

**Coming Home into Thin Air:
Radio and the Socio-Cultural Geography of Homecoming in Germany 1945–55**
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1. Introduction

In September of 1948, the *Nordwestdeutsche Rundfunk* (NWDR), the radio station in the British occupation zone of Germany, bade farewell to one of its former British control officers with a send-up of its daily programme. The programme opened with a parody of the morning programme preview that announced: 'In place of our broadcast "Homecomer, where to?" you will hear the broadcast, "Where to, homecomer?"'.¹ To listeners at the time, the humour would have been obvious. Not only did the station frequently make last-minute schedule changes, but programmes about homecoming were a ubiquitous part of its programming. Even if one such show was cancelled, the joke suggests, the station would still have more of the same in reserve. The joke also pointed to the far more sobering reality of Allied-occupied Germany: three years after the end of the Second World War, 'homecoming' was still a pressing, and indeed tiresomely pervasive theme, both on the radio and in everyday life.

In the realm of everyday life, 'home', and 'homecoming' in any of their multiple and overlapping senses, can best be described as scarce resources. In post-war Germany nearly everyone was 'displaced' in some way, and some were displaced in nearly every way. Physical homes had been destroyed in the millions. Tens of millions of people were in transit and were looking to return to, or re-establish, a place where they belonged. Those who had fled the Nazi regime or had been imprisoned under it, now faced the decision whether to return or remain; approximately thirty thousand returned in the end. For survivors of the Nazi extermination policies, such decisions were even more painful. Allied authorities were faced with the ten million 'displaced persons' who had been brought into Germany as coerced labourers, not all of whom wished to be returned 'home'. Twelve million expellees from beyond the Oder-Neisse line were streaming into the occupied zones. For much of the period of occupation, in spite of some clear indications, uncertainty about the long-term status of those territories, and of their inhabitants, continued. While these groups entered and uncomfortably remained in occupied Germany, another group remained outside of German society. At the war's end, nearly eleven million soldiers of the *Wehrmacht* were in Allied captivity, and their gradual return and re-integration was a key theme in public life.² Allied occupation authorities struggled to deal with scarcities. As

reconstruction policies and Cold War tensions became more visible, improving material conditions became an arena of competition.

These material scarcities of 'home' went hand-in-hand with the scarcity of 'home' in a broader symbolic economy. With the status and borders of the nation of Germany still highly uncertain, and ultimately beyond the control of Germans to determine, questions of spatial belonging settled all the more strongly around the more flexible notion of who was, or would be, 'at home' in any given place. Here, too, the physical transformation of spaces during the early Cold War, with the emphasis on modernization and availability of consumer goods after the currency reform in the West, profoundly shaped these processes.³ Besides being able to lay claim to a space for physical dwelling - no trifling matter - being 'at home' also meant being able to speak and act within the emerging public sphere. As David Morley has stressed, notions of 'home' are not merely about belonging, they are also about exclusion and boundaries, whether at the level of an individual dwelling or at the level of nations.⁴ Particularly as boundaries of the two nations became more solidly mapped onto the ideological divisions between East and West, these dynamics of inclusion and exclusion also shifted strongly. It is thus truly noteworthy that of all of the various groups of displaced 'Germans' mentioned above, only this latter group of returning soldiers was called 'home-comer' [*Heimkehrer*] in common parlance. Listeners to the joke announcement mentioned at the start of this chapter would have instantly understood it as referring to returned POWs. How the meaning of 'home-comer' came to be settled around this group, and what that meant for its members, sits at the heart of the processes we describe here.

At the centre of this physically and symbolically shattered landscape was the radio, the dominant mass medium in everyday life. By the 1930s, radio was playing the leading role in Germany's mass media, and was understood by the Nazi regime as playing central in cementing their hold on the population.⁵ Within weeks, and in some cases days, of the war's official end in May 1945, almost all of the major radio stations west of the Oder-Neisse line were operating again in some capacity under Allied authority. The Allied authorities worked quickly to build up a German staff to broadcast programmes not only to 're-educate' but also to serve a German 'home audience'.

Given the double role that mass media play in both mirroring and moulding societies, German radio stations played an unusually vital role in shaping and defining the emerging German society. In this paper we want to explore this dual position of the medium by looking at the cases of specific groups of German employees of the radio stations. Doing this will involve exploring two issues. On the one hand, we will look to the individual stories of the actors and what they were able to accomplish. On the other hand, we will examine how the various groups they belonged to were represented on the air. The ultimate goal is to question the link between these two processes.

The result of this query will be a broad brush-stroke sketch of what we call the socio-cultural geography of homecoming in post-war Germany. This term is borrowed (and adapted) from Wulf Kansteiner's work on collective memory in Germany.⁶ In Kansteiner's usage, the 'social geography' of memory highlights the insights of social science (not least, those of Pierre Bourdieu) for understanding the ways in which memories and experience function within and between various elite social groups. In particular, he stresses the difference in public memories maintained and expressed by various elite groups such as historians, television journalists, producers and politicians, and the extent to which these memories have entered into public cultures of remembrance of war and the Holocaust. Such an approach makes him alert to conflicts within each social group, but also the extent to which the conflicts and interests of these groups carried over into social and political agency for members of each group. Particularly in its attention to the role played by various elite groups in a broader public sphere, Kansteiner's study of collective memory construction resonates strongly with the historical approach (which also draws strongly on Bourdieu) taken by Christina von Hodenberg in her important study of the development of the media public sphere in the Federal Republic of Germany after 1945.⁷ Taking as her object the rise and transformations of a West German 'media public sphere', she explores the developing groups and rules that governed journalistic practices.

Applying these notions here, we look to the way in which various social groups were able to accrue and employ ideas of 'home' and 'homecoming' as symbolic capital in positioning themselves in the emerging public sphere. It is worth noting - as we will outline below - that these were not so much social groups formed by education, class, profession or gender. Instead, we are discussing new social formations created and defined by twelve years of National Socialism and six years of war. Here, too, the works of Kansteiner and von Hodenberg provide a useful perspective in their attention especially to the formation of (political) generations.

By adding the term 'cultural' we are looking to emphasize the symbolic value of the stories that these groups were able to tell about themselves within the discursive economy. Engagement over the last decade with the construction of collective memory in Germany has shown how the selective embrace of experiences and biographies played an important role in shaping the identities of the emerging German states. Robert G. Moeller in particular has pointed to two of the groups we discuss here - ex-soldiers and refugees - as central to the way German public memory of the war and its aftermath was re-framed around the notion of Germans as victims.⁸ Other work on portrayals of women has developed these ideas further, looking into the ways in which popular representations of women - including expellees - sat at odds with the forms of agency and personal sympathy that such women were able to lay claim to in society.⁹ Exploring the role of broadcasting in these dynamics can be particularly rewarding. Compelling

work on the early years of broadcasting in the Soviet Zone, for example, has pointed to the important role played by personal stories and memories of 'anti-fascist' resistance in attempting to build both internal and external legitimacy, but also to create a founding myth of the German Democratic Republic.¹⁰

These connections between personal narratives and the symbolic space of the nation (state) bring us into the realm of geography, which we use both in Kansteiner's sense of a map of social relations, but combined here with the sense of cultural geography related more directly to the physical spaces of post-war Germany. In other words, we will explore the symbolic (re)construction of the notion of Germany as 'home' and the spatial identities that were constructed in the public telling of these stories. To do this, we will look to the ways in which personal stories served to create boundaries for home spaces and their inhabitants with various geographical, political, gendered and generational markers.

In tracing these three strands of society, culture and geography, we are looking to shed light on an important arena of communicative memory, and to show how these communicative processes began to crystallize into the collected memories of the new society. We will do this here by drawing on a few representative and compelling examples from our research.¹¹ We will focus on three different groups and their narratives. Scholarship has long identified these as distinct groups within - and beyond - the radio stations: returned émigrés, the expellees from the east and the members of the so-called 'young generation' who in the end were best able to don the mantle of 'home-comer' and use it effectively. We will draw these examples mainly from the NWDR in the British occupied zone, but as studies on broadcasting in the Western Zones have revealed they resonate strongly with experiences and discourses from the stations in Munich, Stuttgart, Baden-Baden, Frankfurt, and Bremen. So the main focus is on the Western Occupation Zones of Germany and we will be make only a few remarks on the contrasting developments in the Soviet Occupation Zone.

2. Communicators, representations and audiences: Exploring various social groups

2.1 Building up networks: The returned émigrés

Returned émigrés were a very small but nevertheless important group at the radio stations, particularly in the early years of occupation. Great Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union had all been host to a number of émigrés during the war.¹² Some of them actually returned as civilian employees or with a military rank in the uniform of the occupying Army. No more than a hundred of these people ever worked in the broadcasting stations.¹³ Among them were only a few women. To name but two German Jewish exiles: Anne Bauer (1917-2008), who worked as a US-Controller at the broadcasting station in Bremen, and Ruth Norden (1906-1977), a former reader at the

S. Fischer publishing house and assistant to Peter Suhrkamp in Berlin. Norden, a close friend of Hermann Broch, launched a career in the Radio Control Section of the Office of War Information and became Chief of Station of the RIAS, the Rundfunk im amerikanischen Sektor of Berlin, between May 1946 and December 1947. In general, the returned émigrés held influential positions. They were usually charged with key positions especially in recruiting German personnel and working as intermediaries between Allied and German authorities. Their jobs thus fundamentally involved deciding who did – and who did not – belong within the new broadcasting institutions. Perhaps as much as the official de-nazification processes, the decisions made by returned exiles determined the recruitment practices in the chaotic first months after the war. Walter Albert Eberstadt (born 1921) was a German Jewish émigré from Hamburg who returned in British uniform and bearing the name Walter Everitt. He later recalled:

I engaged the people who interested me in discussions and debates, I'd give them a meal, whisky, cigarettes or pipe tobacco and have them talk, talk, talk. If I concluded they were fundamentally decent, I was not put off by some affiliation with the old system.¹⁴

Looking at the returned émigrés as a whole we see how networking became the core strategy of this small group. Due to the fact that they were given key positions by the Allied Governments, they tried to build up relationships. They did so only to a certain extent with each other, but predominantly with other actors who they considered to be capable of constructing a new society. So Eberstadt's 'talks' and his showy generosity succeeded in establishing a life-long friendship with Peter von Zahn, who was not only as passionate a pipe-smoker as Eberstadt, but also one of the most popular radio voices and influential critical journalists in post-war Germany.

One of the most noteworthy cases and most consummate networkers at the NWDR was Alexander Maass (1902-71). He had been an announcer and journalist at the radio station in Cologne during the later years of the Weimar republic and had fled Germany already in 1932 as the political winds were blowing ever more strongly to the right. His journey through exile led him first to Moscow and through several countries including Spain, where he was badly wounded fighting for the Republicans. He had eventually ended up in London, where he worked, like many others, for the BBC's German service. Maass, too, was in charge of the recruiting process and so he started to find out where former radio colleagues ended up. Fact-finding missions were undertaken and a vital net of correspondence emerged. Maass set himself the goal of finding the right personnel. On 13 December 1945 he wrote to Ernst Hardt, his former chief of the station in Cologne:

That is what I currently see as my main task. Given the absolute lack of genuine expertise, how can the radio play the role it has been given in Germany unless a man like you holds a responsible position in the organisation? We are lacking any personality - they are all industrious and energetic workers, but it is not possible to bring in really valuable people because the magnet to draw them in is missing.¹⁵

Unfortunately, Ernst Hardt was too sick to become head of the Hamburg station. He died in January 1947. Whereas in this case Maass suffered a setback, he succeeded with another project. Together with Hugh Carleton Greene, the Chief Controller of broadcasting affairs in the British zone he established the Broadcasting School of the NWDR. This institution was modelled on the BBC Training School. Between January 1947 and July 1948 the school played host to three courses for up-and-coming young journalists. In total, 55 men and 21 women were trained in Hamburg. Within the next two or three decades these lists of graduates became a "Who's Who" of West-German journalistic elite.¹⁶

While Maass's role in the Broadcasting Control Unit was extremely important, you will search in vain in the sound archives for his voice. Although he also had plenty of on-air experience, all of the work he did after the war was behind the scenes. This was the case of most returned émigrés. This was not chance: it was a policy in the western occupation zones. Only few exceptions to the rule can be given in which émigrés were invited to talk about their experiences. One example is the 15-minute-feature in which Franz Peter Brückner (1886-1956) could depict some facts of life in his exile (which he described as a 'harsh reality', far removed from 'a blithe and cheerful situation'. But the main focus of his paper, entitled 'Coming home from France' [*Heimkehr aus Frankreich*], was not to look back in anger, but to consider the immediate challenges of bridging the gap between the former enemies France and Germany and of building a new international community.

But this is precisely where a great and necessary task arises for us émigrés. We know our host land, and we know our homeland - their character and their personality. And I think we should above all be called upon to remake connections, to be bridges to the European community longed for by all - and beyond that to a world community of peoples.¹⁷

Exile was not generally a topic for public debate. Usually the émigrés said nothing and they were not asked. The well-known debate surrounding Thomas Mann's (non-)return failed to dramatize the experience of the external exile. On the contrary, the debate centred on who was able to represent Germany or German literature. Mann's dictum

'where I am, there Germany is' means that you can take your home with you. Even if you are physically displaced you will be inextricably linked to your home. But this interpretation of exile status provoked many criticisms. Inside Germany, it helped to make public the figure of the 'internal exile'. The symbolic value of having 'been there', in Germany, during the war - that is, having experienced National Socialism and war within Germany - was established as an effective basis for agency in the new society. This denied the legitimacy of other forms of experience, with the effect that narratives of external exile were marginalized. Quite soon it became clear to the British authorities that engaging in such debates would not serve any useful purpose. They decided that the best voices for German audiences were those who were not linked to emigrants or Jews. Former employees at the BBC German Service like Paul Anderson were advised not to speak much of their work during wartime. Elef Sossidi, a Greek-German lawyer and journalist, who became correspondent of the NWDR from the Nuremberg Trial in 1946 was requested to assume the pseudonym 'Andreas Günther' due to concern that he might be assumed to be Jewish.

Returned émigrés faced numerous problems. In general, they were anything but well-liked. Germans who had stayed in Nazi Germany tried to exclude them from public affairs. Their main line of argument ran essentially: 'We know what we did "inside", but we do not know what you did "outside".' So émigrés were often called traitors to their fatherland [*Vaterlandsverräter*]. In smear campaigns they were portrayed as hostile and 'exile' was more or less equated with being communist. In an anonymous communiqué that was passed around in conservative circles, the influential employees of the NWDR who came home from exile were called Communists undermining the Christian values and the effort of economic reconstruction in the new West-German democracy.¹⁸

This was largely the case in the West. In the Soviet-occupied Zone, the main radio station was placed in the hands of the Communist Party, many of whose leading figures were Moscow émigrés. Increasingly, it also became the meeting place for a number of returned exiles from the West, who had left the Western Zones due to the change in the occupation politics of the Western Allies. Once the radio stations had been given back into German hands at the end of the 1940s, this situation made it that much easier for the now-powerful German political parties to flex their muscles and push most of the remaining exiles out of broadcasting completely. Even Maass, who then held the relatively low-profile position of head of the NWDR's broadcasting school, was a target, but he was able to hold onto his position until 1955.

2.2 Coming to terms with a new home country: The Expellees

On the representational level, one of the greatest challenges to the image of a stable culture in the West of Germany was the presence of the millions of refugees from the East. Most refugees were settled in rural areas, the traditional location of 'native'

culture. Furthermore, in the cities, refugees often were taken in before the native populations who had left as a result of the bombing had been able to return. In a time where the population of almost every region was confronted with unprecedented numbers of people from 'outside,' regional difference became a major focus of bitterness. Refugee populations in particular faced the great enmity of the native populations.¹⁹ As the occupation wore on, many of these groups also remained in 'temporary' camps and shelters, partly separated from the rest of society, which led to further anxiety about their integration.²⁰ These were issues that the radio stations needed to address. At the same time, one issue that they were *not* able to address in the early years of the occupation was the official status of the territories from which the refugees came. Broadcasting policies in both the British and US zones of occupation amounted more or less to silence on the issue until 1946.²¹

Generally speaking, radio stations spoke *about* or *to* groups of expellees, but seldom, if ever, *as* them. Among the permanent employees of the radio stations expellees were not well-represented, certainly not explicitly, in the early years of broadcasting.²² This is not surprising, when one considers the demographics of the refugee groups, especially in relation with the hiring practices and backgrounds of many of the station employees. A large proportion of the refugees came from rural areas, and thus in many cases would not have had much relevant experience for starting a career in broadcasting. Furthermore, the expellee populations contained a disproportionate number of women, who, while there were greater opportunities afforded to women in broadcasting after 1945, still did not make up a large proportion of leading station staff. Finally, it is important to note the role of existing personal networks especially in the early years of occupation, in building up station staff. In most cases, for the reasons already cited, the arriving refugee groups would not have been part of such networks.

At the end of 1945, as a part of their more general effort to acquaint their listeners with the problems of administration and reconstruction, the British military authorities started a 'special publicity campaign' over the radio to get the local populations and administrations to accept some responsibility for settling the refugees. In what is probably the only remaining manuscript from this effort, Bernhard Ernst interviewed a city councillor from Düsseldorf who was charged with taking care of the refugees there. Much of the discussion, particularly from the councillor, is a matter-of-fact discussion of the problems that need to be addressed. What is most remarkable about the interview is how much time is spent, especially by Ernst, talking not about the refugees, but rather about the 'hard-tested West', a phrase that recurs several times in the short interview.²³ This is clearly meant as an appeal to local pride in order to get the natives to accept the situation as best they can. At the same time, however, it actually emphasized the difference between the natives and the refugees.

These differences were made abundantly clear in an observation from the councillor when he made an appeal for understanding between the two groups: 'The people who have this hard journey behind them will not be coming here in the best of moods. And they are coming to people who have been hard-tested by fate.'²⁴ The contrast between the two groups, those who are 'not in the best of moods' and those who have been 'hard-tested by fate', suggests far more sympathy for the natives than the refugees. Particularly after years of a Nazi regime that constantly invoked a German 'fate', and the need for sacrifice in the face of this fate, the appeal carried an implicit suggestion that those in the Rhineland were more German than the refugees who were arriving. Within this dialogue, the notion of 'Heimat' was used more as a term of exclusion than inclusion.

Generally speaking, the spatial stories of the refugees proved difficult to accommodate within the new spaces of western Germany. Originally known simply as 'refugees', the label of 'expellees' and then later of 'homeland-expellees' [*Heimatvertriebene*] was adopted by representative groups in 1947, in part to distinguish themselves from Germans who had fled the Soviet-occupied zone. Though symbolically asserting that the lands they had left were German 'Heimats', they themselves often faced racial prejudice that considered them to be 'foreign'.²⁵ At the same time, they were also described by native populations of having been unreformed feudal Prussians and enthusiastic Nazis as happened during a 1949 discussion on the NWDR's pioneering public opinion programme 'The Listeners Have Their Say'.²⁶

In all of their efforts, the function of the radio as an instrument for integration stood central. The metaphor of the individual home, as so often, became one of the central tropes in this effort. In a landmark speech Adolf Grimme, Director General of the NWDR, cited the radio's function as 'the central gathering point for internal communion'. As he announced further in typically flowery rhetoric: 'Like the hearth once was, like the way that once upon a time the petroleum lamp united the family circle, so the radio must hold this position in the German house: as the central gathering point of internal communion'.²⁷ The problem for the radio broadcasters was thus twofold. As the refugees began to settle, the radio stations began to address the problems of assimilation and understanding. They approached this in part with a series called 'The New Neighbour' that ran for much of 1947. It advertised itself as 'a broadcast for natives, and those who would like to become natives.' This was the practical side of attempting to create understanding by explaining the ways of the West. As the occupation continued and the stations were increasingly put in German hands, travelogue programmes that explored Germany's local region found a larger place in schedules. While these increasingly touristic shows were aimed at a broad public, the integration of refugees was often explicitly cited as a goal. Next to or

alongside such programmes, shows dedicated to the folk music and traditional folk customs of some of the lost regions were included in the programme.²⁸

Besides practical efforts at integration, there was also a shift in rhetoric that sought to address the issue not in concrete terms, but as a spiritual challenge. In the early 1950s this idea was often formulated as 'being spiritually homeless' and 'fleeing from one's own emptiness'. It is no accident that such assessments echoed closely the contemporary findings of the prominent conservative sociologist Helmut Schelsky. In a 1953 study, Schelsky took the refugee family to be the 'social prototype' of the modern West German family, embodying in extreme form the shift that all families in the modernizing nation were undergoing. Forced mobility and removal from existing social networks, he argued, had led to a "de-internalisation" [*Entinnerlichung*] of the family - that is, dissolution from its traditional structure and values.²⁹ Radio producers from Grimme onwards saw their task as replacing this lost 'inner' structure and content;³⁰ the extent to which it could be provided for the expellees could be the measure of the radio's success with audiences as a whole.

Whilst addressing the fate of expellees on a metaphorical level, both the more practical approaches and the loftier rhetoric of integration also very typically moved the actual experience of the refugees into a narrative of the West German state. This was the narrative of rolling up one's sleeves and joining the new capitalist economy. In a commentary from 1947, the head of the regional refugee council of the conservative CDU party in Westphalia-Lippe, said: 'Let us not wait for miracles. Let us make every effort to become active members of this economy again.'³¹

2.3 To be released and to be committed to a new home: The 'Young Generation'

This brings us to the third group of actors. They were numerous and they had a compelling story to tell. This was the broad group of former soldiers, home-comers from Allied captivity.³² At the time, they called themselves the 'young generation', a label that was both given to them and enthusiastically chosen by themselves. It was not age that defined them, but their experience at the war front. Their common bond was the fact that they were sent as young pupils, students, and workers to the fronts. In the broadcasting stations, they were a key focal point of recruiting officers' efforts, for both practical and philosophical reasons. Practically speaking, some of them had acquired experience with broadcasting, often as low-ranking members of propaganda companies, during the war. Politically speaking, they were considered to be untainted by National Socialism and worthy of being given the chance to start anew: a chance which they normally welcomed.

Members of this generation not only found work in broadcasting, but they also used this public platform (among others) to tell their stories. The classic example derives from an essay by Rüdiger Proske and Walter Weymann-Weyhe in the

Frankfurter Hefte. From the 1950s onwards, Proske (1916-2010) became one of the leading political journalists in West-Germany, and Weymann-Weyhe (1914-1999) worked as the head of the NWDR-studio in Oldenburg. Their text was entitled: 'We from the war. The path of the younger generation'. It was published in September 1948.³³ In the text they defined themselves as shaped by their time: a time of deprivation, a time of crisis and of transition. These young and energetic men and women claimed that their experience was the only basis for reconstructing society. Everybody who had this experience could take part in the effort, and those who did not were excluded. It became a kind of 'leitmotiv' that helped to establish a sense of belonging to a special group and for a generation which faced new challenges. Historians have called them the 'generation of front soldiers' or the 'generation of flak-helpers', referring to the Nazi mobilization of adolescents at anti-aircraft ('flak') stations starting in 1943.³⁴

These young men and women who committed themselves to efficiency and proficiency, and developed 'German careers', became by far the most successful group in broadcasting. Employed as young home-comers by the Allied controllers and fascinated by the opportunity of learning by doing, they began careers in the late 1940s. By the 1950s and 1960s they had become heads of departments, sections or stations. In Christina von Hodenberg's words, they had become the leading figures of the emerging West German media public sphere.³⁵

Within this group of actors we can also find some young women. They worked for—or even ran—departments which were typically linked with stereotypically female affairs like women's programmes, broadcasting for schools or the daily morning workout on air. But there were also female producers, editors and reporters in spheres such as outside broadcasting, local news, entertainment and literature, too. Julia Dingwort-Nusseck is a good example. This young expert in economics – born in Hamburg in 1921, she received her Ph.D. in economics in 1944 – launched her career immediately after the end of World War II. From autumn 1945 onwards she worked for the NWDR. She began working in women's programmes, which was typical for qualified young woman journalists. But only a few months later, in 1946, she became chief business editor at the Hamburg station. This fact was so uncommon that for a long time her texts were read in front of the microphone by a man. For women broadcasters of the young generation, experience of wartime mobilisation into more traditionally male roles often formed a part of their claim on their position in the new order. Not many described themselves frankly as 'war profiteers', as Dingwort-Nusseck did in an interview in 2001, claiming that the shortage of men had helped her to advance.³⁶

The stories of this generation, particularly its male members, were told in both dramatic style but also as a 'normal' part of a broadcasting career. A good example of this, and of his generation, is the young Herbert Zimmermann, the reporter who later became famous as the radio announcer of the 1954 Football World Cup final. A

biographical blurb about him was presented to the readers of the fledgling radio programme guide *Hör Zu!* In its weekly column on page 2 devoted to introducing 'popular' voices to listeners, it outlined in a very typical biographical trajectory:

Changed schools regularly, but otherwise successfully inoculated. Already as a little tyke liked to hear himself speak. Conscripted from the school bench. Wounded in 1942, hospital in Berlin, where he made first practical encounter with the radio. Then a soldier again. After the war's end, finally a radio announcer.³⁷

This 'normal' sort of biography formed one part of a larger series of public texts, both fiction and non-fiction, that were devoted to stories of these men's homecoming. While wartime experience was cited in both men's and women's biographies, narratives of homecoming were largely a male preserve. The iconic figure is the soldier Beckmann, tragic hero of Wolfgang Borchert's 1947 radio play "The man outside" [*Draußen vor der Tür*].³⁸ In the play, the protagonist returns to his home city of Hamburg, wounded and wearing strange spectacles meant to fit under a gas mask, to find his parents dead and himself unable to make a new start in society while still traumatized by his experiences at the front. While the story is about an unsuccessful integration, most listeners understood it as a representative voice that gave this generation a claim to their leading role in society.³⁹ Such stories of homecoming soldiers would a short time later become a staple of the German film industry, which was beginning to revive after the war.⁴⁰

Beyond this dramatic example, the experiences of these home-comers were addressed in numerous non-fiction programmes, offering practical advice on how to re-integrate into society. Even programmes for women offered instructions on how to cook and care for homecoming soldiers. As we mentioned at the start of this paper, such programmes were ubiquitous enough to be a source of self-parody.

In addition to those programmes meant to ease in reintegration, another sort of programme was meant to serve as a constant reminder that soldiers still remained in captivity. Many programmes were explicitly addressed to soldiers in captivity, such as the NWDR's weekly broadcast for the POWs, read by 'Barbara', a female character who represented those at 'home' speaking to the soldiers in captivity. Popular music and film programmes in other zones also reminded listeners that POWs were part of the audiences, either by addressing them, or reading post from them on the air.⁴¹

Programmes with titles such as 'We're thinking of you' ran from the late 1940s to the mid-1950s; they included highly emotional reports of trains of new home-comers arriving back in Germany, and such events constantly re-energized the narrative of the young generation's homecoming. Reports from camps like the border transit camp

Friedberg (which was notably also used to house refugees) or other camps where former POWs arrived became sort of a radio event. The families at home could listen to strong emotions, to the fever of expectations, to shouts and outcries of women embracing their returning husband or father, and last but not least to the voices of the home-comers struggling for words in the interviews that were conducted immediately at the moment of return. The reporters stressed that these were narratives with a happy end. With audible scenes of reconciliation, they framed the facts of the soldier's release as a story of coming home. Complex stories combined sacrifice and salvation, segregation and unification. With programmes like these both a familial and a political message was given to the listeners - the family as a shelter figuratively representing 'home', and a society that had never forgotten the bitter fate of its former soldiers and was struggling successfully with the Russians in the Cold War.⁴²

3. Conclusion: the socio-cultural geography of homecoming after 1945

We began this paper by querying the degree of social agency (what one might call symbolic capital) exercised by various groups of 'home-comers' and the extent to which each group's narrative found representation in the emerging public sphere. As we have seen, the emergence of this new sphere was shaped by a range of tensions: between Allied occupiers and German populations, between the increasingly polarised political positions in the developing Cold War, as well as between various social groups with various experiences of displacement and deprivation.

Returned exiles, especially in the early years of occupation, exercised a high degree of agency, not least in their position as intermediaries between the occupation authorities and the German population. At the same time, their own experiences of displacement and exile remained behind the scenes for a number of reasons. Indeed, when their stories finally did emerge into the limelight, they were used as weapons to remove them from their positions in broadcasting.

Refugees, by contrast, were frequently represented on the radio, and their stories and ordeals were often referred to, but not in any way that translated into social agency. Their stories were readily woven into Western narratives of displacement and victimisation on the one hand, as well as of the heroic capitalist reconstruction on the other. On the radio (as later in film) refugees often appeared as a lens through which 'native' populations could view themselves, either as generous hosts or, by proxy, as victims of war. Social agency was offered almost exclusively through 'rolling up one's sleeves' and getting to work. The extent to which the suffering of the expellees was allowed to enter into public memory and can be considered as legitimate remains a topic of public and historical debate in Germany, opened once more recently by Andreas Kossert's popular study on the topic.⁴³ Certainly

in looking at the radio programmes, we see attempts at integration based far more around universalizing suffering and seeking healing not in memory, but in modernisation.

The 'young generation', finally, was strongly represented in terms of visibility and personal agency. Not only did they quickly come to occupy leading positions in broadcasting, but their stories soon came to be representative for the nation as a whole. As we have seen, there were a range of factors that contributed to their position. They were able to combine the opportunities afforded them by early occupation policies with a continuing public interest in the lives and well-being of soldiers into an unassailable (collective) public position. They claimed exclusive rights to the scarce resource of homecoming.

Considering the spatial discourses that were woven into these dynamics helps to shed clear light on these processes. Home-comers of the 'young generation' were able to lay such a strong claim to the home spaces of Germany by not having left them voluntarily in the first place (that is being sent to the war). Particularly for the male members of this generation, the visions of Germany as a feminine homeland constructed in wartime broadcasting (then constructed as a 'home front') were translated more or less seamlessly into the post-war narratives of returning soldiers. At the same time, as a group, their displacement to the front during wartime had, in a way, de-localised them: from then on, they were marked primarily as Germans. Taking up their generational mantle thus also granted them spatial access to the new narratives of the nation. In contrast to the 'young generation', the exiles were often accused of having left their *Vaterland* more or less voluntarily, and thus having taken up a new role which turned them into strangers and even worse - enemies. This was also in contrast to the stories of the refugees. They had been dislocated from specific home spaces, from Pomerania, East Prussia, Silesia, etc. For them, laying claim to belonging in the West was a problematic proposition. Instead, as the occupation ended and the borders of Germany began to solidify, the East-West axis of geography grew ever stronger. The East increasingly became the 'land of the lost' either as the German homelands that had disappeared, or as the 'home' of a new form of exile, those who had abandoned their homeland in favour of a political system.

1 "Abschiedssendung für Rolf James", September 11, 1948, NDR Sound Archives.

2 The numbers given above were taken from seminal works on the different issues; see: *Flucht. Vertreibung. Integration: Begleitbuch zur Ausstellung im Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Bonn, 3.12.2005 bis 17.4.2006, 3rd. ed. (Bonn: Haus der Geschichte, 2006); Wolfgang Jacobmeyer, *Vom Zwangsarbeiter zum heimatlosen Ausländer. Die*

Displaced Persons Westdeutschland 1945-1951 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1985); *Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration 1933-1945*, eds. Claus-Dieter Krohn et. al. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998); Arthur L. Smith, *Heimkehr aus dem Zweiten Weltkrieg. Die Entlassung deutscher Kriegsgefangenen* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1985); the number of POWs in the Soviet Union is an unresolved question until today, see recently: Alexander Haritonow and Klaus-Dieter Möller, "Die Gesamtzahl sowjetischer Kriegsgefangener - eine weiterhin ungelöste Frage," in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 58: 3 (2010), 393-401.

³ The recent re-evaluations of the 1950s across a range of disciplines have stressed the importance of the idea of Heimat in incorporating and embracing modernity and the economic miracle. Perhaps most thoroughgoing in this regard is Johannes von Moltke, *No Place Like Home: Locations of Heimat in German Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 114ff.

⁴ David Morley, *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity* (London: Routledge, 2000).

⁵ Especially focused on processes of domestication of radio in the "Third Reich": Inge Marszolek and Adelheid von Saldern, *Zuhören und Gehörtwerden. I. Radio im Nationalsozialismus* (Tübingen: Edition discord, 1998).

⁶ Wulf Kansteiner, *In Search of German Memory: History, Politics and Television after Auschwitz* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006).

⁷ Christina von Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise: Eine Geschichte der westdeutschen Medienöffentlichkeit 1945-1973* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2006).

⁸ Robert G. Moeller, *War Stories: The Search for a Usable Past in the Federal Republic of Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

⁹ Elizabeth Heineman, "The Hour of the Woman: Memories of Germany's 'Crisis Years' and West German National Identity," in *Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany 1949-1968*, ed. Hanna Schissler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 21-56.

¹⁰ Christoph Classen, *Faschismus und Antifaschismus. Die nationalsozialistische Vergangenheit im ostdeutschen Hörfunk (1945-1953)* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2004).

¹¹ The examples come from the work of the two authors. I.e. the ongoing research of the Research Centre for the History of Broadcasting in Northern Germany (Forschungsstelle Geschichte des Rundfunks in Norddeutschland) (see: www.rundfunkgeschichte-norddeutschland.de). Two volumes concerning the history of broadcasting in the British occupation zone were published by Hans-Ulrich Wagner, the head of the Research Centre: *Die*

Geschichte des Nordwestdeutschen Rundfunks (Hamburg: Hoffmann and Campe, 2005 and 2008). And this also draws on the work on the broadcasting and the reconstruction of everyday life in Germany by Alexander Badenoch: *Voices in Ruins: West German Radio across the 1945 Divide* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008).

12 France was host to some émigrés, too, but only until 1940, when the German *Wehrmacht* invaded the country. The best known example of a returned émigré in French uniform was Alfred Döblin, a principally tragic fate.

13 See Marita Biller, *Exilstationen. Eine empirische Untersuchung zur Emigration und Remigration deutschsprachiger Journalisten und Publizisten* (Münster and Hamburg: Lit-Verlag, 1993); Hans-Ulrich Wagner, *Rückkehr in die Fremde? Remigranten und Rundfunk in Deutschland 1945 bis 1955* (Berlin: Vistas, 2000), 60-71.

14 Walter Albert Eberstadt, *Whence We Came, Where We Went: From the Rhine to the Main to the Elbe, from the Thames to the Hudson. A Family History* (New York: W.A.E. Books, 2002), 333.

15 Translated from German. - Some of the correspondence of Alexander Maass has been published; see: Mira Dordević, "Pioniere des deutschen Rundfunks im Spiegel eines Briefwechsels. Ernst Hardt - Alexander Maass (1945/46)," *Rundfunk und Geschichte* 26: 1-2 (2000), 29-43.

16 See Dietrich Schwarzkopf, *Ausbildung und Vertrauensbildung. Die Rundfunkschule des NWDR* (Hamburg: Hans-Bredow-Institute for Media Research), 2007 (= Nordwestdeutsches Heft zur Rundfunkgeschichte, 6), http://www.hans-bredow-institut.de/webfm_send/184 (accessed May 1, 2010).

17 Translated from German. - Broadcast by NWDR-Cologne, March, 11, 1946. WDR. Written Archives.

18 "Politische, sachliche und wirtschaftliche Mißstände im NWDR". WDR. Written Archives. No. 9509.

19 See Rainer Schulze, "Growing Discontent: Relations between Native and Refugee Populations in a Rural District in Germany after the Second World War," in *West Germany under Construction: Politics, Society and Culture in the Adenauer Era*, ed. Robert G. Moeller (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press), 53-72.

20 Meryn McLaren, "Out of the Huts Emerged a Settled People' Community Building in West German Refugee Camps," *German History* 28: 1 (2010), 21-43.

²¹ Thomas Rölle, *Der Britische Einfluss auf den Aufbau des Nordwestdeutschen Rundfunks 1945-1948* (Aachen: Shaker Verlag 1997), 117; For the US Zone, see 'Radio Branch Policy Principles', no date, (1945/46), Bayerischer Rundfunk, Historical Archives, 24.4.

22 The few seeming 'exceptions' prove the rule. At the Südwestfunk in the French Zone, station Intendant Friedrich Bischoff and head of the literary department Herbert Bahlinger were both from Silesia, but not expellees (among other things, the French zone did not accept refugees until very late during the occupation). In print journalism, *Die Zeit* editor Marion Gräfin Dönhoff is a genuine exception among high-profile journalists. Both a woman and an expellee from East Prussia, her success was not built by mobilizing these 'common' elements of her identity, but rather by building on her elite status as a highly-educated member of the nobility. Notably as well, she did not follow the line of most expellee groups and pushed for recognition of the Oder-Neisse line. See von Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise*, op. cit., 243-4.

23 Bernhard Ernst interviews Dusseldorf Oberregierungsrat Dr Auerbach. *Aus Rheinland und Westfalen*, broadcast by NWDR, September 16, 1945. WDR Sendeprotokoll HF, MF.

24 Ibid.

²⁵ See Schulze, "Growing Discontent", op. cit, 61-3; Andreas Kossert, *Kalte Heimat. Die Geschichte der deutschen Vertriebenen nach 1945* (München: Pantheon-Verlag, 2009), 71ff.; Ian Connor, *Refugees and expellees in post-war Germany* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press 2007), 58ff.

²⁶ *Der Hörer hat das Wort* NWDR, June 26, 1949 WDR Written Archives, 4489.

²⁷ Translated from German. - Adolf Grimme, "Das Ethos des Rundfunks," in *Jahrbuch 1949-1950*, ed. Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk (Hamburg and Köln: Nordwestdeutscher Rundfunk, 1950), 14-20, cit. 19.

²⁸ See also Bettina Hasselbring analysing radio series like „Die Kultur der Vertriebenen“, „Ostdeutschland“ and „Für die Heimatvertriebenen“, *Geschichtsvermittlung im Bayerischen Rundfunk. Eine Studie über das Hörfunkprogramm in den Jahren 1949 bis 1955* (Master thesis, München 1988), 172ff. and 210ff.. - For parallel trends in post-war films *Von Moltke, No Place Like Home*, op. cit, 139ff.

²⁹ *Von Moltke, No Place Like Home*, op. cit, 142.

³⁰ This mirrors broadly the intellectual debate surrounding media at the time that saw the private sphere as the safe inner realm that was often threatened by mass media, but could also potentially be rejuvenated. Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise*, op. cit., 62ff.

³¹ Translated from German. - Herman Ehren, *Ostvertriebene in Westdeutschland*, broadcast by NWDR, August 21, 1947 ("Aus Zeit und Leben"). WDR Written Archives, 9358.

³² See Frank Biess, *Homecomings: Returning POWs and the Legacies of Defeat in Postwar Germany* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006).

³³ Rüdiger Proske and Walter Weymann-Weyhe, "Wir aus dem Kriege. Der Weg der jüngeren Generation", *Frankfurter Hefte* 3 (1948), 792-803.

³⁴ See Heinz Bude, *Deutsche Karrieren. Lebenskonstruktionen sozialer Aufsteiger aus der Flakhelfer-Generation* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1987); Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte. Vol. 4. Vom Beginn des Ersten Weltkriegs bis zur Gründung der beiden deutschen Staaten 1914-1949* (München: C.H. Beck, 2003).

³⁵ See von Hodenberg, *Konsens und Krise*, op. cit.

³⁶ Julia Dingwort-Nusseck interviewed by Peter von Rüden, April 11, 2001. Research Centre for the History of Broadcasting, Hamburg.

³⁷ Translated from German. - "Den möchte ich sehn! Herbert Zimmermann", *Hör Zu*, 2, 5 (1947), 2.

³⁸ Wolfgang Borchert, *Draussen vor der Tür*, broadcast for the first time by NWDR, February 13, 1947. NDR Sound Archives. The text was published in: Wolfgang Borchert, *Das Gesamtwerk* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1949).

³⁹ Based on listeners' letters to the author see: Bernd M. Kraske, "Draussen vor der Tür. Anmerkungen zur Hörspiel-Rezeption," in *Wolfgang Borchert. Werk und Wirkung*, ed. Rudolf Wolff (Bonn: Bouvier, 1984), 38-55.

⁴⁰ In 1948, *Draussen vor der Tür* was adapted for cinema as *Love '47 (Liebe 47)* by popular film director Wolfgang Liebeneiner. Many other early postwar 'rubble films' such as *The murderers are among us* (*Die Mörder sind unter uns*) (Wolfgang Staudte, 1946) and *And the heaven above us* (*Und über uns der Himmel*) (Josef von Baky, 1947) also featured the homecoming and integration of soldiers as central narratives.

⁴¹ The best example is the Südwestfunk's weekly film review "Spotlights on!" ("Scheinwerfer auf!"). See also Sabine Friedrich, *Rundfunk und Besatzungsmacht. Organisation, Programm und Hörer des Südwestfunks 1945-1949* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft 1991), 304-7 for such letters from POWs.

⁴² An analysis of programmes concerning 'homecomers' was undertaken by Michael Stolle: "Das Wunder von Friedland. Die Heimkehr der letzten deutschen Kriegsgefangenen und das Radio," *Rundfunk und Geschichte*, 31 (2005), 3/4, 20-30.

⁴³ Kossert, *Kalte Heimat*, op. cit.