

## IN THIS ISSUE

As the sociologist Wolf Lepenies asserts in his ›Brief Cultural History of Re-reading‹, ›The second reading – not the first – determines the value of a book.‹<sup>1</sup> We have now published one hundred articles under the ›Literature Revisited‹ rubric.<sup>2</sup> Nicolas Berg's text in our previous issue, which re-examined Victor Klemperer's *The Language of the Third Reich. LTI: Lingua Tertii Imperii. A Philologist's Notebook* (first published in 1947), showed once again how fruitful it can be to take a closer look at the history of the creation, publication and reception of older works, and to view them anew from current vantage points.<sup>3</sup> ›Literature Revisited‹ is not limited solely to the presentation and discussion of oft-cited classics; we also re-read books and essays that may have received less attention upon their original publication, yet, in light of current issues and questions, have earned more focused attention. For the authors of these contributions, ›Literature Revisited‹ can provide an opportunity for renewed engagement with works that the authors, in their early careers, may have already subjected to intense scrutiny; however, some authors are reflecting on publications that they are encountering for the first time. In any case, this format has proved so stimulating that we will of course continue it – with four articles in the current issue.

One work that rewards multiple readings is Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which was written in exile in the USA and first published in book form in 1947 (the same year as Klemperer's *LTI*). In his contribution, Jörg Später delves into the examination of antisemitism in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which has become relevant in new ways for contemporary debates. Some readers may recall that there was a brief text on this work in the first volume of our journal.<sup>4</sup> A comparison of both articles illuminates how perspectives and priorities can shift over an interval of twenty years.<sup>5</sup> Another author whose work was re-examined in ›Literature Revisited‹ is Günther Anders. This time, however, we do not return to *The Obsolescence of Man*;<sup>6</sup>

- 1 Wolf Lepenies, Und NOCHMAL!, in: *Welt*, 7 November 2022, pp. 18-19, here p. 18.
- 2 The extensive index can be found at: <[https://zeithistorische-forschungen.de/sites/default/files/medien/material/Neu\\_gelesen\\_Register.pdf](https://zeithistorische-forschungen.de/sites/default/files/medien/material/Neu_gelesen_Register.pdf)>. In addition, there are two articles that each unfold a broader panorama based on a bestseller: Sven Reichardt, Klaus Theweleits »Männerphantasien« – ein Erfolgswort der 1970er-Jahre, in: *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History* 3 (2006), pp. 401-421; Frank Biess, »Ganz unten«. Günter Wallraff und der westdeutsche (Anti-)Rassismus der 1980er-Jahre, in: *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History* 19 (2022), pp. 17-47.
- 3 Nicolas Berg, Sprachkritik und Autobiographie. Über Victor Klemperers »LTI. Notizbuch eines Philologen« (1947), in: *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History* 20 (2023), pp. 331-345.
- 4 Clemens Albrecht, Die Dialektik des Scheiterns. Aufklärung mit Horkheimer und Adorno, in: *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History* 1 (2004), pp. 318-323.
- 5 For a broader conceptual-historical overview, in which the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* also plays a role, see Ernst Müller, Aufklärung/Gegenaufklärung, in: Barbara Picht/Falko Schmieder (eds), *Das 20. Jahrhundert in Grundbegriffen. Lexikon zur historischen Semantik in Deutschland*, n.d., URL: <[https://doi.org/10.31267/Grundbegriffe\\_13772469](https://doi.org/10.31267/Grundbegriffe_13772469)>.
- 6 Daniel Morat, Die Aktualität der Antiquiertheit. Günther Anders' Anthropologie des industriellen Zeitalters, in: *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History* 3 (2006), pp. 322-327.

instead, we take a look at Anders's 1972 essay collection, ›Endzeit und Zeitenende‹ (›End-Times and the End of Time‹; as of 1981 under the title, ›Die atomare Drohung‹ [›The Nuclear Threat‹]), in which *Christian Dries* and *Sara Walker* identify ›the building blocks of an anthropologically informed negative political theory of nuclear modernity‹. The Nobel Peace Prize for 2024 – awarded to the Japanese organisation Nihon Hidankyō, which campaigns against nuclear weapons – underscores the fact that such philosophical and political discussions have once again become highly explosive at the present time. Nihon Hidankyō was founded in 1956, in exactly the same year in which Anders's magnum opus, *The Obsolescence of Man*, appeared.

The historicization and reappraisal of older literature has now reached the 1990s. Eric Hobsbawm's book, *The Age of Extremes*, published in 1994–95, was one of the first major overviews of twentieth-century history. As *Eva Bischoff* argues, the ›nexus between economic growth and environmental destruction‹ was not yet in the foreground in early reception of the book, but was certainly present in Hobsbawm as a critical impulse, one that the work of ›writing history in the Anthropocene‹ can, and must, take up and carry forward. Another oft-cited work from the 1990s is Richard Sennett's *The Corrosion of Character. The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* (1998). As *Lukas Doil* shows, Sennett's seminal work proffered a sociological diagnosis of a specific moment in time. Even though Sennett did not develop a theory of flexibilization, and certainly not a contemporary history of capitalism, he was nonetheless able to establish the buzzword ›flexibility‹, which was omnipresent at the turn of the millennium,<sup>7</sup> with regard to individual professional biographies and experiences of alienation.

The article by *Mathias Häußler* in the ›Film & TV Revisited‹ rubric takes us to the time around 1960. With the film *G.I. Blues* (German title: *Café Europa*), the singer Elvis Presley completed a ›transformation of his image [...] from a youthful rock rebel to a widely accepted American patriot and mainstream entertainer‹. Häußler vividly describes ›the interactions between the media stagings of Presley's actual military service [in Friedberg, Hesse] and its subsequent cinematic glorification‹. A photo taken in Friedberg in February 1960, one of many documents of these stagings, can be found on the cover of this issue. The film and the records produced at the same time were highly successful commercially; despite the criticism of clichés that was already being expressed at the time, these media were very influential for a transatlantic, German-American pop culture (or: culture industry).

Meanwhile, there was a high level of scepticism about ›mass culture‹ in the early Federal Republic, at least among intellectuals. The affordable paperback format, which thanks to Rowohlt and other publishers spread rapidly beginning in the early 1950s, was initially met with the critical reservation that the book as a cultural object was being degraded to a cheap commodity. Yet as *Ute Schneider* describes in detail, publishers were able to create a whole new market with high-quality series. In her analysis

7 See e.g. Thomas Lemke, Flexibilität, in: Ulrich Bröckling/Susanne Krasmann/Thomas Lemke (eds), *Glossar der Gegenwart*, Frankfurt a.M. 2004, pp. 82-88.

of the *Fischer Lexikon A-Z*, Schneider shows how leading representatives of all the disciplines considered important at the time contributed to the broad spectrum of this series, and that they did not at all view the popularization of knowledge as a simplification. From today's perspective, the sales and circulation figures for the encyclopaedia volumes are nothing short of breathtaking. This success was due to a growing purchasing power, but above all to the hunger for reading among a broad public and the hope of social advancement through education, which was also expressed in the expansion of higher education.

In her article on the CDU/CSU election campaign ›Black is beautiful‹, *Anna von der Goltz* highlights how freely the conservative party drew on elements from the US civil rights movement, especially in the 1970s, to give itself a more youthful, ›modern‹ image. The nonchalance with which possible references to the history and contemporaneity of racism were ignored in the campaign is telling and was probably not limited to one party. Even more surprising, however, is the fact that the CDU/CSU used the slogan ›Black is beautiful‹ almost up to the present, at least in some cases.

The article by *Jürgen Martschukat*, *Alexander Obermüller*, and *Lisa Patt* focuses on social conflicts in the United States, which have only indirectly and belatedly affected the German party landscape. Their contribution traces the ›clash of emancipatory and reactionary-hegemonic identity politics‹ since the 1970s. The analysis revolves around questions of gender relations and sex, which have repeatedly been a source of conflict, or intensified existing conflicts, in the ›struggles for democracy, participation and hegemony‹. Key issues have included family images, queer ways of life, adoption and abortion rights, and, since the 1980s, how to deal with AIDS. According to one of the article's theses, competing political camps invoked ›identity‹ in equal measure, but they did so in structurally different ways.

This leads us to the strong polarization that has shaped US society, politics and culture in various waves since the 1960s.<sup>8</sup> In his essay, *Constantin M. März* recalls a historical constellation that happened a long time ago and yet seems uncannily familiar: the 1964 presidential candidacy of Republican Barry M. Goldwater, who, by taking extreme rhetorical positions and promising ›simple solutions‹, alienated even many supporters of his own party and sparked a debate among psychiatrists about his mental health. However, his political opponents overstepped the mark when they warned of ›Hitlerism‹ or ›fascism‹, thereby reinforcing the polarization. Although Goldwater lost the election to Lyndon B. Johnson by a wide margin, the Republicans gained a lot of experience during the campaign that came in useful later on – for example, the realization that a separate media universe can be helpful to increase the effectiveness of election propaganda.

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8 On the concept and problem of polarization, see also the recent work by Manfred Berg, *Das gesplittene Haus. Eine Geschichte der Vereinigten Staaten von 1950 bis heute*, Stuttgart 2024, pp. 17-20 (and throughout the book).

Looking at the USA today, one might be reminded of the song ›Democracy‹, which Leonard Cohen released on his 1992 album *The Future*. In Cohen's typical blend of irony and utopia, he sings:<sup>9</sup>

I'm sentimental, if you know what I mean  
 I love the country but I can't stand the scene  
 And I'm neither left or right  
 I'm just staying home tonight  
 Getting lost in that hopeless little screen  
 But I'm stubborn as those garbage bags  
 That time cannot decay  
 I'm junk but I'm still holding up  
 This little wild bouquet  
 Democracy is coming to the U.S.A.

Finally, two notes on our own behalf. As already mentioned on the *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History* website, Jürgen Danyel left our editorial team in spring 2024 and was bid farewell in a ceremony in the fall as deputy director of the ZZF. He will remain connected to the institute as a senior fellow. We would like to take this opportunity to once again thank him for his commitment to the founding and development of this journal! We are pleased to welcome Michael Homberg to the editorial team. He has also taken over from Jürgen Danyel as head of department at the ZZF and is likely already known to our readers through his highly regarded article on ›Computer Love‹.<sup>10</sup>

In the previous twenty volumes, we published *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History* with three issues each. Starting with Volume 21 (2024), we are now changing the rhythm to two issues per year. This decision was not an easy one for the editorial team, editors and editorial board, but it is necessary, given our available capacities, in order to ensure regular publication in the accustomed and desired quality. This also acknowledges that the joint path to publication is just as important as the finished product – that is, the exchange of ideas and concepts, the work on manuscripts, the organization of the review process, the advice and research in the selection of images, the care taken in preparing for printing, and much more. Despite the many technical aids available for research and writing, thinking can hardly be accelerated. In her acceptance speech at the Hamburg Aby Warburg Prize award ceremony, sociologist Eva Illouz recently criticized the trend towards ›fast thought:

9 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DU-RuR-qO4Y>>. Leonard Cohen died on 7 November 2016, and on 8 November, Donald Trump won the US presidential election. This convergence shaped Rüdiger Schaper's obituary, *Sag zum Abschied leise Hallelujah*, in: *Tagesspiegel*, 12 November 2016, p. 25. The lyrics to ›Democracy‹ were printed in a sidebar. For more on the fascination of Cohen's lyrics and music, see Caspar Battegay, *Leonard Cohens Stimme*, Berlin 2024.

10 Michael Homberg, *Computerliebe. Die Anfänge der elektronischen Partnervermittlung in den USA und in Westeuropa*, in: *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History* 17 (2020), pp. 36-62.

›Thinking must be slow – both in the sense of slow food, which is prepared with patience and love, and in the sense that Daniel Kahneman has given to slow thinking: as a cognitive process that resists intuition and spontaneous associations, that attempts to detect fallacies, explore different avenues of interpretation, link arguments to facts, question itself, and pay attention to the multidimensionality of social phenomena.‹<sup>11</sup> We will continue to provide space for this kind of thinking, this scientific approach, in *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History*. We invite all interested parties to participate by reading and writing.

Jan-Holger Kirsch for the editorial team  
(Translated from the German by Lee Holt)

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11 Eva Illouz, *Eure Fast-Food-Argumente*, in: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 15 October 2024, p. 9. Illouz is here opposed to simplifications in the assessment of the Middle East conflict; the quoted plea, however, is generally applicable. [Translator's note: I was unable to locate the original English text of Illouz's speech. The English text here is a re-translation of a translation into German by Moritz Baumstieger.]