested, stigmas are attached to those who are regarded as the outsiders of the moral order and who, in turn, are trying to defend themselves against the stigma of perpetrators. The trauma, unspeakable in the years after 1945, had been turned into the stigma of collective guilt, publicly contested and debated between generations. In the next stage, the stigma will become the theme of stories and histories that can be narrated and represented to an audience that is no longer haunted by personal memories or stigmatized by collective guilt.

The professional historians take over

During the eighties, the memory of the Holocaust was increasingly transferred to a new institutional arena: scholarly debate and historical research. When the number of eyewitnesses is shrinking and personal memories are fading, when new generations can no longer listen and respond to their fathers' stories, then historians and other professional custodians of the past have to preserve relics, reports and remainders. Scholarly reconstructions extend the range of memory and submit it to seemingly impersonal methods of investigation and evaluation.

Historians can investigate their objects even if they are not studying the history of their own group. In principle at least, the memory produced by historical research is disembodied, abstract and detached from the identity of the scholar. If the past is rendered to the professional experts, it becomes an object of comparisons, it is explained by particular conditions and understood by imagining a special context. In distinction to the narrative of national guilt, the past is turned into a field of objective causes and conditions that move history and result in historical events. Questions of guilt and responsibility are shifted into the background and moral commitments are to be separated from the professional investigation of the case and the impartial assessment of truth. The professional expert acts on behalf of the general community, and this community extends to include all reasonable subjects in the case of the scientist and scholar.

As soon as the experts take over the reconstruction of the past, debates about these reconstructions tend not only to be decoupled from issues of personal identity but also to be institutionalized and tempered by the sober rituals of scholarly methods. Therefore the shift from general public debate to the field of professional specialists who replace or supplement the judges and politicians as representatives of the nation and as the impartial third party is commonly expected to produce a more detached and less passionate perspective.

However, this expectation holds true only if the debate about the Holocaust is confined within the shielded fields of scholarly debates. But the general interest in the national trauma could not be banned from the exclusive halls of historical science. The historians (many of them members of the *Hitlerjungen* generation, but also leading liberal intellectuals of postwar Germany) were eager to present their findings to a larger public audience, and the national audience showed a strong and sensitive resonance. As soon as the issue was turned again into a matter of general concern, the very attempt to deal with the Holocaust as a matter of normal historical research provoked violent public objections and triggered off intense debates.

The first important controversy about the Holocaust, however, still remained largely within the scholarly community. It was the debate between so-called functionalist and intentionalist explanations of the Judeocide. Intentionalists focused on the original anti-Semitism of Hitler and the Nazi leaders.[24] They explained the Nazi organizations and even the entire war at the *Ostfront* as a deliberate and controlled attempt to exterminate the Jewish people. According to them, all parts of the Nazi's mythology could be suspended, revoked or mocked at in internal communication among the Nazi leaders—but not anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism was the mythomoteur of Nazism. In contrast, functionalists like Mommsen analyzed the Holocaust as a result of a highly developed differentiation of tasks on the one hand and a complex field of internal rivalries and tensions between different offices and Nazi organizations on the other (Mommsen 1983). Far from being a centrally planned and meticulously executed campaign, the Holocaust appears here as the result of an organizational chaos where even the high ranking participants did not exactly know about the genocidal activities of other parts. Nobody—not even Hitler himself—was in full control and nobody had exhaustive and reliable information about the complete reality of the genocide. If the Holocaust is explained as the—at least partly—unintended consequence of internal rivalries and conflicts between Nazis or as a function of an organizational system, then, indeed, the question of guilt and responsibility is suspended and the ties that link the Holocaust to the national identity are weakened.

As hefty as the controversy between intentionalists and functionalists has been, it was too complex to enter the general public sphere, and it never questioned the monstrosity of the Holocaust itself—whatever its core conditions may have been. In contrast, the famous German *Historikerstreit* of the eighties got tremendous public attention because it addressed directly the question of German national identity and brought out the lingering ambivalence with respect to the trauma. The *Historikerstreit* confronted the protagonists of German exceptionalism who insisted on the uniqueness of the Holocaust and its absolute importance for German identity on the one side with a new right-wing revisionism on the other (Nolte 1987; Hillgruber 1987; Diner 1987; Habermas 1987a, 1987b; Lacapra 1994; Maier 1997). Pointing to some new historical evidence, the conservative revisionists tried to normalize the German war crimes and to position them in the context of a European civil war in which Stalin, not Hitler, had set the model of exterminatory crusades. This strategy obviously lightened the burden of moral responsibility and questioned the uniqueness of the Holocaust; it did not exonerate the Germans, and it did not shift the guilt across the border, but it dissolved and suspended the question of guilt in a broad display of genocidal practices of the "European civil war" triggered off by Soviet communism. It blurred the boundaries. Not surprisingly, the reaction of the liberal public audience led by Habermas was strong. Historicizing the Holocaust and embedding it into a historical context was considered an act of alienation and misappropriation of the very idea of German identity that the new generation had adopted.[25]

In a different way, but with comparable results, the issue was again brought to the fore of public attention by Goldhagen's book *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (Goldhagen 1996). Goldhagen attributed the Holocaust to a deep rooted exterminatory anti-Semitism in German culture. The debate revived the generational revolt of the sixties and, again, expanded the group of perpetrators to include almost all Germans in the Nazi Reich. The public debate was fierce. Even the professional historians who questioned the scholarly merits of the book were accused of masking the past and hence of *ex post facto* collaboration. But both camps in this debate contributed—certainly without intending it—to a blurring of boundaries that constitute a moral discourse. The historians around Mommsen did so in insisting on the impartial treatment of a national trauma in the public sphere and on scholarly investigation even if it deals with matters of identity. Goldhagen's supporters did so because Goldhagen primordialized German anti-Semitism and thus removed it from the range of moral decisions. Furthermore, including everyone in the group of perpetrators risks eroding the distinction between guilt and innocence that is at the core of moral discourse.[26]

To a lesser degree, this erosion of the moral distinction by widening the group of perpetrators could be found in the debate about the exhibition *Wehrmachtsausstellung* of the nineties (Heer 1995). The exhibition presented almost a thousand documents to prove the many connections between the regular German army at the *Ostfront* and the Judeocide, the readiness of officers and common soldiers to cooperate with the *Einsatzgruppen*, and, in particular, the undeniable fact that many of them did know about the Holocaust. Again, the circle of perpetrators was widened and one of the seemingly safe havens of "inner emigration," the *Wehrmacht*, was discovered to be deeply entangled in the crimes. And again, the large public resonance and clamor that the exhibition received resulted not from scholarly debates but from its impact on the new German identity as the nation of perpetrators. Germany's response was divided—a clear majority was deeply moved and concerned by the documented atrocities, prominent politicians and public intellectuals gave the introductory speeches for the exhibitions, etc. A strong minority of conservatives, however, refused to admit to the guilt and the entanglement of the German *Wehrmacht*. Finally, even the German parliament dealt with the issue in a memorable and impressive debate. Again the fundamental demarcation between the majority of decent Germans on the one side and the minority of criminal Nazi monsters on the other was at stake.

In the case of the *Wehrmachtsausstellung*, this new German identity was supported by a scholarly attempt to revise the traditional master-narratives of the decent German soldier, and, at first, it was only the defenders of this traditional identity who rallied against it. But scholarly discourse was by no means unanimously supporting the revisionist cause—at the end of nineties, an increasing number of historians challenged the scholarly basis of the exhibition. They pointed to a small number of the photo documents that were mistaken as proofs for the *Wehrmacht's* murderous actions, but, in fact, showed the victims of the Russian NKWD or the German SS.[27] Finally, the organizers closed the exhibition in response to scholarly criticism. Obviously the trauma was still ruminating and dividing the German public—the diagnosis of the experts was accepted only if it could soothe the pain or acerbate the trauma; most Germans resisted turning their national identity into just another object of impartial scholarly investigation.

Of course, this was not a general ban on historical research about the Holocaust and not all attempts to submit the Holocaust to historical research provoked passionate public controversy. To the contrary, with the number of witnesses fading away, there was an increasing demand for the collection of memories and remainders. The turn toward oral history, autobiographical narration and history of *mentalités* responded to this demand (Niethammer 1983). It extended the perspective to include everyday life and seemingly banal details that reflected the penetration of Nazism into the life of ordinary Germans.

But here again, the once clearly demarcated boundary between the few criminal perpetrators and the majority of innocent and abused Germans was blurred. It dissolved in a history of complex contexts and entanglement; finally, it depicted the manifold ways of ignoring and tacit consenting, of cowardice and fascination. It described the subtle ramifications on the way to the Holocaust, but—in contrast to the trials of the postwar period—it refused to proclaim a final verdict of guilty or not guilty: Indissoluble and entangled, all Germans had been guilty and not guilty at the same time. The historians' narrative of the national trauma established a strong perspective of a third party, but it merged the positions of perpetrators and victims. Finally, there were even German victims and Jewish collaborators. Half a century after the end of the Nazi rule, the Germans discovered their own victims—the victims of the bombing raids, the victims among the refugees in 1945, the victims of rape under Russian occupation. It was mainly the Günther Grass novella *Im Krebsgang* that turned the suffering of Germans after 1945 into an issue of public debate. Because Grass is a liberal and, as such, beyond suspicion of revisionist intentions, his advocacy for the forgotten German victims was believable. In 2003, plans for a center for refugees and expulsion in Berlin were set up by a German committee and caused an international debate. The possible involvement of a Jewish partisan unit in a massacre committed on a Lithuanian village in January 1944 was publicly debated (FAZ 8-12-2003). The once clear-cut distinction between victims and perpetrators was gradually blurred.

Museums and memorial sites: From laic associations to official committees

Professional administration and scholarly investigation of the past is not an invention of the late twentieth century; instead, it dates back to the establishment of history as an academic discipline and the institutional conservation of past objects in the nineteenth century (Nora 1992; Giesen 1999a). The general civil concern with the past as organized in historical associations and the idea that the past can be appropriated by every citizen according to his or her own taste receded in the second half of the nineteenth century and was gradually replaced by an exclusive professional handling of historical matters that turned the non-professionals into a laic audience consuming the past for curiosity and education.

This transformation of voluntary movements that want to preserve the remainders of the past as a matter of general civic concern into a professional organization was repeated in the case of the Holocaust. Although most of the concentration camps—in particular, Auschwitz, Dachau, Bergenbelsen and Ravensbrück—had been turned into memorial sites shortly after the war, it was in the eighties that the Holocaust was focused on by local movements of citizens who tried to collect local knowledge and to discover the traces of the national trauma within their own local community. Frequently organized by teachers of the '68 generation, these laic associations dug out the remainders, established local memorial sites and reconstructed the maps of the cities with respect to a past that their parents had shifted to a distant demon in Berlin. But the traces of the Gestapo and of pogrom, of vanished Jewish citizens and Nazi rituals, could be found in every city—the persecution of the Jewish cocitizens was not just a matter of Hitler and Auschwitz, it happened everywhere in Germany. Thus the laic memorial movements and associations appropriated the national trauma on a local level. In the nineties, however, these laic movements were increasingly superseded and replaced by professional musealization and by official national policies to construct memorial monuments (Schafft and Zeidler 1996; Puvogel 1989). This turn toward professional musealization is not limited to the German collective memory. Holocaust museums were founded in Washington, Los Angeles and more than a hundred other cities; Holocaust archives were sponsored by American movie directors. In Germany, the professional care for the national trauma reached its peak in the planning of a large Holocaust memorial in the center of Berlin as the national monument of the new united Germany. A huge committee was assembled to decide about the different suggestions provided by internationally known artists and architects, and each of these suggestions had its ardent followers and opponents in the committee, as well as in the public debate about the issue.

On the German, as well on the Jewish side, this shift toward musealization and monumentalization hints at the thrust to preserve and to appropriate a memory that is endangered by the passing away of witnesses. This longing for roots can lead to individual investigation of the fate of ancestors, but it results mostly in a collective construction of a past, first by voluntary associations of citizens, then by official organizations and committees chaired by experts who act on behalf of the nation. In the end, the differentiation between past and present is no longer an achievement of the individual consciousness but a spatial distinction between *les lieux de memoire* that are exclusively devoted to memory and the regular and mundane spheres of action that are discharged from the burden of the past; but it is also turned into a social distinction between the professional specialists of the past and the laic audience that faces the past only on special occasions and otherwise indulges in oblivion. They know: the past is stored and in good hands.

The Mythologization of the Trauma: The Holocaust as an Icon of Evil

As a reference for identity, the Holocaust could not be contained within the confines of museums and archives. From the seventies onward, it increasingly entered a new institutional arena: the media. Most important in this respect is certainly the television series *Holocaust,* which attracted unusual attention in the German public sphere. Presenting the Holocaust and the Nazi heritage in the context of a nondocumentary movie was not entirely new: Wolfgang Staudte's movie *Rosen für den Staatsanwalt* had addressed the issue of Nazism as early as the fifties, but this, as well as most other movies dealing with the dark legacy of Nazism, did not dare to present the Judeocide directly. In contrast, the most popular TV-serials dealt with the fate of German POWs in Russian camps and their attempts to come back home (*Soweit die Füße tragen*). In distinction to the many attempts to describe the horrors of the war or the persistence of secret Nazi networks, the TV series *Holocaust* told the story of two German families, one Jewish, the other Nazi, in a convincing, detailed and moving way. Mediated through the movie, the process of remembering was shifted again to the German families, to children who refused to accept the narrative of the seduced nation and to parents who still defended themselves occasionally by maintaining that only the participants could understand, but mostly felt estranged by their own almost forgotten past.

Far from resuscitating the political debates of the sixties or exacerbating the scholarly debates, the presentation of the past in German movies like *Heimat* or *Die Blechtrommel* or U.S. movies like *Schindler's List* (Loshitzky 1997) or *Holocaust,* transferred the issue to a new institutional arena that tends to overcome opposition and conflicts by the ritual construction of communality. Nobody in the audience could disagree with the fundamental evaluation of the Holocaust because the movies presented a story and not an argument.

In contrast to scholarly research, reconstructions of the past in the mass media have to abstain from referring to abstract figures and arguments; instead, they must narrate a story about good and bad people, they have to create suspense and emotions, and to offer clear-cut anchors for identification (Rosenthal 1995). Entanglement and indifference, gradual shifts and uncertainties of evaluation can be presented only at the beginning of the story and only to a very limited degree; sheer coincidence and structural constraints are hardly accepted as moving forces of a story; instead, there must be action and responsibility, heroes and villains, suspense and—at the end of the story—an absolutely clear decision between perpetrators and victims, guilt and innocence. In doing so, the media staging of the Holocaust succeeds also in the representation of the victims as subjects with a face, a name and a voice. Those who have been reduced to mere objects are remembered as "cohumans," as suffering subjects, as members of the national community.

Thus the media staging of the Holocaust not only creates unanimity and the unification of oppositions but can also construct an identification with the past even if personal memories are no longer at hand, and it fosters this identification because it is based on voluntary decision instead of on traumatic intrusion. It creates a collective memory that would not have existed without it. In this respect, it represents the past in the way museums do, as the utmost alterity and without personal memories. The vividness and liveliness of the narrated story blurs the fact that it is not their own personal story that they tell or listen to. They can produce and consume this disconnected past as exotic alterity and even as sentimental entertainment. In the extreme, the Holocaust is converted into "funny" entertainment and presented as a souvenir in the shops of museums: In St. Petersburg, Florida, a visit to the local Holocaust museum rates among the "40 fun things to do" in a flyer for tourists; the museum shop offers, for $39.95, a scale relic of a Polish box car used to transport Jews to the death camps. In Los Angeles, the famous Simon Wiesenthal Museum of Tolerance is promoted like a Disney World of horror: "Make the Museum of Tolerance part of an exciting and informative itinerary for your group. Check us out for group discounts, special bonuses." The show itself is praised as "high tech, hands-on experiential unique interactive exhibits" (*New York Times*, March 18, 1999). The utmost horror is abused for selling kitsch (Young 1994).

Today, the Holocaust has acquired the position of a free-floating myth or a cultural icon of horror and inhumanity—similar to Ghengis Khan's raids, witch hunting or the slave trade. It is not a particular German problem anymore—every person can refer to it, regardless of his or her origin, history and descent; it is understood by every member of a worldwide audience. Independent of individual memories and recollections, of collective trauma and personal guilt, the Holocaust has ascended to the status of an undisputed master narrative. In a strange turn, the hell has been sanctified.[28] This mythological use of the Holocaust contrasts markedly to the traumatic postwar period when the ultimate horror was beyond explanation and description—an abyss of total inconceivability. Today, the mythological use of the Holocaust has turned what once was inconceivable and traumatic into an almost trivial and well known background knowledge in which new stories are embedded and which is evoked in order to explain, to interpret and to evaluate. It is not only staged in the media, but also referred to by various political camps and used to raise money for various campaigns and movements; it disguises strategic action in moral terms, and it ends by creating conflicts about the right to claim it as one's own cause.[29] It was this instrumentalization of the Holocaust for daily purposes and its trivialization in the media against which the German writer Martin Walser raised his voice in his provocative public confession that he switched off the TV if it was showing a movie about the Holocaust. But he also attempted to reindividualize German guilt by stating that everybody has to face his own bad conscience privately, thus criticizing "the incessant presentation of our disgrace" ("Dauerpräsentation unserer Schande"[30]). Ignaz Bubis, the head of the German Jewish community, responded strongly to this by calling this statement "mental arson." In 1999, the controversy between Walser and Bubis divided Germany again into two moral camps—more than half a century after it happened, the Holocaust is at the core of the serious public discourse about Germany's national identity.

Therefore, focusing on the dissolution of collective trauma into global entertainment does not tell the complete story. Certainly, the transformation of the repressed trauma into a national discursive universe is a story of disembodiment and externalization, of decoupling collective memory and identity from personal memory and individual responsibility, of turning internal ambivalence into external presentations of common values staged by professional specialists and appealed to by almost every political actor in the pursuit of a democratic majority. It may even be described as the transformation of a collective nightmare into a myth of commercial entertainment.

But the extraordinary resonance of these media events in Germany cannot be explained by the sheer weirdness and awe-inspiring alterity of their content. It rather hints at a collective memory that exists, is reproduced, and can be appealed to—even if personal memories fade away. Beyond the manifold ways to exploit the trauma of the past for present-day interests remains a deep rooted collective sensitivity to racism and xenophobia. In response to xenophobic outbursts in the mid-nineties, more than two million Germans rallied in the "*Lichterkettenbewegung*." This cannot be reduced to individual interests or to the shifting tides of mass entertainment. It is a matter of collective memory and identity. It transferred the spontaneous gesture of Brandt into the ritual of a huge popular movement.

Any attempt to construct a new Germany after 1989 has to take this into account. The soil in Berlin on which the new center of German government has been erected is soaked with memories of persecution and Nazi rule. Again and again the construction workers in Berlin discovered new remainders and relics buried by a thin layer of sand and shambles. Attempts to get rid of the past and attempts to remember it coalesced in the debate about the Holocaust memorial—appeals to respect the past and to leave the ruins untouched collided with the urge to turn them into a new construction manifesting the new democratic identity after the Holocaust. In all these debates, the reference to the Holocaust itself is never challenged; instead they are moved and twisted by the quest for the right, the most authentic, the most adequate and the most dignified way to refer to the trauma of the nation.

The Globalization of the Trauma: A New Mode of Universalistic Identity

In Karl Jaspers' famous distinction between different notions of guilt with respect to the Holocaust ranges the so-called metaphysical guilt. Metaphysical guilt refers neither to the personal guilt of individual perpetrators nor to the collective guilt of a political community, but extends to all human beings. After the Holocaust, humankind has had to give up its original trust in the irresistible progress of civilization and in its own victorious endeavor to overcome barbarism. Faced with the Holocaust, we have to consider the optimistic anthropology of the Enlightenment as a—possibly fatal—illusion. If this could happen in one of the heartlands of modern European culture, then there is no safe haven where a relapse into barbarism can be excluded. Instead, the human condition has to be rewritten to include a deeply rooted and original tendency toward barbaric violence. Viewed from this perspective the Holocaust is turned from a particular German trauma into a global trauma of humankind. This negative anthropology of the Holocaust hints at religious roots in the narrative of the original sin and the hope for salvation and redemption. It was Germany that committed the original sin of modern history, that had to give up the paradise of the Enlightenment's modernism and that had to respond to the question "where have you been Adam?" but the consequences of this exodus extend to all members of the human species—it could also have happened elsewhere.

But this extension of the trauma beyond the national identity of Germany to humankind is not only the subject of secular theological debates among intellectuals. It can be found also on the level of rituals constructing national identity. The public confession of German guilt shows a new pattern of constructing national identity. It is no longer a ritual remembrance of past triumphs or a remembrance of its own victims as represented by the columns of victory and the monuments of fallen soldiers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is no longer recalling the paradise of a mythical past set up as an ideal for the present. And certainly, it is no longer a revival of an endangered tradition or an appeal to national virtues that resist the changing tides of history. To the contrary, memory aims here at an axiological reversal of history, at a radical rupture in the stream of events: We recall the past to prevent it from ever being repeated.

In this insistence on a radical discontinuity between past and future, the new pattern of national identity relates to modernism and universalism. Modernity commonly sees the attractiveness of the future as the main motive of historical action and as the Archimedeal point of temporal order. In contrast to classical modernity and the universalistic patterns of identity associated with it, however, the new pattern of identity is based not on the attraction of the future, but on the horror of the past.

Progress has lost its powerful appeal as the prime motive of acceleration in historical action, and the moral discourse of Western societies is much more focused on the demarcation of evil than on the definition of the common good. The one great Progress of History has been dissolved again into many little progresses, the side effects and risks of which can be deliberated and debated. The small steps of progress in technology and medicine, in social reform and ecology, can hardly be tightened and condensed into a great project of identity that sets history in global motion and inspires everyone to aspire to the emancipation of humankind. Progressive politics is especially impeded by everyday problems; it has lost its charismatic appeal and complains that the voters are bored and even disgusted by politics. The temporal horizon of history has been reversed. Today, the horror of the past and the remembrance of the victims replace the attraction of utopias that once produced the victims. It is only remembrance, and not the utopia, that is able to provide the unquestionable basis of a universalistic collective identity (Habermas 1985, 1987c).

The new pattern of constructing collective identity by public confessions of guilt got its first and most impressive contour in the German remembrance of the Holocaust, but later on it was not limited to the German case. In many Western nations, political representatives have solemnly admitted the guilt of the past. The French president has deplored the extensive voluntary French collaboration in the deportation of French Jews during the war; the former Norwegian president Bruntland has noted that—contrary to the national master narrative of resistance—more Norwegians died in the ranks of the *Waffen-SS* than as victims of the German occupation; the Pope apologized solemnly for the Catholic Church's failure to intervene in the persecution of the European Jews; in the debate about Jedwabne, Poland—itself a nation of victims—debates its own genocidal crimes committed on Polish Jews under the German occupation (Jan Gross 2001); and the Italian postfascist leader Fini laid flowers in a cemetery of the victims of the German occupation (the "fosse adreatine" executions), even though his own party is considered to be a successor to the fascist collaborators in Italy.

The new pattern of public confessions of guilt extends even beyond the case of the Holocaust of the European Jews. The American president Clinton intended to confess the guilt of white Americans for racism and slavery, as well as for the genocide committed on Native Americans; the Dutch government asked for apologies from the victims of colonial exploitation; the Australian government did the same for the genocide of the Australian aborigines; and French public debate—in spite of the pompous celebrations of its centenary—paid increasing attention to the victims of *la terreur* in the great French Revolution. The French president apologized to the descendants of Alfred Dreyfus; the Pope apologized solemnly for the Inquisition, the Crusades and the persecution of the Jews; the queen of England apologized for the wrongs done to the aborigines of New Zealand. Sometimes these apologies are reluctantly given in response to public pressure and sometimes the act of confessing guilt or asking for apologies is still lacking, but a strong public movement is pressing for it—the massacre of Amritsar in 1919 or the Irish famine in the 1840s are cases in point for the British public debate. The Pope's plea for apology extended even to the victims of the Crusades and of the persecution of heretics in the Middle Ages.

The global spread of these rituals of confessing guilt results even in amazing and questionable acts of taking responsibility: When the American president Clinton visited Africa in 1998, he asked the African people to forgive the American guilt with respect to the Rwanda genocide, because the American government disregarded some reports, it did not prevent the genocide by military intervention. In a similar way, the military intervention in Bosnia and Kosovo by European and American troops was justified by the moral obligation to prevent a genocide—we would have been guilty if we had not invaded the territory of a foreign nation.

This "politics of apology" (Cunningham 1999), the widespread readiness to see responsibility and to ask for apologies, does not presuppose a direct and personal involvement into the crime—it occurs not in spite of a lack of involvement, but because of it. The political representatives can take responsibility and admit a collective guilt for the very reason that they are not responsible as persons. It is not individual moral or criminal guilt that is at stake, but a ritual confession of a collective guilt, and the presuppositions of this representative confession differ from those of a confession of a personal wrongdoing. Again, Willy Brandt is the paradigm: He who was a political refugee from the Nazi terror and never a citizen of the Third Reich confessed the guilt of his fellow Germans, whom he represented as a politician (Weiss 1998). This representation of a moral community—and in this ritual, the nation is imagined as a moral community—presupposes that the representative is beyond any suspicion of masking his personal interests or the history behind his public office. Otherwise the—always fragile and precarious—claim to represent the nation is eroded by one of the most critical risks of moral communities: the suspicion of hypocrisy.

Contrary to common assumptions about authenticity, the representation of the nation succeeds here not because the representative is presented as "one of us," sharing the same memories with the other members of the community. Instead, individual identity and memory on the one hand, and collective identity and memory on the other, are no longer tightly coupled. As in other universalistic constructions of identity, the particular identity of the individuals, their biographies and their life worlds are set apart from the public constructions of identity. It is because of this very separation that individuality can aspire to autonomy and public discourse can focus on its own dynamics, on the common good in distinction to the sum of individual happiness. The separation of individual crime and collective guilt shows some striking parallels to the post-axial age distinction between the impersonal conception of the sacred and the embodiment of the sacred in the person of the hero. The charismatic center of society has to be separated clearly from its representation in particular individuals—and the triumphant hero who merges the public and the private is bound to tragic defeat. In a similar way, but with reversed perspective, the public memory of victims has to be separated from the private guilt of individual perpetrators.

As in the German case, rituals revoking the old national myth are frequently prepared and supported by intellectual debates and scholarly revisions of traditional narratives. The new historiography of the French Revolution attacked the sacralizing view of the Annales school and disclosed the totalitarian character of the Jacobin rule and the exterminatory goals of the revolutionary crusades against royalist resistance in the *Vendée* and other provinces (Furet 1989; Eisenstadt 1998). New French historians scrutinized the history of communism and exposed the mass murders resulting from the attempt to establish a radically new society (Courteois 1997). The widespread support of the Germans by collaborators in France, in the Netherlands and in Belgium is no longer ignored and hidden behind a triumphant history of resistance movements; the refusal to accept and rescue Jewish refugees by Swiss authorities, as well as the almost complete disregard of reports about the extermination camps in the British and American press during the Second World War are no longer denied. The new pattern of collective identity is adopted by ever-more contemporary societies. It is no longer limited to official declarations of political representatives or leaders, but extends also to the level of individual citizens or organizations: church organizations apologize for abuse of children, South Africans apologize to fellow citizens for apartheid, Australians apologize to Aborigines for the assimilative policy of separating aboriginal children from their parents, etc.

Although spreading rapidly in Western democracies, these revisions are rarely accepted unanimously by all participants in public discourse. Revisions of national narratives cannot avoid objections, and the wide public acceptance of a new ritual of remembrance may even provoke a counteracting revisionist attack on the new orthodoxy. The carrier groups of the old master narrative cannot deny the event that resulted in the trauma of collective identity, but they mostly try to remove it from the core of national identity and to normalize it as a deplorable side effect of historical turmoil. The piercing challenge to the traditional triumphant constructions of national identity is reflected in accusations of shamelessness, dishonesty and scholarly incorrectness.

In the debates about revisionism or antirevisionism, the new or the classical historiography of the nation, the rise of the state or the story of its victims, criticism of the dominant narrative is no longer a privileged domain of left-wing intellectuals. The French debate about resistance and collaboration, or the French origins of fascism, and even some publicly presented denials of the Holocaust, show that the general public as well as intellectuals, liberals as well as conservatives, are involved in it. Slowly, deconstructivist criticism has invaded the camp of even its most ardent opponents.

As widespread as the revisionism of national master narratives may be, it is also hard to deny that cultures and political communities differ strongly in their acceptance of rituals of repentance and mourning for past victims. The public confessions of guilt have by no means superseded or replaced the ritual celebrations of heroism everywhere—triumph has not entirely been replaced by trauma. The readiness of the German public to accept the Holocaust legacy contrasts strikingly with the long-lasting refusal of the Austrian public to admit collaboration and to expel the perpetrators. Evidently, the national identity of Austria was mainly based on its demarcation from Germany, to which all the guilt of the Holocaust was shifted. Austria did not consider itself to be the legal and moral successor of the Third Reich (Lepsius 1993).

Occasionally, the official refusal to admit guilt and entanglement is backed by a public conflict about claims for victimhood, by a national master narrative of heroic and tragic resistance. The public conflicts between the international Jewish community on one side and the Polish government and the Catholic Church on the other are a case in point. Should the victims of Auschwitz be labeled as Jewish or Polish, what matters more: being like Edith Stein Jewish by descent or Catholic by confession? Both the Jews and the Poles can claim the status of victims, but the Jews have suffered from anti-Semitic pogroms in Poland before and after the German occupation, and not vice versa. The debate about Jedwabne has, however, increased the awareness of the Polish entanglement in the Holocaust.

Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia have up till now denied involvement in war crimes, but each has accused its adversary of mass murder by displaying the naked bodies of unidentifiable victims to the international press. The evidence of Srebenica cannot be disregarded, but the involvement of the Serbian nation and its government is still an issue for public debate and revision.

For different reasons, but also in a striking way, the political representatives of postwar Japan tried for a long time to avoid mentioning the issue of Japanese war crimes in China or Korea during the Second World War. The Nanking massacres were among the most horrible and brutal episodes of genocide in the past century, but were never included in official speeches by political representatives of postwar Japan. Only recently, as a result of long negotiations, has the Japanese government conceded to war crimes committed by individual Japanese soldiers and signed a document that contained an official excuse for the war crimes in Korea.

The Turkish government has never admitted even the existence of the Armenian genocide of 1915 and declared itself to be offended by an official French statement about it. This refusal to admit the guilt of the past is even more remarkable as the contemporary Turkish nation-state was founded after the event. The repercussions of today's Kurdish separatism and the threat of possible Armenian claims on Turkish territory may support this refusal, but only uncompromising strategic thinking would accept this as a satisfying explanation. The Turkish government does not deny the death of Armenian victims, but it refuses to accept this as the collective guilt or responsibility of the Turkish nation. Instead, the death of the Armenian victims is attributed to individual perpetrators and considered as an accidental collateral damage of war.

We may ask now whether there are structural conditions fostering or impeding the acceptance of collective guilt. One important condition is certainly the passing of time and the phase of latency. In many cases, the politically responsible individuals are still in power and the murderers are still alive, sometimes hidden, sometimes publicly known. But they are out of reach for criminal prosecution. As long as the perpetrators are at large, or at least as long as their dead

booodies are not discovered, their followers can continue to admire them as heroes and engage in underground warfare such as terrorism or guerilla warfare. This is one of the important differences between the collapse of the Nazi rule in Germany and the defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan or of the Saddam regime in Iraq. After Hitler's death, there was neither organized resistance nor underground activities against the allied troops in Germany. The Führer could be publicly converted from a triumphant hero into a criminal perpetrator. Osama bin Laden, in contrast, remains a living hero for his followers. The global search for him forced him into secrecy and disguise, but this distance even enhanced his mythical status as charismatic leader. As long as he is still alive, he will inspire terrorism.

A different case of latency occurred in both Cambodia and Rwanda, where half of the population participated in slaughtering the other half. Here, the mass murder was certainly not a terrible secret planned by a government and executed by specialized military units, but, indeed, the voluntary and passionate deed of ordinary men, women and youngsters. Nobody can deny the evidence of genocide. Although the perpetrators were defeated and driven across the borders for a time, the trauma is omnipresent and its public remembrance risks disrupting the fragile coexistence of the opposing camps or ethnic groups. Almost every family is concerned and was involved in the killing as perpetrators or victims, and sometimes as both. There is no way yet to separate individual and collective guilt or to discuss the horror without accusing all.

But the passing of time and the period of latency cannot account for the resistance to admit to the collective guilt in Turkey and Japan. The Nanking massacres and the death marches of the Armenians occurred more than half a century ago. In order to explain this difference, we have to account for cultural differences. Public confessions of collective guilt by political leaders are fostered in cultures that rely on the Judeo-Christian mythology of sacrifice, repentance and redemption. This cultural pattern dates back to the Augustinian conception of the original sin, to the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham and in particular to the self-sacrifice of Christ, the ultimately innocent hero who, by his death, saved his people from a collective guilt. Western politicians confessing the guilt of the nation are, hence, relying—mostly without being aware of it—on a pattern of Christomimesis that is deeply rooted in Occidental mythology.

In contrast to this occidental connection between collective guilt and individual innocence, the Confucian tradition can hardly conceive of a collective guilt or responsibility. In a Confucian perspective, the attribution of guilt to individual and community is reversed: while war crimes committed by individual Japanese perpetrators can be easily admitted to, the nation has to remain without blemishes. This cultural difference accounts for the reluctance or even refusal of the Japanese government to admit to a national responsibility for the Nanking massacres.

In a similar way—although for different reasons—the Turkish government rejects any international pressure to apologize for, or even to recognize a national responsibility for, the Armenian genocide. While not denying the massacre, the official Turkish response is blaming individual perpetrators. The reasons motivating the perpetrators, however, are closely related to the beginnings of Kemalist Turkey and might stain the official founding myth of modern Turkey: it was not for religious hatred, but for reasons of ethnic cleansing in the pursuit of a modern nation-state that the so-called Young Turks—now revered as the founding fathers of modern Turkey—sent millions of Armenians on death marches.

However, as convincing as they might be, cultural patterns like the common culture of sacrifice are not the only conditions supporting the rise of the new pattern of collective identity in some societies. The Judeo-Christian heritage is a very ancient one and cannot—taken alone—explain the new phenomenon. Therefore, we have to look for an additional condition fostering the acceptance of the new rituals of confession in contemporary societies and we may find this in the conditions of international communication and global observation. A triumphant celebration of past victories or a ritual construction of ethnic purity not only excludes outsiders, but also offends them if they are present and have to attend the rituals as observers.

This situation could be neglected in premodern societies: the excluded others had neither voice to object to the offense nor eyes to observe it. They were slaves, exotic visitors or simply absent. Up to the nineteenth century, the presence of outsiders could be widely disregarded given the state of media communication. The elaborate rituals of the *Sedantag* in Germany, celebrating the victory over France, were hardly reported in the French press. International public attention was focused on political decisions and economic tendencies; letters and written reports arrived with some delay, and telegraphic messages had to be condensed to the bare essentials. Symbolic politics was not limited to gestures of military threat or the movements of warships and armies; in order to reach the international level, it had to be directly addressed to the head of state. Popular feelings and triumphant celebrations were matters of internal affairs. The *demos* was not yet an international actor.

Given the omnipresence of today's international media reporting, however, the presence of third parties and excluded communities can no longer be ignored—they are part of the audience that the performance of a national ritual has to account for. The potential inclusion of outsiders as bystanders is indispensable for the construction of national identity in a tight network of international cooperation. Even if the international audience is not directly offended, as in the case of the famous processions of Northern Irish Protestants through Catholic neighborhoods, the celebration of a past victory has to account for its response. Rituals of collective identity are no longer a matter of just two parties, the insiders and the excluded outsiders; instead, they are constantly monitored and morally evaluated by large international audiences that are in the situation of an impartial third party.

Faced with a global audience, the celebration of victorious traditions can survive only if it is shifted from the level of serious and solemn national ritual to the level of harmless folklore, which does not offend outsiders, but even attracts the attention of tourists. Insisting on a positive construction of collective identity is accepted by outsiders—and that means by the vast majority of others in a globalized world—only if the alleged identity is constructed as a nonpolitical one, which can be aesteticized by outside observers, or as the identity of a victimized group.

The power of the global public opinion depends, however, on its unanimous voice. If the third party is itself divided in supporting one side or the other, then the two camps are turned into allies with opposing perspectives on perpetrators and victims. This was not the case in the defeat of Nazi Germany. In 1945, there was hardly a foreign voice backing the Nazi cause, and those Germans who were still devoted to it preferred to keep their mouths shut. In contrast to the largely unanimous global public opinion in 1945, in 2003, the world was divided into different camps with respect to the postwar situation in Iraq. There was no consensus about victory and defeat, about heroes, victims and perpetrators. Those who continued to admire bin Laden as a charismatic hero could be sure that a large public audience in the Muslim world would back them. The sons of the bourgeoisie in Pakistan wore T-shirts with bin Laden's portrait in the same way as the 1968 generation used the figure of Che Guevara as an icon of anti-imperialism. The most wanted terrorist of the West was admired as a mythical hero in large parts of the Muslim world and both perspectives were incompatible only on a superficial level.

There are victims and perpetrators, triumphant heroes and tragically failing heroes, but the global public opinion is not unanimous on the definition of who is who. The war is not yet over. This seems to question our general thesis about the secular turn from the celebration of heroism toward public confessions of guilt. Certainly, zealots and prophets have always attracted followers and were able to mobilize them even to the level of sacrificing their lives. But today, their frantic attacks are no longer downplayed as accidents that are deplorable but will not shatter the embracing social order. Today, preventing the accident is turned into a core concern of international politics. The madmen are able to set the global agenda. This sudden shift is not just a natural reaction to the trauma of September 11 or the rise of fundamentalism in the Muslim world. Undoubtedly, religion has returned to the fore of politics not only in the Muslim world. The famous clashes of civilizations are phrased as religious divides. But it is not only the increasing violence for religious reasons that seems to question the shift to the public confession of collective guilt. It is also the hegemonial claims of the American government in response to the trauma of September 11 that seem to revive the figure of triumphant heroism. The media reports about the war in Iraq referred abundantly to "our heroes"—operating along the lines of wartime routine was sufficient to be called a hero—the many victims on the Iraqi side were rarely mentioned. And it was this very self-assured triumphalism of the American administration that provoked resentment on the part of other nations. Triumphant heroism is an alien element in the new culture of mourning.

Anyway, the inflationary rhetoric of heroism in the media reports about the war in Iraq converted the meaning of heroism into its opposite: "Hero" did not refer to the unique, mad and rule-breaking lonely individual defying death, but to the many rule-guided, cautious, and calculating professional soldiers whose risk of dying on the battlefield was lower than in any other war. It referred to the routine of war instead of the exceptional deed. In this respect, the inflationary rhetoric of heroism continued the democratic symbolism of warrior memorials in the nineteenth century—every soldier is a hero. The American reports on the war in Iraq extended even the range of heroism; they heroified not only the actual victims of war but also those who could become victims—even if the chance was rather low. The trauma of September 11 could finally be soothed only by a rigorous reenactment of a collective triumph over the alleged enemy. This conversion of trauma into triumph resonates in the inflationary use of the rhetoric of heroism. As the rhetoric of heroism compensates for the—compared to previous wars—relatively low risks for the soldiers, so does the focus on victims with respect to the relatively low number of civil casualties.

But taking revenge and retaliation risks engendering a vicious circle of violence that cannot be stopped by sheer military might. Even the most dominant superpower cannot prevent thoroughly the fanatic heroism of terrorists. Therefore, the vicious circle of violence and revenge has to be interrupted by special institutions instead of waiting for its end to result just from mutual exhaustion. The public confession of collective guilt is such an institution.

We cannot expect that other countries like Iraq will repeat the postwar history of Germany. The situation of global public opinion and the cultural traditions differ, and the passing of time is essential in order to overcome muteness and rage. But the German case and the spread of the new rituals of public confessions of guilt have provided an institutional exemplar for the ritual reconciliation.

Certainly, even these new rituals of reconciliation by confessing a collective guilt cannot escape entirely from dark unintended side effects. If the memory of genocide is passed over to institutionalized public rituals of remembering and accepted as a national cultural code, it risks also being turned into a decanted and light-hearted routine that discharges the individual members of the community from the burden of the past. Sensitive observers may be concerned if haunting and traumatic memories are transformed into cheap public gestures of routinized respect, if the immensity of horror is replaced by the omnipresent reference to a past that never passes away, but has lost its traumatic impact. Thus, for example, the construction of official memorials of the Holocaust and the firm establishment of a pedagogic of the Holocaust may even produce the tragic opposite of their original moral intention: dissolving the trauma on the individual level by externalizing it in official memorials and museums.

But the risk of these paradoxical effects cannot seriously challenge the future of new modes of reconciliation. These new modes focus on victims instead of victors, on the past instead of the future, on the similar fate of the outsiders instead of the homogeneity of the insiders, on the discontinuity between past and present instead of its continuity, on common history instead of a sum of individual identities. A reconciliation between the descendants of perpetrators and those of victims results not from the simple fact that the generation of the direct and indirect perpetrators is fading away and that their offspring can point to their individual innocence. Collective identity is at stake, and only collective rituals can mark the opposition between past and future and heal the fundamental breakdown of commonality between perpetrators and victims. Just as traditions that attempt to continue the past require rituals of commemoration, ruptures between past and present, too, require rituals of repentance and cultures of memory. Neither can persist if we recall them only occasionally, incidentally, and individually. Cultivating memories by rituals and memorials creates a collective identity that is protected against doubts and objections. Therefore, rituals of confession of guilt are not a harassing duty of political rhetoric in postutopian democracies. Quite the contrary, they provide the only way of getting the recognition of national identity beyond reclaiming artificial primordialities and questionable utopias.

Notes

1. Shils (1975b), Eisenstadt and Giesen (1995), Giesen (1998a, p. 62) and Giesen (1999a, p. 24).

2. These basic limits of human experience have been philosophically analyzed by Heidegger (1986, p. 235). According to him, it is impossible for subjects to know about or comprehend the transition from life to death.

3. Brubaker (1994), Giesen and Junge (1991), Giesen (1999a) and Greenfeld (1992).

4. About the Völkische Bewegung, see the extensive work of Puschner, Schmitz and Ulbricht (1996) and Giesen (1999a, p. 255).

5. Giesen (1999a), Berding (1996), Mosse (1991) and Stern (1974).

6. The reform movements (*Lebensreform*) were characterized by an ambivalence of regressive and utopic-revolutionary ideas. The term "Conservative Revolution" shows this ambivalence. See, for example, Stern (1974). About the *Lebensreform*, see Frecot (1976), Krabbe (1974), and Kerbs and Reulecke (1998).

7. P. E. Becker (1990), Mosse (1964), Stern (1974), Weindling (1989) and Weingart (1996).

8. Mosse (1964) emphasizes the continuity of the völkische movement toward the Nazi ideology.

9. See, for example, Rousseau's "*contrat social*" where he refers to various Roman institutions (1966).

10. The representatives of the new German Democratic Republic tried to establish a founding myth of the people by concentrating on the actions of the communist German resistance against Nazi domination (e.g., the upheaval by the communist inmates in the concentration camp Buchenwald).

11. Himmler's famous Posen address to the SS leaders shows his attempt to hide the genocide from the German public. The members of the *Sondereinheiten* had strict orders to keep "the terrible secret," the foreign governments did not respond to the secret reports about the Holocaust because they did not believe it, and even the people in the Ghetto of Lodz did not know their fate several weeks before their deportation to the death camps (Laqueur 1980; Diner 1987).

12. See H. J. Merkatz in the parliamentary debate of November 8, 1950, "*Männer wie Manstein und Kesselring und andere, die in Landsberg und Werl einsitzen, diese Männer und wir, wir sind doch eines. Wir haben doch das mitzutragen, was man stellvertretend für uns auferlegt*" (Men like Manstein

and Kesselring, who are imprisoned in Landsberg and Werl, these men and we are of one kind. We have to carry the burden that has been put on them as representatives of us). (Frei 1996: p. 202).

13. This demarcation was even shared by some Jews, such as Victor Klemperer (1995), who in his diaries considered the Germans to be the chosen people and the Nazis to be un-German.

14. This particular form of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, by retreating to a subpolitical level, has a corollary on the level of historiography: The focus in *Alltagsgeschichte* (life world history) on the ways ordinary people experienced Nazism and narrated their biographical connections with it reflects this turn to the life world as the core of identity and history.

15. Christa Wolff is another famous example.

16. Even the modes of coping with the *Stasi* past after the German unification in the nineties repeated this retreatism from ambitious moral discourse to the level of informal personal ties, to kinship and neighborhood, in distinction to the allegedly few real perpetrators of the *Stasi* system.

17. The "kufia" scarf became a common dress of the generation.

18. The former SDS-members (Socialist German Students Federation) Horst Mahler, Günter Maschke and Reinhold Oberlercher published a "Canonical Declaration on the 1968 Movement" on the Internet. By framing the RAF as "Waffen-SDS," they relate the 1968 revolt to the NS-revolution and the *Waffen-SS*. See http://www.deutsches-reich.de/oberlercher/texte-zur-zeit/1990–1999/kanonische_erklaeung.html.

19. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 8, 1963.

20. In contrast to the foreign newspapers, however, the German newspapers did not immediately notice the importance of the event. Instead, they focused mainly on the legal and political implications of the treaty. Only later on did the picture of the kneeling Brandt advance to a front page issue in Germany. The influential weekly *Der Spiegel* was one of the first to publish it on its front page.

21. For an analysis of veteran ceremonies at Verdun, see Soeffner (1997).

22. Already a significant phrasing by Lev Kopelev from the year 1977 pointed at this direction: "*Er kniete nieder und erhöhte sein Volk*" (He knelt down and elevated his people) (*DIE ZEIT*, Febuary 4, 1977, p. 46).

23. The central position of the Holocaust memory for German postwar identity is also reflected in the fact that denying the Holocaust in public is treated by law as an offense that is severely punished, whereas the usual national symbols like the flag are not protected by German law.

24. Bauman (1989), Feingold (1983), Friedländer (1997) and Fest (1977).

25. This holds true in spite of Steven Katz's (1994) impressive scholarly attempt to prove the uniqueness of the Shoah.

26. Goldhagen (1996) only casually refers to the accurate research of Christopher Browning (1993) on the *Polizeibattaillon 101*. Many German intellectuals participated in the debate about Goldhagen. See, e.g., Heil (1998) and Schoeps (1997).

27. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 21, 1999.

28. This sanctification has provoked critical responses (Mayer 1994; Ophir 1987).

29. This holds true even for political conflicts within Israel where the Askenasin were accused by oriental Jews for discriminating them in the way of a Holocaust (Zuckermann 1999). See also the debate about Finkelstein (2000), who criticized strongly the instrumentalization of the Holocaust for economic interests but presented not much more than a generalized and largely unwarranted suspicion.

30. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 12, 1998.

Chapter 5

Postscript

Modernity and Ambivalence

The social construction of boundaries is an ambivalent endeavour. Separating an inside from an outside, marking a threshold, drawing a line, maintaining a distinction, usually goes along with positioning an object or the observer on one side of the boundary. Both positions are, in principle, possible, but we have to opt for one and to keep the other alternative latent, excluded, even without a name. The boundary is not a naturally given thing, but a product of our mind. In order to map and to represent the world, the mind has to reduce its complexity and to regard a range of phenomena as alike in spite of their manifold differences and in distinction to others that are treated as different. In ordering our perceptions, we have to abstract from the manifold differences; in describing the things of the world, we have to subsume them under categories—we have to treat single and unique phenomena as cases of a certain type.

But the ambivalence of boundaries results not only from the descriptive distinctions that could have been drawn in a different way. It is brought out by the human mind's capability to question and to negate a representation of the world—at least in our reflexive mode, we know that a representation of the world is not, by its sheer existence, already true, and we can argue about its truth. Usually these alternative ways of mapping the world are kept latent, and everyday communication reinforces this latency. But even if the boundary between normality and deviance, reason and insanity, truth and falsity is taken for granted, we know that it is not insurmountable and, above all, we know that there is another side. It is simply impossible to think of a boundary without an outside. In order to respect the boundary, we have to—at least tacitly—imagine the outside and, occasionally, our imagination invites us to change sides, to pass the threshold, to cross the line. Usually we resist and repress our secret longing to switch sides and to go beyond the horizon. Sometimes, however, the temptation becomes too strong. This is the moment when ambivalence is turned into movement (Smelser 1998b).