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Fantasies of Innocence

The Holocaust Bystander as German Television Star

Twenty-first century memory culture resembles a finely tuned ensemble of print media, films, television, video games, and digital media platforms responding to powerful algorithms and providing us with visions of the past carefully tailored to fit our tastes in historical entertainment. Snugly embedded in this fragmented and yet tightly integrated multi-media experience economy, we easily forget that many media dispositifs have historically displayed strong affinities with specific memory regimes. The realistic novel offered generations of readers an opportunity to acquire bourgeois mentalities shaped during the age of European political and industrial revolutions. Film and the rituals of cinema marked powerful sites of memory for the practices and aesthetics of Western urban mass modernity. Finally, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, social media, video games, and AI environments are poised to give rise to yet another memory regime characterised by immersive, interactive, and counterfactual digital memories with unparalleled and as yet unpredictable consequences for our historical cultures.

That leaves television culture responsible for the memory of the Second World War and the Holocaust. A look at decades of televised history seems to support that assumption. From the beginning of regular broadcasting in post-war Europe to the proliferation of cable networks at the onset of the new millennium, the swastika reigned supreme on television. During the heyday of TV culture in the late twentieth century, television was the quintessential vehicle for the exploration of fascism, totalitarianism, war, and genocide, especially in Germany.¹

1 The abundance of Nazi-related TV fare is often invoked anecdotally – see for example: Lukas Gedziowski, *Nazi TV*, in: *Fragmenteum*. Blog für Comics und Popkultur, 18 July 2014; <https://fragmenteum.wordpress.com/2014/07/18/nazi-tv> (26 May 2019). However, reliable data have actually only been assembled relatively rarely. See: Edgar Lersch/Reinhold Viehoff, *Geschichte im Fernsehen. Eine Untersuchung zur Entwicklung des Genres und der Gattungsästhetik geschichtlicher Darstellungen im Fernsehen 1995 bis 2003*, Düsseldorf 2007, 160; Christoph Classen, *Bilder der Vergangenheit. Die Zeit des Nationalsozialismus im Fernsehen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1955–1965*, Cologne 1999, 28; Georg Feil, *Zeitgeschichte im deutschen Fernsehen. Analyse von Fernsehsendungen mit historischen Themen (1957–*

In part, the affinities on display between television and Nazi memory resulted from simple timing. TV was a key theatre of cultural reflection at the very moment when European societies belatedly engaged in intense discussions about their communicative memories of the Second World War and shortly thereafter began crafting enduring transnational cultural memories of the war for future generations.² The Nazis had themselves planned to turn television into a mass medium but redeployed all resources to the war effort after the German attack on Poland in 1939. Consequently, for most Germans, television was a new experience when it expanded rapidly from the second half of the 1950s onwards. In West Germany, by the mid-1960s, the two public TV networks ARD and ZDF reached the majority of the population and became key platforms of cultural exchange.³

However, there were other, more sinister affinities at work that explain the intimate relationship between TV culture and the memory of National Socialism. Throughout formerly occupied Europe and especially in Germany, viewers fascinated by the violent histories unfolding on their TV screens eerily resembled the citizens of a Nazi-dominated continent similarly enthralled by the violence erupting outside their homes. Television technology was an extraordinarily suitable dispositif for addressing and channelling memories of Nazism because the little screen in the living room offered similar vantage points and fantasies of non-involvement as the living room window during the Nazi era. The window and the screen neatly separated the private from the public sphere, normal citizens from Nazis and Jews, and thus fostered seemingly clear-cut categories of belonging that rendered Nazi violence manageable.⁴ TV worked beautifully for the process of coming to terms with the past because it doubled and helped side-step the key moral challenge of the Nazi years providing, yet again, a position of comfortable voyeurism and channelling a myth of 'Heimat' as a safe and allegedly non-political space before and after 1945. With critical distance, the problem of the bystander thus emerges as the not-so-secret point of gravity of the history and the memory of the 'Third Reich', turning TV into a platform of public remembrance equipped with an uncanny ability to naturalise and validate the bystanders' point of view after the fact through important structures and contents of television consumption. At the same time, the exploration of relevant parallels between the social construction of passivity in different historical and media

settings should not give rise to the misconception of TV viewing as a homogeneous and essentially passive activity. TV has historically engendered a wide range of subject positions and memory practices, including lending support to **h**onorary activism.⁵ As a matter of fact, the extensive circulation of fantasies of non-involvement represented one of these memory activities implicating television in the **active** construction of notions of personal and collective innocence on the level of content and communicative structure.

Memory Machine Television

Identifying the vantage point of the Nazi bystander as a key gravitational force of post-war memory culture does not mean that the term was clearly defined – quite the contrary. As memory politics became an increasingly important arena of public debate, the demarcation of the vast and amorphous terrain of Nazi bystanding became subject to intense negotiations. Key memory events in post-war West Germany can be described as serving the primary strategic objectives of first generously extending the exculpatory category of 'fellow travellers' to include almost the entire population of the 'Third Reich' and then, in later decades, exposing many members of former Nazi society as perpetrators who had been enjoying post-war prosperity seemingly safely tucked away in the memory comfort zone of Nazi bystanding. In this fashion, the memory politics of the 1950s championed large-scale legal amnesties of Nazi perpetrators whereas the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s sought to highlight the Nazi careers of prominent individuals and issued sweeping condemnations of entire political generations.⁶ Exposing the fascist leanings of contemporaries of the 'Third Reich' worked wonders as a political weapon precisely because the vast majority of the former citizens of the 'Third Reich' considered themselves passive spectators of the German catastrophe. Similar generational rebranding efforts destroyed self-serving fantasies of communal resistance in countries across Europe.⁷

The intense negotiations about where to draw the line between historical valour, innocence, shame, and guilt fuelled political battles across a diversified print media landscape and, in less explicit and incendiary terms, also set the agenda for historical coverage in the elite-controlled, consensus-driven media environment of public television. Decades of intense historical programming set into motion a repetitive process of

1967), Osnabrück 1974, 153-176; and Wulf Kansteiner, *Television and the Historicization of National Socialism in the Federal Republic of Germany. The Programs of the Zweite Deutsche Fernsehen between 1963 and 1993*, Ann Arbor 1997, 115, 117.

2 Jonathan Bignell/Andreas Fickers (ed.), *A European Television History*, Malden, MA 2008.

3 Knut Hackethler, *Geschichte des deutschen Fernsehens*, Stuttgart 1998, 53, 186, 200-201.

4 For an expansive approach to the study of bystanders exploring a wide range of social and mediated forms of passivity, see: Henrik Edgren (ed.), *Looking at the Onlookers and Bystanders. Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Causes and Consequences of Passivity*, Stockholm 2012; Christina Morina/Krijn Thijs, *Probing the Limits of Categorization. The Bystander in Holocaust History*, New York 2019.

5 See the classic deconstruction of TV viewing as mere bystanding in: Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers. Television Fans and Participatory Culture*, New York 2013, 54-60.

6 Norbert Frei, *Vergangenheitspolitik. Die Anfänge der Bundesrepublik und die NS-Vergangenheit*, Munich 1996; Klaus Wernecke, 1968, in: Torben Fischer/Matthias Lorenz (ed.), *Lexikon der Vergangenheitsbewältigung in Deutschland*, Bielefeld 2015, 188-193.

7 Richard Lebow/Wulf Kansteiner/Claudio Fogu (ed.), *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*, Durham NC 2006.

interpretation within a rectangular symbolic narrative space defined by the four, regularly readjusted historical subject positions of Nazi perpetrator, Nazi bystander, Nazi victim, and Nazi-era hero. These four emblematic cornerstones of Nazi history constitute a robust and immensely entertaining narrative machine reminiscent of Greimas' semiotic square⁸ and spewing forth a seemingly endless series of TV documentaries, docu-dramas, TV plays, and feature films (the latter hijacked from the big screen). Each broadcast derived its communicative value from exploring one or more of the four thematic segments of the square. In fact, stringing together different subject positions by way of more or less plausible narrative arcs resulted in particularly entertaining television, and nearly all theoretically possible options have been produced at one point or another. The TV screen thus for instance regularly revealed Nazi perpetrators as heroes or bystanders as victims. Following the semantic logic of these examples and given the nature of public broadcasting, one might assume that defensive plot lines have outnumbered decidedly self-critical narrative arcs. That hypothesis deserves to be tested by identifying narrative trajectories which have been particularly frequently pursued on the screen, by checking how important TV media events have contributed to the realignment of the symbolic square of Nazi memory, and by paying particular attention to the task of historicising the contours of TV bystander memory.

The bystander section of the square has proven to be a special zone of collective media memory both subdued and, on second glance, extraordinarily busy. The classical bystander figure, removed, non-involved, perhaps fearful or opportunistic, has only occasionally been the primary focus of historical TV fare.⁹ Passivity simply does not make for good television. Yet in memory politics off and on the screen, closely intertwined as they are, bystanding nevertheless constitutes an important imaginary space. In the constant reshuffling of victims, heroes, and perpetrators, the bystander figures have represented the all-important narrative parking space in the margins of the brightly lit arenas of historical reckoning. They are the silent majority, the reserve army, the storage memory (pace Assmann)¹⁰ of unsung heroes, forgotten victims, and undetected criminals promising many opportunities for political struggle and hours of televisual entertainment. Moreover, the bystander zone, both in real life and according to the narrative rationale of television, constituted a realm of extraordinary attraction. During the Nazi years, the victims of the regime would have loved nothing more than to remain uninvolved bystanders of the rise and fall of the "Third Reich".¹¹ After its collapse, the relatively few exposed perpetrators would have loved nothing more than to disappear into the anonym-

8 Algirdas Greimas, *Structural Semantics. An Attempt at Method*, Lincoln NE 1983.

9 For a notable recent example, see: *Wir im Krieg. Privatfilme aus der NS-Zeit* (ZDF, 8 August 2019).

10 Aleida Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization. Functions, Media, Archives*, Cambridge MA 2011.

11 Peter Brückner, *Das Abseits als sicherer Ort*, Berlin 1980.

ity of the bystander category, a label generously handed out by postwar Allied and German denazification courts.¹²

The topic of bystanding thus gives rise to stories of movement from the bystander segment of the square towards its other three segments on the levels of both history and memory. In the narrative universe of the "Third Reich", television tends to turn initial bystanders of Nazism into perpetrators, victims, or heroic resisters. In the narrative world of post-war memory, the anonymity of political bystanding is exchanged for the heroic practice of memory activism and post-war reconciliation. Thus, with few exceptions, the bystanding position features prominently in many stories on the screen but disappears more or less quickly in the course of the broadcast. TV renders bystanding omnipresent and normal yet also relatively invisible and unproblematic. Moreover and probably not coincidentally, the amorphous bystanding segment, comprising the vast majority of Nazi and Federal Republic contemporaries, is rarely explored deliberately and in critical detail on the screen. Instead, the relatively small collectives of perpetrators, victims, and heroes are time and again paraded around for the amusement of these very same history and memory bystanders. That is the disturbing yet perhaps also inevitable complicity of television in misrepresenting the history and legacy of bystanding.¹³

The limited quantitative analyses and a more extensive set of case studies suggest that Holocaust memory on (West) German television developed in four overlapping phases, namely:

- 1) an unfocussed, distanced, at times apologetically structured, but with hindsight nevertheless remarkable exploration of the moral depravity of Nazi anti-Jewish policies, primarily in the 1960s and 1970s and often conducted by way of foreign productions and delivered from a memory angle, that is, engaging with post-war efforts of coming to terms with the past;¹⁴
- 2) a self-critical, emotionally challenging realisation of the enormity of the Holocaust communicated through a string of foreign and West German productions broadcast in the late 1970s and 1980s, often focussed on everyday life during Nazism;¹⁵

12 For a particularly aptly entitled example in this regard, see: Lutz Niethammer, *Die Mitläuferfabrik. Die Entnazifizierung am Beispiel Bayerns*, Berlin 1972.

13 On the dynamics of televisual memory and forgetting, see especially: Leif Kramp, *Gedächtnismaschine Fernsehen*, 2 vols., Berlin 2011.

14 Feil, *Zeitgeschichte im deutschen Fernsehen: Classen, Bilder der Vergangenheit*; Sabine Horn, *Erinnerungsbilder. Auschwitz-Prozess und Majdanek-Prozess im deutschen Fernsehen*, Essen 2009.

15 Judith Keilbach, *Geschichtsbilder und Zeitzeugen. Zur Darstellung des Nationalsozialismus im bundesdeutschen Fernsehen*, Münster 2008, 166-189; Martina Thiele, *Publizistische Kontroversen über den Holocaust im Film*, Münster 2001, 298-303; Michael Geisler, *The Disposal of Memory. Fascism and the Holocaust on West German Television*, in: Bruce Murray/Christopher Wigham (ed.), *Framing the Past. The Historiography of German Cinema and Television*, Carbondale IL 1992, 220-260; Wulf Kansteiner, *In Pursuit of German Memory. History, Television, and Politics after Auschwitz*, Athens 2006, 115-130.

- 3) an even more extensive, less self-reflexive succession of entertaining, professionally produced documentaries and docu-dramas screened around the turn of the century and conveying ambivalent, highly entertaining, and immersive visions of Nazi leadership, warfare, and crimes, often highlighting themes of German victimhood;¹⁶ and
- 4) a possible fourth phase, as yet insufficiently documented and analysed, featuring narratively and ethically complex and ambitious inquiries into the experiences and worldviews of the ‘normal perpetrators’ of the ‘Third Reich’. This last, as yet merely hypothesised phase is probably even more subject to re- and premediation processes than previous programming periods.¹⁷

The first phase was a niche phenomenon with limited viewership, although some of the programmes were screened in prime time because the networks still lacked sufficient off-prime time programming slots. The second and third phase had important prime time components, not least of all media events like the TV series *Holocaust* and the succession of very successful TV documentaries about Nazi leaders produced under the aegis of the ZDF historian Guido Knopp around the turn of the century. During the last phase, non-fiction history returned to the late-night slots and was screened in cable channel ghettos while high-profile fiction remained prime time fare. In the course of these four phases spanning five decades, television came into its own as a primarily visually driven medium. The process of maturation and professionalisation changed the way in which TV communicated with its viewers about the past. In the first decades of its existence, television addressed questions that also dominated other spheres of West German historical culture. Like many intellectuals, academics, and artists – with whom they often communicated prior and during their work for television – TV journalists and producers tried to grasp why the Nazis had come to power and wreaked havoc all over Europe. Since the second phase, TV executives gradually shifted to a different set of guiding questions, trying to figure out how it felt to suffer from Nazi persecution or partake in Nazi crimes. The shift from why to how, from causality to re-enactment, corresponded to a shift from primarily discursively to primarily visually constituted programming and probably resulted in different kinds of collective memories of the Nazi

16 Axel Bangert, *The Nazi Past in Contemporary German Film. Viewing Experiences of Intimacy and Immersion*, Rochester 2014; Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann, *German Docudrama. Aligning the Fragments and Accessing the Past*, in: Tobias Ebbrecht-Hartmann/Derek Paget (ed.), *Docudrama on European Television. A Selective Survey*, London 2016, 27-51; Thomas Fischer/Rainer Wirtz (ed.), *Alles authentisch? Popularisierung der Geschichte im Fernsehen*, Constance 2008; Keilbach, *Geschichtsbilder*, 224-236; Kansteiner, *In Pursuit*, 154-180.

17 The fourth phase features media events like *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter* (English title: *Generation War*, ZDF, screened on 17, 18, and 20 March 2013) and *Das radikal Böse* (ZDF, 1 May 2015); see: Bernd Graff, *Bestien wie du und ich*, in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 30 April 2015; and Christoph Classen, *Unsere Nazis, unser Fernsehen*, in: *Zeitgeschichte-online*, April 2013; <http://www.zeitgeschichte-online.de/film/unsere-nazis-unser-fernsehen> (28 May 2019). Consider in this context also the literary media event *The Kindly Ones*: Aurelia Barjonet/Liran Razinsky (ed.), *Writing the Holocaust Today. Critical Perspectives on Jonathan Littell's The Kindly Ones*, Amsterdam 2012.

past. Over the decades, television constructed and channelled different feelings about the Nazi past, moving from a predominant concern with a sense of control and distancing supported by discursive aesthetics of ‘why’ to a persistent curiosity about sensing facets of trauma through simulative aesthetics of ‘how’. The shift towards new modes of perception and entertainment also aimed at enhancing the bystander experience because TV now focussed specifically on the task of offering viewers an opportunity to experience vicariously the Nazi past and acquire a sense of memory advocacy.¹⁸ The increasing focus on the simulative question of how Nazi everyday life and persecution might have felt developed in a new media context characterised by the commercialisation, fragmentation, digitisation, and globalisation of TV production, now addressed at consumers several generations removed from the history of the ‘Third Reich’.

The Holocaust as Murder Mystery

In October 1963, six months after ZDF went on the air, the station already broadcast its first TV play about the persecution and mass murder of German Jews in the ‘Third Reich’. The author of the script for *Um 8 Uhr kommt Sadowski*¹⁹ was none other than Herbert Reinecker, (West) Germany’s most prolific TV screenwriter and creator of memorable murder mystery series like *Der Kommissar* and *Derrick*. Unlike some of his peers, Reinecker never made a secret of the fact that he had been an officer in a Waffen-SS propaganda unit during the war. In that capacity, he had egged on members of the Hitler Youth to sacrifice themselves for Fatherland and Führer. As a crime fiction author after the war, he incessantly crafted narrative worlds about average people committing violent crimes as a result of seemingly uncontrollable urges and drives, resulting in guilt without responsibility.²⁰ It is tempting to relate Reinecker’s proclivity for hapless criminals to personal feelings of responsibility for Nazi crimes he might have experienced after the collapse of the ‘Third Reich’. On first sight, however, *Sadowski Comes at 8 O’clock* does not follow this apologetic logic. Quite the contrary: The play does not mince words about the base motives of the Nazi generation, put on display, as so often on West German television, as a drama of memory, not history.

18 On the mediation, historicisation, and social construction of dominant collective moods, see: Ben Highmore, *Cultural Feelings. Mood, Mediation and Cultural Politics*, New York 2017; and on media re-enactments of Nazi trauma in particular, see: Stella Bruzzi, *Re-Enacting Trauma in Film and Television. Restaging History, Revisiting Pain*, in: Claudia Wassmann (ed.), *Therapy and Emotions in Film and Television. The Pulse of Our Times*, London 2015, 89-98; and Thomas Elsaesser, *German Cinema-Terror and Trauma. Cultural Memory since 1945*, New York 2014.

19 *Um acht Uhr kommt Sadowski* (ZDF, 16 October 1963).

20 Rolf Aurich/Niels Beckenbach/Wolfgang Jacobsen, *Reineckerland. Der Schriftsteller Herbert Reinecker*, Munich 2010.

Sadowski features a successful West German businessman celebrating his fiftieth birthday who is accused by his adult son of having betrayed a Jewish business partner during the war. Rather than buying out his partner at the severely discounted 'Aryanisation' rate, the father reported him to the Gestapo, thus assuring his speedy deportation to a death camp. The father's despicable behaviour now becomes an issue because Sadowski's daughter has filed a lawsuit seeking financial redress and the businessman's son has promised to help her by turning over key documents during her next visit – at eight o'clock that very evening. In a dramatic finale, Sadowski shows up, her shadow clearly visible behind the front door, but nobody in the family dares let her in. The father does not find the courage to admit his guilt or to bribe her with a generous settlement, as his lawyer recommends, and the son, emotionally overtaxed and pressured by family members, does not find the courage to act on his principles and turn over the documents. In the showdown between the mover and shaker of a father and his introverted, insecure son, the older generation keeps the upper hand. The father retains tentative control over his dirty secret and a sense of integrity because he treats his son respectfully throughout their discussions. With remarkable restraint, he tries to explain his behaviour by highlighting Gestapo pressure, the complexity of the situation, his son's lack of experience and comfortable ex post hoc perspective, and the need for family solidarity. In the end, the play leaves no doubt that the father committed a serious mistake, but by maintaining the status quo, Reinecker also seems to argue that many Nazis with similar track records do not deserve to be publicly humiliated.

Sadowski Comes at 8 O'clock reflects a prominent storyline in post-war German culture featuring survivors of Nazi terror and a handful of upright citizens or law enforcement folk struggling mightily to identify former Nazis and settling on some sort of just punishment for them. In the courts and on the screen, Nazi criminals are thus moved from the bystander to the perpetrator segment of narrative worlds and, depending on the author's point of view, the stories separate a large group of more or less innocent fellow travellers from a small group of committed killers or invoke the spectre of a sizeable army of recalcitrant Nazis lurking in the shadows of the West German economic miracle.²¹ Reinecker is a fan of the first story type. Having exposed the businessman's dark secret, the *Sadowski* script comes to rest in a scene of twofold passivity. According to Reinecker, the members of the post-war generation simply do not have the gumption to pursue their facile, armchair antifascism to its logical conclusion and publicly denounce

21 On the 1960s and early 1970s, see for instance: *Kennwort Gewalt. Jahrmarkt des Todes* (ARD, 9 June 1965); *Der Tod eines Mitbürgers* (ZDF, 8 March 1967); *Mord in Frankfurt* (ARD, 30 January 1968); *Rosen für den Staatsanwalt* (Wolfgang Staudte, 1959), aired on ZDF, 2 December 1968; *Die Beichte* (ZDF, 11 November 1970); *Revolution auf dem Papier* (ARD, 16 May 1971); *Zwei Briefe an Pospischiel* (ZDF, 13 October 1971); *Sondergerichtsakte 86/43. Rechtsprechung im Namen des deutschen Volkes* (ARD, 22 February 1972); *Die Mörder sind unter uns* (Wolfgang Staudte 1946), aired on ARD, 18 December 1971; and *Herrenpartie* (Wolfgang Staudte, 1963), aired on ARD, 11 July 1973.

their parents, whereas the members of the Nazi generation, who failed spectacularly in their efforts to make history, turn out to be less callous and conniving than the youngsters claim. Bystanding in history and memory comes in many different flavours, but Reinecker, like many of his colleagues at the time, worked with readily available stereotypes and rules in favour of his allegedly sufficiently wizened and chastened peers.²² There is no indication that he changed his mind once the generational relationship between Nazi and post-war generation assumed a much more confrontational and overtly political character in the late 1960s and 1970s.

The script of *Sadowski* is an interesting document of television historiography. A few months before the beginning of the Auschwitz trial in Frankfurt in December 1963, Reinecker already presented the viewer with a succinct list of Nazi crime iconography clearly linked to the genocide of European Jewry.²³ Reinecker had the son explicitly mention Auschwitz and the many books about concentration camps he has read. As a result, the son is haunted by succinct visions of camps, train stations, barracks, mud, snow, forest clearings, floodlights, selections, screaming people, and poison gas capsules inserted through ventilation ducts.²⁴ These text passages constitute a highly standardised inventory of NS crime images and story elements connected to the memory site Auschwitz and, more specifically, to the Jewish victims of Nazi persecution. Since the stories and images are mobilised in a compact and condensed format by Reinecker, who has a long track record of successful communication with his viewers, we can safely assume that narratives and iconography were already well established in the viewer's imagination, for instance through extensive post-war media coverage.²⁵ Moreover, television had already started to connect the narrative worlds of Nazi terror to the suffering of European Jewry. The link was often crafted hesitatingly and indirectly,²⁶ although on some occasions West German television already depicted the Nazi mass murder of Jews in heartrending detail, as for example in the 1960 TV series *Am grünen Strand der Spree*.²⁷ In this sense,

22 Kolportage, in: *Der Abend*, 10 October 1963; *Die Schulze unserer Schuld*, in: *Hamburger Echo*, 17 October 1963; *Zeitkritik als Schablone*, in: *Tagesspiegel*, 18 October 1963, 5.

23 For a balanced assessment of the impact of the press coverage of the Auschwitz trial and other Nazi trials on German memory, see: Jürgen Wilke et al., *Holocaust und NS-Prozesse. Die Berichterstattung in Israel und Deutschland zwischen Aneignung und Abwehr*, Cologne 1995, and Horn, *Erinnerungsbilder*.

24 Herbert Reinecker, *Um 8 Uhr kommt Sadowski*, film script, undated, 62, 89-91.

25 Ulrike Weckel, *Beschämende Bilder. Deutsche Reaktionen auf alliierte Dokumentarfilme über befreite Dokumentarfilme*, Stuttgart 2012; Habbo Knoch, *Die Tat als Bild. Fotografien des Holocaust in der deutschen Erinnerungskultur*, Hamburg 2001.

26 Classen, *Bilder der Vergangenheit*, 86-92; see for example: *Schlaf der Gerechten* (ARD, 12 November 1962), broadcast a year before Sadowski.

27 Knut Hickethier, *Nur Histotainment? Das Dritte Reich im bundesdeutschen Fernsehen*, in: Peter Reichel/Harald Schmid/Peter Steinbach (ed.), *Der Nationalsozialismus – die zweite Geschichte: Überwindung, Deutung, Erinnerung*, Bonn 2009, 300-317, 303; Lars Koch, *Das Fernsehbild der Wehrmacht am Ende der fünfziger Jahre. Zu Fritz Umgelters Fernsehreihe Am grünen Strand der Spree*, in: Waltraud Wende (ed.), *Geschichte im Film. Mediale Inszenierung des Holocaust und kulturelles Gedächtnis*, Stuttgart 2002, 78-93.

Sadowski and similarly structured media texts offer key insights into the profile of mass media memory of the 'Final Solution' prior to the development of a full-scale Holocaust paradigm in the late 1970s and 1980s. *Sadowski* was an exceptional broadcast in the context of the 1960s while also reflecting key characteristics of Holocaust TV *avant la lettre* (Übersetzung fehlt). On the one hand, broadcasts like *Sadowski* provided the foundation for the later success of *Holocaust* because the NBC miniseries could tap into a well-established and sophisticated interpretive frame of reference. On the other hand, *Sadowski*'s detour through memory and its self-defensive conclusion correspond to West German TV executives' predilection for uplifting rescue and resistance stories, especially stories featuring Germans saving Jews, and a strange genre of philosemitic TV that acknowledged the 'Final Solution' in passing but primarily celebrated Jewish culture and thus symbolically and counterfactually circumvented the actual destruction of European Jewry.²⁸ German television constructed the increasingly stable semantic connection between the Nazi past and the genocide of European Jews over a wide range of TV genres, including fiction, non-fiction, and a peculiar hybrid of the two called 'documentary TV play' that TV executives often deployed for launching aesthetically understated, as far as possible factually accurate, yet also largely invented sombre inquiries into the history and memory of Nazism.²⁹ Yet over the decades, television executives, television critics, media historians, and possibly also viewers have displayed a particular fondness of the TV format of the miniseries for the purpose of creating memories of Nazism and the 'Final Solution'. Possibly due to the gravitational pull of *Holocaust* or problems of archival access, the rhythm of televisual Nazi memory tends to be measured in terms of fictional and non-fictional miniseries, consisting of three to ten sequels and often marking TV highlights accompanied by corresponding PR efforts.³⁰

Multi-Directional Memory during the Cold War

Since the 1960s, German public television also acquired a fair share of foreign productions on the history of the 'Final Solution', including a number of impressively self-reflexive Eastern European feature films. The Eastern European movies were often of exceptional cinematic quality, representing prime products of sophisticated movie industries

28 Kansteiner, Pursuit, 112-115; Wulf Kansteiner, What is the Opposite of Genocide? Philosemitic Television in Germany, 1963-1995, in: Jonathan Karp/Adam Sutcliffe (ed.), Philosemitism in History, Cambridge, MA 2011, 289-313.

29 See the definition of the genre by one of its key proponents: Franz Neubauer, Geschichte im Dokumentarspiel, Paderborn 1984.

30 John De Vito/Frank Tropea, Epic Television Miniseries, Jefferson NC 2010; Knut Hickethier, Das Fernsehspiel oder der Kunstanspruch der Erzählmaschine Fernsehen, in: Helmut Schanze/Berhard Zimmermann (ed.), Das Fernsehen und die Künste, Munich 1994, 303-348, 335-337.

trying to escape the control of Communist Party censorship.³¹ The films delved into the history of German occupation, invariably highlighting civilian suffering and, in the minds of West German TV executives, sending an important didactic message to German viewers. But the impact of the films on (West) German memory is difficult to ascertain on the basis of available reception data. Critics reacted generally enthusiastically, but many viewers seem to have remained deeply sceptical about what they perceived as communist propaganda purchased with viewer fees in the midst of a Cold War against the Soviet Empire.

The Eastern European films often had a remarkably self-critical edge in that they did not focus on German perpetrators, instead relentlessly pursuing the question to what extent Eastern Europeans could have done a better job protecting the groups who fell victim to Nazi terror. The films thus advocated for a victim and bystander centred and decidedly self-reflexive memory of the Second World War in Eastern Europe. They focussed on complex stories of reluctant resistance, hesitant collaboration, and fearful accommodation with camera and narrative focus trimmed on the bystander segment of Eastern European societies.³² Unfortunately, that strategy of Eastern European self-reflexivity did not seem to have worked in West Germany's television landscape. Rather than feeling encouraged to reflect on their own failings as terror bystanders, the relatively few German viewers who chose to watch these films seem to have walked away feeling vindicated about their lack of resistance in the 'Third Reich'. They construed symbolic parallels between Eastern European impotent responses to Nazi terror and their own inability to prevent what they perceived as the Nazi occupation of German society. Cold War borders notwithstanding, they apparently imagined a transnational coalition of bystander-victims unable to stop the Nazi juggernaut. Moreover, the films reflected prevailing ambivalence about the status of Jews in Eastern European memories. Some Eastern European filmmakers courageously emphasised the exceptional suffering of Jews in Nazi-occupied Eastern Europe; others followed the Communist Party line that had written Jews out of the official histories of the Nazi onslaught against Eastern Europe.³³ In sum, the films provided a contradictory contribution to nascent Holocaust memory in the West. It was all too easy to dismiss wholeheartedly or develop little curiosity about the dubbed, slow cut, foreign made movies presenting Eastern European narrative worlds of limited intrinsic interest to German viewers. Incidentally, East Ger-

31 Aniko Imre (ed.), Companion to Eastern European Cinemas, Malden, MA 2012.

32 *Deveti Krug* (The Ninth Circle, France Stiglic, 1960) aired on ZDF, 20 November 1963; *Két felidő a pokolban* (English title: The Last Goal, Zoltán Fábri, 1961) aired on ZDF, 21 June 1965; *Romeo, Julie a tma* (Romeo, Juliet, and Darkness, Jiří Weiss, 1959) aired on ZDF, 15 November 1965; *Pasażerka* (Passenger, Andrzej Munk, 1963) aired on ZDF 24 November 1966; *Pierwszy dzień wolności* (The First Day of Freedom, Aleksander Ford, 1964) aired on ARD, 3 November 1971. See also: Adam Bingham (ed.), Directory of World Cinema. Eastern Europe, Bristol 2011, 36-40.

33 See for instance: Marek Haltof, Polish Film and the Holocaust, New York 2012.

man cinema produced a few similarly self-reflexive films about Nazi anti-Jewish crimes, most prominently Konrad Wolf's *Sterne* released in 1959. Now considered an important early Holocaust movie, *Sterne* features a veteran soldier turned reluctant resister as a result of his encounter with Jewish deportees en route to Auschwitz. Yet this impressive bystander drama became a victim of Cold War politics. It was released in West German cinemas in 1960 in a truncated version, pulled from ZDF broadcasting schedules after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and only aired for the first time by ZDF in 1983, now in a fully restored version. *Sterne* remained an unusual site of memory in East German historical culture. On East German television, the 'Final Solution' for instance only became a relevant topic in the late 1980s after decades of anti-Zionist neglect and antifascist resistance stories.³⁴ The peculiar media landscape in the GDR thus produced its own bystander phenomenon. The majority of East Germans regularly consumed West German television, preferring TV entertainment to political programming.³⁵ In this fashion, the East German population engaged in intense bystander experiences, witnessing the rise of West German consumerism and the development of West German cosmopolitan memory that differed substantially from East German antifascist memory. It is the witnessing of West German consumerism rather than the vicarious participation in West German cosmopolitan memory that came to play a decisive role in 1989.

In November 1966, ZDF broadcast the Czechoslovak movie *Obchod na korze* (The Shop on the High Street)³⁶ which had won the 1965 Oscar for best foreign film.³⁷ The movie's directors Jan Kádár and Elmar Klos had already crafted a number of noteworthy and impressively self-critical films including *Obžalovaný* (The Accused) highlighting the contradictions between the ideals of communism and its less than perfect post-war Czechoslovakian rendition.³⁸ In *Obchod na korze*, Kádár and Klos trained their self-reflexive eyes on the essential contributions to genocide by average Slovaks, who implemented the 'Aryanisation' of Jewish property and the deportation of their Jewish fellow citizens with various degrees of enthusiasm. Driven by pedestrian motives such as greed and fear rather than antisemitic zeal, these normal collaborators proved very helpful to their German overlords, even if they developed qualms about their actions. In *The Shop on the High Street*, the middle-aged Tono is such an ambivalent figure. Spurred on by his wife, he accepts an offer to become the 'Aryan' supervisor of a little fabric shop owned by

Rosalie Lautmann, an old Jewish woman. Mrs. Lautmann does not understand the political situation and Tono's presence. She gratefully assumes that Tono is a distant cousin come to help her run her business. Tono quickly finds himself in a difficult situation because he likes the old lady and tries to hide her from the authorities when the deportations begin. In the end, they have a fateful misunderstanding: Being unaware of any threat, the old lady becomes suspicious of Tono's motives when he aggressively pressures her to go into hiding. The stress causes her to suffer a fatal heart attack and Tono commits suicide.

Had it been broadcast 20 years later, *The Shop on the High Street* might have helped shape popular Holocaust memory. In many respects, the movie appears perfectly compatible with the narrative strategies of the 1980s and 1990s that established the Holocaust at the centre of German and global history. Kádár and Klos' film is well suited to generate empathy with the victims of Nazi genocide and offers an innovative bottom-up inquiry into the motives of ordinary men who perpetrated the Holocaust. Finally, despite its slow pace and a few problematic dream sequences, *The Shop on the High Street* provides an entertaining mix of comic and tragic story elements following Tono vacillating between the bystander, perpetrator, and resister segments of the narrative world of Nazi occupation.

Reviewers generally praised the film's self-critical exposure of Slovak collaboration. Some called for similarly self-reflexive explorations from a German point of view, noting that efforts in this direction were all too often dismissed as 'Nestbeschmutzung', while others advised against addressing the topic of Nazism on German TV and reported with noticeable relief that the film did not feature a single German Nazi perpetrator.³⁹ The film also found a significant audience. Almost half of the people watching television that night tuned in to watch *The Shop on the High Street* rather than the entertainment programmes offered by ARD (28 percent versus 32 percent of TV households).⁴⁰ Yet there is no indication that *The Shop on the High Street* touched viewers emotionally in significant numbers – at least not in the way TV executives had hoped it would. In fact, consumer responses channelled yet another kind of multi-directional memory likely to represent the feelings of many viewers in front of the ZDF screen that night. Two passionate letters reached the station explaining to ZDF executives that the movie simply addressed the wrong crime. The Czech and Slovak peoples had plenty of reasons to apologise – not for the 'Final Solution', though, but for the expulsion of ethnic Germans after 1945.⁴¹

34 Rüdiger Steinmetz et al., *Deutsches Fernsehen Ost. Eine Programmggeschichte des DDR-Fernsehens*, Berlin 2008, 468-469; see also: Thomas Beutelschmidt/Rüdiger Steinlein (ed.), *Realitätskonstruktion. Faschismus und Antifaschismus in den Literaturverfilmungen des DDR-Fernsehens*, Leipzig 2004, 45; Ulrike Schwab (ed.), *Fiktionale Geschichtssendungen im DDR-Fernsehen*, Leipzig 2007.

35 Steinmetz, *Deutsches Fernsehen Ost*, 62-65.

36 Miloslav Szabó, 'Ein "antislowakischer" Oscar-Film? Zur Darstellung des Holocaust im tschechoslowakischen Film *Obchod na korze*', in: S.I.M.O.N. – Shoah: Intervention. Methods. Documentation. 2 (2015) 1, 102-109.

37 ZDF, 21 December 1966.

38 ZDF, 25 October 1965.

39 Das Geschäft an der Hauptstrasse, in: *Der Vorwärts*, 30 November 1966; Das Geschäft an der Hauptstrasse, in: *Badische Neueste Nachrichten*, 26 November 1966; Norman Gephardt, *Das Geschäft an der Hauptstrasse*, in: *Recklinghauser Zeitung*, 23 November 1966.

40 *Infratest-Index*, 21 November 1966.

41 ZDF Redaktionsakte zu *Das Geschäft an der Hauptstrasse*, Produktions-Nr. 3/7/350, Letter by Josef D. addressed to ZDF and dated 20 December 1966; Letter by Erwin S. addressed to ZDF and dated 27 November 1966.

In Cold War West Germany, *The Shop on the High Street* was variably perceived as a piece of communist propaganda, a reminder of how little anybody could have done against the Nazis, including presumably Germans themselves, or as a praiseworthy or misplaced effort of Slovak self-reproach. Few of the responses indicate that the film made viewers think seriously about their own responsibilities for Nazi genocide. West German historical culture in the 1960s simply pursued other priorities. People were still trying to figure out how the Nazis could have come to power in the first place and how Germans could make sense of their chequered personal fates and failures in the 'Third Reich'. For the latter purpose, they were busily fitting complex and contradictory life trajectories into neat story categories, which, often also by way of television, divvied up Nazi society into a few devilish Nazis, many heroic resisters, some nondescript bystanders, and generously apportioned groups of victims comprising first and foremost German soldiers, POWs, expellees, and victims of Allied bombing raids and denazification efforts.⁴² Jews belonged to the latter category without gaining exceptional visibility because they were not perceived as an important part of West German society and because the role of Nazi victim – as opposed to martyred resister – had not yet attained special prestige. *The Shop on the High Street* simply proved to be the wrong story in the wrong place at the wrong time – sharing that fate with countless memory products across the world.

Despite their ambivalent conceptualisation of Nazi crimes and their problematic reception, Eastern European feature films constituted an important contribution to German historical culture. In the context of 1960s and 1970s German TV, they represent a sizeable and coherent body of work that delved directly into the dark universe of Nazi crimes, seeking to reconstruct for the audience the dynamics of victimisation and bystanding that had wreaked havoc on the lives of millions of people. West German screenwriters, directors, and journalists also touched upon the topic, similarly stressing its terrifying scope and putting even more emphasis on German responsibility for genocide and racial warfare. However, with few exceptions, they preferred to take a detour through memory: West German TV plays, documentaries, and features about the 'Final Solution' approached the topic by way of an explicit present-day narrative frame focussed on the process of coming to terms with the past. Some programmes pursued a philosemitic angle, documenting Jewish culture in Europe before and after the Holocaust and presenting present-day remnants of that culture as resources worthy of careful preservation.⁴³ Other programmes already crafted a small but narratively robust inventory of survivor stories that would become a key staple of the Holocaust

paradigm.⁴⁴ Yet another set of non-fiction programmes focussed on the West German legal, administrative, and symbolic efforts of making amends.⁴⁵ In this way, television documented West German restitution efforts directed at Israel and individual Jewish survivors and criticised the belated and morally and legally flawed efforts of bringing Nazi criminals to justice. The programmes in the latter thematic category assume particular relevance with hindsight because they belong to just a handful of West German programmes that focus squarely and self-critically on Nazi perpetrators.⁴⁶

In the first decades of history programming, an intriguing division of labour thus emerged on West German television. Foreign and especially Eastern European feature films provided potentially taxing simulations of the Nazi onslaught on Eastern European countries in general and their Jewish citizens in particular. In contrast to these narrative worlds of destruction and doom, West German non-fiction and fiction programmes, with their present-day focus, always included a silver lining. The features and documentaries clearly acknowledged crimes and responsibilities but they also highlighted West German efforts of making amends as well as the praise these efforts received from abroad. In this way, the programmes stressed the German population's duty to remember with the best of didactic intentions, but in their discussion of present-day criminal justice and restitution efforts, they also provided a modest counterweight to the extraordinary criminal energy of Nazi society. The programmes constructed an implicit German viewership whose members regained a measure of control over their problematic history. Even if the restitution and law enforcement efforts were found wanting – and they were often criticised on television – there nevertheless always existed the option of improving them. In this sense, the West German programmes focussing on memory contained a modicum of structural optimism that the Eastern European narrative worlds of persecution could not offer their viewers. As *Sadowski* and *The Shop on the High Street* powerfully illustrated, the dividing lines between historical victims, perpetrators, and bystanders could always be reimagined but, on the level of history, the devastating outcome of the story was (as yet) difficult to circumnavigate. By contrast, on the level of Nazi memory, the utopia of rigorously self-critical memory work, especially on the part of the many bystanders past and present, remained a very real possibility. Viewed from this perspective, the narrative vectors of West German cosmopolitan memory and East German antifascist memory were not so different after all. They both offered Germans a place on the right side of history.

42 Frei, *Vergangenheitspolitik*; Peter Reichel, *Politik mit der Erinnerung. Gedächtnisorte im Streit um die nationalsozialistische Vergangenheit*, Munich 1995; Kansteiner, *Pursuit*.

43 To name just two examples: *Die goldene Stadt des Rabbi Löw*. Ein Film über die Judengemeinde Prags (ARD, 28 September 1963); *Die Juden von Prag* (ZDF, 11 October 1968).

44 For example: *Wiedersehen mit Laupheim*. Ein jüdischer Emigrant besucht seine Heimatstadt (ZDF, 12 April 1968); *Denk ich an Deutschland*. Schicksale von Menschen, die Deutschland vertrieb (ARD, 25 April 1965).

45 For example: *Stellvertreter ihrer Väter*. Aktion Sühnezeichen in sechs Ländern (ARD, 15 September 1963); *Die unbezahlbare Schuld*. Ist die Wiedergutmachung abgeschlossen? (ZDF, 8 November 1964).

46 *Der Himbeerpflock* (ARD, 24 June 1965); *Dr. W.: Ein SS-Arzt in Auschwitz* (ZDF, 12 September 1976).

Holocaust – The Perfect Storm

When West German collective memory shifted decisively in January 1979 as a result of the broadcast of the NBC miniseries *Holocaust*, the cultural elites of the Federal Republic found themselves in a tricky situation. They had to explain to the public why they had paid relatively little attention to the history of the Holocaust, which was now unequivocally considered the key event of modern German and world history. From today's perspective, that criticism seems both reasonable and problematic: reasonable, because Holocaust memory remains a key anchoring point for collective identities in the West and, judged by its standards, post-war European memory culture appears to have lacked moral integrity. After all, from the 1940s through the 1970s, European societies in general and German society more specifically failed to recognise the extraordinary historical and ethical/political relevance of the Nazi genocide. Yet the *ex post factum* indictment of post-war memory culture also seems problematic from today's perspective because, nor over seventy years after the collapse of the 'Third Reich' and over 35 years after the conception of popular Holocaust memory, the potential ethical shortcomings of Holocaust memory, including its ethnocentrism and political opportunism, are being more vigorously discussed than ever.⁴⁷ As a result, the invention of the Holocaust paradigm in the 1970s and 1980s no longer qualifies as unequivocal memory progress and the pre-Holocaust memory culture of the 1950s and 1960s no longer appears as a bleak memory-scape of Holocaust denial. Instead, the post-war decades of economic success and decolonisation assume an aura of intriguing memory ambivalence. Considered from the conceptual vantage point of multi-directional memory, the collective memories of the Second World War could have developed in many other directions than they ultimately did.⁴⁸ They could have, for instance, continued to evolve along the well-trodden path of antifascist and anti-totalitarian memory or been radically sidelined by contemporary war and decolonisation memories.

The oscillation between different conceptual perspectives for the assessment of post-war memory culture does not change the status of *Holocaust* as a pivotal point in the history of modern memory.⁴⁹ In an exceptional feat of mass communication, *Holocaust* succeeded in solidifying and naturalising a specific moral perspective that had previously only had limited sociopolitical reach. Once established as a moral certainty, that perspective proved highly efficient for the purpose of criticising post-war Nazi apologet-

ics and turning the Nazi genocide into a popular site of memory. The media event *Holocaust* was a reflection and an important catalyst of the popular turn to memory that swept Western societies a quarter century after the Second World War.⁵⁰ The TV series helped usher in the kind of cultural externalisation of memory in memorials, museums, and visual culture whose existence is largely taken for granted today. *Holocaust* thus represents a first highlight of the politics of regret that became official (West) German and European memory in the 1980s and 1990s.⁵¹

However, *Holocaust* was a scandal before it became a *cause célèbre*. Many critics on both sides of the Atlantic initially vigorously rejected its fast-cut, relentlessly entertaining, emotionally manipulative, profit-mongering aesthetics.⁵² Consequently, in internal discussions before the acquisition of *Holocaust*, ARD leaders did not highlight the series' aesthetic qualities or likely success with German audiences when speaking in favour of broadcasting the NBC production. Instead, they pointed out that West German television would be perceived as utterly hypocritical if ARD now took a pass on *Holocaust* after having just broadcast *Roots. The Saga of an American Family* (Marvin J. Chomsky, ABC 1977) which used the very same problematic aesthetics to highlight the troublesome history and legacy of slavery in the US.⁵³ It seems that these international, multi-directional memory considerations won the day: *Holocaust* came to Germany because German TV executives did not want to look foolish to their peers in Western Europe and the US. There are worse reasons for good memory politics.

Holocaust set an unprecedented and never again reached benchmark for self-critical memory politics. Before *Holocaust*, prime time historical programming that elicited 100 to 150 viewer responses, including factual questions, script requests, or detailed commentary, counted as successful history television. These programmes had served their purpose and made producers and executives proud. Thus, after the broadcast of *Holocaust*, nobody was prepared for tens of thousands of Germans pouring out their hearts in phone calls and letters expressing deep-felt regret, confusion, and resentment.⁵⁴ A combination of emotion-centred, innovative, and expensive colour TV aesthetics (especially innovative in Germany), excellent scriptwriting and acting featuring very attractive victim and non-stereotypical perpetrator figures, unparalleled PR efforts, and a historical

47 Claudio Fogu/Wulf Kansteiner/Todd Presner (ed.), *Probing the Ethics of Holocaust Culture*, Cambridge MA 2016.

48 Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory. Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, Stanford 2009.

49 Raphael Rauch, "Visuelle Integration". *Juden in westdeutschen Fernsehserien nach Holocaust*, Göttingen 2018, 9-10.

50 Astrid Erll, *Memory in Culture*, New York 2011.

51 Jeffrey Olick, *The Sins of the Fathers*, Chicago 2016.

52 Jeffrey Shandler, *White America Watches. Televising the Holocaust*, Oxford 1999; Jürgen Wilke, Die Fernsehserie 'Holocaust' als Medienereignis, in: *Zeitgeschichte-online*, Thema: Die Fernsehserie "Holocaust" – Rückblicke auf eine "betroffene Nation", März 2004; <http://www.zeitgeschichteonline.de/md=FSHolocaust-Wilke> (28 May 2019).

53 On the intersection of the two media events in West Germany, see: Timothy Havens, *Black Television Travels. African American Television around the Globe*, New York 2013, 47-50.

54 Raul Jordan, *Konfrontation mit der Vergangenheit. Das Medienereignis Holocaust und die politische Kultur der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Frankfurt 2008; Friedrich Knilli/Siegfried Zielinski, *Betrifft Holocaust. Zuschauer schreiben an den WDR*, Berlin 1983.

culture already sensitised to concerns of self-reflexive Nazi memory (especially through television) – all these factors combined turned *Holocaust* into a perfect storm of a media event. 34 years after the liberation of Auschwitz, significant segments of the society that had launched the genocide understood the scale of their crimes, felt empathy for the victims, and a sense of loss at their own moral depravity. *Holocaust* thus inadvertently set a high bar for popular memory culture. A mass media product could apparently play a decisive role in crafting new paradigms of historical self-criticism. Ever since, the representation of historical violence in popular culture can be held to higher standards. Television, films, and video games dealing with past crimes may entertain and make money, but they should ideally also serve an important ethical function. The perfect storm of *Holocaust* cannot be replicated, but one can and should ask the question of what ethical and political purpose media violence serves and how successfully a given media product has managed to trigger self-critical reflections about past and present human rights violations. Put bluntly, mediations of trauma should contribute to the important task of preventing people from becoming perpetrators (again). The Holocaust memory paradigm ushered in by *Holocaust* might be dated, but the high expectations directed at mass culture that the TV series raised are worth retaining.

The media event *Holocaust* reconfigured popular memories of Nazi genocide and thus problematised bystanding on the level of Holocaust memory. The ideal viewers of *Holocaust* and similarly structured products are actively participating in the construction of self-reflexive memory through education, regret, reparations, and reconciliation.⁵⁵ *Holocaust* accomplished all of this without decisively changing perceptions of Nazi bystanding on the level of Holocaust history. At the beginning of the miniseries, all the main characters are busy bystanders; they are not involved in the political process and are focussed on their personal lives. From their positions in the margins of the Nazi state, they advance at different speeds to the centre of Holocaust history, namely the power hub of the SS elite, key sites of Nazi persecution including Buchenwald, Hadamar, Theresienstadt, and Sobibor, and important locations of Jewish resistance and survival like partisan camps, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the DP route to Palestine. The different narrative trajectories of *Holocaust* thus reflect a picture-perfect transformation of bystanders into perpetrators, resisters, and victims. This process of creative emplotment inadvertently turns Holocaust bystanding yet again into an underexplored narrative terrain. The Holocaust paradigm as constructed in memorials, museums, and popular culture across the West featured clear narrative hierarchies and revolutionised the politics of collective remembering and forgetting on a transnational scale by highlighting the triumph of survival and the task of witnessing at the expense of any similarly sustained

inquiry into the motives of bystanders and perpetrators.⁵⁶ The avoidance was hardly absolute; television, for example, is a complex business and especially off-prime time hours and cable niches have featured a significant degree of topical diversity. Nevertheless, quickly established narrative routines emphasising the triumph of survival paved the way to media success and communicative self-confidence for journalists, politicians, memory professionals, teachers, academics, and their audiences who rely on such routines.

Holocaust after *Holocaust*

After *Holocaust*, visual culture in the West continued for decades to produce consciously crafted responses to the NBC miniseries, including such memorable media events as *Shoah* (Claude Lanzmann, 1985), *Heimat* (Edgar Reitz, 1984), *Schindler's List* (Steven Spielberg, 1993), *Holokaust* (Maurice Philip Remy, 2000), and *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter* (English title: *Generation War*, Philipp Kadelbach, 2013). In the course of these responses, the topic of bystanding came better into focus – as one would expect following the logic of Greimas' semiotic square in which, as Frederik Jameson argued, one segment designates “the most critical position and the one that remains open or empty the longest time, for its identification completes the process and in that sense constitutes the most creative act of the construction.”⁵⁷

In a testament to the relative diversity of emerging Holocaust memory, cultural elites harbouring reservations about popular TV fare in general and *Holocaust* in particular chose their own sites of Holocaust memory, most prominently Claude Lanzman's over nine-hour long documentary *Shoah* (1985). *Shoah*, like *Holocaust*, was broadcast on West Germany's regional TV channels, but unlike *Holocaust*, it only found a miniscule audience. While an average of four percent of TV households tuned in to *Shoah*, *Holocaust* had attracted up to forty percent of TV households under similarly unfavourable broadcasting conditions.⁵⁸ To date, however, *Shoah* remains an important reference point for academic memory culture enthralled by a narrative universe in which the narrator figure of Lanzman pulls the strings, alternating between duplicitously cuddling up to real Nazis in an undercover sting operation, relentlessly seducing survivors into restaging their humiliating past, and obsessing about Polish callousness and merriment

56 Anne Rothe, *Popular Trauma Culture. Selling the Pain of Others in the Mass Media*, New Brunswick 2011, 36–41. *Holocaust* is actually an exception in this regard because it only features a subdued survival story. On the construction of the figure of the eyewitness, see: Martin Sabrow/Norbert Frei (ed.), *Die Geburt des Zeitzeugen nach 1945*, Göttingen 2012.

57 Frederik Jameson, Foreword, in: Algirdas Julien Greimas, *On Meaning. Selected Writings*, Minneapolis 1987, xvi.

58 Thiele, *Publizistische Kontroversen*, 311, 397.

55 Daniel Levy/Nathan Sznajder, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, Philadelphia 2006.

in the face of Judeocide. The Polish figures, rendered unforgettable on the covers of countless *Shoah* products, effectively export the figure of the Holocaust bystander out of Western Europe. *Shoah* differs in this regard decisively from Marcel Ophüls' *Le Chagrin et la Pitié* (The Sorrow and the Pity, 1969) which almost single-handedly established the figure of the French collaborator as an icon of self-critical Vichy memory.⁵⁹ By comparison, *Shoah* lacks self-critical depth and amounts to Western academic memory kitsch exploring the abyss of genocide from the superior point of view of a peculiar anti-intellectual intellectualism which takes great pride in unflinchingly and relentlessly confronting the genocidal mindset without realising that this attitude of cold aloofness is itself implicated in the crimes.⁶⁰ Thus, *Holocaust* and *Shoah*, representing the centre of popular and intellectual Holocaust memory, inscribe very different implied viewer figures into their respective narrative worlds. *Holocaust* might not have focussed explicitly on average people watching ostracism, deportation, and genocide unfold in the 'Third Reich', but the series facilitated a degree of emotional empathy with the victims that rendered memory bystanding highly problematic for a significant share of the audience. By contrast, *Shoah* fails to inquire self-critically into its own fascination with the extremity and consistency of Nazi violence. Considering genre, production context, and narrator self-stylisation, *Shoah* and *Holocaust* represent very different media products, with Holocaust emerging as the superior site of Holocaust memory.

Among the answers to *Holocaust*, *Schindler's List* is the most conventionally structured film showcasing the time-tested metamorphoses of a bystander into a hero and concluding the Americanisation of the Holocaust with a carefully planned and highly entertaining act of simulative commodification with limited self-critical potential.⁶¹ By contrast, Edgar Reitz's *Heimat*, the first answer to *Holocaust*, constituted a self-conscious challenge of the emerging Holocaust paradigm highlighting the relative innocence of the bystander subject position in a complex yet ultimately romantic exploration of provincial life in twentieth-century Germany in which the Holocaust is simply not an event of great significance.⁶² Through his intervention, Reitz hoped to retake control of German history that, he felt, "the Americans have stolen [...] through Holocaust".⁶³ As different as they are, *Heimat*, *Shoah*, and *Schindler's List* are all auteur films, highly wrought, self-reflexive confrontations with the powerful interpretive framework of Holocaust history. Plus, they all try to insert explicit reflections on the bystander perspective in

59 Pauline Kael, *Hooked*, New York 1989, 84-88; Henri Rousso, *The Vichy Syndrome. History and Memory in France since 1944*, Cambridge, MA 1994, 100-114.

60 Dominick LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz*, Ithaca, NY 1998, 95-138; Tzvetan Todorov, *Facing the Extreme. Moral Life in the Concentration Camp*, New York 1996, 277.

61 Yosefa Loshitzky (ed.), *Spielberg's Holocaust. Critical Perspectives on Schindler's List*, Bloomington, IN 1997.

62 Anton Kaes, *From Hitler to Heimat. The Return of History as Film*, Cambridge, MA 1989, 163-192.

63 Edgar Reitz, *Liebe zum Kino. Utopien und Gedanken zum Autorenfilm 1962-1983*, Cologne 1984, 102.

their narrative worlds, as if the auteurs in question had perceived the previous lack of engagement with that perspective and perhaps also understood the implication of cinema and television in the social construction of political bystanding.

Just like *Holocaust*, *Heimat*, *Shoah*, and *Schindler's List* are transnational sites of memory that played an important role in the evolution of Nazi memory in Germany. However, in terms of popular resonance, the auteur films have been overshadowed by a series of stunningly successful yet morally disappointing documentaries and docudramas broadcast by German public television since the turn of the century. The programmes elegantly circumnavigated and subverted the Holocaust paradigm by paying lip service to Holocaust memory, emphasising the depravity of the Nazi elite, but embracing the bystanders of war and genocide as the true measure of normal behaviour in times of crisis. The docudramas and documentaries – the latter are often linked to the name of the ZDF TV executive Guido Knopp – amounted to a third wave of history TV. They lacked the self-consciousness of auteur cinema and settled on predictable transformations of German bystanders into German victims. Yet the millennium wave also self-confidently accomplished what German memory culture had rarely dared attempt previously. It gave voice and image to the figure of the sombre German bystander, emotionally shaken by seeing so much violence but nevertheless bravely fulfilling the duty of (Holocaust) bystanding by relating the lessons of actual or imagined Holocaust proximity to a transnational public. The German bystander figure had observed the crimes and now tearfully testified to their occurrence and lamented the victims' suffering in a carefully staged performance that systematically sidestepped any questions about the real bystanders' implication in the crimes. This figure had been the implicit point of gravity of many TV productions but now, at an advanced age, its lined face exuding authenticity, wisdom, and the innocence of physical incapacity, it stepped into the limelight and went on a great farewell tour through living rooms in Germany and across the West. In signature documentaries like *Holokaust* (ZDF, 2000) and countless similar productions, the Holocaust bystander figure came into its own, generously borrowing character traits from other better known figures (especially the survivors) while clearly establishing an independent and innocent presence on the screen. Needless to say, the bystander hero of Knopp TV was an attractive emotional sounding board for exploring the now distant Nazi past precisely because the figure lacked any capacity for sustained self-criticism.⁶⁴

The hitherto last response to *Holocaust*, *Generation War*, deserves credit as a high profile programme focussing squarely on average Nazi perpetrators.⁶⁵ The series seems to be

64 Thomas Fischer/Rainer Wirtz (ed.), *Alles authentisch? Popularisierung der Geschichte im Fernsehen*, Constance 2008; Keilbach, *Geschichtsbilder*; Kansteiner, *Pursuit*; Kansteiner, *Aufstieg und Abschied*; Ebbrecht-Hartmann, *German Docudrama*.

65 *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter. Eine andere Zeit* (ZDF, 17 March 2013); *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter. Ein anderer Krieg* (ZDF 18 March 2013); *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter. Ein anderes Land* (ZDF, 20 March 2013).

part of a more extensive, belated televisual inquiry into normal Nazi perpetrators, although we lack comprehensive TV data to assess the volume and the social relevance of these programmes.⁶⁶ *Generation War* builds up viewer identification with a group of five young and attractive Nazi bystanders and then carefully and compellingly depicts their descent into the moral quagmire of the Second World War. All but the token Jewish member of the group become embroiled in Nazi crimes, but in the end script and film remain too protective of their main characters. The production falls into a generation trap because the friends are simply too young to bear political responsibility for the rise of Nazism. In addition, the protagonists are morally redeemed by premature deaths, attempts at desertion, and experiences of rape, resulting in the three most innocent characters surviving the war. The production team behind *Generation War* simply pushed the characters too far into the victim segment of their Nazi universe, making it difficult for viewers to retain ambivalent, self-critical feelings about the figures' participation in Nazi crimes.⁶⁷

The narrative square seems to have come full circle. Before and after *Holocaust*, ARD and ZDF only sporadically confronted their viewers with the most painful legacy of Nazism, namely the deeds and continued presence of hundreds of thousands of perpetrators and many more bystanders in the midst of German society before and after 1945. The networks belatedly acknowledged the crimes and the suffering of the victims with impressive detail, candour, and frequency, but they often let the average perpetrators and bystanders linger in the shadows – nameless, faceless stereotypes devoid of stories worth exploring. The aesthetic construction of these lacunae changed substantially over the course of the decades. In the 1960s and 1970s, the perpetrators and bystanders of the 'Final Solution' were largely absent from prime time because West Germany's historical culture had not yet conceived of Nazi genocide as the primary focus of its efforts of coming to terms with the 'Third Reich'. In the 1980s, a consciousness of the extraordinary characteristics of the Holocaust quickly permeated all layers of West Germany's historical culture, but now the perpetrators and bystanders took a back seat, visually and narratively, to the survivors of the 'Final Solution', who came to play a decisive role in many media stories about this event. Finally, since the 1990s, the average perpetrators were overshadowed by the figures of the Führer and his henchmen, who came to dominate the airwaves and conveniently absorbed all responsibility for the Holocaust. At the same time, TV embraced the aged figure of the bystander as the measure of appropriate moral

conduct in times of war and genocide. Television only seems to have developed more persistent curiosity about the ordinary men who committed genocide over six decades after their crimes at a point in time when the vast majority of murderers and bystanders were already dead and when historical coverage had lost social relevance and thematic focus in a highly diversified and fragmented TV market. It seems unlikely that the exploration of Nazi narrative worlds will pick up speed any time soon in the dated setting of television. The next narrative history frontiers are video games and AI settings whose immersive, simulative, and counterfactual environments offer fabulous opportunities to explore the moral conundrum of Holocaust bystanding and complicity – if Holocaust memory institutions can muster the courage to develop truly interactive digital memory landscapes.⁶⁸ Moreover, television culture faces an even more pressing challenge. How can TV help counter the rise of right-wing parties like the AfD, whose members have largely abandoned television in favour of social media far more conducive to their radical taste in political coverage?⁶⁹ Public television runs the risk of experiencing its very own (neo-)Nazi bystanding dilemma.

⁶⁶ See for instance: Das radikal Böse (ZDF, 1 May 2015), which finally provided the kind of compelling analysis of average Nazi perpetrators on TV that Chris Browning already presented in scholarly form in 1992 in his *Ordinary Men*; see also: Bernd Graf, Bestien wie Du und ich, in: Süddeutsche Zeitung, 29 April 2015, 5.

⁶⁷ Ulrich Herbert, Die Nazis sind immer die anderen, in: Die Tageszeitung, 21 March 2013, 7; Christoph Classen, Unsere Nazis, unser Fernsehen.

⁶⁸ Wulf Kansteiner, The Holocaust in the 21st Century. Digital Anxiety, Transnational Cosmopolitanism, and Never Again Genocide without Memory, in: Andrew Hoskins (ed.), *Digital Memory Studies. Media Pasts in Transition*, New York 2017, 110-140.

⁶⁹ Hubert Kleinert, *Die AfD und ihre Mitglieder*, Wiesbaden 2018, 63.