

"Must I Remember?": *Hamlet*, History, and Helmut Käutner's *The Rest is Silence*

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Abstract

We have grown accustomed to conceptualizing Shakespearean appropriation as a means for filmmakers to speak through a vehicle imbued with great cultural authority, even when filmmakers aim at questioning or undermining that authority. Certainly that is the case with *The Rest is Silence*. Käutner deploys *Hamlet*, a text especially laden with political and cultural resonance for German audiences, as a means to engage a key issue of postwar German cinema: the nation's guilt and yet its desire to remain silent about its past. *The Rest is Silence* takes up two particular components of that cultural silence, the unacknowledged imbrication of corporate power and profit in the rise of the Nazi regime, and the temptation of a younger generation, coming of age after the war in the fifties, to forget the nation's guilty past or, at the least, to participate in communal silence about it. Both issues had some topicality at the time of the film's initial release. At the same time, however, the *Hamlet* narrative also provides Käutner a means to avoid remembering the complicity of ordinary German people with Nazism, a means to displace rather than fully acknowledge communal guilt. Käutner's selective fidelity to certain aspects of *Hamlet* constitutes a subtle mode of strategic forgetting in the tale of national guilt he seeks to tell. In *The Rest is Silence*, *Hamlet* functions as both mirror and cover for the nation's guilty memory, so that the appropriation of Shakespeare becomes both a means to voice an uncomfortable (family) secret but also a precedent for not remembering it in all its disturbing power.

Introduction

The title of Helmut Käutner's 1959 *Der Rest ist Schweigen* (aka *The Rest is Silence*) has, ironically, presaged its critical fate.¹ Despite being dutifully noted in lists of *Hamlet* screen adaptations, commentators have said nary a word about it. Even Kenneth Rothwell's comprehensive history of film Shakespeare devotes exactly one sentence to it (Rothwell 172). One reason for this critical silence may be that Käutner's film *oeuvre* is not widely known outside Germany. Although Käutner was a major West German director of the forties and fifties, only a fraction of his *oeuvre* is available on video and only a handful of monographs have assessed

his career.² Those monographs typically present *The Rest is Silence* as a work of peripheral interest, produced as Käutner's reputation began to wane in the 60s and, so the implication goes, precipitating his decline. Reviews of the day treated the film as a technically accomplished work marred by the fact that Käutner was insufficiently faithful to *Hamlet*, his Shakespearean template.³ *The Rest is Silence* deserves better, for it speaks in interesting ways to the relationship between appropriation and cultural silence. Käutner deploys *Hamlet*, a resonant text for German audiences, to engage a key issue for postwar German cinema: the nation's desire to remain silent about its guilty past. *The Rest is Silence* takes up two components of that silence, the unacknowledged place of corporate power in the Nazi regime, and the temptation of a younger generation to remain silent about Germany's recent history. Yet paradoxically *Hamlet* also provides Käutner a means to avoid fully acknowledging Germany's deep complicity with National Socialism. Selective fidelity to Shakespeare's play, I will argue, allows Käutner to voice the uncomfortable (family) secret of postwar Germany while not remembering it in all of its disturbing power.

Though not a word of *Hamlet* appears in the film, the indebtedness of *The Rest is Silence* to Shakespeare's play is unmistakable. The Hamlet figure is John H. Claudius, son of Johannes Claudius, a German steel magnate. Sent to America by his father during the war, John becomes a professor of modern philosophy at Harvard. As the film begins, John uses the occasion of his transferring power-of-attorney to his uncle Paul, now manager of the family steelworks, to return home to Germany. His visit, however, is a ruse. John's real purpose is to investigate the murky circumstances of his father's death, who, the official report states, was killed in an air-raid shelter during an Allied bombing of the steelworks. Assisting John is his friend Major Horace, an American ex-military officer working in Germany. In John's absence, his mother Gertrud has married Paul, and the two now live in the family mansion which, in an affront to John's childhood memories of home, Paul has recently renovated. There too live Dr. Pohl, known as "Uncle Max," a Freudian psychiatrist; his son Herbert, who spent time in prison for his service as a Nazi soldier; and Pohl's daughter Fee, a psychologically fragile girl fascinated with John. Using newsreel, radio and newspaper reports, and his father's diary which he discovers in his father's study, John learns that Paul used the bombings as a cover for murdering Johannes so that he could possess the family home, the steelworks, and Gertrud, with whom he'd been carrying on an affair. To test his findings, John invites Paul, Gertrud, and Pohl to a ballet called "The Mousetrap" which he crafts with his friend Michael Krantz, a choreographer. Angered, Paul pressures Pohl to fake a psychoanalytic assessment of John that will get him committed. Unable to get satisfaction from the police because Paul has stolen and destroyed Johannes's incriminating diary, John confronts Paul directly about

his father's murder, at which Gertrud, unable to bear the family secret any longer, shoots Paul with his own gun.

Der Rest ist Schweigen and post-war Germany

Hamlet serves Käutner in several ways in his engagement with German post-war guilt and silence. Käutner reimagines *Hamlet* as a *noir* detective film where protagonist John Claudius seeks to unearth the truth behind his father's death. The pursuit of justice and truth leads John, like other *noir* protagonists, to discover an inchoate system of evil, a discovery dominated by the emergence of what Žižek calls "the obscene father" (in this film Paul Claudius), a perversion of that paternal logos which might guarantee restoration of social order and stable meaning (see Charnes 1-7). In *Epilog: Das Geheimnis der Orplid* (1950) Käutner had introduced this kind of *noir* film, what Joglekar calls the "antidetektive" genre, to postwar German cinema audiences. Breaking with the epistemological confidence and escapist intent of classical detectives shown during the Nazi era, the "antidetektive" stresses a lack of epistemological closure and moral clarity. In such tales, the solving of a single crime leads to confrontation with endemic corruption that is everywhere and nowhere; the detective is often implicated in the very system he investigates; the film's structure, riddled with flashbacks or subjective sequences, confounds the secure deduction from facts that drives traditional detectives; and the detective's paranoid "overknowing" of the world is never made public or fails to have any social effect. In postwar Germany, Joglekar argues, traditional detectives contributed to a culture of forgetting, "rendering the political past invisible" by treating justice as a matter of solving a discrete single crime, thereby limiting group culpability. By contrast, Käutner's "antidetektive" *Epilog* "insisted on casting a critical glance at the Nazi past and foregrounded the connection between investigation and introspection, between suspicion and self-incrimination" (Joglekar 65). The genre Käutner inaugurated in postwar Germany provided popular cinema with a vehicle for acknowledging Germany's national crimes and the general public's involvement in them, though notably Käutner refused to "nam[e] names" (Joglekar 69). *The Rest is Silence* thus marks Käutner's return to his roots, both to a film genre he had pioneered a decade earlier and to the literary roots of that genre in the form of *Hamlet*.

By choosing *Hamlet* as a subtext, Käutner was taking up a play which had long served as a vehicle for Germany's conversations about its political self-image.⁴ In this case, the conversation concerned the vexed question of postwar German rearmament, a question which divided the West German intelligentsia throughout the Adenauer era. Adenauer's pro-rearmament position lined up with the American argument that a re-armed West Germany was needed to serve as a bulwark against creeping Communism. For many, however, rearmament only codified German partition

and threatened a drift back into militarism and authoritarianism. It constituted a forgetting of the lessons of the recent past.

It is the last of these sentiments that the film addresses. If earlier iterations of the "Germany is Hamlet" trope had identified the nation with Hamlet, Käutner's film identifies postwar Germany with Paul, the Claudius figure. Paul, a successful business executive, epitomizes postwar West German culture, in which corporate capitalism has replaced National Socialism. He has rebuilt the family business, an armaments manufacturing empire, as well as the family home, so much so that it is barely recognizable to John. Also residing there is Dr. Pohl, the "Uncle Max" of John's youth, a wise but wily psychologist who otherwise might function as his surrogate father. Pohl's presence reveals how Paul has co-opted the older German intellectual tradition, a point underlined by the ominous echo of their names. Gathered around Paul is a coterie of businessmen — Voltman and Cornelius, figures straight out of a Grosz painting, who ominously refer to "phase one," removing the rubble from Allied bombings that still clutters the Claudius steelworks. All they need is John's consent. However, the last trace of the war contains circumstantial evidence of the primal crime John seeks to substantiate — Paul's murder of his father. John's investigation reveals that Paul's designs on Johannes predate his murder; Paul forced his brother Johannes publically to embrace the Nazi cause and serve as frontman for Paul's morally-corrupt business ambitions. Several times we see John or Paul looking into a black hole in the rubble which leads to the air-raid shelter below. This signature shot visually articulates the intent of John's investigation and Käutner's film: to look into the dark criminal past buried under the rubble Paul seeks to sweep away in service of postwar prosperity. Quite literally and figuratively, Paul seeks to return to the concerns of the "rubble films" that appeared immediately after the war, films concerned with Germany's self-immolation during National Socialism, its collective guilt and the possibilities for a new national history begun in the ruins of the old (see Shandley, and Manvell and Fraenkel).

Corporate Capitalism, Tele-technology and the Legacy of National Socialism

Certainly one target Käutner had specifically in mind is the Krupp family, known for its manufacturing dynasty in steel and arms (for details, see Manchester). Under Alfried Krupp, the family business profited from Nazi slave labor, and when it became clear Germany was losing the war, Alfried liquidated millions of marks in German bonds and hid the money abroad, thereby preserving the family fortune. After the war, the complicity of the Krupps with the Nazis came out in their trials (Alfried was initially sentenced to twelve years and forfeiture of his fortune), but by 1951 officials of the American occupation granted the family a blanket amnesty, restored their assets to them, and allowed them to return to business, so long as arms manufacture and mining

were kept separate from other company holdings. Notably, 1959, the release date of Käutner's film, was also the year in which Alfried was required to have gotten rid of his remaining interests in arms and mining. From the start he had had no intention of divesting and was supported in his resistance by many Ruhr industrialists. At the time Alfried was one of the richest men in the world and in many ways a troubling symbol of the postwar German *Wirtschaftswunder*, or economic miracle.

Paul extends what Alfried Krupp exemplifies, the continuity between National Socialism and modern corporate capitalism. Like Herbert, Paul has a Nazi past, but unlike Herbert, he has managed to remain silent about it and has not paid for his crimes. When Herbert bitterly complains about hypocritical Allied treatment of ex-Nazis, Paul shuts him up with the observation "politics sometimes requires compromise," a comment that epitomizes his calculating amorality and desire not to engage the past. Paul's power springs from the fact that others are willing to remain silent with him. Käutner plays up the tensely elliptical quality of dialogue in the Claudius household where what can't be said hovers over conversations. John is threatening because he raises taboo topics. At the dinner table he scandalizes Paul, Gertrud and Pohl, for example, by asking his mother and uncle whether they were with his father on the night of his death. Their anxious glances, pauses and too-careful, matter-of-fact answers betray that much is being left unsaid. Soon John's persistent investigation into the past, an affront to proper decorum, leads to the charge that he is "mad." Even the police, Käutner suggests, are complicit with the conspiracy of silence, for when John demands that Paul be arrested, Inspector Fortner (i.e., Fortinbras) takes his statement but observes that prosecutors probably won't indict "a close family member...who enjoys [such] an impeccable reputation." Fortner implies that John's delusions are brought on by stress from dealing with all that modern philosophy at Harvard. Paul is at the apex of an entire social system — family, business associates, the police — conspiratorially committed to silence about the past because silence maintains the prosperous status quo. Question the source of the Claudius family fortune, and the German economic miracle threatens to fall apart, exposed as a just another transformation of the willingness to cast a blind eye to militarism.

Käutner broadens out his critique of post-war Germany by suggesting how modern technology and modernism are implicated in this conspiracy. The decor of the renovated Claudius home is noteworthy in this regard, for it showcases modern design — the paintings are abstract, the furniture is sleek and without decorative ornament. These design touches make a connection between Germany's impulse not to acknowledge its past and International modernism's featurelessness, its desire to eliminate references that might evoke history. The one exception is a monumental statue in the front foyer, of a steelworker holding a forge ladle. Featured in several shots, this statue symbolizes the family business, but its abstracted, vaguely heroic style is unmistakably reminiscent

of Fascist propaganda. It is thus a reminder of the dubious political affiliations of corporate-modernist style, which allows advanced capitalism to project a benignly abstract face and obscure its history. The only section of the Claudius mansion not in this style is Johannes's wood-paneled study, the room where Johannes has hidden records of his experiences during the Nazi era. The oversized portrait of Johannes that dominates the room serves the function of Hamlet's ghost, fixating John with its direct, almost accusatory stare and leading him to a secret safe containing the diary where Johannes recorded Paul's attempts on his life, his affair with Gertrud, and his manipulation of him in the company's dealings with the Nazis. In this space, untouched by modernist style, the otherwise unspoken past becomes available to John. Appropriately, too, here is where John confronts Paul and Gertrud with his knowledge of Paul's crimes in the film's final scenes. By this time, Paul has stolen Johannes's diary, the only non-circumstantial evidence John had of his activities. Käutner thus constructs the final scene so that justice depends entirely on John's memory of what his father revealed about the past and his willingness to break the conspiracy of silence.

Equally noteworthy is the film's engagement with the relationship to corporate power and history to modern tele-technology operating across gulfs of space or time. The film opens with shots of a jet airplane landing from a transatlantic flight, John's arrival from the States. This image establishes John as a remigrant, the native German returning to his homeland after the war, like Hamlet an alienated figure both inside and outside his native society. But these opening images, with interiors of the modern international terminal and the disembodied voice announcing arrivals, also hint at the nexus of technology and power. That technology made Germany's economic boom possible, but it is also how corporate control of society is exercised and memory of the past erased. Käutner is particularly interested in modern media — telephone, radio, television, tape recording and film. Paul, for example, phones Inspector Fortner before John gives his statement to the police, and it is while watching television that he comes up with the idea of using Michael Krantz and his companion Stanley Rosen to distract John from snooping. One telling moment occurs just after John, having discovered his father's diary, sits down to read it in a bar. As he reads, we hear the truth of his father's past articulated for the first time, presented in voiceover and flashback, but competing in the background is a goofy variety show on the radio, a sign of the superficially happy, prosperous present and, more ominously, a media opiate lulling the one other patron to sleep.

This use of mass media to project a false image of the nation connects to an earlier sequence, where John watches a Nazi newsreel, "Die Deutsche Wochenschau" ("The German Weekly Review"), as part of his investigation. The newsreel offers an unwittingly damning portrayal of Johannes's involvement with Hitler's war machine: pictures of the Claudius factory and his father alternate with Riefenstahl-like shots of goose-stepping troops and parading armaments.

At Johannes's funeral, we see the Reichsminister for Munitions and Armaments lay a wreath in his honor; even Hitler himself offers Gertrud condolences. (Käutner cleverly intercuts actual newsreels with his own footage to achieve the effect.) The newsreel, and the recording of a patriotic speech by Johannes to which John also listens, allow the Nazi regime to project a seductive image of national solidarity. This sequence highlights the disturbing continuity between the Nazis' manipulative use of mass media and the postwar military-industrial complex's use of media to lull the German public into complacent silence.⁵

Here Käutner raises a moral dilemma facing postwar German filmmakers: how to acknowledge the cinema's complicity in the rise of the Nazis? For him this issue had personal resonance, for he began his career as filmmaker in 1939, and though he made movies during that period that either avoided propagandizing or registered ambivalence about politics, he was nevertheless part of the Nazi media apparatus. Soon after the war in a 1947 essay "Dismantling the Dream Factory," Käutner laid blame upon bourgeois audiences, not the director, for the escapist (and so politically complicit) nature of German cinema, a claim he reiterated nine years later in a co-written editorial, "Every Audience, as Everybody Knows, Has the Films It Deserves," for the film magazine *Film: Monatshefte für Film und Fernsehen*.⁶ Within *The Rest is Silence* itself, deferral of complicity comes from another angle. The culpatory "Die Deutsche Wochenschau" newsreel is capable of yielding potentially exculpatory conclusions, for as John watches it and closely peruses news photos, he notices Paul's sinister presence in the margins, a figure of "pure hatred" who, John hypothesizes, forced his father to cooperate. Despite the clear aim of the photographic evidence to create a false image of Germany and his father, John (and Käutner) insists that the medium captures more and less than its Nazi practitioners intended. The film medium can preserve the past in spite of its misuse, if one has the skill to read it carefully.

The Ghost in the Machine

Perhaps the best example in the film of this equivocality is the telephone. What prods John to exhume the past is a mysterious telephone call he receives from his dead father, the counterpart to the call that Paul places later on to Inspector Fortner. Here the voice of the almost silenced past enters the narrative through an instrument of Paul's corporate power, as if it were the ghost in the machine.⁷ This paternal voice on the wire is uncanny. We see the phone call only in flashback, narrated with John's voiceover. As the scene opens, John is napping at his desk at Harvard; a skull on the shelf behind identifies him as a Hamlet figure; beside him is his father's photo, eyes glancing to the right, directly at John. The call awakens John, and we see him answer, but we don't hear

what either figure says, only a dissonant organ chord and insistent drumbeat, a musical motif that highlights various sinister moments throughout the film. Afterward, John tells us, he contacted the operator to identify the caller, only to discover no such call was put through. Since here we never directly hear the father's voice (in fact we hear his voice only in the diary sequence and on the recording of his speech), the status of this accusatory voice from the past remains uncertain. Is it real? A projection of John's guilt? Manifestation of his desire to exonerate his father? The result of reading too much Heidegger and Nietzsche? Even John's ally Horace, the only person to whom he reveals the story of the phone call, doesn't believe the voice actually exists, calling it instead a hallucination brought on a letter about John's mother's remarriage. Like Hamlet's ghost, this voice who breaks silence about unacknowledged sins at the nation's heart is haunted by doubt, but in John's case, he has no witnesses, not even the film viewer, who can corroborate that the voice is real. And yet in the final confrontation between John and Paul, a confrontation in which John acknowledges that "there's no one left who'll believe me," the telephone suddenly rings, as if to suggest that the otherwise silenced ghost of the Nazi past in the modern corporate machine were on the other end of the line, threatening to make itself heard. The ringing phone represents the pressure to acknowledge the insistent call of Germany's history. As it rings, Gertrud finally blurts out the heretofore silenced truth that Paul killed Johannes — "I knew it all the time"; with that confession she turns Paul's own gun on him. Yet Käutner refuses to resolve the ambiguity of the voice on the line. When Herbert eventually picks up the receiver, it's clear from the conversation that he is speaking to Inspector Fortner. In a strange way, then, to all but John the direct voice of the past remains silent to the end, incapable of speaking to us in anything more than a troublingly mediated fashion.

Undoubtedly Johannes's voice reflects the ambiguous status of Hamlet's ghost, but Käutner's amplification of that ambiguity is symptomatic of the film's unease with the father-figure's (and fatherland's) relationship to the Nazi past. Käutner's central point was that Germany, a generation on from the war and experiencing unprecedented prosperity, risked not recognizing how its troubling past survived into the present. One advantage of using *Hamlet* to make this point was that Shakespeare's play made Hamlet, representative of the younger generation intent on recovering a repressed past, the tale's hero. Though Käutner aligns the dominant power structures of modern Germany with Claudius, he aligns the counter-cultural strains of German youth culture with Hamlet. If one follows out the equivalences between play and film, *Hamlet* also establishes the elder Hamlet as an entirely blameless victim, precisely how John sees his father. John's effort to uncover Paul's criminality seeks to exonerate his father from wartime guilt, this despite the fact the public record contains ample evidence of Johannes's Nazi involvement. John devotes himself

to bringing his father's image in line with the kind of idealized paternal image that Hamlet holds of his father. *Hamlet* also functions in *The Rest Is Silence*, then, to establish analogically Johannes's status as a mythic, idealized victim-father like old Hamlet. So presented, Johannes allows Käutner to reserve a space of non-culpability for the older generation even as he stresses the nation's need to confront its sordid past.⁸

John's desire to reconstruct an unsullied memory of the patriarch — corresponding to Žižek's notion of the paternal logos — bears upon his own inherited culpability, since John still reaps the rewards of the family dynasty and has power-of-attorney. After all, he too bears the guilty name of "Claudius." And yet even though Käutner, like John, would like to exonerate Johannes, he must know that displacing communal blame onto a single figure like Paul is potentially just another form of evading shared moral responsibility for National Socialism, another mode of silence. In fact, Major Horace — the film's only non-German — voices that awareness. When John claims to him that his innocent father was forced to collaborate, Horace replies, "You, of all people, using the old Nazi excuse. No individual is to blame. No industrialist, general, concentration camp bullies. All were forced." Käutner's odd representation of the father's voice, then, is symptomatic of the film's struggle to engage the full implications of German guilt. We never hear Johannes directly utter his accusation of murder (as Hamlet's ghost utters his), for that accusation would constitute an utter evasion of Johannes's own complicity. Rather, his voice on the wire remains to the end ambiguous, silent for us and insistent for John.

Oedipal Psychoanalysis and the Wound of History

The film's ambiguous attitude toward a psychoanalytic reading of *Hamlet* also betrays its struggle with the demands of history. When John tells Horace of his father's mysterious phonecall, Horace concludes that this is an Oedipal hallucination. Dr. Pohl floats a similar idea when Paul asks him why John hates his mother so, observing cryptically that "the cause isn't always clear, even to the one who hates. It might be jealousy." Interestingly, the film repeatedly entertains the possibility that John's hostility to Paul and Gertrud may spring from psychological neuroses only then to dismiss that possibility, as if it were purging the Oedipal resonances of the *Hamlet* narrative. The reason for doing so is easily divined. To explain John's obsession with unearthing Paul's crimes in psychoanalytic terms is to explain away his moral imperative and to pathologize his need to break silence; it is to reduce Johannes's voice, the voice of the unarticulated past, to an Oedipal projection of John's imagination. Within the film, psychoanalysis is presented as an instrument of Paul's power. Though Paul doesn't believe Pohl's Freudian explanation for John's hostility, he encourages Pohl to write a diagnosis designed to commit John to an isolation ward, the equivalent

of the execution order Claudius sends with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. It is as if Kätner were at some level attracted to an Oedipal reading of John as a way of blunting the full burden of history, while at the same time he recognizes how a psychoanalytic reading of his Hamlet figure is just another way of converting John's demand for justice into private neurosis.

This topic draws attention to one final parallel between *Hamlet* and *The Rest is Silence*: Dr. Pohl's daughter Fee, the film's Ophelia figure. Unlike Ophelia, Fee is coded as psychologically unhinged from the very start of the tale. She is the only member of the Claudius household who goes to meet him at the airport, though John is so preoccupied with his investigation that he never sees her. Our first glimpse of Fee is through a car's back window as she is driven away from the airport without John, looking sad, abandoned, imprisoned, alone. That look backward is thematically significant, not just because it announces her romantic idolization of John. Fee's relationship to modernity is one of looking backward — she dresses in outdated frocks; she lives in the decrepit Pohl family home where she grows flowers; her bed is littered with dolls, suggesting her arrested development; she insists that John "has always been here," despite the fact that he's been in America for more than a decade; and she is pointedly detached from the Claudius household, with its silence about the past. If with John Kätner is at pains to deny psychopathology, with Fee he emphasizes it — Fee's troubled idealization of John parallels John's idealization of his father.

Several key scenes suggest that Fee's mental state is an effect of her denial of wartime history. If Paul, Claudius and Pohl know the truth of the past and choose never to speak it, Fee has repressed all cognizance of the past and remains in a state of childhood. She speaks to John about her flowers as if they were her children and she their protective mother — "I just let them grow undisturbed. And I help them. I am with them when they die." In the same conversation she reveals a fatalistic fascination with dying with dignity: "Have you ever watched a flower die?...It looks nice. Humans try to live to the end. Flowers don't. They have dignity. They die the way they flower. Happy and ready when their time comes." When John asks her "But if you cut them before their time, is that a nice death too?", Fee declares with fury, "That is not death, it's murder! Even if it's only a flower!" This strange exchange suggests how fully Fee has repressed any engagement with Germany's history of wartime cruelty, particularly genocide. Rather than acknowledge the nation's culpability for its past, she steps out of history and retreats into her own imagined world where she can protect her flower-children and insure that they die with dignity. Dr. Pohl's diagnosis of his daughter is apt: she suffers from schizophrenia, the national malady of postwar Germany.

Early on Fee is attracted to John, as if despite her repression of the past she remains drawn to what he represents, the desire to break through the oppressive silence of German society. The two connect as representatives of the younger generation at odds with their elders, but they also share

a deeper bond of alienation, revealed in their conversation after John has read his father's diary. When John laments "I always thought I could understand what I saw," Fee sympathizes "We only understand secret things. At least I do. I don't try to understand anything else. It just brings pain or disgust." Here Fee is not the pawn of Paul and Pohl, as Ophelia is of Claudius and Polonius; John does not mock Fee at the performance of his "Mousetrap," as Hamlet does Ophelia. In fact Fee is at John's side as he writes the ballet and she sits with him at its premiere; the two are in league against the Claudius household. But when John accidentally kills Pohl as he listens in on John's confrontation with his mother, Fee quickly falls apart. Not only can't she bear the death of her father; she can't bear the fall of John in her estimation, for with the killing of her father John has committed the same act he has accused Paul of. We see her fall into mad disillusionment when Herbert, Paul and Gertrud observe her clipping off the heads of her flowers while romantic music plays in the background. With wartime trauma repeated so close to home and unable to repress it any longer, Fee descends into psychotic disconnection from the world. Her function in *The Rest is Silence* is to provide tragic counterpoint to John's "heroic" notion that revealing Germany's secret guilt will lead to justice, reform or psychological health.

Fee does not die, unlike Ophelia (nor does John, unlike Hamlet), and in fact the film gives her the last word. After Gertrud has shot Paul, John sees Fee being led to a car by a doctor, and he calls out to her. At first she gives no sign of recognition, then she asks him "How do you know my name? You're a stranger. Come and visit me. I want to show you my flowers. The cattleya's in bloom tonight. But you must be very quiet. I don't want my father to hear you. He's always behind the door." After getting into the car, she adds, "Maybe you'd better not come. I'd forgotten - all my flowers have died. Don't be sad about it. Death is nothing special to me. Ask your father. He knows." This final speech underlines the film's ambivalent attitude toward the father-figure, at once menacingly enforcing silence ("you must be very quiet, he's always behind the door") and a source of truth ("he knows"). As Fee drives off, the film's final image is of John, alone in a parking lot, the family steelworks behind him, walking slowly into the blank landscape, a figure of existential integrity who has left to contemplate the tragic cost of his labors. Only then does the title "the rest is silence" appear, as if to stress the sadly ironic effect of his pursuit of justice and truth. John's pyrrhic victory reveals the difficulty with Kautner's engagement with postwar guilt: he is unable to conceptualize what German society might look like after it has moved beyond silence and acknowledged fully its political past.

Conclusion: Acknowledgement and Silence

We have grown accustomed to conceptualizing Shakespearean appropriation as a means for filmmakers to speak through a vehicle imbued with cultural authority, even when they contest that authority. Käutner's *The Rest is Silence* certainly uses *Hamlet* in this way, deploying a Shakespearean text long central to Germany's self-conceptualization to meditate upon the nation's postwar cultural memory. But with its conflicted desire to idealize the ghostly dead father, also drawn from and strengthened by parallels to *Hamlet*, the film occludes a full acknowledgment of national guilt even as it seeks to confront it. What makes *The Rest is Silence* fascinating is that it demonstrates powerfully that for all its mediated eloquence, Shakespearean appropriation can also be a form of silence.

Notes

1. Thanks to Courtney Lehmann and members of the 2011 SAA seminar "Silent Shakespeare" for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this essay.
2. See Cornelsen; Jacobsen and Prinzler; and Mehlinger and Ruppert. Loquai makes no mention of Käutner's film.
3. For example, Niehoff's 1959 review, in Jacobsen and Prinzler, 243-5.
4. See Habicht, Pfister 1986, Loquai and especially Zimmermann. Hopkins discusses at some length the ways in which the long legacy of the Germany-*Hamlet* analogy pervades Edgar Reitz's *Heimat* film cycle and is transformed in the process for a very different generation.
5. Käutner does establish the possibility of using modernist style and media for voicing the truth. John's highly mocking, confrontational "Mousetrap" ballet is in up-to-the-moment modernist style, in contrast with the blandly conventional ballet that precedes it.
6. Käutner's essays are reprinted in *German Essays on Film* (McCormick and Guenther-Pal), 198-201.
7. When Horace insists that the voice must have been a hallucination, John insists that he thought so too until he got a second phone call, where the voice repeated its accusation and insisted he return to Germany. "I spoke but he didn't hear me," John claims, "he kept repeating the words, *like a machine*, like the first time" [my emphasis].
8. Though Käutner was one of the first German filmmakers to address postwar guilt, many critics have accused him of stressing his characters' private acts of resistance and humanity during the Nazi era as a means for combining positive remembrance of the German people along with acknowledgment of their general culpability: "the overarching narrative in all of these films is the tragic set of circumstances that always enables the protagonists' 'blameless guilt'" (Köppen 2010, 57). As Köppen and others point out (see also Berman and Silberman), this strategy

locates the essential German spirit in the private, fundamentally decent soul of individual Germans and treats the public political realm in the Nazi era as a kind of fate, imposed from outside and difficult to resist. In this formulation, the weight of history becomes a generalized existential burden Germans must bear rather than a specific set of choices for which they bear responsibility.

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