

Representing the “Good German” in Literature and Culture after 1945

Altruism and Moral Ambiguity



Edited by **PÓL Ó DOCHARTAIGH**
and **CHRISTIANE SCHÖNFELD**

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Literature and Culture after 1945*

Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture

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We would like to dedicate this book to our children, Pól's twins Róise and Treasa and Christiane's sons Sebastian and Benjamin. But especially Benjamin, who, for the past two years, has faced a very difficult journey with enormous courage and inner strength.

Many of the cultural representations in this book are meant to be role models, canvasses for reflection on the meaning and significance of goodness — something we all try to pass on to our children in the hope that they will be able to lead meaningful lives.

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Christiane Schönfeld and Pól Ó Dochartaigh

Introduction: Finding the “Good German”

Pól Ó Dochartaigh and Christiane Schönfeld

IN THE AFTERMATH of the Second World War and the Nazi period, both the Allied occupying powers and the nascent German authorities in the political and cultural spheres sought Germans whose record during the war and the Nazi period could serve as a counterpoint to the notion of all Germans being evil. After the division of Germany in 1949, finding “good Germans” whose record helped legitimize each of the new German states became a core aspect of building a new nation in Germany and of the propaganda battle in this respect between the two German states. In eastern Germany, the ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED) began, even before the creation of the German Democratic Republic in 1949, to honor those Communists such as Ernst Thälmann who had died at the hands of the Nazis, as well as those “good Germans” of earlier generations, such as Rosa Luxemburg, who had opposed right-wing, “proto-Nazi,” forces from a socialist or communist standpoint. Leadership of the new state passed into the hands of people who for the most part had spent the Nazi years outside Germany, people such as Walter Ulbricht and Wilhelm Pieck. Communist resistance was used to legitimize the state, and those officially recognized as “Fighters against Fascism” were accorded privileged treatment, which was instantly withdrawn if they engaged in political opposition to the new order.¹

In West Germany, the new political parties that became dominant emphasized that there were “good German” traditions that could be built on, and they were led by people with varying anti-Nazi credentials. The two key leaders in the early period were Konrad Adenauer of the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU), who, though dismissed as mayor of Cologne in 1933 and imprisoned for three short periods by the Nazis, spent most of the period from 1933 to 1945 in seclusion, merely refusing to participate in the Nazi regime, and Kurt Schumacher of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), who as a vehement political opponent of Nazism even before 1933 had gone on to spend almost the entire Nazi period in concentration camps. Despite some hostility in ultra-conservative circles to commemorating those whom they saw as “traitors,” opposition, both active and passive, to the Nazi state came to be seen as virtuous in West Germany, and such heroes as could be found were embraced, provided they were not identified as communists.

The year 1945 represented in many ways a break with the past, but each German state sought to establish continuity with what it saw as the best of German traditions, both anti-Nazi and democratic (though definitions of the word “democratic” varied). The existence of such traditions had been obscured for many, especially outside Germany, by the Third Reich and the war it had inflicted on Europe and the world. Some, such as the British politician and author Sir Robert Vansittart, demonized the Germans as a race: “History puts it to you plainly. The *German* is often a moral creature; the *Germans* never; and it is the *Germans* who count. You will always think of *Germans* in the plural, if you are wise. That is their misfortune and their fault.”² Vansittart went all the way back to Tacitus to justify his claim that the Germans hate peace, preferring to fight rather than plow their fields, an argument that provoked the ire of later West German Chancellor Willy Brandt and the satirist Robert Neumann, both exiles from the Nazis.³ Yet Vansittart’s views had gained wide currency: his 1941 book *Black Record*, which contained seven lectures that had been broadcast to millions on BBC Radio in late 1940, ran to several editions and one million copies, and excerpts were also published in the *Sunday Times*. Similar attitudes were expressed by some in America, too,⁴ though many German exiles such as Thomas Mann, Bertolt Brecht, and Lion Feuchtwanger worked at countering this view. The experience of fighting Germany at that time, coupled with the gradual revelation of unique German barbarism in the organization and execution of the Holocaust, had done little to disabuse others of the belief that “the Germans” were evil. In the UK, at least, the words “German” and “Nazi” remained virtually synonymous for many — though by no means all — people for a long time afterwards, and remain so to this day for some.

Vansittart argued that there was but one Germany, in which evil had long (since the time of Tacitus) held the upper hand over good, but such views were, unsurprisingly, not accepted by Germans, even anti-Nazi Germans. Thomas Mann, in his May 29, 1945 speech in the Library of Congress, was one of those who argued that Germany had strong cultural traditions on which to build a new democracy. From the vantage point of exile, he regarded the dominance of evil in Germany as a recent phenomenon: “there are *not* two Germanys, a good one and a bad one, but only one, whose best turned into evil through devilish cunning. Wicked Germany is merely good Germany gone astray, good Germany in misfortune, in guilt, and ruin.”⁵ In this speech, delivered just three weeks after the fall of Nazism, Mann was explicitly refusing to dissociate himself from the German experience of the previous twelve years, choosing to offer instead what he called “a piece of German self-criticism.”⁶ At this point Mann himself had long been regarded internationally as a “good German” but he had also, as he admitted in this essay, become a US citizen the previous year and could thus be seen as an American,

perhaps even a “good American.” Still, his views were shared by many in Germany, including, as we have seen, the founders of what came to be the dominant political parties in West Germany.

A good example of the type of “good German” appropriated since 1945 to “demonstrate” the existence of an alternative German ethos even in the Nazi period is Count Claus Schenk von Stauffenberg, a prominent member of the conspiracy against Hitler that culminated in the unsuccessful assassination attempt of July 20, 1944. Born into a minor aristocratic family in Bavarian Swabia in 1907, he entered the military as a young man and was also active in ultraconservative political circles, though not a member of the Nazi Party. Still, in 1932 he publicly supported Hitler for president against the former general and outgoing conservative and monarchist President Paul von Hindenburg. Hitler lost, but when Hindenburg appointed him chancellor in January 1933 Stauffenberg publicly welcomed this, too. Stauffenberg engaged in military training of the *Sturmabteilung*, or SA (aka the Brownshirts), welcomed the invasion of Poland in 1939, and, even while plotting the attack on Hitler, rejected democracy and notions of equality as an alternative, swearing instead allegiance to a hierarchical Germany rooted in the soil.⁷

Initially after 1945, unreconstructed Nazis and some in conservative circles rejected the legacy of the July 20th plotters, seeing them along with those who spent the war in exile such as Willy Brandt as traitors to Germany. In these years even those Germans who admired the plotters were uneasy about their motives or about the fact that highlighting the existence of resistance, no matter how small in terms of the numbers of people who participated, could only serve to highlight their own failure to resist.⁸ Gradually the mood changed and West Germany sought more openly to identify with those individuals who had been against Hitler, though without ever asking too closely what exactly they had been *for* (unless they were communists, in which case it was left to the GDR to commemorate them, something the GDR had been doing rather well from the very start). An army barracks in Sigmaringen was named after Stauffenberg in 1961, as were schools in Osnabrück (1967), Bamberg (1979) and several more since.⁹ Postage stamps were issued in West Germany on the twentieth anniversary of the attempt on Hitler’s life in 1964 and, by united Germany, on Stauffenberg’s 100th birthday in 2007. Numerous public events are now held to commemorate the plotters on the anniversary of July 20th, and there are also sites of memory in Berlin, Stuttgart, and other places. After unification, the city of Dresden, which had been in the GDR, renamed as “Stauffenbergallee” the street in which the military academy that Stauffenberg attended in 1927–28 was located. In addition, several films have portrayed Stauffenberg and his co-conspirators in a positive light, including *Es geschah am 20. Juli* (It Happened on July 20th, dir. G. W. Pabst, 1955), the two-part TV drama-documentary

Operation Walküre (Operation Valkyrie, dir. Franz Peter Wirth, 1971), and the TV film *Stauffenberg* (dir. Jo Baier, 2004).¹⁰ In the 1980s even the GDR got in on the act of depicting the 1944 conspirators in a positive light with the TV film based on Stephan Hermlin's short story "Der Leutnant Yorck von Wartenberg" (*Lieutenant Yorck von Wartenberg*, dir. Peter Vogel, 1981).

The Scholl siblings and, in the old GDR, Ernst Thälmann and other Communist leaders have been granted similar recognition since 1945 in the name of demonstrating the existence of "Das 'andere' Deutschland" (The "other" Germany), the one of resistance fighters and people who strove to uphold what was implicitly a "good Germany" against the "bad Germany" of the Nazis. Some have included writers and other cultural figures who were part of what became known as the "inner emigration" in this "other" Germany, but this is disputed, for such writers are seen as representing more of a sullen accommodation with Nazi Germany than any real opposition.¹¹ The "other" Germany, the one of resistance, assumed an importance in the GDR that had everything to do with justifying communist rule and little to do with the reality of life in Nazi Germany. By contrast, in West Germany these characters were never seen as central to the narrative of the Third Reich, a position that accorded with the reality of life in the Nazi state. Going further, however, the implication was that Nazi control had been so total that resistance had been virtually impossible. This offered a form of exculpation for individual Germans even while the collective guilt of the German nation was acknowledged through the payment of reparations, primarily to Israel and to Jewish organizations. Often Germans have taken great pains to "make good" on their responsibility for the Second World War and the Holocaust while being unsure what the most appropriate steps in such a process might be. Given the sheer scale and intensity of the horror perpetrated on the world in the Second World War and on Jews in the Holocaust, this can hardly be a surprise. Finding and building on the legacy of "good Germans" has been part of this process, but, as we shall see, the "good German" is an ambiguous figure in both literature and history. Nevertheless, the figure of the "good German" is an important part of Germany's engagement with the legacy of Nazism because, if we view the past as progress, as Walter Benjamin does in *Über den Begriff der Geschichte* (On the Concept of History/Theses on the Philosophy of History), then we need figures such as the "good German" as a memory in this "storm [. . .] we call progress," one that "flashes up at a moment of danger,"¹² an image that may point us in the right direction, that may help to reflect critically on conformism and tradition, authority and our own actions.

Why a book on "the good German" now? After all, as the essays in this volume show, good Germans have been represented in literature, film,

popular culture, and political debates, both as fictional and historical figures, more or less since the beginning of the postwar period. Despite this, until recently there has been little attempt to develop a cultural or literary discourse around the concept of “good Germans.” If we put the highlighting of communist heroes in the GDR to one side, we struggle to find scholarship that deals with the concept in any form. One searches in vain for such a discussion in literary histories, such as the two volumes by Heinz Forster and Paul Riegel.¹³ Beginning in the 1960s younger writers became more interested in remembering the bad that the first postwar generation had been trying desperately to forget: they saw in this forgetting the roots of many of German society’s contemporary ills. This absence of a differentiating discourse concerning Germans in the Nazi period was a consequence of the determination in both German states to regard the Nazi period as deserving of blanket condemnation. In West Germany, part of this determination undoubtedly derived from a desire not to be seen to attempt to relativize German guilt: the Holocaust, in particular — and by extension the entire period of the Third Reich — was seen to have very clearly defined victims and perpetrators, so that there was little room for anyone whose role might be considered ambiguous. As Stuart Taberner suggests, “political correctness” demanded that it be so.¹⁴ Yet guilt was often externalized, linked to Nazis but denied in “ordinary Germans.” In the historical sphere the heroicization of military figures such as Rommel and Stauffenberg, embraced even outside Germany in feature films such as *The Desert Fox* (dir. Henry Hathaway, 1951) and *Valkyrie* (dir. Bryan Singer, 2008), relies in no small measure on the myth that the German crimes of the Second World War were perpetrated by Nazis, the Gestapo, and the SS, whereas the regular army (Wehrmacht) had somehow maintained “honor” even while fighting for the Nazi regime. This myth was thoroughly debunked by the “Crimes of the Wehrmacht” exhibitions at the turn of this century, the first of which (1995–99) was seen by 1.2 million people at twenty-nine locations across Germany and Austria. The revised, amended exhibition was shown at eleven venues in Germany, Luxemburg, and Vienna between 2001 and 2004.¹⁵

These exhibitions were among the many attempts in Germany since 1990, in both the political and cultural spheres, to challenge the ambiguity by which “Germany” accepted its guilt internationally, but internally often projected that guilt onto a Nazi “other.” Initially this took the form of a focus on “ordinary Germans,” their guilt and, sometimes, their innocence. Sweeping condemnations of Germans were challenged: the German novelist Peter Schneider was one of those who rejected Daniel Goldhagen’s positing of a German genetic disposition towards eliminationist anti-Semitism, for example.¹⁶ Yet Schneider also argued that Germans had often made too little of their individual responsibility in the

Nazi period because for many of them it was easier to believe that there was no possibility of resisting Hitler's "perfected terror apparatus" than to accept that one had had a choice. Consequently, wrote Schneider, "it may be easier to claim that everyone was a potential killer than to honor those who were not."¹⁷ But, easier or not, Schneider could not agree with this approach any more than he could with Goldhagen's.

A quite different challenge to the previously dominant narrative has emerged in the form of increased engagement with the concept of Germans as victims, a contemporary discussion that has its roots in W. G. Sebald's essay "Luftkrieg und Literatur" (Air War and Literature) as well as in Günter Grass's novella *Im Krebsgang* (*Crabwalk*).¹⁸ On the one hand this debate, on which a great deal of scholarship has been done,¹⁹ has broken a taboo created by the fear that discussion of Germans as victims in the Second World War could be seen as an attempt at relativizing the suffering of Germany's victims (especially Jewish victims). On the other hand, casting Germans as victims is an easy way of breaking taboos for ordinary Germans because it explicitly confirms their essential passivity. This is especially true for the kind of discourse generated by, for example, Jörg Friedrich's best-selling book *Der Brand*, which focuses on the Allied bombing of German civilian targets during the Second World War while, Friedrich's critics argue, failing to contextualize properly by omitting to refer to, for example, the German bombing of Polish towns in the first few days of the war.²⁰ This discourse thus confirms, implicitly, the inability of ordinary Germans to have effected change in the Third Reich. It also has the coincidental effect of turning Nazism's enemies into perpetrators, while the guilt of passive Germans, who ought to have resisted Nazism actively, is wiped out by the suffering they endured. Particularly in West Germany, the suffering endured by "ordinary" German families during the war and the immediate postwar period became part of the equation when calculating one's own guilt and standard of morality.

The figure of the "good German" is, we argue, potentially far more subversive of the earlier black-and-white narratives than is the narrative of the German as victim, even though some "good Germans" were also victims, because the "good German" reminds ordinary Germans that alternative forms of behavior were possible in the Third Reich. Of course, this is not true of all "good Germans": if transformed into an heroic figure, as has often been done with Stauffenberg, Scholl, Thälmann, and others, the "good German" is a figure whose achievements may be merely aspired to without feeling the need to emulate them. But if the "good German" is seen to have been more commonplace, less exceptional, then highlighting this may be seen as a reproach to the ordinary German, and this very fact may help to explain why it has not been a central part of literary and cultural discourse. The silence on the role of ordinary Germans that followed in the immediate aftermath of the war and a more recent

narrative of victimhood are more understandable human reactions than willingly engaging with one's own failures by holding up ordinary people who debunk the myth of paralysis. As Helmut Schmitz has argued, Germans since the mid-1990s have begun to develop a new perspective on National Socialism "from the vantage point of empathy."²¹ At times, however, it has almost seemed like self-empathy, to coin a phrase.

As Maeve Cooke argues in this volume, the "challenge is to use this figure [the good German] to instantiate ethical rightness, while avoiding ideological closure and epistemological authoritarianism." Yet all too often, representations of the "good German" have tried to be redemptive and thus implicitly offer a form of closure, even as they re-engage with the evils of the Nazi period. Among other cultural representations of the "good German", some films of the immediate postwar period, as Christiane Schönfeld shows, were made with the specific intention of "re-educating" the population away from the evils of Nazism. This was frequently an attempt to achieve ideological closure, but it failed because there was too much continuity between Nazi Germany and the societies that came after it, especially, though not exclusively, in the West.

Overtly political commemorations of "good German" historical figures have often tended towards heroicization, and the intention there has also often been didactic, illustrated most strikingly by the naming of schools after such figures. By contrast, the figure of the "good German" in literature and culture is only rarely a hero, even when the intention is a didactic one. Rather, in literature and film the "good German" is often an ambiguous creature who defies narrow categorization. He/she is sometimes cultured, sometimes not. He/she only sometimes acts out of the highest of motives. His/her goodness is sometimes intentional, sometimes accidental. He/she sometimes comes to goodness on the back of unspeakable evil, at other times out of necessity or despair. The key point about the "good German" is that in the context of the Third Reich he/she is the exception that proves — in the original meaning of "tests" — the rule that only passivity was possible. In light of the figure of the "good German," that rule is found to have limited validity.

In Germany, there has been little analysis of this figure, though the term has surfaced on occasion. It has been used in connection with the Scholl siblings, Hans and Sophie, who were commemorated in both German states and whose profile was raised by the 1982 film *Die weiße Rose* (*The White Rose*, dir. Michael Verhoeven), which was the most successful film in Germany in that year.²² The infrequency of the phrase "good German" in German in any other context is indicated by the fact that the most hits generated by internet search for the expression "Der gute Deutsche" are for John Rabe, "The Good German of Nanking," a Nazi Party member who rescued hundreds of Chinese citizens during the Japanese rape of that city in 1937.²³ The epithet has occasionally

been applied to others, including W. G. Sebald.²⁴ Most recently, the term resurfaced during the election of a new German president in 2012, when Beate Klarsfeld (the candidate of the Linke party) declared herself “eine gute Deutsche.”²⁵ The term “Gutmensch” (good person) is used ironically and in other contexts as a twisting of the more grammatically correct “der gute Mensch,” which, when it does not refer to Brecht’s play *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* (The Good Person of Szechuan), is used in a variety of contexts, usually without irony. One such usage, noted by Jon Hughes in his chapter in this book, is to the boxer Max Schmeling, who has been described as “Der gute Mensch von Hollenstedt.”

It is noteworthy that the figure of the “good German” rarely has any connection to Jews. The one significant figure who is recognized for his actions in saving Jews is Oskar Schindler, a non-Jewish German who was awarded the Federal Cross of Merit by the Federal Republic in 1965, largely at the behest of some of the Jews that he had saved. Yet the West German state was content to let him disappear into relative obscurity afterwards. Remembrance of him is primarily a consequence of the work done not by Germans but by Australian writer Thomas Kenneally, who was prompted by “Schindler Jew” Leopold Pfefferberg to write the novel *Schindler’s Ark*,²⁶ and especially by Steven Spielberg, whose 1993 film *Schindler’s List* was based on Kenneally’s novel.²⁷ Like the memory of John Rabe, Schindler’s memory in the German consciousness has been primarily shaped by film, so that almost all public commemoration of him has followed the film. A plaque marking the places where Schindler lived in Regensburg was only put up by the city council in 1995. Only two schools have been named for him in Germany: the first in Berlin in 1999, the second in Hildesheim in 2010, and a postage stamp was issued on his 100th birthday in 2008, neatly juxtaposed against the Stauffenberg centenary stamp the previous year. Unlike Stauffenberg and Rabe, however, the impulse to commemorate Schindler came not from Germans. It would be the subject of a quite separate study to determine whether this fact is directly attributable to the fact that Schindler had saved Jews.

It seems appropriate that this volume should seek to initiate a broader discussion around representations of the figure of the “good German” in literature and culture, as well as public discourse, including the discourse of nation-building. While most of this book is concerned with German representations of the figure, we also include four essays which offer an external view of the “good German,” while another considers German views from exile. We do not seek to set up an absolute figure, a yardstick against which all true “goodness” in the Nazi period must be measured. Rather, one of the things this volume seeks to do is offer insights into concepts of goodness that challenge what appear to us to be frequent attempts to relativize Nazi evil through a specific focus on German

victimhood. “Good German” figures have appeared in German literature, film, and culture, and to some extent the literatures, films, and cultures of other languages, throughout the entire postwar period, and indeed, as the writings of Brecht, Seghers, and other exiles testify, since the very rise of Nazism. Yet there has been little engagement with the figure in literary or film discourse, while in politics such engagement has been largely restricted to the few “heroic” figures already mentioned. In recent years, a greater tendency to portray such figures in literature and film has been part of a move away from a dominant binary narrative of German evil and Allied good, but it goes beyond the narrative of German victimhood precisely because it is not only the Allies’ behavior that needs to be challenged as we move away from the old narrative, but also the behavior of ordinary Germans themselves.

This volume derives from a conference entitled “The ‘Good German’ in Literature and Culture,” which was held at the Institute of Germanic and Romance Studies at the University of London in October 2009. The inspiration for the conference goes back to a discussion by the editors in 2008 of Joseph Kanon’s novel *The Good German* and the Steven Soderbergh film of the same name.

In the opening chapter Maeve Cooke invites us to see the figure of the “good German” as one that offers an alternative to the depravity of the Third Reich. She argues that, though the figure has a specific context, its ability to represent an alternative to the evil of Nazism is nevertheless “context-transcending,” noting, however, that *representations* of the “good German” are more ambiguous than the alternative morality that the figure represents. She reflects, via Adorno, on the ethics of representing the “good German” and on the ability of the “good German” as an ambiguous figure to nevertheless offer a form of ethical orientation in the post-Holocaust world.

Chapters 2 through 4 offer perspectives on “good German” historical figures and the reception of the roles they played in the Nazi period and after. In chapter 2 Karina Lindeiner-Stráský considers the representation of two Nazi fellow-travelers, the composer Wilhelm Furtwängler and the actor and theater director Gustaf Gründgens, as “good Germans” in the West German press. The often cozy relationship between the press and these two cultural figures was directly responsible, she argues, for the uncritical portrayals of their senior roles in the Nazi cultural hierarchy and the unquestioning acceptance of their own claims to have worked to subvert the Nazi regime. Moreover, Furtwängler and Gründgens were also often held up by the postwar media as artists who kept “true German culture” present and alive because they were not themselves committed Nazis. Lindeiner-Stráský argues that media portrayals of the two as “good

Germans” often serves merely to implicitly exonerate other media figures from any complicity in the misdeeds perpetrated in the Third Reich.

Jon Hughes’s consideration of the German world heavyweight boxing champion Max Schmeling in chapter 3 reflects on what it was that enabled Angela Merkel to describe Schmeling on his death not merely as “an extraordinary sportsman” but also as “a brave German patriot.” Schmeling had become Germany’s first boxing world champion in 1930, a title he lost in 1932, but he had also been held up by the Nazis as the epitome of German manhood when he fought for the world title again in 1938. After the war he concentrated on business success during the so-called “economic miracle” and was held up in the media as an example of what was possible through hard work. He also developed a narrative in which his success was about himself as an individual rather than about Germany, negotiating, as Hughes argues, “a path between the crimes of the past and a successful future.” In the 1950s in particular, when the population of West Germany concentrated on economic success rather than mastering the past, Schmeling’s “goodness” became inextricably linked with a very different concept, his “greatness” as a boxer.

In chapter 4 Eoin Bourke addresses the story of the Berlin Police Station 16, led by its chief, Wilhelm Krützfeld, whose district covered the area around the New Synagogue in Oranienburger Strasse. According to reports brought to a wider audience by the East German feuilletonist Heinz Knobloch, Krützfeld not only ordered his men to defend the New Synagogue from attacks by the Nazi Brownshirts on the so-called *Kristallnacht* and intervened to save some Jews from Nazi violence by warning them surreptitiously of other planned actions, he also created an environment in his police station in which his officers found it possible to engage in minor acts of opposition, for which in the latter years of the war at least one paid with his life. The story of Krützfeld and Police Station 16 serves as a reminder that blind obedience to discriminatory Nazi practices was not the only choice open to citizens of the Third Reich.

Chapters 5 and 6 focus on representations of “good Germans” in German literary fiction. In chapter 5 Sabine Egger analyzes the portrayal of good German soldiers in Nazi-occupied Poland as seen in two short stories from the 1960s by the East German Christian writer Johannes Bobrowski. Bobrowski, who himself served as a German soldier in Poland in the Second World War, never tried to relativize German guilt, but in these stories he moves away from the polarized world found in his earlier poetry, in which Germans are invariably bad while Poles, Jews, and others are generally good, towards a world in which Germans can interact with Poles and Jews without appearing personally evil. Bobrowski does not hide the inadequacy of the small kindnesses he portrays in the historical context of the Holocaust, nor does he attempt to exculpate his German

soldiers, but as Egger shows, his literary portrayals are themselves flawed because of the use of passive Jewish stereotypes in both stories.

Matthias Uecker considers Heinrich Böll's novel *Gruppenbild mit Dame* (Group Portrait with Lady) in chapter 6, and specifically the very naïve character of Leni Pfeiffer-Gruyten, whose moral and intellectual innocence, he argues, are the very qualities that make her a "good German." The narrative attempt to reconstruct Leni's life from the 1920s through to the 1970s remains simply an "attempt," but the character thus constructed, through her innocence, reconnects less innocent characters in the novel with a sense of moral rectitude, and it is this ability that ultimately allows us to see Leni as what Uecker argues is an allegorical figure in the tradition of the saints.

Chapters 7 through 9 take us into the realm of film, beginning with Christiane Schönfeld's analysis of "rubble films," so-called because they were made and set in the ruins of German cities in the immediate aftermath of the defeat of the Third Reich. She focuses mostly on feature films such as Helmut Käutner's *In jenen Tagen* (In Those Days/Seven Journeys, 1947), Josef von Baky's *Und über uns der Himmel* (And the Sky Above Us, 1947) and *Der Ruf* (The Last Illusion, 1949), Eugen York's *Morituri* (1948), and Robert Stemmle's *Berliner Ballade* (Berlin Ballad, 1948). Licensed by the British and American occupying authorities, these films portray "good Germans" in order to encourage reflection regarding the individual's vital role in the reconstruction of the German imagined community and a value system based on equality and human dignity. She puts the films she considers into the context of Ernst Wiechert's and other German intellectuals' writings, both literary and critical, which encouraged postwar Germans to engage in a critical discourse with their recent past while reminding them of their own, forgotten culture of humanity and tolerance. Schönfeld notes that these films had limited popular success because the historical period depicted was so recent and extreme, and, in effect, still unmastered. Filmic coming-to-terms-with-Nazism, in West Germany at least, was postponed by two decades, with only very rare exceptions such as Bernhard Wicki's 1959 film *Die Brücke* (The Bridge).

In chapter 8 Alexandra Ludewig considers contemporary German film and notes a shift in the depiction of Nazis in which the distinction between good and evil has sometimes become blurred. The films she considers are to some extent based on historical fact, but they also, she argues, create the illusion that they are presenting a historical reality in which Nazis were both perpetrators and victims, thereby creating what might potentially be called a "banality of good." As Ludewig says, the existence of so many "good Nazis" in these films has the potential to give "good" a bad name.

Coman Hamilton engages in chapter 9 with the 2005 film *Sophie Scholl — Die letzten Tage*, one of those also considered by Ludewig, but he adopts a different approach, focusing here on the figure of Scholl in the film rather than on any supposedly “good” Nazis. Hamilton argues that the director, Marc Rothemund, determinedly set out to subvert the heroicization of Scholl that began in 1960s West Germany and to instead portray her as a “normal” woman, blending memory and imagination to create a new icon who is someone to whom the average filmgoer can directly relate. Using concepts such as cultural memory, prosthetic memory, and postmemory, Hamilton examines the representation and reception of Sophie Scholl as a “good German” in Rothemund’s film.

Chapters 10 through 13 engage with “good Germans” as portrayed in literature from outside Germany. Manuel Bragança in chapter 10 considers three French best sellers written in the immediate aftermath of the war in which “good German” characters are to be found. Bragança locates in these three texts the humanist values to which his writers, all members of the French Resistance, subscribed and which they maintained even after the German occupation of France had made it difficult for many to distinguish between Germans and Nazis. He considers how it was possible for these writers to present such characters without blurring the divide between good and evil in the novels.

In chapter 11 Kevin De Ornellas approaches the character of an ostensibly good German, von Ebrennac, in *Le Silence de la mer*, a novel written in 1942 by Jean Bruller using the pseudonym Vercors. He shows how Vercors creates a German with exaggerated cultural awareness and sensitivities towards both Shakespeare and his hosts. This representative of the German occupying power is essentially an unbelievable character whose lack of credibility serves to dismiss the relevance of any attempts by German occupiers to communicate sympathetically with the occupied French. The French family with whom von Ebrennac has been billeted shuns him by maintaining absolute silence in his presence. In contrast to the authors considered by Bragança, who portrayed believable good Germans without relativizing German evil, Vercors’s work is “a Resistance novella for a Resistance audience,” in which the concept of a “good German” is simply not credible.

Joachim Fischer in chapter 12 considers the German mother portrayed in the writings of Irish-German writer Hugo Hamilton. In two separate autobiographical volumes, *The Speckled People* (2003) and *The Sailor in the Wardrobe* (2006), one of Hamilton’s central figures is his German mother, Irmgard Kaiser, a survivor of the Third Reich and Nazism who instructed her children never to deny their guilt and never to complain about their predicament. She had associated with “good Germans” during the Second World War and survived, and the key lesson that this “good German mother” passed on to her children was that

“goodness” must be determined by one’s stance in contemporary political struggles, whether in the Nazi period for herself or the more recent periods for her children.

In the final chapter Pól Ó Dochartaigh considers the American author Joseph Kanon’s novel *The Good German* as one that illustrates the moral relativism that dominated postwar discourse on the subject of German guilt. Kanon’s novel offers a range of characters, both German and American, whose “moral” compass is guided, both during the Nazi period and after, by utilitarian considerations rather than moral absolutes. Almost immediately after the war, in the murky world that was occupied Berlin, few Germans are simply evil and few Americans are simply “good.” Emphasizing the human failings and sometimes even strengths that can lead to varying degrees of both selfishness and self-sacrifice, Ó Dochartaigh argues that what remains morally in Kanon’s postwar world are “shades of gray” that have continued to inform political behavior ever since.

It is hoped that this book will appeal to the specialist academic and student audiences, as well as providing stimulation to the general reader. Its chapters are intended to encourage consideration of the figure of the “good German” in the context of a changing discourse in Germany and elsewhere about the Nazi period. Germans were not only perpetrators during the Second World War, but they were also not predominantly victims, as some recent discourse appears to imply. Some Germans attempted to maintain some level of humanity even in the hell of Nazi domination, and writers and politicians have engaged to a greater or lesser degree with this phenomenon ever since. This book is intended to be a contribution to the ongoing exploration and re-evaluation of the roles of Germans during the war as well as of their cultural representations and their ethical, social, and political significance.

Notes

¹ Jewish survivors, by contrast, were accorded a lower level of privilege as “Victims of Fascism,” a status that could also easily be withdrawn as a punishment for “disloyalty.” See Paul O’Doherty [=Pól Ó Dochartaigh], *The Portrayal of Jews in GDR Prose Fiction* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997), 51–52.

² Sir Robert Vansittart, “Germans in the Plural,” in *Black Record: Germans Past and Present* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1941), 14–20; here 19.

³ Vansittart, “Germans in the Plural,” 19–20. The charge is taken from chapter 14 of Tacitus’s *Germania*, though a more accurate translation may be that “inaction is odious to their race.” In a book originally published in Norwegian in 1946, Willy Brandt accused Vansittart of ignoring and thus harming “the other Germany,” that is, German anti-Nazis. See Willy Brandt, *Verbrecher und andere Deutsche* (Bonn: Dietz, 2007), 45–47. Robert Neumann published a satire

entitled “Die Protokolle der Weisen von Bonn,” which likened Vansittart’s writings to the forged, racist “Protocols of the Elders of Zion.” See Robert Neumann, *Mit fremden Federn: Der Parodien zweiter Band* (Munich: Kurt Desch, 1955), 156–58.

⁴ See, for example, Theodore Newman Kaufman’s argument that all Germans should be forcibly sterilized, expressed in his *Germany Must Perish!* (Newark, NJ: Argyle, 1941). Although self-published, the book was reviewed in both the *New York Times* and *Time* magazine, though it ultimately did not achieve the reach that Vansittart’s pamphlet achieved in Britain.

⁵ Thomas Mann, “Germany and the Germans,” in *Thomas Mann’s Addresses Delivered at the Library of Congress, 1942–1949* (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1963), 45–66; here 64.

⁶ Mann, “Germany and the Germans,” 65.

⁷ Eberhard Zeller, *Geist der Freiheit: Der 20. Juli* (Munich: Gotthold Müller, 1963), 489–90.

⁸ For a finely nuanced essay on the changing reception in Germany of the July 20th plotters see Peter Steinbach, “Der 20. Juli 1944 — mehr als ein Tag der Besinnung und Verpflichtung,” *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 27 June 2004, 5–10.

⁹ Other schools named for Stauffenberg are to be found in Frankfurt am Main, Flörsheim am Main, Rodgau-Dudenhofen, and Heidelberg.

¹⁰ See Eberhard Görner, “Der 20. Juli im deutschen Film,” *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, 27 June 2004, 31–38.

¹¹ See Paul Riegel and Wolfgang van Rinsum, *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte Band 10: Drittes Reich und Exil* (Munich: dtv, 2004), 48–51.

¹² Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 253–64; here 258 and 255. For the German originals see Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972–89), I, 697 and 695.

¹³ See Heinz Forster and Paul Riegel, *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte. Band 11. Nachkriegszeit* (Munich: dtv, 1995) and Heinz Forster and Paul Riegel, *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte. Band 12. Gegenwart* (Munich: dtv, 1998).

¹⁴ For a discussion of how such political correctness has begun to be challenged in postunification Germany, see Stuart Taberner, “Confronting the Nazi Past I: ‘Political Correctness,’” in *German Literature of the 1990s and Beyond: Normalization and the Berlin Republic* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2005), 106–33.

¹⁵ On this subject see Bill Niven, *Facing the Nazi Past: United Germany and the Legacy of the Third Reich* (London: Routledge, 2002), 143–74. A recent book based on transcripts of German POW conversations, in which soldiers and airmen sometimes talked about how they enjoyed killing civilians, has served to reinforce some of the points made by the exhibitions. See Sönke Neitzel and Harald Welzer, *Soldaten: On Fighting, Killing and Dying* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012).

¹⁶ Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Knopf, 1996).

¹⁷ Peter Schneider, "For Germans, Guilt Isn't Enough," *New York Times*, 5 December 1996.

¹⁸ Taberner, "Confronting the Nazi Past II: German Perpetrators of German Victims?," in *German Literature of the 1990s and Beyond*, 134–64.

¹⁹ See, for example, *A Nation of Victims? Representation of Wartime Suffering from 1945 to the Present*, ed. Helmut Schmitz (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007). See also Stuart Taberner and Karina Berger's edited volume *Germans as Victims in the Literary Fiction of the Berlin Republic* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2009).

²⁰ Jörg Friedrich, *Der Brand: Deutschland im Bombenkrieg 1940–1945* (Munich: Propyläen, 2002).

²¹ Helmut Schmitz, "The Birth of the Collective from the Spirit of Empathy: From the Historians' Dispute to German Suffering," in *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany*, ed. Bill Niven (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 93–108; here 95.

²² The original book on the Scholls' resistance group Weiße Rose was written by a surviving sister of Hans and Sophie, who were executed. See Inge Scholl, *Die Weiße Rose* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1955). There is now a wealth of literature on the subject.

²³ See the film *John Rabe* (dir. Florian Gallenberger, 2009) and the book *John Rabe: Der gute Deutsche von Nanking*, ed. Erwin Wickert (Stuttgart: DVA, 1997, reissued 2009), which is a commented edition of Rabe's Nanking diaries. It is interesting that the Dutch translation of Wickert's book is called *De goede nazi van Nanking* (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2009) rather than *De goede Duitse van Nanking*.

²⁴ Gina Thomas, "W. G. Sebalds Nachruhm: Der gute Deutsche," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 25 January 2010.

²⁵ I. Pohl and S. Reinicke, "Ich bin eine gute Deutsche." Interview with Beate Klarsfeld in *taz*, 1 March 2012. <http://www.taz.de/!88813/>.

²⁶ Thomas Kenneally, *Schindler's Ark* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1982). Published in the United States as *Schindler's List*.

²⁷ See Liliane Weissberg, "The Tale of a Good German: Reflections on the German Reception of *Schindler's List*," in *Critical Perspectives on Schindler's List*, ed. Yosefa Loshitzky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 171–92.