MAKING SENSE OF HISTORY

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NARRATING THE NATION

*Representations in History,
Media and the Arts*

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the Scotsman and the Glasgow Herald, undoubtedly extending and broadening the social range of Scott's patriotic appeal.

29. In 1814 his neighbour the Earl of Buchan erected a colossal statue of William Wallace on the grounds of his estate at Dryburgh facing England across the historic border at the River Tweed. It was the first nationalist monument to be raised in Scotland. Scott's reaction to the monument is not known.

30. 'Meeting of Wallace and Bruce', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 30 (Sept. 1819): 686–87.

31. Ibid.

32. This poem was first published in James Hogg, *Collected Poems*, ed. John Wilson, vol. 4, Edinburgh, 1888: 280–91.

33. James Hogg, Wallace (a poem), Edinburgh University Library, Special Collections, La.II.216.

34. Walter Scott, 'Culloden Papers', *The Quarterly Review*, 28 (Jan. 1816), Art. I.

35. 'Patrick Fraser Tytler', in *Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scots*, ed. R. Chambers; the text available online at http://www.electricscotland.com/history/men/tytler_patrick.htm

36. The Letters of Sir Walter Scott, 5–129.

37. J.W. Croker, *Stories Selected from the History of England from the Conquest to the Revolution: For Children*, London, 1817. The book was reprinted four times within the two years of publication.

38. The episode is related by Robert Chambers in his edited *Biographical Dictionary of Eminent Scotsmen*, Edinburgh and London, 1856. The entry on Francis Tytler which contains this information has been transcribed and is available at http://www.electricscotland.com/history/significant_scots.htm

39. *Tales of a Grandfather*, vol. 4 in *The Prose Works of Sir Walter Scott*, 25, Edinburgh, 1836, 80.

40. For example, N.A. Polevoi, who wrote historical novels under the influence of Scott, also published *History of the Russian Nation* (1833); Cf. D. Ungurianu, 'Fact and Fiction in the Romantic Historical Novel', *Russian Review* 57, 3 (Jul. 1998): 380–93.

41. W. Scott, *The History of Scotland from the Earliest Period to the Close of the Rebellion 1745–46, Contained in Tales of a Grandfather*, Edinburgh, 1836.

42. On the fortunes of the popularity of Walter Scott's writings during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see C. Parsons, 'Sir Walter Scott: Yesterday and Today', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 116, 6, 1972: 450–57.

Chapter 7

Families, Phantoms and the Discourse of 'Generations' as a Politics of the Past: Problems of Provenance – Rejecting and Longing for Origins

SIGRID WEIGEL

The Rediscovery of Family Ties

The discourse of 'generations' has for some time dominated the German *Zeitgeist*. Recently, however, the inception of a new era within this discourse has entered the culture pages of the newspapers, this most sensitive of seismographic instruments when it comes to registering even the tiniest shifts in collective states of mind. In the political sphere, the contract between the generations is becoming the object of negotiations that could possibly end up blowing apart the structures of the social welfare state altogether. At the same time, however, a whole series of films and literary publications are revealing the awakening amongst the younger generation of a new interest in the older one.

The success of Wolfgang Becker's film *Good Bye, Lenin!* (2002), for example, is being heralded as the document of a new peace between the generations, under the sign of which the parents' traditional caring role vis-à-vis their children is reversed. This is despite the fact that it was only the year before that the satirical film *Tanguy* (2001) by French film-maker Etienne Chatiliez gave expression to the notorious and in the meantime all too familiar complaint of today's fifty-year-olds that their offspring are reaching their late

twenties without contemplating giving up the comforts of 'Hotel Mama'. It may of course be the case that the contrast between the two films can be put down in part to other causes – that the nostalgic story in which a son stages a resurrection of everyday life in the GDR in a 79 square metre apartment for his mother's sake is simply confirming the sociological hypothesis which suggests that generational conflict is less of an issue in eastern Germany because it is overshadowed by the contrast between the old and new federal states.[1] This reading would suggest that the allegorical marriage between East and West, an image both popularised *and* ironised in the mass media in 1989 through countless cartoons, would have to be regarded as having failed, since it had been overtaken by obviously more powerful recollective images of previous genealogies. In other words, the family ties and sense of origin would have proved more dominant than the contractually formed new national community would.

However, in the West, too, there is a marked reawakening of interest in the older generation. Here too the link is via research into the German past, albeit in this case the past of fifty years ago. Recently there has been a run of novels by authors born in the post-war era that explore the history of the war and post-war periods via the medium of generational narratives. This goes for writers now in their fifties, such as East Berliner Reinhard Jirgl and Stephan Wackwitz from Stuttgart, as well as for younger writers like Tanja Dückers, who was born in 1968. Dückers' *Himmelskörper* (*Heavenly Bodies*, 2003) is expressly concerned with the rediscovery of the extent to which one's own situation is determined by one's place in the sequence of generations in the family genealogy. Wackwitz's novel *Ein unsichtbares Land* (*An Invisible Country*, 2003), meanwhile, which revolves around the memories of a grandfather, in staking its claim to being a 'family saga' presents itself so to speak as the spectre of a literary genre long since given up for dead. The form of Jirgl's novel *Die Unvollendeten* (*The Incompleted*, 2003), which presents scenes of the expulsion of the German population from the Sudetenland, in its representation of a community of three generations of women cites a narrative model characteristic of the nineteenth century. It is a model that reached its zenith and simultaneous end-point in Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks: The Decline of a Family*, which was published in 1902. In the twentieth century, the form was only used in the context of a programmatic literature of remembrance by marginalised groups, as in the feminist project of reconstructing a female genealogy[2] or, for example, in Dieter Forte's trilogy about a family from the Ruhrgebiet, whose line Forte traces back to the twelfth century.[3]

There are, of course, literary alternatives to the novel of multiple generations that encapsulates history in the narrative model of a seemingly natural genealogy – 'from generation to generation', as the saying goes. In the nineteenth century, this saying became the discourse-forming pathos formula of an epoch of temporalisation, historiography and the theorisation of heredity,

strongly under the influence of evolutionary theory. Thus, narrating national history also followed a sort of evolutionary structure since the image of the society was presented by a sequence of generations. Historical developments were in literature mediated by changes in families and the experiences of their members. This mode of writing formed a typical bourgeois narrative in which the family romance functions as a model for the nation, particularly for a specific historical epoch of the nation. Whereas the nineteenth century was dominated by this narrative model structured by generations following each other, there emerged a new kind of generation literature in the twentieth century especially after the First World War. Since then, there have been stories of specific generations who consider themselves to have undergone a unique experience with national relevance and who identify and entitle themselves by a specific event, e.g. Generation First World War, Hitlerjugend-Generation, Generation of 68, etc. It is only through this representative type of generation novels that the autobiographical experience has become a reason and legitimacy for nationally relevant narrations. Here a specific generation appears as the protagonist of a national history although individual experience can never include the whole story. As a result, stories of generations have also become the family romance of the nation in the Freudian sense, i.e. narratives including fantasies and images produced to cover blind spots within the genealogy or to substitute gaps in memory. When generation stories function as national narratives historical experiences tend to be presented as analogy in a familiar framework, and thereby history tends to be brought into line with natural rhythms.

Nowadays, however, one has to look beyond German literature to find the literary alternatives to such generational narratives. To Rafael Chirbes' *La Larga Marcha* (*The Long March*, 1998), for example, a novel which presents a panorama of two generations – that which lived through the Spanish Civil War and the post-1968 generation – without recourse to the model of the family novel or the representation of generational succession. In its two parts, Chirbes' novel sets up a contrast between synchronically organised sequences of scenes from the lives of different families and classes. This device enables Chirbes to show the lack of communication and awareness between the two 'political' generations, as well as unspoken correspondences that connect the stories in unsettling ways. In this way, he succeeds in demonstrating, through striking scenarios, the synchronicity between historically asynchronous episodes and events.

To return to recent German literature, however, the interest, already outlined, in the grandparents' generation is indeed a novelty. It is of course the case that a number of publications from the decade before had already given the lie to the claim that the literature of younger writers took no interest in the German past. It is true that in the 1990s, as the passing of the years gradually diminished the source of the survivors' memories, a new literature emerged,

authored by younger writers who had not participated in the historical events they described. These were texts in which scenes, events and figures from the history of National Socialism, the Shoah, exile and the aftermath were brought back into the limelight through the conscious and skilful use of fictional methods. These are works that no longer fall into the category of autobiography and authenticity, but which are based on precise archival research. In novels such as Marcel Beyer's *Flughunde* (*The Karnau Tapes*, 1995) and Norbert Gstrein's *Die englischen Jahre* (*The English Years*, 1999), fiction does not appear opposed to facts – as the formula, as popular as it is erroneous, 'fact and fiction', would suggest. On the contrary, it is precisely the fictional scene of literature which makes it possible to articulate things retrieved from the archives, to address the hidden and repressed traces of history, and to give voice to the silenced and the uncanny lodged within the familiar.

Family Secrets and Phantom Images

The most recent literature follows in the wake of this liberation from the norms and the myths of a postulate of authenticity, to which such precarious products as the simulated eyewitness account of Wilkomirski are to be ascribed.[4] This, at any rate, is how Tanja Dückers has described it in an interview: 'My generation is the first to be able to dare to take a sober look at this topic. I would find it very dubious if the older generation got up on its high horse over the issue of authenticity on account of my generation not having lived through the war.'[5] It is all the more remarkable that this new attention to history, while freed from the obsession with authenticity, has been accompanied by the return of genealogical investigations. Yet a number of works from this body of recent literature differ very considerably from the traditional family novel in which the family sets the rhythm for the historical process in a quasi natural-historical generational progression. In contemporary literature, the family is not infrequently the scene of a secret or unresolved past, in which the gaps in memory or in recounted family history become the basis from which uncanny effects unfold, in particular with regard to the central figures' own familial background.

The new generational novel is often a novel that revolves around a family secret in which the forefathers are entangled. Thus, the protagonists of Tanja Dückers' *Himmelskörper*, for example, while clearing out the apartment of their grandparents, stumble upon some documents that set them on the trail of a family secret from the Nazi period. In Marcel Beyer's *Spione* (*Spies*, 2000), meanwhile, the image of the grandmother itself takes on phantom-like features, as a prohibition on memories surrounding the grandfather's deceased first wife transforms the children of the family into spies who fill the blind spots within the family memory with fantasies, speculations and suspicions.

'The phantom (le fantome, the ghost, the spirit) – in all its forms – is an invention of the living', according to the psychoanalyst Nicolas Abraham; an invention which 'must turn into an object the gap which the obscurity of a segment in the life of the love-object has produced in us [...] This means, it is not the dead who haunt us but the gaps which have remained behind in us as a result of other people's secrets'.[6] Phantoms, then, are not simply what are silenced, secret or obscure in our tradition; they are not the buried memories of our forefathers, or what is concealed in the crypts. Rather, they are what the imagination sets in the place of the mysterious gaps in the stories handed down to us. They are the product of our fantasy – and thus fictions. The fiction of the phantom is related to the life and the secrets of others to whom we are bound by interest or by love, or, more precisely, to the obscurities in what they have told of themselves or transmitted in some other way. In short, it is related to the family narrative they have handed on. In this sense, the phantom refers not to one's own unconscious, but to what is repressed in one's ancestors' stories.

Abraham posits this difference in images of varying strangeness. He says that the phantom affects us like a foreign body and not like a repression which 'Freud calls the *familiar* and *old-established* in the mind [...] which has become *alienated* from it or the uncanny'.[7] The character of the phantom as a secondary fiction is given a genealogical foundation in Abraham's conceptualisation, when he states that the phantom cannot be traced back to a lost object and refers not to the person who conceals a grave within him or herself, but rather to this person's descendants. It is the latter whose fate it becomes to 'objectify such hidden graves in the figure of the phantom'. It is the graves of the others which, in the form of phantoms, haunt the survivors. In the case studies cited by Abraham, it is always familial constellations that are at issue, phantoms formed in relation to the family narratives of parents, and mostly ones that circle around narcissistic injuries and reinterpretations of one's own origin. For example, in one case he mentions, 'The family narrative of the father was a repressed fantasy', or in another, 'The appearance of the phantom thus indicates the effects upon the descendant of what was injurious or even a narcissistic catastrophe for the respective parent.'[8] Hans-Ulrich Treichel's novel *Der Verlorene* (*Lost*, 1998) deals with a complex case of this kind. In this novel, it is a brother lost by the refugee parents during their flight at the end of the war whose infant photograph and, even more, whose phantom image comes to dominate the narrator's childhood. The mother's all-consuming desire to find her lost son sets in motion a dynamic of genealogical research whose methods, ranging from family likeness to anatomical measurement and genetic certification, get closer and closer to the racial-political practices characteristic of the Nazis.

The rediscovery of family ties as a link that produces an immediate relation to the past of the war and of Nazism for those born subsequently serves not infrequently in recent writing as a means of accessing a historical

knowledge that has been hushed up. Very often it is literally pictures missing from photograph albums that initiate or accompany the search for the traces of the past, together with hidden documents, manically preserved souvenirs or written records that do not tell the whole story. In this sense, Stephan Wackwitz's story of the reappearance of a grandfather's camera reads like an allegory of the relations between the generations in the long epoch of Germany's post-war history. The camera, which for many years lay in a depot of property confiscated by the Allies from former German soldiers, still contains a film from 1939. However, the old film will not deliver up its images of the past, because it had 'decomposed in the darkness of that half-century and would only show the black of the kind which reigns upon the bottom of the sea'.[9] If the younger generation's investigations of history through the medium of family origins confront the grandsons with the images that can no longer be developed from the recollective apparatuses of their ancestors, then this corresponds with the experience of having grown up in a ghostly reality. Wackwitz again comments, 'But it is not only because the earlier life of my parents lay in a time beneath the sea or the rubble of destroyed towns that the country in which I grew up often seemed ghostly to me as a child.'[10]

The rediscovery of family origins in recent German literature does not so much serve the appropriation of the past via the relation between the generations. Put differently, it does not support the usual form of the transmission of history within the family structure. Rather, it seems to take place as part of an attempt to secure a subjective position and to accept an uncanny inheritance in a history that otherwise remains abstract and obstructed by the moralising discourse of victims and perpetrators.

The Discourse of Generation as Politics of Identity and Lifestyle

The revaluation of the family line in recent German generational discourse as described so far really does signal a new departure, given that the period prior to this saw the flowering of a quite different way of conceptualising generation. This was 'generation' as a title, even a label, of a group sharing common birth years, whose name then came to characterise the political and cultural disposition of a set of people whose mentality or lifestyle had been shaped by a particular historical experience or situation. A new controversy emerged recently about the historical role of the 1968 generation, which looked, in part, like a re-run of the way in which the political camps divided during that period – in accordance with the rule that the talk of generations usually follows from the perspective of a particular generational attitude. However, even before this controversy, it had become habitual in the debates about the *Zeitgeist* to invent new generations on an almost daily basis. If the media are dominated at the moment by metaphors such as 'Generation Unemployed' or 'Generation Scrapheap',[11] only a short

while ago names such as 'Generation X', 'Generation Golf', 'Generation East', 'Generation Berlin' or 'Generation@com' were prevalent.

Florian Illies' book *Generation Golf* (2000) first emerged as a bestseller from this discourse. Seen from the perspective of those born between 1965 and 1975, Illies' book depicts the 1980s as the most boring decade of the twentieth century, the decade *after* the upheaval of 1968 and the German Autumn of 1977 and *before* the *Wende* of 1989. West Germany appeared to this particular age group as a comfortably feathered nest, though they had no mission and no prospects in this period. Moreover, it was a time in which leisure activities were largely unaffected by the oncoming new media age, 'Well-fed, admittedly, but otherwise completely without orientation, a whole generation born between 1965 and 1975 stumbled its way into the 1980s.'[12] The defining characteristics of this generation were, according to Illies (himself born in 1971), a certain dress sense, a particular set of consumer habits and a general attitude of indifference: 'Generation Golf's complete apathy towards every kind of theoretical construction, and its preference for practical philosophy are surely shaped decisively by the demise of the Lego age.'[13]

Illies' book predicates upon the distinction drawn between the 'Generation Golf' and the generation of 1968. It had been preceded by a debate in the newspaper review sections, staged as a controversy between the '68ers' and the '89ers' or as a fight between the thirty-year-olds and the fifty-year-olds. When Ulrich Greiner described this debate in a 1994 article in *Die Zeit* as a 'conflict between generations',[14] he was coining a new usage of the phrase 'generational conflict'. Therefore, the conflict was no longer that between fathers and sons (or mothers and daughters), but one arising out of the need of groups relatively close to each other in age to be seen as distinct from one another. It is this sense of generational conflict that opens up the possibility of replacing the rhythm of natural, familial reproduction with a succession of generations that change with ever-increasing rapidity. *Generation Berlin* was published soon after, based on a title coined by Heinz Bude first in 1998 in an article in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and then as a book in 2001. It provided a name to the sense of themselves and their place in the world shared by those born around 1960, whom he set apart, in essence, from the 'protagonists of protest', i.e. the '68ers'. According to Bude, they were a generation hitherto assigned to the backstage of history but now waiting in the wings to 'make the Berlin Republic their own'.[15] Since then, the term 'generation' has become free territory in the media for all kinds of quite arbitrary metaphorical usages. In the process, the battle of the generations in the media sphere seems to have taken over from the older pattern of generational conflict as the form by which the relation to the past and issues of lifestyle and life preferences are negotiated.

Jochen Hörisch introduced a rather differently articulated liaison between generation and the media when, under the title *Mediengenerationen* (*Media*

Generations), he reformulated the aforementioned 'quarrel between 68ers and 89ers' by means of an analogy between the history of technology and that of mentalities. Hörisch proposed that the technical development of hardware and software provides the conditions that shape the consciousness and attitudes of users. He saw the change in the computer generations as instrumental in shaping the respective youth culture, and thus substituted the media for a historical index in demarcating the generations.[16] The rhythm for the change from one generation to the next in this interpretation is set by the speed of media development. Indeed, the generation of the 'video kids' has been supplanted by that of the net surfers and of the avatars before their parents have even had the chance to learn their ABC in the new vocabulary of digitalisation.

The examples given here have in common that the term generation is used to refer to an identity politics that differentiates between lifestyles and attitudes. Illies' *Generation Golf* made this use of the term popular and simultaneously set its self-ironic standard. The understanding of generation is dominated here by the observation of a similarity amongst those of the same age and the difference vis-à-vis those who are only a little older. However, retrospective appraisal serves not to position oneself within the genealogy, but at the most to generate a nostalgic review of one's own short history. As Illies self-ironically remarks, 'we have, although we are barely adults, already developed a strange tendency to indulge retrospective review, and some of us write at 28 already books about our own childhoods, in the vain belief that these will be able to tell the story of an entire generation'.[17]

With this formulation, Florian Illies takes the aspect of identity politics within the conceptualisation of generation to its absurd extreme. It is not by chance that this happens in a book that was published in 2000, at the end of the millennium. For, insofar as the 'Generation Golf' is determined by a lack of events or formative experiences, one could see in it also the embodiment of a kind of negative conceptualisation of generation. In the 'Generation Golf' we see taken to its negative extreme the form of conceptualising generation which can be said to be the master trope of the twentieth century: generation understood as a cohort whose biography was shaped in a particular phase by decisive historical events, usually of a catastrophic nature. This way of conceptualising generation goes back to Karl Mannheim's 1928 essay *Das Problem der Generationen* (*The Problem of Generations*), in which the experiences of the First World War took on the form of sociological theory.

The Doubled Semantics of the Term 'Generation' and the Forgetting of Genealogy in Modernity

The concept of generation is ambiguous, since the term stands at the intersection of multiple dimensions of meaning. It refers to a stage of life and

so to the fact of belonging to a particular age group. Also, when the relation between generations or the succession of the generations is at issue, it contains a temporal or genealogical dimension: the human race owes its existence to the succession of the generations. In an older, nowadays largely neglected usage, generation also means production, (pro)creation or begetting (lat. *generatio* or gr. *genesis*), a meaning which has passed into the bioscientific concept of generation or development of an organism. Etymologically, 'generation' is derived from the family of words surrounding the Greek *genos* (species, race, family), which can also be translated as the genus of the human being or age of man. Founded in the fact of ageing, mortality and sexual reproduction, generation is an order that guarantees the continuation of history in the figure of the production of ever-new lineages, and organises genealogy in terms of provenance and succession.

In this sense, the concept of generation already conceals within itself a complex interplay of nature and culture, since 'generation' stands at the threshold between emergence and continuation, between provenance and legacy, between procreation and tradition, between origin and memory. For cultural studies and for the question of narrating a nation the concept of generation is thus of eminent interest. It can be regarded as the medium of genealogy, so to speak, which regulates the boundary between the procedure of reproduction as described by biology and a process of tradition understood as culture. However, the term always carries with it the danger that cultural phenomena will be regarded as being produced by natural laws and historical-theoretical questions will be treated as if they were derivations of biologically defined rhythms – that diachrony is reduced to demography, in other words.

In the current usage of the term, one meaning has, however, become dominant. It has arisen because of a paradigm shift from a genealogical to a synchronic perspective that aims to capture what it is that unifies a specified age group. Here 'generation' is used to mean a generational community or cohort. A similarity in attitudes, lifestyles and patterns of behaviour is traced back to experiences held in common by people born around the same time or shaped by particular life histories, while at the same time, distinctions are drawn between this and other generations. This understanding generally takes as its reference point Wilhelm Dilthey's definition of generation as a 'narrow circle of individuals who, despite the differences arising out of other factors, are bound together into a homogeneous whole through their dependence on the same great facts and changes which occurred in their formative years'.[18] Through participating, as a result of being born at a particular time, in specific historical events, which in turn come to constitute a given generation, the individual thus becomes both a part of a group and also, as it were, its natural representative. In this way, the individual's biographical narrative becomes the micro-narrative of history, and, conversely, the individual life history becomes narratable within a structure of generationally specific life-stages. This generational model can be

seen, as such, in terms of the interplay between subjective and epochal history that has a tendency to harmonise individual biography and historiography. It is on the basis of this narrative structure that 'generation', as the term which designates a group or identity, becomes an instrument so well-suited to that variant of historiography which calls itself social or oral history. Oriented around biographical or collective memory, it makes of the representative of a generation an eyewitness or witness of history.[19]

The concept was elaborated theoretically in Karl Mannheim's 'cohort model'. His notion of generation is the product of a form of German romantic-historical thinking directed towards a sociology rooted in the cultural sciences, which is elaborated with reference to Dilthey. It combines the idea of 'an interior time that cannot be measured but only experienced in purely qualitative terms', a 'sphere of interior time which can [only] be grasped by intuitive understanding', with the phenomenon of synchronicity (contemporaneousness) and a 'state of being subjected to similar influences'.[20] On the evidence of its diction, Mannheim's model can be translated without any difficulty into the ontic language of Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*). Thus, Mannheim does not specify contemporaneousness as a social given for a certain age group, but assesses it as 'subjectively experienceable time'. Here, the idea of generational synchronicity becomes compatible with Heidegger's concepts of destiny (*Geschick*), togetherness and appearance within the same time: 'The inescapable fate of living in and with one's generation completes the full drama of individual human existence.'[21]

From a theoretical point of view, it is perhaps more significant that in Mannheim's approach the sociological sphere is introduced as the medium between nature and mind/intellect (*Geist*). He ascribes to social and cultural forces, quite literally, the medial position between the 'natural' and the 'mental' spheres, as the level of those 'socializing forces' which mediate between the 'vital' (or biological) and the 'intellectual'. This triple layered model is reproduced directly in the three levels of his conceptualisation: generational 'location' (*Lagerung*), generational 'actuality', and the generational unit. As he attempts in the final section of his essay to introduce dynamism into this static model, however, Mannheim's rhetorical devices and metaphors reveal a significant return of the kind of rhythms associated with natural occurrences that the author had repudiated at an earlier point in his essay. The social dynamic is expressed above all in images of currents, tides, the rhythm of waves and of emergence – in other words, with the aid of metaphors from the sphere of nature.[22]

It has frequently been stressed that the establishment within the social sciences of 'generation' as meaning the social uniformity of the experiences of an age group can be explained by the aftermath of the First World War. However, the strongly nationalist overtones have hitherto been largely overlooked. The nationalist elements in the way in which war experiences were

dealt with and within the post-war consciousness were not least responsible for the fact that the concept of the generational community that emerged in the process lent itself to appropriation by the total state, as Werner Krauss has shown.[23] In Mannheim's work, the nationalist arguments are located on the level of his methodology. In the course of Mannheim's development of a sociological approach, with reference to 'understanding' as a method derived from the social and cultural sciences, the nationalist connotations that were latent in Dilthey are made manifest. In France, according to Mannheim, positivism had been able to dominate not only in the natural sciences, but also in the humanities. The situation in Germany was different. Here, only the natural sciences had been constituted under the sign of positivism.[24] This distinction between the arts and the sciences is only briefly addressed, but the schema of 'measurable versus understandable' which underpins Mannheim's entire essay can be read as a cipher of Dilthey's opposition between the two. A proper debate about the natural sciences is never actually taken into consideration, despite the theoretical apparatus of evolutionary thinking, which had so influenced the development of knowledge in the nineteenth century, being derived from the biological definition of generation.

Rather, Mannheim's opposition to positivism ends up blocking out the natural sciences' notion of generation altogether. The result is that the category of the social is introduced as a means of avoiding the immediacy of the 'biological', although at the same time the description of the social sphere remains contaminated by natural metaphors. What this means, though, is that a significant prehistory of the concept of generation is left out of the picture. For the fact is that neither Mannheim nor, for that matter, Dilthey established a new concept. What they did was radically reformulate a concept introduced (in Germany) around 1800. At that point, the revalorisation of the 'young generation' under the influence of the development of biological theories of inheritance and of the French Revolution led to the emergence of a genealogical meaning of the term. This enjoyed a notable career in the formula 'from generation to generation'.[25] In Mannheim's sociological reinterpretation, however, the genealogical meaning is replaced by a dimension of synchronicity (contemporaneity) which takes over the functions of social classification and of identity-formation. Although the origin of the term is forgotten in the process, it is the condition of possibility for a usage that underpins the rejection or denial of one's own parentage. It is this concept of generation that has also quite literally written the history books in post-1945 Germany.

The Young Generation: The Refusal of Provenance after 1945 and the Belated Generation Conflict of 1968

The discourse of generations was of central importance for the politics of the past in Germany after 1945. It is one of those scenes in which the negotiation of political and moral power is carried out. Self-definition as a representative or member of a generation has stood in for and superimposed itself upon the paradigm of victims and perpetrators (or accessories). In this sense, the discourse of generations can often be understood as an oblique form of national discourse in which the refusal to accept guilt and the desire for blamelessness find expression. The changing rhetoric and reference to different contours of the concept of generation, meanwhile, is symptomatic of the shifts in the self-understanding of subjects and their relation to the past. 'Generation' functions as a medium of the politics of memory.

In the period immediately following the Second World War, cultural-political discourse was shaped definitively by the programme of a 'young generation' that was linked to its radical refusal of its provenance. A programmatic statement in these terms is to be found in the journal *Der Ruf* (1946–47), which bore the subtitle *Unabhängige Blätter für die junge Generation* (*Independent Journal for the Young Generation*) and functioned, so to speak, as the articles of an association for German post-war literature and the *Gruppe 47*. This programmatic article was authored by Alfred Andersch and entitled 'Young Europe Forms Its Features'. It begins by linking the familiar rhetoric of the 'zero hour' with the phantasm of a young generation without parentage, the offspring of an immaculate conception: 'From out of the most extreme reaches of destruction there sprang, as once Athena from the head of Jupiter, a new, youthful-fresh and virginally Athenian spirit.'[26] The construction of the young generation in these terms is the precondition for the authors' definition of their own self-understanding via the synchronicity and common cause with other, non-German groups, as opposed to their position vis-à-vis the recent past:

> From here [i.e. from the resistance] there stretches a thin, very precarious tightrope across the abyss to another group of young Europeans which has in the past few years likewise given its all with total dedication and personal sacrifice. We are speaking of young Germany [...] It seems to us – despite the crimes of a minority – that it is quite conceivable that a bridge might be built between the Allied soldiers, the men of the European resistance and the German soldiers from the front, between the political inmates of the concentration camps and the former Hitler Youth (they have long since ceased to be it!).[27]

It is notable, and indeed symptomatic, with regard to the unity conjured up by Andersch, which is supposed to bring together recent enemies, that among the groups he lists one above all is missing, namely the Jews and emigrants.

This gap in the originary scene of the discourse of the generation marks the symptom of the hushed-up extermination within the projection of this young generation without origins and its role as the foundational generation of the Federal Republic. Nor is it coincidental that this construction appears in the context of a clear attempt to distance themselves from America:

> We see in general only two methods with the aid of which this bridge-building might be possible. One is on everybody's tongue at the moment. It is called 're-education' [...] There remains, then, only the other course, the independent one which the young generation of Germany must tread alone. Transformation as our own achievement [...] Generally, America and Europe seem to have exchanged roles: with its two-hundred-year-old republican tradition and its capacity for fostering and guarding the spirit of freedom, America is about to become the maternal breeding-place of a European renewal. For Germany this means that the emigration must bear fruit for us. The emigration can in any case only live from the expectation of the return home. We demand and expect the union of the emigration with Germany's young generation. Because this young generation of Germans, the men and women aged between 18 and 35, separated from their elders by the fact that they bear no responsibility for Hitler and from those younger than they by the experiences of the frontline and imprisonment, in short, through having given their all – they are accomplishing the turn towards the new Europe with passionate rapidity.[28]

The metaphorical and rhetorical use of 'young generation' stands here for a complete sealing off from the recent past. The image of the generation without provenance serves to legitimise the refusal of responsibility for the past, supported by the phantasm of being a part of 'young Europe' and thus of participating in the aura of the resistance. At the same time, there is articulated the self-definition as a 'child' of America that needs to cut loose from the latter's tutelage (re-education).

The editors of *Der Ruf* speak in the name of a generation that from a historical perspective must be defined as the generation of the Hitler Youth or the anti-aircraft support, a generation which the history books have described as the 'white generation'. In fact, however, there is a very marked discrepancy between the platform they adopted as representatives of a young and 'guiltless' generation and the editors' actual age. Hans Werner Richter, born in 1908 (and so 31 years old when the war began and 38 already in 1946), and Alfred Andersch, born in 1914 (and so 25 at the start of the war and 32 years old by 1946), belonged to a generation which was not after all as young as all that. The leitmotifs of their founding programme – such as rebirth, renewal and radical rebuilding, dedication and self-possession, the experiencing of the war in religious terms and the experience of freedom – linked up very clearly to the rhetorical pathos formulae of the Youth Movement and Existentialism. They are very clearly contaminated by the mentality of the inter-war years. With their assistance, all the differences in historical provenance and all the incompatibility of the positions occupied during the historical catastrophe that

had just passed were determinedly pushed aside. Moreover, in order to create a unity capable of eradicating all differences, another opposition was posited as absolute, namely that between the older and the younger generations. In this sense, the *Young Generation* is the cover name for a historical memory divided along the demarcation line of guilt. Under this name, a heroic collective of soldiers attempts to wriggle its way out of the historical responsibility for Nazism: 'The astonishing feats of arms of *young* Germans in this war and the 'deeds' of rather *older* Germans, currently the object of the trials in Nuremberg, are in no way connected. The warriors of Stalingrad, El Alamein and Cassino, whose efforts were acknowledged even by their opponents, are *innocent* of the crimes of Dachau and Buchenwald.'[29]

Therefore, it is not wholly accurate to suggest that the knowledge of Dachau and Buchenwald played no role in the cultural discourse of the immediate post-war years, as Martin Walser recently claimed in his defence of his works of post-war literature. Rather, the nursery years of his literary career were spent under the influence of a grouping which in the same breath laid the responsibility for history at the door of the 'rather older Germans' and defined itself as a guiltless, innocent 'young Germany': 'We mean the young Germany. It stood for the wrong cause [...] But it stood.'[30] In the rhetoric that reciprocally substitutes this generation for Germany, the age-group comes to stand as it were for the entirety, as the latter's first representative. The image of the virgin head-birth as applied to this generation severs the umbilical cord of its origins in the war. In this way, it defines itself as the starting-point of a new and unbegotten genealogy. Under such circumstances, every survivor's testimonial must appear to this generation as suspect or disturbing, to the extent that it is a reminder of a tradition in which, however disrupted or discontinuous, genealogy is seen as a form of memory that crosses, but also connects the generations.

Seen against the horizon of this post-1945 discourse, the 1968 movement becomes readable as a late echo of it, as a delayed forced confrontation between the generations. The uprising and protests of 1968 took place amongst other things under the sign of a generation conflict, in which the older generation of those who took part in the war was explicitly confronted with its position as the perpetrator generation. The so-called 'father literature' (*Väterliteratur*) embodies this trend. With the formulation *Täter-Väter* (perpetrator-fathers), which represents in condensed form the identification of Nazi history with the generation of the fathers, the so-called 'coming to terms with the past' or *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* is transferred into the genealogy of one's own family. In this body of literary work, the sons (and daughters) direct their rhetoric of accusation and attack against their parents, a constellation which produces, from the historical point of view, a precarious effect. By presenting in this literature their own understanding of themselves as the victims of the *Täter-Väter*, the children take over the position of the real

victims of Nazi history and so contribute once more to the repression of the historical victims.

The overlaying of history with the familial perspective marks as it were the return of impurity into the dimension of genealogy and provenance. Moreover, symptomatic here is the symbolism of guilt (*Schuld*) and debts (*Schulden*) and more generally the role of money in the discourse of the 1968ers. The demonising of money in the anti-capitalist pathos formulae of the movement may be interpreted as a contra-phobic reaction on the part of the children to the idea of an inherited guilt with which, even though provenance always involves impurity, they wished at least to protect themselves from the grubbiness of money.[31]

Counting the Generations: *Télescopage*

Since the 1980s, that is, at a considerable distance now to the events concerned, the history of the National Socialist period has come increasingly to be represented in the narrative of the second and third generation – that is, it is counted and recounted in terms of generations. As so often happens, the counting of the generations starts at two. It is only in relation to the second and third generations, i.e. only retrospectively, that a first generation is posited, mostly implicitly and without being expressly described as such. It happens remarkably seldom that anything is said in the name of the first generation. Yet we have any number of accounts that claim to be speaking from some kind of originary place, in that they ascribe their own origins to those historical events that the history of the aftermath takes as its reference point, so that they come in retrospect to figure as *the* history.

If talk of the second and now the third generation has invalidated modern concepts of historiography, post-1945 history has at the same time drawn closer and closer to biblical notions. On the side of the descendants of the perpetrator collective, the figure of the return of guilt inherited from the parents displays a close proximity to the notion of original sin. The responsibility of those born after the events is not derived directly from the events themselves, but relates in a *mediated* way to the history of the war and the Final Solution. However, it is directly connected to the parents' mistakes and failures in the aftermath of 1945, to the consequences of their refusal to acknowledge their guilt and their inability to mourn. Only the history of the aftermath, perceived by those most affected as a kind of 'propagation' of denied or refused guilt, has brought forth those symptoms which in psychoanalytical case studies since the 1980s have been described as 'transgenerational traumatisation' and analysed as the 'Continuing Effects of National Socialism in the Unconscious'.[32]

Since transgenerational traumatisation affects a generation who did not participate in the events from which the trauma arises, it means that the retrospective symptom-formation, which according to Freud characterises every trauma, has now broken through into historical time. Here, the temporal dimension of the individual life history is exceeded, while the symptom-formation continues across the generations. At the same time, the impossibility of relating the discourse of the second and third generation unambiguously to particular age groups points to phenomena of displacement and encapsulation in the memory of the generations. This is a kind of *télescopage* in the language of the unconscious, a figure of a distorted genealogy, where a bond is created between the generations, which continues to work actively within the memory.[33] In this way, the category of generation has become, in the aftermath of 1945, a category of memory, and genealogy now takes up a position within the unconscious.

The traditional historical-philosophical concept of generation marks the intersection of continuum and periodisation. The figure of the 'transgenerational', on the other hand, unites the break in the continuum and genealogy, though not in terms of a break *in* the genealogy but rather as a way of conceptualising the legacy of a 'break in the history of civilisation' and its consequences. Against the backdrop of the semantics of generation after 1945, the generational narratives whose return has been observed recently can be interpreted not just as narratives of origin that connect aspects of identity politics and the politics of the past. The fact that the concept of generation plays the dominant role must also be interpreted as a response to the displacements in the elementary 'structures of relationality' that up until now have been seen as the foundation of our culture as well as the agents of its reproduction and development. These structures are now coming into question in view of the achievements of reproductive medicine and genetic technologies (such as in vitro-fertilisation, surrogate motherhood, cloning, and so on). This alone can explain the success of Michel Houellebecq's novel *Particules élémentaires* (1999). In this book, memories of the 'sexual revolution' of the 68ers contrast with fantasy perspectives on the development of genetic technology and a programme for asexual replication. On the metaphorical level, the novel expresses on the one hand the desire to regress and at the same time the wish for an undifferentiated maternal sexuality. The bioscientific interventions in a generational succession hitherto regarded as natural are evidently activating old myths as well as new longings for origin.

Notes

1. Cf. K.O. Hendrich, 'Katalysator Katastrophe: Betrachtungen über den Generationskonflikt' [Catalyst Catastrophe: Observations on the Generation Conflict], *Frankfurter Allgemeine*

Zeitung, 19 Dec. 2002: 8. The article is a discussion of the findings of the recent Shell study into today's youth.

2. For example, in Ingeborg Drewitz's *Gestern war heute. Hundert Jahre Gegenwart*, Düsseldorf, Claassen, 1978.

3. D. Forte, *Das Muster*, Frankfurt am Main, 1992; also her *Der Junge mit den blutigen Schuhen*, Frankfurt am Main, 1995; and *In der Erinnerung*, Frankfurt am Main, 1998.

4. Cf. S. Weigel, 'Zeugnis und Zeugenschaft, Klage und Anklage. Zur Differenz verschiedener Gedächtnisorte und -diskurse' [Witness and Witnessing, Lament and Accusation: Differences in the Standpoints and Discourses of Memory]', J. Tanner and S. Weigel, eds, *Gedächtnis, Geld und Gesetz. Vom Umgang mit der Vergangenheit des Zweiten Weltkriegs*, Zürich, 2002: 39–62.

5. 'Der nüchterne Blick der Enkel. Wie begegnen junge Autoren der Kriegsgeneration? Ein Gespräch mit Tanja Dückers' [The grandchildren's sober gaze: How do young authors encounter the war generation? A conversation with Tanja Dückers], *Die Zeit*, 30 Apr. 2003: 42.

6. N. Abraham, 'Aufzeichnungen über das Phantom. Ergänzungen zu Freuds Metapsychologie [Notes on the phantom: a supplement to Freud's Metapsychology]', *Psyche* 8, Aug. 1991: 691–98.

7. Ibid., 697, my italics.

8. Ibid., 694, 696.

9. S. Wackwitz, *Ein unsichtbares Land. Ein Familienroman*, Frankfurt am Main, 2003: 17.

10. Ibid., 28.

11. The latter as the title under which the 'dip in careers for academics' is being discussed, *TU intern* (Journal of the Technische Universität Berlin), Feb/March 2002: 3.

12. F. Illies, *Generation Golf*, Berlin, 2000: 18.

13. Ibid., 20.

14. *Die Zeit*, 16 Sept. 1994.

15. H. Bude, *Generation Berlin*, Berlin, 2001: 25.

16. 'Today generations switch identities as quickly as the software programmes and the chip generations'; J. Hörisch, ed., *Mediengenerationen*, Frankfurt am Main, 1997: 14.

17. Illies, *Generation Golf*, 197.

18. W. Dilthey, 'Über das Studium der Wissenschaft vom Menschen, der Gesellschaft und dem Staat' [On the study of the human, social and political sciences], in his *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 5, Stuttgart and Göttingen, 1964: 37.

19. Cf., for example, *Die Hitlerjugend-Generation. Biographische Thematisierung als Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, ed. G. Rosenthal, Essen, 1986; *Generation und Gedächtnis. Erinnerungen und kollektive Identitäten*, eds K. Platt et al., Opladen, 1995; H. Bude, *Das Altern einer Generation. Die Jahrgänge 1938–1948*, Frankfurt am Main, 1995.

20. K. Mannheim, 'The Problem of Generations', in his *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. P. Kecskemeti, London, 1952: 281–82.

21. M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, Halle/Saale, 1927: 384, as quoted in Mannheim, 'Generations', 282.

22. Ibid., 312–20.

23. W. Krauss, 'Das Ende der Generationsgemeinschaft' [1946/47], in his *Literaturtheorie. Philosophie und Politik*, ed. M. Naumann, Berlin and Weimar, 1984, 399–409.

24. Mannheim, 'Generations', 280–81.

25. Cf. S. Weigel, *Genea-Logik. Generation, Tradition und Evolution zwischen Kultur- und Naturwissenschaften*, München, 2006.

26. A. Andersch, 'Das junge Europa formt sein Gesicht', in *Der Ruf. Unabhängige Blätter für die junge Generation* 1 (15 Aug. 1946), München 1976: 19.

27. Ibid., 21–22.

28. Ibid., 24.

29. A. Andersch, 'Notwendige Aussage zum Nürnberger Prozeß' [Necessary statement on the Nürnberg trials], *Der Ruf*, 26.

30. Andersch, 'Das junge Europa', 21.

31. Cf. S. Weigel, 'Shylocks Wiederkehr. Die Verwandlung von Schuld in Schulden oder: Zum symbolischen Tausch der Wiedergutmachung [Shylock's return: the transformation of guilt into debt or: the symbolic exchange of reparation]', in S. Weigel and B.R. Erdle, eds, *50 Jahre danach. Zur Nachgeschichte des Nationalsozialismus*, Zürich, 1995: 165–92.

32. This is the title of an essay by Werner Bohleber, 'Das Fortwirken des Nationalsozialismus in der zweiten und dritten Generation nach Auschwitz', *Babylon. Beiträge zur jüdischen Gegenwart*, 7, 1990: 70–83.

33. Cf. S. Weigel, 'Télescopage im Unbewußten. Zum Verhältnis von Trauma, Geschichtsbegriff und Literatur' [Télescopage in the unconscious: the relation between trauma, the concept of history and literature], in E. Bronfen, B.R. Erdle and S. Weigel, eds, *Trauma – Zwischen Psychoanalyse und kulturellem Deutungsmuster*, Köln, 1999: 51–76.

PART III

NARRATING THE NATION AS FILM