Chapter Two

Long Forgotten, Now Feisty: Reunification and the Right’s Quest for Respectability

After the collapse of the Third Reich, conservative writers found themselves in a difficult—and not wholly undeserved—predicament. Those who had supported the Nazi cause were banned for a time, and those who had remained in Germany but retreated into a tenuous “inner emigration” attempted to portray themselves as patriots and guardians of true culture. (One widely publicized dispute involved attacks on the antifascist Thomas Mann by the relatively unknown “inner émigrés” Walter von Molo and Frank Thiess.) The German literary right might well have disappeared altogether if it had not been for the Cold War. As the Soviet Union went from wartime ally to mortal enemy of the West, anticommunism became not only acceptable, but de rigueur—long before Nikita Khrushchev’s 1956 “secret speech” about Stalinist atrocities. The course of thoroughgoing Western orientation set by West Germany’s first chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, allowed former Nazis to delude themselves into believing that they had been part of a crusade to save the occidental heritage. Ironically, many of the antifascist writers who settled in the Soviet zone of occupation, later to become the German Democratic Republic, were Jewish. (Among them were Anna Seghers, Friedrich Wolf, Stephan Hermlin, Stefan Heym, and Arnold Zweig.) They had avoided death in the concentration camps, only to be declared enemies of the West by some of the same “colleagues” who had gloried in the prospect of an Aryanized German culture.

Benn’s first postwar book publication came in 1948, and Jünger was prohibited from publishing until 1949, mainly because he had refused to provide information to the Allies in the course of de-Nazification. A surprising number of “second-rank” Nazi writers (if such a term is conceivable) went on to
Literary Skinheads?

publish in West Germany, avoiding any blatantly pro-Nazi sentiments. These included Werner Beumelburg, Hans Friedrich Blunck, Edwin Erich Dwinger, Hanns Johst, Erwin Guido Kolbenheyer, and Kurt Ziesel, who achieved dubious postwar notoriety by accusing Günter Grass of purveying “the worst kind of pornographic filth”4 and leading a campaign against muckraker Günter Wallraff.5 Even Hans Grimm, the author of the (in-)famous 1926 novel *Volk ohne Raum* (People without space), continued to publish until his death in 1959. A group of traditional conservative writers (e.g., Hans Carossa, Werner Bergengruen, Ernst Wiechert, Reinhold Schneider, Rudolf Hagelstange, and Gertrud von Le Fort) also formed part of the postwar literary scene. Since they wrote mainly poetry—the least-read genre—and prose from a religious or ethical perspective, their influence was rather limited. During the postwar reconstruction period, introspection and meditation about guilt and personal responsibility held little attraction. As I have argued elsewhere,6 conservative literature was mainly ignored by literary scholars until the fall of the Berlin Wall. The young West German writers who began their careers after World War II by no means viewed themselves primarily as representatives of the left (even in the East, “critical bourgeois humanism” was tolerated in the immediate postwar period), but they generally had no affinity with fascism and cultivated a kind of skeptical individualism.7 Affiliations with the political left were mainly a product of the social upheavals of the 1960s. Conservative writers who went beyond purportedly timeless ethical humanism or literary expressions of religious faith inhabited a cultural Diaspora for decades. When the Diaspora came to an abrupt and unexpected end in 1989, there remained only one inhabitant, none other than Ernst Jünger.

Up until now, we have focused on literary figures. Their Weltanschauungen of course did not evolve in a vacuum, as was demonstrated with reference to Nietzsche. One could easily devote an entire chapter to the influence of Oswald Spengler’s *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (The decline of the West, 1918–22) on Thomas Mann, Jünger, and others. The same is true of the philosopher Martin Heidegger, who not only engaged in a dialogue with Jünger but also became a major force in postwar French culture. Of late, an entire scholarly industry has arisen around the analysis of Heidegger’s actions and thoughts in Nazi Germany.8 The legal theorist Carl Schmitt, who depicted Hitler as the “protector of the law” and praised the 1935 Nuremberg Laws, and the anthropologist Arnold Gehlen, “the most single-minded theorist of counter-Enlightenment institutionalism”9 as a crutch for fragile
human beings, are significant figures as well. All four—Spengler, Heidegger, Schmitt, and Gehlen—have the status of intellectual mentors of the post-1989 New Right. This status is reflected in the pivotal volume *The Self-Confident Nation*, which will be presented below. One way to broach the discussion of the relationship between literature and other areas of human inquiry is to turn to a compelling study originally written in the 1950s and reissued after German reunification.

In 1958, Christian Graf von Krockow, who has since gone on to become one of the most prolific and discussed writers on twentieth-century German political and intellectual history, published a book entitled *Decision: A Study of Ernst Jünger, Carl Schmitt, and Martin Heidegger*. Although this was a scholarly book, Krockow emphasized that the “decisionism” that he described had proved to be in error and should not be tried again (159). The “decisionism” (“Dezisionismus”) that he found in the works of the imaginative writer, the legal theorist, and the philosopher is characterized by a separation from material reality, a separation linked to the “general disorientation” of the German populace in the wake of late—but highly accelerated—industrialization and its social consequences (the so-called “special path”11) and the lack of exemplary social and political models, especially after 1918 (5). According to Krockow, the nineteenth-century German bourgeoisie, incapable of obtaining political power comparable to its economic influence, committed “ideological class suicide” by turning against the Enlightenment principles that had enabled it to flourish (28). In order to demonstrate the extent of this phenomenon, Krockow points to the antibourgeois stance in Thomas Mann’s *Reflections*, a work by an “arch-bourgeois writer” (41).

To illustrate Jünger’s perspective, Krockow cites a phrase from *Combat as an Inner Experience*: “It is not what we fight for that is important, but how we fight.”12 A second, more concrete citation from the 1932 work *The Worker* (Der Arbeiter) provides even more insight into Jünger’s thought processes: “The more life is led in a cynical, Spartan, Prussian or Bolshevistic manner, the better it will be.”13 In other words, anything that contributes to the destruction of the supposedly antivitalist bourgeois way of life is to be welcomed, even if it is “foreign” —in the geographical and philosophical sense of the word. Krockow discovers similar assertions in Schmitt, who views the dichotomy of “friend and foe” as the basis of all politics. The identification of the foe cannot be accomplished by endless parliamentary discussions; only the leadership elite can make that determination. Even
though Krockow traces the influence of counterrevolutionary theorists like Bonald, de Maistre, and Donoso Cortés on Schmitt, he still seems astounded that a figure of such intelligence could describe dictatorship as “true democracy” in the Germany of 1932 (65). If Heidegger offers a philosophical foundation for Jünger and Schmitt, the latter two provide an “ideological and political commentary” for the philosopher (77). By maintaining that true history, or rather, historicity (“Geschichtlichkeit”) takes place without regard for barren, unreflective everyday reality, Heidegger lends an authoritative aura to the real actions and decisions of Jünger (e.g., the apotheosis of combat as one path to true self-knowledge) and Schmitt (the exaltation of dictatorship).

Although Krockow does not fail to mention that all three thinkers distanced themselves from their earlier positions, he is skeptical of such self-interpreations. He finds no room for objectivity in the hermit-like later Jünger (112–115), rejects Schmitt’s revamping of irrational dictatorship into an “enlightened, ideology-free” version à la Hobbes (106), and worries about Heidegger’s emphasis on the special mission of the “metaphysical” Germans caught between the technology fetishism of the Americans and the social engineering of the Soviets (125). In the earlier and later writings of this unlikely troika, he discovers the internal contradiction of a class that wishes to halt developments at a certain stage and hinder the realization of possibilities that it had once brought forth itself. Krockow’s term for this mind-set is “conservative revolution” (157–158). He states bluntly that this way of thinking is faced with two alternatives, neither of which bode well for the future: “ideological flight from reality” or “totalitarian terror” (159). The postwar fantasies of the self-proclaimed elitist Jünger are one illustration of the former, whereas the latter manifested itself—albeit indirectly—both in Schmitt’s legal work for the Nazis (who, as in the case of Benn, abandoned him later) and in Heidegger’s 1933 speech as rector of the University of Freiburg.

Krockow’s point of view was not the only one articulated in the postwar years. Already in 1949, Armin Mohler (b. 1920), who was Ernst Jünger’s private secretary from 1949 to 1953, finished a dissertation on the Conservative Revolution.14 It was published as a book in 1950, and it is still, after two revised editions, the most voluminous work on the subject.15 In the original version, Mohler criticizes the German intellectual elite for failing to come to terms with what occurred in the first year of the Third Reich, a
time, he claims, when it was not possible to clearly separate good from evil (7). By this he means that the Conservative Revolution, although not without responsibility for what was to follow, was in the end distinct from National Socialism. One problem with this view is that Mohler cannot decide what the Conservative Revolution actually was. In the 1950 preface, he provides the following definition:

[T]hat movement of intellectual renewal that attempted to clean up the field of rubble left behind by the 19th century and to create a new order in life. . . . [I]t already began in the Age of Goethe, and it has not been interrupted by what has happened thus far, but rather has continued on various paths. (8)

This is a vast canvas, and it is indeed stated that it is a phenomenon found not only in Germany, but also in other European countries “and even in some non-European ones” (8). Put this way, it is simply a reaction to modernity. Mohler tries to be more precise by setting the French Revolution as the beginning point, but he must add that not all the counterrevolutionaries are part of his subject, because he is interested only in those who “attack the foundations of the century of progress but do not simply want to restore some Ancien Régime.” It turns out that the German version is at the source after all, not only because the intellectual roots of the entire enterprise are to be found in the period “between Herder and German Romanticism,” but also because the German revolt has proved to be the most violent (14).

Mohler makes another distinction which has great relevance for the current situation in Germany: Since the Germans never saw themselves as a nation in the Western European sense—the term refers more to a “frame of mind” (seelischer Zustand) than to politics—the struggle against the French Revolution and the Enlightenment was also a struggle against foreign domination (“Überfremdung”) and part of a search for a German, Central European, Nordic, or Germanic identity (15). Mohler does not seem to realize that he is walking a fine line here (like the one between the symbolic blond beast and the biologic one): Where is the point of transition from exhibiting runic inscriptions to undertaking cranial measurements? His solution—a questionable one—is to limit himself to the Conservative Revolution as expressed in political thought (12). This limitation unfortunately makes the material much drier than it really is, since Mohler admits that parallel manifestations can be found “in all areas of life,” including theology, physics, music, urban planning, family structure, bodily care, and the construction of machines (12). (How can one read this list without visualizing the Third Reich,
with its German physics, German Christians, new cities courtesy of Albert Speer, and emphasis on physical fitness?) In addition, Mohler himself asserts that the Weltanschauung typical of this movement is not produced by philosophers, but by “a new type of author” who is “neither a pure philosopher nor a pure poet . . . a kind of ‘poet-thinker,’ just as his language is a mixture of the conceptual and the visual” (17). As we will see below, this title was recently bestowed on Jünger by the New Right.

To his credit, Mohler does not avoid an essential fact: The Conservative Revolution, this paradoxical movement of “intellectual anti-intellectualism” driven by the “anti-bourgeois bourgeoisie,” has few victories to its credit (19–20). Perhaps its most impressive one to date lies in its contribution to the destruction of the Weimar Republic. Unfortunately, or rather predictably, Mohler chooses to dodge this issue by stating that it is not the purpose of his book “to analyze the weaknesses of the Weimar Republic.” He merely informs us that the subjects of his study did not take the republic seriously as an “independent entity” and at times only took it be to the last gasp of the hated Wilhelminian state (38). With such wording, Mohler unwittingly gives up any claim to objectivity. One further example of his affinity with the ideas of the Conservative Revolution deserves to be cited here. In the 1950 conclusion, which is not superseded later, he speaks of our age as an “interregnum” between the collapse of the previous unified worldview of prerevolutionary Christian Europe and a new synthesis that has yet to appear. Instead of terming this view (which he attributes to the Conservative Revolution) a hypothesis or theory, he simply calls it an “insight” (203–204). This is more than an intellectual issue, for Mohler has not remained in his study in recent years: He was an advisor of Franz Josef Strauß, the legendary head of the Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU), and he has also written for right-wing tabloids like the Deutsche National-Zeitung and the Junge Freiheit. In a 1995 interview, he openly expressed his sympathy with Italian and Spanish fascism. If this is the kind of new synthesis that he had in mind in 1950, his attempt to salvage the intellectual reputation of the Conservative Revolution was at the very least disingenuous.

A very different and for that reason possibly more disturbing book was published in the early 1960s. Hans-Peter Schwarz, a conservative academic with impeccable credentials, produced a monograph on Jünger with the bland title The Conservative Anarchist: Ernst Jünger’s Politics and Cultural Criticism. This monograph is a prime example of the “Yes, but . . .” school
of criticism. Schwarz examines practically every detail of Jünger’s œuvre through 1960, and he makes no attempt to camouflage the most distasteful aspects. Right at the outset, Schwarz postulates that for decades, the German reading public had considered Jünger to be the “authorized speaker for the Zeitgeist,” a role that he did not relinquish until around 1950, when the paths of the author and the Germans apparently separated (11, 13). After that time, he represented only those who stood in opposition to postwar (West) German society (13). In other words, he was transformed into a voice of the “Ewiggestrige,” those who could not come to terms with the German defeat. After 1945, there seemed to be few prospects of reviving the failed project, so Jünger’s stance became that of a lonely prophet clinging to his post in hopeless times. Schwarz speaks of a transformation from the “militarist activist” to the “liberal, if not democratic conservative”23 (15), but he hastens to add that this transformation did not affect the fundament of Jünger’s thinking, namely the “deeply seated enmity of the spiritualist metaphysician toward contemporary society” (15). This formulation lends almost a tragic grandeur to a mode of thinking that has in reality been quite calamitous in the context of recent German history.

Here are some of the characteristics of that thinking as elucidated by Schwarz:

1. Transforming history into metaphysics (16).
2. A turn away from empiricism and rationality as products of the hated nineteenth century (23).
3. A fascination with magic, witchcraft, and demonology as witnesses to powers at work beyond our normal perception (30).
4. Plunging the depths of existence, be it in the ecstasy of battle or creative writing or in quiet contemplation (35).
5. Transcending of the intellect as the hindrance of the kind of holistic experience propagated by the Romantics (42).
6. The propagation of revolutionary elites dedicated to creating the “aristocracy of the future” (104).
7. The theoretical curiosity of a distanced observer (162).
8. Belief in a qualitative difference between the elite and the masses (185).
9. Glorification of “natural” life, small communities, patriarchal order and autarky (186).
10. View of history from the perspective of the ruling classes (220).
This is not a complete list, but these ten points lead inexorably to one question: Must one evaluate this worldview as mere speculation, or is one allowed to ponder its consequences for history and society? Schwarz decides, in the end, to evade this question. He claims that Jünger was basically a nonpolitical man who by chance wandered into the political arena in the 1920s (130). Since he is a “great writer” (126), however, Schwarz feels incapable of judging his impact on politics and society, although he does believe that there is much to learn from Jünger’s errors (242). He is absolutely convinced that Jünger will have no successors, so he can strike a conciliatory note at the end: “Let’s take him for what he is—not a democrat, but a gentleman with fantasy and character.24 . . . One is learning and will learn to see him as one of the great eccentrics and outsiders of our literature” (242, 244).25 Given this degree of sympathy for his subject, it is incredible that Schwarz dares to call Armin Mohler an “apologist” (242). His book is part of a pattern that can be discerned in German scholarship—and society!26—throughout this century. If a controversial figure belongs even peripherally to the conservative camp, almost anything can be forgiven. Leftist cultural figures are by definition suspect and often seen as foreign elements27 in Germany. The “Literature Debate” of the 1990s, in which the literary left was excoriated, dwarfs the controversies involving rightist authors after 1945.

A month before the fiftieth anniversary of the capitulation of the Nazi regime, a political advertisement appeared in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung.28 The brief text began with a quote from Theodor Heuss, a liberal who had been the first president of the Federal Republic. Heuss is quoted as saying that May 8, 1945, was “the most tragic and problematic paradox” for all Germans. The reason was that the Germans had been “saved and destroyed” at the same time. After the citation, whose context is not provided, the rest of the text consists of an attack on “the media and politicians” who speak of May 8 as a day of “liberation.” Instead, we are told, “the end of the National Socialist reign of terror” (this is substituted for “liberation”) was also the beginning of “the terror of expulsion,” new oppression in the East, and the division of Germany. These are not new themes, but the effect of the juxtaposition is to create a nation of victims. In the context of the advertisement, this is rather odd, because the purpose of the exercise is to create the basis for “the self-concept of a self-aware and self-confident nation,” which
the postwar Germans have allegedly yet to become. Only such a nation could do its part, one reads, to exclude the possibility of “comparable catastrophes” in the future. Which catastrophes are meant actually? There is no reference to the Holocaust in the text, only to the fate of the Germans. Similar views had been purveyed for years, albeit mainly in small journals and newspapers seen only by the already convinced. This particular undertaking was clearly an attempt to get out of the closet and make an impression on the nation as a whole. The publication contains a list of dozens of signatories, two of whom are of special interest in this chapter: Ulrich Schacht and Heimo Schwilk. Their compatriots are politicians from the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), Christian Social Union (CSU), Free Democratic Party (FDP), German Social Union (DSU) (a new right-wing party), one sitting and one former cabinet minister, a former federal prosecutor, active and retired military officers, representatives of the Germans expelled from the East in 1945, a handful of aristocrats (including Prince Ferdinand von Bismarck), and no fewer than eleven of the contributors to the anthology Die selbstbewußte Nation, edited by Schacht and Schwilk. Readers are asked to contribute to a so-called “Special Account for Democracy” care of Heimo Schwilk. Aside from the former East German dissident Siegmar Faust, none of the other representatives of the literary sphere have any name recognition. What is unusual about this action is that two conservative literati, Schacht and Schwilk, played a major role in its organization. This would have been inconceivable before 1989, and it harks back to the Weimar Republic.

This has not remained an isolated incident. On May 5, 1995, another advertisement appeared in the Frankfurter Allgemeine, decrying the fact that a memorial service planned for May 7, with Christian Democrat Alfred Dregger as the keynote speaker, had had to be canceled due to “an aggressive [defamation] campaign by the leftist media.” The five signatories, once again including Schacht and Schwilk, celebrated a sort of victory in defeat, claiming that one of their main goals, namely to break through the all-encompassing rhetoric about the “liberation,” had been accomplished. They also stated that they had had expressions of support from all sectors of German society. Their struggle for “freedom of thought” would continue despite defamation campaigns, they assured their adversaries. The word “selbstbewußt” (self-aware, self-confident) is used twice in this brief passage. The group took an almost identical line in yet another advertisement placed in the Frankfurter Allgemeine on June 10, 1995. In this case, the bone of
contention was the image of June 17, 1953, the day on which the (or rather, some) East Germans rose up against the Communist government and its Soviet backers. The sponsors of the advertisement, among them Schacht and Schwilk, called for the retention of a national holiday on June 17, railed against deserters and pacifists, and linked the 1953 revolt to the 1944 plot against Hitler. In place of Heuss, they chose to quote French historian Joseph Rovan, who believes that the East German patriots belong in the pantheon of the most important Germans. One new element here is the portrayal of National Socialists and Communists as the enemies of democracy.32 We are thus dealing with quite an ephemeral entity here, namely a New Right enamored of democracy and untainted by any association with totalitarianism. Before turning to the hitherto most ambitious attempt to set the parameters of this project, the 1994 book Die selbstbewußte Nation, light must be shed on the intellectual development of East German poet and essayist Ulrich Schacht and West German critic and sometime prose writer Heimo Schwilk.

Ulrich Schacht (b. 1951) could probably not have become a “nonpolitical man” even if he had wanted to. His mother was a political prisoner in the GDR, and he was born in the women's prison Hoheneck in Stollberg, Saxony. (One of his books presents the life stories of women imprisoned for political reasons in that penal institution.)33) The reason for her imprisonment was her relationship with a Soviet officer, Schacht’s father, who was sentenced to hard labor and disappeared in the Gulag. When Schacht was seventeen, his opposition to the East German system was crystallized in Prague, where he witnessed the crushing of the “Prague Spring” by Soviet tanks. He became an activist in oppositional groups centered around the Lutheran Church, and his activities led to his arrest in 1973. In 1976, he was released and sent to the West after the government of the Federal Republic had intervened in his behalf. He refers to 1976 as the “year of his second birth.”34) His biography is a German story that would have been very different if his mother had lived in the American zone of occupation and given birth to the child of a G.I. Like many East German dissidents, Schacht studied Lutheran theology at the university. In the West, he turned to political science and philosophy. His writings are eminently political (although his poetry is generally not overtly so), and they are anchored by a strong sense of morality. This is a combination not often found in the West German literary scene, except in the works of “exiled” GDR writers like poet Reiner
Kunze. Like Kunze, Schacht often extols freedom of expression and action with reference to the ideas of Albert Camus.

During the East German “thaw” of the early 1970s, a number of established writers felt able to take more risks with regard to esthetic experimentation and political/social content than before. In contrast to this seeming liberalization, the Socialist Unity Party (SED) gave no quarter to young would-be writers who were involved—however minimally—in underground oppositional politics. The best-known member of this younger group was Jürgen Fuchs (1950–1999), who was arrested after the expatriation of poet-balladeer-social critic Wolf Biermann in 1976. Under duress, Fuchs agreed to leave for the West in 1977. Ulrich Schacht was a known quantity to the Stasi (secret police) before he became a writer, so he had no chance of ever publishing in the East.36 The older GDR writers who were allowed to leave the country after 197637 were, in most cases, fairly well known in the West, and they succeeded in continuing their writing careers. Newcomers like Schacht were in limbo from the start. East German dissidents of the stridently anticommunist variety were not popular figures in the West Germany of the 1970s and even 1980s,38 and such people were more often than not simply ignored, in part because most West Germans were not overly interested in their neighbors to the east. (The gradual “normalization” of relations between the two Germanies and ongoing attempts at rapprochement were also a major factor.) To this day, Schacht, who has published several volumes of poetry and prose and has been awarded literary prizes for his efforts, is an absolute outsider in the German cultural scene. Like other former dissidents, he has been away from the former GDR too long to be a true Easterner (“Ossi”), and Western critics generally disregard him. Few of the leading lexica of literature contain an entry on him, most literary histories mention only that he was one of the many to leave the GDR, and his books are rarely reviewed.39 One way to gauge a German author’s standing in the cultural sphere is to examine the unique annual surveys of contemporary German literature published by Reclam. A perusal of the ten yearbooks published from 1988 to 199740 yields the following: None of these volumes contains a review of a book by Schacht. The only piece by him is the reprint of a 1995 polemic against Günter Grass and his novel Ein weites Feld.41 In most cases, the references to him do not go beyond bibliographical information about a publication or a brief quotation. The high point is the survey of 1993, in which the volume Die selbstbewusste Nation is discussed. Even
there, one finds such formulations as “author in the brown [=Nazi] net,” referring not to Schacht, but to Botho Strauß. To put this “limbo” in perspective: In the ten volumes in question, there are over one hundred references to Günter Grass, and almost as many to Peter Handke, Botho Strauß, and Christa Wolf. In recent years, Schacht has been dealing with this situation by moving from literary texts to political essays (in other words, the opposite of the path taken by Jünger in the course of his career).

The development of Schacht’s perspective on culture and society can best be traced by analyzing the volume Gewissen ist Macht (Conscience is power), which contains essays, speeches, and portraits of contemporary authors (mostly from the GDR) originally published between 1980 and 1991 in newspapers and elsewhere. The back cover provides, in the form of two quotations, an ideological framework for these writings. The first, from 1983, calls for a nonviolent “process of decolonialization” in the “Soviet sphere of influence” as well as “documentary work of mourning” meant to demonstrate the necessity of such decolonialization. The second, from 1989, sounds a triumphant note: “It was worthwhile to believe in the power of the spirit and to deny reverence to the ideology of the status quo.” On the one hand, Schacht represents himself as someone who shares a difficult background with many members of his generation, but on the other hand, he states that the East German Lutheran Church was the major influence on his life (30). The latter was typical only of a relatively small number of East Germans, and these people were one of the foci of the opposition. (In West Germany, the—until reunification mainly leftist—opposition to the system was rarely influenced by the established churches, although the peace movement did have a spiritual dimension.) According to Schacht, in the case of any serious poet, “biographical stages” are the “fundamental element” of poetic existence (250). This attitude is far removed from the practice of postmodern identity construction or deconstruction popular in the West, and it explains at least in part the breakdown in communication between the Germans from the “old” and “new” Federal States. To the East Germans, biography—not biology—is fate. Many West Germans, especially those who strive to be “good Europeans,” hope that at some point their Germanness will simply be overlooked.

Conscience Is Power has much to say about German cultural and historical identity, although contradictions abound. For example, Schacht writes in 1984 that only part of Germany has been given the chance to prove that
Germans can learn from the past and will not be depraved ("verworfen") forever (38). In the same passage, the GDR is seen as continuing the “barbarism” of the recent past, i.e., German incorrigribility and perniciousness ("Ungeist"). This smacks of the “special path” hypothesis, as does the assertion that for centuries, the Germans’ longing for a “perfect world” (heile Welt) has lain at the root of their problems (59). One could imagine Günter Grass making such utterances, but there is a fundamental difference between him and Schacht, who does not at all accept the view that the division of Germany is an appropriate atonement for crimes against humanity. Such crimes, says Schacht, do not, in the long run, justify the perpetuation of Yalta (344–345). In itself, this is not an extremely conservative position (although it was considered to be so before 1989). Another word that Schacht seems to be extremely fond of, however, is a staple of German irredentism, namely “Central Germany” (Mitteldeutschland). The use of this word in postwar Germany—with respect to the territory of the GDR—implies that there is another eastern part of the country that will someday return to the fold. In 1981, Schacht relates the change in his attitude toward Willy Brandt’s Ostpolitik—from enthusiasm to skepticism—but he declares in the same text that he is still a social democrat (25). On the same page, he uses the term “Central Germans” instead of “East Germans.” Anyone who could do that was clearly still searching for a political identity as a West German. His brand of social democracy (or democratic socialism—the two are interchangeable for him) was a throwback to the immediate postwar years, when his idol Kurt Schumacher combined patriotism and a passion for democracy (162). Schacht often refers to the Germans’ “inability to mourn” (a concept introduced by the psychoanalysts Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich), but unlike the West German left, he links it not only to the inability to come to terms with Nazi atrocities, but also with the division of Germany after 1945 (169). His longing for national unity is complemented with a sense of homeland (“Heimat”), another phenomenon long ignored by the left (or rather, consciously avoided, since it was considered to be a smoke screen for nationalist reawakening).

In general, the author of Conscience Is Power does not appear to be a candidate for later New Right notoriety. With the benefit of hindsight, however, one can discern a number of incipient indicators. In his rejection of literature as a vehicle for political consciousness-raising (e.g., 231, 240), he is a precursor of the “Literature Debate” of the 1990s. He advocates rationality...
and Enlightenment (58–59), but almost simultaneously believes that “myths and legends” can tell us more about human beings than any “exact formula” or “ideological definition” (221). He does not deny German “shame,” but he characterizes it (years before the “Historians’ Debate”) as “historical”—albeit “fraught with consequences” (157). He criticizes the homogenizing (“nivellierend”) effects of cosmopolitanism (134) and rejects an “aggressive feminism” that thrives on denunciation—an example of “dogmatic self-delusion” (275). Like many anti-Hegelians before him, he repudiates any theory of history that does not place the individual human being at its center (101, 108). In an interview from the year 1990, Schacht even slips into the mantle of the prophet: “That which was seen by me as possible ten, five, or two years ago has now been real for over a year” (199). In the meantime, he has turned, with his compatriot Heimo Schwilk (b. 1952), to other possibilities.

Schwilk’s background is as different from Schacht’s as it could possibly be, and it reflects to no small degree the undramatic biography of most West Germans of his generation, who were never forced to make the kind of existential decisions almost unavoidable for their counterparts in the East. Schwilk was born in Stuttgart, and he studied philosophy, German literature, and history in idyllic Tübingen (finishing with a teacher’s certification). From 1972 to 1976, he was a paratroop officer in the Bundeswehr. Like Schacht, he has been a journalist at Die Welt for the last few years. Whereas Schacht works in the area of cultural affairs at Die Welt, Schwilk has been assigned to the “Berlin and the New Federal States” desk. This fits in well with his interest in the future of the entire German nation. He has written and edited books about Ernst Jünger and published articles on literature for the conservative newspaper Rheinischer Merkur. The best way to familiarize oneself with his outlook is to analyze the 1991 volume Wendezeit—Zeitenwende, which is a collection of essays on contemporary German authors. Most of the essays, written between 1986 and 1991, originally appeared in the Rheinischer Merkur. In his preface, Schwilk describes Germany of the 1980s as a “phenomenal success story,” one overshadowed, however, by a diffuse anxiety (11). Normally, he says, it would have been the task of culture to thematize such contradictions, but instead, culture became “an object and playground of postmodern arbitrariness, for whom every truth is acceptable, as long as it can be marketed” (11). Despite the “shimmering surface” of consumerism, a cultural crisis could not be overlooked (12). Although the apocalyptic mur-
muring of established writers perturbs Schwilk, he clearly is most disgusted with “West German poet-dandies” who purvey cynicism and narcissism (13). In this, he sounds much like a young disciple of William Bennett or Allan Bloom.

The lead essay, “Mediocrity and the Culinary: A Look Back at the West German Idyll” (from the summer of 1989), dispels this impression immediately. We are very far from the American variety of cultural conservatism. Although Schwilk does express his disdain for the postmodern German retreating into his “Procrustean bed of enjoyment and egocentrism” (18), he bolsters his critique of this state of affairs with references to the Dialectics of Enlightenment by the leftist icons Adorno and Horkheimer, Hans Magnus Enzensberger’s analysis of the “levelling out of values” in West German society, and Freud’s Civilization and Its Discontents (18–19, 26). Heidegger and Jünger, as well as the difficult-to-categorize thinker Peter Sloterdijk, are called upon also, leading to a mixed message. When Schwilk decries the role of the mass media and their stultifying effect on the intelligence of the populace, he mentions not only the conservative—and sensationalistic—tabloid Bild, but also Der Spiegel, the famous left-liberal weekly read by the educated elite (20). Thanks to the “destruction of meaning” undertaken day after day by television (especially the talk show, an American import), all distinctions are being eliminated, including those between “left and right, art and kitsch, action and painting” (23). Unlike American neoliberals, Schwilk does not hesitate to indict the economic system as one of the perpetrators of this travesty. “Irresponsible managers” take advantage of the industriousness, decency, and solidarity of the workers, engaging in shadowy deals like the sale of poison gas factories to Libya and Iraq (19). The fetishization of an ever-higher material standard of living leads to “destruction of the environment and the plundering of natural resources,” in a time when “abortion on a mass scale” is systematically destroying life (19). What is most intriguing about this philippic is what is missing, namely a political vision. The politicians are depicted as mere puppets of a system gone wild, who share their ritualized survival behavior with intellectuals (23). The economic elite are the “true politicians and social engineers” of the republic (25). It is an almost automatic reflex to refer to such people as conservatives, and Schwilk also does so—correcting himself immediately: they are actually “Besitzkonservative,” i.e., conservatives whose worldview is not determined by a value system, but instead by the drive to retain and increase wealth (25). Without using the
term, Schwilk has placed himself squarely in line with the tradition of the Conservative Revolution, collecting some unlikely allies along the way.

After this initial tour de force, the rest of volume offers in the main evidence for the theses put forth. A visit to the mammoth Frankfurt Book Fair confirms Schwilk's suspicion that, in this "era of decline" (Spätzeit, 29), there is no place for serious conflicts, which might darken the mood of the visitors to the literary amusement park. One such conflict would be the question of national unity, and in an essay about this, Schwilk demonstrates how only a few members of the West German cultural elite, like filmmaker Werner Herzog, novelist Martin Walser (who is often quoted by Schacht), or Botho Strauß, dared to challenge the seeming impossibility of reunification. His own program for post-1989 Germany (the essay was first printed in the Rheinischer Merkur of September 29, 1989) is not at all what one might expect. Without renouncing Germany's Western "value orientation," he makes the case for a neutral country without arsenals of mass-destruction weapons that could potentially be the main "peace power" in Europe (126). This country would also rid itself of something else, namely "U.S. plastic culture" (127). Cultural self-determination must divorce itself, however, from "saber-rattling visions of German power and importance" à la Fichte, Görres, and others (127). Germany could lead the way in two areas, i.e., "ecological solidarity" (beginning with a cleanup of the polluted areas in the former GDR) and mediation between East and West based on a "free life of the mind" (127–128). The latter formulation is taken from Otto Schily, a former Green who is now a leading—if controversial—Social Democrat. Once again, Schwilk endeavors to build (unlikely) coalitions for the future.

Two portraits of contemporary authors warrant special scrutiny. The first concerns the "neo-Romanticism" of Botho Strauß, whose essay "Impending Tragedy" was to become the centerpiece of Die selbstbewußte Nation. Schwilk defines Strauß's project as the construction of an "anarchic" sphere of literature in opposition to a social dynamic that aims at "the self-liquidation of the humane through its technologization and computerization" (141–142). This recalls Heidegger's aversions as well as the self-imposed isolation of the later Jünger (whose name is dropped). Strauß's often opaque language is praised as a counterweight to "jargon and party small talk" (142), and his return to the mystical atmosphere of Novalis is seen as a struggle against the dis-enchantment ("Entzauberung") of the world, a process that has made great strides since the time of the Romantics (143).
The question of the accessibility of a literature so consciously and militantly divorced from the communicative strategies of most “ordinary” people is apparently not an issue for Schwilk. To a certain extent, he accepts a division of labor in literature, and the “other side” is extolled in his portrait of Ulrich Schacht. In reviewing the stories in Schacht’s Brandenburg Concertos, Schwilk applauds the author for not propagating a form of “escapism that would like to flee from reality to the realm of dreams” (176). The harsh life in a GDR prison is minutely described (and compared to the Third Reich), and Schacht’s protagonist Bornholm ponders the nature of human existence in an absurd world—not unlike Camus and Kafka. Since Schacht chooses the parable as the appropriate form for his meditations, the reader may well relate them to similar extreme situations throughout human history. Schwilk clearly approves of this, and his approval is a sign that his conservatism does not entail a return to some imagined premodern idyll. This too is a characteristic stance of the Conservative Revolution (in an updated version for the 1990s).

To date, the coalition-building project initiated by Schwilk and Schacht has had, in terms of impact on the public sphere, one notable success story, namely the publication of the anthology Die selbstbewußte Nation in 1994. The reason for giving this title in the original German is that it has—as has been indicated above—a double meaning. In the first sense of “selbstbewußt,” the Germans are to become aware of their true cultural identity. This is necessary because of postwar “reeducation” in the wake of American predominance in the West. In the second sense, the authors hope that self-awareness will lead to a new self-confidence, allowing Germany to play a greater role in world affairs, one befitting its size (the country with the largest population in Europe) and economic might. This was regarded as a taboo until 1989, both because of Germany’s tarnished image in the postfascist era and due to the desire to do nothing that might endanger reunification. The two editors of Die selbstbewußte Nation demonstrate the kind of self-confidence for which they are striving by printing reactions to their book on the dust cover. The left-liberal camp is represented by citations from the Frankfurter Rundschau and Die Zeit. The Rundschau reporter speaks in a tone of warning of the “moment of self-creation of the intellectual right in Germany,” whereas the Zeit commentator views the book as “a declaration of war on the basic consensus of the old Federal Republic.” A reporter from Schwilk’s Rheinischer Merkur declares that the book “deserves real attention,” and the political scientist
Arnulf Baring contrasts the authors favorably with “lame leftist public opinion leaders.” A blurb from the news magazine Focus, the new conservative competitor of Der Spiegel, expresses less the real situation than the aspirations of the editors: “The anthology Die selbstbewusste Nation is shaking up the German cultural landscape.”

When the thirty contributors to this anthology are grouped together in generational cohorts, one finds that fully one-third belong to the “generation of 1968,” the makers of the student revolt that shook German society. Eight were born before the Second World War (of these, three during the Weimar period), meaning that they have some direct memory of National Socialism. Eight (including the editors) were born in the 1950s, three in the 1960s, and one in 1970. The composition of the group as a whole makes one wonder just how “new” this New Right is. Another statistic casts doubt on the supposedly forward-looking character of the enterprise: only one of the authors is female, namely Brigitte Seebacher-Brandt, the controversial widow of the most popular postwar German Social Democrat, Willy Brandt. (The Conservative Revolution of Weimar vintage was also almost exclusively a male domain.) Twenty-five of the contributors are West Germans (or have spent most of their lives west of the Elbe), whereas only four are from the former GDR. The only “outsiders” are Austrian Roland Bubik, who works in Berlin, and Michael Wolffsohn, who was born in Tel Aviv and writes on German-Jewish relations. The predominance of Westerners is a reflection of a general cultural trend since reunification: very few Easterners have a voice in national concerns. They are accepted primarily as “experts” on life in the GDR, not as fellow citizens from whom all Germans could learn valuable lessons. In terms of education and profession, the group of thirty comes close to the profile of what Fritz Ringer has called “the mandarin intellectuals.” They are all university trained, and the fields of study listed most often are history, literary studies, philosophy, and political science. Journalists form the largest group, followed by free-lance writers, professors, lawyers, civil servants, and teachers. (There are four creative artists: the dramatist Hartmut Lange, the poet Ulrich Schacht, prominent writer Botho Strauß, and the filmmaker Hans Jürgen Syberberg.) To paraphrase Ringer, their status is tied to their academic preparation or cultural production, not to money or prestige passed down through the generations. Their humanistic orientation, that of the Bildungsbürgertum, has been under siege since the late nineteenth century and is now relegated to the periphery of a fast-paced consumerist society.
Many of the contributions are reactions to, or continuations of, the polemic “Impending Tragedy” by Botho Strauß (which is reprinted at the beginning of the volume). That particular piece will be scrutinized in the context of Strauß’s career in chapter 3 below. (Aside from facilitating a contextualization of “Impending Tragedy,” this will direct more attention to the “other twenty-nine” contributors to the volume, who have, taken together, been discussed much less than Strauß.) A logical entry point into the complex of ideas and emotions found in *Die selbstbewußte Nation* can be found in the essays by Schacht and Schwilk, as well as in the introduction that they coauthored. The dedication, to the “patriots of 20 July 1944 and 17 June 1953,” reflects the view of recent German history found in the political advertisements discussed above. At the beginning of the introduction—bolstered by a motto about national sentiments from Camus—Schacht and Schwilk provide a definition of “Selbstbewußtsein” that serves as a justification for the entire volume. It is, one learns, an inwardly directed process of finding the “familiar form” of human presence. Individuals who have found self-knowledge can master the future based on their origins and their present existence. The same is true for the “realm of experience and identity” of the family and the nation (11). Such phrases are hardly original or ominous in and of themselves, but this changes when they are tied to the Nazi period. Self-knowledge cannot be obtained without self-confidence (“Selbstvertrauen”), and it is exactly this that today’s Germans lack. Why is this the case? Why are they different from other modern nations? The answer lies in the perpetration of the Holocaust, a word that is not used. Instead, the editors speak of an “evil reason” behind the destruction of German self-confidence, related to the “temporary, not lasting German transgression” (11). This is a roundabout way of summarizing the “Historians’ Debate” and the attempted historicization of the Holocaust. Specifically, the “transgression” involved allowing the “order-seeking longing for the metaphysical” supposedly so central to German identity to degenerate into “unbounded pursuit of power.” It is emphasized that the normalcy of a “selbstbewußte Nation” will not be attainable until the Germans attain deeper self-knowledge and through it “self-purification” (11–12). Now that the postwar status quo has been brought to a conclusion, this goal can be attained, assert Schacht and Schwilk. The manner in which this status quo is described makes it absolutely clear that the message is not directed toward the average German. Instead of simply saying that, in the postwar era, the
Germans were not allowed to be masters of their own affairs because of the crimes that they had committed, the editors state:

With the 1989 collapse [of the Soviet system], this normalcy, via the irreversible destruction of the postwar status quo, which in turn was attributable to a symbiosis of alienation from self and foreign domination caused by the course of events, has become a historical basis from which one must proceed. (12)

Such rhetorical flourishes, or rather obfuscations, serve no purpose other than to avoid painful historical memories and give the intended elite readership a feeling of superiority. A call for “self-purification” is also much less disruptive than an appeal for regret and remorse.

With amazing panache, Schacht and Schwilk not only declare their opposition to the Enlightenment, but at the same time claim that the political clique running Germany has an understanding of “democracy and civil society” that is limited to staying in power and keeping order by means of increasing prosperity. Allowing free rein to individuals’ “self-gratification complex” instead of promoting “nonmaterial values” is not social (see the social welfare state) but asocial (12). The introduction contains no elucidation of these values, concentrating instead on *negativus* like the “hypermoralistic” mass media (Heidegger’s “Letter on Humanism” is proffered as a starting point for criticizing such media), ritualized antifascism (that has also been critiqued from a liberal perspective63), and contemporary conformism (14–15). The final paragraph has no little import for the entire anthology, however. The two editors emphasize that the “time of German special paths” is over, meaning that the Germans can finally dare once again to go their own way (17). This could be interpreted as a rejection of the cultural and political developments of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and an appeal to the Germans to return to Romanticism and post-Romantic critiques of the status quo as sources of national identity and spirituality. There is another possible interpretation, but it is not completely convincing. If the “special paths” are taken to be National Socialism and Communism, then the final paragraph postulates a return to conditions prior to 1933. Within the logic of the Conservative Revolution, this would make little sense, since both the Weimar Republic and the Kaiserreich are objects of derision, not idealization.

The true democracy that is envisioned by the editors is thus not rooted in German political history, but in the dynamic of the present, the potentialities of the future, and the never-realized dreams of Novalis and his heirs. To some observers, this might seem exhilarating, to others profoundly unsettling.
Ulrich Schacht’s essay, “Stigma and Concern: German Identity after Auschwitz,” pursues an agenda that is not reflected in its title. It is primarily a condemnation of almost every political development since the French Revolution and a scathing critique of political correctness. In contrast to the calm, often contemplative manner of Schacht’s poetry and the nostalgic sentimentality of his prose writings about “Heimat,” this essay practically leaps off the page with polemic energy. The first sentence contains a key term: “media democracy” (“Mediendemokratie”). This is a system in which those who determine the interpretation of political concepts hold power (57). The fact that this is a view also held by many on the left does not seem to interest Schacht. For him, the domination of the media is simply the most recent chapter in the history of the “fallacious systems of virtue and salvation” that have attempted to achieve power by means of terror (58). Among these are “National Socialism, Communism, Ignorantism, and Costume Humanism” (58–59). The only one that is not taken seriously is “Costume Fascism” (a term borrowed from the writer Martin Walser), i.e., the manifestations of neo-Nazism in reunified Germany. It is difficult to imagine how anyone who would like to be seen as a serious critic of the first four phenomena could dismiss the latter out of hand. It is even more difficult to imagine a milieu that could bring forth the notion that the political class of the Federal Republic is the modern equivalent of the “Committees for Public Safety” from the dark days of the French Revolution (59). What but a raging persecution complex could lead Schacht to speak of “the block-warden system of West German PC society and its PC commissars” that is leading inexorably to “discourse apartheid” (60)? Political correctness has been criticized by many Germans as an unwanted American import, but usually not with such vehemence. The use of the Nazi term “block warden” (Blockwart) also raises the stakes considerably: “PC” is depicted as nothing less than the media democracy’s version of fascism.

It is problematic that while this type of “fascism” is placed in the spotlight, the historical manifestation is being “contextualized.” As a German, Schacht apparently—unlike some of his compatriots—is apprehensive about undertaking such contextualization without outside help, so he uses a reference to Zygmunt Baumann (sic) as a crutch. The Bauman thesis is that Auschwitz, Kolyma (i.e., the Gulag), and Hiroshima are the triad of horror emanating from the spirit of modernism (58). Such a constellation not only questions the singularity of the Holocaust, but also harks back to...
Heidegger’s warnings about the American and Soviet models. The problem is that before Germany can resume its mission as the “other” between these models, it has to be cleansed of fascism. To accomplish this feat, Schacht launches an attack on what he calls “post-German, national-suicidal historiography” under the tutelage of said “West German PC commissars” (62). Here, as opposed to other parts of the essay, he names names, castigating the “historical laboratories of Hans-Ulrich Wehler [and] Hagen Schulze” (61) for situating German identity in a community of culture and language rather than in a national state. (The positing of culture as the defining moment is also found in the myriad post-1989 statements by Günter Grass.66) The image of national suicide in the form of a verbal perpetuation of Holocaust memories leading to a permanent German self-reproach, if not self-hatred, is taken to its extreme in the assertion that this suicide is “identical with the total will of Nazi Germany to destroy the Jewish people” (63). The use of the term “blindwütig” (in a blind rage) implies that both the Holocaust and its instrumentalization are pathological. Where, then, does Schacht find the seeds of a healthy German self-image? Quoting Hannah Arendt’s dictum that it was not a German tradition that led to National Socialism, but rather “the violation of all traditions” (64), Schacht memorializes the representatives of the good Germany “who knew honor and dignity and connected them with Germany” (63). His memorial is a flawed one, however, because he forgoes any differentiation. One finds not only the idealistic Scholl siblings, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Georg Elser, the loner who almost assassinated Hitler, but also the members of the July 20, 1944, conspiracy. The latter group had, at least in part, extremely reactionary plans for post-Nazi Germany.68 This could possibly be overlooked if Schacht’s selection criterion had been simply resistance to Hitler, but this is not true, because his list intentionally excludes any resistance by German communists. It also will not do to misuse Thomas Mann as a witness (66), since Mann hardly shared Schacht’s vilification of the Communist resistance. Schacht’s final sentence (“Hitler is not a symbol of the German character, and Auschwitz is not the logical end point of German history” [68]) is thus less convincing than it could have been. It is one thing to assert—once again, with Camus—that each person has the “absurd freedom” to determine his own identity (57), but he who makes such an assertion should not assume that all observers, especially non-German ones, will look favorably upon an identity that rests upon a questionable reading of the cultural and historical heritage.
Heimo Schwilk’s contribution to *Die selbstbewusste Nation* is quite different. Even though he follows his usual practice of drawing from diverse sources (in this case from liberal novelist Siegfried Lenz, sociologist Max Horkheimer, Arnold Gehlen, Carl Schmitt, and Peter Sloderdijk), the core of his essay is the attempt to analyze contemporary Germany through the lens of Ernst Jünger’s *On Pain* (1934). Jünger had written that of the measures of human greatness, pain is “the most difficult test in that series of tests that one calls life.” He had also spoken — one year after Hitler’s seizure of power — of his time as a final “phase of nihilism,” one in which most people considered the present order to be merely transitional. Schwilk’s “Pain and Morality: On the Ethos of Resistance” moves through similar terrain, with one significant difference: whereas the majority of Jünger’s contemporaries may well have felt that change was necessary — although there was certainly no consensus on the nature of that change — Schwilk’s contemporaries appear to fear the future, not welcome it. His mission is thus not to offer sustenance, but to shake his fellow Germans out of their stupor. This is anything but a simple task, for, as Schwilk readily admits, the avoidance of pain became “the tacit inner prerequisite for the reconstruction of the [German] state and society after 1945” (394). Here, as in the rest of the essay, he is referring exclusively to West Germany. Pain and sacrifice were the order of the day in the East at least until the 1960s, and that was one of the basic weaknesses of that system, whose people literally had no respite after war’s end. In the West, Schwilk discerns an ongoing process of “pacification” that was meant to radically cleanse Germany of “traditional patterns of authority and ‘evil’ mentality vestiges” (394). The result, according to Schwilk, was to systematically strip the West Germans of their identity, resurrecting them as “constitutional patriots.” This term, associated with Jürgen Habermas and Günter Grass, is an object of derision for the New Right. Its replacement of venerable traditions led, according to Schwilk, to “the most extensive neuroticization of generational and authority relationships” in German history. This in turn yielded a society based on self-hatred and material prosperity.

The true national apocalypse was not, it is claimed, really upon the Germans until the 1960s, when the generation of 1968 hoisted banners proclaiming the “total discrediting of all ascetic ideals” (395). Expert testimony is offered by Arnold Gehlen, who warns that societies cannot be built upon the pleasure principle. It is not immediately apparent that this is to be dismissed out of hand (a suitable passage from Freud could have been cited, for
example), but when one knows that Gehlen published such theses as a sociology professor during the Third Reich, it is difficult not to have second thoughts. An intellectual discussion of asceticism would not be without merit, but it is instructive to remind oneself how selflessness and renunciation were manipulated by the Nazis for inhuman purposes. In this context, Schwilk's critique of German “self-diminishment” as an eternal reparation for past overbearingness (396) makes one wonder just how much German grandeur might be restored. It is not reassuring when Schwilk tells us, through the words of Carl Schmitt, that “only a political esthetics of the sublime that allows the citizen to transcend his physical existence and risk death” can lead to the discovery of the ability to resist (401). The type of resistance being glorified here is of course not individual resistance, something anathema in the Third Reich (whose laws were formulated in part by Schmitt), but national resistance. But what should reunified Germany resist as a nation? For one thing, it should resist an untrammelled eudaemonism (not just a German failing, we are told, since the “pursuit of happiness” is written into the U.S. constitution!). When Schwilk cites Bertrand Russell on the connection between prosperity and morality, one hears echoes of the pre-1933 German image of British materialism (395). Another bugaboo, possibly the ultimate enemy for Schwilk, is feminism, that is, “the cultural-revolutionary subversion by feminism” (396). The word that is chosen for subversion, “Umtriebe,” sounds especially sinister in German. Once again, it is Arnold Gehlen who teaches us that it is the familial “instincts” of women that lead in the end to “a limitless expansion of humanitarianism and eudaemonism” (396). Gehlen's aside that such instincts do, to be sure, have their legitimate place in the family only makes matters worse. His, and Schwilk's, concern is the strengthening of the “counterweights” to such instincts in the realm of the state. If this were to succeed, then many of the problematic aspects of modern Germany would disappear. Among these are road rage (“the venting of aggression by the artificially pacified West German”), “Angst” and a “crisis of orientation,” the need for psychiatry, alcohol and drug addiction, crime, vandalism, and, last but not least, abortion (398). Without denying the existence of such phenomena in practically all modern societies, it is clear that a system in which they have been abolished or at least greatly reduced will have to find a higher purpose. Some form of “venting” will no doubt take place, and in the past, authoritarian states have sought to find ways out of economic or political conundrums by engaging in armed
Can Schwilk truly believe that the reduction of consumption and an ethos of service to the community will suffice as bases for social cohesion (402)? The Greens have a similar vision (except for their attitude toward eudaemonism and feminism, and those are not trivial matters), but they are not burdened by a catastrophic realization of the vision in an earlier time.

The essays by Schacht and Schwilk have been highlighted because of their editorial/organizational role and also because they have gone on to amplify their views (in the 1997 book *Für eine Berliner Republik*, which will be discussed below). The contributions to *Die selbstbewusste Nation* are divided into five categories, i.e., “Identity,” “Conflict,” “Interest,” “Resistance,” and “Unity.” Rather than giving each author equal weight, the individual essays will be viewed with regard to the “German legacy” described in the first chapter and at the beginning of the second chapter of this study. The section “Identity,” where Schacht placed himself, is, like much of the volume, a mixed bag. Brigitte Seebacher-Brandt’s essay “Norm and Normalcy: On the Love of One’s Own Land” is an attack on those who would preserve the “Bonn Republic” and its mentality in reunified Germany. The reason for the attack is that Seebacher-Brandt regards the West German Federal Republic that existed from 1949 until 1990 as an abnormality characterized by “antifascist gibberish,” “feigned guilt complexes,” and endless “rituals of Enlightenment” (47–48). To counter all-encompassing German self-hatred, she offers countermodels, namely the pre-1933 Social Democrats, the only opponents of Hitler who believed in political freedom (51), and the 20th of July resistance group, whose members were filled with love for their country (53). She constructs a kind of utopian anti-Volksgemeinschaft ranging from aristocrats to workers who dreamed of a Germany free of occupying forces, be they enemies or friends. Her belief that Germany wants to be a “normal” democracy (56) is overshadowed by her concern that her country has become too “comfortable,” both materially and spiritually (49). In other words, she sees, with no little justification, that most (but by no means all) Germans are less concerned with regaining a sense of national honor than with maintaining their standard of living. Most Europeans are quite content with such a state of affairs.

Seebacher-Brandt’s piece is rather pedestrian and was probably included as an attempt at coalition building (i.e., wooing the right wing of the SPD). The rest of the essays in the “Identity” section speak to the question of German
Reinhart Maurer’s “Guilt and Prosperity: On the Western/German General Line,” is an attempt to revive “fundamental social criticism” (70) of the kind engaged in by Ernst Jünger and Martin Heidegger in the early 1950s. Maurer laments the fact that talking about nihilism is “out,” because the Western general line will have us believe that technology and democracy are “the solution to all problems,” rejecting any other lines as “either obsolete or evil or both” (70). The Greens have often been targets of such rejection, and Maurer himself points out with tongue in cheek that all would be well if the per capita energy consumption of the “progressive countries, especially the USA” would be equaled throughout the world (70). He considers the Third Reich to be “at least in part a deviation from the [Western] general line,” and defines postwar reeducation as a means to correct this deviation (71). If the Germans are ever to find a way back to this deviation (or at least to a new manifestation of it), they will have to leave behind their “enduring bad conscience” and find a way to a “normal national self-image” (74), the best antidote to an “irrational nationalism” (78). What is fascinating about this view is that Maurer calls for a reevaluation of twentieth-century history that transcends the “perspective of the victors” [of 1945] and takes both fascism and socialism seriously as attempts to deal with “fundamental problems in the force field containing the individual, community, and society, including those that liberalism tries to solve by repressing them” (83). This is quite different from Ernst Nolte’s goal of explaining away Nazi excesses by seeing them as a reaction to Stalinism. Paraphrasing Francis Fukuyama, Maurer states that the combination of liberalism and capitalism (he uses the phrase “pursuit of happiness” in English) will indeed lead to the end of history—the absolute end (84). Although Maurer calls—like Seebacher-Brandt—for a normalization of the German self-image, he actually strives to blaze a new “special path,” one in which the Germans will have the role of saving the human race from ecological disaster. It is thus not surprising that he disputes any connection between Heidegger and Auschwitz (76), because it is the metaphysical bent of the Germans that supposedly makes them the strongest advocates of environmental protection.

Klaus Rainer Röhl’s “Morgenthau and Antifa[s]cism: On German Self-Hatred” is a barely coherent tirade against everything from the Morgenthau Plan (which is linked to the visions of today’s “fundamentalist Greens” [92]), the taboo placed on any discussion of Allied war crimes (94), the “thought police” enforcing political correctness in Germany (97), and
“multicultural buttering-up” (“Anbiederung”[100]). The last point, the alleged (cynical) xenophilia of postwar Germany’s ruling class, is a particular concern of the New Right. Although one can easily dismiss Röhl’s potpourri, Gerd Berglèth’s “Earth and Homeland: On the End of the Era of Disaster” leads directly to the confluence of Old Right and New Right thinking. Berglèth (b. 1936), a literary scholar and translator, openly embraces the “antimodern tradition of German thought” (122). He thus chooses to open with a motto taken from Carl Schmitt’s Der Nomos der Erde about the need for a reorientation of human thought to “the elemental order of [our] terrestrial existence” (101). Berglèth begins with a horror vision of a world in which the idea of homeland (“Heimat”) has been proscribed along with “Volk, fatherland, and nation” (102). Since these have been replaced by “humanitarian dreams and a multicultural-criminal [!] society,” the uprootedness analyzed by Heidegger in the postwar period has become much worse. Although this is a universal phenomenon, it is the Germans, robbed of their traditions, who are “broken” and suffer the most (103). Once again, we are told that it is the “leftist intelligentsia” that has sewn the seeds of hatred for everything German, brought about the “fiasco of emancipatory education,” cultivated cosmopolitanism instead of love for the homeland, and thus taught a “disdain for the earth” (104). Utilizing the same phrases coined by vitalism and the Conservative Revolution and applied by the Nazis to the Jews, Berglèth characterizes “the entire culture” of late modernity as “alienated from the homeland, devoid of origins and roots, enlightened, intellectualistic, and cynical” (106). The only way out of this dilemma is through the “antimodern origin” of the homeland, and Berglèth locates this principally in German Romanticism (106).77 Romantic “longing for home” (Heimweh) is defined as a striving to return home in contrast to modern rootlessness. As a literary scholar, Berglèth unfortunately stoops to misusing etymology in the cause of national renewal: even though the word “home” is common to many Germanic languages, “homeland” (Heimat) is found exclusively in German. It is consequently suggested to the reader that only Germans can feel what it really means to have—and lose—one’s homeland.78 (In the Reflections, Thomas Mann conceded that Russians might have similar sentiments, and Berglèth agrees.) This is yet another version of the “special path.” In Berglèth’s apocalyptic scenario, a “major collapse” is coming, the result of a nihilism that threads its way through the entire history of the West since Plato, a history that brings with
it a “devaluation of man” (113). The only solution is to transcend history, especially the modern nihilistic era with its “ideologies of destruction,” i.e., “capitalism, communism, National Socialism, and liberalism” (121). Our sole hope is to renounce the “superficiality of the Enlightenment” and return to the “fundamental knowledge of myth” (121). Only then will we find the “future realm of freedom”—one that is beyond history and society in the “state of nature” (110). As one might expect, it is the Germans, or the “Nordic man,” who can understand the “tragic elemental power” of nature (117).

One wonders how Seebacher-Brandt’s desire for German “normalcy” could possibly mesh with such truly frightening doomsday prophecies, how August Bebel or Willy Brandt could find a modus vivendi with the Nibelungen. If Bergfleth’s mutterings were at all representative, he and any followers that he might have would rate round-the-clock surveillance. Engaging in such mind games in light of twentieth-century history is either a conscious provocation or an expression of a truly eerie perception of reality.

A welcome contrast to Bergfleth’s conjuring is found in Hans Jürgen Syberberg’s essay, “The Self and the Other: On the Loss of the Tragic.” Syberberg emphasizes in his first paragraph that he is speaking not as a theoretician, but as an active artist. His goal is to support new activities in film, the theater, and literature. The “new” that he is striving for is the rebirth of a truly German culture after decades in which the “ward” Germany was subject to the influence of the culture of the occupying powers. According to Syberberg, the end of socialism has brought with it a transitional phase in the old Federal Republic as well, one in which the hegemony of an imported Western morality is beginning to slip (126). On one hand, the filmmaker portrays himself as an artist who was criticized at home and supported from abroad, since the French and American intellectuals saw in his works—for example in the monumental Hitler film—the “German soul” that fascinated them (129). On the other hand, he sees the end of an era for those “official” artists who neither caused nor anticipated the events of 1989.79 For him, art is not a mere provocation, since “esthetics is politics” (132). In other words, he still has a strong sense of identity as a German because it is derived from the esthetic sphere, not quotidian reality. This is why culture is paramount for him, and his vision of Europe’s future is far removed from that of his co-contributors:

If Europe, this stinking fish and maltreated, sore continent, still has—thanks to us—a center, then it is not its military might, not its science, not its economic or consumption-oriented mass, but rather its culture. Even now? It is up to us. (133)
In this vision, the singularity of Germany’s tragic fate is the source from which an understanding of and salvation from tragic guilt can be obtained. The other Europeans (with the possible exception of the Italians, who are not mentioned), who feel superior as associates of the victorious Allies, have lost the ability to comprehend tragedy and existential guilt. One may take issue with this claim, but it is clearly on a different plane from the endless mantra of lament and self-hatred found elsewhere in the anthology. As an artist, Syberberg has the opportunity to exorcise his demons by providing them with a form outside himself, rather than watching helplessly while they devour him from within.

In the final contribution to the “Identity” section, Tilman Krause (“Inwardness and Distance from the World: On the German Longing for the Metaphysical”) takes up some of Syberberg’s themes, including the commonalities between East and West German literature. The sophistication of his approach is reflected in his depiction of Thomas Mann. After praising Mann for his courage in making an “Appeal to Reason” against the Nazis in 1930, Krause relates how the antifascist Mann characterized the Germans in his 1945 speech “Germany and the Germans” (delivered at the Library of Congress) as basically nonpolitical (134). The purpose of this reference to Mann is to demonstrate that one can oppose National Socialism without renouncing that which is “incomparable” in German culture, i.e., “German metaphysics [and] German music” (135; Krause is quoting Mann). Revisiting Syberberg’s image of non-Germans who are entranced by the German soul, Krause provides an example from France: Brigitte Sauzay, once François Mitterand’s chief interpreter, writes (in 1985) that Germany, once so fascinating and “magical,” has become “banal” (135). The reason? It is the “normalization” of Germany after World War II (136). Instead of striking out at those who perpetrated this normalization, Krause admits that a distancing from “German obscurity” was absolutely necessary in 1945. Now, however, after the success of the Westernization process, it is time to overcome the fear of that which has been repressed so long, namely “that complex of melancholy-pensive introversion and turning-away from the world, which can only with difficulty be reconciled with the belief in progress of the rational social culture of the West” (136–137). The justification for such an undertaking lies for Krause in the danger that anything repressed will eventually return “in a destructive form” (136). To illustrate his thesis that the repression of German introspection never was completely successful, Krause praises three of its
contemporary literary representatives, namely Botho Strauß, Christa Wolf, and Heiner Müller. The latter two are products of the East German culture and society, one that is seen by Western intellectuals as “premodern” (137). Wolf is defended as a cultural figure who possesses traditionally German characteristics thought to have been overcome:

[T]oo much serious pensiveness and complicated self-interrogation—very much in the tradition of Pietistic outpouring of the heart and of “Protestant uneasiness.” Too much conjuring up of distancing and flight from the world, something unthinkable without the Romanticism that is today felt to be ambivalent. Too much cultural criticism in the garb of the ancients, something that is already problematic in Hölderlin. Too much reveling in the ideals of a fraternal [!] community (rather than society). (138)

When they are formulated in this manner, it is difficult to imagine that these characteristics could ever be cause for yet another crusade against the Germans. Krause is fully aware of this, and he takes great pains to emphasize that the presence of non-Western elements in German culture is of no significance for German politics (139–141). Let us not forget, however, that Syberberg equated esthetics with politics. With his attempt to separate the two, Krause is an outsider in Die selbstbewußte Nation. There is no reason to doubt his sincerity, but his presence in dubious company makes one think of Lenin's concept of “useful idiots.” Most of the other contributors to the anthology are not interested in enriching German culture for the sake of culture alone. It is hardly fortuitous that the collected essays were not entitled Treasures of the German Spirit or The Unique German Contribution to Global Culture.

Much of the rest of the volume is repetitious, and many of the essays are not concerned directly with culture and identity, so a critical selection and summary will be provided instead of an exhaustive presentation. In the section “Conflict,” there is an outsider somewhat like Krause, namely, Rüdiger Safranski. This literary scholar, once a highly visible representative of the academic left in 1970s Berlin (it is likely that, at least to a certain extent, his politics prevented him from becoming a professor) has written well-received biographies of Arthur Schopenhauer and Martin Heidegger. His essay here (“Destruction and Desire: On the Return of Evil”) was a preliminary study for his most recent book. The title refers to the repression of evil in the postwar welfare state, a danger already present in the nineteenth-century America observed by Tocqueville (237). According to Safranski, the events of 1989 and their aftermath have destroyed a world in which the Germans...
and other Europeans were protected against “intellectual and material risks.” The loss of such protection leads people, he claims, to take out their fears on foreigners and “here and there once again on Jews” (238). There is not an emphasis on a specifically German self-hatred, but rather a general diagnosis of “barbarization” manifested as “selfishness, destruction of community spirit, hospitalism, [and] consumerism.” This is not new, but an additional ingredient—one which Tocqueville could not foresee—has been added to the mix, i.e., the “brutalization and emptiness” brought about by the media (239). Safranski may sound like a German Neil Postman, but he actually turns to the philosopher Kant for guidance. Civilization is not seen as an end in itself; rather, it is the ongoing attempt to “domesticate” evil (241). Kant believed that the possibility of evil was the price of freedom, but his successors—Safranski names Hegel, Marx, and Habermas and speaks indirectly of Fukuyama—viewed evil as something that could be overcome. In the context of Die selbstbewusste Nation, Safranski constructs a unique model, a possibility of a conservatism that does not wholly reject the Enlightenment. Although human beings are made of “crooked timber,”83 they may still pursue the project of civilization, although there is no guarantee of success. Safranski, who once was no stranger to utopian thinking, now calls upon us to persevere without a gleaming telos, and his final sentence demonstrates the distance between his brand of conservatism and that purveyed by many of his coauthors: “We have no choice but to act as if God and our own nature wanted the best for us” (248).

Safranski’s assessment of our present condition is the rueful reevaluation of an erstwhile ’68er, and its contemplative tone is unusual in this volume. (One wonders why he chose to allow the editors to publish his thoughts, which predate the anthology.) Roland Bubik’s essay consists mainly of whining—about the way right-wingers are stigmatized by the media, about the alleged domination of the media by the left, about the secret satisfaction felt by leftists when foreigners are attacked, etc. His improbable vision of Germany’s future involves combining a “Dionysian feeling for life” with a “society based on norms” (194). This would involve nothing less than fusing the two Nietzsches into one. Peter Meier-Bergfeld’s plea for a Germany more like Austria is chilling. Some of the advantages of the system in place in the Alpine republic that supposedly deserve emulation are: prisons oriented toward retribution, use of the army to keep the peace on the domestic front, a legal system that transcends the “American rhetorical cliché ‘rule of
law” (206), reverence for the beautiful (as opposed to the German “con-
scious cultivation of the ugly” [206]), a paternalistic, premodern, somewhat
underdeveloped capitalism with relative autarky, the lack of pornography on
television, the homogeneous (i.e., Catholic) religious life, the absence of a
revolt of “spoiled children against castrated fathers” (216), a “healthy box on
the ears” for misbehaving children (223), and so forth. Perhaps most dis-
turbing is the talk of “Austria’s mission” (226). Michael Wolffsohn believes
that a traditional German nationalism would be “immoral,” whereas an “in-
wardly directed one” is indispensable (271).85 He is less worried about the
skinheads (who are not particularly German and have no real ideology, he
asserts [268]) than about the “global migration” affecting Europe and much
of the rest of the world. In listing the growth of the foreign population in
Germany since 1958—he calls it a “social revolution”—he does express re-
lied that neither slavery nor the fate of the Jews86 are conceivable today, al-
though he thinks that it was “mindless” to have brought in millions of
“Gastarbeiter” (269). In the course of his often incoherent essay, it never be-
comes clear just why this might be so. Ansgar Graw, then a journalist at Ra-
dio Free Berlin (Sender Freies Berlin), now at Die Welt, trots out the usual
catalogue of leftist sins (the elimination of taboos, attacks on family and
church, pacifism, permissiveness, etc.), only to make an astonishing pro-
posal: “Those who mourn the loss of the organic society from the epoch be-
fore the Enlightenment will have to ¤nd a historic compromise with those
who dream of the omnipotence of emancipatory rationality” (289). The
original compromise of this type was of course attempted by the Italian
Euro-Communists in the 1970s. What is astonishing about Graw’s proposal
is that he could make it after laying the responsibility for practically every so-
cial problem in today’s Germany at the left’s door. For Felix Stern, there
clearly can be no compromise with his chosen antagonists, i.e., feminists.
His title (“Feminism and Apartheid”) and ¤rst paragraph leave no doubt
about that, since he begins with phrases like “sexist virus” and “feminist dead
end” (291). Stern fears a “totalitarian language-cleansing” led by feminist lin-
guists, the utilization of sexual abuse charges as “divorce weapons” (he longs
for simpler times, when “a little ¶irt” in the of¤ce was taken care of un-
bureaucratically with a box on the ears [297]), and most of all, “the total sepa-
ration of men and women”—the “feminist apartheid” (306). Anyone
familiar with contemporary Germany knows the feminist movement has
made rather modest strides there in comparison to conditions in some other
European countries, not to speak of the U.S. (this is especially true in the areas of work and child care).

Another author who analyzes feminism is the historian Ernst Nolte, who triggered the “Historians’ Debate.” Much of Nolte’s essay is taken up with a reprise of his hypothesis about Italian fascism and National Socialism as (necessary and understandable) reactions to Soviet communism, but there are other aspects as well. Nolte, who portrays himself as a “moderate conservative” (160), does not fear a rebirth of fascism in Europe (if it were to reappear, he predicts, it would be in the U.S. or Russia [161]), but he believes that “liberism,” a degenerate form of liberalism, could well destroy nation-states, cause a “gigantic shift in population,” and even wipe out the human race (160–161). One effective countermeasure to “consumerism” and “hedonism” would be the conscious choice of well-educated people to dedicate a decade of their lives raising children (and sharing “the burdens and the joys” as equally as possible). This would, he says, not only be beneficial to the environment, it would also realize “the rational and timely core of feminism” (161). If this sounds uncharacteristic of Nolte, widely considered to be one of the most conservative German historians, one should not ignore certain signals embedded in the essay. Nolte discovers “strong leftist features” in the NSDAP (153), and associates both Ludwig Klages and the Nazis with “Green” thinking (159). He intimates that the best ideas of the left will only be realized if put into practice by the responsible right. This is far removed from the compromise proposed by Graw. As a footnote to the Nolte essay, it is not surprising that similar ideas about the relationship of left and right are found in the piece by Rainer Zitelmann, a journalist and historian who is often associated with Nolte. Zitelmann makes the case for a “democratic right” distinct from the “conformist niche conservatives” and the “antidemocratic ghetto[ized] right” (172). This implies that the German government led by Christian Democrat Helmut Kohl from 1982 to 1998 was not a government of the right. Zitelmann in fact uses the word “liberal conservative” to describe this government. For American readers, it is interesting to hear that it takes some “gumption” to say openly that one sympathizes with the right in Germany, whereas one supposedly seldom hears people deny that they are on the left (164). In the world of American culture, it is none other than the “L word” that is rarely heard in public. Postwar reeducation has apparently been, at least when viewed from Zitelmann’s perspective, all too successful.
The section “[National] Interest” is not of great relevance here, although there are some notable statements to be found there. Controversial historian Karlheinz Weissmann tells us that “civil society” demands at once too much and too little from human beings, who are not completely rational and are tied to historical tradition (313). If the latter were still quite true, there would have been no reason to publish *Die selbstbewußte Nation*. Former air force officer and former Green Alfred Mechtersheimer characterizes the same Rainer Zitelmann who wishes to construct a “democratic right” as a “leftist” with an enlightened view of nationalism (346). Mechtersheimer also predicts that in the German future, there will be a collision between the “antinationalism of the elites and the nationalism of the masses” (363).90 The section “Resistance” contains the only essay that offers any criticism of Botho Strauß. Hartmut Lange, a well-known dramatist who left the GDR in 1965, praises the “courageous and very unusual food for thought” found in *Impending Tragedy*, but he warns that Strauß is “playing with fire” (433). He reminds him that dictatorships are more opposed to art (Strauß’s raison d’être) than mass democracies with their “anything goes” attitude.91 Lange’s essay is also notable for its separation of Jünger and Heidegger. Citing “Over the Line,” Lange claims that Jünger was wrong to think that nihilism could be overcome by positing a new meaning for life (“Sinnstiftung”), whereas Heidegger recognized correctly that nihilism is “immanent” to human beings (442). Lange proceeds to assert that the terms “left” and “right” are irrelevant to culture, pointing to Heidegger’s influence on Sartre and Camus (443). This is a line of thinking (one foreign to many of the contributors) that is taken up in the section “Epilogue,” which was added after the first edition of the anthology.

Bavarian politician Peter Gauweiler, generally considered to be a representative of the right wing of the CSU, criticizes not the Enlightenment, but its “bending out of shape” and “falsification” at the hands of the left (476–477). He ends his essay not with references to Heidegger, but to Karl Jaspers, Cicero (whose speeches against Catilina are quoted in Latin), and Orwell’s 1984. This attempt at bridge building is also the thrust of Heimo Schwilk’s section of the epilogue, although his chosen title, “Mindless Pyromaniacs,” suggests something quite different. He does begin with a tirade against the “denunciation” launched against *Die selbstbewußte Nation* by the leftist media, mocking leftists who hold up the banner of Habermasian “nonhegemonic discourse” while condemning those who do not share their views (465–466). He
attests that there is not even a trace of “salon fascism” in his anthology (467). On the contrary: The book is an illustration of the “freedom of thought” long opposed by the left (468). He even provides a reading list for those who would dare to follow him:

a knowledge of critical theory [i.e., the Frankfurt school], Bloch’s utopianism, Benjamin’s spiritual materialism, Hannah Arendt’s analysis of totalitarianism, Heidegger’s existential ontology, Carl Schmitt’s theory of the state, and Ernst Jünger’s esthetics of the miraculous. (468)

Even more significant than this list is his own comment on it: “As necessary as a polarization is in the political sphere, it is nonsense in the esthetic sphere. There are no leftist or rightist metaphors, only good ones and bad ones” (468). Two things must be said about this dictum: First, it will never be possible to completely separate politics from culture—especially in Europe, where culture is (still) often highly subsidized—although such a separation has often been posited by both conservative social elites and conservative artists. (Can one in all good conscience initiate legal proceedings against a Hamsun or Pound?) One should not forget that many of the same critics—and politicians—who readily accepted the moral authority of the anti-Soviet92 Solzhenitsyn were disinclined to accept the possibility of such a phenomenon (Böll or Grass, for example) vis-à-vis Western society. Second, Schwilk’s words are clearly directed to an extremely small elite. Very few Germans have had the intellectual preparation necessary to tackle the kind of texts that Schwilk recommends. If the target group consisted exclusively of conservative intellectuals, the number would be even smaller. One has the impression that the editors of Die selbstbewußte Nation feel isolated from the mainstream, and that they have realized the necessity of reaching out to sectors of (educated) society normally averse to their Weltanschauung. Only time will tell if their efforts will be crowned with a modicum of success.

This is not the place to survey the responses to the publication of Die selbstbewußte Nation. Most of them concentrate upon the essay by Botho Strauß, to which we will soon turn. It would be instructive, however to take a brief look at the review published in Der Spiegel, probably the magazine most vilified by the intellectual New Right. The title itself is, unfortunately, an example of the “bending” spoken of by Gauweiler: “Teachers of Hate.”93 The quotation marks in the title, easily overlooked by the casual reader, refer to words — quoted in the last part of the review — written by the problematic
Gerd Bergfleth. They refer not to the authors of *Die selbstbewusste Nation*, but rather to leftist intellectuals, who purportedly sow the seeds of (self-) hatred against everything German (104). After this citational sleight of hand, *Spiegel* journalist Martin Doerry uses attributives like these to describe the contributors and contributions to the volume: “scurrilous,” “a flood of brownish [i.e., protofascist] prose,” “growing enthusiasm for war,” and “duds.”

Any serious analysis of *Die selbstbewusste Nation* must come to the conclusion that the authors are an extremely diverse group and that the views expounded are often contradictory. The harried reader of a newsweekly may not be interested in such fine distinctions, and the editors of the weekly itself are obviously not. Why is this significant? The reason is that very few people have seen lengthy reviews of the anthology, but over a million at least cast a glance at the polemic in *Der Spiegel*. Such are the vagaries of the free and open public sphere.

Three years after their attempt at coalition building, and two years after their spectacular newspaper advertisements, Ulrich Schacht and Heimo Schwilk struck out on their own, publishing a book in tandem for the first time. The work is entitled *Für eine Berliner Republik* (*For a Berlin Republic*), and it contains, as the subtitle informs us, “polemics, speeches, [and] essays after 1989.” Only one of the pieces had not been previously published (at least in part), and two are reprints from *Die selbstbewusste Nation*, i.e., Schacht’s “Stigma and Tribulation” and Schwilk’s “Pain and Morality.” No fewer than ten other contributions appeared in the rightist journal *Gegengift* (*Antidote*), which leads one to believe that the authors have come to the conclusion that publication in peripheral journals is not the way to reach one’s intended audience. The title refers to the plan to move the German central government from Bonn to Berlin, a move seen by many as a symbolic gesture uniting the old and new member states of the Federal Republic. The essays in *Die selbstbewusste Nation* written by East Germans (and not introduced in this study up until now) demonstrate just how difficult this unifying process might be. Steffen Heitmann, an unsuccessful candidate for federal president in 1993, laments the fact that the East German “revolution”—a term that many would not use without qualifications—has lost its original impetus, which was a “moral” one (450, 447). Having said this, Heitmann has no qualms about citing a polemic by Hans-Dietrich Sander (for Rainer Zitelmann, a representative of the “antidemocratic right” [171]) and then refusing to make a moral judgment about Sander’s views. Among
the views cited by Heitmann are the depiction of National Socialism as the “failed attempt to liberate at least the Germans from the rule of modernity,” the characterization of the Holocaust as “an interlude of unaccustomed brutality for the Germans, for Jews one grisly act of the normalcy of their history,” and the “oriental rationalism” of the “assimilated Jews” as the “predecessor of modernity” (435). When Heitmann concludes that “evil is lurking in human beings,” that we must thus avoid political “extremes” and preserve the “center” (454–455), then it is clear that his idea of the center is actually somewhere on the right. The essay by former GDR dissident Wolfgang Templin illustrates the tenuous position of oppositional figures from the East who attempt to speak to the entire nation from a position of moral superiority. In the former West Germany, Templin sees an unlikely alliance of ’68er leftists and “increasingly unprincipled conservatives” who failed to confront the GDR dictatorship, choosing instead a problematic policy of détente (458). He would like to see a second Historians’ Debate, one concentrating this time not on the Third Reich, but on the image of the GDR (459–460). The fundamental problem with his perspective is that neither the majority of Germans nor most non-Germans would place the character and deeds of the “two German dictatorships” on the same plane. Templin seems to acknowledge this when he calls those who do share his view a “little band” (462). These are treacherous waters. How are they navigated by the East/West German Schacht and the West German Schwilk in For a Berlin Republic?

The lengthy preface written by the two authors gives more than a few hints of what is to come. Before they begin to speak themselves, they attempt to endow their enterprise with the aura of truth-seeking by providing, yet again, a motto from Albert Camus. Camus assures us that the terms “left” or “right” have nothing to do with the verity of a thought and adds that he would be on the right if it seemed to him that truth could be found there. These words are in themselves not without contradictions, but what follows is much worse. After preparing the reader for a nonideological approach, Schacht and Schwilk immediately launch into a polemic against the left. In their view, 1968 was “the beginning of the wanton destruction” of the “political-moral standards” found in the West German constitution (8). In the meantime, they assert, Germany has become “principally and habitually a republic of the ’68ers” (9). This phrase will perhaps have the unintended effect of offering a measure of solace to the former student activists who have long
since resigned themselves to failure or cynically made their peace with the system. What the authors are in effect saying is that official party politics is absolutely irrelevant, or rather, that the then-reigning Christian Democrats are no less than puppets of the radical left. Although Helmut Kohl is given his due for facilitating reunification, he is also accused of “doing the business of the social liberalism inspired by neo-Marxism and hyper-egotism” (a puzzling juxtaposition, that) and allowing the dissipation of a state sovereignty that had just been recovered (11). In their eyes, Germany is a country where a whole catalogue of horrors makes everyday life practically unbearable. These include crime, limitless self-absorption, political correctness boosted by the mass media, abortion, homosexual marriages, the suicidal abolition of the deutsche mark, pacifistic ideologies, multiethnic clichés, and a politicized legal system. (To express the nature of the latter, a new word is imported from the U.S.: “Simpsonization” [Simpsonisierung] [10].) Even the ancient foe west of the Rhine is resurrected: The French hope to tame the Germans by stripping them of their economic might in the dark corridors of European bureaucracy (12). These present problems are magnified by the past, since German self-hatred is fueled by “campaign-like, ritualized [pre-]occupation with the Third Reich’s murder of European Jews” (12). The impersonal formulation (“Third Reich”) is immediately dropped in favor of a reference to individual murderers, who are “numerous Germans, but also foreign secret and special policemen, lawyers, and military men acting for German National Socialist politicians” (12–13). In the third paragraph following this formulation, the authors criticize Germany’s “destructive immigration policies” and warn: “Whoever is not ready to preserve cultural hegemony in his own country and to undertake the assimilation of immigrants on this basis will also in the future forfeit his own identity” (13). There are ethnic enclaves—some of them quite large—in German cities (at least in the former West Germany), but these are not the places where most Germans live and work. To deny the still-overwhelming Germanness of the reunified country is to have a distorted perception of social reality or to engage in demagoguery. (It goes without saying that Germans of this bent have not a few counterparts in the United States.) One might also ask just what it means to maintain “cultural hegemony” at a time when the habits and lifestyles of the Germans themselves—see the Excursus below—are rapidly changing.

In Die selbstbewusste Nation, literature did not play a pivotal role, but it had an overarching presence in the form of Botho Strauß’s essay “Impend-
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ing Tragedy.” Strauß’s canonization of Heidegger and Jünger as “poet-philosophers” (28) was meant to provide legitimization for his own prophecies, and other contributors, including the editors, clearly accepted the significance of prophetic dicta from the mouths of poets. In For a Berlin Republic, the emphasis has changed from the past to the future. Now that the historical lineage of the New Right has been traced, it is no longer necessary to dwell upon it. Not only Heidegger and Jünger, but also Gehlen, Schmitt, and Spengler are now peripheral figures. There is one intriguing reference to the literary background, however. In his essay against the project of European integration, Schwilk leaves no doubt that, although he is opposed to a political/bureaucratic Europe, he is very much in favor of a metaphysical Europe representing venerable traditions. To illustrate this viewpoint, he cites both Novalis’s Christendom or Europe and Jünger’s 1944 manifesto Peace. His understanding of this tradition in the present context is that Europe must be grounded on values and must also insure that its market economy take “humane and social standards” into account (74). Schacht and Schwilk do not, however, look to contemporary authors100 for an elucidation of such values and standards. Rather, they expend considerable energy attacking these authors for their shortcomings and problematic role in German reunification.

In a total of four essays, three by Schwilk and one by Schacht, a kind of literary kangaroo court is set up in order to reprise and extend the “Literature Debate” of the early 1990s. In “Clueless in Berlin: German Authors and the Revolution” (1990), Schwilk attempts to relegate authors with a political streak to the dustbin of history, accusing them of “dilettantism” (139), a word strangely absent from his various paeans to Ernst Jünger. Writers are also dismissed as parasites whose opposition to society is “good for publicity” but without consequences for them, since they “profit” from the economic system (139–140). One must take this to mean that only writers who never publish hold serious views worth considering. This is of course the end of literature as we know it. In the swirl of events after 1989, it was somewhat risky to make global pronouncements of any kind, and this essay is a case in point. Schwilk has great praise for novelist Monika Maron and her “irreproachable biography,” and he quotes her as saying that she is more afraid of “Grass and Piwitt” than of “Höpcke and Kant,”101 meaning that the Western [leftist] intellectuals are worse than the Stalinist Eastern variety (141). A few years later, it came out that Maron had been an informant for
the secret police while in the GDR. In another 1990 essay, “The Dry Bread of Utopia: The ‘Wende’ and the Intellectuals,” Schwilk seems to despair of finding any writers worthy of serving the cause of conservative culture in reunified Germany:

Perhaps it is just a waste of time to generally expect from writers and artists that exceptional ethos that distinguishes personalities like Havel, Dinescu, Solzhenitsyn, or Sakharov. The morality of these creative artists is usually found in their works, whose most productive inspirations are vanity and self-portrayal. There are plenty of examples of great writers who are at times opportunists [“Gesinnungslumpen”] and political dilettantes. (163)

The unparalleled models praised here are a Czech, a Romanian, and two Russians. Schwilk seems truly disturbed by the fact that he cannot provide any comparable figures from East Germany, and he tries—rather unconvincingly—to explain their absence by pointing to the special status of the GDR as part of a divided country and to the unusually effective socialist “re-education” in the GDR. The tortured logic could be symptomatic of the fact that Schwilk himself is not unaffected by a form of German self-hatred, a phenomenon that he and Schacht would like to eliminate.

In his 1995 essay “Too Far Afield: Günter Grass and the Myth of the Nation,” Schwilk turns to the favorite literary whipping boy of the New Right. This piece was originally published in November 1995, several months after the controversies surrounding the commemoration of the end of World War II. Schwilk cannot accept the fact that Grass, of all people, presented the country with “the novel about German unity,” since he views the author as a pathological national pedagogue consumed with his own obsessions (153). Among these are the author’s interest in Poland, and Schwilk is outraged that Grass could openly support the emancipation of the Polish nation while rejecting the German drive for reunification from a “racist-determinist” standpoint (i.e., the Germans will never change). Grass’s novel Ein weites Feld (Too far afield) was esthetically and politically controversial, but it is less the book itself than, yet again, the “German self-hatred” displayed by Grass—and Jürgen Habermas—that raises Schwilk’s hackles. He contrasts it with the rebirth of the “myth of the nation . . . a spiritual reality of captivating power” (157), a rebirth that took place in the East German demonstrations of 1989. It does not surprise Schwilk that this “miracle of German national rebirth” (156) took place in the East, for that part of the country had, he intimates, remained more German than the rest. Once again, it is
unsettling that he refers to the residents of that part of the country as “Central Germans” (157). These particular Germans exhibit, according to Schwilk, “German virtues like community spirit, solidarity, inwardness, and knowledge of tradition” (158). In the second half of the essay, Schwilk becomes so involved with his project of a “self-aware nation” displaying “purified patriotism” (158–159) that he forgets completely about Grass and his novel. Ironically, this novel, which has been criticized by so many, has probably received more public attention than all of the writings of the New Right put together. Since intellectuals are rarely free of envy, one can imagine that Schwilk’s aggressiveness did not stem solely from philosophical disagreements.

Ulrich Schacht’s essay “The Strange Freedom: German Poets and German Unity” is intended to show that patriotism was never foreign to German poets. He reviews verses from the Baroque period (Gryphius), the eighteenth century (Wieland, Schiller), the Napoleonic era—when writers took up arms against Napoleon—and the revolution of 1848, when authors contributed to the formulation of the democratic constitution. The survey ends here, and there is a good reason for that—although Schacht does not seem to see it: Once national unity was achieved—not by the democrats of 1848, but by Bismarck—only lowbrow authors continued to sing its praises. Instead of discussing this, Schacht devotes his attention to poems by contemporary authors who are apparently less than enthusiastic about recent German reunification. Schacht discovers the persistence of a longing for a third path between capitalism and Soviet socialism, even in poets that he truly respects, like Volker Braun. To Schacht, the lack of patriotism shown by such figures is the result of an “incomparable process of spiritual desolation” (150). Since Schacht concentrates almost exclusively on East German poets, an unexpected dichotomy is constructed: The former GDR intellectuals must be as alienated from the populace as their West German counterparts, since they clearly do not represent the “German virtues” extolled by Schwilk. Those few East—and West—German writers who do (based upon Schacht’s assessment) are purportedly evidence enough that the “humane positive myth of the German” (151) has not been extinguished completely. To an outside observer, this “evidence” does not carry much weight. The intellectuals dedicated to myth-making are and will probably remain a minority.

The question of the role of literati in nation-building may be of peripheral interest to the reader not fixated on the literary sphere, but the first essay
in *For a Berlin Republic* is one that could and should hold the attention of anyone concerned with the future of Germany. It is an analysis of the Goldhagen debate in Germany, and its title is a variation on the young American scholar’s own: “Hitler’s Willing Executors: On the Logic of Power in the German Goldhagen Debate.” Although a summary of the German debate about Goldhagen’s book cannot be given here, it should be pointed out that most observers noted a gap between the reaction of professional historians and that of the general reading public. The historians tended to emphasize errors and omissions, whereas the public displayed a mixture of enthusiasm for the relatively young author and a deep sense of remorse for the Holocaust. As one might well imagine, Ulrich Schacht is anything but enthusiastic. His 1997 essay, the only one in *For a Berlin Republic* not published elsewhere, is less a review of Goldhagen’s book than a polemic against Goldhagen’s German supporters (whom he calls “propagandists and admirers” [16]). Before entering the fray, Schacht musters “politically correct” support in the form of two quotations. The section of the book containing the essay is preceded by a positive assessment of the “truly talented, extraordinary” German people by then U.S. ambassador to Germany Vernon Walters, and the essay itself has as its motto a statement by German-Jewish Holocaust survivor Inge Deutschkron, who compares Goldhagen’s generalizations about the Germans to Nazi practices (16). It is thus suggested to the reader that it is not just right-wing conservative Germans who reject Goldhagen, but even Americans and Jews. Schacht’s tactic suggests that he might be worried about a backlash that could harm his conservative project in reunified Germany.

Schacht’s actual target is not Goldhagen, but rather Jürgen Habermas, the “militant spiritus rector with rational-shamanist denunciation rhetoric,” for whom *Hitler’s Willing Executioners* is a gift, or, to use Schacht’s military imagery, an “impressive delivery of ammunition” (17), an “anachronistic argumentation bomb” (21). If “eliminatory anti-Semitism” did in fact, as Goldhagen claims, permeate every fact of German society before 1933, then the constant resurrection of that phenomenon could have a deleterious effect on the (re-)construction of a self-confident nation. Instead of engaging in damage control, however, Schacht literally loses control. Habermas is accused of organizing an “institute for applied repressive tolerance” and transforming the social sciences into “police sciences” used to spy on the populace (18). Habermas’s “destructive delusions” (i.e., the possibility of a rerun of fascism,
the necessity of replacing the old nationalism with constitutional patriotism) are compared with “vampire research” (18). Jan Philipp Reemtsma of the Hamburg Institute for Social Research, who praises Goldhagen, is portrayed as a “quasi-racist” whose “methodological Stalinism” and “orgy of suspicion” are “virulent” (20). What is odd about this is that it was not right-wing historians who criticized Goldhagen, but left-liberals. Were Schacht’s compatriots asleep? That is not likely. Instead, one could imagine that the taboo against attacking Jews was still quite effective. Axel Springer, the late publisher of the tabloid Bildzeitung and the blandly conservative Die Welt, always took a pro-Israeli stance, and Schacht himself has called for German military support for Israel, as we have seen. This position, long a fig leaf hiding other unsavory sentiments like xenophobia and racism, may well lose its effectiveness as a result of Schacht’s tirades. It is true that Schacht does stray from his polemical mission by launching into a rather ho-hum review of leftist fascism theories, but before putting down his pen, he takes the offensive again. He revels in the discomfort of the (leftist) German audience (caught up in “anti-German destructive hate”) forced to listen to Goldhagen praise postwar West Germany as a great democratic success (29), and he believes that he has witnessed the Waterloo of leftist pseudomorality, one that he describes as “ermächtigungsgesetzlich” (i.e., similar to the Nazi seizure of power in 1933) (30). The real neofascists, he hopes to teach us, are not the right-wingers, but the hypocritical leftists. Before this lesson can sink in, however, Schacht makes yet another tactical error. He describes the Holocaust as “undeniable,” only to add that it was perpetrated by

- politicians, policemen, lawyers, secret agents, German soldiers, and SS formations of National Socialist Germany, and [my emphasis] their foreign collaborators in the uniforms of the French gendarmerie, Dutch police, Latvian and Lithuanian SS men, or Polish and Ukrainian thugs in this or that garb. (30)

The structure of this sentence leads the reader to the conclusion that the Germans and their collaborators played roughly equal parts in the Holocaust. If Schacht truly does believe this, his criticism of Goldhagen’s book (“It is primarily speculative. One just has to believe it.” [28]) rings hollow. To lend credence to his argument, he cites Eric Hobsbawm, Ruth Bettina Birn, and Christopher Browning (33). Cite them he may, but he in no shape or form shares the same intellectual and moral universe. He accuses the German intellectual left, his real adversary, of “shameless fornication with the dead of Auschwitz” and an “eliminatory hate” of all that is German, accompanied by
“self-righteousness and ice-cold arrogance” (34–35). The essay ends with a rejection of the singularity of the Holocaust. Schacht asserts that the German media are under “almost totalitarian [leftist] control” (17). He should in fact consider himself fortunate that this control—be it “totalitarian” or not—keeps his views from the general public, and, more importantly, from international attention. If the paranoia, projections, and polemics of Schacht and other New Rightists were widely disseminated, the global community would in all likelihood wonder if the granting of full sovereignty to the Federal Republic was somewhat precipitous. One enterprise that could quickly endanger that sovereignty would be the attempt to use Schacht’s description of the reunified country as “Rump Germany” (“Restdeutschland” [181]) as the basis of a political program.

Schacht’s speech “The Measure of Shock: On the Fiftieth Anniversary of May 8, 1945” is problematic in similar ways. In order to shake up his audience, Schacht once again chooses to use the language of Auschwitz. He compares the leftist intellectuals who mourn the Nazi victims deeply, but the Soviet victims only in passing, to those who decided who should live and who should die in the concentration camps. For him, these people are “the suffering selectors on the ideological ramp of the year 1995” (48). Their supposed hegemony in German society is described as “Gleichschaltung,” i.e., a new version of the Nazi homogenization program that no longer (thanks in part to the mass media) needs a one-party dictatorship to succeed. He will have us believe that, fifty years after World War II, Germany is very close to the totalitarian regime depicted in Orwell’s 1984 (49). The “cultural officers of the West German special consciousness who profess pacifism” are in actuality the ones bent on destroying German identity (51–52). We are not told just who these people might be, but we do learn that they consider Mickey Mouse cartoons to be a higher form of culture than German Romanticism, simply because the latter was “supposedly prefascist” (52). For those who do not fathom this logic, one could add that Mickey Mouse is a product of Western civilization, and the postwar Germans are accused of fetishizing absolutely anything that emanates from the West. It is arduous to have to wade through such verbiage, and the task is not made easier by Schacht’s self-recycling. Instead of editing the material destined for this volume, the individual texts are simply put together between two book covers. The May 8 speech thus parallels Schacht’s “Stigma and Tribulation,” a reprinted chapter from Die selbstbewusste Nation that is placed here cheek-to-jowl with the speech. Both texts
have the same quotations from Elias Canetti (44 and 54) and Hannah Arendt (44 and 55), and both discuss “concern” (Sorge) for Israel (45 and 58). The misuse of Canetti is, incidentally, quite distasteful. The 1945 passage in question, from Canetti’s *Sketches, 1942–1972*, reads as follows:

> When spring comes, the sadness of the Germans will be an inexhaustible well, and not much will still distinguish them from the Jews. Hitler has turned the Germans into Jews in just a few years, and “German” has now become a word as painful as “Jewish.” (54)

Schacht laments the fact that this text is not discussed in German schools, but he sees only the second part of it, namely the victimization and stigmatization of the Germans. He has nothing to say about how Canetti’s prophecy did not come true: in 1945, not endless sadness and mourning were the order of the day in Germany, but rather the beginning of a long-term repression of the immediate past. Given that Schacht is familiar with the work of Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich (see above), this lacuna is the result either of purely tactical considerations or of ideological blinders. Is Schacht capable of providing a more insightful and straightforward analysis of the former GDR and its legacy?

In the May 8 speech, the one contemporary German who is singled out as a model and named directly is East German Joachim Gauck, the director of the office charged with dealing with the activities and files of the GDR Secret Police. Gauck is viewed by most, though not all, Germans as someone selflessly dedicated to preserving the memory of the GDR past as a warning for future generations. In *For a Berlin Republic*, Schacht contributes several essays to this project. One of these, “We Brandenburgers: Memories of the First Secretary of the Bureaucratic Murderers” [*Schreibtischmörder*], sheds light on Schacht’s innermost motivation as a writer. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Schacht strolls through East Berlin and buys a copy of the propagandistic biography *Erich Honecker—A Life for the People*. Sitting in a café in Friedrichstraße, he leafs through it and comes across a photo of the prison in Brandenburg-Görden where Honecker was held as a political prisoner by the Nazis from 1937 to 1945. He managed to escape from a work detail outside the prison about two months before the end of the war, but in his official biography, he is said to have been liberated by the Soviets. Schacht is incensed that Honecker could insult the victims (of fascism?) with his “liberation performance” (105). To him, Honecker is yet another embodiment of the “banality of evil” (Hannah Arendt), and he refuses to grant
him the status of a resistance fighter who “fought for humanity although threatened with death” (105). To do this is to deny that German communists suffered and died under Nazi terror, and, more significantly, to deny that the personal experiences of these victims played any role in their political and personal behavior after 1945. Schacht effectively engages in dehumanization, despite his partisanship for humanity. This puzzle is solved by Schacht himself, albeit obliquely. When he looks at pictures of the Brandenburg prison, he looks for his own face: “Behind one of the barred windows: 1974, 1975, 1976” (104). He not only provides us with his prisoner identification number, but also recounts the story of his own resistance against the East German communists. The harsh realities of his life as a prisoner are undeniable and inexcusable, but Schacht’s prose creates the portrait of a heroic resistance fighter who overcame every obstacle and retained absolute personal integrity to the bitter end. This is indeed a story worth telling, but when it is told by Schacht himself, it smacks of self-elevation. A sense of moral superiority was probably a means of survival in an East German prison, but the same sense can easily be transformed into arrogance in the post-1989 political scene. In addition, when the superiority is not accepted or is even questioned, the result is often aggression, insult, and vitriol. Sadly, Schacht engages in the same “selection of the dead” that he has accused West German leftists of: there are “victims of the purest kind” (108) who deserve our veneration, and pseudo-victims like Honecker. As for Schacht himself, he was “never a victim,” he declares, because he never accepted Honecker’s system. Ironically, Schacht ends this essay by saying that he is “sorry for” the benighted Honecker (110), who did his duty (like many other Germans of his generation, one might add). It is the West Germans who negotiated with Honecker rather than ostracizing him for whom Schacht’s deepest contempt is reserved.

Schacht’s essay “The Sacrosanct Dictator: Erich Honecker and His Societal Defenders” continues in the same vein. It need not be discussed here, with the exception of one point that is relevant in another area of the volume. Schacht attacks Rudolf Bahro, one-time prominent GDR dissident and political prisoner, for thinking aloud about a possible historical legitimacy of the GDR. Although Bahro’s political activities in the West—he worked with the Greens and was active in the New Age alternative scene—are not the topic at hand, Schacht cannot help but castigate him for his “ecologically oriented totalitarianism” (112). This epithet is developed into a full-blown argument by
Heimo Schwilk in another part of the collection. The title of the essay, “Self-Betrayal as a Virtue: The SED State and Its West German Collaborators,” speaks for itself. It is a condemnation of détente as “inhumane and reaction- ary” (88) and a vilification of its proponents as collaborators. The analogy with the fascist era does not quite fit, however, especially since Schacht chooses to end the piece with another quote from Camus about “leftist collaborators.” One of the characteristics of these people, according to Camus, is a toleration or even acceptance of anti-Semitism (92). The détente policymakers have been accused of many things, but this is patently absurd.118 No less absurd is the misstep involved in quoting Gottfried Benn at the beginning of the section that contains the essay on collaborators. Writing in 1946, the (former Nazi collaborator) Benn expresses surprise that the “so-called intellectuals” fall prey to political ideologies (77). Finally, the brief polemic “Dangerous Legacy: The PDS and Its Clandestine Admirers” warns West Germans not to fraternize with the East German neocommunist Party of Democratic Socialism, since many of its members belonged to the “hard core” of the toppled regime (183). In a strange twist, Schacht criticizes the intellectual supporters of the PDS as “anti-Western . . . anticapitalist, and anti-American” (184). These are positions not unknown among the contributors to Die selbstbewußte Nation.

As has been mentioned above, Heimo Schwilk comes from a very different background, and his writings bear the stamp of a corresponding animus. Although he is no stranger to polemics, from time to time he provides the reader with a glimpse of a pessimistic streak. In 1996, for example, he complained that the chance to “turn” the reunited country to a domestic and foreign policy in the national interest, one prepared by a “spiritual, order-oriented, moral-ethical and economic shift,” had been “pathetically squandered” (211).119 A year later, he predicted that even “contemplating” right-wing alternatives could in the future become a punishable offense, and he went on to advise conservative thinkers to become accustomed to “an existence in the catacombs” (180). At the end of that passage, he used the phrase “holding out even though the situation is hopeless.” This is a description of the dilemma of the later Jünger,120 who had given up all hope of seeing a transformation of society in his lifetime. It is far removed from the Camus-inspired stance of absolute freedom and pugnacity favored by Schacht. Schwilk has not given up yet, however. He continues on as a conservative mole, inspired by the Goethe quotation placed before one of his
political essays: “One cannot change one’s century, but one can stand up against it and lay the groundwork for salutary developments” (175).

What is, however, the nature of this “century” when seen through Schwilk’s eyes? It is surely not the one seen by most Germans. First of all, the Social Democrats, who were out of power from 1982 to 1998, and who have only held the chancellorship for a total of fourteen years (out of almost fifty), are the true victors. Schwilk speaks of the “Kohl system,” which is none other than the “universal social-democratization” of Germany (175). Whereas some of the other European countries with comparable systems have seen the light of “Thatcherism” (praised as a practical American way of doing things [177]), Germany is in an era of “national decline” (176). This is hardly an original viewpoint, but what distinguishes it from its formulation by less right-wing observers is the insistence that Germany is firmly in the grip of the “’68ers and their profit-seeking fellow travelers,” who are responsible for the “nihilism” of public life and the battle against all traditions (177).¹²¹ For Schwilk (and Schacht), a typical representative of this group is Dr. Rita Süssmuth, then the president of the Federal Parliament. Süssmuth, who does believe in equal opportunity for women, was born in 1937, finished her Ph.D. in 1964, and was a young professor long before the students took to the streets. She is considered to be a liberal member of the CDU, but her ideas are not close to those of the Greens’ Joschka Fischer (an archetypal ’68er, but one without real political power until his appointment as foreign minister in 1998). What “’68er” really means is anyone who does not believe that the only hope for Germany lies in a return to the reigning values of the pre-1933 period. Schwilk cannot reconcile himself to the fact that, since Hitler took advantage of these values (Schwilks list: “a readiness to take risks, the will to renewal, daring, a readiness to sacrifice, achievement, punctuality, order, loyalty” [178]), they have become discredited. What has in fact changed is something else: in the process of postwar democratization, more ordinary citizens have a voice in determining what to take risks and make sacrifices for, what to achieve, and who deserves their loyalty. This is often a messy business in a democracy, and today’s Germans are no less acquisitive or self-centered than anyone else, but the alternative proposed by the New Right—an alternative that is never really fleshed out to any great extent—does not exert any great attraction. At least not so far.¹²² One must concur when Schwilk postulates that German immobilism can be primarily attributed to the consequences of National Socialism (179), and these are not likely to disappear in the near future.
Schwikl contributes essays on, or rather, against political correctness and United Europe that recapitulate what he and Schacht have said before. His attack on the Greens — “Eco-Pharisees or The German Desire for Destruction” — deserves a closer look, however, since environmental consciousness and the Green Party are factors to be reckoned with in Germany. Schwilk is so anxious to dismantle the ecology movement as a viable political alternative in Germany that he engages in an activity that he (and Schacht) have often condemned, namely, the construction of a catastrophic tradition in German history. The concrete manifestations of German politics have been determined (he does not say partially determined) for centuries by ambivalence — a “genuinely German phenomenon” — an ambivalence that burdens the German mentality. Oscillating between “moralism and dreams of destruction, belief and applied rationality, fear and a desire for renewal,” the Germans have gravitated toward an “apocalyptic messianism” (195). The explanation for this, according to Schwilk, must be sought in Germany’s central geographic location in Europe, religious conflicts, imperial dreams, and in the ambitions of its neighbors. Once again, we have arrived at the “special path.” It is, however, difficult to take the construction of this path seriously when one reads that not only the Nazis, but also Kant and German idealism are part of it (196). The most recent manifestation is supposedly the Green movement, which pairs apocalyptic warnings with hypocrisy (i.e., wailing while consuming high-end goods). Reading Schwilk, one gets the impression that all of the Greens are from the upper middle class, “eco-pharisees” who praise asceticism without practicing it themselves. This does not jibe with his claim that, in coalition with the SPD, they use tax money to support the following groups: “gays, lesbians, drug addicts, criminals, autonomous (i.e., left-wing extremist) activists, anarchists [“Chaoten”], communists, and squatters who reject, disregard, or fight against the values and norms of our free society” (198). This confused piece of prose tells us little about the ecology movement, but much about Schwilk’s enemies list. At the end, Schwilk reports with obvious satisfaction that the German economic crisis has led to a drop in interest in ecological questions (200). In place of the purportedly inconceivable combination of “emancipation ideology” and “asceticism,” he proposes a “controlled modernism” that would give both nature and man their due (201). In his fervor, Schwilk has overlooked something relevant to his own project. Many observers who attempt to come to grips with the Green Party and the ecological movement in Germany discuss the conservative roots of the protest
against industrialization and the consumer society, beginning with the educated middle class (Bildungsbürgertum) in the nineteenth century. One has even asserted that the Greens are the “true conservatives,” those who strive to “conserve what is worth conserving and preserve what is worth preserving.” It is clear that the title “true conservative” cannot be shared, so Schwilk’s vehemence is understandable. His dilemma is unlikely to be resolved in the near future, since the “modernity” of which he speaks has shown few signs of responding to the feeble attempts to “control” it. Given that he has called for some sort of German Thatcherism himself (see above), the phrase “controlled modernity” is a sham.

At the end of For a Berlin Republic, Schacht and Schwilk mount the podium once more in order to speak of the future. In “The Answer of History: Will Our System Be Able to Transform Itself?” Schacht labels Habermas a Trotskyite in disguise (240) and produces Jacob Burkhardt as an early witness to the “demagogic core of all Enlightenment philosophy” (241). Despite this, he unexpectedly calls for a dialogue with “the authentic representatives of the ’68ers,” whom he distinguishes from the “petit-bourgeois imitators” [Epigonen] of that generation (243). Why might he wish to exchange ideas with those whom he has vilified so thoroughly? The answer lies in his fear of a German apocalypse (this is apparently different from the apocalypse envisioned by some Greens and belittled by Schwilk). Schacht warns us that if the “radical transformation within the system” is no longer possible, the “radical change [i.e., replacement] of the system is inevitable” (243). In other words, if the New Right is not given its chance, another model will take over, and this could well be another attempt to save Germany from modernity by means of fascism. Such rhetoric is a variant of the slogans used by left-wing extremists in the 1970s (“First brown, then red!”) with the difference that Schacht hopes to prevent the apocalypse by nipping the “brown” phase in the bud. Despite the oil crisis and recessionary retrenchments, the leftist version held little appeal. The new reformulation has not achieved much resonance so far either. In contrast to such forbodings, Schwilk—usually the more pessimistic of the two—chooses to strike an upbeat note by using as a motto a prophecy by U.S. diplomat Richard Holbrooke: “In five years, the entire world will regard Berlin as the capital and center of Europe” (244). In “From the Bonn to the Berlin Republic: Plea for a National Shift [“Wende”] in Germany,” Schwilk predicts that the new republic will no longer be able to prolong “national-masochistic pathologies” or the “boundless hedonistic
repression of the West German welfare state” (245). One explanation for this is his belief that, whereas “national” projects remain suspect in the West, the revival of national pride could come from the newly incorporated East. (One recalls that Schwilk’s focus at Die Welt is on the former GDR.) First, however, the alleged hegemony of the ideas of 1968—“the continuation of 1933 with other means and an especially momentous date of shame in our history” (246)—must be broken. Schwilk is so fixated with this endeavor (despite Schacht’s tentative attempts at dialogue just a few pages back!) that he does not hesitate to enlist the aid of liberal academic and journalist Richard Herzinger, who condemns the ’68ers as “political enemies of liberal democracy per se” (247). Searching for the roots of German identity, Schwilk quotes Hegel about the “special role” of the Germans in the intellectual sphere and praises the representatives of idealism rejected by Schacht (248). He characterizes the “mass murder of the Jews” as the “nadir of a perverted striving for ‘purity’ and ‘cleansing’” and worries about the “inclination of the Germans toward the ideal, universal, or totalitarian solution” (248). Has Saul suddenly become Paul? Only to a certain extent. Although Schwilk admits that it is difficult to be proud of being a German, he also rejects “ritualized abhorrence or self-hatred” (248–249). If one combines this stance with his praise of German cultural profundity (247), the gulf between him and Günter Grass is no longer unbridgeable. In fact, he almost (at least at the end of the volume) seems closer to Grass than to Schacht.

What is one to make of this? Perhaps sloppy editing and haste have obscured the New Right creed as proclaimed in For a Berlin Republic. If this were the case, then more clarity might be expected in the future. A comparison of this volume with Die selbstbewußte Nation makes such a prospect unlikely, however. Creative thinking—including a stimulating rethinking of earlier concepts and critiques—can only be encountered rarely, and contradictions can be discovered both within individual contributions and between various contributors. The overriding propensity is toward resentment, resulting in a striking out in all directions. These angry young men—many of whom are graying at the temples—have so far not succeeded in channeling their rage (reminiscent of “white male backlash” in the U.S.) into a coherent program for political action and social change. It is difficult to imagine how such a program might look, given the difficulty of juxtaposing a concern for the entire “Volk” with Thatcherism, a rejection of the mass media with attempts to infiltrate such media, and the advocacy of religiously
anchored values with an increasingly secularized populace. In addition, the myriad attempts at critique have yet to lead to creative production in the culture sphere. A younger generation of conservative authors has not yet made its appearance,\textsuperscript{129} and the tastes of the reading public presently run more to Anglo-American middle-brow novels than to Teutonic profundities (whether articulated from left or right). German feature films with themes even marginally relevant to conservative cultural renewal are few and far between.\textsuperscript{130} Practically the only conservative art, i.e., art devoted to variations of traditional models, is produced by former GDR painters like Werner Tübke. Can one thus conclude that the New Right has had negligible impact on the cultural sphere in post-Wall Germany? That conclusion would be justified if one examined only the younger generation(s). In actuality, the lion's share of media attention and publicity has not been directed toward the would-be theoreticians of the New Right, but rather to two established writers of the 1968 generation, namely Botho Strauß (b. 1944) and Peter Handke (b. 1942). Might the “right turn” discerned in the writing of these prominent figures be the harbinger of the cultural, political and societal paradigm shift anticipated by Schacht, Schwilk, and others?