



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

**Fighting against the dying of the present: on
nostalgia, resonance, and Edgar Reitz's heimat**

Peters, M.A.; Liere, L. van; Sremac, S.

Citation

Peters, M. A. (2024). Fighting against the dying of the present: on nostalgia, resonance, and Edgar Reitz's heimat. In L. van Liere & S. Sremac (Eds.), *Heritage and Memory Studies* (pp. 153-178). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
doi:10.1515/9789048559237-009

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Creative Commons CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 license](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3748692>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

7 Fighting against the Dying of the Present

On Nostalgia, Resonance, and Edgar Reitz's *Heimat*

Mathijs Peters

Abstract

This chapter examines the interplay between Hartmut Rosa's concept of "resonance" and the ideas of "nostalgia," "Heimat," and "trauma." By scrutinizing Rosa's effort to develop a non-nostalgic interpretation of Heimat, the argument underscores that the concept inherently still contains nostalgic elements. Drawing on Svetlana Boym's distinction between reflective and restorative nostalgia, it asserts that Heimat can embody both reactive and reflective elements, all rooted in nostalgia. This distinction supports the differentiation between restorative and reflective resonance, contra Rosa. To illustrate this, the chapter analyzes the resonance in Edgar Reitz's film series *Heimat*, demonstrating how it engages with viewers and addresses collective traumas, showing that resonance can be both restorative and reflective, and enriching Rosa's theory as a critical theory of modernity.

Keywords: cinema; *Sehnsucht*; resonance; Holocaust; memory; Germany

Introduction: Ghost Strata

In Ben Rivers's 2019 experimental film *Ghost Strata*, Jan Zalasiewicz, a professor in paleobiology well known for his reflections on the notion of the "Anthropocene," is interviewed in the Park Tunnel in Nottingham. Zalasiewicz explains that in the rock face of the walls of the tunnel, which was dug out in 1855, we can discern "lines of strata" that show the dunes that were formed a quarter of a billion years ago. Zalasiewicz observes that we

can imagine how similar strata used to fill the space where he is standing, in between the walls of the tunnel. He refers to these imagined strata as “ghosts” and describes them as “our own imagination of the past.” Standing in the tunnel, with the ghost strata being *present* as an *absence* (Botha 2020), Zalasiewicz observes, “The ghost running through me now and running into that wall is the image of.” Then the shot ends abruptly, and *Ghost Strata* continues with an exploration of time, history, memory, past, and future, suggesting that the fragmented (moving) images that the spectator sees summon and represent the ghost strata to which the paleobiologist refers, foregrounding the various ways in which humanity has made and continues to make its mark on the earth in the Anthropocene.

The juxtaposition between Zalasiewicz’s truncated hauntological observations and the experimental aspects of *Ghost Strata* makes the spectator reflect on the various ways in which we can imagine and represent the past. In this scene, after all, Zalasiewicz is reflecting on the images that geologists shape to create a representation of natural history, using the actually existing strata in the two walls as reference points that, in turn, might provide us an idea of the moment that humanity started to become a dominant influence on the environment. As Svetlana Boym shows in her seminal work *The Future of Nostalgia*, this is often more difficult in the case of cultural representations of social history. One of the reasons is the role that different forms of nostalgia play in our remembrance and representation of times past. On the one hand, Boym observes in this context, there are traditionalist and reactionary forms of what she calls “restorative nostalgia,” which “stresses *nostos* (home) and attempts a transhistorical reconstruction of the lost home” (Boym 2002, xviii). On the other hand, there is the more critical “reflective nostalgia,” which “thrives in *algia*, the longing itself, and delays the homecoming—wistfully, ironically, desperately” (Boym 2002, xviii).¹

In this chapter, I aim to confront Boym’s analysis of these two forms of nostalgia with Hartmut Rosa’s notion of “resonance.” In his 2016 work *Resonance: A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World*, this German sociologist describes what he calls resonant relationships as making one feel at home again in a world permeated by what he understands as the alienating dimensions of modernity (see also Rosa 2019b, 361–63). In his 2019 article “Heimat als unverwandelter Weltausschnitt: Ein resonanztheoretischer

1 The word “algos” also associates nostalgia with pain. Clay Routledge therefore observes, in his historical analysis of the concept, that nostalgia “as originally construed” in a medical context refers to “the pain caused by the desire to return to the one’s native land” (2016, 4).

Versuch,” furthermore, Rosa interprets the German notion of “Heimat” through the lens of his resonance theory, arguing that this rather untranslatable word—which signifies “home,” “homeland,” “native soil,” “motherland,” “place of origin and belonging,” and more (see Santner 1990, 57; see also Costadura, Ries, and Wiesenfeld 2019, 16)—should be given meaning as a term referring to a segment of a world that promises resonance.

Even though the notion of home returns in his descriptions of resonance and of Heimat, and even though he also argues that we can experience resonance with the historical narratives that we tell ourselves (Rosa 2019b, 300), Rosa hardly refers to nostalgia. The editors of the collection in which his text on Heimat is published even characterize his definition as “nostalgia-free” (“Nostalgie-frei”; see Costadura, Ries, and Wiesenfeld 2019, 21) and *therefore* as progressive instead of reactionary. In contrast to Boym’s claims, this implicitly suggests that nostalgia itself is uncritical by definition.

In the following, however, I will argue that even though “resonance” adds an insightful experiential dimension to the diagnoses of modernity, it is not convincing to completely “purify” this notion—as well as a new definition of Heimat—by removing its nostalgic traces. Doing this, I will argue with the help of several reflections made by Theodor W. Adorno in his radio talk “The Meaning of Working through the Past,” ignores subjective tendencies that permeate the age of modernity and that might be triggered or propelled by collective traumas. Only if we recognize the nostalgic longing that forms the basis of a need for resonance, I will claim, can we critically reflect on it without having to reject it.

I will substantiate this argument using a focus on several aspects of the first installment in Edgar Reitz’s film series *Heimat*, titled *Heimat: Eine deutsche Chronik*. In particular, I will analyze Reitz’s own claims about this 1984 film and several critical responses to the manner in which it would present traumas that, according to these same responses, continue to permeate the German society in which the film was released. Using *Heimat* as a focal point where the concepts of nostalgia, resonance, and Heimat are confronted with the notion of “trauma,” I will eventually argue that instead of defending one understanding of resonance, we should distinguish restorative from reflective resonance.² Although this is not the main aim of the chapter,

2 These two forms of resonance, which are inspired by Boym’s notions of restorative and reflective nostalgia, can be understood as particular manifestations (revolving specifically around our relation to time and history) of the two more general forms of resonance that I characterize, in *Exploring Hartmut Rosa’s Concept of Resonance*, as *affirmationist* and *critical* in nature (see Peters and Majid 2022). The latter characterization is based on the idea of a “spectrum of resonance” on which we can position forms of resonance that range from highly

I also hope to show that Rosa's resonance theory adds an interpretative layer to the many analyses already developed of Reitz's "cine novel" (Moltke 2003, 115).³ Before arriving at an analysis of *Heimat*, however, I will first discuss those ideas of Boym and Rosa that are relevant for my analysis.

Modernity and Temporality

Boym's discussion of nostalgia and Rosa's theory of resonance were born as diagnoses of modernity. More specifically, both concepts refer to experiences that could, according to them, only arise under specifically modern conditions. Boym claims, for example, that nostalgia is "coeval" with modernity and that it is a "historical emotion" that came into being in modernity's "dislocation in space" and "changing conception of time" (2002, xvi). Processes of modernization resulted, she observes, in a loss of traditional experiences of rootedness and embeddedness, as well as in "the modern conception of unrepeatable and irreversible time" (Boym 2002, 13). These conditions, which are intrinsically tied to modern notions of progress, sparked and continue to spark longing for an imagined pre-modern whole in which time, according to these utopian ghost strata, was not yet linear, in which the future was not yet unpredictable, in which one was rooted in one specific place, and in which the self was not yet thrown into a fragmented and unpredictable world. "Modern nostalgia," Boym concludes, "is a mourning for the impossibility of mythical return, for the loss of an 'enchanted world' with clear borders and values" (2002, 8).

This mourning, Boym argues, returns in different ways in seminal diagnoses of modernity, in which nostalgia for a "being at home in the world" (2002, 25)

critical and disruptive experiences to experiences that are soothing, uncritical, and mainly *affirm* what we already believe, feel, or embrace (see Peters and Majid 2022, 29–60). Whereas the reflective resonance described in this article can be understood as leaning toward *critical* forms of resonance, restorative resonance is more *affirmationist* in nature, since it revolves around the acceptance of a fixed and mythical notion of the past that resists attempts to change or be critically revised.

3 In a footnote to his article about the role that music plays in *Die zweite Heimat*, Ulrich Schönherr argues that Boym's nuanced analysis of nostalgia presents a theoretical framework that could "help revise the continuous verdict of nostalgia on *Heimat I*" (2010, 122n31). To some extent, this is what I aim to do in this chapter. Another implicit aim is to show how the field of semiotics might contribute to resonance theory, but also to infuse this field with the specific emphasis on experience that characterizes Rosa's approach. More specifically: his approach, I believe, presents us with a fruitful analysis of how phenomena like customs, objects, artworks, or even language might come to resonate with subjects and constitute a meaning that *matters* to them in specific ways.

results in descriptions of a pre-modern and lost form of embeddedness. She describes, for example, how this nostalgia permeates the “primitive communism” of the “prefeudal society” described by Karl Marx, the “enchanted public life” mourned by Max Weber, the “creative sociability” that Georg Simmel describes as threatened by modern individualization processes, the “integrated civilisation of antiquity” that György Lukács contrasts with the “transcendental homelessness” of modernity (see Boym 2002, 24), and Friedrich Nietzsche’s references to animal forgetfulness and the eternal return (25).

Boym does not focus extensively on the notion of acceleration in her analysis of modern temporality, although she does mention it several times. For example, she writes the following in observations on the emergence of cyberspace and the “visual global village”: “Nostalgia inevitably reappears as a defense mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals” (Boym 2002, xiv). Similar observations return in her analysis of the acceleration caused by the “economic shock therapy” that Russia went through after the demise of the Soviet Union, which sparked nostalgic longing that materialized in imagined representations—restorative ghost strata—of the Soviet era (Boym 2002, 64), not unlike the *Ostalgie* of post-1989 Germany.

The notion of “acceleration” *does* play a main role in Hartmut Rosa’s *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*. Unlike Boym, who mainly discusses acceleration in regard to specific historical developments, Rosa understands this phenomenon as the key denominator of modernity *itself*. His analysis is based on the idea, which returns in Boym as well, that “measurements of time, perceptions of time, and time horizons are highly culturally dependent and change with the social structure of societies” (Rosa 2013b, 5). This emphasis on the constructed character of temporality results in his claim, again similar to Boym’s ideas, that with the beginning of the modern era, cyclic or episodic experiences of time were replaced with a temporality understood as an “irreversible line running from the past through the present into the future” (Boym 2002, 5–6).

It is this same linearity that sparked forms of acceleration, Rosa continues: driven by a capitalist concern with growth and accumulation, as well as by the emphasis on progress, renewal, and advancement in the name of the future, the modern era came to be dominated by what he characterizes as the logic of acceleration. Positioning himself in the tradition of critical theory, extensively referring to Lukács, Adorno, Erich Fromm, and Herbert Marcuse, Rosa furthermore argues that this logic eventually turned into an ideology—into “second nature” (2013b, 315)—that permeates “every aspect of life” (2020, 31) and sometimes even gains a totalitarian character: it is

incredibly difficult, he observes, to escape from the need to accelerate or even to critically reflect on this logic in contemporary societies (Rosa 2013a, 61). Paradoxically, acceleration eventually resulted in an experience for which he uses the term “frozen time” (Rosa 2009, 101), as well as a translation of Paul Virilio’s notion of a postmodern “‘polar inertia’ as a ‘frenetic standstill’” (“rasender Stillstand”; see Rosa 2013b, 15, 102).⁴

Like Boym, Rosa refers to several seminal diagnoses of modernity (see Rosa 2013a, 13), not only mentioning Nietzsche’s reflections on never hearing “the voice of the universe again” (2019b, 265) but also arguing that the notion of “acceleration” should be understood as part of a tradition of sociologists and philosophers who analyzed and critiqued modernity with the help of concepts like rationalization (Weber, Habermas), differentiation (Durkheim, Luhmann), individualization (Simmel, Beck), and commodification (Marx, Horkheimer, Adorno). In *Alienation and Acceleration*, he furthermore employs the early Marxist notion of “alienation” to pinpoint the condition of radical disconnectedness that is, in his view, the result of acceleration processes, arriving at the bold claim that in late modernity “social acceleration is about to pass certain thresholds beyond which human beings necessarily become alienated not just from their actions, the objects they work and live with, nature, the social world and their self, but also from time and space themselves” (Rosa 2013a, 83; see also Rosa 2019b, 164; 2020, 104–5).⁵

In his 2020 book *The Uncontrollability of the World*, Rosa adds another dimension to this critical narrative about modernity: driven by the logic of acceleration, he argues, late modern societies can only “stabilize” themselves “dynamically” and through “escalation,” which means that “they are structurally and institutionally compelled to bring more and more of the world under control and within reach” (Rosa 2020, 10). Paradoxically, he claims, the attempt to make the world completely controllable undermines the ability to be touched by it or embedded in it, instead constituting what he calls, with Rahel Jaeggi, a “relation of relationlessness” (Rosa 2020, 27). Again, he embeds these ideas in a critical sociological and philosophical tradition, referring to writings on alienation by the early Marx, Weber’s analysis of disenchantment, Georg Simmel’s reflections on modern isolation, and Émile Durkheim’s concept of “anomie” (Rosa 2020, 20–25). All these theories, he suggests, crystallize in the idea that something happened at the

4 Rosa criticizes Virilio for only focusing on technological acceleration and not also on acceleration of social change and the pace of life (see Rosa 2013b, 56–56).

5 This embeds Rosa in a discourse shaped by a renewed interest in this term; see for example Jaeggi (2016). See also Rosa (2019b, 184) and Felski (2020, 208).

dawn of modernity, something that threw the self into a world that started spinning out of control.

The Promise of Modernity

We have seen that Boym argues that modern forms of temporality resulted and continue to result in a nostalgic longing for “homeliness.” As mentioned above, Rosa does not extensively refer to nostalgia (and does not mention Boym) but claims instead that the alienating conditions of modernity trigger a need for experiences that he characterizes as “resonant.” Indeed, he opens *Resonance* with the following claim: “If acceleration is the problem, then resonance may well be the solution” (Rosa 2019b, 1). In a helpful footnote, he furthermore cites Steven Luke’s observation in *Marxism and Morality* that alienation enters human history “at the point where human beings can no longer successfully understand themselves as in control and at home in the world” (Rosa 2019b, 467n105).⁶

What makes resonant relationships meaningful, according to Rosa, is that they are constituted in a reciprocal relationship between the experiencing self, on the one hand, and that which this self experiences, on the other. Not only is the self-addressed and “called upon” in these relationships, but she also puts something of herself *into* this experienced “Other,” *transforming* herself as well as that which is experienced (Rosa 2019b, 184–91). Not unlike Boym’s argument that nostalgia and progress form the Jekyll and Hyde, or “alter egos,” of modernity (2002, xvi), Rosa also continually emphasizes that resonance cannot be understood without its counterpart, alienation. Resonance is often even made possible by alienation, he claims: modern experiences of a world in which we do not feel at home anymore point negatively to the possibility and importance of connection, embeddedness, and warmth (Rosa 2019b, 188). Furthermore, the disconnecting and alienating aspects of modern processes like individualization often have a *liberating* aspect, he goes on in what Rita Felski calls a “Hegelian move” (2020, 409); this loosens the ties between self and tradition, for example, and in turn triggers longing for a more “mature” and modern form of embeddedness in

6 Rosa argues in *Resonance* that the notion of “autonomy” is able to explain the first aspect but that only resonance captures the latter (see also Rosa 2020, 53). Autonomy, according to Rosa, does not capture the importance of self-transcendence that takes place when the self gives itself over to another (see also Lijster and Celikates 2018, 32). His 2020 book *The Uncontrollability of the World*, however, suggests that the first aspect cannot be captured by the notion of autonomy either; it instead lies in what he calls “semicontrollability.”

which the self is “called upon” as an individual being that opens itself up to a transforming experience (Rosa 2019b, 189). Rosa even refers to the process of puberty as substantiating this idea: “puberty ... appears as a fundamental transformation of one’s resonant relationships.... Without a phase of alienation, we must presume, the process of adaptive transformation, of *making the world resonant* or *making speak*, cannot succeed” (Rosa 2019b, 189).

In several ways, these reflections suggest that resonance embodies the *promise* of modernity, healing the wounds caused by acceleration and enabling the modern self—and modern societies—to go through a phase of puberty and to reach a stage of maturity.⁷ In a chapter called “Modernity as the History of Increasing Sensitivity to Resonance,” for example, he observes that the “fundamental anxiety of modern society,” which is “the fear that the world may fall mute,” finds its opposite in a “fundamental *promise*, the great hope of a *singing world*” (Rosa 2019b, 357).⁸

Even though Rosa stresses that resonance should not be understood as a utopian or dogmatic metanarrative that promises salvation and foregrounds its vulnerability instead (see Susen 2019, 20), arguments like these do sketch the contours of a historical narrative that goes through the following three stages: (1) a pre-modern communal embeddedness; (2) modernity’s acceleration processes severing ties between self and Other, causing the experiences of alienation described by countless sociologists and philosophers (Rosa 2013a, 82), eventually culminating in a postmodern “frenetic standstill”; and (3) a more mature form of embeddedness in which the self comes to fruition through experiences of resonance that include and absorb *transformative* forms of alienation. “Modernity,” in his own words, is therefore not “just a catastrophe of resonance”; to a large extent, it actually “produced certain capacities for resonance in the first place” (Rosa 2019b, 29; see also Felski 2020, 409).

In *The Uncontrollability of the World*, Rosa extends this narrative by enriching the notion of resonance with the idea of *Unverfügbarkeit* (a rather untranslatable word for which the English “uncontrollability” has been chosen; see Rosa 2020, vii–ix). Using this concept, he argues that we should temper our need to control every part of the world. Instead, he argues that we should embrace a form of “semicontrollability,” in between the iron cage of the illusion of total control, on the one hand, and an equally disrupting

7 In *Alienation and Acceleration*, Rosa still defines this promise as revolving around autonomy; in *Resonance* he characterizes it as revolving around resonant relationships (see Rosa 2016, 77–83). For an analysis of the role that autonomy plays in Rosa’s theory of modernity and acceleration, see Peters (2020).

8 Rosa frequently employs metaphors relating to sound to explain resonance. This concept, after all, finds its origins in the realm of acoustics (see Rosa 2019, 162; Felski 2020, 407).

complete lack of control, on the other.⁹ In a statement in which the romantic tendencies of his theory shine, he writes, “I should allow myself to be called” (Rosa 2020, 42).¹⁰

The Descriptive and the Normative

Whereas Boym is highly critical of forms of nostalgia that are restorative in nature and that, in her view, form the basis of reactionary responses to modernity, Rosa describes resonant relationships as positive and good by definition. Resonance, he argues, presents us with a normative yardstick; with an *ideal* of what good experiences *should* look like (Rosa 2020, 171; Susen 2019, 18–19; Felski 2020, 412; Masquelier 2020, 859). The moment a relationship does not respect the independence of the experiencing self and the value of that in which this self is embedded, and the moment it does not *transform* both the self and the experienced Other, he claims, we cannot talk about resonance anymore (Rosa 2020, 163).

In a detailed evaluation of *Resonance*, Simon Susen criticizes this idea by arguing that it is difficult to really discern problematic forms of embeddedness from the resonance that Rosa defends. Under the header “No reactionary resonance?,” he writes,

One may sympathize with Rosa’s contention that genuine resonance is, by definition, emancipatory. It is difficult, however, to ignore the fact that there are *highly problematic* practices that may “resonate” with those performing them. Fascist regimes not only rely on “resonance”-generating techniques and activities, but also provide realms of “resonance” that their supporters experience as “inspiring” and “galvanizing.” The same is true of various other reactionary endeavours with which those immersed in them may identify in a resonant fashion. (Susen 2019, 17)

Rosa would argue that those immersed in these “reactionary endeavours” do not truly experience resonance, since even though resonance contains “visceral,” “bodily” (Lijster and Celikates 2018, 49), and “uncontrollable” (Rosa 2019b, 183) aspects that partly transcend one’s individuality, as well

9 Paradoxes like these return at several places in Rosa’s works, such as the aforementioned claim that extreme acceleration results in a standstill.

10 Felski argues that one of the “more provocative theses” of *Resonance* is “Rosa’s argument for the contemporaneity of a Romantic sensibility” (2020, 409).

as rational critique and autonomous reflection, he also argues that “you cannot get into a resonance with something you cannot rationally explain as at least potentially valuable” (Lijster and Celikates 2018, 49).

However, at this point, I believe, the confrontation between Boym’s analysis of nostalgia and Rosa’s theory of resonance indicates that one of the potentially problematic aspects of the latter is that resonance forms both a *normative* yardstick and a *descriptive* concept.¹¹ After all, Rosa not only aims to describe what we long for and why we desire this experience by diagnosing modern existence from a sociological perspective; his book also tells us what we *should* long for and how this experience *should* come about, shaping a “normative monism” (see Susen 2019, 20) that indicates that *the good life in modernity is a life of resonance* (see also Susen 2019, 18–21). However, the descriptive and the normative do not always overlap, which means that if we want to use the concept of resonance to diagnose and describe modern developments, it becomes very difficult to simultaneously argue that the same concept enables us to *critique* or even *reject* some of these developments for not being resonant, or to argue *how* they *should* be shaped.

To work toward my claim that we should therefore distinguish restorative from reflective forms of resonance, I want to show that a similar problem permeates the notion of *Heimat* as discussed by Rosa in “*Heimat als anverwandelter Weltausschnitt: Ein resonanztheoretischer Versuch.*” In this text, Rosa claims that his theory of resonance enables us to disconnect the concept of *Heimat* from the way in which it has been, and still is, employed by different reactionary, conservative, and identitarian movements—such as Pegida in Germany, but he also hints at Donald Trump’s “*Make America Great Again*” ideology. These movements shape the mythical idea of a homeland that used to be pure and homogenous in the past and would be threatened by external “*Others*” in the present, with these “*Others*” referring to people of color, Islam, refugees, or anyone or anything presented as different from the homogeneous identity linked to the mythical idea of “*our Heimat*” (Rosa 2019a, 163).¹² Emphasizing the inclusive experience of resonance, during which one truly is touched and transformed by an *Other*, Rosa argues that

11 For a more extensive discussion of this critical observation, see Peters and Majid (2022, 13–60).

12 The notion of “*Heimat*” gained different meanings in different historical contexts, meandering between nationalist frameworks and regionalist forms of anti-nationalism. Examples are its connection to a notion of “*Germany*” shaped within National Socialist discourses, constructions of a “*pure*” and idyllic home in *Heimatfilme*, representations of an evil isolationist prison in anti-*Heimatfilme*, or the New Regionalism that started gaining momentum in the Germany of the 1970s and positioned the notion of *Heimat* in opposition to nationalist discourses (see Geisler 1985; Palfreyman 1997, 529).

a resonant concept of *Heimat* welcomes diversity, difference, and progress instead, resulting in a progressive understanding of a country that, for example, welcomes immigrants and a political system that counters racism and xenophobia. Using his notion of *Unverfügbarkeit*, he argues that we should therefore let go of the mythical idea of a completely *controllable* *Heimat* that an “Us” would have to protect against the uncontrollable and “impure” forces of a “Them” (Rosa 2020, 44).

It is here, however, that the schism between the normative and the descriptive again becomes problematic, in my view. On a *normative* level, after all, this new understanding of *Heimat* is “nostalgia-free”: it does not revolve around the notion of a *return* to an imagined past but around the creation of *new* places that welcome difference, progress, and *Unverfügbarkeit*, transforming both self and Other (Rosa 2018a, 170). This normative dimension, however, conflicts with the more descriptive aspects of Rosa’s discussion of this concept, which *do* contain traces of nostalgia. And since, as Boym shows us, these traces can become restorative, this partly explains why the notion of *Heimat* has so often been embedded in reactionary ideologies.

This schism can be illustrated with the help of Rosa’s quotation of Ernst Bloch’s famous observation in *The Principle of Hope* that *Heimat* is something that “shines into the childhood of all” (“das allen in die Kindheit scheint,” qtd. in Rosa 2019a, 168).¹³ This is no surprise, Rosa observes, because children by nature would be “resonance-beings” (“Resonanzwezen,” Rosa 2019a, 169). Before they learn to speak and before they develop an individual self—even before they are born—they are connected to others and to the world through resonant relationships, he claims (Rosa 2019a, 169). At several places, he uses Merleau-Ponty’s notion that we are “always already *au monde*” to conceptualize this same idea (Rosa 2020, 5).

However, if these descriptive statements are *also* part of resonance, and if “*Heimat*” refers to a place that promises resonance, then it becomes increasingly difficult to argue that this notion does not, in some way or another, contain nostalgic elements that long for a *Heimlichkeit* already experienced in the past and lost in the present, for example by going through puberty. This problem can be illustrated using the following passage in *Resonance*, in which Rosa provides the notion of *Heimat* with a historical and social dimension:

It has often been remarked that the German idea of *Heimat*—“home” or “homeland”—“is a specifically modern concept, that it denotes something

13 On Bloch, “*Heimat*” and *Heimat*, see also Geisler (1985, 28, 26).

which appears to be always already lost. But *what* it denotes, I would like to claim, is a specific form of reference or relation to a segment of world that has been adaptively transformed—in the classic sense, a place where *things speak to us* and *say something to us*: the trees, the river, our house, or even the gas station, the industrial chimney stacks, and the local fast-food restaurant. (Rosa 2019b, 359)

In *The Uncontrollability of the World*, Rosa uses the above-mentioned notion of semicontrollability to make a similar point:

My theory of “semicontrollability” may help to explain why *home* [Heimat] only becomes a resonant concept after we have *already lost it*.... [H]ome represents our hope for a segment of world that we can adaptively transform, our desire to find or create a place in the world where things (plants and trees, mountains and streams, bridges and streets, houses and cottages, people and animals) *speak to us*, where they *have something to say to us*. A segment of world loses its resonant quality in this sense if it is completely controllable. Soon enough, it falls silent or bores us. (Rosa 2020, 44–45)

Combined with his claims that children, even embryos, are *Resonanzwesen*, passages like these suggest, contra Rosa’s own arguments, that it is very difficult to rob the notion of Heimat as a “modern concept”—and eventually also the notion of resonance itself—from its nostalgic elements. After all, the *descriptive* side of Rosa’s theory tells us that the idea of a segment of world that promises resonance includes references to a mythical experience that, even if we have never truly experienced it, appears to be *already lost* because modernity culminated in our tendency to try to *control* and *instrumentalize* the world, robbing this segment of its resonant qualities. This idea conflicts, however, with the *normative* dimension of his discussion, which tells us that Heimat should *not* point at something that rests on the feeling of an “already lost” but instead to a segment of world that *can* and *should* transform us. The notion of “already lost,” after all, is different from the notions of “ungraspability” or *Unverfügbarkeit* as conceptualized by Rosa, the difference lying in the presence or absence of nostalgia.

Working through the Past

That the normative and the descriptive, as it were, pull apart the notion of resonance as well as the definition of Heimat that Rosa defends has to do

with the complicated relation that they have with temporality. By trying to make the concept of *Heimat* nostalgia-free, the normative elements of his theory appear to focus exclusively on constituting an open, resonant *Heimat* in the *future*. This, in turn, links the descriptive and nostalgic dimensions of these same concepts to the past, as illustrated by Rosa's references to childhood resonance. By constituting this dichotomy, however, Rosa overlooks the idea that past and future do not necessarily have to exclude each other, since nostalgia can permeate both past and future. As Boym writes in *The Future of Nostalgia*, "Nostalgia is not always about the past; it can be retrospective but also prospective. Fantasies of the past determined by needs of the present have a direct impact on realities of the future" (xvi).

This suggests that trying to purify our ideas about the future from the tendencies and desires that shape our imaginings of the past might result in an uncritical understanding of the future that we try to create, and *therefore* in a reactionary form of restorative nostalgia that is uncritical because it does not *recognize* its own nostalgic dimensions. Put differently: Rosa does not acknowledge that the notion of *Heimat* always already contains nostalgic traces, since his theory does not enable him to argue that there are different forms of nostalgia, some of which can be highly critical and some of which can be problematic. Since Rosa embeds his theory in a tradition shaped by the same authors whom Boym argues offer critical diagnoses of modernity permeated with nostalgia (Marx, Nietzsche, Lukács, Weber, Simmel, and more), it could even be argued that his theory of resonance might *itself* be a nostalgic response—longing for the gone sensibility of Romanticism, for example—to the fragmenting and alienating effects of modernity.

To argue why Rosa's attempt to distinguish *Heimat* and resonance from nostalgia might be problematic, I want to turn to the 1959 radio talk "The Meaning of Working Through the Past," in which Adorno reflects on attempts to process Germany's past in a present still permeated with the collective traumas of the rise of National Socialism and the Holocaust. Adopting insights from psychoanalysis, he argues that the past should not be "worked through" in such a way that the rise of the National Socialist regime and the horrors of the Holocaust are processed in a "clean" or "hygienic" manner, eventually turning into a "cold forgetting" that reduces them to a sealed-off past (Adorno 1998, 98; see also Hansen 1985, 5). This would naively suggest, after all, that the societal structures and subjective tendencies that made these events come about completely disappeared with the end of World War II and that Fascism will never rise again. Instead, in analyses that also echo through Boym's defense of reflective nostalgia, Adorno stresses the importance of continually reflecting critically on ourselves and on

our societies and of shaping an *awareness* of the needs and desires that constitute our worldviews, our political ideals, our representation of the past, and our imaginings of the future. In his own words, which link this idea to a critical notion of “enlightenment”: “a working through of the past understood as enlightenment is essentially such a turn towards the subject, the reinforcement of a person’s self-consciousness and hence also of his self” (Adorno 1998, 102).

I follow Adorno’s emphasis on working through the past in ways that critically reflect on the idea that the tendencies and desires that resulted in oppressive regimes are still present in our societies and in ourselves, and I want to defend a distinction between restorative and reflective forms of resonance, inspired by Boym’s analysis. Following Rosa’s descriptive observations that the notion of *Heimat* does include traces of nostalgia, my suggestion entails that it is neither convincing nor critical to rob it, as well as the concept of resonance, from its nostalgic elements once we present them as normative notions. *Both* concepts, I claim, are built around the longing for a pre-modern and mythical past that is “always already lost” and that finds its echoes on an individual level in childhood experiences. *Restorative* forms of resonance allow this longing to bend these concepts into reactionary and mythological imaginings of the past—into false ghost strata—precisely because they pretend that this experience of resonance is not driven by nostalgic longing and, instead, “stress the homecoming.” *Reflective* forms of resonance, my claim goes, *are* aware of the nostalgic longing that permeates the experience of resonance and therefore on the falseness of the “home” that they try to shape. However, they critically reflect on this longing without completely removing it, creating ghost strata that are so fragmentary and elusive that those who experience them will not fall into the illusion that they are brought home and instead are triggered into thought and reflection on themselves and their past while still resonating with that which they experience.

To embed the longing that permeates these forms of resonance in their socio-historical and subjective context, it is crucial to explore an aspect of the same modernity that Rosa aims to diagnose with his resonance theory, but to which he himself does not refer extensively: trauma. This aspect is foregrounded by Adorno in his above-mentioned lecture and concerns the manner in which experiences like resonance or notions like *Heimat* form responses to collective traumas that make it impossible for the self-seeking resonance to disconnect itself completely from the past. I want to develop this argument by now turning to an analysis of the first film of Reitz’s

Heimat, more specifically to the manner in which its resonant imaginings of ghost strata contain traces of nostalgia and trauma.¹⁴

Triggering Resonances

In an age that Rosa characterizes as permeated with the logic of acceleration, *Heimat* might well provide us with what he calls an “oasis of resonance” (Lijster and Celikates 2018, 49), demanding our attention and encouraging us to slow down and undergo a possibly transformative experience. After all, the whole *Heimat* series currently counts about sixty hours.

The series, which Carole Angier describes as having the “narrative and thematic complexity of a great novel” (1991, 33), currently consists of the following three long films, each divided into chapters: *Heimat: Eine deutsche Chronik* (1984); *Die zweite Heimat: Chronik einer Jugend* (1992); and *Heimat 3: Chronik einer Zeitenwende* (2004). The first film spans the years between 1919 and 1982 and mainly shows the viewer three generations of several families who live in Schabbach. This fictional village is located in the Hunsrück, an existing rural area in southwest Germany in the Rhine borderland, where Reitz himself grew up and which he left at the age of nineteen (Gabriel 2004, 193). The second film mainly revolves around the musical prodigy Hermann, who leaves for Munich (also at the age of nineteen) to study music, experiencing the revolutionary social, political, and artistic climate of the West Germany of the 1960s. The third *Heimat* takes place in the period between 1989 and 2000 and again tells the story of Hermann, who has by then become a world-famous composer and returns to the Hunsrück together with his newfound love, Clarissa. In 2006 Reitz also released a collection of previously unreleased fragments as *Heimat-Fragmente: Die Frauen*, and in 2013 he directed a film called *Die andere Heimat: Chronik einer Sehnsucht*. The latter film shows life in the Hunsrück area as well, this time in the period between 1840 and 1844, and focuses on several ancestors of the family depicted in the first *Heimat* films. It concerns the decisions of many Hunsrückers to migrate to Brazil, particularly showing how images of this country trigger escapist and romantic longing in one of the film’s protagonists.

14 In *Exploring Hartmut Rosa’s Concept of Resonance*, I analyze Reitz’s *Heimat* as well (see Peters and Majid 2022, 79–110). However, this analysis is mainly driven by the aim to translate Rosa’s ideas into an aesthetic theory and does not focus on forms of nostalgia and trauma, nor on Boym’s theory.

Even though I believe that the concept of resonance can be used to interpret and analyze different aspects of the other films of *Heimat* as well, in the following I will only focus on certain aspects of the first installment, *Heimat: Eine deutsche Chronik*. Reitz himself presented this film as a response to the “personal depression” (Gabriel 2004, 190) he went through after watching Marvin J. Chomsky’s 1978 American miniseries *Holocaust*, which he rejected in his essay “Unabhängiger Film nach Holocaust?” for its (in his view) artificial approach to Germany’s past (see Santner 1990, 73; Confino 1998, 85–86; Wickham 1991, 36; Hansen 1985, 3–4; Garton Ash 1985). *Holocaust*, according to Reitz, would “steal” the memories of the Germans (Gabriel 2004, 149) and exploit “the horrible crocodile tears of our nation” (qtd. Gabriel 2004, 152).

In contrast to the American series—even presenting a “German antidote” to it (Santner 1990, 73)—he therefore set out to create moving images of the past that would focus on experience, details, and individual human lives as they are embedded in and shaped by one community—focusing on that which Eric Santner, with reference to Walter Benjamin, characterizes as “gelebtes Leben” (1990, 66). Instead of glossing over these details and pushing them into a narrative from a moralistic top-down perspective, as he argued *Holocaust* did by employing “thinking in categories” (“Schubladendenken,” see Santner 1990, 74; Elsaesser 1985, 11), and instead of casting judgments (Confino 1998, 194; Birgel and Reitz 1986, 8), *Heimat* would focus on “little people” (Gabriel 2004, 150) or “common people” (Stern 1987, 10) from a bottom-up point of view (Moltke 2005, 212; see also Moltke 2003, 161; Angier 1991, 38). In this way, he recreated German rural life with an “almost archaeological concern” (Geisler 1985, 26) that shifts “emphasis from the center of history to its echo on the fringe” (28).

This is done in the first film of *Heimat* by rooting individuals, as Eckart Voigts-Virchow observes in his analysis of the film, in the “regional” (2007, 128); in Schabbach. Throughout *Heimat* this fictional village indeed gains an aura of *Heimlichkeit* once we get acquainted with the film’s different characters and see them get older, fall in love, get married, and experience historical changes. We are continually shown how deeply the characters are rooted in the specific locational, cultural, and traditional space of Schabbach: the *Heimat* that the film shapes is presented as a close-knit community, revolving around local traditions and customs. Furthermore, the film is mainly spoken in Hunsrück dialect¹⁵ and stars not only professional but

15 The strong link between language and experience (as manifested in untranslatable words like “Heimat” and “Sehnsucht,” which returns in the subtitle of *Die andere Heimat*) is emphasized

also amateur actors who grew up in the Hunsrück area, contributing to its aura of authenticity and its feeling of locality (see Garton Ash 1985; Birgel and Reitz 1986, 3).

Importantly, Reitz explicitly claimed that the first *Heimat*—in contrast with the external and top-down perspective adopted, in his view, by *Holocaust*—was built around *memories* of experiences (“Erlebnisse,” Santner 1990, 75; see also Wickham 1991, 36), stressing its nostalgic dimensions. In a Dutch interview with the author Arnon Grunberg, for example, he responded as follows to the question of whether film is “a way of remembering”:

Yes, because one has to watch one’s own experiences. They lie in our memory like a heap of fragments, and, when we consciously remember, we take them and put them together again in memory and make a second life with them. The camera portrays the time again, it describes it in a way that lasts, and when I make a film, I make the past permanent, the fragments can’t disappear any longer. The art of film is a victory over time and in some ways a victory over death. Time is always this dying of the present. (VPRO Documentary, my translation)

In the same interview, Reitz adds to these claims that film shapes “images of times in the past that are still important for us” (VPRO Documentary, my translation).

These reflections, I want to argue, not only emphasize the nostalgic character of *Heimat* but also provide a steppingstone to the idea that the film constitutes resonant relationships with its viewers. In *Resonance* Rosa describes how, during aesthetic experiences, the consumer of art can be pulled in by an “irresistible force,” a “pre- or extra-subjective” power that overcomes her and demands something from her (Rosa 2019b, 281; see also Rosa 2019, 166).¹⁶ We can link these romantic descriptions of art to Rosa’s explanation of his above-cited statement on “the German idea of *Heimat*” as a “place where things speak to us”: “They speak because they trigger

by the word “Geheischnis.” Santner writes that this “Hunsrück word” signifies “the trust, security, and warmth one feels amongst the members of a small, tight-knit community” (1990, 176). The word was the original title of *Heimat* and plays an important role in the last chapter of the first film (see Geisler 1985, 42; Costadura, Ries, and Wiesenfeld 2019, 19). I would argue that this word refers to a specific experience of resonance with one’s community and natural environment, containing elements of restorative and reflective resonance and leaning toward the former.

¹⁶ Reitz makes similar observations on the nature of “longing” and the ungraspable nature of a *Heimat* (see Geisler 1987, 5; Gabriel 2004, 160–61).

resonances in our own biographical memory and the people with whom we are connected by a shared history” (Rosa 2019b, 359).¹⁷ Rosa elaborates this notion of a “biographical memory” further in reflections on what he calls “historical resonance”: “Because human beings are storytelling creatures who must constantly assure themselves of their identity through narratives,” he writes, historical and biographical resonances “are always already built into the reservoir of interpretation that they draw on in order to make sense of themselves and the world” (2019, 300).

Heimat, I argue, presents us with such a narrative, which means that the film “triggers resonances” in the biographical memories of its viewers, pulling these viewers in and providing them with the feeling of being embedded in the past shaped on screen. Indeed, Thomas Elsaesser observes in his review of the film that “for a German audience, there must be literally hundreds of details and scores of incidents that feel absolutely ‘right,’ that spark off personal memories, and allow an audience to recognize themselves in the guise of the ‘other’ up there on the screen or right there in the living” (Elsaesser 1985, 11).¹⁸

However, I believe that the resonance that *Heimat* constitutes transgresses borders and does not only concern German viewers. Once the viewer has watched several chapters, she indeed comes to feel that she has become part of the “home” of Schabbach herself, knowing who lives “where” and how to get to which part of the village, entangling the past watched on screen with memories of her own past, even developing “memories” about events that happened earlier in *Heimat*. Throughout the film, these experiences are encouraged by the camera, which often lingers for a long time on the landscape in which Schabbach is embedded or explores the different objects, interiors, and exteriors in which the lives of the protagonists come about (Santner 1990, 69).

With the help of Rosa, we can argue that *Heimat* “triggers resonances” by embedding viewers in the past as it is shaped on screen by Reitz, entwining this past with their own biographical memories and feeding on their nostalgia. This is the aspect that I have linked to the *descriptive* dimension of Rosa’s

17 I do not want to suggest that this is the only way in which art can trigger resonances: Rosa himself also observes that experiences of the sublime or shock moments can be resonant (see Lijster and Celikates 2018, 51). Furthermore, he argues with the help of Christoph Menke’s *The Power of Art* and Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy* that art should be understood as an “Other” that challenges and transforms the self (see Rosa 2019b, 283). However, my claim is that his theory also enables us to argue that, in the case of artwork like *Heimat*, resonances are triggered in a different and more uncritical manner.

18 For a detailed analysis of *Heimat*’s reception and the way in which the process of “mainstreaming” might have eventually buried its more critical elements, see Geisler (1985, 50–59).

theory, a dimension that contains nostalgic traces. I have also argued above that the *normative* dimensions of Rosa's theory, especially his writings on a new definition of *Heimat*, suggest that nostalgia is by definition reactionary and backwards, an idea that conflicts with his more descriptive claims. I want to argue in the next section that *Heimat* can help to demonstrate how this is not the case, and an exploration of secondary literature shows that the film meanders between restorative and reflective nostalgia, and therefore between the triggering of restorative and reflective resonances.

Restorative Elements

The scope of this chapter does not allow me to delve into the details of the many extensive analyses developed of the film. Key to my argument is the way in which the nostalgia that permeates *Heimat*, as well as the question of whether this nostalgia is restorative or reflective, is discussed in many of these analyses in the context of two different traumas: the trauma of modernity and the trauma of the Holocaust.

The first trauma is extensively explored by Eric L. Santner, who argues in *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany* that *Heimat* performs a form of what Freud called *Trauerarbeit* or "work of mourning" (1990, xiii; see also Geisler 1985, 46). *Heimat*, according to this reading, mourns the traumatic loss of a pre-modern world, a world in which people were still firmly rooted not only in their communities, language, customs, and traditions but also in what Santner characterizes, with reference to Walter Benjamin, as a predictable and cyclic *Naturgeschichte* in which birth and death followed each other like the seasons, rooting the individual's existence in a predictable larger whole. Santner writes, "It is a nostalgia for a particular relation to time, a nostalgia for that passage of time which inscribes itself on artifacts, objects of everyday use, even including the words used in daily discourse" (1990, 99). This *Naturgeschichte*, Santner goes on, is presented by *Heimat* as eventually unable to absorb "the fitful accelerations and decelerations of political history as well as what in Western societies is generally called progress" (65), causing the traumatic loss that *Heimat*, by both representing this process and showing *what* has been lost (Schabbach), tries to mourn.

Referring to Reitz's well-documented critique of the *Wegwerfgesellschaft* (throwaway society, see Santner 1990, 68),¹⁹ for example, Santner writes a passage that could refer to Rosa's musings on the way in which "our

19 On the "trauma of modernity" and film, see also Elsaesser (1989, 254).

relationship to the object-world is significantly transformed by the increasing speed-rates of modernity” as well (2013a, 45; see also 85–87): “Contemporary Western society represents for Reitz a world in which people have learned to separate painlessly from everything, where what has been lost leaves no scars, no traces, in the psyches and physiognomies of the survivors” (Santner 1990, 67).

Santner eventually concludes that this diagnosis turns into an uncritical form of nostalgia, because Reitz contrasts the present that he critiques with the Schabbach that he creates on screen, making the latter into an idyllic place that is *restored* in order to *escape* from the present. Put within Rosa’s framework distilled above from his reflections on modernity: *Heimat* remains stuck in the second “stage” of modernity and is unable to move toward a third stage—that of a mature form of embeddedness and resonance. Instead, the film suggests, the only way out is a way back, a return to the pre-modern home of Schabbach.

This conclusion seems to be substantiated by several claims made by Reitz himself. The German director argued, for example, that while making *Heimat*, he was driven by a “Tarkovsky-like desire to return to the womb” (qtd. in Gabriel 2004, 190). In Utz Kastenholtz’s documentary *Schabbach ist Überall*, he states,

In Schabbach people still know where things come from, and how they are connected. They still know who likes who and who does not like who. That contains a certain human clarity. They care about and for the place and time in which they live. And I actually do not see that anywhere else. In that sense, I understand Schabbach as a utopia. Schabbach is nowhere. (Kastenholtz 2007)

In reflections that echo aforementioned observations made by Hartmut Rosa, Reitz furthermore observes that the notion of *Heimat* evokes the feeling of “something lost or very far away” and that “if one would go closer and closer to it, one would discover that at the moment of arrival it is gone,” concluding that “one can arrive there only in poetry, and I include film in poetry” (cited in Birgel and Reitz 1986, 5). Passages like these, in which Reitz explicitly refers to the tradition of German Romanticism as embodying this idea (5), suggest that *Heimat* “triggers resonances” by shaping a utopian, non-existing Schabbach. Instead of “delaying the homecoming” and reflecting on the longing itself, to use Boym’s descriptions, *Heimat* brings us—the viewer, but also Reitz himself—home (again) by materializing otherwise ungraspable

memories and by recalling an otherwise disappeared past—by restoring the lost *nostos* in Schabbach.

Reflective Elements

Even though several of Reitz's own observations seem to strengthen this conclusion, many scholars actually argue that an analysis of the film itself shows that it contains different elements that continually make the viewer aware of its nostalgic nature and thus of the falseness of the idyll that it presents. In a statement that conflicts with Reitz's above-cited reflections, for example, Michael E. Geisler observes that "Reitz makes it clear that Schabbach has absolutely no claim to utopia" (1985, 44). In other words, statements like these result in the idea that *Heimat's* nostalgia is *reflective* in nature.

Most of these analyses are developed in the context of *Heimat's* response to the trauma of the rise of National Socialism and the Holocaust. Christopher J. Wickham, for example, observes that the mythical "bed of roses" shaped by *Heimat* is continually shown to "have its thorns" (1999, 36), and Rachel Palfreyman argues that the film presents a "deconstructive reading" of the concept of *Heimat* (1997, 543). Even though he does eventually resist the latter conclusion, Santner argues, with the help of Jacques Derrida's analysis of the purifying expulsion procedures inherent to the construction of a social order (1990, 77–79), that the film contains several "irritants" or "remainders" that threaten to disrupt the idyll of Schabbach and are therefore shown to be expelled from its representation (1990, 87).²⁰ Barbara Gabriel refers in a similar way to "abject" and "uncanny" elements—hallucinations of ghosts, dead bodies, a severed finger, scars, and more—that would make the viewer aware of the Freudian idea that the apparent *Heimlichkeit* of Schabbach's premodern community inhibits forms of *Unheimlichkeit* (see also Geisler 1985, 44–45). These elements after all suggest that the mythical images we shape of the past are haunted by pain and by traumas that must be repressed to create these same images (2004, 157).

20 The word "remainder" reminds one of Adorno's reflections on a "physical remainder" or *das Hinzutredende*, which are elements that in his view cannot fully be translated into theory (see Adorno 2000, 97). Geisler uses the word "irritants" as well to emphasize similar elements (1985, 52). For an analysis of the notion of *Heimat* and Otherness through the lens of Derrida's understanding of *différance*, see Palfreyman (1997, 532–53).

The reflective aspects of the nostalgia that permeates *Heimat* are also emphasized by those who argue that the film, in different ways, emphasizes its own *constructed* nature and, in turn, the falseness of the idyll of Schabbach. The film, for example, continually shows photographic equipment and even lets a character, using photographs made by another character, summarize what has happened up to that point in the beginning of each episode, sometimes telling stories differently or using different photos (Elsaesser 1985, 21). Furthermore, the film is mostly shot in black and white, but certain shots are in full color or sepia (Geisler 1985, 53; Hansen 1985, 6; Klimek 1999, 231; Garton Ash 1985). Referring to the alienating techniques of the Russian formalists, Anton Kaes argues that these scenes make the viewer aware of the fact that she is watching a construct (1987, 188–89).

Famously, several authors have ultimately argued that, despite these elements, which would provide the film with a (*self*-)critical dimension, *Heimat* still *uncritically* presents the 1930s as a “golden age of prosperity and excitement in the German countryside” (Garton 1985; see also Koch 1985). This suggests that the film is eventually driven by restorative forms of nostalgia. The above-mentioned Santner, for example, argues that Reitz’s unsuccessful attempt to work through the trauma of modernity eventually obliterates the traumas of the Holocaust and of the rise of National Socialism (1990, 99). My main aim, however, is not to determine whether *Heimat*’s nostalgic tendencies are ultimately restorative or reflective in nature. The different analyses of *Heimat* are far too complex, diverse, and extensive to explore this question within the scope of this chapter.

Instead, I hope that my brief overview has illustrated the following three ideas: Firstly, I have explored the idea that even if we acknowledge that both the notion of resonance and the notion of *Heimat* contain nostalgic traces, this does not necessarily make them reactionary or conservative. After all, these traces can still be reflective in nature, as many authors argue about *Heimat* by foregrounding its more self-critical and reflecting elements. Secondly, I have illustrated the idea that presenting these notions as “nostalgia-free” precisely makes them vulnerable to reactionary ideologies, since this makes it impossible to reflect critically on the desires and longing that permeate them. Thirdly, I have presented the idea that we might therefore prevent this from happening by acknowledging that these notions are responses to different traumas that, by causing radical disconnectedness and uprootedness in the past, sparked longing for embeddedness and for resonance in the present.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued in favor of a distinction between *restorative* and *reflective* experiences of resonance, which should be understood as particular manifestations of that which I have previously characterized as *affirmationist* and *critical* forms of resonance (Peters and Majid 2022). Both are permeated with traces of nostalgia, but each responds to these traces in different ways. This distinction is not only inspired by Boym's reflections on nostalgia but also by Adorno's emphasis on a "turn towards the subject," which critically reflects on the different tendencies and desires that still shape the modern self. It is also based on a critique of Rosa's implicitly Hegelian emphasis on the intertwining of the descriptive and the normative, which suggests that historical developments, by going through the dialectics between communal embeddedness and alienation, eventually present the normative yardstick, resonance, to judge the experiences constituted by these *same* developments. Even though the notion of resonance does add a fruitful dimension to the many diagnoses of modernity already developed by the authors to whom Rosa refers, it is only by distinguishing the restorative from the reflective that, in my view, its critical dimensions can be preserved (and separated, more generally, from affirmationist forms of resonance). After all, in a modernity permeated with different traumas, as Adorno forcefully suggested by turning Hegel's "whole that is true" into a "whole that is false" (1974, 50), the normative and the descriptive do not always overlap. As a critical theory of modernity, a theory of resonance should therefore be able to recognize these traumas as they still ripple through our societies and permeate the different desires and longing of the modern self. And these include our longing for resonance and our imaginings of ghost strata, such as the film series *Heimat*.

Works Cited

- Adorno, Theodor W. 1973. *Negative Dialectics*. New York: Continuum.
- Adorno, Theodor W. 1974. *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*. London: Verso.
- Adorno, Theodor W. 1998. "The Meaning of Working through the Past." In *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, translated by Henry W. Pickford, 89–104. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Adorno, Theodor W. 2000. *Problems of Moral Philosophy: Lectures 1963*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Angier, Carole. 1991. "Edgar Reitz." *Sight and Sound* 60, no. 1: 33–40.
- Barkin, Kenneth. 1991. "Review of *Heimat: Eine Deutsche Chronik*." *American Historical Review* 96, no. 4: 1124–26.
- Birgel, Franz A., and Ed Reitz. 1986. "You Can Go Home Again: An Interview with Edgar Reitz." *Film Quarterly* 39, no. 4: 2–10.
- Botha, Rachel. 2020. "Critique: Ben Rivers' Ghost Strata." *The Visual Artists' News Sheet Online*. <https://visualartistsireland.com/critique-ben-rivers-ghost-strata>.
- Boym, Svetlana. 2002. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books.
- Confino, Alon. 1998. "Edgar Reitz's *Heimat* and German Nationhood: Film, Memory, and Understandings of the Past." *German History* 16, no. 2: 185–208.
- Costadura, Edoardo, Klaur Ries, and Christiane Wiesenfeldt. 2019. "Heimat global: Einleitung." In *Heimat global Modelle, Praxen und Medien der Heimatkonstruktion*, edited by Edoardo Costadura, Klaus Ries and Christiane Wiesenfeldt, 11–44. Bielefeld: Transcript.
- Elsaesser, Thomas. 1985. "Memory, Home and Hollywood." Special issue on *Heimat*, edited by Miriam Hansen, *New German Critique* 36 (Autumn): 11–13.
- Elsaesser, Thomas. 1989. *New German Cinema: A History*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Englén, Pehr. 2012. "Memory of Everyday Life: A Study of Edgar Reitz's *Heimat*." *Dandelion Postgraduate Arts Journal and Research Network* 2, no. 2. <https://doi.org/10.16995/ddl.251>.
- Felski, Rita. 2020. "Good Vibrations." *American Literary History* 32, no. 2: 405–15.
- Gabriel, Barbara. 2004. "The Unbearable Strangeness of Being; Edgar Reitz's *Heimat* and the Ethics of the Unheimlich." In *Postmodernism and the Ethical Subject*, edited by Barbara Gabriel and Susan Ilcan, 149–202. Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Garton Ash, Timothy. 1985. "The Life of Death." *The New Yorker*, December 19, 1985.
- Geisler, Michael E. 1985. "'Heimat' and the German Left: The Anamnesis of a Trauma." *New German Critique* 36 (Autumn): 25–66.
- Hansen, Miriam, ed. 1985. "Dossier *Heimat*." Special issue on *Heimat*, *New German Critique* 36 (Autumn): 3–24.
- Hoberman, J. 1985. "Once in a Reich Time." *New German Critique* 36 (Autumn): 9–11.
- Jaeggi, Rahel. 2016. *Alienation*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Jeffries, Stuart. 2005. "The Nazis, Communism and Everything." *The Guardian*, May 4, 2005.
- Kaes, Anton. 1987. *Deutschlandbilder: Die Wiederkehr der Geschichte als Film*. Munich: Edition Text und Kritik.
- Kastenholtz, Utz, director. 2007. *Schabbach ist Überall* (film). Lumière.

- Klimek, Julia F. 1999. "Elusive Images of Women, Home, and History: Deconstructing the Use of Film and Photography in Edgar Reitz's *Heimat*." *Women in German Yearbook* 15: 227–46.
- Koch, Gertrud. 1985. "How Much Naivete Can We Afford? The New *Heimat* Feeling." *New German Critique* 36 (Autumn): 13–16.
- Lijster, Thijs, and Robin Celikates. 2018. "Beyond the Echo Chamber: An Interview with Hartmut Rosa on Resonance and Alienation." In *The Future of the New: Artistic Innovation in Times of Social Acceleration*, edited by Thijs Lijster, 23–54. Amsterdam: Valiz.
- Markham, James M. 1987. "Uneasy West Germans: Yearnings Despite Plenty." *New York Times*, August 2.
- Masquelier, Charles. 2020. "Book Review: Hartmut Rosa, *Resonance: A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World*." *Sociology* 54, no. 4: 858–60.
- Moltke, Johannes von. 2003. "Home Again: Revisiting the New German Cinema in Edgar Reitz's *Die Zweite Heimat* (1993)." In *Cinema Journal* 42, no. 3: 114–43.
- Moltke, Johannes von. 2005. *No Place Like Home: Locations of Heimat in German Cinema*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Palfreyman, Rachel. 1997. "Reflections of the 'Heimat' Genre: Intertextual Reference in Reitz's *Heimat*." *German Life and Letters* 504 (October): 529–43.
- Peters, Mathijs. 2020. "Reification and the Duty to Work Through the Past: On Critical Theory and Temporality." *New German Critique* 47, no. 2: 107–38.
- Peters, Mathijs, and Bareez Majid. 2022. *Exploring Hartmut Rosa's Concept of Resonance*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Peterson, Brian. 1987. "The Hunsrück in the Pre-Nazi Era: Film and Reality." *Film and History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies* 17, no. 1: 17–24.
- Reitz, Edgar, director. 1984. *Heimat: Eine Deutsche Chronik* (film). Lumière.
- Reitz, Edgar, director. 1992. *Die Zweite Heimat: Chronik Einer Jugend* (film). Lumière.
- Reitz, Edgar, director. 2004. *Heimat 3: Chronik Einer Zeitenwende* (film). Lumière.
- Reitz, Edgar, director. 2013. *Die Andere Heimat: Chronik Einer Sehnsucht* (film). Lumière.
- Rivers, Ben, director. 2019. *Ghost Strata* (film). Mubi.
- Rosa, Hartmut. 2009. "Social Acceleration: Ethical and Political Consequences of a Desynchronized High-Speed Society." In *High-Speed Society: Social Acceleration, Power and Modernity*, edited by Hartmut Rosa and William E. Scheuerman, 77–112. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Rosa, Hartmut. 2013a. *Alienation and Acceleration: Towards a Critical Theory of Late/Modernity Temporality*. Aarhus: NSU Press.
- Rosa, Hartmut. 2013b. *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*. New York: Columbia University Press.

- Rosa, Hartmut. 2019a. "Heimat als anverwandelter Weltausschnitt: Ein resonanztheoretischer Versuch." In *Heimat global Modelle, Praxen und Medien der Heimatkonstruktion*, edited by Edoardo Costadura, Klaus Ries, and Christiane Wiesenfeldt, 153–72. Bielefeld: Transcript.
- Rosa, Hartmut. 2019b. *Resonance: A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Rosa, Hartmut. 2020. *The Uncontrollability of the World*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Routledge, Clay. 2016. *Nostalgia: A Psychological Resource*. New York: Routledge.
- Santner, Eric L. 1990. *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Schönherr, Ulrich. 2010. "Out of Tune: Music, Postwar Politics, and Edgar Reitz's *Die zweite Heimat*." *New German Critique* 37, no. 2: 107–24.
- Skrimshire, Angela. 2012. *Heimat of Memory, Imagination and Choice: An Appreciation of Edgar Reitz' Heimat Films*. Self-published.
- Stern, Dagmar C. 1987. "A German History Lesson: Edgar Reitz's *Heimat*." *Film and History* 17, no. 1: 9–16.
- Susen, Simon. 2019. "The Resonance of Resonance: Critical Theory as a Sociology of World-Relations?" *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 33: 309–34.
- Voigts-Virchow, Eckart. 2007. "Heritage and Literature on Screen: *Heimat* and Heritage." In *The Cambridge Companion to Literature on Screen*, edited by Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Wehelan, 121–37. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- VPRO Documentary. 2004. *Over Heimat*. VPRO Heimat123.net.
- Wickham, Christopher J. 1991. "Representation and Mediation in Edgar Reitz's *Heimat*." *The German Quarterly* 64, no. 1: 35–45.
- Witte, Karsten. 1985. "Of the Greatness of the Small People: The Rehabilitation of a Genre." *New German Critique* 36.