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Bonn, the Transitional Capital and its Founding Discourses, 1948-1963

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Bonn, the Transitional Capital and its Founding Discourses, 1948-1963

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Dedication

For Berna and my family.

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Bonn, the Transitional Capital and its Founding Discourses, 1948-1963

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My dissertation reconstructs sociopolitical new-beginning discourses pertaining to Bonn, the provisional West German capital, during the Federal Republic's founding years. Combining approaches from history, cultural studies, and literary studies, I look at Bonn as a projection screen through which to explore the new-beginning discourses that challenged the FRG during its founding years. I argue that there exists a common pattern of contradiction throughout these discourses, as West Germans attempted to straddle the sociopolitical divides and contradictions between the Nazi past, and a now West-oriented future. With individual chapters addressing different cultural domains, my dissertation offers a cultural cross-section of how Bonn was instrumental in implementing a complex strategy for a new beginning in a post-fascist, war-torn society.

Chapter one contextualizes the history of the search for a provisional capital of 1948/9 in symbolisms about Bonn that were seldom explicitly expressed, but which help explain the choice of Bonn as provisional capital, paying particular attention to the fact that it was a provincial city removed from the flashpoints of recent German history. The second chapter investigates city-planning debates about the Bonn federal district to

highlight the dynamic ways in which West Germans negotiated the status of their provisional capital in relation to larger geopolitical questions of the Cold War and the division of Germany. Chapter three traces the complex genesis of the *Neues Bauen*-infused, modernist architecture employed by architect Hans Schwippert in the Bundeshaus and Palais Schaumburg renovations. It goes on to illustrate how the FRG's early, official architectural stance is one based on contradiction and negotiation between two opposing conceptions of political architecture: the traditionalism of Chancellor Konrad Adenauer and Schwippert's moderate modernism. The final chapter examines the spatial configurations of two "Bonn-novels," Wolfgang Koeppen's *Das Treibhaus* (1953) and Günter Weisenborn's *Auf Sand gebaut* (1956) to argue that both "Bonn novels" portray the city as a topographical contradiction, divided between the "old Bonn" and the "political Bonn," with corresponding, largely incompatible social spheres. Both novels exploit this characteristic to express a critique of the democratic process in Bonn.

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Introduction: Inherent Contradictions

“Certainly, the past still continues to hold us with a thousand ties.”¹ –
CDU representative Henle, 23 September 1949

When the seventy-four year old Father of the House (*Alterspräsident*) Paul Löbe (SPD) walked up to the speaker’s podium to formally inaugurate the West German Bundestag on 7 September 1949, the complicated political history of the Weimar Republic and its disastrous demise was brought to bear on the founding moment of the West German democracy at a time when the present already could not have been more complicated.² Located on the fault line of the Cold War, postwar Germany had been split in half by the occupying powers: while West Germans had gathered in the new Bundeshaus to celebrate the foundation of a separate West German state in their newly-elected, provisional capital Bonn, the inauguration of the GDR, a second German state, in East Berlin precisely one month later on 7 October, was already imminent. At its founding moment, the Federal Republic faced two challenges, one from previous incarnations of Germany, and one from a contemporary and ideologically competing one.

The symbolical associations of Löbe’s appearance at this event throw these challenges into sharp relief. From Löbe’s former positions as Reichstag president (1920-24, 1925-32) and the chamber’s vice-president from 1932 to its dissolution by the Nazis in 1933, to his present position as father of the house, Löbe embodied a claim to take up the democratic tradition of the Weimar Republic and the continuation of a unified

¹ “Gewiß, die Vergangenheit hält uns noch mit tausend Faden fest.” Deutscher Bundestag, eds., *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, vol. 1 (Bonn: Deutscher Bundestag, 1950), 96. All translations from German are mine unless noted otherwise.

² Compare Helmut Dubiel’s analysis of Löbe’s inaugural address in his study on the presence of the Third Reich in Bundstag debates. Helmut Dubiel, *Niemand ist frei von der Geschichte: Die nationalsozialistische Herrschaft in den Debatten des Deutschen Bundestages* (Munich: C. Hanser, 1999), 37-42.

German nation state at this occasion.³ As a representative of the short-lived Weimar democracy, however, Löbe was equally a symbol of Germany's unsuccessful democratic past; he was, we recall, the last administrator of Germany's democratic parliament during Hitler's ascension to supreme power through the 1933 Enabling Act. In any case, Löbe's presence at the opening of the Bundestag established a symbolical continuity with the Weimar Republic that the Basic Law and the overall political stance of the Adenauer administration explicitly sought to disavow.⁴ Furthermore, Löbe's presence bookends the Nazi period in problematic fashion by creating the impression that Germany in the past had had a predominantly democratic tradition and that the Nazi years had been a mere aberration: the tumultuous and unstable Weimar years are thus glossed over and overemphasized in comparison to other competing and undemocratic German political traditions, such as the Kaiserreich and the Third Reich. Last, as appointed representative to the Bundestag of West Berlin, Löbe also poignantly embodied the problematic German present: he was an official symbol of the all-German capital-in-waiting Berlin, albeit without political powers; hence he was equally a symbol of the German division, and thus ultimately a powerful memento of Bonn's provisional status.⁵ After all, his task was

³ Dubiel, *Niemand ist frei von der Geschichte*, 37. Dubiel cites after Paul Löbe's memoir *Der Weg war lang* (Berlin, 1990). Compare Christian Peters, *Deutscher Bundestag* (Bonn: Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, n.d.), 20.

⁴ In fact, one of the buzzwords during the early years of the Adenauer chancellorship was "*Bonn ist nicht Weimar*" ("Bonn is not Weimar"), coined by the journalist and historian Fritz René Allemann and used for his book of the same title. Fritz René Allemann, *Bonn ist nicht Weimar* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1956).

⁵ Since West Berlin was not officially declared a German federal *Land* due to the city's Four Powers status, the members of the Bundestag appointed from Berlin were mere representatives who were not allowed to take part in parliamentary votes. Their presence in the Bundestag, however, fulfilled the important symbolic function of emphasizing that West Berlin was considered part of West Germany and that an overwhelming majority of the Bundestag considered Berlin the "real capital" of Germany.

to inaugurate a parliament and a state “on hold,” a political entity that from its onset came with an expiration date, as stipulated in the preamble of the Basic Law.⁶

The complications continue with Löbe’s audience. In speaking to the German Bundestag of 1949, Löbe addressed a highly heterogeneous group. Like Löbe, some of these representatives had presided over the downfall of the Weimar Republic as members of the Reichstag.⁷ Others had been Nazi party members or had worked for the Nazi state in prominent positions. Yet another group had joined the Bundestag without any prior democratic experience, and had been politically socialized while working under Allied supervision during the tumultuous postwar years. Bitter fighting during election campaigns between the conservative Christian Democratic CDU and the Social Democratic SPD, which now was the largest oppositional party to Adenauer’s coalition government, had preceded the Bundestag elections of 14 August. Adenauer had only been elected federal chancellor with a majority of one vote – his own – and his government coalition, formed out of the CDU/CSU, the FDP and the DP, had only come together after considerable politicking and arm-twisting.⁸ Thus, the political constellation of the first Bundestag of 1949 was far from stable. It consisted of more than ten political parties competing for political influence, among them the right wing German Reich Party (DRP), the separatist Bavaria Party (BP), and the communists of the KPD. Because of

⁶ The preamble of the original Basic Law of 1949 contained the clause: “The entire German people remain called upon to fulfill the German unity and freedom through self-determination.” (“Das gesamte Deutsche Volk bleibt aufgefordert, in freier Selbstbestimmung die Einheit und Freiheit Deutschlands zu vollenden.”) “documentArchiv.de - Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland (23.05.1949),” accessed 4 March 2011, <http://www.documentarchiv.de/brd/1949/grundgesetz.html>.

⁷ At the opening of the Bundestag on 7 September 1949, 28 delegates had formerly belonged to the Reichstag of the Weimar Republic. Peters, *Deutscher Bundestag*, 20.

⁸ Mary Fulbrook, *History of Germany, 1918-2000: The Divided Nation*, 2nd ed. (Malden, Mass: Blackwell, 2002), 142.

its parliament's heterogeneous composition and the extremist potential represented by various splinter parties left and right, the Federal Republic was facing the increasingly urgent imperative to create a viable mode of parliamentary (inter)action. Important political steps had to be implemented as soon as possible. In order to arrive at a viable parliamentary working mode, Löbe had to reach across the political aisles.

A chief problem of this (politically) extremely heterogeneous Bundestag was that it was burdened with the political baggage of the past, about which there existed a great deal of political dissent. When Löbe paid tribute in his speech to the SPD victims of the Nazi Enabling Act of 1933, there was uproar in the plenary chamber, followed by a heated quarrel about which Weimar party had suffered more as a result of the Nazi takeover.⁹ Finger pointing and accusations made it apparent that a not insignificant number of the Bundestag representatives present had voted *for* the Enabling Act.¹⁰ On the surface only a minor incident, it nonetheless illustrated how much the Weimar political past was still part of the political realities in the Bundestag of 1949. There simply was no zero hour of parliamentary politics in West Germany.

At a time when many of the Bundestag members were still in deep disagreement about their understandings of the past and present, and their vision for the future, Löbe tried to establish a sense of unity in the plenary by appealing to a commonly shared victim status among Germans. Present victims are, in Löbe's view, the East Germans, who were precluded from taking part in the Bundestag:

[...] begging for deliverance, today the eyes of millions of fellow German countrymen are upon us - those who are living in Germany's Eastern provinces.

⁹ Deutscher Bundestag, *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 1:2.

¹⁰ Only the SPD had resisted the Enabling Act.

Occupying powers or foreign administration prevent their representatives by force from sitting in this chamber and joining our negotiations.¹¹

Past victims are, for Löbe, yet again the Germans, the civilian casualties of the air war over German cities, the POWs and displaced persons, together with the SPD Reichstag representatives who had voted against the Enabling Act.¹² Highlighting the German victim discourse was an effective rhetorical strategy to bridge the political gaps between the benches of the Bundestag, and in order for it to succeed, the Nazi past had to be rewritten on terms favorable to a new political beginning, while the issue of German perpetration would be kept at bay. Sure enough, Löbe broached the issue of German guilt, but only in the manner common to the early parliamentary debates: by making vague, yet emotively powerful, references,¹³ and by predominately rendering Germans as victims:¹⁴

At no time do we deny the vast amount of guilt that has been placed on our shoulders by a criminal system. But the critics outside should not overlook this: the German people suffered a twofold punishment. It groaned under the kicks of the German tyrants, as well as under the measures of war and retribution, which foreign powers exercised in order to overcome Nazi rule. He whose house is on

¹¹ “[...] Erlösung heischend sind heute die Augen jener Millionen deutscher Landsleute auf uns gerichtet, die in den deutschen Ostgebieten wohnen und deren Vertretern Besatzungsmacht oder fremde Verwaltung gewaltsam verwehrt, mit in diesem Saale zu sitzen und mit uns zu beraten.” Deutscher Bundestag, *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 1:1.

¹² Deutscher Bundestag, *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 1:2.

¹³ Löbe asks the representatives to have one minute of silence to remember “all the dead, who have been claimed as victims of the war from all nations, all those who lost their lives to the war’s further effects.” (“Nun meine Damen und Herren, lassen Sie uns eine Minute stillen Gedenkens all den Toten weihen, die als Opfer des Krieges von allen Völkern gefordert wurden, all denen, die durch die Fortwirkung des Krieges ihr Leben verloren.”) Deutscher Bundestag, *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 1:2.

¹⁴ For an overview on the West German postwar victim discourse, see William John Niven, ed., *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany* (Basingstoke [England]: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

fire in all corners at first sees his own distress, before he gains enough composure to entirely recognize the situation of his neighbor.¹⁵

Rhetorical maneuvering to deflect German guilt like the above was a commonplace in the early Bundestag debates.¹⁶ In his 1999 study on the presence of the National Socialist era in Bundestag debates, *Niemand ist frei von der Geschichte* (*No One is Free From [our] History*), Helmut Dubiel asserts that Löbe followed a prevalent rhetorical pattern of the time by dividing Germans during the Nazi period into members of the *System* and the *Volk*, to the effect that “perpetrators and accomplices are being turned into victims.”¹⁷ In this view, the tyrannical Nazi *System* oppressed the generally innocent “*Volk*.” It is striking that Löbe paints non-Jewish German suffering in drastic terms in his address but does not mention Jewish suffering. From today’s perspective, Löbe’s blatant omission of the chief victims of the Third Reich from the inaugural address may seem scandalous,¹⁸

¹⁵ “Wir [...] bestreiten auch keinen Augenblick das Riesenmaß von Schuld, das ein verbrecherisches System auf die Schultern unseres Volkes geladen hat. Aber die Kritiker draußen wollen doch eins nicht übersehen: das deutsche Volk litt unter zweifacher Geißelung. Es stöhnte unter der Fußtritten der deutschen Tyrannen und unter den Kriegs- und Vergeltungsmaßnahmen, welche die Fremden Mächte zur Überwindung der Naziherrschaft ausgeführt haben. Wessen Haus an allen Ecken brennt, der sieht zunächst die eigene Not, ehe er die Fassung gewinnt, die Lage des Nachbarn voll zu würdigen.” Deutscher Bundestag, *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 1:2.

¹⁶ Robert G. Moeller argues that in the early years of the FRG, “in the political arena and forms of commemoration, stories of German loss and suffering were ubiquitous.” Robert G. Moeller, “The Politics of the Past in the 1950s: Rhetorics of Victimization in East and West Germany,” in *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany*, ed. William John Niven (Basingstoke [England]: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 28. Compare Dubiel, *Niemand ist frei von der Geschichte*, 40. Dubiel argues that “the self-image of the Germans as victims and the rejection of the collective guilt argument are an integral element of nearly all speeches given in the new Bundestag which address the prehistory of the new republic.” (“Die Selbstwahrnehmung der Deutschen als Opfer und die Abwehr der Kollektivschuldthese bestimmen nahezu alle Reden, die sich im frühen Bundestag auf die Vorgeschichte der neuen Republik beziehen.”)

¹⁷ “... verwandeln sich die Täter und Komplizen zu Opfern.” Dubiel, *Niemand ist frei von der Geschichte*, 40.

¹⁸ Dubiel expresses his profound bewilderment about this omission by bemoaning the “absence of traces of a collective shame, which after all could have been presumed within the representatives of a democratic postwar Germany.” (“... die Abwesenheit von Spuren einer kollektiven Scham, die bei den demokratischen Repräsentanten Nachkriegsdeutschlands doch zu vermuten gewesen wäre.”) Dubiel, *Niemand ist frei von der Geschichte*, 41.

but from a contemporary vantage point, his rhetorical strategy is highly effective: in rendering them a largely innocent “Volk,” Löbe frees Germans (and specifically the members of the Bundestag) from an alleged “collective guilt,” and creates a space for an untainted new beginning, if only in the realm of rhetoric.¹⁹ This was of exceptional importance since, quite obviously, a Bundestag full of perpetrators would have had to be avoided at all cost. Political credibility was desperately needed at this hour, and talking it into existence was, in the eyes of many, a good start. In shedding light on the problem complexes attached to the Nazi past and the complicated present of two emerging, separate German states, Paul Löbe’s inaugural address thus embodies two central challenges that the nascent Federal Republic needed to address effectively and quickly in the near future, if it did not want to gamble away the crucial momentum of the new beginning necessary for the German postwar democracy to succeed.

The founding discourses on Bonn examined in the following chapters of this dissertation are, in one way or another, informed by the contradictory desires alluded to in Löbe’s speech: to demarcate a clear break with Nazism while shielding the general population from guilt on the one hand,²⁰ and to pursue a political course of

¹⁹ The problem complex of collective guilt (*Kollektivschuld*) was at this time an important part of the public debate, as embodied by Karl Jaspers 1950 book *The Question of German Guilt*, in which he allotted to the Germans a collective, moral guilt in the events of the Third Reich (Karl Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt* (Fordham Univ Press, 2001), 69. In fact, at no point in time did the Allies level accusations of collective guilt at the Germans. Stephen Brockmann, *German Literary Culture at the Zero Hour* (Rochester, N.Y: Camden House, 2004), 28/9. However, as Jaspers’ book and prevalent media debates of the time serve to illustrate, the “collective guilt”-complex was very much present in political, cultural, and even domestic life.

²⁰ Compare von Schilling’s use of the term “nationales Substrat.” Von Schilling discusses the German strategy to delegate guilt onto a few, obvious perpetrators in order to exonerate the many fellow travelers: “Thus also the German honor remained untainted, and a national substrate was preserved which remained untouched by the Third Reich and the events of the war.” (“So blieb auch die deutsche Ehre rein, ein nationales Substrat also erhalten, das vom Dritten Reich und dem Geschehen des Krieges nicht berührt worden war.”) Klaus von Schilling, *Scheitern an der Vergangenheit: Das deutsche Selbstverständnis zwischen re-education und Berliner Republik* (Berlin: Philo, 2002), 94.

socioeconomic western integration while not losing sight of Eastern Germany on the other. As will be shown in this dissertation, these two axes, between past and present, and between West and East, would fundamentally shape the new-beginning discourses on Bonn as provisional capital.

Building on the analyses laid out above, this dissertation examines the local culture of Bonn during the chancellorship of Konrad Adenauer (1949-1963) from a synchronic point of view.²¹ It investigates founding discourses connected to the West German provisional capital during the country's struggle to establish a post-Nazi, modern identity during the postwar period and the time of the "economic miracle." The West German 1950s and early 60s represented a period of quick recovery and subsequent unprecedented economic growth after WWII. Throughout, Bonn modeled West Germany's experiments in cultural and political identity within postwar Europe, as well as functioning as a laboratory for a post-Nazi and anti-communist social, political, and democratic identity. Because this capital was provisional and to be replaced by a recovered Berlin at any given moment in time, Bonn after 1945 would become a symbol for a transitory West German identity under intense negotiation. Throughout, due to its status as the locus of the West German political beginning, the nature of its location, and its recent history, Bonn served as an intersection of different founding discourses pertaining to Germany's past, present, and future, acting as signifier and testing ground for core challenges faced by the West German state in its founding years.

Examining the story of Bonn's founding years through the lens of a "new beginning," this dissertation begins by tracing founding discourses relating to the city's

²¹ I am borrowing this term from historical linguistics, which calls the analysis of a language as a complete system at a specific time, without taking a developmental teleology into consideration, "synchronic," while it refers to the analysis of the historical development of a language "diachronic."

role as federal capital as they emerged during the search for a new capital in 1948/9. It then goes on to examine the reception and manifestation of these discourses in city planning and architecture, and its representation in literary fiction.²² At the same time, this dissertation analyzes the strategies by means of which politicians, architects, city planners, journalists, and novelists manipulated the “project Bonn” in order to either displace and silence, or alternatively highlight Germany’s conflicting, historical, and political discourses, thus forcing the “project Bonn” forward, onward against the contradictions inherent in the West German political new beginning. As has already been touched upon in the first part of this introduction, the process of implementing Bonn together with a new democratic symbolism for the future during numerous instances demanded of West Germans a complex (re)positioning process vis-à-vis the complicated Cold War present and the Nazi past. These (re)positioning maneuvers will provide the red thread connecting the chapters.

In thus reading Bonn as spatial manifestation of the contradictions inherent in the West German nation building process, I focus my analyses to trace a number of characteristics that determined Bonn’s precarious status in cultural practice. The first is Bonn’s provisional status. The capital was explicitly meant to be provisional until Berlin, which was still perceived to be the all-German capital, was recovered as capital in a future process of German unification.²³ Second, I argue that this preliminary capital was a “no place,” a location spatially, historically, and symbolically removed from the flashpoints of Germany’s recent and burdensome history. With these two determinants

²² This list of cultural domains in which founding discourses about Bonn played out is of course not exhaustive. By offering a selective overview of different discourses, this dissertation is to be understood as a first step in reading Bonn’s local culture for the negotiation of the FRG’s new political beginning from a synchronic vantage point.

²³ Therefore the Basic Law as introduced in 1949 did not contain any specific location for the capital.

converging to a synergetic effect, Bonn came to represent several contradictions that challenged the West Germans' politics of nation building. Bonn was a capital that carried an (unknown) expiration date. It was at the same time both West Germany's political heart and a sleepy town in a provincial setting on the banks of the Rhine, and to considerable extent removed from the destruction and the pressing problems of most German cities. The capital Bonn stood for a retreat into a *Heimat* – to build up a nation.²⁴ It was the capital of the legal successor of the Third Reich and at the same time claimed to be free from associations with the country's militarist, antidemocratic, and fascist past.²⁵ Lastly, this new nation had only been created under intense political pressure from the Western Allies, while West German politicians desperately wanted to avoid creating a *fait accompli* with regard to a potential German reunification.²⁶ To sum up, the emerging new-beginning discourses shared the pattern of contradiction as their determining

²⁴ In this Bonn also symbolizes Celia Applegate's contention that Germany was rebuilt from the regions outward and upward, and not from its centers. Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 229. In chapter one, I represent Bonn as the culmination of a striking pattern of locating the key political decisions pertaining to West Germany's political future in the province: German politicians seemed to want to avoid staging their postwar conventions in locations that carried connotations to Germany's imperial, Weimar, and Nazi past.

²⁵ Compare Hans Dollinger, *Die Bundesrepublik in Der Ära Adenauer 1949-1963: Ihre Geschichte in Texten, Bildern und Dokumenten* (Munich: Desch, 1966), 178. Dollinger cites the government-issued publication *Regierung Adenauer 1949-1963*, (no date) which (sometime in the 1960s) states that: "No new state has [...] been created by the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany. The Basic Law merely reorganized the state, which did not disappear in 1945: the Federal Republic of Germany is a continuation of the German Reich under a new name, albeit in a spatial limitation dictated by the political developments since 1945." ("Durch die Konstituierung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland ist mithin kein neuer Staat geschaffen worden. Das Grundgesetz hat lediglich den 1945 nicht untergegangenen Staat reorganisiert: Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland setzt das vor 1945 bestehende Deutsche Reich, allerdings in einer durch die politische Entwicklung seit 1945 erzwungenen räumlichen Begrenzung, unter neuem Namen fort...")

²⁶ Here I refer to the fact that West German policy makers in both CDU and SPD in 1948, when the Frankfurt Documents put forth by the Western Allies called upon West Germans to draft a constitution for a Western German state, understood this order as a profound dilemma with regard to the question of a future reunification of the Eastern and Western occupied zones. This will be discussed further in chapter one.

characteristic. They were directed forward for this new country to claim its place among the states of Western Europe, but were at the same time haunted by the past; they were directed at national and even international concerns, but rooted in the province, they strove for political stability but at the same time insisted on the provisionality of the present West German state.

In order to trace the new-beginning discourses on Bonn, I will combine a New Historicist understanding of culture with close reading of cultural artifacts. A notion of “discourse” informed by the work of Michel Foucault enables me to trace a discursive practice on a new beginning by politicians, city planners, architects, journalists, novelists, and other participants in the West German public sphere.²⁷ The New Historicists’ notion of *cultural poetics* describes culture as text, in that it approaches cultural processes as discursive transactions.²⁸ With the New Historicist notion of culture as dynamic interchange between discursive fields such as art, history, or politics, it becomes possible to conceive of the Adenauer years from a synchronic vantage point as a cultural archive

²⁷ I base my understanding of “discourse” on the definition that Michel Foucault developed in *The Archeology of Knowledge* (1972), and which he later modified for practical application in his foreword to Pierre Rivière’s memoir *I, Pierre Rivière, Having Slaughtered My Mother, My Sister, and My Brother...* (1982). (Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972); *I, Pierre Rivière, Having Slaughtered My Mother, My Sister, and My Brother--: A Case of Patricide in the 19th Century* (Lincoln [Neb.]: University of Nebraska Press, 1982). In *Archeology of Knowledge*, Foucault defines discourse as: “constituted by a group of sequences of signs, in so far as they are statements, that it, in so far as they can be assigned particular modalities of their existence;” and as “the group of statements that belong to a single system of formation; thus I shall be able to speak of clinical discourse, economic discourse, the discourse of natural history, psychiatric discourse” (121). In *I, Pierre Rivière...*, Foucault examines an “intersection of discourses that differed in origin, form, organization, and function,” much on terms as I propose in my dissertation. *I, Pierre Rivière, Having Slaughtered My Mother, My Sister, and My Brother--*, x.

²⁸ “Culture as primarily a matter of language and text; poetics as a set of rules and procedures for analysis.” Christopher Prendergast, *The Triangle of Representation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 57. In his essay “Towards a Poetics of Culture,” Stephen Greenblatt’s model of culture distinguishes between several cultural discursive practices and claims that they are dynamically interconnected. “His model for this view of historical and cultural process is that of the transaction, transactions between discursive forms (...).” Prendergast, *The Triangle of Representation*, 55.

of non-hierarchically organized “texts,” established by discursive practices that engage in a dynamic exchange. These texts can be compared on the same level by tracing the discourse threads that establish them. Employing the method of close reading will enable me to situate detailed analyses of certain cultural artifacts – buildings, newspaper articles, books, photographs, or political speeches – into the discourses that intersect on them, highlight connections between different cultural domains, and to contextualize these artifacts into the larger sociopolitical context.²⁹

This dissertation’s chapters are ideally meant to reproduce the dialogic exchange between the different cultural domains. Each chapter inquires into one founding discourse led in a specific cultural domain: politics (chapter one), city planning (chapter two), architecture (chapter three), and literature (chapter four). Taken separately, they function as self-contained and independent analyses of particular aspects of Bonn’s founding period. Taken together in the arrangement proposed here, I argue, exposes their interconnectedness. Thus, this dissertation’s chapters are meant to be read as a dialogue between different discursive practices, a dynamic dialogism which ultimately should provide the reader with a representative overview of the problem complexes at play while the provisional capital was sought out, planned, designed and built, and commented upon in fiction.³⁰

The first chapter offers, besides a comprehensive review of the major political and historical waypoints of Bonn’s path to federal capital, an inquiry into symbolical

²⁹ In employing the term “close reading,” I need to distance my use of this framework from the tradition founded by I. A. Richards and established by the New Criticism, and other merely formalist approaches. For my purpose, I define “close reading” as a method to carefully examine texts as defined above for patterns, similarities, and contradictions and, in a second step, to contextualize these qualities into the sociopolitical pattern (the new-beginning discourses) I am examining.

³⁰ I am using the term “representative overview” since the chapters of my dissertation can only be understood as a first and highly selective step to map out the public imaginary on Bonn as federal capital. Suggestions for further research will be made in my conclusion.

complexes, which I suggest were influential in the capital's selection. In arguing that these complexes formed a symbolical subtext in the decision for Bonn that rarely ever was explicitly mentioned in official policy making, but nevertheless shines through in the political decisions leading up to Bonn, this chapter complements the predominantly historical narratives of Bonn's success with an inquiry into the symbolical imaginary connected to the new federal capital.

Chapter two traces the process of careful consolidation of Bonn's federal district in city planning debates, from a completely provisional arrangement to a quasi-permanent "capital of convenience," in the context of larger geopolitical developments in the Cold War. I argue that distinct moments of crisis, as for example the "Berlin crisis" of 1956/7, when parts of the media landscape, politicians, and private persons in West Germany demanded a relocation of the capital to West Berlin in order to signal solidarity in concurrent struggles for democracy in the Eastern Bloc, attest to the highly dynamic fashion in which West Germans negotiated their relationship to their capitals, Bonn the provisional one, and Berlin the all-German capital. Arguing for a more detailed division of Bonn's developmental phases than has up to now been established by scholarship, the chapter illustrates how Bonn's federal district was to considerable extent a spatial manifestation of West German policy making, especially in regard to "foreign," German-German politics.

Chapter three examines the historical origins, postwar theoretical repositioning, and subsequent negotiation of the FRG's early official design language in the architecture of Hans Schwippert, who was in charge of the renovation of the Pedagogical Academy into the Bundeshaus and of the remodeling of the Palais Schaumburg into Adenauer's Federal Chancellery (1948-1950). In recapitulating Schwippert's schooling in Weimar New Building, his complicity in enlisting this design language for the political aims of

the Third Reich as an openly compliant architect working for the Nazis, and in tracing Schwippert's strategies to ideologically reposition modern architecture post 1945, the chapter lays bare how architecture was charged with ideological concerns and thus subject to profound processes of rededication, reorientation, and ideological cleansing in the aftermath of the Third Reich. The ensuing analysis of Schwippert's conflict with Adenauer about the design language of the remodeling efforts and their associated democratic symbolisms illustrates how and why both men were leading different and competing architectural discourses of new beginning, something that in the end betrays different concepts of democracy. Ultimately, the Bonn federal district emerges as an architecturally contested space in which Adenauer's concerns about Schwippert's ambitious democratic symbolisms brought about an effect of moderation that accounts for the restrained, yet modern design language of Schwippert's renovations and beyond.

Moving on to Bonn's reception in literature, chapter four examines the functionalization of the spatial configuration in two "Bonn novels," Wolfgang Koeppen's *Das Treibhaus* (*The Hothouse*, 1953), and Günther Weisenborn's *Auf Sand gebaut* (*Built upon Sand*, 1956). I use the shared characteristic of the literary Bonn as a city determined by two distinct and segregated parts with corresponding social spheres entertaining contrasting ideas and world-views in order to read both novels as distinct critical interventions into Bonn's ongoing process of political consolidation from different aesthetic/ideological angles. Reading the novels as literary commentaries on the preceding chapters, my analysis illustrates how the texts' immanent and unresolved spatial contradictions convey a sense of profound mistrust in the FRG's political process.

Located at the intersection of different disciplines, this dissertation draws upon findings from such diverse fields such as (architectural) history, city planning, sociology, as well as literary- and culture studies. In conceiving an interdisciplinary project like this,

I would also like to suggest new avenues for German Studies to engage productively with other disciplines and new topics at a time when the market for traditional German Studies is becoming smaller and smaller for professionals entering the field. In melding Cultural Studies' recent "turns," such as the cultural turn and the spatial turn, with historical and sociological research, and in combining the findings with "traditional" literary analysis, I would argue that this project reflects some of the important synergies German Studies can establish with other disciplines.

In writing this dissertation on the local culture of Bonn during the Adenauer years, I hope to contribute to a field of inquiry that only recently has been rediscovered for German Studies. Often enough, the literature and culture of the West German 1950s have been examined on terms of a reverse-teleology, which examines this period as occupied almost exclusively with a "coming to terms" with the Nazi past.³¹ This perspective largely concentrates on the continuities and ruptures with the Third Reich during the transition to democracy and on reading the culture and literature of the West German 1950s through the lens of an *unbewältigte Vergangenheit* (an uncompleted past).³² Alternatively, popular opinion has often construed the Adenauer years as the "boring decade," especially if compared to the more openly dynamic late 1960s and early

³¹ As to the field of literary studies, Stephen Brockmann has made the point that the critical examination of the myth of a German literary "zero hour" by the *Progressive Germanistik* of the late 1960s and subsequent critical approaches has been so effective that the identification of continuities with the Nazi past had for a long time become the predominant paradigm in literary studies. Brockmann, *German Literary Culture at the Zero Hour*, 3.

³² Examples for this perspective are: Ernestine Schlant, *Language of Silence: West German Literature and the Holocaust* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1999); Alexander Mitscherlich and Margarete Mitscherlich, *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior* (New York: Grove Press, 1975); Judith Ryan, *The Uncompleted Past: Postwar German Novels and the Third Reich* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1983).

1970s.³³ In fact, the Adenauer years are bookended by two decades that both brought very manifest and palpable changes to German society. Their position between the 1940s with the obliteration of the German state in the wake of Hitler's "total war," and the 1960s with the intensifying Cold War and the profound social upheavals in the wake of 1968, are largely responsible for the ostensible impression of being a static/"boring" period. Correspondingly, many scholars have based their perception of the period on the pattern of restoration: an alliance of material reconstruction and an alleged widespread social conformism.

Recently, however, the West German 1950s have come under critical reevaluation by many disciplines contributing to German Studies, such as history, sociology, film studies, and literary- and culture studies. Contributions by Hanna Schissler, Dagmar Herzog, Johannes von Moltke, and others have called into question prevalent assumptions about this period by looking at gender relations, generational conflicts, the "Coca-colonization" of West Germany by US-style popular culture, sexual mores and politics, and the reworking of a post WWII *Heimat* in the *Heimatfilm* genre.³⁴ The result of these inquiries is a growing sense that the Adenauer years need to be revisited as a highly dynamic, complex, and often contradictory period.

With the exception of a few notable studies, the interest in Bonn and its development as federal capital has been extremely limited in US-American academia.³⁵

³³ Axel Schildt, *Zwischen Abendland und Amerika: Studien zur westdeutschen Ideenlandschaft der 50er Jahre* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1999), 1.

³⁴ Hanna Schissler, ed., *The Miracle Years: A Cultural History of West Germany, 1949-1968* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2001); Dagmar Herzog, *Sex After Fascism: Memory and Morality in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2005); Johannes von Moltke, *No Place Like Home: Locations of Heimat in German Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

³⁵ Studies which go into some length upon this topic are: Deborah Ascher Barnstone, *The Transparent State: Architecture and Politics in Postwar Germany* (London: Routledge, 2005); Michael Z. Wise, *Capital*

At the same time, in the German context, after a hiatus which was most likely due to the concentration on Berlin as the new capital of reunified Germany, there has been renewed focus on Hans Schwippert and the Bundeshaus project. This testifies to a resurgence of interest in the birthplace of West German democracy – not lastly because Berlin as capital of a reunited Germany has now become somewhat of a normalcy. This allowed for a shift in perspective and the troubling realization that the Bonn Bundeshaus building of today is a mere shadow of its former function as West German parliament. The birthplace of the German postwar democracy has been stripped of the parliamentary chamber, which was torn down in 1987, and now quite unromantically hosts a shipping company. Recent contributions by architectural historians Agathe Buslei Wuppermann and Gerda Breuer have through excellent studies shed new light on the turbulent years during which Hans Schwippert renovated the two most important buildings in the federal district and have brought to light and made accessible material which has been invaluable for this dissertation.³⁶ At the same time, Buslei-Wuppermann's and Breuer's efforts have been predominantly archaeological and preservationist in nature: in telling the story of the Bundeshaus and its architect, the scholars largely stay within the realms of architectural history with the goal to preserve the memory of the birthplace of the West German democracy and Schwippert's considerable architectural legacy at an age when most of the remnants have already disappeared. In regard to the history of Bonn's road to

Dilemma: Germany's Search for a New Architecture of Democracy (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998).

³⁶ Agatha Buslei-Wuppermann and Andreas Zeising, *Das Bundeshaus von Hans Schwippert in Bonn: Architektonische Moderne und demokratischer Geist* (Dusseldorf: Grupello, 2009); Agatha Buslei-Wuppermann, *Hans Schwippert, 1899-1973: Von der Werkkunst zum Design* (Munich: Herbert Utz Verlag, 2007); Gerda Breuer, *Hans Schwippert: Bonner Bundeshaus 1949, Parlament der jungen BRD: mit einer Auswahl aus dem Briefwechsel mit Konrad Adenauer* (Tübingen: Wasmuth, 2009); Gerda Breuer, Pia Mingels, and Christopher Oestereich, eds., *Hans Schwippert 1899-1973: Moderation des Wiederaufbaus* (Berlin: Jovis, 2010).

capital and the political events leading up to and following its election, groundbreaking work has been laid by Reiner Pommerin's seminal study *Von Berlin nach Bonn* (1989).³⁷ As to more recent studies, Jens Krüger's 2006 *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn* has shed light on the financial aspects of planning the federal district.³⁸ To set these important findings into context and dialogue with larger problems connected to the West German nation building process was thus a task that still had to be done.

While aspects of Bonn's status as provisional capital have been discussed in the respective fields, such as the history of the political decisions leading to Bonn,³⁹ Bonn's representation in novels critiquing the Adenauer restoration,⁴⁰ and questions of an architectural language of transparency,⁴¹ this dissertation for the first time incorporates many of the aforementioned problem complexes and findings in a locally focused study. Never before have a variety of cultural and political domains about Bonn been read for an integrative cultural meaning, in the sense that the cultural archive of Bonn's founding discourses functions as testimony of an experiment of nation building *in nuce*.

³⁷ Reiner Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn: Die Alliierten, die Deutschen und die Hauptstadtfrage nach 1945* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1989).

³⁸ Jens Krüger, *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006).

³⁹ Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*; Dietrich Höroldt, *25 Jahre Bundeshauptstadt Bonn: Eine Dokumentation* (Bonn: Röhrscheid Verlag, 1974); Helmut Vogt, "Der Herr Minister wohnt in einem Dienstwagen auf Gleis 4:" *Die Anfänge des Bundes in Bonn 1949/50* (Bonn: Stadt Bonn, Stadtarchiv, 1999).

⁴⁰ Such as: Ursula Knapp, *Der Roman der fünfziger Jahre: zur Entwicklung der Romanästhetik in Westdeutschland* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2002); Brigitte Neubert, *Der Aussenseiter im deutschen Roman nach 1945* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1977).

⁴¹ Barnstone, *The Transparent State*.

Chapter One: Symbolically Distant, Geographically Close, Politically Convenient: Why Bonn became Provisional Capital

“It was cozy. And the landscape was beautiful. And the experience that the landscape had not changed. With the fantastic vistas of the *Siebengebirge*. Since Goethe.” – Egon Bahr, 2009¹

“Bonn was the right city at the right time.” – Wolfgang Thierse, 1998²

INTRODUCTION

Why Bonn? Why did the sleepy town on the Rhine become the West German provisional capital and not a larger city with a more cosmopolitan flair, such as Bonn’s toughest competitor, Frankfurt am Main? If one googles a phrase such as “Bonns Wahl zur Bundeshauptstadt” (Bonn’s election as federal capital), one is struck by the sheer volume of discussions, historical facts, and speculation about Bonn’s election on German internet forums. Obviously, there is still widespread fascination with the fact that Bonn was once the capital of the Federal Republic. A German Internet discussion thread from 2004 gives a representative overview of how average Germans answered a question that, despite the established historical facts, obviously continued to perplex them, even some 60 years after the fact. Answers to the question – why Bonn? – range from famous Adenauer myths and half-truths (Bonn was elected because Adenauer lived nearby and was able to get his way through cunning intrigue), to matters of a Cold War military nature (the main competitor, Frankfurt am Main, was too exposed to an attack by Warsaw

¹ “Es war gemütlich. Und die Landschaft war schön. Und das Erlebnis, dass die Landschaft sich nicht geändert hatte. Mit dem fantastischen Blick auf das Siebengebirge. Seit Goethe.” Interview with Egon Bahr in the WDR documentary: Jürgen Bevers and Bernhard Pflutschinger, *Wie die Bundeshauptstadt an den Rhein kam*, DVD (WDR mediagroup, 2009).

² “Bonn war die richtige Stadt zum richtigen Zeitpunkt,” said President of the Bundestag Wolfgang Thierse during the last session of parliament held in Bonn prior to the move to Berlin in 1998. Cited after: Bevers and Pflutschinger, *Wie die Bundeshauptstadt an den Rhein kam*.

Pact forces through the Fulda valley, while Bonn was protected by the *Siebengebirge*), to the well-known contention that Frankfurt was “too much of a real city,”³ implying that it would not easily relinquish capital status – a charge famously uttered by the mayor of West Berlin, Ernst Reuter. While many contributors in one way or another contended that Bonn was an adequately provisional gesture from the West German side with regard to the capital in waiting Berlin, one forum guest even argued that the “Besatzer” (“occupiers”) “would have vetoed any real city” since they were “only interested in taking apart the German Reich for good” after WWII.⁴ The fascination with Bonn the provisional West German capital continues until the present day, or so it seems.

With the above lay opinions on Bonn in mind, this chapter will provide an overview of the factors that ultimately tipped the scales for Bonn as provisional capital. It will precede a review of the main decision points for Bonn by presenting three distinct arguments regarding the imaginary components of Bonn’s election.⁵ I argue that Bonn was invested with a great deal of symbolism that has often been neglected in purely historical accounts of Bonn’s road to capital status. First, this chapter will introduce Bonn as the culmination of a pattern of rebuilding the country from its margins. Second, it will examine Bonn’s status as a “Western capital,” that is, a capital both geographically and culturally oriented toward the US and Western Europe. Third, it will contextualize Bonn’s election in a West German tendency to avoid symbolically over-determined spaces. In its analysis of West German and Allied fears, ambitions, and power struggles,

³ “Warum gerade Bonn? | aus Forum Geschichte | wer-weiss-was,” accessed 9 December 2010, <http://www.wer-weiss-was.de/theme75/article2457666.html>.

⁴ “Warum gerade Bonn? | aus Forum Geschichte | wer-weiss-was.”

⁵ By “imaginary” I am referring to collective West German fantasies, symbolisms, and emotional and political investments in the capital.

this chapter will lay bare some of the symbolic subtext of the decision for Bonn, thus complementing the predominantly historical narratives of Bonn's success as established by scholarship.⁶

A) READING BONN FOR SYMBOLIC MEANING

Rebuilding Germany from the Margins: Bonn as “No Place”

Scholarship has very precisely documented Bonn's success in its advocates' efforts to establish the city on the map of the West German political landscape throughout the 1950s. However, I will argue that one of the most important factors that worked in favor of the provincial city on the Rhine was precisely the fact that it had *not* yet appeared on the German political map. It was precisely the city's quality of a “no place,” a venue that seemed both symbolically and spatially removed from the flashpoints of recent German history, that made it attractive as capital choice. The deliberate exclusion of Germany's destroyed cities would allow for the negotiation of postwar problems that were too imminent, physically reified, elsewhere. The withdrawal to the country was equally important for the difficult project of implementing a *provisional* capital – a concept that borders on a contradiction in terms, since capitals are usually the product of a long process of sociopolitical development, and are not simply determined at will as temporary solutions. Bonn's decidedly provincial air made it possible to insist on its

⁶ Höroldt, *25 Jahre Bundeshauptstadt Bonn: Eine Dokumentation*; Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*; Klaus Dreher, *Treibhaus Bonn, Schaubühne Berlin: deutsche Befindlichkeiten* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1999); Anthony James Nicholls, *The Bonn Republic: West German Democracy, 1945-1990*, Postwar world (London: Longman, 1997); Gabriele Müller-List, “Bonn als Bundeshauptstadt 1949-1989,” in *Bonn: Von einer französischen Bezirksstadt zur Bundeshauptstadt 1794-1989*, ed. Dietrich Höroldt (Bonn: Dümmler, 1989); Vogt, “*Der Herr Minister wohnt in einem Dienstwagen auf Gleis 4:*” *Die Anfänge des Bundes in Bonn 1949/50*.

provisionality, since it was clear from the start that this city would not nurture any ambitions to remain capital of a reunited Germany. This common agreement on Bonn made it possible to extend the city's provisional status for an infinite period of time into the future, ultimately creating a stable "capital of convenience" that was acceptable to West Germans and the Western Allies⁷ – a capital that was never loved and often ridiculed, but which at the same time garnered praise for its modesty and efficiency from foreign diplomats and politicians. In short, Bonn was the perfect laboratory in which to rebuild a state whose population was waiting to be reunited, or as the author Felix Kuby put it: a *Wartesaal Deutschland* ("waiting room Germany").⁸

Only with the move of the capital to Berlin in 1999 would a reunited Germany return to a political center that fits the most common description of a national capital as the political and cultural focus of the country.⁹ In her 1990 study *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat*, Celia Applegate keenly observed that in its political rebuilding process, West Germany followed a striking pattern: it was rebuilt from its regions outward and upward, not from its centers.¹⁰ Indeed, Bonn can be seen as the

⁷ The notion of "capital of convenience" will be further expanded upon in chapter two.

⁸ Erich Kuby, *Das ist des Deutschen Vaterland, 70 Millionen in zwei Wartesälen* (Stuttgart: Scherz and Goverts, 1957); Marion Gräfin Dönhoff, *Im Wartesaal der Geschichte* (Berlin: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt DVA, 1993). "Wartesaal Deutschland" was a common metaphor used to describe the preliminary air of the two German states, while a possible reunification in the near future had not been yet ruled out. Erich Kuby's 1957 book and Marion Gräfin Dönhoff's retrospective account illustrate the use of the metaphor in a teleological reading of the German present and future (Kuby) and in narrating the immediate history of Germany in teleological fashion (Dönhoff).

⁹ "[the capital ...] is often, although not invariably, the cultural focus of the country [...]" O. H. K. Spate, "Factors in the Development of Capital Cities," *Geographical Review* 32, no. 4 (October 1942): 622. Compare Jens Krüger's discussion of capital city features: Krüger, *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn*, 9-10.

¹⁰ Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials*, 229. One could argue that Bonn's location was not exactly "the province" as in Applegate's words. After all, Bonn lay in close proximity to the Ruhr region, the industrial heartland of West Germany, which was subject to widespread industrial dismantling campaigns, which did not stop until well into the early 1950s. This is exactly right and in fact illustrates my point that Bonn can

culmination of a striking pattern of locating the key political decisions pertaining to West Germany's political future in the province. The CDU, the party that would lead the West German reconstruction effort for the next 20 years, was without a national leadership structure between 1946 and 1948. They designed their first political program, the *Ahlener Programm*, in the small town of Ahlen, North Rhine-Westphalia, in 1947. The 1948 currency reform in the Western Zones was planned in Rothbach, a small town near Kassel. After the Western Allies summoned the West German minister presidents to Frankfurt am Main and ordered them to formally prepare the formation of a West German state, the minister presidents preferred to hold their negotiations not in Frankfurt, but rather in inconspicuous hotels in the countryside near Koblenz.¹¹ The Basic Law was drafted between 1948 and 1949 at Herrenchiemsee, an extremely remote island in the Bavarian lake of Chiemsee, where Ludwig II of Bavaria had left behind an uncompleted palace. The fragmentary air of the building's unfinished rooms might have reminded many a delegate of the conspicuous absence of the Russian-occupied zone in the future West German state, which Adenauer regularly described as a "West German core state" (*Kernstaat*).¹² Lastly, none of the cities applying for capital status, with the exception of

only be explained as a confluence of the four factors mentioned in my introduction. More about Bonn's proximity to the Ruhr region in the next section, "Bonn as western capital."

¹¹ Of course, apart from the fact that these locations were blank spots on the German socio-political map, they were also significantly less damaged than the cities and thus guaranteed a better-functioning infrastructure. As even the medium-sized towns were often battered, larger conferences sometimes had to move to the country to find adequate infrastructure. On the other hand, in the case of the minister presidents' conferences, it is curious that they did not stay in Koblenz, since the city was at that point the seat of the provincial government and thus should have been more than qualified to host the minister presidents.

¹² Such as during Adenauer's first declaration of government as Federal Chancellor on 20 September 1949. Deutscher Bundestag, *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 1:22. Adenauer's core state concept contended that the democratic beginning in the western occupation zones was the only way to a democratically reunited Germany. This partial state would ultimately grow due to the West's military and economical strength, to absorb the other part. In the broader scheme of Cold War geopolitics, Adenauer hoped that a position of Western supremacy would make the Soviet Union give up their satellite states and

Frankfurt am Main, could be considered focal points of either political or cultural life worthy of the capital of Germany. Indeed, the foundation of West Germany took place far removed from the old locations connected to historical caesuras of German history.¹³ West German postwar politicians seemed to want to avoid staging their postwar conventions in locations that carried connotations to Germany's imperial, Weimar, and Nazi past.

Bonn as “Western Capital”¹⁴

In moving to Bonn, the capital was not only moved to the country, but it was also relocated to the far west of the FRG's territory. Most importantly, Bonn was located on the left side of the Rhine, which was traditionally considered a bulwark against the old enemy France, as in the anti-French nineteenth-century song, *Die Wacht am Rhein* (*The Watch on the Rhine*). In the aftermath of WWII, it came as no surprise that the political negotiations with France, which had suffered the brunt of the German *Blitzkrieg* in the west, were particularly difficult.¹⁵ The question of the French-occupied Saar region,

thus enable the GDR to join the Federal Republic. See Mareike König and Matthias Schulz, *Bundesrepublik Deutschland und die europäische Einigung 1949* (Franz Steiner Verlag, 2004), 49. Interestingly, Wilhelm Pieck used the concept of “core area” (Kerngebiet) in regard to the nascent GDR: Françoise Knopper and Alain Ruiz, *État et nation en Allemagne au XXe siècle* (Presses Univ. du Mirail, 1995), 136. For Adenauer's elaboration on the core state concept, see Falk Wiesemann, “Die Gründung des deutschen Weststaats und die Entstehung des Grundgesetzes,” in *Westdeutschlands Weg zur Bundesrepublik 1945-1949*, ed. Institut für Zeitgeschichte (Munich: Beck, 1976), 130.

¹³ Michael Winter, “Schichten der Geschichte,” *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, 17 July 1998; cited in Dreher, *Treibhaus Bonn, Schaubühne Berlin*, 40.

¹⁴ I capitalize “West” here in order to convey the sense that Bonn was not only geographically located in the west of Germany, but also a signal by West Germans that they wanted their new state to be part of the cultural “West” in form of socioeconomic and defense networks.

¹⁵ France's occupation policies continued to be more critical towards the reemergence of German self-governance than US or British policies. Wiesemann, “Die Gründung des deutschen Weststaats und die Entstehung des Grundgesetzes,” 119.

located about 150 miles from Bonn and annexed by the French in 1947, would continue to occupy West German politicians until 1955, when the people of the Saar chose to join West Germany in a referendum. With these disputes with France in mind, Bonn's close proximity to France connoted close observation of the French and their policy towards West Germany.¹⁶ More importantly, however, in the course of the Adenauer government's policy of rapprochement with De Gaullian France, Bonn's geographic symbolism equally underlined a firm commitment to West Germany's role as a reliable partner in a future German-French socioeconomic alliance, which soon picked up momentum through the installment of the European Coal and Steel Community, a precursor of the European Union.¹⁷

In addition to its proximity to France, Bonn was also conveniently located near West Germany's industrial heartland, the Ruhr region. Bonn was a mere 40 miles away from the Ruhr authority's headquarters at Dusseldorf. Just like the Saar, the Ruhr continued to have a special status even after the founding of the Federal Republic and thus garnered special attention from the federal government. A look into the negotiations of the German Bundestag of 1949 vividly illustrates the problem complexes connected to this region, of which the most pressing was the ongoing dismantling campaigns of the Western Allies, which paradoxically continued well into the early 1950s, even while

¹⁶ Compare Reiner Pommerin's discussion of Adenauer's plan to preempt French initiatives about an independent Rhineland state by placing the capital on the left side of the Rhine: Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 118/9.

¹⁷ The commitment to Europe is part of the very first negotiations in the Bundestag. Father of the Bundestag Paul Löbe insisted during the opening ceremony of the Bundestag on 7 September 1949 that "this Germany wants to be an honest and good-willing part of a unified Europe." ("[...]versichern wir gleichzeitig, dass dieses Deutschland ein aufrichtiges, von gutem Willen erfülltes Glied eines geeinten Europa sein will"). Deutscher Bundestag, *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 1:1.

Marshall plan aid was simultaneously directed into the region.¹⁸ Bonn's proximity certainly helped in the negotiations with the Ruhr administration, in the struggle against the dismantling campaigns, and during the subsequent reorganization of the region and its integration into the industrial complex of the Federal Republic. The importance of the future capital city's closeness to the Ruhr was emphasized as early as early 1948, during the search for the seat of the Parliamentary Council. During that time, North Rhine-Westphalia's Minister of the Interior Walter Menzel had already proposed a city in North Rhine-Westphalia so that its members would gain a firsthand perspective on the tensions in the Ruhr region.¹⁹ It seems that Bonn's close proximity to the Ruhr region was considered to be an important characteristic for the capital, as this was considered crucial for rebuilding West German industry.

Apart from more immediate political symbolisms referring to the current West German situation, West Germans also cast Bonn as a counter-symbol to the former capital of Berlin. In moving to the Rhine, West Germans broke with their traditional capital and its associated symbolism: Wilhelmine Germany as dominated by Prussian-style militarism, the latter of which Winston Churchill had famously considered to be "the root of all evil" at the Conference of Teheran in 1943,²⁰ and, of course, Hitler's Berlin, the capital of Nazi warmongering. In 1947, the state of Prussia was for this reason

¹⁸ The Western Allied dismantling campaigns were an ongoing topic for the Bundestag during its first year. Adenauer mentions them in his declaration of government of 20 September 1949. As early as 30 September 1949, several motions of different political parties to stop the dismantling campaigns were passed in the Bundestag. Deutscher Bundestag, *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 1:224.

¹⁹ Höroldt, *25 Jahre Bundeshauptstadt Bonn: Eine Dokumentation*, 22.

²⁰ Winston Churchill, *The Second World War: Closing the Ring*, vol. 5 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985), 354.

completely dissolved by the victors, the only state in recent history to meet such a fate.²¹ While this testifies to the dangerous potential that the Allies saw in Prussia and its associated mentality, by tapping into the federalist heritage of the Rhineland, traditionally viewed as the birthplace of the failed German democratic revolution of 1848, Bonn's selection suggested the replacement of a centralized Prussian militarist tradition with a decidedly modest, Rhinish, non-threatening, Western city that quickly came to embody the decentralism inscribed into the Basic Law: "the city suggested anything but monumental authoritarian government."²² All this resulted in a capital that in terms of its symbolism matched many of the political aims of the new Federal Republic: a firm commitment to the cultural West in socioeconomic and military terms, a pledge for peace and friendship with the former enemies England, the US, and France, and the desire to once again rise to a position of economic prosperity.

Avoiding Symbolic Over-Determination

The relocation of West Germany's political reconstitution to the provinces played a key role in Bonn's success because it offered a way to avoid burdening the new beginning with the problematic German past represented in the symbolically over-determined, destroyed German cities. Many former German political venues, such as Berlin, Frankfurt am Main, Munich, or Nuremberg were laden with an excess of historical and political symbolism, some of these stemming from the Third Reich (Berlin, Munich, Nuremberg), the unsuccessful Weimar Republic and the German Empire (Berlin, Munich), or even the unsuccessful German revolution of 1848 (Frankfurt). In

²¹ Christopher M. Clark, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600-1947* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), xix.

²² Barnstone, *The Transparent State*, 78.

addition to these cities, compromised as they were by their recent and distant histories, other national centers such as Hamburg, Cologne, Dresden, and industrial strongholds such as Dusseldorf, Duisburg and Dortmund, had been subjected to devastating bombing campaigns. The rubblescapes of their cities reminded Germans of the staggering amount of destruction that the bombings had brought home to Germany, a devastating retribution campaign directed against the war of aggression they had brought over Europe. Still in 1948/9, large parts of these cities were traumatic landscapes of death whose visual foreignness testified to the “total extinguishment of a cultural space and [...] liquidation of the structure of civilization,” something that would continue to accompany the “superficial history of civilized normality regained” as a “dark, subterranean current.”²³ Aside from the problems in infrastructure caused by the bombings, starting negotiations on a new Germany in such a symbolically (and emotionally) over-determined environment, one that reminded Germans of their civilization’s downfall, seems difficult.²⁴

In fact, the omnipresent rubble in the cities kept several strands of the recent German collective memory vividly alive. Apart from the private and most recent trauma of the air war, these threads of memory involved larger psychological complexes connected to the Third Reich, among them an antagonism towards the Allied occupying

²³ “totale[n] Auslöschung des kulturellen Raums und [...] Tilgung der zivilisatorischen Struktur,” “Oberflächengeschichte der wiedererlangten zivilisatorischen Normalität”, “dunkler, unterirdischer Strom.” Götz Grossklaus, “Das zerstörte Gesicht der Städte: ‘Konkurrierende Gedächtnisse’ im Nachkriegsdeutschland (West) 1945-1960,” in *Die zerstörte Stadt: mediale Repräsentationen urbaner Räume von Troja bis Sim City*, ed. Andreas Böhn and Christine Mielke (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2007), 101. Translations by Lee Holt.

²⁴ Of course, the move out of the destroyed cities also was to alleviate logistical problems such as traffic connections and readily accessible phone connections. These issues will be cursorily touched upon further below. The logistic problems of the city are part of the historical narrative that is most exhaustively presented in: Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*. My argument here is that the historical narrative is only *one* side to the story that is complemented by my reading of the political decisions’ symbolic subtext.

powers as the former foe responsible for the destruction, the feeling of having been betrayed by Hitler through his recent suicide, and the feeling of being unjustly blamed by the Allies for the atrocities committed in the name of Nazism.²⁵

Besides the rubble and its numerous associations, the larger cities in the West German occupation zones also had been the loci of numerous other memories of past incarnations of Germany: they had seen parades in honor of the Kaisers, the socialist workers' and soldiers' councils during the end of WWI, the picket lines and the unemployment lines during the world economic crisis of 1929, and they had been the sites of street battles between the SA brown-shirts and the Communists as the Weimar Republic's democracy fell apart. Whether as a palimpsest or as still-visible remnants, these vestiges of prior incarnations of Germany continued to remind Germans of their turbulent past.

Another important aspect of symbolical over-determination, one that was explicitly mentioned during the deliberations on the seat of the capital in the Parliamentary Council, was the high visibility of the Allied occupation forces in most larger German cities. This factor would become decisive in the decision for Bonn. As will be discussed later on, it was considered important for a new political beginning to take place in an environment that was visually free of direct references to the fact that the Allies in fact ruled supreme over West Germany. A discussion of how this point factored into the political negotiations about Bonn follows further below.

Moving the political new beginning away from the West German centers ensured that the young Federal Republic would have a "clean start," in that at least the physical and symbolical spaces of the new provisional capital were significantly less contaminated

²⁵ See Konrad Jarausch's overview on German reactions to the military defeat of the Third Reich: Konrad Hugo Jarausch, *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germans, 1945-1995* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 9.

with reminders of the catastrophic war.²⁶ Ultimately, while the symbolic terrain of the city was rendered as complicit in Nazism on visual terms, the provinces were often positioned as an ostensibly untainted, guilt-free ground – quite obviously a pretense, but one that made the rebuilding of West Germany easier since it effectively contained a feeling of collective guilt.²⁷ This is evidenced by the *Heimatfilm* wave of the postwar years, which lasted into the early 1960s.²⁸ As Alan Confino argues, the *Heimat* concept allowed West Germans to “link to a selective personal and collective experience of the Third Reich, while side-stepping moral questions.”²⁹ In terms of symbolism, by moving to the picturesque Rhineland, West German politicians thought that they had found a cleaner slate on which to build their capital than they would have in the established political centers of West Germany.³⁰ It was there that they saw the opportunity to

²⁶ On a more practical note, the larger cities’ symbolical over-determination coincided with the problem of a more practical nature: their infrastructure lay in ruins, leveled by the Allied saturation bombing campaigns. This made the logistics of staging postwar political conventions difficult. A look into the initial considerations about potential candidate cities for capital attests to this point’s importance. Important discussion points were the number of available hotel beds in a particular city, the status of the rail and road network in the area, and the condition of the telecommunication lines. Compare Reiner Pommerin’s discussion of Bonn’s application for the seat of the Parliamentary Council, which involves all factors mentioned above: Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 74/5. Such questions will be discussed under the next heading.

²⁷ This question deserves further inspection. Especially the role of *Heimat* memory in the provinces and the extent to which this memory had to be cleansed of the vestiges of Nazism and the memory of the Third Reich would be a topic for much needed further research. For an excellent overview on *Heimat* memory, see Alon Confino, *Germany as a Culture of Remembrance: Promises and Limits of Writing History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

²⁸ See Johannes von Moltke’s study on the *Heimatfilm* genre: von Moltke, *No Place Like Home*.

²⁹ Confino, *Germany as a Culture of Remembrance*, 91.

³⁰ Of course, there were remnants of the previous Germanies in the provinces as well, such as monuments or *Heimat* memory. However, I would argue that these provincial memories of the previous Germanies were not as much part of a national sociopolitical narrative as were the same sites in the big cities. The move into the province also expresses a desire to free oneself of guilt associated with the Third Reich, as a prevalent belief held on to the myth that the provinces never had known the full extent of the Nazi atrocities.

deliberately and consciously design at least the outer appearance of the new government apparatus with as little symbolic interference as possible. With the different aspects of Bonn's symbolism in mind, in the following, the main historical waypoints of Bonn's road to capital will be discussed.

B) POLITICAL WAYPOINTS ON THE WAY TO BONN: NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE WESTERN ALLIES AND WEST GERMANS

The Frankfurt Documents

By early 1948, the landscape of Western occupational policies was rapidly developing toward the creation of a West German state. The Six-Power Conference, which was held by the US, Britain, France, and the Benelux countries without participation of the Soviet Union from February to July 1948 in London, effectively finalized the division of Germany. The outcome was a merger of the French zone with the Bi-Zone to form the Tri-Zone in March 1948 (to form roughly what would geographically emerge as the Federal Republic), and a currency reform to introduce the Deutsche Mark (DM) on 21 June 1948. Most importantly, the Six-Power Conference resulted in a call for a constitutional conference in the western zones.

On 1 July 1948, at the Allied Control Authority in Frankfurt am Main, the Allies informed top-level West German politicians of their plan to create a constitutional assembly out of the Tri-Zone's eleven *Landtage* (the parliaments of the West German states), in order to conceive a democratic constitution for a federal West German republic.³¹ The so-called "Frankfurt Documents" handed over to the minister presidents at this meeting marked the first time since the beginning of the occupation that West

³¹ Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 61; Dreher, *Treibhaus Bonn, Schaubühne Berlin*, 40.

German politicians were asked to take part in deciding the reorganization of postwar Germany.³² To add to a sense of growing emancipation of West German postwar policy making, the Allies had not specified a location for the constitutional assembly, and had left the choice of the assembly's seat to the minister presidents.³³

Right at the beginning of the ensuing conference from 8-10 July 1948 at the scenic Hotel "Rittersturz" near Koblenz, overlooking the Siebengebirge and the Rhine, the minister presidents were locked into a heated debate on how to deal with the Allied offer. West German political leaders saw themselves in a serious predicament: they did not want to cast the first stone in the emerging East-West German dilemma by formally sealing the intra-German division by writing a constitution for a separate, West German state that had an air of permanence.³⁴ Peter Altmeier, then minister president of Rhineland-Palatinate, remembered the dilemma as follows in 1958:

On the one hand there was the awareness that for the first time after the downfall, there was a chance to unite at least the larger part of our German people. On the other hand, considering the stance of the fourth occupational power, the Soviet Union, there was the anxious question whether this would not deepen or even eternalize the division.³⁵

In the end, after much discussion and in order not to face the Allies without having reached a conclusion, the minister presidents agreed to a rhetorical compromise. By not

³² Wiesemann, "Die Gründung des deutschen Weststaats und die Entstehung des Grundgesetzes," 122.

³³ Höroldt, *25 Jahre Bundeshauptstadt Bonn: Eine Dokumentation*, 22.

³⁴ Dreher, *Treibhaus Bonn, Schaubühne Berlin*, 41; Wiesemann, "Die Gründung des deutschen Weststaats und die Entstehung des Grundgesetzes," 124.

³⁵ "Auf der einen Seite die Erkenntnis, daß hier erstmals nach dem Zusammenbruch die Chance des Zusammenschlusses wenigstens des grösseren Teiles unseres deutschen Volkes geboten wurde. Auf der anderen Seite die bange Frage, ob dadurch angesichts der Haltung der vierten Besatzungsmacht – Sowjetrußland – nicht die Spaltung vertieft oder gar verewigt würde." Altmeier is cited in Francesco Roberg, "Die Koblenzer Rittersturzkonferenz vom Juli 1948: Ein Meilenstein auf dem Weg zur Bundesrepublik Deutschland" (Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Rheinland-Pfalz, 2008), 11.

referring to the constitution to be drafted as a “constitution” (*Verfassung*) but rather as a “Basic Law” (*Grundgesetz*), they meant to convey in linguistic terms that the division of Germany was in no way meant to be permanent; they wanted to avoid presenting the nascent entity as a fully developed state.³⁶

When the minister presidents submitted their response to the Frankfurt Documents after the “Rittersturz” meeting, however, the Allies did not take too well to West German reservations about the new state to be created and threatened to revise the Frankfurt Documents on terms even less agreeable for the Western zones.³⁷ This resulted in further hectic meetings of the minister presidents at another remote location – this time it was the Jagdschloss Niederwald near Rüdesheim – on 15/16 and 21/22 July 1948. During these meetings, and under intense pressure exerted by the Allies’ harsh reaction to the West German minister presidents’ initial proposal, they agreed not to attempt to further obstruct Allied prescriptions about West Germany.³⁸ The minister presidents however stood by their terminology of “Basic Law” in order to convey the tentative character of the West German state, which they now referred to as the “West German Core State” (*westdeutscher Kernstaat*), a term that Adenauer would eventually adopt.³⁹ Another outcome of the Niederwald meeting was the formation of a constitutional committee to lay the organizational groundwork for the assembly of the Parliamentary Council (the nomenclature that supplanted the original Allied suggestion of

³⁶ Wiesemann, “Die Gründung des deutschen Weststaats und die Entstehung des Grundgesetzes,” 124; Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 79.

³⁷ Wiesemann, “Die Gründung des deutschen Weststaats und die Entstehung des Grundgesetzes,” 125.

³⁸ Reportedly, the American Military Governor Lucius D. Clay screamed at the minister presidents and reminded them that without the American military presence they would have “long ago become Russian.” Dreher, *Treibhaus Bonn, Schaubühne Berlin*, 42.

³⁹ Wiesemann, “Die Gründung des deutschen Weststaats und die Entstehung des Grundgesetzes,” 124.

Constitutional Convention, which to West German ears suggested too much permanence) and work on the basic premises of the new Basic Law. This committee met at Herrenchiemsee in Bavaria from 10 to 23 August 1948 upon invitation by the minister president of Bavaria.⁴⁰

The predicament that the West German minister presidents found themselves in as a consequence of the Frankfurt Documents marked the very beginning of the founding discourses on Bonn. The Western Allied order to found a separate German state resulted in a political stance that insisted on the provisionality of the newly emerging West German state and on the prospect of a possible German unification, when in fact the political decisions taken in the interest of establishing West Germany would cement the German division for an indefinite period of time. At the same time, these decisions forced West German politicians to address the Nazi past in such a way that it could be used productively for the new beginning. Again, contradiction was a prevalent pattern when the Nazi past served as a political and ethical anti-foil during West Germany's founding, while at the same time former Nazis, private persons and government officials alike, were deliberately reintegrated into the West German democratic process for reasons of expediting reconstruction measures, political administration, and domestic peace.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Wiesemann, "Die Gründung des deutschen Weststaats und die Entstehung des Grundgesetzes," 126/7.

⁴¹ The most prominent example for the reintegration of Nazis into the West German democratic process is Adenauer's Head of the Federal Chancellery Hans Globke, who had authored a "judicial commentary" to the Nuremberg Laws. For more information on the case of Hans Globke and his career in the Adenauer administration, see Jürgen Bevers, *Der Mann hinter Adenauer: Hans Globkes Aufstieg vom NS-Juristen zur Grauen Eminenz der Bonner Republik* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2009).

West German-Allied Negotiations on the Road to the Parliamentary Council

While the West German minister presidents fought hard to defuse the German-German situation during their initial meetings in the wake of the Frankfurt Documents, they disregarded the issue of where to seat the Parliamentary Council.⁴² In fact, the race for the seat of the Parliamentary Council took place alongside political meetings, on the sidelines of official politics. On 15 July 1948, the Hessian Minister President Christian Stock was put in charge of a special commission that would review the pertinent data and make visits to the applicant cities.⁴³ Five West German cities, each supported by their respective minister presidents, applied for the honor to host the council, which would play a major role in deciding the fate of the West German occupation zones:⁴⁴ Karlsruhe, Koblenz, Frankfurt am Main, Bonn, and Celle.⁴⁵

There were three thematic groups that the cities used to promote their qualifications to host the council: housing, infrastructure, and symbolic significance.⁴⁶ In the question of housing, the smaller Bonn stood out in a positive way and proudly announced that it would be capable of housing up to 500 persons in hotels, pensions, and “good private accommodations,” a statement which no doubt was a big draw at a time when hotel beds were extremely scarce.⁴⁷ Bonn planned to house the council itself in the

⁴² Dreher, *Treibhaus Bonn, Schaubühne Berlin*, 42.

⁴³ This follows Höroldt, *25 Jahre Bundeshauptstadt Bonn: Eine Dokumentation*, 24.

⁴⁴ For details on the competition see Dreher, *Treibhaus Bonn, Schaubühne Berlin*, 41-47; Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 62-83; Müller-List, “Bonn als Bundeshauptstadt 1949-1989,” 641-646; Höroldt, *25 Jahre Bundeshauptstadt Bonn: Eine Dokumentation*, 22-29.

⁴⁵ Stuttgart submitted a belated application at a time when the decision to host the Parliamentary Council at Bonn was already reached.

⁴⁶ A very detailed description of the cities’ promotional efforts can be found in Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 61-78.

⁴⁷ Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 74.

relatively new, modern and undamaged Pedagogical Academy (*Pädagogische Hochschule*), or in the local Museum König, while Celle planned to use the local castle as a venue.⁴⁸ With regard to traffic infrastructure, train and road connections were among the most important assets. Bonn was conveniently situated in terms of railways, with express connections in all four directions.⁴⁹ Frankfurt am Main, it was argued, was located at the center of all three Western zones and thus could be easily reached from anywhere in the future new state by a car drive of only a few hours.⁵⁰ Another point of discussion was the amount of destruction in the area. Here the more provincial Bonn had a clear advantage over heavily bombed cities such as Frankfurt and Karlsruhe, especially since the projected venue lay outside of Bonn proper, on the banks of the Rhine between Bonn and Bad Godesberg.⁵¹

Augmenting geographical considerations with appeals to history, Karlsruhe, Frankfurt, and Bonn all invoked the heritage of the failed German Revolution of 1848.⁵²

⁴⁸ Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 74, 77.

⁴⁹ Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 74.

⁵⁰ Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 69.

⁵¹ Dreher, *Treibhaus Bonn, Schaubühne Berlin*, 43; Nicholls, *The Bonn Republic*, 75. A look into regional, scholarly literature from Bonn, however, paints a different picture about the destruction of the city. Höroldt quotes numbers of destroyed houses and portrays the housing situation in Bonn as desperate for many years, even after Bonn had become the seat of the federation (Höroldt, *25 Jahre Bundeshauptstadt Bonn: Eine Dokumentation*, 13-15. Journalists and state employees working in Bonn during the early years also often testified to the terrible amount of destruction they saw in the inner city of Bonn (Vogt, "Der Herr Minister wohnt in einem Dienstwagen auf Gleis 4:" *Die Anfänge des Bundes in Bonn 1949/50*, 10.) Finally, a look at unreleased newsreel footage from 1948 and 1949 also reveals the old town of Bonn to be heavily destroyed (*Unveröffentlichte Sonderrollen: Parlamentarischer Rat in Bonn*, ST (Hamburg: Deutsches Wochenschau-Archiv Studio Hamburg, 1948). There is, however, a clear difference in the amount of destruction between the old town of Bonn, which was heavily affected by bombing, and the land south of the city, where the federal district was to be installed. This land lay south of the city in the direction of Bad Godesberg, and had been far less affected by bombing.

⁵² Dreher, *Treibhaus Bonn, Schaubühne Berlin*, 43.

Bonn contended that it possessed the “oldest German cultural soil (*Kulturboden*)” which had since then continued to “house liberal thinking,”⁵³ and tried to emphasize its democratic tradition by referencing the name of Carl Schurz, a prominent figure in the events of 1848, who later emigrated to the US and became the first US-German member of the US Senate.⁵⁴ As the epicenter of the historic 1848 movement, Frankfurt had it easier: the centennial of the revolution made it easy to see similarities between 1948 and 1848 in a city that possessed the legendary St. Paul Church (*Paulskirche*), the seat of the short-lived National Convention (*Nationalversammlung*) of 1848.⁵⁵

A Preliminary Decision for Bonn: Allied Preconceptions in the Race for the Seat of the Parliamentary Council

As it would turn out, however, the most influential aspect of the symbolic significance of the potential council cities was not centered on West German perceptions, but rather on Allied preconceptions. The Allies placed great symbolic emphasis on the distribution of their present political responsibilities in occupied Germany. Unbeknownst to the West Germans, the choice of the seat of the Parliamentary Council would already serve as a preliminary decision for the seat of capital.⁵⁶ As it turned out, the British were eager to house the Parliamentary Council in their zone,⁵⁷ since the Americans already

⁵³ “‘ältester deutscher Kulturboden’, indem ‘freiheitliches Denken von jeher seine Heimstatt’ besessen habe.” Dreher, *Treibhaus Bonn, Schaubühne Berlin*, 43.

⁵⁴ Müller-List, “Bonn als Bundeshauptstadt 1949-1989,” 641.

⁵⁵ Compare the letter by Frankfurt’s Mayor General Walter Kolb to Hessian Minister President Christian Stock, 3 August 1948; reprinted in Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 69/70.

⁵⁶ Jens Krüger even argues that it was not for the Germans to determine their capital city, as he perceives British influence in the decision making process as overwhelming. Krüger, *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn*, 12/13.

⁵⁷ Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 81.

hosted all the other important administrative bodies, such as the Tri-Zonal administration in Frankfurt am Main, as well as the Economic Council.⁵⁸ This factor was of advantage for Bonn, as it lay in the British occupied zone, and in turn made the prospects of the cities located in the American zone (Frankfurt and Karlsruhe) less likely. In fact, as early as 1946, the British had decided for themselves that a future German capital should be located in the British occupied zone.⁵⁹ The British Foreign Office had already floated Bonn, Hannover and Gottingen as potential venues, although the latter two were eventually deemed unfit.⁶⁰ Hence the British were highly supportive of Bonn, and ensured the Germans that they could count on British support if Bonn hosted the Council.⁶¹ The Americans ultimately bowed to British claims to the seat of Parliamentary Council,⁶² mainly because they anticipated logistical problems if the Parliamentary Council were housed in Frankfurt.⁶³

With that amount of symbolic capital thrown into the decision from the Allied side, Allied interests ultimately came to determine the choice of the council seat: British support for Bonn was so overwhelming that on 12 August 1948 Hessian Minister President Stock agreed to support Bonn instead of his “own” contender city of

⁵⁸ Krüger, *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn*, 13.

⁵⁹ Krüger, *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn*, 12.

⁶⁰ Müller-List, “Bonn als Bundeshauptstadt 1949-1989,” 641. The British found Hannover too large, too destroyed, and lacking the appropriate amount of “tradition.” Göttingen was perceived to be too closely located to the Soviet zone.

⁶¹ Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 76.

⁶² Krüger, *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn*, 13.

⁶³ Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 80.

Frankfurt.⁶⁴ Koblenz met with a similar fate: although it had hosted the important “Rittersturz” and “Niederwald” meetings in its immediate vicinity, Minister President Altmeier also bowed to the will of the British authorities.⁶⁵ The list cleared of two contenders, the race for the seat of the Parliamentary Council came to a sudden conclusion on 13 August 1948. On 12 August, the Allies summoned the three minister president representatives from each occupied zone – Stock (United States), Altmeier (France), and Arnold (Britain) – to formally inquire about the venue for the Parliamentary Council.⁶⁶ After having had to face the Allies without an answer, on the next day Stock held a telephone vote among the minister presidents to finally determine the location. In the phone survey, Bonn won with a total of eight votes over Karlsruhe (two votes by the old Württemberg states Württemberg-Hohenzollern and Württemberg-Baden) and Celle (one vote by Niedersachsen).⁶⁷ Bonn was now officially the seat of the Parliamentary Council.

The Race for the Seat of Capital

The ensuing race for the seat of capital basically took place in two stages. The first phase took place from September 1948 to January 1949, during which the contender cities assembled their application portfolios and presented them to the Parliamentary

⁶⁴ Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 81.

⁶⁵ Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 81.

⁶⁶ Dreher, *Treibhaus Bonn, Schaubühne Berlin*, 46; Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 81.

⁶⁷ The account of the decision making process on 12/3 August 1948 differs slightly in the accounts of Dreher and Pommerin. The latter claims that the process took two days and involved a telephone vote, while Dreher makes it appear that the decision for Bonn was taken right after the first meeting with the Allies on 12 August. My account follows Pommerin’s findings.

Council. The second phase lasted from February 1949 to the deciding vote of 10 May 1949. During that phase, a Capital Commission, created specifically for the purpose, discussed the question of the capital within the Parliamentary Council. A final concluding vote to formally acknowledge Bonn as provisional capital of the FRG took place on 21 October of 1949. The race for the seat of the capital was basically fought between two opponents: Bonn and Frankfurt. Stuttgart and Kassel joined the ranks of the applicants in spring of 1949.⁶⁸ As it would turn out, both Kassel and the unofficial applicant Stuttgart did not really stand a chance in the race and therefore did not play a significant role.⁶⁹ The conflict between Frankfurt and Bonn, however, would exert a decisive influence on the founding discourse surrounding Bonn.

Both Bonn and Frankfurt submitted application exposés to the Parliamentary Council, which were backed by the respective provincial parliaments (*Landtage*) of Hessen and North Rhine-Westphalia – a source of invaluable support in manpower and finances.⁷⁰ As to the criteria to be considered in the cities' exposés, basically the same features were evaluated as during the race for the seat of the Parliamentary Council: (traffic) infrastructure, housing, and symbolic significance. Since the race was now for the seat of the capital, the cities' features were evaluated this time in much more detail.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Just like during the race for the seat of the Parliamentary Council, Stuttgart again declared its willingness to host the capital if all other alternatives were exhausted. This strategy was mainly due to the fact it contender cities faced steep domestic opposition, as city councils often enough wanted to focus on much more pressing domestic problems than to dwell in capital ambitions. Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 59.

⁶⁹ Krüger, *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn*, 14. I focus here on the competition between Bonn and Frankfurt and its implications on the founding discourse about Bonn. For a full account of Kassel and Stuttgart's candidacies, see Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*; Höroldt, *25 Jahre Bundeshauptstadt Bonn: Eine Dokumentation*; Müller-List, "Bonn als Bundeshauptstadt 1949-1989."

⁷⁰ Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 89, 93.

⁷¹ The most detailed account of the race for the seat of the capital can be found in Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 86-195.

At the beginning of the race, the Hessian Minister President Stock still assumed that no other city could compete with Frankfurt, since it already housed the Bizonal and Allied administrative authorities.⁷² As we will see, it was precisely this point that would ultimately turn the tide against Frankfurt, since most politicians, among them Adenauer, favored a city in which the signs of the Allied occupation were less visible. Thus, Frankfurt's main thrust of argument for the seat of the capital was the Allied *presence* – while the exact opposite, the Allied *absence*, was to be Bonn's main argument.

Frankfurt argued that the Allied presence was an asset that would save money in the process of establishing the capital, since much of the needed infrastructure would already be in place. Because it hosted the Allied headquarters and served as the seat of the Economic Council, the de facto precursor of the West German parliament, Frankfurt in 1948 was already a diplomatic center with some 30 foreign consulates and the delegates of the West German federal states. Any transfer of these administrative structures away from Frankfurt, it was argued, would place an unnecessary burden on the taxpayer.⁷³ As to the accommodations of the future government, Frankfurt made a symbolic nod to the democratic revolutions of 1948 and announced plans to house the parliament in the famous St. Paul Church. Representative buildings in Frankfurt and its surroundings were scouted as official residences for the future chancellor and the president.⁷⁴ Frankfurt city officials set to work on planning the future location of the various ministries, authorities, and organizations associated with a capital, such as union

⁷² Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 86.

⁷³ This follows Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 90/1.

⁷⁴ Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 91.

headquarters, the board of trade, and the like.⁷⁵ In terms of symbolic significance, however, the city's 1848 heritage had undergone a critical reappraisal in light of Germany's recent attempt at European domination. Among others, influential political figures like the later Federal President Theodor Heuss (FDP) and Carlo Schmidt (SPD) deemed the venue to be unfit for parliamentary life. At this point, the nationalistic tenor of the 1848 revolution, which in its demands had envisioned a Germany covering half of Europe, played contrary to Frankfurt am Main's intentions.⁷⁶

While this critical perspective on the heritage of 1848 already created a host of problems, another point of criticism was even more important. Critics of Frankfurt am Main's candidacy argued that if the capital were to be moved there, this would create a situation in which the preliminary capital would eventually become a permanent one. Frankfurt am Main, argued German politicians including West Berlin Mayor Ernst Reuter, was such a metropolitan city that it would not easily relinquish the status of capital.⁷⁷ In the face of the all-German capital Berlin, it was thought that this would create considerable problems in the future unification process by sending an unwanted signal of permanence to both the German East and the Soviet Union.

While Frankfurt's candidacy was ridden with problems at the symbolic level, Bonn had powerful advocates. As it turned out, Bonn would run a highly efficient campaign with high-level British support, one that would ultimately turn the opinion of the Parliamentary Council in its favor. From the beginning of the race, there was high-level, concerted action between Bonn promoters and the British. On 9 October 1948,

⁷⁵ Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 90.

⁷⁶ This follows Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 92.

⁷⁷ Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 105/6.

Minister President Arnold met with the British regional commissioner, General Alexander Bishop, and on 11 October Arnold conferred with British Governor General Sir Brian Robertson to discuss Bonn's qualifications as potential capital.⁷⁸ If the British had been enthusiastic about hosting the Parliamentary Council, they were even more eager to have the future capital of West Germany within their own occupation zone. The British parties involved viewed this as an exceptional opportunity to be even more closely involved in the West German political process.⁷⁹ With British backing, Minister President Arnold could present Bonn's application in front of the Parliamentary Council with great confidence, especially since the Americans did not explicitly promote "their" Frankfurt.

In front of the Council, Arnold claimed that the necessary construction and renovation measures could be undertaken quickly and with "surprisingly little cost."⁸⁰ Furthermore, he was able to point to a development package that would ensure North Rhine-Westphalia's commitment to providing housing and office space for the seat of the capital.⁸¹ With now more than 2000 hotel beds at the ready, housing for the representatives had risen sharply in number since the city's previous application for the

⁷⁸ Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 93/4.

⁷⁹ On 30 September 1948, General Robertson had submitted a memorandum to the British Foreign Office in which he complained about the ambiguity of British policies towards Germany. Robertson recommended a careful, strategic alliance with future West Germany against the Soviet Union and argued for a more supportive British role in Britain's occupation zone. See Pommerin's discussion of Robertson's letter to Sir William Strang from the British Foreign Office of 30 September 1948: Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 94.

⁸⁰ "mit einem überraschend niedrigen Kostenaufwand," Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 96.

⁸¹ North Rhine-Westphalia's backing would turn out to be an invaluable support for Bonn, when during the critical phase of renovating the Pedagogical Academy the federal state took over the financial liabilities. This was an important factor that enabled Bonn to complete the renovation of the future parliament on time. This will be discussed in more detail in chapter two.

Parliamentary Council.⁸² Much like Frankfurt's application, Bonn already had made plans for official representative buildings, such as the seat of the chancellor and the president. The parliament would be housed at exactly the same spot as the Parliamentary Council, the Pedagogical Academy. The development package called for immediate renovation measures at the academy, and arrangements had already been made to house the academy's students at a nearly former army barracks. A housing development plan for the construction of further housing for civil servants, as well as an improvement of local roads and bridges across the Rhine, were also promoted as part of the development package. Arnold further pointed out that a number of representative buildings on the banks of the Rhine in and near Bonn would be suited for the headquarters of the federal states.⁸³

Bonn's application exposé commented extensively on the symbolic function of Bonn as seat of the capital. In reference to Bonn as a decidedly "Western" capital, Bonn promoters insisted that Bonn as capital would create fewer problems in case of a potential reunification, since there would be no danger that "that thus a western state would be affirmed too strongly."⁸⁴ In clear reference to Frankfurt, the exposé maintained that "the choice of a provincial capital or a big city with a distinct political or historical character could easily be interpreted as an implied predetermination of this city as the final seat of the federal government, also after accession of the eastern zone."⁸⁵ The division of duties

⁸² Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 97.

⁸³ This follows Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 96-98.

⁸⁴ Bonn's application expose explicitly mentioned these concerns and underlined that in Bonn's case, there would be no danger ("...daß damit ein Weststaat zu stark bejaht wird.") Höroldt, *25 Jahre Bundeshauptstadt Bonn: Eine Dokumentation*, 33.

⁸⁵ "Die Wahl einer Landeshauptstadt oder einer großen Stadt mit bestimmter politischer oder geschichtlicher Prägung könnte leicht als unausgesprochene Vorbestimmung dieser Stadt zum endgültigen

between Bonn and Frankfurt, as it was at this point still discussed, was advertised as a symbol for the federalist spirit of the constitution to be drafted: Bonn as capital, Arnold argued, would effectively realize a “clean division” between government and administration.⁸⁶ Most importantly, the exposé argued that Bonn would appropriately symbolize the preliminary character of the future West German state:

If the Parliamentary Council would like to give the German people *a first* and solid base for its future civil life, they would find a suitable location in Bonn, the city of Beethoven, and in its surrounding communities. Here the new development will be allowed to take place in healthy fashion, *freely* and vitally [emphases mine].⁸⁷

Arnold portrayed Bonn as a place steeped in *Bildung*, which had played a leading role in German culture by alluding to Beethoven, an attempt to hark back to a seemingly uncontaminated German cultural tradition. At the same time, the symbolism of Arnold’s contention that the “new development will be allowed to take place *freely*” calls up a host of associations, ranging from the fact that the West of Germany would soon be part of the so-called (democratic and capitalist) “free world.” Yet Arnold’s appeal also alludes to Bonn’s freedom from the symbolic over-determination of the larger and more destroyed cities, as well as Allied supervision.

Sitz der zukünftigen Bundesregierung, auch nach Anschluß der Ostzone, ausgelegt werden [...]” Höroldt, *25 Jahre Bundeshauptstadt Bonn: Eine Dokumentation*, 33.

⁸⁶ Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 96. One line of argument for Bonn suggested splitting the duties between Bonn (seat of the parliament) and Frankfurt (seat of the administration). Adenauer later distanced himself from the suggestion.

⁸⁷ “Wenn der Parlamentarische Rat dem deutschen Volk eine erste feste Grundlage für das künftige staatliche Leben schaffen will, so würde er in der Beethovenstadt Bonn und ihren Nachbargemeinden eine geeignete Stätte finden, an der sich die neue Entwicklung gesund, kraftvoll und frei vollziehen kann.” Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 98.

Negotiations in the Parliamentary Council

Once their applications had been submitted by the candidate cities, the question of the future capital of West Germany lay in the hands of the Parliamentary Council, which would eventually determine a capital by vote. Both cities continued their campaigns in the Parliamentary Council by giving presentations that quoted figures, facts, and incentives.⁸⁸ Both Bonn and Frankfurt had influential advocates: of the two main contenders for the chancellery, Kurt Schumacher (SPD) was in favor of Frankfurt, and Konrad Adenauer (CDU), president of the Parliamentary Council, privileged Bonn. But the council was far from being neatly divided along party lines. For example, the Berlin section of the SPD was in favor of Bonn, since it would less likely be a permanent option.⁸⁹ As a consequence, Adenauer and Schumacher tried to bring their respective parties into line. The fact that the Allies, in search of a German partner in this vital question, chose Adenauer as president of the Parliamentary Council, further bolstered Adenauer's influence and made him into the official high-level liaison to the Allies. As a consequence, he had access to all the pertinent information and data, and ultimately ended up in a position of unrivaled influence and power.

Adenauer had three main arguments for Bonn that he voiced from October 1948 onwards on several formal occasions in the Parliamentary Council, as well as other informal meetings. The first of them was that Bonn fit his concept of a "lean parliament" – the idea to have the Parliament in Bonn and the administration together with the different ministries in Frankfurt, a concept that he later distanced himself from, but which was discussed for months.⁹⁰ From this perspective, the quiet Bonn fit perfectly as the seat

⁸⁸ Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 113.

⁸⁹ Nicholls, *The Bonn Republic*, 78.

⁹⁰ Dreher, *Treibhaus Bonn, Schaubühne Berlin*, 56/7.

of a government that would concentrate on the immediate issues at hand in a modest and measured manner. A second important factor that spoke for Bonn in Adenauer's view was the fact that Bonn was, unlike Frankfurt am Main, relatively free of an Allied presence. Adenauer had, in fact, repeatedly expressed doubts about the idea to have the Allied administrations and the capital in the same city.⁹¹ Although the Belgian occupation forces planned to make Bonn their new headquarters, an agreement was eventually reached with the help of the British Governor General Roberts, according to which the Belgians promised to clear Bonn in case the decision was made to make Bonn the capital.⁹² For Adenauer, Bonn would thus grant a certain freedom from an all-too direct Allied influence. On the level of political symbolism, it was important to German politicians for the new capital city to have at least the air of sovereignty, although the government of the new Federal Republic of Germany had in fact to answer to the Allies until it reached full sovereignty through the Paris Treaties in 1955. The precariousness of the symbolism of working in a capital still under the watchful eyes of the Allies explains the uproar that Kurt Schumacher caused on 24 November 1949 in the Bundestag, when he called Adenauer a "federal chancellor by the mercy of the Allies" (*Bundeskanzler der Alliierten*).⁹³ The third of Adenauer's arguments for Bonn refers to Bonn's status as a "Western capital." He claimed that Bonn's geographical position on the left bank of the

⁹¹ Letter by branch BdMn Bad Godesberg to BdMn, 5 November 1948 (BArchiv Z 12/119); cited in Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 115.

⁹² Dreher, *Treibhaus Bonn, Schaubühne Berlin*, 60.

⁹³ A transcript of the critical part of the turbulent debate on the Petersberg Agreement can be found at: "24./25. November 1949: Aus der Aussprache über die Regierungserklärung des Bundeskanzlers, Adenauer, in der 18. Sitzung des Deutschen Bundestages zum Petersberger Abkommen," accessed 21 February 2011, <http://www.konrad-adenauer.de/index.php?msg=4495>.

Rhine would discourage France in her territorial claims to the left Rhine bank,⁹⁴ as well as quell separatist movements instigated by the separatist *Rheinische Volkspartei*, which had been observed close to Bonn, near Düren and Monschau.⁹⁵ One of Adenauer's chief arguments for Bonn was thus the territorial integrity of the future West German state.⁹⁶

Frankfurt, on the other hand, could not rely on as much concerted action as Bonn could, especially with regard to Allied backing. Frankfurt's main advocate, the ailing SPD leader Kurt Schumacher, was based in Hannover and thus far removed from the events unfolding in Bonn. Along with Schumacher, however, many SPD politicians, such as Carlo Schmidt still favored Frankfurt am Main:

Most Social Democrats favored Frankfurt because they felt it was a city in which the tasks that the industrial age posits to a parliament and an administration in times of reconstruction were more clearly perceived than in the quiet pensionopolis on the Rhine.⁹⁷

By 1949, both cities now were competing in a battle that was widely publicized by the press. Numerous lead articles weighed the pros and cons of the two cities and caricatures took up elements from the race, most importantly the allegation that irregularities had improved Bonn's status (by depicting the cities as a beauty contest between women in

⁹⁴ Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 118.

⁹⁵ Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 121.

⁹⁶ Apart from Adenauer's official arguments for Bonn as capital, it can be safely assumed that Adenauer also had a personal preference for the city. A.J. Nicholls convincingly argues that for Adenauer "Bonn represented the provincial, middle-class Roman Catholic Rhineland, from which Adenauer drew his support," and which also represents Adenauer's personal background. Furthermore, one cannot oversee the fact that Bonn was quite conveniently placed near Adenauer's residence in Rhöndorf. Nicholls, *The Bonn Republic*, 79.

⁹⁷ "Die meisten Sozialdemokraten gaben Frankfurt den Vorrang, weil es ihnen richtig erschien, den Regierungssitz in eine Stadt zu legen, in der die Aufgaben, die das Industriezeitalter in einer Zeit des Wiederaufbaus an Parlament und Regierung stellt, deutlicher in Erscheinung treten als in der geruhsamen Pensionopolis am Rhein." Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 120.

ancient Rome, of which “Bonn” was secretly flashing a breast to a male spectator holding the capital crown).⁹⁸ Another caricature again depicted Frankfurt and Bonn as women, this time as wrestlers in a heated fight, while the women symbolizing Stuttgart and Kassel lay knocked out on the sidelines.⁹⁹

The Capital Commission

While the battle between Bonn and Frankfurt continued in the press, the race for the seat of the capital went into its second and final phase when the Parliamentary Council created the Capital Commission (*Hauptstadtausschuß*, or *Bundessitz-Kommission*) on 27 January 1949. The commission was headed by Adenauer himself, although he left the work to his deputy, Hermann Schäfer (FDP).¹⁰⁰ The task of this commission was to visit the applicant cities and to determine the correctness of the data and costs quoted in the application exposés. The commission submitted their report on 28 April 1949, a mere two weeks before the official vote about the capital on 10 May 1949.

As it turned out, the report of the Capital Commission did not help in determining the capital based on the facts. The Council was bombarded by new data, revised proposals, and presentations during their some 20 sessions, as each city sought to present itself as superior to the other.¹⁰¹ One of the strategies employed was to doctor the

⁹⁸ “Sie suchen Deutschlands provisorische Hauptstadt,” *Die Zeit*, 17 February 1949; cited in Höroldt, *25 Jahre Bundeshauptstadt Bonn: Eine Dokumentation*, 37.

⁹⁹ “Städteringkampf im Freistil,” *Rhein-Echo*, 5 May 1949; cited in Höroldt, *25 Jahre Bundeshauptstadt Bonn: Eine Dokumentation*, 51.

¹⁰⁰ Höroldt, *25 Jahre Bundeshauptstadt Bonn: Eine Dokumentation*, 49/50.

¹⁰¹ Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 125.

numbers by applying the most favorable measures and conditions.¹⁰² For example, Frankfurt stated that it had already spent 60 Million DM during the construction of buildings for future authorities and ministries, which would be transferred to federal ownership, and quoted an annual rent for them of 1 Million DM. In contrast, Bonn's application quoted a mere 3.8 Million DM of one-time cost, of which the federation would only have to take over 1.9 Million. According to the exposé, the annual rent that Bonn demanded from the federation would only be 37.000 DM.¹⁰³ As a consequence, Bonn appeared to be by far the cheapest capital city.¹⁰⁴

Apart from the increasingly confusing financial aspects, research trips into the applicant cities kept the members of the Capital Commission busy. The commission was especially interested in the reaction of the local citizens to the proposed plan, and the extent to which the city was ready to house the parliament.¹⁰⁵ This was determined by means of a checklist, which had familiar items such as traffic and communication infrastructure, hosting capacity for foreign consulates and missions, and the degree to which these cities were conducive to the concentration of lobbyists, which was considered to be a negative.¹⁰⁶ An important asset mentioned about Bonn in this context again hearkens back to Bonn's status as the "Western capital:" its close proximity to

¹⁰² Dreher, *Treibhaus Bonn, Schaubühne Berlin*, 65.

¹⁰³ This follows Dreher, *Treibhaus Bonn, Schaubühne Berlin*, 64/5.

¹⁰⁴ The official in charge of the application, Hermann Wandersleb, was subsequently castigated for his reckless manipulation of numbers, when still in 1949 the Bundestag investigated how much money had actually been spent in the move, and was shocked to hear that – still in 1949! – already over 100 Million DM had been used for construction.

¹⁰⁵ Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 127.

¹⁰⁶ Although Pommerin points out how naive this criterion seems in hindsight when one takes the very agglomeration of lobbyism in Bonn into account (127). Bonn lobbyism will be discussed further in relation to Günther Weisenborn's novel *Auf Sand gebaut* (1956) in chapter four.

Dusseldorf, which was the future seat of the Ruhr administration. This was considered to be beneficial for the negotiations the future federal government would conduct with the Ruhr administration.

Frankfurt ran into problems during the commission's inquiry into the housing infrastructure that could be committed to housing the federation. The commission encountered a delicate issue: the ownership of particular buildings and properties, which might potentially be subject to restitution claims by Jewish families.¹⁰⁷ As it turned out, many of the buildings and properties in question had formerly belonged to German Jews whose fate remained unclear in 1949. As had been the case in any other German city, "Aryan" owners or Nazi authorities had often stolen these buildings from their original owners during the Third Reich. For obvious reasons, the fresh start of a new, democratic West German government on soil or property expropriated by the Nazis would have meant a heavy burden and a catastrophic blow to government credibility.¹⁰⁸ This is just one example of how the long shadow of the Nazi past hung over the new political beginning.

With Frankfurt's chances thus severely blemished, the city still continued to be backed by the majority of the SPD faction under Kurt Schumacher, although not unanimously, in early May of 1949. Accordingly, in public opinion, Frankfurt was largely associated with the SPD, while Bonn was linked to the CDU. Momentum had built up to the day of the vote to the extent that the decision about the capital was interpreted as an important omen of who would be the future chancellor, to the effect that

¹⁰⁷ This follows Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 132.

¹⁰⁸ Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 132.

the question of the capital city receded into the well-publicized duel between Adenauer and Schumacher in the public eye.¹⁰⁹

Thus, it is not surprising that, ultimately, last-minute political arm-twisting played an important role in Bonn's victory in the vote.¹¹⁰ On the day of the election, the CDU held a test vote among their faction, which did not result in the desired uniformity: 21 voted for Bonn, but there were still six votes for Frankfurt. This made Adenauer nervous, for he expected the SPD to vote unanimously for Frankfurt. This would have resulted in a turnout of 33 votes for Frankfurt and 28 votes for Bonn. In the meantime, Adenauer's chief political competitor, SPD leader Kurt Schumacher, criticized the plan to make Bonn capital as a "totally unpolitical" decision, which in addition had the "embarrassing aftertaste of petty party politics and provincial conceptions" during a speech in Cologne. The "political necessities," Schumacher argued, would clearly point to Frankfurt.¹¹¹ Information of Schumacher's most recent plea for Frankfurt was leaked to the press in the *Bundeshaus* at Bonn in a doctored press release. Heinrich Böx, a journalist of the *Kölnische Rundschau*, a publication closely associated with the CDU, falsified the wording so that it sounded as if Schumacher had equated a decision for Frankfurt with a victory of the SPD in the upcoming federal election in August 1949. Thus, by associating the decision for the capital with the future decision of who would take the political lead in the newly founded state, Adenauer had acquired a powerful means to keep his faction in line.

¹⁰⁹ Dreher, *Treibhaus Bonn, Schaubühne Berlin*, 67/8.

¹¹⁰ The account of Adenauer's press ploy prior to the vote follows Dreher, *Treibhaus Bonn, Schaubühne Berlin*, 69-73.

¹¹¹ Kurt Schumacher according to the dpd of 6 May 1949; cited in Dreher, *Treibhaus Bonn, Schaubühne Berlin*, 68.

The vote for the capital was held the same day that the Federal Republic had been officially constituted after the ratification of the Basic Law, shortly after 11 pm on 10 May 1949, in the newly constructed parliament building, which would later become the seat of the Bundestag.¹¹² On the stands in the plenary chamber and outside of the future *Bundeshaus*, a large crowd of journalists and onlookers had gathered. As scribe Jean Stock read out the ballots, the crowd outside cheered each time that Bonn won a vote, especially since Bonn initially appeared to trail behind. In the end, 33 votes were cast for Bonn, while Frankfurt am Main received 29 votes. The FRG, which had been formally instated shortly before on that same day, now also had an – albeit provisional – capital, whose position was by no means secure yet.¹¹³

CONCLUSIONS: BONN, A NEW GERMAN SYMBOLISM

There were several determining factors that led to Bonn's election as provisional capital, and *prima facie* political decisions revolved around a highly charged and hotly contested symbolic imaginary. The necessity of respecting Allied wishes and directives, as well as of taking into account West German political, financial, and infrastructural decisions arising from these directions, were intrinsically connected to the desire to establish a political symbolism that allowed for the ongoing negotiation of problems arising from both the Allies' postwar division of Germany and the Nazi past. These

¹¹² This follows Dreher, *Treibhaus Bonn, Schaubühne Berlin*, 75-77.

¹¹³ As chapter three will illustrate, Bonn still had powerful adversaries: Firstly, as it turned out, the provisional capital had to be yet again acknowledged by a vote in the Bundestag due to the SPD's motion to relocate the capital to Frankfurt during the opening ceremony of the Bundestag of 3 September 1949. While this motion was ultimately decided in Bonn's favor on 3 November 1949, Bonn continued to be subject to an SPD-led opposition that continued to attempt to obstruct Bonn's capital ambitions throughout the early 1950s, the efforts of which would come to a head in the year of 1956 when there was discussion of moving the capital to Berlin in order to send a signal reacting to an apparent thaw in the Cold War.

considerations necessitated a capital with enough housing and functioning infrastructure, free of visible signs of occupation, with an ostensibly untainted symbolism, located in the British occupational zone, but at the same time located near the American occupation headquarters in Frankfurt am Main. Bonn met all of these criteria.

While the move to the provinces testifies to a search for a “clean slate” on which to create a new Germany, one that eschewed any associations with the country’s militaristic and fascist past and the traumas connected to it, the location of the Federal Republic’s new political center could not have been more quintessentially “German.” After all, the new parliament building was located directly on the banks of the Rhine, which became the symbol of an alternative German identity that was free of associations with Berlin. This was a supposedly untainted version of “Germanness” – at least until four years later, when the novelist Wolfgang Koeppen would use the Rhine metaphor and its associations with the Nibelungs as the chief symbol of an ultimately doomed German political reconstruction in his novel *The Hothouse* (*Das Treibhaus*, 1953).¹¹⁴

On the other hand, the following quote from SPD politician Egon Bahr attests to the fact that Germans did indeed find a positive symbol of Germany on the banks of the Rhine: “It was cozy. And the landscape was beautiful. And the experience that the landscape had not changed. With the fantastic vistas of the Siebengebirge. Since Goethe.”¹¹⁵ By way of its surroundings, Bonn thus represented an alternative strain of

¹¹⁴ Apart from referencing the Nibelungs, Koeppen’s protagonist Keetenheuve calls the Rhine landscape of the Siebengebirge “a nature that Heidegger might have invented, and Ernst Jünger might have bestrode.” The reference of Heidegger and Jünger points to a still prevalent strain in the national character that united an experience of a quintessentially German landscape (the Rhine) with a complacent attitude towards National Socialism (Heidegger) and a conservative-reactionary strain of character, which many in the 1950s political landscape of the left blamed for the rise of National Socialism (Jünger). Wolfgang Koeppen, *The Hothouse*, trans. Michael Hofmann (W. W. Norton & Company, 2002), 205.

¹¹⁵ “Es war gemütlich. Und die Landschaft war schön. Und das Erlebnis, dass die Landschaft sich nicht geändert hatte. Mit dem fantastischen Blick auf das Siebengebirge. Seit Goethe.” Interview with Egon Bahr in the WDR documentary: Bevers and Pflutschinger, *Wie die Bundeshauptstadt an den Rhein kam*.

continuity in symbolic codifications of Germany in the postwar chaos. It provided Germans with a different version of Germany that had seemingly been untainted by the events of the Third Reich, one that went all the way back to still-cherished German figures of the humanist tradition, such as Goethe and Beethoven. In this way, Bonn's symbolism allowed West Germans to at least temporarily elide their problematic past and concentrate on the immediate problems at hand. The apparent contradiction of moving to the provinces in order to build up Germany can thus be resolved. Bonn offered a space to which West German politicians could withdraw, offering symbolic distance yet geographical proximity to the most pressing political problem areas in West Germany: the Ruhr region and the German-French border. In the words of Bundestag President Wolfgang Thierse, "Bonn was the right city at the right time."¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ "Bonn war die richtige Stadt zum richtigen Zeitpunkt," said President of the Bundestag Wolfgang Thierse during the last session of parliament held in Bonn prior to the move to Berlin in 1998. Cited after: Bevers and Pfletschinger, *Wie die Bundeshauptstadt an den Rhein kam*.

Chapter Two: On the Way from Provisional Capital to Capital of Convenience: The Image of Bonn as Interim Solution in City Planning Debates Throughout the Adenauer Years, 1948-1963

“Stop the building of office palaces, [...] we should finally pay respect to the interim solution Bonn, so that one cannot claim that “Bonn continues to build against Berlin.” – SPD representative Heinrich Ritzel, 3 October 1956¹

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will trace the political and planning developments connected to Bonn’s provisional status from the initial founding process of 1949 to the end of Adenauer’s chancellorship in 1963. In examining city planning measures and construction projects in Bonn’s federal district and their negotiation in the political and public sphere of West Germany, I will argue that Bonn underwent a careful process of consolidation, as West Germans struggled to overcome the experienced contradictions of the West German situation resulting from the division of Germany and the escalating Cold War. This reading will establish the story of Bonn’s founding discourses during the city’s passage from a makeshift interim solution to a capital of convenience and compromise, still a largely unloved capital, accepted only due to the political facts as dictated by the ossified division of Germany.

During this tentative consolidation process, in which Bonn’s provisional status slowly turned into the status quo, however, the capital saw manifest moments of crisis.²

¹ “Schluss mit dem Bau von Büropalästen [...] dem provisorischen Charakter, dem Provisorium Bonn soll endlich Rechnung getragen werden, damit nicht mit guten Gründen gesagt werden kann: Bonn baut weiter gegen Berlin.” Deutscher Bundestag, *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 28:6547

² By “status quo” I mean a status of Bonn according to which it had come to be accepted as the interim capital of the Federal Republic for an indefinite amount of time. While West Germans might not have been enthusiastic about Bonn, they nonetheless became aware that Bonn as capital had become a stable solution which would last until a German unification in an uncertain future. “Status quo” also is meant to borrow from Cold War terminology, conveying a stalemate between the super powers. This also helps to posit

The capital was supposed to be moved to Frankfurt am Main in 1949, and then to West Berlin in 1956. Especially the building freeze period of 1956/7, during which all construction activities were halted and which saw a resurgence of the insistence on Bonn's interim status in the public sphere, I argue, illustrates the dynamic nature with which West Germans still negotiated the German-German relationship at that time. Only the building of the Berlin Wall in August 1961 created facts that would eventually silence such initiatives for immediate reunification. In the close congruence between Bonn's development as capital and the status of the German-German relationship, the building and planning schemes in Bonn were to a certain degree spatial manifestations of West German policy making, especially in the realm of "foreign," German-German policy making.³ This process would transcend Adenauer's tenure as chancellor and come to a temporary conclusion in Willy Brandt's government declaration of 18 January 1973, which (at least officially) quieted the provisionality discourse until the *Wendezeit* of 1989/90 by asserting that Bonn was "the federal capital" ("*Bundeshauptstadt*").⁴

A NEW PERIODIZATION

In offering a new periodization of the different stages of Bonn's consolidation process, I argue for a more detailed examination of the different planning stages for the capital than has been done so far. The (purely German) scholarship on this aspect of

Bonn's position as an outcome of the German-German relationship, which is one of the arguments this chapter will make.

³ To a certain degree the dynamism of the German question determined Bonn's development. A reading that purely focused on Bonn as outcome of West German *Deutschlandpolitik* would be reductive, however, as the work of historians like Reiner Pommerin or Jens Krüger has shown.

⁴ Krüger, *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn*, 257.

Bonn's development by Horst Fehre (1967), Reiner Pommerin (1989), and Jens Krüger (2006) only identifies two (Pommerin) or three stages in which the consolidation of the capital took place.⁵ Writing in 1967 when Bonn's consolidation process was not yet complete, Horst Fehre argues for a threefold distinction of Bonn's developmental stages: "1. Etappe: Auftakt" (Stage One: Beginning, 1945-1950), "2. Etappe: Aufbau" (Stage Two: Construction, 1950s), and "3. Etappe: Ausbau" (Stage Three: Development, 1960 as turning point).⁶ Writing from the pre-Wende perspective of 1989, Reiner Pommerin, whose study focuses on the instating of Bonn as provisional capital in 1948/9, only marginally touches upon the development of Bonn after 1949, but nevertheless places the turning point from "Provisorium" (Provisional Arrangement) to a developmental process towards "Bonn wird Bundeshauptstadt" (Bonn becomes Federal Capital) in the year 1961.⁷ Finally, writing in 2006, Jens Krüger, whose study examines the financial aspects of Bonn's development, divides Bonn's development into three phases: "Die Zeit des Provisoriums 1949-1969" (The Era of the Interim Solution), "Der Ausbau Bonns zur und als Bundeshauptstadt 1970-1989" (Development of Bonn into Federal Capital and as

⁵ Horst Fehre, "Bonn im Zeichen der vorläufigen Bundeshauptstadt," *Bonner Geschichtsblätter* 21 (1967): 179-210; Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*; Krüger, *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn*. Fehre's article "Bonn im Zeichen der vorläufigen Bundeshauptstadt" does not concentrate explicitly on the Federal district alone, rather it delineates the influence exerted by the capital status on the entire city of Bonn. However, as part of his argument, Fehre comments on the development of the Federal district and divides the stages of the city's development according to key events in the Federal district.

⁶ Fehre, "Bonn im Zeichen der vorläufigen Bundeshauptstadt," 180, 181, 183.

⁷ Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 209. Due to the focus of Pommerin's study on the immediate founding years of the FRG from 1948-1949, only 19 pages are devoted to developments in Bonn post 1949. Hence, his remarks on the developments post 1949 are merely an outlook on further developments. Pommerin does not give a distinct year as a clear caesura. Rather he describes a crucial turning point in the mentality towards Bonn as interim arrangement – Willy Brandt's experience of the building of the Berlin Wall on 13 August 1961.

Federal Capital), and “Hauptstadt im Zeichen der Einheit: Bonn in den 90er Jahren” (Capital under the Sign of Unity: Bonn during the 1990s).⁸

Common to all three periodizations is that they largely ignore the subtle changes in Bonn’s image as the nation’s capital during the Adenauer years, the interpretations of which transcend pure historical fact. Although these studies mention and discuss the building freeze period of 1956/7, it has no effect on their divisions of the federal district’s developmental stages, although it practically halted any coordinated further development of the federation in Bonn until at least 1960. I will argue that the building freeze even undid some of the credibility Bonn had accumulated as capital until then. While Fehre was lacking the historical distance to adequately assess Bonn’s development (namely by writing in 1967, before Bonn was officially acknowledged as “the” West German capital), Krüger’s periodization, due to its concentration on financial matters, neglects the importance of city planning decisions of the early 1960s by placing the transition to Bonn’s consolidation in 1970. This is largely due to the fact that the political city planning decisions preceded the ultimate approval of financial means – in case of the lifting of the Bonn building freeze by up to ten years. While Pommerin places the transition in 1961, due to his study’s focus on the early period between 1948 and 1949, his model offers little differentiation of the period between 1949 and 1960. Thus, none of the above periodizations is adequate to trace Bonn’s development as suggested above. Therefore, I would like to propose a new model for the development of Bonn as capital, which allows for these influences to register. I propose to divide the development of the planning and construction activities in Bonn’s Federal district between 1948 and 1963

⁸ Krüger, *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn*, 3, 4.

into four phases, according to the degrees in which Bonn's interim status was emphasized:

- 1949 - 1950: the total improvisation in the accommodation of the Federal authorities,
- 1950 - 1956: a process of careful stabilization, which saw the onset of planned construction measures and the first new constructions
- 1956 - 1960: the building freeze due to the discussion of the move of the capital to West Berlin and its aftermath
- 1960 - 1963: a consolidation of the status quo in terms of the search for a long-term development plan for the Federal district.

A CAPITAL ON HOLD

Even if Bonn's provisional Federal district would eventually become less provisional and increasingly consolidated over the Adenauer years, the possibility of a German unification always factored into the equation until the building of the Berlin Wall in August 1961. All through these years, any amount of money to be spent on construction in Bonn had to be painstakingly justified in front of the Bundestag and a public, which until the 1960 still anticipated unification in a future not too far away. Especially during the mid-1950s, the catchphrase "stop the building against Berlin" (*Schluss mit dem Bauen gegen Berlin*) appeared in numerous sessions of the Bundestag and in the press.⁹ Apart from that, any new building erected for the federation in Bonn

⁹ Such as in the Bundestag debate of 19 January 1956, in which the SPD presented its motion for a building freeze in Bonn. See Deutscher Bundestag, *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 28:6546/7.

had to be planned with its use in a future unified Germany in mind, in case the seat of the capital was moved to Berlin. As a result, most of the federal buildings were built in such a way that they could be commissioned to the University of Bonn or other national or international institutions, in case the city lost the capital to Berlin.¹⁰ The result was a capital that was as unique in the world as its buildings, which Michael Z. Wise observed to be conspicuously void of any vestiges of architectural grandeur,¹¹ and which much rather seemed like an insurance headquarters.¹² The West Germans' process of capital planning would result, in spite of Brandt's commitment to Bonn as West German capital of 1973, in a capital city that seemed like a mirage: its inhabitants were keenly aware it could be gone at any moment if the geopolitical situation changed.

FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS TO A CAPITAL OF CONVENIENCE: THE STORY OF BONN'S CONSOLIDATION AS FEDERAL CAPITAL

In the following, this chapter will trace key new-beginning discourses in planning the Bonn federal district. It will present a story of Bonn's success that will try to give credit to the different parties involved, such as politicians, city planners, private persons,

¹⁰ This is a point frequently reiterated in federal communications relating to the planning of Bonn, such as in a press release by the building department of the Ministry of Finances, 9 August 1963 (BArchiv, B 157/3443): "These plans are grounded on the belief not to create a new federal capital Bonn, but to conceive a compound befitting the character of the city of Bonn and the Rhenish landscape, which is designed on terms of space, functionality, city planning, and architecture in such a fashion that it can also serve national and international authorities, should Berlin again become the definitive capital." ("Diesen Überlegungen liegt der Gedanke zugrunde, keine neue Bundeshauptstadt Bonn, sondern eine dem Charakter der Stadt Bonn und der rheinischen Landschaft angepaßte Anlage zu schaffen, die räumlich und funktionell, städtebaulich und architektonisch so gestaltet ist, daß die auch nationalen und internationalen Institutionen dienen kann, wenn Berlin wieder endgültige Hauptstadt sein wird.")

¹¹ "In response to Speer's overblown neoclassicism for Nazi Berlin, the Federal Republic based in Bonn studiously downplayed architectural grandeur." Wise, *Capital Dilemma*, 15.

¹² Michael Stürmer, "Die Republik auf der Suche nach Staat und Stil," in *Wanderungen durch die Kulturpolitik: Festschrift für Sieghart v. Köckritz* (Berlin: Nicolai Verlag, 1993), 17-19; cited in Wise, *Capital Dilemma*, 17.

journalists, and others. As a consequence of this endeavor, the decisions taken in regard to Bonn's development will emerge as a product of a "messy" and often asymmetrical decision making process, which often enough involved day-to-day decisions taken due to sudden and still unfolding geopolitical events, the struggle against a too rigid legislature that prevented an efficiently organized capital, a struggle for political power and political agendas, as well as self-interest on part of the decision making parties. These decisions were taken in Adenauer's ministerial cabinet, the plenary of the Bundestag, in planning offices of the Ministry of Finances, in offices subjected to the heated atmosphere of 1956 West Berlin, and in press offices. They were presented to the West German public through TV, radio, the democratic media landscape, and through specifically published government bulletins in the form of an ongoing debate that had started with the first mentioning of Bonn as a potential seat for the federal capital in the summer of 1948, and which would continue well into the 1970s determined by Brandt's *Ostpolitik*. What united all participants of this debate was one point of agreement: no one seriously wanted to make Bonn the permanent capital of the Federal Republic.

Accordingly, the aspect of provisionality will be the red thread uniting the many different stories about Bonn's founding. My argument will be that from 1948 to 1963, there is a clear pattern of development that can be gleaned from the often chaotic planning of Bonn. After a period of total improvisation (in the following entitled "stage one," from 1949-1950), there followed a brief and careful consolidation period (stage two, from 1950 to 1955), which was then interrupted by the period of the building freeze and the "Berlin crisis" (stage three, from 1956-1959), which then opened out into a period of consolidation and long-term planning in Bonn (stage four, 1960 and beyond).

The following presentation of the events lays no claim to an exhaustive description. Rather, its aim is to highlight key decision points in Bonn's long way to a

capital of convenience that represent the different angles to the founding discourses at play: provisionality vs. the efforts to bring order into the resulting planning chaos, provisionality and architectural matter of factness, Bonn as symbol of political stagnation with regard to a potential German reunification vs. Berlin as symbol of taking a political initiative.

Stage One: Bad Press and Total Improvisation: The Beginnings of Planning the Capital, 1949-1950

The accommodations made for the federal government during Bonn's earliest days as federal capital were extremely makeshift. During this period, Bonn was not treated as a solution that would last a long time. After the initial decision for Bonn of 10 May 1949, the summer saw renewed discussion about the seat of the capital, to the extent that the Parliamentary Council's vote for Bonn was even publicly questioned.¹³ Bonn had bad press: most German newspapers outside of Bonn rejected the new provisional capital.¹⁴ Of 150 German newspapers, initially only 10 were in favor of Bonn, in addition to many critical comments in the foreign press.¹⁵ Bonn found so little consent outside of its city limits that on 20 May, a mere ten days after the decision for Bonn had been reached in the Parliamentary Council, the Hessen Landtag (state parliament) publicly

¹³ Vogt, "Der Herr Minister wohnt in einem Dienstwagen auf Gleis 4:" *Die Anfänge des Bundes in Bonn 1949/50*, 29.

¹⁴ Höroldt, *25 Jahre Bundeshauptstadt Bonn: Eine Dokumentation*, 54.

¹⁵ Hermann Wandersleb, "Die Berufung Bonns zur vorläufigen Bundeshauptstadt," *Bonner Geschichtsblätter* 23 (1969): 8; Freiherr Rüdiger von Von Wechmar, "Bemerkungen zu Bonns Berufung zur vorläufigen Bundeshauptstadt," in *Festschrift für Hermann Wandersleb zur Vollendung des 75. Lebensjahres* (Bonn, 1970), 617. Both cited in Höroldt, *25 Jahre Bundeshauptstadt Bonn: Eine Dokumentation*, 54. Höroldt's treatment of the quotes seems reductive when he argues that "not a single newspaper" ("keine einzige Zeitung") were in favor of Bonn, which is a claim that seems hard to back up. However, the quote is included here since it attests to a general atmosphere of bad press for Bonn.

called Bonn the “wrong decision,” thus detracting from much needed political momentum for Bonn.¹⁶ Consequently, the council of German minister presidents recommended to “all the parties involved to limit their preparations [in Bonn] to the level necessary to guarantee the proper beginning of the work of the Federal Authorities” in the so-called Schlangenbad Recommendations (*Schlangenbader Empfehlungen*) of 6 Juli 1949.¹⁷ As a consequence, the decision for Bonn still had to be acknowledged by a Bundestag vote, which the SPD famously put forward at the very hour of the new parliament’s festive induction in Bonn on 7 September 1949.¹⁸ Thus, the overall atmosphere of the beginning in the new capital was one of tentativeness. The ensuing, narrow Bundestag vote in favor of Bonn of 3 November 1949, which yielded 200 votes for Bonn and 176 for Frankfurt, did not significantly change the general public’s antipathy during the capital’s initial founding years, since belief in a speedy reunification was still widespread. On the very day of the Bonn vote of 3 November, the Bundestag underlined the desire for reunification by declaring that the capital would be moved to Berlin as soon as “general, free, and fair elections by secret ballot have been conducted in the Soviet occupied zone. The Bundestag will then convene in Berlin.”¹⁹ The Bundestag’s endorsement of Berlin would continue to hamstring concerted long-term

¹⁶ Höroldt, *25 Jahre Bundeshauptstadt Bonn: Eine Dokumentation*, 54.

¹⁷ Höroldt, *25 Jahre Bundeshauptstadt Bonn: Eine Dokumentation*, 58. “Die Versammlung empfiehlt sämtlichen beteiligten Stellen, ihre Vorbereitungen auf das Maß zu beschränken, das erforderlich ist, um den ordnungsgemäßen Beginn der Tätigkeit der Bundesorgane zu gewährleisten.”

¹⁸ Vogt, “*Der Herr Minister wohnt in einem Dienstwagen auf Gleis 4.*” *Die Anfänge des Bundes in Bonn 1949/50*, 94.

¹⁹ “Die leitenden Bundesorgane verlegen ihren Sitz in die Hauptstadt Berlin, sobald allgemeine, freie, gleiche, geheime und direkte Wahlen in Berlin und in der sowjetischen Besatzungszone durchgeführt sind. Der Bundestag versammelt sich alsdann in Berlin.” Deutscher Bundestag, *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 1:348.

planning in the new capital, casting a pall of insecurity over the initial planning stages in Bonn.

The primary instatement of Bonn as capital mainly comprised two agendas: a hasty renovation of the Pedagogical Academy into the Bundeshaus, and the transfer of the administrative authorities of the Tri-Zonal administration, which would form the staff basis for the later ministries, from Frankfurt am Main to Bonn. Due to scant financial resources, and because a potential move of the capital to Frankfurt was still on the table, the Bonn promoters around Hermann Wandersleb, who headed the newly instated Capital Office (*Büro Bundeshauptstadt*), were forced to plan the capital in two phases, of which the first was merely directed at ensuring that the Bundestag and Bundesrat could be successfully seated in Bonn. Only after the Bundestag had acknowledged Bonn on 3 November 1949 could the second phase in planning and building the capital be implemented, thereby initiating the first steps toward consolidating the seat of the capital in Bonn.²⁰ The Federal Building Authority (*Bundesbaudirektion*), which developed out of Wandersleb's Capital Office on 1 December 1949, led the initial planning effort²¹ and took charge of allotting office space.²²

Even after the second phase of establishing the capital was implemented after Bonn's affirmation by the Bundestag, the process still amounted to total improvisation. Most of the Ministries, which generally were formed out of their counterparts in the

²⁰ Vogt, "Der Herr Minister wohnt in einem Dienstwagen auf Gleis 4:" *Die Anfänge des Bundes in Bonn 1949/50*, 42.

²¹ Krüger, *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn*, 28.

²² To complicate matters further, there existed a great deal of confusion about responsibilities between Wandersleb's Capital Office and the Ministry of Finances, to the point that Adenauer had to intervene and reaffirm that Wandersleb was in charge of all building and planning measures in and around Bonn, directly responsible only to the Minister of Finances. Memo from the building department of the Ministry of Finances of 28 November 1949 (BArchiv, B 157/331).

former Tri-Zonal administration in Frankfurt am Main, were housed in makeshift quarters, and many of them found themselves in need of ever more office space as the authorities quickly began to grow in personnel, and initial projections proved far too conservative. The need for office and housing space in Bonn was enormous, especially if one takes into consideration that Bonn had never before played a significant administrative role. By January of 1950, 3633 officials and employees worked in Bonn, and two months later, 5000 positions were already mentioned in the federal budget.²³ As budgets and personnel skyrocketed, the cost of the move was by no means fully determined. A wide range of unforeseen costs began to appear and budgets were frequently overdrawn. This did not go unnoticed by the general public, and reportedly tourist steamers played the *Schlager* hit, *Wer soll das alles bezahlen?* as they cruised down the Rhine past the Bundeshaus under construction.²⁴ In 1956, the total cost of the building measures was already estimated to be about 70.6 million DM,²⁵ about 18 times the originally projected 3.8 million that Bonn had quoted as a “one-time cost” to the Parliamentary Council in April of 1949.²⁶

As the cost for the move was spinning rapidly out of control, the Federal Republic did not initially construct any new buildings in Bonn. Money was simply too tight to be committed to something that was only regarded as transitory. Convinced that the renovation of existing buildings would be cheaper, it was decided to use assets that the

²³ Vogt, “*Der Herr Minister wohnt in einem Dienstwagen auf Gleis 4:*” *Die Anfänge des Bundes in Bonn 1949/50*, 178.

²⁴ Buslei-Wuppermann, *Hans Schwippert, 1899-1973: Von der Werkkunst zum Design*, 113.

²⁵ Memorandum “Die Bonner Bundesbauten” by Ministerialdirigent Rossig, 5 December 1956 (BArchiv, B 157/336).

²⁶ Höroldt, *25 Jahre Bundeshauptstadt Bonn: Eine Dokumentation*, 51.

state of North Rhine-Westphalia had inherited from the Third Reich, the so-called *reichseigene Liegenschaften*.²⁷ North Rhine-Westphalia now transferred these properties into the ownership of the federation or allocated them in perpetuity. In some cases office space was rented from third parties, such as the city. These properties, hastily renovated and reconfigured to house the federal authorities, were thought to be perfectly in keeping with the makeshift air of the capital.

This approach led to an awkward situation: several ministries of the new federal government were housed in former military barracks, located in and around the center of Bonn. Four different Wehrmacht barracks, Troilokaserne, Gallwitzkaserne, Ermekeilkaserne, Husarenkaserne, and a former police barracks complex, were assigned to house most of the ministries and other authorities, such as the Ministries of Economics and Housing (Gallwitzkaserne), Employment/Work and Agriculture (Troilokaserne), Refugees and the Press and Information Authority (*Presse- und Informationsamt*, Ermekeilkaserne), and parts of the Ministry of Finances (Husarenkaserne). The Ministries of Justice and Interior were temporarily housed in the police barracks complex near the Husarenkaserne.²⁸

The problematic political symbolism of using former Wehrmacht barracks to house the new government's ministries was not lost on the parties involved, yet financial difficulties were too pressing. Housing space was still precious, since the inner city of Bonn had been damaged considerably by the recent air war and the largely unaffected barracks proved to be the most viable solution to meet the demand for office space.

²⁷ Krüger, *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn*, 30. Krüger points out that in nearly all cases the initial projections for the renovation cost were exceeded, something that he explains with the often chaotic initial planning stage.

²⁸ This list follows inventories assembled for Adenauer on 25 February 1950 and for the North Rhine-Westphalian Minister of Finances on 23 March 1950 (BArchiv, B 157/331).

Moreover, since they were now in the ownership of the federation, there was no rent to pay. There was, however, at least some concern about the political symbolism of the barracks: in a letter of 9 December 1949, a concerned official inquired to his fellow division head about the origin of the Troilokaserne's naming.²⁹ Apparently the federation at that point was unaware of the etymology of some of their assets' names. At the same time, in spite of their housing predicament, they wanted to avoid all-too obvious associations with these buildings' militaristic or fascist past. Even the city council of Bonn could not shed light on the origins of the name.³⁰ The Troilokaserne was actually named after Hans von Troilo (1865-1934), a Weimar Reichstag representative for the conservative-nationalist DNVP and member of *Stahlhelm*, the DNVP's paramilitary arm.³¹ Since both the DNVP and *Stahlhelm* were organizations which toward the end of the Weimar Republic had become openly hostile towards the Weimar democracy, the naming seems extremely awkward and hardly the kind of association that the new democracy would want to be connected with. Ultimately, as the focus on practicability prevailed, the name of the Troilokaserne remained unchanged.

The accommodation of the two highest-ranking officials of the Federal Republic had been relatively easy. Since Konrad Adenauer's initial headquarters as federal chancellor at the Museum König had been less than satisfactory, the Palais Schaumburg, which had also been transferred from the Third Reich into the federation, was renovated to house the Federal Chancellery. Federal President Theodor Heuss eventually moved

²⁹ Undated correspondence (BArchiv, B 157/331). Helmut Vogt quotes "recent research" that claims that the Troilokaserne was named after a WWI battle in which Regiment 77 had excelled: Vogt, "*Der Herr Minister wohnt in einem Dienstwagen auf Gleis 4:*" *Die Anfänge des Bundes in Bonn 1949/50*, 185.

³⁰ Vogt, "*Der Herr Minister wohnt in einem Dienstwagen auf Gleis 4:*" *Die Anfänge des Bundes in Bonn 1949/50*, 185.

³¹ "Hans von Troilo – Wikipedia," accessed 9 February 2010, http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hans_von_Troilo.

into the Villa Hammerschmidt, which the federation had purchased in 1950. It proved more difficult to accommodate the representatives of the federal states (*Länder*) in Bonn. Although Bonn's richness in representative houses in close proximity made the search for adequate housing easier,³² the fact that during the summer of 1949 the Bundestag had initially not yet acknowledged Bonn posed a problem. In order to ensure that the Bundesrat was able to constitute itself, the state of North Rhine-Westphalia in many cases forwarded the money needed to complete house purchases, since the other federal states did not want to make financial commitments until Bonn's capital status was secured. Other federal states decided to rent for the time being. Württemberg-Baden even insisted on a one-month termination period in the leasing contract for its headquarters.³³

The most important of all the buildings to be commissioned in Bonn, the Pedagogical Academy, had undergone extensive renovation and modification by Dusseldorf architect Hans Schwippert. A former academy of the State of Prussia for teachers' education, it had fallen into the ownership of North Rhine-Westphalia and had cBonn, North Rhine-Westphalia took a considerable risk while the federation still hesitated in their commitment to Bonn. The state had pressed for the completion of the designated parliament building in Bonn even before the initial vote about the seat of the capital in the Parliamentary Council of 10 May 1949. In February of 1949 the Landtag had allocated 1.5 Million DM for the modification of the Academy, of which the city of Bonn agreed to shoulder 500000 DM in case Bonn did not remain provisional capital. The efforts and investment paid off: a week before the official vote on the seat of the

³² Vogt, "Der Herr Minister wohnt in einem Dienstwagen auf Gleis 4:" *Die Anfänge des Bundes in Bonn 1949/50*, 57.

³³ This follows Vogt, "Der Herr Minister wohnt in einem Dienstwagen auf Gleis 4:" *Die Anfänge des Bundes in Bonn 1949/50*, 56.

capital, the topping-out ceremony was held at the Pedagogical Academy.³⁴ This achievement decisively boosted Bonn's chances in the capital race.

The Pedagogical Academy was an ideal solution for the provisional seat of the capital, and in a sense it perfectly symbolizes the tentative beginnings of the federation on the Rhine. It could be transformed in little time and with comparatively little effort into a parliamentary building that was able to house both chambers. In an exposé to the President of the Parliamentary Council Konrad Adenauer, city mayor Johannes Langendörfer praised the economy of this solution and even argued that the Academy's gymnasium could be transformed into a plenary chamber.³⁵ Even while this proposition was quickly dropped (Schwippert turned the gymnasium into the foyer of a newly constructed plenary chamber), Adenauer was intrigued with the suggestion of the Academy.

The establishment of the different government authorities in Bonn went hand in hand with large-scale plans to create the necessary housing space for the thousands of government officials streaming into Bonn, the representatives and officials of the Allied administrative authorities, and for Bonners, many of whom were still in desperate need of housing. The bulk of the new demand in housing space was met by new construction developments.³⁶ Consequently, large housing developments sprang up around Bonn's federal district, such as the *Reutersiedlung* along Reuterstraße, only a mile away from the federal district. This housing development would be a temporary home to many

³⁴ Buslei-Wuppermann, *Hans Schwippert, 1899-1973: Von der Werkkunst zum Design*, 109/110.

³⁵ Exposé presented to Adenauer by Langendörfer of 11 October 1948; cited in Buslei-Wuppermann, *Hans Schwippert, 1899-1973: Von der Werkkunst zum Design*, 109-110.

³⁶ Kerstin Kähling, *Aufgelockert und gegliedert: Städte- und Siedlungsbau der fünfziger und frühen sechziger Jahre in der provisorischen Bundeshauptstadt Bonn* (Bonn: Stadt Bonn - Stadtarchiv, 2004), 7.

important Bonn politicians, such as Ludwig Erhard and Franz Josef Strauss. Other developments soon followed, such as the *Bundessiedlung Lotharstraße* (1950-52), and the HICOG development *Tannenbusch* (1951), which housed Allied officials.³⁷

Stage Two: Careful Build-up: The First New Constructions, 1950-1956

After the Bundestag acknowledged Bonn on 3 November 1949, and the second phase of establishing the different authorities of the federal administration in Bonn had been completed by the end of 1950, the first tentative steps in consolidating and extending the capital were taken. This developmental phase is characterized by the first extensions and new constructions on the grounds of the Bundeshaus and the construction of the first ministerial buildings, such as the Federal Postal Ministry (*Bundesministerium für Post- und Fernmeldewesen*) and the Federal Foreign Office (*Auswärtiges Amt*). It is important to note that these constructions were not part of a larger plan on how to develop the federal district, but were purely built out of the desire to meet the demands for office space: a large-scale development plan for the federal district did not yet exist.

In summer of 1950, a seven-story high-rise extension of the Bundeshaus was evaluated. As the original Bundeshaus project had been completed with great haste and under intense pressure due to the still ongoing competition with Frankfurt, long term projections about needed office space had not been available.³⁸ Consequently, Schwippert

³⁷ Kähling, *Aufgelockert und gegliedert: Städte- und Siedlungsbau der fünfziger und frühen sechziger Jahre in der provisorischen Bundeshauptstadt Bonn*, 262, 350. “HICOG” is an acronym for “High Command of Occupied Germany.”

³⁸ To quote an example, by February 1949, the evaluated office space for the Bundeshaus had nearly quadrupled in numbers compared to the original projections. Agatha Buslei-Wuppermann, “Das Bonner Bundeshaus: Architektonische Moderne und demokratischer Geist,” in *Das Bundeshaus von Hans Schwippert in Bonn: Architektonische Moderne und demokratischer Geist* (Dusseldorf: Grupello Verlag, 2009), 55.

had designed his original modifications to the building in such a way that they could be further extended in the future.³⁹ On 1 September 1950, Minister of Finances Fritz Schäffer informed the Bundestag budget committee that three different forms of construction had been evaluated: solid construction, barracks, and prefabricated construction.⁴⁰ The fact that Schäffer in his letter recommended solid construction,⁴¹ and that subsequently this construction form was adopted, signify that a careful sense of security had set in in Bonn.

The Bundeshaus extension, the Representatives' High-Rise (*Abgeordnetenhochhaus*), was completed in April 1952 in solid construction as Schäffer had recommended. It was a seven-story high-rise building with office space for 418 representatives, libraries, and file storage facilities, and cost 2.1 million DM. Because of frequent complaints about the crowded conditions within the Academy building, the extension was completed in great haste: a mere 100 days after the beginning of the construction, the topping-out ceremony was celebrated, and the building was commissioned within nine months.⁴² The speedy completion came with a price, however: In a letter of complaint of December 1952, Bundestag representative Kalbfell complained about the "miserable work" he found when he moved into his new office. Kalbfell

³⁹ Letter by the Bundestag Organization Committee to the Bundestag President, n.d. (BArchiv, B 157/335).

⁴⁰ "als Massivbau," "unter Verwendung von Baracken," "in Montagebauweise." Letter by Minister of Finances Fritz Schäffer to the Budget Commission of the Bundestag, 1 September 1950 (BArchiv, B 157/335).

⁴¹ Letter by Minister of Finances Fritz Schäffer to the Budget Commission of the Bundestag, 1 September 1950 (BArchiv, B 157/335).

⁴² "In 100 Tagen reif für das Richtfest," *Rheinische Zeitung*, 20 December 1951.

complained about bad door fittings, and that the floor was so uneven that his office door would not fully close.⁴³

In keeping with the credo of provisionality, the federation had insisted on pure functionalism in the design of the building. This was positively highlighted by the press, which called the building “simple and modest.”⁴⁴ In fact, the director of the Bundestag Hans Trossmann had criticized the initial design for the building’s lobby staircase as “too representative.” Trossmann argued that the building was “conceived as a purely functional building. Therefore, the German Bundestag is not interested in representative staircases. Rather the emphasis should be on functionality, also for reasons of savings of cost.”⁴⁵ Cost was thus saved, but ironically the Representatives’ High-Rise had to be further extended in 1953 due to further increasing demand in office space. This is an indication of the haphazard planning that dominated this phase of Bonn’s initial consolidation: the federation still did not want to go into any long-term commitment regarding Bonn. Building activities thus solely focused on obtaining the minimal accommodations, were hastily executed, and resulted in numerous step-by-step expansions of federal buildings. For this reason, the Bundestag building complex underwent three major extensions/renovations alone in the early 1950s: in 1951, 1953, and 1955.⁴⁶

⁴³ Letter of complaint by representative Kalbfell to the Bundestag director’s office, 3 December 1952 (BArchiv, B 157/335).

⁴⁴ “15. Mai: Einzugstermin für 418 Abgeordnete,” *General-Anzeiger*, 29 April 1952.

⁴⁵ “Der Bau ist als reiner Zweckbau gedacht. Der Deutsche Bundestag legt daher keinen Wert darauf, repräsentative Treppen zu erhalten, sondern er legt lediglich Wert auf Zweckmäßigkeit und zwar auch aus Gründen der Kostenersparnis.” Letter by Trossmann to Head of Division Weil, 8 June 1951 (BArchiv, B 157/335).

⁴⁶ “BBR Bauten des Bundes in Bonn,” accessed 20 February 2011, http://www.bbr.bund.de/nn_21460/DE/BautenBundesBonn/BautenVereintenNationen/UN-Campus/UN-Campus.html.

In 1953, the plenary chamber of the Bundestag was extended, partly because the second Bundestag (legislative period of 1953-1957) required a larger chamber due to the outcome of the 1953 elections. The major changes comprised an extension of the plenary chamber by six meters toward the Rhine, two new stands for the press, and a separate entry to the building, complete with offices for the cabinet.⁴⁷ Due to the rigid time restrictions, construction again had to be as swift as possible. Construction started a mere 24 hours after the last session of the old Bundestag on 3 June and was completed just before the first session of the new legislative period on 6 October 1953. To complete everything on time, Minister of Finances Schäffer had to apply for an exemption for night-work and Sunday shifts. While Sunday shifts were denied due to the “moral sensibilities of the Christian population,”⁴⁸ Schäffer was still granted the night shifts and the extension was completed on time. The extension came with a complete overhaul of the plenary chamber’s interior, which also included a large federal eagle (*Bundesadler*) emblem that was affixed to the front wall of the plenary chamber above the seat of the Bundestag president. Again, it was important not to create the impression that money was wasted. In a letter by the Advisory Board for Questions of Art (*Fachgremium für künstlerische Fragen*) of 17 August 1953, the board praised the design of the chamber and described it as “free of any forced or extravagant manner” and ominously claimed that the huge clay eagle in particular would pose “no offensive moment.”⁴⁹ Even if the federal eagle, as we can glean from the careful phrasing, was apparently a sensitive issue,

⁴⁷ “3,6 Millionen für Bundeshaus-Erweiterung,” *General-Anzeiger*, 6 June 1953.

⁴⁸ Letter by Minister of Finances Fritz Schäffer on behalf of the Phillip Holzmann GmbH, 11 June 1953 (BArchiv, B 157/335).

⁴⁹ Letter by the “Advisory Board for Questions of Art” to Head of Department Rossig, 17 August 1953 (BArchiv, B 157/335).

on the other hand its presence on the front wall of the Bundestag, which replaced the original tapestry ornamented with the coats of arms of the eleven federal states and West Berlin, suggests that the FRG's confidence in itself, and in Bonn in particular had grown.

Apart from the extension of the Bundestag, the year 1953 saw three major construction projects in the federal district that further testify to Bonn's growing consolidation as the provisional capital. Two major ministerial buildings were built along Koblenzer Strasse (later named "Adenauerallee"), the building of the Postal Ministry designed by Josef Trimborn, and the new headquarters of the Federal Foreign Office, designed by Hans Freese. Both buildings have a distinct air of austerity and were emblematic of the building style overseen by the Federal Building Authority. This style would underline the buildings' provisionality and would come to dominate Bonn's federal buildings throughout the 1950s.⁵⁰ The Postal Ministry building was completed in 1954, and the Foreign Office building in 1955. In September 1953, construction began on the building for the Federal Information Authority (*Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung*). This sprawling T-shaped complex on the Adenauerallee, finished in the summer of 1954, held 250 rooms, a modern conference room to be used for press conferences, and a large committee room.⁵¹ While Bonn was thus tentatively consolidated, the future capital of Berlin was not forgotten. Adenauer's officials were in fact working on two capital cities at the same time.

⁵⁰ The air of provisionality is specifically mentioned on a memorial plaque of the Bonn *Path of Democracy* (*Weg der Demokratie*) in front of the former Foreign Office, Adenauerallee 99. The texts on the signs are both in English and German. The English reads: "Its simple architecture underlines the fact that Bonn was only intended as a provisional seat of government."

⁵¹ "250 Räume im neuen Presse- und Informationsamt," *General-Anzeiger*, 4 September 1953.

Stage Three: Back to Berlin? The Building Freeze in Bonn and Its Aftermath, 1956-1960

While tentatively building up Bonn, the federal government, as early as 1952, had secretly initiated evaluations of needed office space should the capital be moved to Berlin.⁵² In fact, the all-German capital continued to loom large in the imagination of the political decision makers in Bonn. In March of 1952, the Ministry of All-German Questions (*Ministerium für Gesamtdeutsche Fragen*) instated the Advisory Board for Questions of German Reunification (*Forschungsbeirat für Fragen der Wiedervereinigung Deutschlands*).⁵³ In 1953, the SPD initiated two architectural Berlin-competitions that asked participants to come up with ideas for the reconstruction of the Reichstag and to submit ideas for a future governmental district in a unified Berlin.⁵⁴ Almost immediately after the FRG had been founded, minor administrative bodies had been installed in Berlin in accordance with the Bundestag declaration of 3 November 1949 (the very one which acknowledged Bonn as provisional capital) that the capital be moved to Berlin once there had been free elections in the East. In February 1950 Adenauer had sent an official envoy of the FRG to Berlin, who headed the Berlin dependencies of nearly all Federal Ministries.⁵⁵ This was to send a signal to West Berliners that despite the city's Four Power status, the FRG considered West Berlin part

⁵² "Geschätzter Raumbedarf von Parlament und Regierung in Berlin nach der Wiedervereinigung," Ministry of Finances, 27 June 1956 (BArchiv, B 157/336).

⁵³ BArchiv, B 136/987.

⁵⁴ By October 1955, all factions of the Bundestag supported the idea of an "Ideenwettbewerb Berlin" and a competition indeed took place, some concepts of which were later used for the 1957 international building exposition in Berlin. *Vom Parlaments- und Regierungsviertel zum Bundesviertel: Eine Bonner Entwicklungsmaßnahme 1974-2004*, 36.

⁵⁵ "Liste der Bundesdienststellen in Berlin," Bulletin of the Federal Press and Information Authority, Nr.3, 5 January 1957 (BArchiv, B 157/336), 26.

of the FRG's territory. While West Berlin was thus present in the political decision making in Bonn, serious initiatives to turn the "frontier city" into the capital city remained dormant.

In 1956, about ten years after the end of World War II, Berlin's big sleep was suddenly over. Many West Germans, among them parliamentarians, journalists, the West German workers' unions such as the DGB (*Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*), industrialists, special interest and lobbyist groups such as the Alliance for an Indivisible Germany (*Kuratorium unteilbares Deutschland*), and even private individuals began to press for an abandonment of Bonn's interim arrangements and a move of the West German capital to West Berlin.⁵⁶ Bonn never had been an easy decision, and emotions about the new capital had never fully settled. The SPD in particular, which had favored Frankfurt am Main, harbored resentment against Bonn and continued to work against Bonn in the Bundestag all through the early 1950s, even though a move to Frankfurt had been out of the question after the decision for Bonn of 3 November 1949.⁵⁷ SPD antagonism against Bonn came to a head in December 1955, when the party passed a motion in the Bundestag that demanded information about the total cost spent on establishing Bonn as capital. In January 1956, the Bundestag discussed an SPD-led motion which called for a building freeze to be applied to any further administrative construction projects in Bonn – polemically called "office palaces" - in order to underline the provisional character of the city. The conclusion of the motion even claimed that Bonn continued "to build against

⁵⁶ Compare Jens Krüger's discussion of the Berlin initiatives of 1956/7: Krüger, *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn*, 52-66.

⁵⁷ Krüger, *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn*, 45.

Berlin.”⁵⁸ To deepen Bonn’s crisis, for the better part of 1956, a parliamentary commission examined SPD accusations that the initial Bonn promoters around Adenauer had installed Bonn as capital based on doctored numbers, an accusation that was hard to refute in the face of frequent and drastic budget overruns. Finally, in a huge blow to the Bonn supporters, on 3 October 1956 the Bundestag adopted the recommendation of its parliamentary commission to halt all new construction projects in Bonn.⁵⁹

The already heated discussion about Bonn’s interim status coincided with dramatic social upheavals in the Eastern Bloc triggered by the death of Stalin in 1953, the effect of which were felt during the Workers’ Uprising in East Berlin of 16/17 June 1953. The subsequent process of de-Stalinization in the USSR was evidenced in Khrushchev’s “secret address” during the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in February 1956, in which he accused Stalin of having distorted the principles of Marxism-Leninism. In the wake of these developments, the Poznań uprising in June 1956 in Poland, and the events leading to the Hungarian uprising in October and November 1956 provided indicators of ongoing, far-reaching changes in the sociopolitical climate of the East Bloc, bringing to a head long-lingering West German desires to take the initiative in the question of a German unification. The Hungarian struggle for democracy threw a new light on the German-German situation and initiated events in Bonn and West Berlin that

⁵⁸ “Schluss mit dem Bau von Büropalästen [...] dem provisorischen Charakter, dem Provisorium Bonn soll endlich Rechnung getragen werden, damit nicht mit guten Gründen gesagt werden kann: Bonn baut weiter gegen Berlin.” Deutscher Bundestag, *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 28:6547.

⁵⁹ Deutscher Bundestag, *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 32:9004-9017. What would become known as the “building freeze decision” of 3 October however, allowed projects already begun to be finished, and also acknowledged certain limitations of the freeze, such as the completion of urgently needed construction projects, and it explicitly exempted residential construction, which was still needed on a large scale to compensate for housing space lost during the war. Deutscher Bundestag, *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 28:6547.

added a new sense of urgency to long dormant hopes. The revolutionary events of 1956 in Eastern Europe made it suddenly seem as if the stalemate could be broken.⁶⁰

What followed was an unprecedented concerted effort of politicians, journalists, and private individuals to at once move the capital to West Berlin. The fact that the building freeze conclusion of the Bundestag was taken days before the outbreak of the revolution in Budapest significantly fueled the desire to take matters into West German hands. As the singular counterpoint to the consolidation process of Bonn as seat of the federation, the events to follow had the potential to bring down the new West German capital. During the most turbulent months of the building freeze period in late 1956 and early 1957, a stunned Adenauer saw “his” Bonn in acute danger.

The first impetus for the Berlin initiatives originated from the mayor of West Berlin, Willy Brandt (SPD), himself. On 28 September 1956, Brandt gave a speech at the Berlin Week (*Berlinwoche*), during which he demanded that the term “front city” (*Frontstadt*), which West Berlin was commonly referred to at the time, should be replaced by “capital city” (*Hauptstadt*) of all Germany.⁶¹ In this, Brandt highlighted the function of the divided city as symbol of the unsolved German Question. As was to be expected, Brandt’s remark resonated strongly among West German politicians and the West German press, most importantly the Hamburg-based weekly *Die Zeit*. In a series of

⁶⁰ Rainer Pommerin argues that these events unfolded against the backdrop of a prior West German disillusionment with regard to a potential German reunification: Adenauer had continued to steadfastly dismiss Stalin’s diplomatic notes of 1952, and the FRG’s accession to NATO and the GDR’s subsequent Warsaw Pact membership threatened to cement the division infinitely. Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 200. More recently, Nikita Khrushchev had demonstratively spoken of two existing German states in the aftermath of the Geneva conference of 1955. Andreas Hillgruber, *Deutsche Geschichte 1945-1986* (Stuttgart-Berlin-Cologne, 1983), 59-65; cited in Krüger, *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn*, 58. Compare Krüger’s discussion of the geopolitical situation of 1956, and of the Berlin discussion of 1956/7: Krüger, *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn*, 58, 58-66.

⁶¹ Diethelm Prowe, *Weltstadt in Krisen: Berlin 1949-1958* (Berlin-New York, 1973), 247; cited in Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 202.

lead articles, Marion Gräfin Dönhoff advocated a move of the West German capital to Berlin. In a front page article headlined “Now or never: within the year still must Berlin become capital” of 18 October 1956, while tensions in Hungary started to grow, Dönhoff urged West German policy makers for action:

We all can sense that a certain caesura has come about in our postwar age. With us, a lot has consolidated itself: economic and political matters, we carry more weight; but outside many things have started to develop which no one would have dared to dream of only a year ago. The diagnosis: the time is ready to rethink our interim arrangement. The most provisional aspect of our Federal interim arrangement is the capital Bonn, which was explicitly deemed the “provisional seat of the Federal Republic” by the Parliamentary Council. While the Bundestag held session in Berlin last week, we already asked ourselves: “for how long still will this provisional seat be maintained?” And: “what are we waiting for after all?” [...] “to know when to take action” – this is how politicians are judged, not only by their contemporaries, but also by history.⁶²

The *Die Zeit* lead articles penned by Dönhoff represent a uniquely powerful link between the press and the sphere of parliamentary politics. Dönhoff’s colleague Gerd Bucerius, the publisher of *Die Zeit*, also happened to be a CDU Bundestag delegate and Adenauer’s Commissioner for the Economic Advancement of Berlin. With the help of *Die Zeit*, and other newspapers who followed suit, Bucerius was able to open up a powerful “second

⁶² “Wir alle spüren, daß in unserer Nachkriegsepoche eine gewisse Zäsur eingetreten ist. Bei uns hat sich vieles konsolidiert: Wirtschaftliches und Politisches, unser Gewicht ist größer geworden; draußen aber ist manches in Fluß gekommen, wovon sich noch vor Jahresfrist niemand etwas träumen ließ. Diagnose: der Zeitpunkt ist gekommen, unser Provisorium einmal neu zu überdenken. Das Provisorischste unseres bundesrepublikanischen-Provisoriums ist die Hauptstadt Bonn, die vom Parlamentarischen Rat ausdrücklich als ‘provisorischer Sitz der Bundesrepublik’ bestimmt wurde. Wir haben anläßlich der Tagung des Bundestags in Berlin in der vorigen Woche schon einmal gefragt: ‘Wie lange soll dieser provisorische Sitz noch beibehalten werden?’ Und: ‘Worauf warten wir eigentlich?’ [...] Für gewußt wann — nach dieser Devise werden die Politiker beurteilt, nicht nur von ihren Zeitgenossen, sondern auch von der Geschichte.” Marion Gräfin Von Dönhoff, “Jetzt oder nie! Noch in diesem Jahr muß Berlin Hauptstadt werden”, 18 October 1956, <http://www.zeit.de/1956/42/Jetzt-oder-nie>.

Other newspapers, such as the Berlin-based *Tagesspiegel* did not go as far as Dönhoff in *Die Zeit*, but were supportive of the Berlin-initiative in general. The *Tagesspiegel* suggested making Berlin a second seat of the capital alongside Bonn, and advocated a step-by-step move of the governing bodies to Berlin. Wolfgang Schütz, *Der Tagesspiegel*, 17 October 1956; cited in Krüger, *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn*, 60.

front” outside of the sphere of politics in favor of Berlin. Supplementing Dönhoff’s Berlin campaign in *Die Zeit*, in what would become known as the “Bucerius initiative” in the Federal Chancellery, Bucerius became actively in favor of Berlin. His plan, presented to Adenauer in early October 1956, demanded the move of the capital by May of 1957 to signal to the East that West Germany was genuinely interested in unification. Needless to say, Adenauer dismissed the idea outright. In a letter to Bucerius of 15 October, Adenauer emphatically argued that it was “impossible for a federal government to take its seat in an occupied city which is entirely encircled by Russians.”⁶³ Bucerius, however, was undeterred and argued in his response to the chancellor that the times [Hungary] called for a clear signal that the Federal Government had “not forgotten” the East Germans.⁶⁴ He had in the meantime planned a motion for the Bundestag to execute his plan. The motion called for a move of the capital to Berlin by 1 May 1957.⁶⁵ This caused alarm in the Federal Chancellery, and Bucerius’ letter is commented on in the handwriting of the head of the Federal Chancellery, Hans Globke: “apparently the initiators are unaware that they are dissolving the integrity of the Federal Republic.”⁶⁶ However, Bucerius’ motion was ultimately not brought into the Bundestag by his CDU

⁶³ “Es ist unmöglich, dass eine Bundesregierung ihren Sitz nimmt in einer besetzten Stadt, die nur von Russen umgeben ist.” Letter by Konrad Adenauer to Gerd Bucerius, 15 October 1956 (BArchiv, B 136/4668).

⁶⁴ Letter by Gerd Bucerius to Konrad Adenauer, 23 October 1956 (BArchiv, B 136/4668).

⁶⁵ “The Bundestag should decide: The seat of the Bundestag and the leading governing bodies is Berlin. Die Federal Government should create the preconditions enabling the leading governing bodies to work out of Berlin by latest 1 May 1957.” (“Der Bundestag wolle beschließen: Der Sitz des Bundestags und der leitenden Bundesorgane ist Berlin. Die Bundesregierung möge die Voraussetzungen dafür schaffen, daß die leitenden Bundesorgane spätestens am 1. Mai 1957 ihre Arbeit in Berlin aufgenommen haben.” Attachment of letter by Gerd Bucerius to Konrad Adenauer, 23 October 1956 (BArchiv, B 136/4668).

⁶⁶ “Offensichtlich sind sich die Initiatoren nicht bewußt, daß sie das Staatsgefüge der Bundesrepublik auflösen.” Globke’s handwriting on a letter by Gerd Bucerius to Adenauer, 23 October 1956 (BArchiv, B 136/4668).

colleagues, where it most likely would have been accepted to potentially disastrous consequences, since it called for the *immediate* move of the Bundestag, together with all ministries, to Berlin within the year,⁶⁷ something that surely would not have gone unanswered by the GDR leadership and the Soviet Union. While prudence still prevailed among Bucerius' peers, to Adenauer, this plan must have represented an unprecedented endangerment of the still fragile balance that had been struck between the Federal Republic, its Western Allies, and its Eastern opponents.

Bucerius however found support from the Berlin Senate, which at that time had already compounded Bonn's crisis by asking the president of the Bundesrat to effect an immediate move of several ministries, the Bundestag, and the Bundesrat to Berlin, as well as to start the construction of a parliament building.⁶⁸ Other initiatives spawned or inspired by Bucerius' efforts, and which had quite similar aims, were the Alliance for an Indivisible Germany (*Kuratorium Unteilbares Deutschland*),⁶⁹ and the Königstein Circle (*Königsteiner Kreis*),⁷⁰ an interest group of jurists, economists, and government officials who had emigrated from the Soviet Zone.

The vehemence of the different initiatives and their widespread public support took the Adenauer administration by surprise. A letter by the Representative of the FRG in West Berlin Heinrich Vockel (CDU) to Adenauer illustrates the precariousness of the

⁶⁷ Krüger, *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn*, 61.

⁶⁸ Krüger, *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn*, 61.

⁶⁹ In contrast to the Bucerius initiative, the Federation Indivisible Germany called for a step-by-step move of the parliament and the ministries to Berlin. Willy Brandt, *Von Bonn nach Berlin* (Berlin: Arani, 1957), 62; cited in Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 203.

⁷⁰ The Königstein circle was even less drastic in its demands. It suggested to create a second official residence for the federal president and a second venue for the Bundestag in Berlin. An immediate move of the entire government apparatus, however, was not supported by the Königstein Circle. Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 204.

situation in West Berlin, where local papers celebrated Bucerius and his peers. Vockel's report to the chancellor revealed that while the Hungary Uprising raged in Budapest on 29 October 1956, a stirring public appeal by Ernst Scharnowski (SPD), chairman of the West Berlin chapter of the West German Federation of German Unions (*Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund*, DGB) to the East Berliners had only been averted in the last minute. Scharnowski had planned to transmit a rousing message into East Berlin via the West Berlin broadcast system to the extent that "the hour of liberation has arrived."⁷¹ Only the prudence of the broadcasting stations, so Vockel's letter went, which had made further inquiries about the nature of the pamphlet, had averted a potential disaster. After the broadcast stations denied their support, the DGB had instead organized a candlelight vigil for the East, which had far less revolutionary potential.⁷²

By now, an acute sense of crisis had swept the federal government, and several ministries sprang into action in order to catch the federal government up with the rapidly evolving situation. Adenauer ordered the Federal Foreign Office to evaluate whether a move to West Berlin would be in accordance with the city's Four Powers Status.⁷³ As the

⁷¹ Letter by Representative of the FRG in West Berlin Dr. Heinrich Vockel to Konrad Adenauer, 29 October 1956 (BArchiv, B 136/4668).

⁷² Letter by Representative of the FRG in West Berlin Dr. Heinrich Vockel to Konrad Adenauer, 29 October 1956 (BArchiv, B 136/4668).

⁷³ An initial opinion commissioned by Vockel in late October of 1956 explicitly stated that a move to Berlin would constitute a breach of the existing agreements with the Western Allies. Letter by Representative of the FRG in Berlin Dr. Heinrich Vockel to Konrad Adenauer, 30 October 1956 (BArchiv, B136/4669). On 12 November 1956 however, Under-Secretary Reinhold Mercker of the Federal Foreign Office claimed that a move of the Federal capital would in fact be in accordance with the Paris Treaties. Letter by Dr. Reinhold Mercker (Federal Foreign Office) to Adenauer, 12 November 1956 (BArchiv, B136/4669). Mercker came to revise his opinion two weeks later. On 30 November, he wrote to Adenauer that the Four Powers Agreement would cause "significant difficulties," carefully stating "the occupational forces in Berlin would not be judicially hindered in creating a situation that would negatively affect a free governing process." ("[...] die Besatzungsmächte von Berlin wären daher rechtlich nicht daran gehindert, eine Situation herbeizuführen, die eine freie Regierungstätigkeit beeinträchtigen kann.") Letter by Mercker to Adenauer, 30 November 1956 (BArchiv, B136/4669).

results were initially inconclusive, the Federal Chancellery feverishly compiled a list of all factors speaking against Berlin. A contemporaneous memo from the Foreign Office reveals that the authority had in the meantime found severe disadvantages in a potential move to Berlin. Explicit concerns were that the Federal Republic's sovereign status would clash with Allied Occupational powers and capacities, to the extent that the Allies could simply reject West Berlin as the FRG's capital. A second grave concern was the spatial separation of the potential capital from the territory of the FRG.⁷⁴

Other ministries, such as the Ministry of Finances, ordered clandestine operations to discretely evaluate the housing opportunities for the federation in West Berlin. In a letter to the building officer for West Berlin Mertz, Head of Section Johannes Rossig from the Finance Ministry ordered Mertz to personally evaluate the office space for the federation in Berlin and explained this order by the recent events in Poland and Hungary, stressing his belief that “in the course of the next months, effects with regard to the German situation will occur.”⁷⁵ While Rossig expressed doubts that the Bucerius initiative would have immediate effects on the Berlin question, he stressed that Bucerius nevertheless should put the subject up for discussion and that the topic “would not disappear by itself again” due to the efforts centered in Berlin.⁷⁶ Rossig urged Mertz to exclude “other Berlin authorities” from these activities.⁷⁷ The tone of Rossig's letter and

⁷⁴ Memo of a discussion of the Berlin question in the Federal Foreign Office, n.d. (BArchiv, B136/4669).

⁷⁵ Letter (draft) by Head of Section Johannes Rossig of the Finance Ministry to the Governmental Building Officer of West Berlin Mertz, 29 October 1956 (BArchiv, B157/336). Compare Jens Krüger's discussion of the letter in Krüger, *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn*, 62-63.

⁷⁶ Letter (draft) by Head of Section Johannes Rossig of the Finance Ministry to the Governmental Building Officer of West Berlin Mertz, 29 October 1956 (BArchiv, B157/336).

⁷⁷ Letter (draft) by Head of Section Johannes Rossig of the Finance Ministry to the Governmental Building Officer of West Berlin Mertz, 29 October 1956 (BArchiv, B157/336).

his insistence on secrecy underline the letter's explosive content: quite obviously the federal government wanted to avoid this information leaking to the press in order not to add further fuel to the Berlin debate. Interestingly, at the same time, Rossig three months later insisted in a treatise entitled *The Federal Buildings in Bonn (Die Bonner Bundesbauten)* on the provisionality of the Federal buildings in Bonn and claimed that due to their nature as "singular and self-sustaining economic objects" they would serve a "manifold future purpose" should Bonn be no longer seat of the capital.⁷⁸ Rossig even initiated a series of clandestine financial surveys of the projected cost of the move, which in January of 1957 the federation estimated at about 143 million DM.⁷⁹

Another secret initiative originated from the Ministry of Transportation. In October and November of 1956, Minister Seebohm had commissioned an ambitious "Preparatory Plan for the Reunification."⁸⁰ The plan projected a drastic enhancement of the street network leading up to the zonal border with an investment volume of 401 million DM. The minister as well suggested an expansion of the railway network that would cost an additional 165 million DM.⁸¹ Seebohm argued that while the routes toward the Iron Curtain saw comparatively little traffic at the moment, this would instantly change on the day of reunification. In order to prepare for this day, Seebohm recommended an enhancement of the road network leading to the border that would put

⁷⁸ Johannes Rossig, "Die Bonner Bundesbauten," 5 December 1956 (BArchiv, B 157/336).

⁷⁹ Express letter by Rossig to Subdivision IIA of the Ministry of Finances, 14 January 1957 (BArchiv, B157/336).

⁸⁰ Attachment to a letter by Minister of Transportation Hans Seebohm to the under secretary of the Federal Chancellery entitled "Preparatory Plan for the Reunification," 14 November 1956 (BArchiv, B 136/2131).

⁸¹ Attachment to a letter by Minister of Transportation Hans Seebohm to the under secretary of the Federal Chancellery entitled "Preparatory Plan for the Reunification," 14 November 1956 (BArchiv, B 136/2131).

them in a condition “equal to the high-frequency road network in West Germany.”⁸² By December 1956, however, the Cabinet had rejected this ambitious plan due to the high cost involved.⁸³

At about the same time that Seebohm’s plan was rejected, the governmental building officer of West Berlin Mertz had finished his evaluation of the possibilities of provisionally housing the federal government in Berlin. On 30 December 1956, Mertz’ report claimed that on short notice, an accommodation even of only small parts of the federal government was impossible.⁸⁴ Adenauer was thus increasingly assured that he could reject the emotional Berlin plans on a rational basis of carefully researched numbers and facts. On 14 November, Hans Globke requested “a compilation of all factors speaking against Berlin” to organize a concerted defense of Bonn.⁸⁵

While Adenauer organized his defense, other plans and motions were being made. On 11 December 1956, the factions of the SPD, FDP, GB/BHE motioned the Bundestag for a declaration entitled “Berlin is the capital of Germany,”⁸⁶ which differed from the original motion conceived by Bucerus and his friends from the CDU in that it did not

⁸² “Es bedarf also, wenn die Vorbereitung der Wiedervereinigung auf dem Verkehrsgebiet ernstlich in Angriff genommen werden soll, eines Ausbaues dieser Straßen entsprechend dem Ausbau der stark belasteten Bundesfernstrassen in Westdeutschland.” Attachment to a letter by Hans Seebohm to the under secretary of the Federal Chancellery entitled “Preparatory Plan for the Reunification,” 14 November 1956 (BArchiv, B 136/2131).

⁸³ Express letter to the under secretary of the Federal Chancellery, 11 December 1956 (BArchiv, B 136/2131).

⁸⁴ “Untersuchung über die augenblicklichen baulichen Unterbringungsmöglichkeiten der Bundesregierung in Berlin,” 30 December 1956 (BArchiv, B157/336), 8.

⁸⁵ “Bitte um eine Zusammenstellung aller gegen Berlin sprechenden Gesichtspunkte.” Handwritten note by Hans Globke on a press conference transcript held by the Representative of the FRG in Berlin Vockel, 14 December 1956 (BArchiv, B136/4669).

⁸⁶ Motion by the factions SPD, FDP, GB/BHE, 14 December 1956 (BArchiv, B136/4669).

call for immediate action. Rather, the motion demanded that “work be started” on moving “several ministries on a short-term basis” and called for the erection of a new Parliamentary building on the Platz der Republik.⁸⁷ The Berlin initiatives were not confined to political groups or regional parliaments alone. On 21 November 1956, the former NSDAP ideologue Otto Strasser, who had only been allowed to return to Germany in 1955, suggested the “Strasser-Plan for an Armed Neutrality” to the federal government. Oblivious of the Cold War political minefield, Strasser suggested a plebiscite in both German states about a neutral, unified Germany, which was to defend its neutrality by the means of a strong army.⁸⁸ The Federal Chancellery advised to ignore the plan.

The year 1957 saw the Berlin debate abate gradually. The Soviet Intervention in Hungary, which started on 4 November 1956 had already lead to the sobering realization that the Soviet Union would ruthlessly pursue its interests, if needed by force.⁸⁹ As a consequence, important momentum for the Berlin initiatives had been lost. Now assured that a short-term move of the capital to Berlin was out of the question, the federal government was hard at work to pacify the debate by calling for sober-mindedness and by demonstrating to the public that it in fact had supported Berlin’s status as future capital of a unified Germany all along. Still on December 14th 1956, Adenauer’s representative in Berlin, Heinrich Vockel, held a press conference in which he stressed Bonn’s ongoing commitment to Berlin. This was to prepare West Berliners and West Germans for accepting that the Federal capital would not be moved to Berlin in the

⁸⁷ Krüger, *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn*, 64; Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 205.

⁸⁸ Letter by Otto Strasser to Konrad Adenauer, 21 November 1956 (BArchiv, B 136/2131). See also Hans Gotthard Ehlert, *Die NATO-Option* (Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 1993), 342.

⁸⁹ Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 205; Krüger, *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn*, 63.

foreseeable future. Quoting a recent statement by Willy Brandt, Vockel stated in conciliatory fashion “not buildings or authorities account for the atmosphere of a capital, but the spirit of its citizens. To preserve this spirit here is the great political task of the city of Berlin for the great day which we are waiting for.”⁹⁰

While Vockel was trying to pacify the proponents of a move to Berlin in Berlin, in Bonn Under Secretary Reinhold Mercker called the Ministers of Defense, Economy, Interior, Justice, Finances, and Traffic to a meeting in the Federal Chancellery on 18. January 1957. This meeting resulted in an exhaustive enumeration of the factors speaking against the move to Berlin, which would finally lay the debate to rest. Most importantly, experts now agreed that the Allied Occupational Statute would cause insurmountable difficulties. Since the West Berlin police force was subordinate to the Allies, and because the *Bundeswehr* and the German Border Patrol (*Bundesgrenzschutz*) could not be deployed in Berlin, the federal government would be left without an executive branch. There were also strong concerns about the fragile territorial connection between West Berlin and the rest of the FRG’s territory, and on the vulnerability of this link to [Soviet] manipulation.⁹¹

In the face of these facts an immediate move of the capital was off the table. Nevertheless, on 6 February 1957, the Bundestag finally adopted an SPD motion of December 1956 with which was decidedly more careful in its language about the German capital Berlin in an effort to bridge the differences in the Berlin question. The motion

⁹⁰ “[...] nicht Bauten oder Behörden schaffen die Atmosphäre einer Hauptstadt, sondern der Geist der Bürger. Und daß wir diesen Geist hier erhalten, das ist die politische Aufgabe dieser Stadt Berlin für den großen Tag, auf den wir warten.” Transcript of a press conference held by the representative of the FRG in Berlin Vockel, 14 December 1956 (BArchiv, B136/4669).

⁹¹ Minutes of meeting, Federal Chancellery, 18 January 1957 (BArchiv, B136/4669).

called for a Bundestag declaration entitled “Berlin is the capital of Germany,”⁹² which differed from the original motion conceived by Bucerius in that it no longer called for immediate action. In light of the recent events in Hungary and in Poland, however, the practical sense of the motion came down merely to performing the organizational preparations for a moment in the indistinct future. In reality, the motion did not change anything about the continuation of the interim solution that was Bonn.

In the aftermath of the Bundestag declaration, the federal government strengthened Berlin’s status by relocating the elections of the federal president there, and by declaring the Bellevue Castle as the second seat of the president. Apart from that, the Bundestag and the Bundesrat continued to hold sessions in Berlin, a practice that had already been started in October 1955, when the Bundestag had held its first working session in Berlin.⁹³ While political activity in the FRG remained centered in Bonn, it is safe to say that the Berlin discussion of 1956/7 and the ensuing Bundestag declaration resulted in an increased engagement of the federal government in Berlin, and thus in a gradual consolidation of the FRG’s political outpost in the East, also on legal terms.⁹⁴ On the other hand, the Berlin discussion demonstrated that the provisional capital of Bonn was more stable than it was believed to be by many contemporaries. At any rate, the Berlin discussion of 1956/7 resulted in a heightened public awareness of Bonn’s interim status. Testifying to the growing maturity of a democratically minded press with the capacity and competence to critically intervene in ongoing political debates, the West

⁹² Motion by the factions SPD, FDP, GB/BHE, 11 December 1956 (BArchiv, B136/4669).

⁹³ This follows Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 205.

⁹⁴ Federal courts between 1956 and 1959 strove to position West Berlin in German constitutional law as a quasi - federal state, albeit without trying to question Berlin’s special status as defined by the Allies. See Ralf-Georg Reuth, “Berlin - Bonn: Eine Konkurrenzsituation?,” in *Vierzig Jahre Bundeshauptstadt Bonn 1949-1989*, ed. Der Bundesminister für Raumordnung, Bauwesen und Städtebau (Karlsruhe: C.F. Müller GmbH, 1989), 31.

German newspapers, first and foremost *Die Zeit*, had alerted the West German public and the world that under the present circumstances West Germans would not tolerate any further consolidation of the status quo in Bonn towards a permanent capital. As the Berlin-plans disappeared in the drawers, Bonn continued to be an unloved capital.

This political climate led to the perpetuation of the building freeze in Bonn, and the federation began to answer the ever increasing demand for office space by renting.⁹⁵ This had the consequence that most ministries in Bonn had to continue working under makeshift circumstances. As a consequence, Bonn under the building freeze saw a building boom carried by private enterprise, and the federation now became Bonn's most famous tenant. This resulted in a further and uncontrolled sprawl of the Federal facilities on the Rhine that was lacking in any kind of long-range concept for urban development.⁹⁶ As a consequence, ministries were in many cases divided up and housed in different buildings, which were often kilometers apart from another, thus hindering communication and organization.⁹⁷ For example, in 1963, the Ministry of Transportation was still housed in nine different rental buildings, while the Ministry of Finances was housed in five different locations all over Bonn.⁹⁸

Eventually this problem would lead to the gradual abolishment of the building freeze: as early as 1959 the federation began again to plan new building projects. That year several ministries, such as the Ministries of Finance, Justice, and (most importantly)

⁹⁵ Krüger, *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn*, 65.

⁹⁶ Johannes Rossig, "Gedanken zur städtebaulichen Entwicklung des Raumes Bonn im Zusammenhang mit der Unterbringung der obersten Bundesorgane," 6 September 1963 (BArchiv, B 157/3443).

⁹⁷ Press memorandum (draft) by the Bundespresse- und Informationsamt, Referat III b/2, 9 August 1963 (BArchiv, B 157/3443), 1.

⁹⁸ Press memorandum (draft) by the Bundespresse- und Informationsamt, Referat III b/2, 9 August 1963 (BArchiv, B 157/3443), 1.

Defense began to file building applications for new ministerial buildings.⁹⁹ As to the corresponding political climate, Jens Krüger argues that a growing consolidation of the East-West divide of the Cold War, as evidenced by the Geneva Conference of 1959, and by a hardening of the Soviet stance towards West Berlin, largely replaced the laboring for a swift unification by efforts to dissolve the growing tensions between the Soviet Union and the Western Allies.¹⁰⁰ The construction of the Berlin Wall in August 1961 finally attested to the manifest stalemate of the Cold War that would inhibit any concerted action of consolidating a Federal hold on West Berlin for the next 28 years.¹⁰¹

Stage Four: Towards a Capital of Convenience, 1960 to 1963

The year 1960 marks the beginning of a large-scale offensive against the building freeze in Bonn; it also saw the first genuine efforts at long-term planning of the federal district. General agreement began to crystallize that the building freeze could no longer be sustained and that the organizational chaos and financial losses inflicted by the numerous rented locations had to be stopped. The efforts to break the building freeze took place on two fronts. Firstly, many ministries applied for construction permits, which were approved by the Bundestag Budget committee in form of *Leertitel*, earmarked money awaiting final approval by the Cabinet. Secondly, the year 1960 saw the onset of a series of planning initiatives with the aim of carefully orchestrating federal construction activities. There was growing agreement among the Finance Ministry (which oversaw all building activities) that a future move to Berlin would leave a large number of inherited liabilities for Bonn, which had the potential to severely constrain the town's prospects at

⁹⁹ "Sprechzettel" Referat III b/2, 17 October 1962 (BArchiv, B157/3444), 7.

¹⁰⁰ Krüger, *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn*, 66.

¹⁰¹ Reuth, "Berlin - Bonn: Eine Konkurrenzsituation?," 32.

getting by on its own. At the same time, however, neither the Bundestag nor the Cabinet (the two bodies authorized to take such a decision) had not yet officially abolished the building freeze. The plan was thus to build up political pressure on the freeze and to have the plans and budgets for new constructions ready in order to begin as soon as the ban had been lifted.

As a result of this policy, 1960 saw a veritable flood of construction applications, motivated by the numerous ministries' pressing need for extension and consolidation of office space. A 1962 memorandum from the building department of the Finance Ministry lists no less than seven new building projects filed by different ministries and other governing bodies filed in 1960, such as the Ministries of Justice, Defense, Finances, Agriculture, the Office of the Federal President, and the Federal Information Authority.¹⁰² These were joined by a construction application submitted by the Bundesrat in 1961. Even more importantly, the Bundestag Council of Elders decided to build a new set of extensions to the Bundeshaus. Lastly, in May of 1960, the Budget Committee of the Bundestag approved the Ministry of Defense's new construction plans for the Hardthöhe, a series of hills east of the federal district.¹⁰³ Germany's growing role in NATO made the move out of the Ermekeilkaserne and numerous rented locations, which had housed the Ministry of Defense since the early 1950s, a sheer necessity.

While the ministries continued to rebel against the building freeze, the Ministry of Finances realized the need for a concerted initiative to bring order into the chaotic circumstances left in the wake of the building freeze and by the early years of improvisation in Bonn. This dovetailed with the growing concern about the sustainability

¹⁰² "Sprechzettel Referat III b/2," Ministry of Finances, 17 October 1962 (BArchiv, B157/3444).

¹⁰³ "Sprechzettel Referat III b/2," Ministry of Finances, 17 October 1962 (BArchiv, B157/3444).

of the federal district should the federation leave Bonn for good, thus boosting initiatives that called for long-term development for Bonn. In May of 1960, the Ministry of Finances held a first meeting during which the future of the federal district was discussed. There was general agreement that continuing to rent office space was economically inefficient.¹⁰⁴ Hence, in 1961, the Ministry of Reconstruction of the Land Nordrhein-Westfalen hosted the first in a series of meetings, which had as its objective the ordering of the planning chaos that had prevailed for the better part of 12 years since Bonn had been instated.¹⁰⁵ Beginning in 1961, the federation started to preemptively buying up building land for its future building projects in the north of Bad Godesberg, a decision which was supported by the Bundestag with up to 5 Million DM for the next four years.¹⁰⁶ A letter of 13 April 1962 to Adenauer by Minister of Finances Hans Lenz (FDP) emphasizes the need for a planning initiative for the Federal district and underlines that it found growing support among Bundestag representatives:

It has [...] to be seen as an important signal that lately also representatives of the different factions of the German Bundestag have repeatedly showed signs of their readiness to open-mindedly approach the manifold questions of planning, of traffic projects, and logistics of the city of Bonn, and thereby also the construction needs of the federation. They also signaled their support of the desperately needed planning initiatives, for the present, increasingly deteriorating state, which ultimately was brought about by the presence of the Federal Government in Bonn, is no longer sustainable. All planning activities and all planning forces therefore have to be consolidated, coordinated, and ordered into a master plan based upon common consensus. Any further hesitation will have irreversible [negative] consequences.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ "Sprechzettel Referat III b/2," Ministry of Finances, 17 October 1962 (BArchiv, B157/3444).

¹⁰⁵ "Sprechzettel Referat III b/2," Ministry of Finances, 17 October 1962 (BArchiv, B157/3444).

¹⁰⁶ Krüger, *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn*, 70.

¹⁰⁷ "Es muß [...] als besonders bedeutend gewürdigt werden, daß in letzter Zeit auch Vertreter der Fraktionen des deutschen Bundestages mehrmals zu erkennen gegeben haben, daß sie bereit sind, den vielfachen Fragen der Ordnung, der Bauplanungen des Verkehrs und der Versorgung der Stadt Bonn und

At the same time, Lenz wanted to avoid the impression that these initiatives were leading towards a “final” capital Bonn:

“It is not the goal to erect a Federal Capital Bonn, but rather to pay attention to the traditionally and geopolitically determined character of the city of Bonn and to arrange the still needed constructions of the parliament and the Bundestag in such an urbanistic way that they can be organically inserted into the metropolitan area and do not impede its future development.”¹⁰⁸

Lenz continues to say that Rossig’s planning council was to include several architects of note, such as Egon Eiermann and Sep Ruf.¹⁰⁹ As it took shape, the development plan concentrated on three major areas of development: the area around the Ministry of Defense on the Hardhöhe in Bonn-Duisdorf, the Federal district, and the area in Bad Godesberg, where the federation projected the erection of a cluster of new ministry buildings.¹¹⁰

From that point on on, efforts were underway to bring about a policy decision in the Bundestag that would formally end the building freeze and that gave the federation

dabei auch den Baubedürfnissen des Bundes aufgeschlossen zu folgen und die dringend notwendigen Planungen zu unterstützen, weil der jetzige sich ständig zunehmend verschlechternde Zustand, letztlich ausgelöst durch die Anwesenheit der Bundesregierung in Bonn, nicht länger tragbar ist. Alle Planungen und alle planenden Kräfte müssen deshalb zusammengefaßt, koordiniert und in ein gemeinsam abzustimmendes Gesamtkonzept eingeordnet werden, Jedes längere Zögern wird sonst nicht wieder gut zu machende Folgen haben.” Letter by Minister of Finances Hans Lenz (FDP) to Konrad Adenauer, 13 April 1962 (BArchiv, B 157/3444). Compare Krüger’s discussion of Lenz’ letter in Krüger, *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn*, 69.

¹⁰⁸ “Es ist nicht das Ziel der Planungen eine Bundeshauptstadt Bonn zu errichten, sondern unter Wahrung der [sic!] traditionell und geopolitisch bestimmten Charakters der Stadt Bonn die noch notwendigen Bauten des Parlaments und der Bundesregierung städtebaulich so einzuordnen, dass sie sich in den Gesamtraum organisch einfügen und seine künftige Entwicklung nicht behindern.” Letter by Minister of Finances Hans Lenz (FDP) to Konrad Adenauer, 13 April 1962 (BArchiv, B 157/3444).

¹⁰⁹ Letter by Minister of Finances Hans Lenz (FDP) to Konrad Adenauer, 13 April 1962 (BArchiv, B 157/3444).

¹¹⁰ Memorandum from the Ministry of Finances, 18 October 1962 (BArchiv, B 157/3444).

the right to met their building needs by means of its own constructions. A memorandum from the Finance Ministry preempted potential criticism from the representatives by reiterating that these efforts were by no means a “Hauptstadtprogramm” – Bonn would stay an interim solution. However, the memorandum argued, Berlin could not be helped by housing the federal bodies in Bonn in an “insufficient and costly manner.”¹¹¹ Special attention was given to how to inform the press. Detailed prescriptions were handed out in form of memoranda, in order to prevent “false reporting and interpretations, which could inflict considerable political damage.”¹¹²

In order to publicly promote the further development of the federal district, the federation enlisted the help of the President of the Bundestag Eugen Gerstenmaier (CDU). In 1963, the ARD television network interviewed Gerstenmaier in a symbolic setting: the rooftop of the Bundeshaus building. With the help of a model, Gerstenmaier presented the ambitious plans for a complete overhaul of the Bundeshaus to the West German public, complete with extensions such as a new high-rise office building. Preempting potential criticism by the TV audience, Gerstenmaier once again strongly rejected allegations that the development plans for Bonn would come down to a renouncement of Berlin as capital, dismissively stating that he had to see to it that he had a “functioning parliament in the here and now.”¹¹³

While the federation launched its press offensive in favor of Bonn, Konrad Adenauer stepped down as federal chancellor on 16 October 1963 and handed the reins to

¹¹¹ Memorandum from the Ministry of Finances, n.d. (BArchiv, B 157/3444), 2.

¹¹² Memorandum from the Ministry of Finances, n.d. (BArchiv, B 157/3444), 2.

¹¹³ “Aber ich muss jetzt darauf sehen, daß ich ein heute und jetzt funktionierendes Parlament habe.” This follows “Interview des deutschen Fernsehens mit dem Bundestagspräsidenten Dr. Eugen Gerstenmaier,” n.d. (BArchiv, B 157/3443).

Ludwig Erhard (CDU). As the Adenauer era came to an end, it was clear under the present circumstances that his successor would have to continue working out of Bonn. Adenauer and Erhard were men whose concept of architecture and its representative function could not have been more diametrically opposed. While Adenauer favored a traditional concept of design and representative architecture, Erhard had a well-cultivated taste in modern architecture and befriended modern architects like Sep Ruf, who had designed Erhard's private residence on the Tegernsee. Thus, it can be safely argued that Erhard's ascension to office spawned an overall sense of "house cleaning" after the architecturally static and uneventful Adenauer years dominated by the Federal Building Authority. The enthusiasm with which Erhard pursued his plans for a representative bungalow on the grounds of the Palais Schaumburg (commonly referred to as *Kanzlerbungalow*), which was precisely tailored to Erhard's architectural tastes by architect Sep Ruf, also testifies to the sense of rejuvenation in architecture and planning of the federal district brought about by the FRG's first change of chancellors.¹¹⁴

Outlook: The Formal Abolition of the Building Freeze

The final decision to suspend the building freeze surpassed the Adenauer era and took place in two stages, de-facto in 1965 and formally acknowledged in 1969. On 17 February 1965, the Bundestag agreed after a spirited debate to erect new *Zweckbauten* (functional buildings) in the Federal district, the most important one being the landmark high rise building designed by Egon Eiermann, which housed representatives' offices and which, due to Gerstenmaier's advocacy of the building, would eventually come to be

¹¹⁴ For more information on the chancellor's bungalow, see Georg Adlbert, *Der Kanzlerbungalow: Erhaltung, Instandsetzung, Neunutzung* (Krämer, Stuttgart, 2009).

known as *Langer Eugen*.¹¹⁵ This building in particular would alter the cityscape of Bonn forever and was perceived as a firm commitment to Bonn as West German capital on architectural terms. While the building freeze had effectively been broken in 1965, it was only formally ended in 1969 by means of two treaties. The first, entitled the “Bonn-law,” consolidated the municipalities of Bonn and the surrounding communities to form an urban district (*kreisfreie Stadt*), a move that would significantly facilitate future city planning negotiations.¹¹⁶ The second was an agreement between the federation and the city of Bonn that decreed that the federation would organize and finance any further development of the federal district, not as an interim solution, but rather as official federal capital. The municipality in turn agreed to create the necessary municipal administrative bodies for a true federal capital and committed to creating and maintaining a representative cityscape.¹¹⁷ Reiner Pommerin claims that this treaty ended Bonn’s status as interim arrangement.¹¹⁸ I would argue that while this may be true on the level of local city planning, it took another four years until Chancellor Willy Brandt, who during the building freeze period had ironically been one of Berlin’s staunchest supporters, also politically acknowledged Bonn as federal capital in his government declaration of 1973, after he had created irrevocable facts with his *Ostpolitik*.¹¹⁹

By 1973, the federation had completely taken root in Bonn, as evidenced by the cabinet decision to plan a new Federal Chancellery (1969, completed in 1976) and by the

¹¹⁵ Krüger, *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn*, 71.

¹¹⁶ Müller-List, “Bonn als Bundeshauptstadt 1949-1989,” 668.

¹¹⁷ Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 211.

¹¹⁸ Pommerin, *Von Berlin nach Bonn*, 211.

¹¹⁹ This policy acknowledged Poland’s western border in the Treaty of Warsaw of 1970 and officially recognized the GDR as a sovereign state by means of the Basic Treaty (*Grundlagenvertrag*) of 1972.

large scale planning initiative “Bonn, Parliament- and Governmental District” (1975), which eventually grew out of the first planning initiatives of the early 1960s.¹²⁰

Conclusion: Toward a Capital of Convenience

The political notions and justifications, the imaginary concept, emotional investments, and public image connected to Bonn as provisional capital underwent significant changes between 1948 and 1963, the year that Konrad Adenauer stepped down as chancellor. From the initial years of establishing the capital between 1949 and 1950, during which total improvisation created a host of organizational problems, to the years of growth and careful consolidation between 1950 and 1956, Bonn was seen as a product of circumstances. The Berlin initiatives of 1956/7 were a singular threat to an overall narrative of gradual consolidation, which would achieve new dynamics by the efforts to ground the federal district’s development in concerted planning initiatives between 1960 and 1963. In general, the events defining German-German politics between 1949 and 1963 had a profound impact on Bonn’s consolidation process, even if they in some cases may not have been, as Jens Krüger points out with regard to the building of the Wall in 1961, the trigger moments. Rather, they created at times a heightened public awareness, against which the policies of the time had to be measured and justified.¹²¹ This holds especially true in regard to events relating to a potential German reunification. In the case of the building freeze, however, the recent uprisings in the Eastern Bloc of 1956 in Poland and Hungary *were* catalysts around which the Berlin debate unfolded. It is highly unlikely that the building freeze in Bonn could have been sustained for so long

¹²⁰ Compare *Vom Parlaments- und Regierungsviertel zum Bundesviertel: Eine Bonner Entwicklungsmaßnahme 1974-2004*, 31-36.

¹²¹ Krüger, *Die Finanzierung der Bundeshauptstadt Bonn*, 70.

had the popular perception of the revolutionary events in the East not left such an imprint on the West German consciousness and thus triggered the collective imaginary about Berlin.

The changes in the image of the interim capital Bonn through the Adenauer years make one thing clear: all through those years, Bonn was never a capital much liked by the public. Rather, the geopolitical events centered on Berlin of 1961 were the catalysts of a changing perspective on part of West Germans, politicians, journalists, and citizens, on their unloved capital. Because the GDR had created *faits accomplis* by erecting a spatial manifestation of the Iron Curtain throughout the all-German imaginary capital Berlin, Western Germans eventually came to slowly accept Bonn as their capital for an indefinite amount of time. Bonn had become the capital of convenience.

Chapter Three: Architectural Recontextualizations and Contested Spaces: Hans Schwippert, Konrad Adenauer, and the Architectural Language of the Bonn Federal District, 1948-1950

“I would urgently recommend that you call upon the help of a man with technical experience in these matters.” - Konrad Adenauer to Hans Schwippert, 1950¹

INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on examining the historical origins and postwar theoretical repositioning of the early FRG’s architectural design language, as well as the subsequent negotiation of this architecture’s basic tenets between Konrad Adenauer and architect Hans Schwippert. Scholarship by Deborah Ascher-Barnstone, Agatha Buslei-Wuppermann, Heinrich Wefing, Michael Z. Wise, Gerda Breuer, and others has attempted to explain what the FRG’s architectural stance “*means*,” in the sense of reflecting basic tenets of the self-image of West German democracy.² Ascher-Barnstone focuses on the issue of political transparency as conveyed in architectural terms, Wise on how the architecture of the German capitals after 1945 reflects national identities and historical consciousnesses. Apart from documenting Hans Schwippert’s renovation of the Pedagogical Academy in Bonn, Buslei-Wuppermann and Breuer address the question as to how Schwippert’s redesign of the Pedagogical Academy paid tribute to a “democratic spirit,” and Wefing looks at how basic constitutional principles are reflected in the Bundeshaus architecture. Following on but also diverging from the aforementioned, this chapter will examine the architecture and design language employed in the renovations of

¹ “Ich empfehle Ihnen dringend doch einen handwerklich erfahrenen Mann für diese Sachen heranzuziehen.” Letter by Konrad Adenauer to Hans Schwippert, 4 May 1950; reprinted in Breuer, “Briefwechsel zwischen Konrad Adenauer und Hans Schwippert anhand ausgewählter Beispiele,” 89.

² Compare Barnstone, *The Transparent State*; Wise, *Capital Dilemma*; Breuer, *Hans Schwippert: Bonner Bundeshaus 1949, Parlament der jungen BRD*; Buslei-Wuppermann and Zeising, *Das Bundeshaus von Hans Schwippert in Bonn*; Heinrich Wefing, *Parlamentsarchitektur: Zur Selbstdarstellung der Demokratie in ihren Bauwerken: Eine Untersuchung am Beispiel des Bonner Bundeshauses* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1995).

two buildings that took center stage in the FRG's political founding process: the Pedagogical Academy and the Palais Schaumburg, Adenauer's Federal Chancellery. It will trace the origins of this architectural stance as an amalgam of founding discourses pertaining to the past and the present, and will then look at the subsequent negotiation as to how this architectural stance should be applied to two key centers of the reemergence of democracy in West Germany.

The first part of this chapter seeks to highlight the strong New Building roots of the early FRG's representative architectural style.³ It will focus on one strand of the architectural New Building continuities as represented by its most important representative during the FRG's early years, architect Hans Schwippert (1899-1973), who was leading the renovations of the Pedagogical Academy into the Bundeshaus, and the remodeling of Palais Schaumburg into Konrad Adenauer's Federal Chancellery. It will briefly discuss Schwippert's architectural socialization in the New Building movement of the Weimar Republic and his adaptation of the New Building design language to the aims of National Socialism during the Third Reich. Finally, this chapter will discuss the re-contextualization of New Building into Schwippert's declared goal to foster democratic sensibilities in the FRG by means of architecture and design, as well as the amalgamation of these roots with other ongoing modernisms in Europe and the US. This will posit Schwippert's case as emblematic of how the often contradictory histories and ideological

³ It should be made clear from the start that I do not argue that the representative architecture of the early FRG as designed by Schwippert is simply a reinvented New Building design language. Rather, I contend that by tracing these New Building roots, we can examine yet one more manifestation of basing the West German political beginning on a strategy, which relies strongly on the past and how it selectively re-contextualizes it in the present. In our case, the program of New Building, which never was explicitly designed or even connoted with political representation, is adapted and modified to become the central component of a *new*, modernist design language which was charged with democratic symbolisms by Schwippert.

rationales behind modernist architecture were rededicated to new political aims in the Federal Republic.

Having thus highlighted the genesis of Schwippert's architectural style, the second part will discuss Schwippert's leading role in the power struggle for the "right" way to architecturally represent the new Federal Republic. It will examine the rebuilding of the Pedagogical Academy as an architectural manifestation of West Germany's democratic ambitions and pay special attention to Schwippert's numerous confrontations with the president of the Parliamentary Council and later federal chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, during the renovation efforts of the Pedagogical Academy and Palais Schaumburg. In the process, a second strand of the architectural founding discourses comes into view. The two buildings become contested spaces between the architect who is set on creating a truly modernist parliament building on the one side, and the old Weimar politician on the other, whose desire to have these buildings tailored around his personal style of governing is at odds with Schwippert's modernist design language and its democratic symbolism. Pitting Adenauer's preference for pre-modernist forms of political architecture against Schwippert's modernist ambitions allows us to compare different strategies striving for the same goal: to facilitate a new political beginning for West Germany through a specific architectural and design aesthetic and its corresponding symbolisms. Thus, this chapter will ultimately shed new light on the connections between architecture and politics and will posit architecture as one of the numerous "interfaces" by means of which West Germans sought to access the nation's past in order to facilitate a new beginning after the Third Reich.⁴

⁴ I by no means consider Schwippert's case, or the fact that the Bundeshaus architecture is strongly influenced by New Building, to be unusual. Both Schwippert's personal story and the strong continuities of New Building in the Bundeshaus architecture are established fact. Obviously, apart from Schwippert, numerous other architects such as Egon Eiermann and Rudolf Schwarz were influenced by New Building and continued to work under the Nazis. Neither do I contend that the Bundeshaus is built in the New

THE GENESIS OF REPRESENTATIONAL ARCHITECTURE IN BONN: THE CASE OF HANS SCHWIPPERT

Like no other architect in postwar West Germany, Hans Schwippert was instrumental in the genesis of representational architecture in the FRG, since he singularly was in charge of the renovation, extension, and interior design efforts of the two most important official buildings in the Bonn Federal district, the Bundeshaus and the first Federal Chancellery (*Bundeskanzleramt*), also known as the Palais Schaumburg. From the initial beginnings of 1948 until 1950, when Schwippert's tenure with the Federation ended in open conflict with Adenauer, no other architect had exerted such influence on the shape of the representational architecture of the Bonn federal district. Even if the relationship between Adenauer and Schwippert was far from harmonic, with the Bundeshaus, Schwippert alone among West German architects of the time was able to create an architecture that he thought reflected what "democratic building could and should look like."⁵ Hired for a project that was explicitly deemed provisional, Schwippert's architectural style more than any other came to be equated with the atmosphere of austerity that determined the political beginnings in Bonn.⁶

In order to arrive at the representational aesthetic he employed during the two federal renovation projects, Schwippert reconnected to the Weimar New Building and

Building style. Rather the focus of this chapter will be on the *process* of re-contextualizing the New Building past in the West German postwar present, and even more importantly, on how the thus emerging, modernist architectural stance, which was by then different from New Building, became a point of contention in the power struggle for the architecture to appropriately represent the FRG.

⁵ Wolfgang Pehnt, "Die Würde des Werks: In Erinnerung an Hans Schwippert," in *Das Bundeshaus von Hans Schwippert in Bonn: Architektonische Moderne und demokratischer Geist*, by Agatha Buslei-Wuppermann and Andreas Zeising (Dusseldorf: Grupello Verlag, 2009), 8.

⁶ Hans Schwippert, "Das Bonner Bundeshaus," in *Das Bundeshaus von Hans Schwippert in Bonn: Architektonische Moderne und demokratischer Geist*, by Agatha Buslei-Wuppermann and Andreas Zeising (Dusseldorf: Grupello Verlag, 2009), 85. In this short article, Schwippert comments on how the concept of provisionality determined the entire restoration effort.

Werkbund design heritages, projected them into the postwar present, and aligned the historic aesthetic heritages with contemporary, international modernist architecture and design. This historic heritage needed ideological cleansing, since Schwippert himself had carried the New Building and Werkbund styles through the Third Reich and adjusted them to the aims of National Socialism.⁷ After the downfall of the Third Reich he had to rededicate the design's social function and integrate it into the social context of the emerging, postwar Federal Republic. Following this re-contextualization, we will see that the austerity of modern design and architecture fit perfectly into the postwar context. It offered numerous interpretations, starting from the popular new beginning myth of a "zero hour" by embodying a "clean slate," all the way to the intellectual heights of existentialist philosophy.⁸ While modern architecture was a means to protest and overthrow existing notions about design and social conventions in the Weimar Republic,⁹ in postwar West Germany it was used to transmit a non-nationalist, modest new beginning in close alignment with the cultural West, which in the meantime had incorporated many elements of the Weimar building style into its "international style."

⁷ Scholarship by the likes of Paul Betts, Hartmut Frank, Gerhard Fehl, and others has established that the Third Reich was by no means a caesura for the modernist movement, but that on the contrary, modernist design was rededicated to the aims of National Socialism. While the Nazis eschewed the modernist styles for their representative architecture, they employed modernist and functionalist styles for industrial buildings: Gerhard Fehl, "Die Moderne unterm Hakenkreuz: Ein Versuch, die Rolle funktionalistischer Architektur im Dritten Reich zu klären," in *Faschistische Architekturen. Planen und Bauen in Europa 1930 bis 1945*, ed. Hartmut Frank (Hamburg: Christians, 1985), 88; cited in Wefing, *Parlamentsarchitektur: Zur Selbstdarstellung der Demokratie in ihren Bauwerken: Eine Untersuchung am Beispiel des Bonner Bundeshauses*, 83/4.

⁸ The "zero hour" concept claims that 1945 was a caesura that triggered a new beginning. Scholarship by Stephen Brockmann and others has demonstrated that this is largely a myth. See Brockmann's introduction on the German literature of the Zero Hour: Brockmann, *German Literary Culture at the Zero Hour*, 1-20.

⁹ Sabine Hake ascribes to the modernist program in architecture an agenda of "formal innovation and radical change." Sabine Hake, *Topographies of Class: Modern Architecture and Mass Society in Weimar Berlin* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 15.

Schwippert's Bundeshaus was in a way a blank canvas on which its inhabitants could ostensibly design an entirely new version of Germany.

Carrying New Building from the Weimar Republic to the Present

Schwippert received his first, full scale exposure to the New Building style during his nine month internship from February to October of 1925 at Erich Mendelsohn's studio in Berlin, right after completion of his studies at the Technical College (*Technische Hochschule*) at Stuttgart.¹⁰ During his time in Berlin, Schwippert came into close contact with the *Zehner Ring* (the precursor of the later *Der Ring*), an avant-garde architectural think tank consisting of Weimar modernist architects of note whose main interest was to promote and propagate New Building. It was among this illustrious circle of architects such as Erich Mendelsohn, Hugo Häring, Otto Bartning, and Bruno and Max Taut that Schwippert met Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, who as a lifelong friend would fundamentally influence Schwippert's outlook on architecture.¹¹

In 1926, Schwippert combined his modernist schooling with his lifelong, deep interest for woodwork and crafts when he became an instructor at the Academy of Arts and Crafts (*Handwerker- und Kunstgewerbeschule*) at Aachen, a position he would continue to occupy until the academy was closed by the Nazis in 1934.¹² The time at the academy, during which he collaborated closely with architect and theologian Rudolf

¹⁰ Buslei-Wuppermann, *Hans Schwippert, 1899-1973: Von der Werkkunst zum Design*, 37.

¹¹ Buslei-Wuppermann, *Hans Schwippert, 1899-1973: Von der Werkkunst zum Design*, 40.

¹² Buslei-Wuppermann highlights Schwippert's early exposure to arts and crafts in the form of furniture design before the beginning of his studies. Between 1917 and 1920, Schwippert attended classes in technical drawing and woodworking at the Essen Vocational School his father was heading. At that time he also began interning at wood workshops, took classes in interior design, and began designing and constructing his own furniture, such as tables and chairs. Buslei-Wuppermann, *Hans Schwippert, 1899-1973: Von der Werkkunst zum Design*, 17-19.

Schwarz, would be extremely formative for Schwippert's theoretical outlook on architecture and design. Schwippert's accession to the Werkbund in 1928 testifies to his strong identification with the ideological aspects of the modernist project, since "the Werkbund was among Germany's most important cultural organs in the crusade for modern functionalist architecture and design."¹³

In 1935 Schwippert accepted a visiting professor position at the Technical College (*Technische Hochschule*) in Aachen, which he continued to hold until 1944, when the Americans marched into Aachen. In 1943 he handed in his dissertation at the Aachen Technical College entitled *Crafts Science as Work Training for Architects (Handwerkskunde als Werklehre der Architekten)*, and by 1944, he had already finished his tenure thesis *Work Training and Work Education (Werklehre und Werkerziehung)*.¹⁴ Although not an NSDAP member, Schwippert was in such excellent standing in Nazi academia that his university sponsored and protected him from repeated drafts to the Wehrmacht as an indispensable faculty member. Accordingly, Schwippert was able to continuously evade front line duty and experienced the march of the American forces into Aachen in fall of 1944 as aerial defense auxiliary (*Luftschutzhelfer*) at his college.¹⁵

During the initial years of National Socialism, Schwippert, as an active Werkbund member, helped align the philosophy of the organization with Nazi aims.¹⁶ As Paul Betts

¹³ Paul Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects: A Cultural History of West German Industrial Design* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 25.

¹⁴ This follows Buslei-Wuppermann, *Hans Schwippert, 1899-1973: Von der Werkkunst zum Design*, 25-27. The translations given here try to emphasize that Schwippert had thoroughly adopted the Werkbund's concept of the (handi)work – as Wolfgang Pehnt points out, Schwippert was thoroughly identifying with the Werkbund's agenda and thus used the term widely in his work. Pehnt, "Die Würde des Werks: In Erinnerung an Hans Schwippert," 9.

¹⁵ Buslei-Wuppermann, *Hans Schwippert, 1899-1973: Von der Werkkunst zum Design*, 26/7.

¹⁶ Christopher Oestereich, "Die 1000 Jahre durchstehen? Hans Schwippert im 'Dritten Reich,'" in *Hans Schwippert 1899-1973: Moderation des Wiederaufbaus* (Berlin: Jovis, 2010), 79.

convincingly argues in his seminal 2004 study *The Authority of Everyday Objects*, until its dissolution by the Nazis in 1938, Werkbund principles in design were used to “re-enchanted the commodity” in accordance with National Socialist’s versions of modernism.¹⁷ Until 1943, Schwippert also worked for the Kunst-Dienst, a Weimar design institution that originally tried to “reconcile modern artistic expression with [Protestant] religious devotion.”¹⁸ Just like the Werkbund, the Kunst-Dienst was quickly brought in line after 1933, and after being reassigned by Goebbels’ Reich Culture Chamber (*Reichskulturkammer*) to promote the aesthetic value of German arts and crafts, served to promote “a desired image of Nazi modernism” abroad.¹⁹ Schwippert was active in both organizations. For example, he helped organize the Kunst-Dienst contribution to the International Exposition in Paris in 1937, and in 1939, he worked on the Kunst-Dienst exhibition “Household Effects and Life” (“*Hausrat und Leben*”) in Antwerp.²⁰

After the dissolution of the Werkbund by the Nazis in 1938, Schwippert’s design style changed significantly. Agathe Buslei-Wuppermann argues that Schwippert extended his repertoire toward the “Berghof aesthetic,” with designs in both furniture and architecture that sought to imitate the massive representational style of the Nazis. This was characterized by “heavy handed designs,” ornaments, and overly massive furniture, which lacked the clear design language that characterized his earlier designs.²¹ This was

¹⁷ For example, they were used to transmit a cultivated image of Nazi modernism abroad (modernism as part of Nazi foreign cultural policy), to campaign against excessive Nazi Kitsch in German living rooms, and to reconcile modernist industrial designs with a workplace determined by the Strength through Joy (*Kraft durch Freude*) movement. Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects*, 23-72.

¹⁸ Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects*, 61.

¹⁹ Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects*, 62.

²⁰ Oestereich, “Die 1000 Jahre durchstehen?” Hans Schwippert im ’Dritten Reich,” 80.

²¹ Buslei-Wuppermann, *Hans Schwippert, 1899-1973: Von der Werkkunst zum Design*, 88.

likely due to Schwippert's apparent desire to find an arrangement with the Nazi system,²² both in academia and on the free market. In fact, Schwippert served many different employers and assumed numerous responsibilities in the Third Reich.²³ Working for the Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda (*Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda*), Schwippert collaborated on an "Encyclopedia of Good German Consumer Goods" between 1937 and 1939.²⁴ In his capacity as consultant for the Reich Commissar for German Volk Traditions (*Reichskommissar für die Betreuung des deutschen Volkstums*), Schwippert "advised" on such topics as "rural house wares and tools" and "cultural publications regarding the Volk."²⁵ Finally, Schwippert worked directly under the *Reichsführer SS* (Reich Leader of the SS) Heinrich Himmler in doing groundwork research for the future settlement of the "Eastern territories" which Hitler's Wehrmacht was meant to acquire during its campaigns in Poland and Russia. On Himmler's special orders, Schwippert even designed public housing and "simple consumer durables for the Eastern settler (*Ostsiedler*)."²⁶ Schwippert seemed by this point to have completely subjected his original agenda to the dictate of the Nazis.

While the style of his designs may have changed, in his capacity as professor at the Technical College, however, Schwippert was able to continue to think in the

²² Compare Buslei-Wuppermann, *Hans Schwippert, 1899-1973: Von der Werkkunst zum Design*, 95.

²³ For a more detailed overview on Schwippert's activities during the Third Reich, see Buslei-Wuppermann, *Hans Schwippert, 1899-1973: Von der Werkkunst zum Design*, 88-96; Oestereich, "Die 1000 Jahre durchstehen?" Hans Schwippert im 'Dritten Reich,' 77-85.

²⁴ Buslei-Wuppermann, *Hans Schwippert, 1899-1973: Von der Werkkunst zum Design*, 93.

²⁵ Buslei-Wuppermann, *Hans Schwippert, 1899-1973: Von der Werkkunst zum Design*, 92. "bäuerliches Wohnzeug und Werkzeug", "volkskulturelle[r] Veröffentlichungen."

²⁶ This follows Oestereich, "Die 1000 Jahre durchstehen?" Hans Schwippert im 'Dritten Reich,' 80-82.

Werkbund tradition. He divided his work into designing commissioned pieces that tried to accommodate the tastes of his Nazi employers and the less restrictive, more theoretical environment of the Technical College. Schwippert published numerous essays on design and architecture in Nazi journals alongside articles published by the SS, but in them he was never forced to deviate from Werkbund positions, neither in style nor content.²⁷ The fact that the Nazis had by no means a unified position towards industrial design and architecture certainly helped in the process.²⁸ In addition, parts of the Werkbund's original agenda resonated among the Nazi design and architecture establishment, such as the concentration on simplicity in design, and the emphasis on the quality of German handcrafts.²⁹ Schwippert was thus able to "sell" his work, even the stylistically corrupted "Berghof designs," through a theoretical framework that had remained largely unchanged compared to the Weimar-era Werkbund in terms of its vocabulary. In this, Schwippert was implicated in the Third Reich's project of (albeit selectively) reclaiming the modernist project for its political aims and even war objectives, even if the modernist strand in his completed projects became increasingly subdued after 1938. Schwippert's biography is exemplary of the complicated past of modernist design and architecture.³⁰

²⁷ Christopher Oestereich, "Schreiben und Werken in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus," in *Hans Schwippert 1899-1973: Moderation des Wiederaufbaus* (Berlin: Jovis, 2010), 523. Oestereich argues that Schwippert held sympathy for the more traditional aspects of modern design, as favored by the conservative-Christian milieu he socialized with. The social proclivity to the conservative-völkish ideology of these circles made it easier to achieve professional recognition by the Nazis.

²⁸ Oestereich, "Die 1000 Jahre durchstehen? Hans Schwippert im 'Dritten Reich,'" 80.

²⁹ Oestereich, "Die 1000 Jahre durchstehen? Hans Schwippert im 'Dritten Reich,'" 80.

³⁰ Obviously, Schwippert was not the only architect and designer who chose to make compromises with the Nazis. Oestereich argues that Schwippert was joined in his dubious efforts for the Nazi settlement of the "Eastern Territories" by modernist colleagues such as Paul Schmitthenner, Rudolf Schwarz, Hermann Henselmann, and others. Oestereich, "Die 1000 Jahre durchstehen? Hans Schwippert im 'Dritten Reich,'" 82. His case is exemplary for my project, however, due to the fact that he was the architect who after the end of World War II had to again re-adapt his Werkbund positions to design the West German parliament.

As part and parcel of the Nazi's political and war agendas, these designs and their theoretical rationales needed as much de-Nazification as did the person behind them.

Rebranding New Building and Werkbund for Postwar West Germany: New Beginnings in Architecture

In March of 1945, after Aachen had been taken by the US-Army, the Americans stated that they had “no adverse findings” on Schwippert as to his potential implication in the dealings of the Nazi party.³¹ Schwippert had never actually joined the Nazi party, and could produce influential advocates on his behalf, like his friend Mies van der Rohe, who by then had risen to one of architecture's most famous names in the United States. Because of his *Mitläufertum* (non-confrontational compliance) with the Nazis, Schwippert was able to appeal positively to both sides, Nazi *Mitläufer* and the exiled modernist community. Hence his transition into the postwar period was virtually seamless. From 1945 on, Schwippert had been the driving force behind the re-founding of the West German Werkbund chapter,³² which was finally officially constituted in 1950 as the Deutscher Werkbund (DWB),³³ and which Schwippert would lead as chairman until 1963.³⁴ Indeed, Schwippert quickly became, in the words of Wolfgang Pehnt, “Mr.

³¹ Buslei-Wuppermann, *Hans Schwippert, 1899-1973: Von der Werkkunst zum Design*, 27.

³² Buslei-Wuppermann, *Hans Schwippert, 1899-1973: Von der Werkkunst zum Design*, 135.

³³ Buslei-Wuppermann, *Hans Schwippert, 1899-1973: Von der Werkkunst zum Design*, 134. Other sources place the beginning of Schwippert's efforts to resurrect the Werkbund in 1947. Compare Wend Fischer, “Einführung: Der Anwalt der Sinne,” in *Denken, Lehren, Bauen*, by Hans Schwippert (Dusseldorf: Econ, 1982), 11.

³⁴ Gerda Breuer, “Moderation des Wiederaufbaus: Schwippert und der deutsche Werkbund,” in *Hans Schwippert 1899-1973: Moderation des Wiederaufbaus* (Berlin: Jovis, 2010), 90.

Werkbund,” the mastermind behind the organization for some fifteen years.³⁵ Schwippert was also instrumental in the founding of the government-funded Design Council (*Rat für Formgebung*),³⁶ a design council founded in close collaboration with Minister of Economics Erhard in 1953, which had as its task the promotion of German industrial design abroad in order to boost the West German export economy.³⁷

Again, as in the Weimar Republic, the newly founded West German Werkbund held as a central belief that by means of good design one could create better people and thus a better society as a whole.³⁸ However, the people who were to improve society with their designs were the same who had helped “better” Nazi society. Paul Betts explicitly points to these continuities in the postwar Werkbund as embodied in the persona of Hans Schwippert and continues: “so the objects and the design spirit may have essentially stayed the same, but the context had shifted considerably – with the result that it was not very clear where the boundaries between “good” and “evil” design really lay.”³⁹ In other words, while Schwippert was designing the new West German parliament in 1948/9 and in the course of this employed his New Building and Werkbund concepts in the interior design and architecture, a mere five years earlier the same man and design principles, “Nazified,” but still based on the Werkbund principles, had aided the Reich Leader SS Heinrich Himmler in the planning of the conquest of the so called “Ostländer.”

³⁵ Pehnt, “Die Würde des Werks: In Erinnerung an Hans Schwippert,” 11.

³⁶ Buslei-Wuppermann, *Hans Schwippert, 1899-1973: Von der Werkkunst zum Design*, 145.

³⁷ Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects*, 9. See also “German Design Council - Overview,” accessed 11 May 2010, <http://www.german-design-council.de/en/rat-fuer-formgebung/uebersicht.html>.

³⁸ Fischer, “Einführung: Der Anwalt der Sinne,” 11.

³⁹ Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects*, 80.

Schwippert set about reverting his recently nazified designs into the postwar context. Since he had never deviated from the Werkbund's prewar theoretical rationales, this was easily achieved. In staging his professional reemergence as closely associated with the West German Werkbund, Schwippert conflated his problematic past under Nazism with the Werkbund's selective narrative of its activities in the Third Reich. In a sense, he stepped into the long shadow of an organization that claimed victim status. Indeed, the Werkbund's compromised Nazi past was remembered selectively, and the useful parts of that past were projected into the present, to the extent that the Werkbund under Schwippert repositioned itself exclusively as a victim of the Nazis, not as an institution that until 1938 had been a tool in the hands of the Propaganda Ministry:

“Even if it is true that designing home-front furniture or export cutlery may seem quite venial in comparison to the more gruesome index of Nazi atrocities, the Werkbund never addressed its Nazi career. (...) After the war the Werkbund justified its moral credentials by portraying itself as the historical enemy of fascism. Its postwar identity and moral fervor were fueled by the myth of Nazi ‘liquidations,’ as Werkbund history was discreetly folded into the best-known story of Nazi antimodernism, the 1933 closure of the Bauhaus.”⁴⁰

Emphasizing his close connection with a Werkbund past that was thus seemingly decontaminated was a powerful tool for Schwippert in aligning his architectural agenda with the new postwar political circumstances. The great continuity of his theoretical work certainly helped in this. Beginning in 1936, Schwippert had created a substantial body of theoretical writing, in which the emphasis on and the theoretical engagement with the Werkbund philosophy had been a red thread. Just a cursory glance at some titles of Schwippert's writings between 1936 and 1953 illustrates how Schwippert carried the Werkbund ideas across the ideological divides from the Third Reich into the Federal Republic, while always emphasizing the Werkbund's idea of “Werk,” which is only

⁴⁰ Betts, *The Authority of Everyday Objects*, 78/9.

unsatisfactorily translated as “work:” *Handcrafts and Work Arts Today*, (*Handwerk und Werkkunst heute*, 1936), *Crafts Science as Work Training for Architects* (*Handwerkskunde als Werklehre der Architekten*, 1939), *Art Training and Work Education* (*Kunstschulung und Werkerziehung*, 1946), *A Werkbund Letter* (*Ein Werkbundbrief*, 1952), *Applied Arts and the Human Work* (*Angewandte Künste und das menschliche Werk*, 1953). In 1949, Schwippert organized the Werkbund exhibition *New Living* (*Neues Wohnen*) in Cologne. Buslei-Wuppermann argues that in the aesthetic put on display in this exhibition, Schwippert was seeking to reconnect to the aesthetic of the 1920s and 1930s by employing large blowups of designs by Mies van der Rohe and Bruno Taut, two of the big names from the Werkbund’s uncontaminated Weimar past.⁴¹ In thus bracketing the Werkbund’s activities during the Third Reich, Schwippert was able to create the impression of an aesthetic continuity that had been interrupted by the Nazi years. Tracing the above strategy offers important analytic tools for understanding larger processes in the propagated “new beginning” in nearly all of the FRG’s cultural and political spheres. Architectural modernism was not simply “taken out of the box and dusted off” again after the Third Reich, but rather its story was much more complicated and demanded elaborate models of justification, repositioning, and ideological cleansing, as it had led a complex and contradictory existence during the Third Reich.

The Werkbund philosophy “according to Schwippert” also aligned itself well with the larger landscape of ideas concerning building and architecture in postwar West Germany. An example: on 5 August 1951, philosopher Martin Heidegger, who due to his initial complicity in Nazism had needed to thoroughly reposition himself, gave a public lecture entitled “Building Dwelling Thinking” (*“Bauen Wohnen Denken”*) at the

⁴¹ Buslei-Wuppermann, *Hans Schwippert, 1899-1973: Von der Werkkunst zum Design*, 134.

Darmstadt Talks (*Darmstädter Gespräche*).⁴² Under the conference heading “Man and Space” (*Mensch und Raum*), Heidegger in his talk approached the question of dwelling and building from a phenomenological vantage point.⁴³ Referencing to the terms’ (“bauen,” “wohnen”) etymology in the old Germanic languages, Heidegger identified the acts of building and dwelling as innate and fundamentally determining factors of human existence that are inseparable from one another.⁴⁴ In claiming that dwelling was the basic trait of human existence,⁴⁵ Heidegger, like the Werkbund, called for an anthropocentric approach to architecture and design that paid tribute to the fundamental *condition humaine* that is dwelling.⁴⁶ In emphasizing the ethical primacy of building homes for a still largely homeless nation and in advocating for an architecture with a human touch, Heidegger’s talk must have resonated strongly among Germans, especially Werkbund professionals, whose cities lay in ruins. Most importantly, Heidegger’s talk must have impressed Schwippert, who was present on the occasion and delivered his lecture right after Heidegger.⁴⁷ Schwippert’s Werkbund-influenced ideas on work science (*Werklehre*) and architecture were largely in congruence with the ideas laid out in Heidegger’s presentation, to such an extent that the title of Schwippert’s posthumously published

⁴² The Darmstadt Talks were a loose series of conferences concerned with philosophical and sociological issues, which took place between 1950 and 2001.

⁴³ Martin Heidegger, “Bauen Wohnen Denken,” in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, by Martin Heidegger (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2000), 148-156.

⁴⁴ Compare Eduard Führ, “Einleitung: Zur Rezeption von ‘Bauen Wohnen Denken’ in der Architektur,” in *Bauen und Wohnen: Martin Heideggers Grundlegung einer Phänomenologie der Architektur*, ed. Eduard Führ (Münster: Waxmann, 2000), 11.

⁴⁵ Heidegger, “Bauen Wohnen Denken,” 163.

⁴⁶ Heidegger uses the expression “to build out of dwelling” (“aus dem Wohnen bauen”). Heidegger, “Bauen Wohnen Denken,” 164.

⁴⁷ Pehnt, “Die Würde des Werks: In Erinnerung an Hans Schwippert,” 7.

selection of theoretical essays, *Thinking Teaching Building (Denken Lehren Bauen)*, was obviously modeled after the title of Heidegger's talk, *Bauen Wohnen Denken*, down to the omission of the commas.⁴⁸ Wolfgang Pehnt points out the similarities with Heidegger in Schwippert's choice of words in order to describe his craft:

The words Hans Schwippert used to talk about his work sound like calls from a different world. The holistic action. The spiritual foundation. The cleverness of the senses. The reason of the heart. They are words that reference a host of ambitious meanings. [...] But they are also words which aim so high that their sense does not open up before us automatically: The order of existence. The being in its origins. This murmurs and whispers like in Heidegger, whose presentation at the Darmstadt Talks in 1951, "Building Dwelling Thinking" Schwippert attended.⁴⁹

When connected with an existentialist-anthropocentric approach as outlined in Heidegger's 1951 talk, the New Building and Werkbund philosophies fit perfectly into the postwar West German world. This new combination downplayed the technicalities and the original New Buildings' claim to large-scale social engineering in favor of more immediate and intuitive endeavors centered upon the human being, which were desperately needed considering the amount of destruction that was still very much present in German cities. Especially the Werkbund philosophy did not need much cleansing or repositioning, and it is striking how it apparently found common denominators in Weimar, the Third Reich, *and* postwar West Germany. Schwippert was the perfect man to carry out such a task on the level of official architecture and design. While he harks

⁴⁸ Hans Schwippert, *Denken Lehren Bauen* (Dusseldorf: Econ, 1982).

⁴⁹ "Die Wörter, die Hans Schwippert gebrauchte, wenn er über seine Arbeit sprach, tönen wie Zurufe aus einer anderen Welt. Das ganzheitliche Tun. Der geistige Grund. Die Klugheit der Sinne. Die Vernunft des Herzens. Es sind Wörter, die einen Hof anspruchsvoller Bedeutungen um sich ziehen. [...] Aber es sind auch Wörter, die so hoch greifen, daß sich ihr Sinn uns heutzutage nicht selbstverständlich erschließt: Die Ordnung des Seins. Die Wesenheit vom Ursprung her. Es raunt wie bei Heidegger, dessen Vortrag bei den Darmstädter Gesprächen 1951 'Bauen Wohnen Denken' Schwippert gehört hat." Pehnt, "Die Würde des Werks: In Erinnerung an Hans Schwippert," 7.

back to the architectural language of the Weimar New Building, we will see below that Schwippert at the same time brought this rebranded, modernist design language in line with ongoing architectural and design modernisms in Western Europe and the Americas, where modernism had continued to develop (also largely due to German émigré architects who had left Germany) with freer rein than had been allowed by the Nazis. The Bundeshaus as remodeled out of the Pedagogical Academy by Schwippert in many ways embodies the project of rebranding the New Building and Werkbund heritages for the postwar West German present.

A Symptomatic Document of the New Beginning in Architecture: The Lützelbach Manifesto

In 1947, Schwippert was among the signatories of the Werkbund's Lützelbach Manifesto, conceived by designers and architects who advocated a "new beginning" in architecture and city planning. The Lützelbach Manifesto was the single most important step in repositioning the Werkbund and New Building philosophies in the postwar West German present. In claiming that the destroyed heritage must not be historically reconstructed, its signatories went against purely historicist reconstruction efforts to simply recreate the destroyed building heritage in the course of West German reconstruction efforts.⁵⁰ A second contention made by the Manifesto was that:

[...] for residential constructions and our public buildings, for furniture and appliances we are searching for the simple and current, instead of over-specialization or makeshift contrivances. For only the simple and current can be used in a versatile fashion.⁵¹

⁵⁰ "Ein Aufruf: Grundsätzliche Forderungen," *Baukunst und Werkform*, no. 1 (1947): 29; cited in Breuer, *Hans Schwippert: Bonner Bundeshaus 1949, Parlament der jungen BRD*, 34.

⁵¹ "Ein Aufruf: Grundsätzliche Forderungen," 29; cited in Ulrich Pantle, "Leitbild Reduktion: Beiträge zum Kirchenbau in Deutschland von 1945 bis 1950" (Stuttgart: Universität Stuttgart, 2003), 83.

The tenor of the Lützelbach Manifesto was perhaps most palpably present in many of the postwar modernist renovations of West German neo-gothic and baroque churches, such as in the renovation of the St. Engelbert Church in Mühlheim/Ruhr (1953/4) and the St. Hedwig's Cathedral in Berlin (1956-63), which Schwippert himself oversaw.⁵² Just like Schwippert's Bundeshaus project, however, these renovation efforts bore clear traces of pre-WWII New Building, Werkbund, and Kunst-Dienst design. In this, the architectural program laid out in the Lützelbach Manifesto is emblematic of the theoretical rationales behind modern architecture in the postwar present: while the main design tenets were derived from Weimar New Building, the rationale for these designs was adapted to the sociopolitical circumstances of the postwar era and presented as a "new beginning." Now New Building was marketed as the appropriate design language for a new political beginning in a destroyed country, where, as Hans Schwippert outlined in his essay "Das Bonner Bundeshaus," material scarcity and the "technical age" largely determined architecture and design, as well as human expectations of it.⁵³ In the words of Schwippert, the redesigned Bundeshaus was to offer the new Federal Republic a "bright house, and a simple one, a house of today, which is open to the world."⁵⁴ In pronouncing a break with the old, while at the same time basing the new beginning largely in the design language of the Weimar New Building, the Lützelbach Manifesto thus demonstrates the large scale continuities, ruptures and resumptions, amalgamation

⁵² Gerda Breuer, Pia Mingels, and Christopher Oestereich, eds., "Katalog: Späte Kirchenentwürfe," in *Hans Schwippert 1899-1973: Moderation des Wiederaufbaus* (Berlin: Jovis, 2010), 388-403.

⁵³ Schwippert, "Das Bonner Bundeshaus," 86.

⁵⁴ Schwippert, "Das Bonner Bundeshaus," 86.

processes, and rebranding efforts of Werkbund and New Building design after 1945.⁵⁵ We will now consider this newly created amalgam of the new and old in Schwippert's practical implementation of his own aesthetic in the Bundeshaus renovation.

Re-Contextualizing New Building: Schwippert's Renovation of the Pedagogical Academy into the Bundeshaus

The theoretical rationale behind New Building thus altered, the Lützelbach Manifesto would also come to shape the architectural logic for the Bundeshaus renovation, on which Schwippert set to work in November 1948. Ready to experiment, Schwippert was eager to show what modernist architecture and design could achieve in the field of political representative architecture. While the substance of the original building by Martin Witte from 1933 was largely left intact, Schwippert mainly designed two five- and three story extensions to the building's north and south sides, remodeled the building's gymnasium into a large lobby, built a restaurant tract, and, most importantly, added the parliamentary chamber.⁵⁶

Schwippert's plans for the renovation, heavily reliant on glass and steel, are deeply indebted to Weimar New Building, although Schwippert's designs are not simply a continuation from where New Building left off in 1933. This becomes evident when

⁵⁵ It is important, however, to avoid simplification here. The Weimar New Building design was not simply taken over unchanged. Rather, as we will see below, it was enriched by influences from architectural and design modernisms that had continued outside of Germany during the Third Reich.

⁵⁶ For detailed accounts on the renovation, see Gerda Breuer, "Architektur der 'Stunde Null': Das neue Parlamentsgebäude der jungen BRD in Bonn," in *Hans Schwippert 1899-1973: Moderation des Wiederaufbaus* (Berlin: Jovis, 2010), 106-119; Breuer, *Hans Schwippert: Bonner Bundeshaus 1949, Parlament der jungen BRD*; Buslei-Wuppermann, "Das Bonner Bundeshaus: Architektonische Moderne und demokratischer Geist.," Buslei-Wuppermann and Zeising, *Das Bundeshaus von Hans Schwippert in Bonn*; Gisbert Knopp, "Das Bundeshaus in Bonn: Von der Pädagogischen Akademie zum Parlamentsgebäude der Bundesrepublik Deutschland," *Bonner Geschichtsblätter* 35 (1984): 251-267.

one compares Witte's original building with Schwippert's extensions. Witte's Bauhaus-indebted design is dominated by clean and austere white walls with (compared to Schwippert's extensions) small and almost loop-hole like windows, which lend the building an almost bulwark-like air. Schwippert's extensions, on the other hand, consist almost entirely of large windows, while the dark clinker work underneath them breaks up the original building's monotony.⁵⁷ Most importantly, Schwippert tried to bring West German modernist architecture up to speed with modernisms which had been ongoing in the 1930s and 40s outside of Nazi Germany and especially in the United States, which by then had come to be known as the International Style. Thus, Schwippert's approach consisted of combining traditional New Building design approaches with inspirations from groundbreaking modernist designs pioneered outside of Germany. Schwippert's employment of steel frames and glass for the extensions bears the signature of the influential steel-frame designs Mies van der Rohe had planned in Weimar Berlin and perfected later in the United States, such as the famous glass skyscraper design (1921). In this context, the Columbushaus (1932) of Erich Mendelsohn, at whose studio Schwippert had once interned, may also have been an inspiration. On the other hand, as Charlotte Werhahn has convincingly demonstrated, Schwippert's design of the Bundeshaus extensions as brick-filled steel frames is equally indebted to more contemporary buildings, such as the structures Mies had erected on the Campus of the Illinois Institute of Technology in the United States in the early 1940s.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ For a detailed discussion of Schwippert's extensions to the original academy building see Buslei-Wuppermann, "Das Bonner Bundeshaus: Architektonische Moderne und demokratischer Geist," 55-59.

⁵⁸ Werhahn actually compares the building Schwippert designed for the local government of Northrhine Westphalia in Juli 1948 with Mies' Chicago campus buildings, which in hindsight served Schwippert as an important preparatory study for the Bundeshaus project. Charlotte Werhahn, *Hans Schwippert (1899-1973): Architekt, Pädagoge und Vertreter der Werkbundidee in der Zeit des deutschen Wiederaufbaus* (Munich, 1987), 194; cited in Breuer, "Architektur der 'Stunde Null': Das neue Parlamentsgebäude der jungen BRD in Bonn," 111.

Schwippert's approach, thus updated while resting on fundamental design conventions of New Building, offered numerous interpretations relating to the contemporary situation. These new connotations created distance from the old, ambitious sociopolitical aims of New Building as a reactive social engineering tool that aimed to straddle post WWI Weimar society's class gaps and to bring into sync "the body of modernity and the modern body politic" of Weimar society.⁵⁹ In spite of its obvious aesthetic continuities, to the contemporary beholder Schwippert's architecture signaled a clear break with the representational architecture of all previous German forms of state, be it the monumental style of Nazi representative architecture in Hitler's Reich Chancellery as designed by Albert Speer, or the neo-renaissance infused architecture of Paul Wallot's Reichstag.⁶⁰ As Deborah Ascher Barnstone argues, "[t]aken together, the elements of Schwippert's state architecture beg[an] to define a new national image – one of pluralistic, open, delicate, and fragile modern democracy. To realize his vision, Schwippert adopted the ideology of transparency as the guiding concept for his design."⁶¹ The large glass walls which defined the parliamentary chamber signaled transparency in the political decision making process, something that could not be said about the Reichstag parliamentary chamber, which was located in the very center of the building, closed off from the public on each side by other rooms, visually inaccessible for the

⁵⁹ Hake, *Topographies of Class*, 113.

⁶⁰ Werner Strodthoff argues that Schwippert's building was immediately understood as a "manifest of a democratic decision-making process" ("Manifest demokratischer Willensbildung"). Werner Strodthoff, "Der alte Plenarsaal: Eine zerstörte Erinnerung," in *Architektur und Demokratie: Bauen für die Politik von der amerikanischen Revolution bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Ingeborg Flagge and Wolfgang Stock (Stuttgart, 1992), 266; cited in Wefing, *Parlamentsarchitektur: Zur Selbstdarstellung der Demokratie in ihren Bauwerken: Eine Untersuchung am Beispiel des Bonner Bundeshauses*, 168.

⁶¹ Barnstone, *The Transparent State*, 122.

citizens.⁶² Lastly, the Bundeshaus' aesthetic understatement was perfectly in keeping with the desired provisional air of the Federal buildings in Bonn.

On terms of architectural style, Schwippert signaled three things with the Bundeshaus, each of which clearly positioned its architecture with regard to the German past, present and future. First, concerning the future, the Bundeshaus was a pioneer work in the realm of democratic parliament buildings, which placed West Germany on the forefront of a modernist movement in political architecture that would find its first culmination in the inauguration of the Brazilian, "modernist capital" of Brasília in 1960. Second, concerning the present, it closed the gap to the International Style, the architectural modernisms, which, untainted by Nazi misuse, had continued elsewhere in Europe and the Americas. Third, concerning the past, the Bundeshaus design straddles the ostensible "divide" between the postwar and Weimar Modernism, left by the popular belief that the Third Reich had formed a larger caesura for the German modernist movement than it actually did. This in turn signaled a return to an uncontaminated form of architectural modernism, thereby bracketing the Nazi years. In thus reconfiguring the rationale behind his New Building-indebted designs, Schwippert was able to signal on architectural terms a return of West Germany into the fold of the cultural "West."

In its practical application of the Lützelbach Manifesto's main principles, and by physically connecting to Martin Witte's original building design, Schwippert's Bundeshaus is the manifestation of some of West Germany's principal founding discourses cast into stone, steel, and glass. It is the physical expression of Schwippert's efforts to reconnect to the rich modernist design heritage of the past and to reapply it to a present that could not have been more different from Weimar New Building's origins.

⁶² Compare Wefing's discussion of the symbolical content of the Reichstag's architecture: Wefing, *Parlamentsarchitektur: Zur Selbstdarstellung der Demokratie in ihren Bauwerken: Eine Untersuchung am Beispiel des Bonner Bundeshauses*, 153-158.

Speaking strictly in architectural terms, nowhere is West Germany's complex and contradictory negotiation process between past, present, and future more evident than in Schwippert's original Bundeshaus redesign of 1949.

THE NEGOTIATION OF THE FRG'S ARCHITECTURAL STANCE: HANS SCHWIPPERT VS. KONRAD ADENAUER

In the following, I will examine Schwippert's renovations of the Academy and the Palais Schaumburg, in order to focus on the negotiation of Schwippert's plans for a new, representative architecture with his main opponent during this process: Konrad Adenauer. The confrontation between the chancellor and his architect will shed light on how architecture became a point of contention while establishing two of the emerging West German state's central symbols, the Bundestag and the Federal Chancellery. Schwippert was eager to put the modernist project to work in order to facilitate a new and democratic beginning for the Federal Republic. While Adenauer did not have a comparably developed architectural philosophy of his own – though he did have often strongly voiced lay opinions on furniture design and architecture – we will see that he nevertheless acted as a touchstone, and even as the antagonist to Schwippert's program. Just like Schwippert, Adenauer was trying to reconnect to architectural and design languages from the past, and both men shared the aim of facilitating a new political beginning for West Germany in Bonn on architectural terms. Ultimately, throughout this process, both men aimed at recontextualizing different parts of the German past in the present.

Architectural Wars: The Struggle for the “Right” Architecture

The conflict between Schwippert and Adenauer during the architect’s tenure with the federation can be traced in an exchange of letters between the chancellor and the architect.⁶³ These letters cast a characteristic light on the opposing conceptions of architecture during the postwar era.⁶⁴ What can be learned from the confrontation between the two parties as represented in these letters is that the representational architecture of the new state was an elementary part of the power struggles in the young Federal Republic. What was at stake is obvious when one reminds oneself that this new state was located on the fault lines of an emerging Cold War. A mere four years after the cessation of hostilities in World War II, with the economy in ruins, this new state would have as one of its main goals the fostering of a democratic sensibility among a poverty stricken population which, after the disastrous ending of Germany’s first republic, did not identify strongly with democratic traditions.⁶⁵ The “architectural wars” fought between Adenauer and his architect were therefore equally an integral part and symptom of Adenauer’s efforts in establishing a democratic government that would be tailored around his style of governing. Schwippert, on the other hand, had spent a considerable amount of his professional life educating a new generation of craftsmen and architects about the

⁶³ Gerda Breuer made these letters accessible as an annex to her excellent study *Hans Schwippert. Bonner Bundeshaus 1949*. A selection of these letters is discussed by Agathe Buslei-Wuppermann. Breuer, *Hans Schwippert: Bonner Bundeshaus 1949, Parlament der jungen BRD*, 66-71, 83-117; Buslei-Wuppermann, *Hans Schwippert, 1899-1973: Von der Werkkunst zum Design*, 126-132.

⁶⁴ “Die Korrespondenz zwischen dem Bundeskanzler und dem Architekten ist in diesem Zusammenhang besonders aufschlussreich: Sie wirft ein bezeichnendes Licht auf die unterschiedlichen Architekturauffassungen der Nachkriegszeit.” Breuer, *Hans Schwippert: Bonner Bundeshaus 1949, Parlament der jungen BRD*, 83.

⁶⁵ Compare Jarausch, *After Hitler*, 139-147.

social function of modernist and Werkbund design.⁶⁶ While Schwippert wanted to let his architecture and designs speak for themselves, Adenauer, equally concerned about the shape of the new West German state's public face, would not permit him to do so. Thus, it would be foolish to dismiss Adenauer's critique of Schwippert's designs simply as pedantic: Adenauer's often scathing criticism of his architect was nothing less than an integral part of the struggle to determine the face of the future West German democracy.

Adenauer, Authoritarian Democrat: The Renovation of the Pedagogical Academy into the Bundeshaus

Based on his belief that modernist architecture was the appropriate form for the representation of the postwar West German state and would effect positive changes in it, Schwippert's goal in the renovation of the Pedagogical Academy into the Bundeshaus was to create the first truly modernist parliament building in central Europe. Adenauer, on the other hand, was known to have very little understanding of modernist architectural sensibilities. Scholarship has so far contributed very little to the question of Adenauer's opinions on and preferences for architecture, other than establishing that Adenauer had a very traditional outlook on building design.⁶⁷ In order to extrapolate Adenauer's opinions on architecture and interior design, Agathe Buslei-Wuppermann has looked at Adenauer's home in Rhöndorf, located in close vicinity to the Federal district, on the

⁶⁶ In this context, see Christopher Oestereich's discussion of Schwippert's influence on the postwar *Werkkunstschule*: Christopher Oestereich, "Zurück in die Zukunft? Schwippert als 'geistiger Vater' der Werkkunstschule," in *Hans Schwippert 1899-1973: Moderation des Wiederaufbaus* (Berlin: Jovis, 2010), 120-131.

⁶⁷ For example, Deborah Ascher-Barnstone speaks of "traditional tastes:" Barnstone, *The Transparent State*, 115.

other side of the Rhine.⁶⁸ Deeply at odds with Schwippert's design language envisioned for the Bundeshaus, Adenauer's private residence is a two-story Heimatschutzstil bungalow with a slated hip roof and lattice windows. It was built in 1937 according to plans drawn by Adenauer's brother in law, architect Ernst Zinn. An enthusiastic lay interior designer, Adenauer oversaw every detail of the interior decoration of his home. He furnished his house in the Biedermeier style, with few originals mixed with numerous replicas, a diametrical opposite of the modernist furniture that Schwippert proposed for the Bundeshaus and Palais Schaumburg.⁶⁹ Adenauer also had a preference for exotic woods and leather furniture, with which he furnished his summer cottage.⁷⁰ He also regularly visited the local carpenter in Bad Honnef to discuss new furniture items for his home. Each finished piece was subject to strict criticism; to the effect that often enough

⁶⁸ Buslei-Wuppermann, *Hans Schwippert, 1899-1973: Von der Werkkunst zum Design*, 126/7. To extrapolate Adenauer's architectural sensibilities from his private preferences in furniture and home design is an approach that comes with problems. Most importantly, it runs the risk of obscuring the line between Adenauer the politician and the Adenauer the private person by asymmetrically comparing Adenauer's private home with the Bundeshaus. However, especially in regard to Adenauer's media persona, this distinction could hardly be maintained due to the numerous features on Adenauer's private life in the press and the newsreels of the *Neue Deutsche Wochenschau*, to the effect that Adenauer's image in the newsreels was characterized by an amalgamation of the public and the private realms. Compare Uta Schwarz, *Wochenschau, westdeutsche Identität und Geschlecht in den fünfziger Jahren* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus Verlag, 2002), 359.

Furthermore, if one draws an analogy to Adenauer's successor Ludwig Erhard, one can see that there is a great congruency between his private and official tastes. Erhard employed architect Sep Ruf to design his official residence (Kanzlerbungalow), the same architect who had already designed Erhard's private residence at the Tegernsee. Apart from that, this will not be my only basis on which I assess Adenauer's tastes in official architecture, as I will also combine my observations with Adenauer's statements on political architecture made during the renovations of the Bundeshaus and the Palais Schaumburg. If applied in a balanced manner that avoids over-generalization, I would argue that this approach can uncover some important general tendencies which help explain how and why Schwippert clashed with his architect. I will therefore be wary of over-generalization in making my argument.

⁶⁹ The description of Adenauer's home follows Buslei-Wuppermann, *Hans Schwippert, 1899-1973: Von der Werkkunst zum Design*, 126.

⁷⁰ Buslei-Wuppermann, *Hans Schwippert, 1899-1973: Von der Werkkunst zum Design*, 126.

the carpenter had problems in incorporating numerous requests for modifications.⁷¹ Two things emerge from this account. Firstly, while a layperson, Adenauer nevertheless had very developed architectural and design conceptions of his own, and second, as a declared follower of the Biedermeier style, Adenauer's own preconceptions about design and architecture would hardly be compatible with Schwippert's modernist design plans.

In her excellent 2005 study *The Transparent State: Architecture and Politics in Postwar Germany*, Deborah Ascher-Barnstone argues, "Adenauer does not seem to have influenced the design for the Bundeshaus."⁷² While expressing her consternation at the choice of Schwippert as modernist, Ascher-Barnstone contends that the traditionalist Adenauer must have been convinced that the style preferred by Schwippert "at least partially[,] mirrored Adenauer's picture for the postwar West German state."⁷³ This needs to be problematized further, as in fact Adenauer was very involved in discussions about the shape of the West German parliament, down to questions of construction methods, in the course of which he made comments on the design that Schwippert envisioned. Adenauer was in no position to decide alone on the design of the future seat of the West German government, and one has to assume that the choice of the Pedagogical Academy and its architect had come about in the form of a majority decision between the different parties involved, such as Hermann Wandersleb as head of the *Land* chancellery, Minister President Karl Arnold, and Adenauer.⁷⁴ At any rate, it seems as if Adenauer himself

⁷¹ Buslei-Wuppermann, *Hans Schwippert, 1899-1973: Von der Werkkunst zum Design*, 126.

⁷² Barnstone, *The Transparent State*, 75.

⁷³ Barnstone, *The Transparent State*, 114.

⁷⁴ There is, to my knowledge, no account of which parties were ultimately involved in deciding on the Pedagogical Academy and its architect. According to Ascher-Barnstone, "there is no surviving correspondence before the project began." Barnstone, *The Transparent State*, 113.

never picked Schwippert for the job. Adenauer argued in 1950 in an internal memo of the Federal Chancellery, while the argument about the renovation of the Palais Schaumburg had reached its climax with Schwippert's resignation, that he had been forced to work together with Schwippert and insisted that he had not been the one who authorized Schwippert to renovate the Academy.⁷⁵ It is important to note that the working relationship between Adenauer and his architect rested on a compromise from the start.

Forced into compromise with a modernist building and a modernist architect in charge of its renovation, Adenauer nevertheless, or perhaps precisely for this reason, involved himself immensely in the construction process of the Bundeshaus, and on numerous occasions, he conveyed his criticism of the overall architecture to Schwippert. While staging his postwar political comeback, there was simply too much at stake for Adenauer to not involve himself in the planning of the future West German parliament. As Schwippert set to work on the designs for the Bundeshaus in November 1948, Adenauer's power was steadily growing. By then he was President of the Parliamentary Council, he had his eyes set on the chancellorship, and he de-facto was the most powerful German in the West German political landscape of the time. Accordingly, Adenauer saw fit to keenly oversee Schwippert's efforts, and he conveyed to the architect numerous "demands and wishes" throughout the different planning stages.⁷⁶ Although the real authority over the renovation of the Pedagogical Academy lay with the state of North Rhine-Westphalia who paid the bills, Adenauer used his authority as council president to go against two basic design decisions taken by Schwippert, the arrangement of the

⁷⁵ Internal memo, Federal Chancellery, 24 June 1950 (BArchiv, B 157/335).

⁷⁶ Buslei-Wuppermann, "Das Bonner Bundeshaus: Architektonische Moderne und demokratischer Geist," 48. For an overview of the different planning stages of the Bundeshaus project, see Buslei-Wuppermann, "Das Bonner Bundeshaus: Architektonische Moderne und demokratischer Geist," 47-51.

parliament seats in circular fashion, and the intended use of steel frames and glass for the extensions (Schwippert even planned two walls of the parliamentary chamber to be made entirely out of steel-framed glass).

The parliamentary chamber's interior as it had been finally built was very different from the one that Schwippert had originally envisioned – and this is largely due to Adenauer's intervention. By means of the circle as central symbol for the building, Schwippert had originally wanted to underline the egalitarian aspect of a democratic parliament.⁷⁷ In Schwippert's initial designs, the seating of the parliamentarians was arranged in the manner of a circle – in a way a “round table” for a new political beginning and a new democratic culture.⁷⁸ In these first sketches, the government ministers would not have had separate seating, but would have been allocated a specific sector of the circle. Accordingly, the initial designs had no speaker's desk, and Schwippert confidently explained in his design rationale that the delegates were to speak from their own seats.⁷⁹

This was the first major instance in which Adenauer curtailed the architect's authority, for he had strong reservations against the circular seating idea: true to his later campaigning motto “no experiments” (*keine Experimente*), he found the design too much of a radical departure from the norm and was afraid that the parliamentary work

⁷⁷ Breuer, *Hans Schwippert: Bonner Bundeshaus 1949, Parlament der jungen BRD*, 26/7. For a collection of Schwippert's early designs for the parliamentary chamber, refer to: Buslei-Wuppermann, “Das Bonner Bundeshaus: Architektonische Moderne und demokratischer Geist,” 63-67. See Heinrich Wefing's discussion of the debate on the circle between Adenauer and Schwippert: Wefing, *Parlamentsarchitektur: Zur Selbstdarstellung der Demokratie in ihren Bauwerken: Eine Untersuchung am Beispiel des Bonner Bundeshauses*, 163-168.

⁷⁸ Peters, *Deutscher Bundestag*, 34.

⁷⁹ Peters, *Deutscher Bundestag*, 35.

would thus be hampered.⁸⁰ According to Hermann Wandersleb, Adenauer had insisted that “for the beginning of the parliamentary work, one should not employ such radical innovations.”⁸¹ Such a circular arrangement of the parliament was at odds with Adenauer’s efforts to lend authority to West Germany’s new political beginning. The arrangement that was later realized featured a central lectern together with an elevated bench for the administration, facing the parliamentary seats in half-circle fashion. It is hard to overlook the close similarities this design bears to the Berlin Reichstag of the Weimar Republic,⁸² and it had ironically been referred to as a “classroom” by novelist Wolfgang Koeppen in his Bonn novel *Das Treibhaus* (1953), arguably the most important West German novel to deal with the political “restoration” in Bonn. Koeppen’s protagonist Keetenheuve critiques the seating arrangement as traditionalist and authoritarian: “A large empty classroom with row upon row of tidy desks. The teacher’s desk at the front, fittingly elevated.”⁸³ This arrangement matched both Adenauer’s notion of a strong federal chancellor as the center of democratic power and his efforts to hark back to established and traditional notions of design and political representation. At the same time, the design Adenauer favored signaled the continuity of a democratic German tradition, even if this tradition was one that had failed:

⁸⁰ Letter by Adolf Arndt, 18 January 1963; cited in Barnstone, *The Transparent State*, 132. Compare Buslei-Wuppermann, “Das Bonner Bundeshaus: Architektonische Moderne und demokratischer Geist,” 62.

⁸¹ “[...] für den Anfang der parlamentarischen Arbeit sollte man nicht gleich zu so radikalen Neuerungen greifen.” Werhahn, *Hans Schwippert (1899-1973): Architekt, Pädagoge und Vertreter der Werkbundidee in der Zeit des deutschen Wiederaufbaus*, 229; cited in Buslei-Wuppermann, “Das Bonner Bundeshaus: Architektonische Moderne und demokratischer Geist,” 62.

⁸² Wefing, *Parlamentsarchitektur: Zur Selbstdarstellung der Demokratie in ihren Bauwerken: Eine Untersuchung am Beispiel des Bonner Bundeshauses*, 167.

⁸³ Koeppen, *The Hothouse*, 73. “Ein großes Klassenzimmer mit aufgeräumten Schülerpulten. Der Katheder des Herrn Lehrers war erhöht, wie es sich gehörte.” Wolfgang Koeppen, *Das Treibhaus* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), 54. Koeppen’s novel will be the point of discussion of chapter four.

The architect's conception of a new beginning that was realized also on the level of form "collided with Adenauer's wish to pick up lines of tradition stemming from prewar times. [...] [Adenauer] wanted the reconstruction where Schwippert sought the new beginning."⁸⁴

The ostensible continuity established by Adenauer's executive decision bracketed in problematic ways what had happened in and with the Reichstag when the Nazis had seized power in 1933. At any rate, while Schwippert wanted to move forward and risk a new beginning in the representation of democratic power in a truly unique and highly symbolical parliament building, Adenauer wanted the opposite, to return to the established Weimar-style parliament, most likely because he believed that the established arrangement lent an air of stability to the new democratic process.

In this confrontation, both men acted on their belief in the symbolical power of architecture and design. However, in arranging the seats in a circle, Schwippert had followed his firm conviction that architecture and design possessed innate democratic powers. He genuinely believed, true to the credo of New Building, that architecture was a means of social engineering, that his design would foster democratic equality among the delegates. As it would turn out, this was far from what Adenauer wanted as a democrat, who in 1945 had openly stated:

It is in accordance with the principles of democracy that the will of the majority should decide matters. But ... let me insert the words 'in the last resort.' [...] The principles of democracy also demand respect for and confidence in the man of different political views; they demand an effort to enter into his thoughts and his reasoning and to reach an understanding with him; they require that the ultimately

⁸⁴ "Die Vorstellung des Architekten von einem auch formalin Neubeginn 'kollidierte mit Adenauers Wunsch, Traditionslinien der Vorkriegszeit aufzugreifen. [...] [Adenauer] wollte den Wiederaufbau, wo Schwippert den Neuanfang suchte." Wefing, *Parlamentsarchitektur: Zur Selbstdarstellung der Demokratie in ihren Bauwerken: Eine Untersuchung am Beispiel des Bonner Bundeshauses*, 167. Wefing cites Schwippert, *Denken Lehren Bauen*, 187.

coercive act of voting someone down should be resorted to only when everything else fails.⁸⁵

In this light, Adenauer's understanding of the representational architecture and design of the parliament emerges in the form of a mere backdrop for his own authoritarian style of governing,⁸⁶ which was to be permeated by the (culturally) Western, traditional symbols of democratic power: a speaker's desk on an elevated podium, as it is realized in the US Congress, and more importantly to Adenauer, in the former Reichstag of the Weimar Republic.⁸⁷ With his concerns about a "total" democracy as mentioned above in mind, Adenauer, who had already been a prolific politician during the Weimar period, resorted to the political podium-style parliament he was politically socialized in.

Even if the parliament's overall interior design, with its two huge glass walls and its restrained and modern looking interior, lacking traditional symbols of German political representation such as the German Eagle, which only was installed in 1953,⁸⁸ hardly permits a comparison between the two parliaments, and indeed partly symbolizes a new beginning, Adenauer insisted that the chamber's most important feature be similar to the Reichstag. The parliamentary culture, the way in which delegates would interact

⁸⁵ Konrad Adenauer, *Adenauer Memoirs: 1945-1953* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1966), 30/1; cited in Barnstone, *The Transparent State*, 77.

⁸⁶ Konrad Jarausch argues that Adenauer's "chancellor democracy" helped cement democracy in West Germany precisely because of its "semiauthoritarian" character. Together with his CDU leadership, the strong position of the chancellor vis-à-vis the president as codified in the Basic Law enabled Adenauer "to consolidate his authority in decisive moments, outmaneuver rivals, and impose his views on the cabinet and parliament." Jarausch, *After Hitler*, 136/7.

⁸⁷ See Heinrich Wefing's discussion of the symbolic aspects of different seating arrangements in parliament buildings: Wefing, *Parlamentsarchitektur: Zur Selbstdarstellung der Demokratie in ihren Bauwerken: Eine Untersuchung am Beispiel des Bonner Bundestages*, 134-161.

⁸⁸ An absence of the Federal Eagle would again be discussed during Sir Norman Foster's renovation of the Reichstag in 1999. However, the delegates voted for the 'Fat Hen' displayed in the Bonn Bundestag, after a proposition to design "leaner, more dynamic version of the German national symbol" was voted down. William J. V. Neill, *Urban Planning and Cultural Identity* (Psychology Press, 2004), 42.

during the democratic process, which is closely determined by the seating arrangement, would be similar: an audience had to sit passively through a speech made from the podium, making spontaneous remarks or interjections largely impossible.⁸⁹ The seating arrangement with its separate governmental bench in effect created a “strict division of the legislative and executive powers,” which was even underlined through the elevated position of this bench,⁹⁰ replete with “a speaking symbolism of order and a hierarchical consciousness of distinction.”⁹¹ In effect, this partly accounted for the reduction of the democratic process to an antagonism between the current administration and the opposition (which is still prevalent in Germany today), casting less “important” parties to the sidelines of the democratic process.⁹² In insisting on the traditional seating arrangement, Adenauer was responsible for coding a compromise into Schwippert’s parliamentary chamber as it was built in 1949.

When disregarding its complex heritage and concentrating on the innovative potential of his architecture in the present alone, Schwippert emerges as a true innovator

⁸⁹ Breuer, *Hans Schwippert: Bonner Bundeshaus 1949, Parlament der jungen BRD*, 68. Breuer cites a letter by Adolf Arndt to Gerstenmaier of 29 December 1962, in which Arndt summarizes some of Gerstenmaier’s complaints about the parliamentary chamber, that for a representative “to hold a spontaneous speech from his seat, was impossible under these circumstances without the help of microphones.” (“[...] eine spontane Rede von seinem Sitz aus halten zu können, sei unter diesen Umständen ohne die Hilfe von Mikrofonen nicht möglich.”)

⁹⁰ “strenge Teilung zwischen Legislative und Exekutive geschaffen[...].” Wefing, *Parlamentsarchitektur: Zur Selbstdarstellung der Demokratie in ihren Bauwerken: Eine Untersuchung am Beispiel des Bonner Bundeshauses*, 167.

⁹¹ “voller sprechender Ordnungssymbolik, von hierarchischem Unterscheidungsbewußtsein.” Jan Thorn-Prikker, “Keine Experimente: Alltägliches am Rande der Staatsarchitektur,” in *Architektur und Demokratie: Bauen für die Politik von der amerikanischen Revolution bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Ingeborg Flagge and Wolfgang Stock (Stuttgart, 1992), 250; cited in Wefing, *Parlamentsarchitektur: Zur Selbstdarstellung der Demokratie in ihren Bauwerken: Eine Untersuchung am Beispiel des Bonner Bundeshauses*, 167/8.

⁹² Compare Peters, *Deutscher Bundestag*, 35.

advocating a new beginning, while Adenauer insists on a return to traditional forms of political representation.⁹³ This opposition is responsible for an architecture of compromise with regard to the parliamentary chamber, in which the parliament's progressive architecture as such was neutralized by its conservative parliamentary culture. All of this was to steer Schwippert's design in a direction in which it aided a style of governing that was tailored around the needs of a semi-authoritarian democrat, Adenauer.

After the parliamentary chamber was finished in May 1949, construction began on the two office extensions to the north and south of the original Pedagogical Academy. Schwippert's plan to construct these extensions in the form of steel-frames was another point of contention between the two men. After inspecting the extensions' shell construction in June of 1949, Adenauer voiced decidedly anti-modernistic concerns and wrote on 30 June 1949 in a drastic tone to Schwippert:

On Tuesday I heard from your aides that if I understood them correctly, it is planned to construct the North and South wings entirely out of glass. [...] I believe that I am obliged to tell you that I have the strongest reservations against this, should these plans be correct. Two weeks ago I was in the main building by Corbussier [sic] in Geneva, which is constructed entirely out of steel and glass. The building is atrocious on the outside, and to be inside of it is an entirely unpleasant experience. [...] There is nothing more uncomfortable, I almost want to say unbearable, than to be inside such a glass box. The lighting inside is

⁹³ While it is not unusual for architectural projects to be revised by the ones who commissioned them, I would argue that in the case of such a highly symbolical building as the parliamentary chamber, whose design was thought to directly influence the democratic process as just outlined, the circumstances transcend a mere aesthetic dispute between architect and builder-owner. Precisely the struggle for the "right" democratic symbolism of the seating arrangement makes this dispute special and distinguishes it from the debate Adenauer and Schwippert led about the steel-frame construction method for the chamber. Thus, Schwippert did not merely tried to pitch a bold idea with the anticipation of it being denied by Adenauer. Still in 1962, Schwippert insisted in a letter to Adolf Arndt that the "present chancellor spoiled my conception" ("Es war der heutige Kanzler, der mir's Konzept verdarb"). Letter to Adolf Arndt, 29 December 1962; cited in Breuer, *Hans Schwippert: Bonner Bundeshaus 1949, Parlament der jungen BRD*, 68.

irritating and uncomfortable to such an extent that it is inconceivable to me how a normal human being could think and speak coherently inside it. I think I am authorized to tell you that such a building will be rejected flat out by the vast majority of the future Bundestag representatives and the deputies of the Bundesrat. To build in such a manner would in my view severely harm Bonn's prospects at remaining the seat of the federation. I therefore ask you, if my information is correct, to reconsider your plans. I believe that you, apart from maybe a small circle of architects, would cast a major stain on your personal reputation.⁹⁴

Apart from Adenauer's explicitly stated issues with Schwippert's "glass box," is this a rejection of Schwippert's wish that "the German land watched the parliamentary work?"⁹⁵ It is highly unlikely that the symbolism of transparency resulting from the large-scale application of glass had escaped Adenauer; it rather seems he simply did not subscribe to the idea. As we saw earlier, Adenauer's understanding of the democratic process was different from Schwippert's in that it eschewed the equal participation of everybody at all times. At any rate, a building whose main construction principle relied so strongly on new democratic symbolisms again ran counter to what the architectural traditionalist Adenauer expected from a parliamentary building. It was too radical, too far

⁹⁴ "Am Dienstag hörte ich von Ihren Herren, wenn ich dies richtig verstanden habe, dass beabsichtigt sei, den Nordflügel und den Südflügel ganz aus Glas herzustellen. [...] Ich glaube doch, verpflichtet zu sein, Ihnen zu sagen, dass falls diese Absichten richtig sind, ich die grössten Bedenken dagegen habe. Ich war vor zwei Wochen in Genf in dem Hauptbau von Le Corbussier [sic], der ganz aus Eisen und Glas hergestellt ist. Das Gebäude ist von aussen betrachtet fürchterlich und der Aufenthalt im Inneren ist im höchsten Masse unerfreulich. [...] Es gibt nichts Ungemütlicheres, fast möchte ich sagen, Unerträglicheres, als einen Aufenthalt in einem solchen Glaskasten. Die Lichtverhältnisse darin sind derartig unangenehm und störend, dass ich mir nicht vorstellen kann, dass ein normaler Mensch in einem solchen Raum vernünftig denken und sprechen kann. Ich glaube, Ihnen sagen zu dürfen, dass ein solcher Bau von der weitaus grössten Mehrzahl der zukünftigen Abgeordneten des Bundestages und den Vertretern des Bundesrates grundweg abgelehnt werden wird. Eine solche Bauausführung würde meines Erachtens die Aussicht Bonns, Sitz des Bundes zu bleiben, aufs schwerste schädigen. Ich bitte sie daher, falls ich richtig unterrichtet worden bin, Ihren Plan einer Nachprüfung zu unterziehen. Ich glaube, dass Sie ihrem persönlichen Ruf, abgesehen vielleicht von einem kleinen Kreise von Architekten, ebenfalls einen grossen Stoss versetzen würden." Letter by Konrad Adenauer to Hans Schwippert, 30 June 1949; reprinted in Buslei-Wuppermann, "Das Bonner Bundeshaus: Architektonische Moderne und demokratischer Geist," 58.

⁹⁵ Schwippert, "Das Bonner Bundeshaus," 185.

removed from his conceptions of what a parliament should look like, rooted in the traditions of 19th century political representation as codified in the Reichstag.

The tone of this letter should dispense all doubt that Adenauer might have found Schwippert's architectural approach to be conducive to West Germany's political development. At this point, the race between Frankfurt am Main and Bonn for the seat of the capital had not yet been decided, and Adenauer even saw Schwippert's designs as disadvantageous for Bonn's chances at winning. Adenauer's dismissive opinions about modernist architecture are obvious from these lines, even though he did not even mention it by name, but merely by using the misspelled "Le Corbussier" as a synonym for modernism. In addition, he mistook the building in question: at the time, there was no building by Le Corbusier in Geneva that would have fit the description.⁹⁶ Adenauer simply strongly disliked the aesthetic vocabulary of modernist architecture and found it diametrical to his political intentions. This time, however, Schwippert prevailed. Interestingly, it was not the political symbolism of the glass walls as conveying a sense of transparency in the democratic process that convinced Adenauer, but rather Schwippert's reference to the practicability of this sort of construction. Schwippert argued that only the steel-frame construction would allow him to meet the tight deadlines while erecting a building for which detailed specifications for the interior were still missing.⁹⁷ It can be assumed that only Schwippert's reference to these problems, together with the fact that Adenauer was not alone in deciding on the Bundeshaus, quieted Adenauer's criticism.

With Adenauer's problematic relationship with Schwippert as one based in profound distrust in the modernist program in general and in the efforts of creating a new

⁹⁶ Buslei-Wuppermann, "Das Bonner Bundeshaus: Architektonische Moderne und demokratischer Geist," 58.

⁹⁷ Breuer, *Hans Schwippert: Bonner Bundeshaus 1949, Parlament der jungen BRD*, 38.

democratic symbolism for the Federal Republic by Schwippert in particular in mind, we will see how the antagonism quickly escalated once Adenauer had been elected federal chancellor and was faced with Schwippert trying to renovate a neo-classicist building of Adenauer's personal choice. To Adenauer, the Palais Schaumburg symbolized the chancellorship as an architectural figurehead, and he would fight even more fiercely for an architecture and design that he found appropriate.

Architectural Antithesis to the Bundeshaus: The Renovation of the Palais Schaumburg into the Federal Chancellery

On 8 February 1960, Konrad Adenauer was photographed at his desk in his office at the Palais Schaumburg for official purposes. With serious eyes, Adenauer fixated the camera, hands folded on the desk, surrounded by papers, a globe in the background. The photograph, part of a series in both color and black and white, is carefully composed, both by Adenauer and by photographer Rolf Unterberg. The atmosphere is serious, and Adenauer radiates gravity and authority. Adenauer and the photographer make confident use of the furniture in the shot, especially the desk, which has traditionally been commonplace in the photography of statesmen, located in the frame's center. This was the way Adenauer apparently wanted to be remembered as Germany's first federal chancellor. If one takes a closer look at the furniture in the image and compares it with promotional shots of Adenauer at his desk taken by the photographer Klaus Schulz ten years earlier on 1 January 1950, it is striking that the room was completely refurnished by 1960. In particular, a Biedermeier-style desk of dark wood standing on a thick Persian rug, and a heavily padded Biedermeier chair with floral patterns had replaced the desk Hans Schwippert had designed in the Werkbund style, together with the Helmut Krahn-

designed office chair that Schwippert had picked for Adenauer. Why did Adenauer have the furniture that Schwippert designed and hand picked for his office removed?

In November of 1949, while the renovation work was just beginning, Adenauer moved from his preliminary Federal Chancellery at the Museum König into the Palais Schaumburg, a classicist city palais erected in 1860. On first sight it is already obvious how thoroughly the Palais Schaumburg's appearance contradicts the architectural program that Schwippert, albeit with compromises, realized in the Bundeshaus project. Most importantly, in the outer appearance of the building, Adenauer's choice of classicist architecture represents a return to traditional forms of political representation. In this, the Palais Schaumburg is the architectural antithesis to the Bundeshaus and as such it partly reverses and undoes Schwippert's democratic symbolism. As it would turn out, Adenauer and Schwippert had fundamentally opposing opinions on how to renovate the palais. Adenauer had a historicist recreation of the palais as a stately manor in mind,⁹⁸ while Schwippert wanted to impart a modest and contemporary modernization upon the building, much along the criteria he had already envisioned during the Bundeshaus project.⁹⁹

Recently elected federal chancellor, Adenauer saw the Federal Chancellery as "his" building, and he intervened in the renovation and decoration process like a true master of the house. The vehemence with which Adenauer would oppose, obstruct, and reverse Schwippert's renovation and decoration efforts, can only partly be justified by the elderly politician's desire to create a comfortable working environment (especially since

⁹⁸ Angela Buslei-Wuppermann argues that Adenauer wanted to "rebuild" the Palais as a manor. She uses the verb "zurückbauen," which literally means "to 'renovate into' the original form." Buslei-Wuppermann, *Hans Schwippert, 1899-1973: Von der Werkkunst zum Design*, 131.

⁹⁹ Buslei-Wuppermann, *Hans Schwippert, 1899-1973: Von der Werkkunst zum Design*, 131.

Adenauer did not use the living quarters prepared for him inside the Palais, but continued to reside at his private home in Rhöndorf). Instead, Adenauer's efforts, in particular his pedantic and schoolmasterly criticism of Schwippert's designs in numerous letters to the architect, betray a true power struggle about how a West German Federal Chancellery, West Germany's "business card" to foreign heads of state and other dignitaries, should look both inside and out.

With regard to the Palais Schaumburg renovation, Adenauer no longer saw the need to be considerate of Schwippert, as he still had to be during the Bundeshaus renovation, since the palais was a building that Adenauer felt should be completely designed around himself. Probably aware of future problems with Schwippert's renovation, he had demanded of Schwippert that he presented designs of all the furniture the architect planned to place in the house.¹⁰⁰ He further specified: "It will now be crucial to furnish the house according to its purpose. It is especially important to me that this furnishing is done according to my wishes. I therefore ask you to confer with me on all questions, also in questions concerning details, regarding furniture, curtains, carpets, wallpaper, and so forth."¹⁰¹ Thus, every single one of Schwippert's modifications and furniture suggestions was subject to Adenauer's often scathing criticism. Even a simple guard post hut that Schwippert had designed for Adenauer's private residence was deemed "as ugly as possible" by the chancellor, who had decided to take off the gloves

¹⁰⁰ Letter by Konrad Adenauer to Hans Schwippert, 30 November 1949; reprinted in Gerda Breuer, "Briefwechsel zwischen Konrad Adenauer und Hans Schwippert anhand ausgewählter Beispiele," in *Hans Schwippert: Bonner Bundeshaus 1949*, by Gerda Breuer (Tübingen: Wasmuth, 2009), 85.

¹⁰¹ "[...] es wird jetzt darauf ankommen, das Haus seinem Zwecke entsprechen einzurichten. Es liegt mir ganz besonders daran, dass diese Einrichtung gemäß meinen Wünschen erfolgt. Ich bitte Sie deshalb, meine Entscheidung in allen Fragen, auch in Detailfragen – Möbel, Vorhänge, Teppiche, Tapeten, usw. – einzuholen." Letter by Konrad Adenauer to Hans Schwippert, 16 January 1950; cited in Buslei-Wuppermann, *Hans Schwippert, 1899-1973: Von der Werkkunst zum Design*, 128/9.

with his architect.¹⁰² During the ensuing confrontation about architecture and design, Adenauer repeatedly saw the need to underline that he alone had the authority over the renovation process. On 11 May 1950, he wrote to Schwippert:

As I heard, you told the antique dealer Wennerscheid that one day I would leave as federal chancellor, but you remained responsible for the furnishing of the house. I cannot let this opinion stand. It is not you who are responsible, but I who am responsible. And if you think that you are unable to bring your convictions into accord with my wishes, there will be nothing left for us but to bring about a solution.¹⁰³

A major point of contention was the chancellor's desk that Schwippert designed. As can be inferred from the 1960 photograph, the desk was of particular symbolic importance for Adenauer. So it was for Schwippert, and he spent considerable time designing it, while trying to accommodate Adenauer's detailed wishes. As it would turn out, Schwippert, who could look back on extensive experience in designing furniture in the Werkbund context, was at a loss with his client, who suggested that the modern desk Schwippert designed should have "green felt" on it.¹⁰⁴ Schwippert tried his best to bring his Werkbund ambitions into unison with Adenauer's views, but failed: In May of 1950, a few months after the initial office photographs had been made by Klaus Schulz, Schwippert's "national desk" was ultimately rejected by Adenauer and replaced by a desk

¹⁰² Letter by Konrad Adenauer to Hans Schwippert, 31 December 1949; reprinted in Breuer, "Briefwechsel zwischen Konrad Adenauer und Hans Schwippert anhand ausgewählter Beispiele," 86.

¹⁰³ "Wie ich hörte, haben Sie gegenüber dem Antiquitätenhändler Wennerscheid gesagt, ich würde eines Tages als Bundeskanzler gehen, Sie blieben aber verantwortlich für die Einrichtung des Hauses. Das ist eine Auffassung, die ich nicht gelten lassen kann. Nicht Sie sind verantwortlich, sondern ich bin verantwortlich. Und wenn Sie glauben, mit Ihrer Überzeugung [sic!] meine Wünsche nicht in Einklang bringen zu können, wird nichts anderes übrigbleiben, als dass wir eine Lösung herbeiführen." Letter by Konrad Adenauer to Hans Schwippert, 11 May 1950; reprinted in Breuer, "Briefwechsel zwischen Konrad Adenauer und Hans Schwippert anhand ausgewählter Beispiele," 92/3.

¹⁰⁴ Letter by Konrad Adenauer to Hans Schwippert, 21 December 1949; reprinted in Breuer, "Briefwechsel zwischen Konrad Adenauer und Hans Schwippert anhand ausgewählter Beispiele," 85.

custom made to his wishes in the Biedermeier style. On this occasion, Adenauer took the opportunity to collectively dismiss *all* the furniture and renovations Schwippert had designed for his personal office. In a long letter to the architect, Adenauer vented his anger:

Let me first criticize the desk: I already told you that I think the opening in the middle of the desk is completely wrong. It is nothing else than a gathering ground for dust. The desk is too low, I cannot even fit my knees under it. [...] I find the four marquetrys on the desk completely misplaced. [...] The metal pieces between the two boards have a completely different form than the posts. They are much thicker than the posts. The drawers between the two boards have a different line than the desk. All in all I regret to tell you that I don't like this desk. By the way, how much have you planned to charge for it?[...] I would rather stay with my present desk, which is a decent good piece, while I really do not like the new desk.¹⁰⁵

The letter continues to critique and dismiss every single one of the furniture items Schwippert designed for Adenauer's office. Of the armchairs, Adenauer wrote "the whole house is making fun of them" and continued, no doubt insulting Schwippert in his professional honor as furniture designer:

I would urgently recommend that you call upon the help of a man with technical experience in these matters. I ask you not to hold it against me if I tell you that, if the furniture was made after your own designs – this especially applies to the strange armchairs with the even stranger armrests – you jeopardize your arguably justified reputation as artisan-builder.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ "Lassen Sie mich zunächst einmal den Schreibtisch kritisieren: Ich habe Ihnen schon gesagt, dass ich die Öffnung in der Mitte des Tisches für ganz falsch halte. Sie ist nichts weiter als ein Abladeplatz für Schmutz. Der Schreibtisch ist zu niedrig, ich kann nicht einmal mit meinen Knien darunter. [...] Ich finde weiter die vier Intarsien auf dem Schreibtisch ganz deplaziert. [...] Die Metallstücke zwischen den beiden Platten haben eine ganz andere Form als die Stempel. Sie sind viel dicker als die Stempel. Die Schubladen zwischen den beiden Platten haben einen anderen Schwung als der Schreibtisch. Alles in allem genommen bedaure ich, Ihnen sagen zu müssen, dass mir dieser Schreibtisch nicht gefällt. Was soll er übrigens kosten? [...] Lieber bleibe ich bei meinem jetzigen Schreibtisch, der ein anständiges gutes Stück ist, während der neue Schreibtisch mir wirklich nicht gefällt." Letter by Konrad Adenauer to Hans Schwippert, 4 May 1950; reprinted in Breuer, "Briefwechsel zwischen Konrad Adenauer und Hans Schwippert anhand ausgewählter Beispiele," 88/9.

¹⁰⁶ "Ich empfehle Ihnen dringend doch einen handwerklich erfahrenen Mann für diese Sachen heranzuziehen. Ich bitte, es mir nicht übel zu nehmen, wenn ich Ihnen sage, dass, falls die Möbel nach

Adenauer's criticism was not limited to his personal office alone. In a letter of 11 May 1950, he complained to Schwippert that the doors between two representational rooms on the ground floor of the building were too small for his taste: "Just imagine how people are supposed to wriggle themselves through that door."¹⁰⁷ To compound matters further, Adenauer had asked an antiques dealer of his choice to furnish the house with antiques without Schwippert's knowledge, a further indication that he found Schwippert's ideas inappropriate. In the same letter, Adenauer mentions the diametrically opposing design philosophies between himself and Schwippert: "It seems to me that you are planning to furnish a house which is not modern with furniture items, which may meet some artists' contemporary tastes. This is impossible. The house would lose its entire character because of this furniture."¹⁰⁸ In his answer to this affront, Schwippert basically offered Adenauer his resignation and wrote:

Times like these do not favor responsible, personal decisions. [...] The courageous feeling of responsibility out of which I am striving for contemporary design, contemporary workmanship and truly contemporary solutions, suitable to the task at hand, while forgoing more comfortable accommodations, should not be disregarded or punished. It should not be overlooked that the results of such

Ihren Zeichnungen gemacht sind – das gilt insbesondere auch für die merkwürdigen Sessel mit den noch merkwürdigeren Armlehnen – sie Ihren wohl begründeten Ruf als Baukünstler gefährden." Letter by Konrad Adenauer to Hans Schwippert, 4 May 1950; reprinted in Breuer, "Briefwechsel zwischen Konrad Adenauer und Hans Schwippert anhand ausgewählter Beispiele," 89.

¹⁰⁷ "Stellen Sie sich doch bitte vor, wie sich dann die Menschen durch diese schmale Pforte quetschen sollen." Letter by Konrad Adenauer to Hans Schwippert, 11 May 1950; reprinted in Breuer, "Briefwechsel zwischen Konrad Adenauer und Hans Schwippert anhand ausgewählter Beispiele," 93.

¹⁰⁸ "Sie wollen, wie mir scheint, in einem Hause, das nicht neuzeitlich ist, dem heutigen Tagesgeschmack mancher Künstler velleicht entsprechende Möbel aufstellen. Das ist unmöglich. Das Hause würde seinen ganzen Charakter durch diese Möbel völlig verlieren." Letter by Konrad Adenauer to Hans Schwippert, 11 May 1950; reprinted in Breuer, "Briefwechsel zwischen Konrad Adenauer und Hans Schwippert anhand ausgewählter Beispiele," 93.

efforts are amiably received and lauded as a ‘healthy sign of democracy’ abroad. I should not be denied the respect for the material accomplishments.”¹⁰⁹

Adenauer, however, was not moved by Schwippert’s emphatic words and countered: “I deeply regret that you are apparently unable to adapt to the wishes of the builder-owner.”¹¹⁰ In not even referring to Schwippert’s argument that modern architecture and design are suitable for the palais, Adenauer entirely rejected Schwippert’s design language for the renovation.

Lastly, Adenauer had issues with Schwippert’s renovations on the building’s exterior as well. After he saw the redesigned official entrance to the palais, Adenauer remarked to Schwippert: “The entrance suits a modern hotel, but not the residence of a chancellor, in particular it does not suit this chancellery. It is not of the style that the house of the chancellor should display.”¹¹¹ Schwippert had designed the portal, a simple projecting roof in the driveway, in clear and unadorned fashion. Together with the redesigned lobby, which was dominated by clear white walls and a simple staircase with a thin handrail, it must have seemed to Adenauer to take away from the palais’ original classicist design. Since the entry as designed by Schwippert stayed, Adenauer continued

¹⁰⁹ “Die Zeiten sind der verantwortlichen Entschlusskraft der Persönlichkeit nicht wohlgesinnt. [...] Nicht aber sollte die mutige Verantwortung übersehen oder bestraft werden, mit welcher ich für heutiges Gestalten, heutige Wertarbeit und wahrhaft heutige Lösungen, der jeweiligen Aufgabe angemessen unter Verzicht auf bequemere Mittel eintrete, - nicht verkannt werden, dass die Ergebnisse solcher Arbeit draussen als ein ‘healthy sign of democracy’ aufmerksam wahrgenommen und begrüsst werden, - nicht die Achtung versagt werden vor der sachlichen Leistung.” Letter by Hans Schwippert to Konrad Adenauer, 14 May 1950; reprinted in Breuer, *Hans Schwippert: Bonner Bundeshaus 1949, Parlament der jungen BRD*, 97/8.

¹¹⁰ “Ich bedaure sehr dass Sie offenbar nicht in der Lage sind, sich den Wünschen des Bauherren anzupassen.” Letter by Konrad Adenauer to Hans Schwippert, 22 May 1950; reprinted in Breuer, *Hans Schwippert: Bonner Bundeshaus 1949, Parlament der jungen BRD*, 101.

¹¹¹ “Der Eingang passt zu einem modernen Hotel, aber nicht zu einem Kanzlerhaus, insbesondere nicht zu diesem Kanzlerhaus. Er weist nicht die Art auf, die das Haus des Kanzlers aufweisen müsste.” Letter by Konrad Adenauer to Hans Schwippert of 25 May 1950; reprinted in Breuer, “Briefwechsel zwischen Konrad Adenauer und Hans Schwippert anhand ausgewählter Beispiele,” 102.

to use the backstairs to access the chancellery,¹¹² perhaps to underline his disgust for the modern-style modernizations.

The conflict dragged on for two more months, until finally, on 10 July 1950, an exasperated Schwippert resigned from his responsibilities, citing “lack of decision making” and “furnishing measures by other appointees and advisers.”¹¹³ Schwippert had lost the power struggle with Adenauer for a redesign of the Palais Schaumburg that would project the architectural stance of the Bundeshaus. On the other hand, Adenauer did not completely succeed in establishing a Federal Chancellery precisely tailored to his wishes. Apart from Adenauer’s personal office, the Palais Schaumburg, just like the Bundeshaus, represents an architectural and design compromise, one which had come into being during the struggle between two men who were led by their firm architectural convictions: Schwippert the modernist, and Adenauer the traditionalist.

Conclusions: Adenauer the Mediator

By means of the Bundeshaus and Palais Schaumburg projects, Schwippert aimed at nothing less than a radical rewriting of the stylistic code for German political representation through architecture and design. However, although at times pedantic and even personal in his criticism of Schwippert, Adenauer’s concerns in the face of Schwippert’s ambition should not be dismissed as the privately-motivated antipathy of a tired traditionalist towards anything modern. Rather, Adenauer’s concerns exemplify the concerns of many West Germans for the nascent state not to lose touch with an ostensibly

¹¹² Buslei-Wuppermann, *Hans Schwippert, 1899-1973: Von der Werkkunst zum Design*, 130.

¹¹³ Memo by Hans Schwippert entitled “Palais Schaumburg, overall developments since 30 May 1950,” 10 July 1950; reprinted in Breuer, “Briefwechsel zwischen Konrad Adenauer und Hans Schwippert anhand ausgewählter Beispiele,” 105/6.

uncontaminated, non-fascist past, an anchor of identity that was to be preserved in the turmoil of the new beginning, and which in addition was often perceived – rightfully or not – as a potentially stabilizing influence. Adenauer hoped that in architecturally referring to the heritage of traditional forms of political representation as realized in the French and British parliaments and also in the Weimar Reichstag, a symbolic language could be found that closed the gap between postwar West Germany and the democracies of the West, and which would help overcome the disruption of a German democratic symbolism left in the wake of the Third Reich. In this regard, Adenauer’s criticism has to be taken seriously. As the standard against which Schwippert’s ambitious plans had to be measured, Adenauer in this light was a voice that called for moderation, one which insisted on salvaging some of the preserved German heritage after “the rupture of German civilization.”¹¹⁴ At the same time, Adenauer believed in the importance of a strong leader to guide West Germany through the difficult socioeconomic rebuilding process. It is for this reason that he so passionately opposed Schwippert’s symbolically over-determined, autonomy-radiating designs. Adenauer aimed to tailor the design of the parliament and the Federal Chancellery around *himself* as the center of the West German democratic process. It is no coincidence that he chose a small palace for his chancellery.

Both men’s architectural new-beginning discourses aimed to reposition the new West German state among the democratic, “Western” nation states, if by different means. Schwippert’s emphasis on the aesthetic language of modern design and architecture betrayed a true modernist’s belief in the social function of architecture as a means to change society. In true Werkbund fashion, Schwippert strongly emphasized the social

¹¹⁴ Konrad Jarausch uses this term to refer to the twofold breakdown of German society due to the acts of genocide committed under Nazism, the discovery of which in 1945 fell together with the total destruction of the German cities and social fabric. Jarausch, *After Hitler*, 3-18.

function of his “good” design when he argued in regard to the Bundeshaus: “I wanted a house of openness, an architecture of encounter and dialogue.”¹¹⁵ In other words: Schwippert believed that architecture *on its own* had a significant influence on changing society.

For the conservative politician Adenauer, on the other hand, architecture emerges as the backdrop of the sociopolitical changes *he himself* aimed to implement. This is not to say that this backdrop for Adenauer had no symbolical connotation; he just did not subscribe to the idea that architecture possessed agency in itself. Architectural traditionalist that he was, he did not seem to trust in the autonomous power of architecture alone to effect positive, democratic changes in society. Rather, Adenauer seems to have regarded these domains as mere “amplifiers” of the political persona of a strong democratic leader. In line with the politics of Adenauer’s “chancellor democracy,” political buildings and interiors should passively represent and cite common and “Western” denominators of democratic societies – neoclassicist architecture, heavy desks, feudal interiors, conventional parliamentary chambers, and the like – but not radiate autonomous agency like Schwippert’s designs.

¹¹⁵ “Ich wollte ein Haus der Offenheit, eine Architektur der Begegnung und des Gesprächs.” Schwippert, “Das Bonner Bundeshaus,” 184.

Chapter Four: Separate Cityscapes, Divided Societies: Bonn as Topographic Contradiction in Wolfgang Koeppen's *Das Treibhaus* and Günther Weisenborn's *Auf Sand gebaut*

“The very choice of Bonn as the waiting house for Berlin has long been an anomaly; it is now an abuse. Perhaps only the Germans, having elected a chancellor, would have brought their capital city to his door. To accommodate the immigration of diplomats, politicians and government servants which attended this unlooked-for honor – and also to keep them at a distance – the townspeople have built a complete suburb outside their city walls.”

- John Le Carré, *A Small Town in Germany*

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will conclude the dissertation's inquiry into the sociopolitical and spatial imaginaries about Bonn by examining the semantization¹ of the spatial configuration in two Bonn novels, Wolfgang Koeppen's *Das Treibhaus* (*The Hothouse*, 1953), and Günther Weisenborn's less well-known *Auf Sand gebaut* (*Built upon Sand*, 1956).² By Bonn novels, I refer to novels that are set in their entirety in Bonn and that use the city's topography and its function as the capital city as organizing principles for the development of character, story, and plot.³ In examining two fictional versions of Bonn, this chapter will shed light on how contemporary West German fiction commented on topics surrounding Bonn's founding discourses as discussed in the previous chapters, and

¹ By 'semantization' I am referring to a narrative strategy to imbue the city's topography with meaning by means of symbols, references, or analogies.

² Koeppen, *Das Treibhaus*; Günther Weisenborn, *Auf Sand gebaut* (Munich: Kurt Desch Verlag, 1956).

³ Novels in which only a small part of the plot takes part in Bonn, or which merely set certain scenes there, therefore are not Bonn novels in the sense outlined here.

how these topics are functionalized in the novels' respective agendas.⁴ In this sense, and by offering an overview of fictional reenactments of Bonn's local culture, it will work as a closing view on the founding discourses relating to Bonn's emergence as provisional capital.

A VERY SHORT HISTORY OF BONN NOVELS

During the Adenauer years, Bonn was not exactly a "hot topic" for novelists. There are indeed very few Bonn novels in the sense defined above, with Koeppen and Weisenborn's books the only ones written between 1949 and 1963.⁵ Only after the 1960s and 70s, during the consolidation of Bonn's political status, did West Germans make their peace with the provisional capital and began to tentatively incorporate it into fiction. For a short period in the 1980s and 1990s, Bonn was even discovered as a setting for middlebrow crime fiction. However, apart from the short-lived genre of the *Bonn-Krimi* (*Bonn thriller*), which disappeared with the move of the capital to Berlin in 1998, Bonn did not at all figure prominently in West German literature.⁶ Just like the *Bonn-Krimis*, Weisenborn's *Auf Sand gebaut* was quickly forgotten, presumably due to its

⁴ I will refrain from author-centered criticism by speculating on either Koeppen's or Weisenborn's intentions, especially with Koeppen's preface to *Das Treibhaus* in mind, in which he insisted that the novel had its "own poetic truth" Koeppen, *Das Treibhaus*, 5. All which will be presented in the following rests on the assumption that I am demonstrating merely one interpretation out of several possible others.

⁵ According to these criteria, John Le Carré's 1968 spy thriller *A Small Town in Germany* would also qualify as a Bonn novel and add a valuable British perspective, but it transcends the time frame of this dissertation in being set during Chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger's great coalition between CDU and SPD in the late 1960s. John Le Carré, *A Small Town in Germany* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1968).

⁶ For more information on the Bonn Krimis of the 1980s and 90s, see Doris and Arnold Maurer, "Bonn im Kriminalroman," *Bonner Geschichtsblätter* 1, no. 42 (1992): 719ff; Jürgen Leinemann, "Kurze Blüte: Jürgen Leinemann über Aufstieg und Ende der Bonner Polit-Krimis," *Spiegel Special*, 1995.

compositional deficits.⁷ Koeppen's *Das Treibhaus* is an exception to the rule, due to its status as the only serious highbrow literary effort to take stock of the new capital's sociopolitical climate, a fact that made the novel of interest to historians and sociologists and guaranteed it scholarly attention in literary studies;⁸ outside the world of academia and the literary feuilleton pages it remained little-known.

REFLECTING THE FOUNDING DISCOURSES

The two novels to be discussed have been read as critical interventions on the city's perceived political, social, and even moral shortcomings, largely interpreted under the heading of "restoration."⁹ In a *Spiegel* article of 1957, Weisenborn is even quoted saying that the book was a "literary bang with the fist on the table."¹⁰ While I subscribe to the reading of the novels as interventions, my analysis will examine the interventionist agendas of the novels not purely on the story level, but rather on how the character's/narrator's critical perspective on Bonn is combined with the organization of Bonn as narrative space in the texts. To cast into relief their criticism of Bonn, both novels render the city as a problematic presence. That is, they feature a highly semantized spatial configuration of a divided city organized around thematic opposites, such as "old

⁷ Compare Wolfgang Ferchl, *Zwischen "Schlüsselroman," Kolportage und Artistik: Studien zur gesellschaftskritisch-realistischen Romanliteratur der 50er Jahre in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in ihrem sozialgeschichtlichen und poetologischen Kontext* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1991), 220. More on the structural deficits of the novel will follow later.

⁸ For example, Kurt Sontheimer uses the book in his overview on the Adenauer years, *Die Adenauer Ära*, side by side with historical and sociological sources. Kurt Sontheimer, *Die Adenauer-Ära: Grundlegung der Bundesrepublik* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1991), 9-25.

⁹ For example, Karl-Heinz Götze, *Wolfgang Koeppen: Das Treibhaus* (München: W. Fink, 1985), 45-89; Ferchl, *Zwischen "Schlüsselroman," Kolportage Und Artistik*, 217-220.

¹⁰ "ein literarischer Faustschlag auf den Tisch," "Leiche Im Auto," *Der Spiegel*, 23 January 1957, 46.

vs. new,” “traditional vs. modern,” and, in Weisenborn’s novel, “honest vs. dishonest,” “moral vs. corrupt,” “politically right vs. politically left.”¹¹ In setting up the contradictions, both novels exploit Bonn’s characteristic as a city determined by the founding discourses traced throughout the previous chapters. Among others, they comment on the contradictions inherent in the new political beginning (introduction), the strategy of rebuilding Germany from its margins and not from its centers (chapter one), the planning of the federal district vis-à-vis the geopolitical developments of the Cold War (chapter two), and the efforts to rededicate modernist architecture after the Third Reich and its negotiation in the face of more traditional architectural approaches (chapter three).

DIVIDED TOPOGRAPHIES: BONN AS “PROBLEMATIC PRESENCE”

It is striking that in both novels there exists a palpable contradiction between the old Bonn, the long-standing Rheinish town with its cobblestone streets, half-timbered houses and the marketplace with its Beethoven and Ernst Moritz Arndt monuments on the one side, and the newly built federal district of soberly-styled, modernist governmental quarters on the other. Bonn becomes a contradiction cast in stone, steel and concrete. Both novels exploit this perceived spatial contradiction and incorporate it into their respective agendas. Adding to John Le Carré’s contention that the city as “waiting house for Berlin has long been an anomaly,”¹² Bonn also emerges as a topographic anomaly, determined by two largely discrete social spheres, each associated with a

¹¹ “Thematic opposites” is a neutral term to reflect that only Weisenborn’s novel privileges one part of the city over the other.

¹² Le Carré, *A Small Town in Germany*, 5.

specific part of the city. This unresolved sociogeographical contradiction references broader, unanswered sociopolitical issues that West Germans were having with the new democracy and corresponding behavior patterns.

Both novels feature a recently built space, the parliamentary district and the new housing developments, associated with the social sphere of politicians, bureaucrats, secretaries, journalists, diplomats, and the like. This I will henceforth call the “political Bonn.” The city’s other half in the novels, the old town populated by long-established natives who have no contact with the circles of the political Bonn, I will refer to as the “old Bonn.” Both novels’ protagonists serve as border crossers (*Grenzgänger*): they oscillate freely between Bonn’s two spheres, while the other characters remain tied to a specific part of the city. The border crosser protagonists connect the city’s disjointed parts, with the critical message arising from their inability to unite their impressions from both realms into a “positive” whole, and to conceive of Bonn as representing a society functioning on democratic terms adequate for the advancement of West Germany. As long as this contradiction remains unresolved in the novels, this causes a “Bonn effect,” which underlines a sense of estrangement from and a profound mistrust of the FRG’s democratic process. Bonn emerges from these novels a highly semantized cityscape of contradictions, populated by equally incompatible and discrete social milieus. In giving primacy to the novel’s spatial configurations, my reading notably goes beyond an examination of Bonn’ obvious symbolical function as capital. Rather, as Burton Pike argues, “the image of the city is a figure with profound tones and overtones, a presence and not simply a setting.”¹³

¹³ Burton Pike, “The Image of the City in Modern Literature,” in *The City Reader*, ed. Richard T LeGates and Frederic Stout (London: Routledge, 1996), 245. I distinguish Pike’s use of the term “presence” from a mere “setting” for my purpose in that Bonn is a “speaking topography” in the novels. The cityscape assumes symbolical agency – in Weisenborn’s novel this symbolism is mainly political/ideological, in

TWO TAKES ON BONN: *DAS TREIBHAUS* AND *AUF SAND GEBAUT*

If both novels render Bonn as, in Pike's words, a "presence," they do this differently and to distinctive ends. Koeppen, who had spent about a week in Bonn prior to writing the book, arranged these impressions to render Bonn in highly critical terms, to an extent that the entire West German democratic process is dismissed as utterly futile, with a new German catastrophe on the horizon, this time caused by a confluence of West Germany's rearmament and a resurgence of the German militaristic strain of character. In fact, before the publication of *Das Treibhaus* in 1953, Koeppen toned down certain scenes and language of the book because he and his publisher Henry Goverts feared a harsh reaction from the public.¹⁴ The novel was indeed radical in its connection of a realistic political setting (the Bonn federal district) with a scathing critique of the West German democratic process, all culminating in the spectacularly rendered suicide of a disillusioned Bundestag member.

The idealistic representative Felix Keetenheuve, a member of the SPD opposition, recently lost his young wife Elke to alcoholism and drugs. Alone, an outsider among his peers, ridden with guilt, he returns to Bonn to take part in a Bundestag debate on the FRG's rearmament, something he as a pacifist passionately opposes. During the two days of deliberations, Keetenheuve experiences a series of disillusionments in the federal district, which take place around the Bundeshaus, the Bundestag press barracks, and the newly-erected representatives' housing developments. After uncovering a plan to muzzle his concerns and to offer him a position as ambassador in Guatemala for his silence,

Koeppen's novel is political/psychological. In the employment of a "speaking topography," the novels are in the tradition of the 19th century realist city novel.

¹⁴ Hiltrud Häntzschel and Günter Häntzschel, "*Ich wurde eine Romanfigur:*" *Wolfgang Koeppen 1906-1996* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2006), 99.

Keetenheuve eventually becomes convinced that resistance against Germany's persistent militaristic and even fascist legacies is futile. During the evenings, he leaves the federal district for the nocturnal old town, where he comes to realize that he is equally out of touch with the West German electorate, who are succumbing to what he sees as anesthetizing consumerism.¹⁵ Wandering through the decaying rubblescape of the old Bonn, he gives in to his alcoholism, his sexual desires and drives, and finally to underworldly visions of decay and death. On the last night, after he leaves the rearmament debate and the Bonn federal district for good with the realization that the outcome of this crucial vote was already set before the debate, Keetenheuve tries to have sex with an adolescent girl in a rubblescape by the Rhine. Upon discovering that his last resort, lust, was an illusion, haunting visions of Germany's militaristic past take hold of Keetenheuve and drive him to drown himself in the nearby Rhine.

In spite of the fact that the story was narrated from the highly individualized perspective of the outsider Keetenheuve, the novel was initially perceived as a scandalous *roman de clef* about Bonn. The book was overwhelmingly dismissed as too negative, not based enough on facts, or as the feuilletonist Fritz René Allemann put it, as *Abtrittspornographie* (suicide pornography).¹⁶ Quite ironically, the large-scale dismissal by the critics of the 1950s soon turned into a large-scale approval and celebration of the book in the 1960s, when it was hailed as a text that described the social state of the early

¹⁵ This point was a common critique in the novel of the 1950s and 1960s, such as in Günter Grass' *Hundejahre* (1963), Martin Walser's *Ehen in Phillipsburg* (1957), and Koeppen's own *Der Tod in Rom* (1954).

¹⁶ Fritz René Allemann, "Restauration im Treibhaus," *Der Monat*, 1954, 81-85; cited in Angelika Brauchle, "Gert Ledig und die Sprache der Gewalt: Untersuchung über die Darstellung der Gewalt in literarischer Form anhand der Kriegs- und Nachkriegsromane von Gert Ledig" (Bonn: Rheinische Friedrich Wilhelms Universität, 2008), 38.

Federal Republic like no other.¹⁷ The decisions that the book castigates, such as the rearmament and the founding of the Bundeswehr, had of course already been made and become widely accepted by then: during the early 1960s, public debate about the question of rearmament had quieted down considerably, as the Bundeswehr became part of West Germans' everyday lives.

At the time of its publication in the aftermath of the 1953 general election, however, not least due to fears that the novel would cause scandal, Koeppen insisted that the novel was not a direct intervention in the West German political process and posited the novel as a highly subjective perspective on Bonn when he claimed that the novel had "its own poetic truthfulness."¹⁸ In fact, the idiosyncratic high modernism of Koeppen's prose, his penchant for mythological references, his willful and dark renderings of settings, together with the internal perspective of his narrator Keetenheuve, all run counter to our expectations of a literature solely concerned with political activism and point towards an assessment of the political reality in Bonn which Edgar Platen refers to as "meine Geschichte" – a subjective truth.¹⁹ While paying attention to the focus on its

¹⁷ For an overview of the critical reception of *Das Treibhaus*, see Götze, *Wolfgang Koeppen: Das Treibhaus*, 120-135; Richard L. Gunn, *Art and Politics in Wolfgang Koeppen's Postwar Trilogy* (Berne: P. Lang, 1983), 18-24; Helmut Peitsch, "Auf Sand gebaut? Die Bundesrepublik in der Prosa der frühen Fünfziger Jahre," *German Life and Letters* 44, no. 4 (1991): 370-373; Knapp, *Der Roman der fünfziger Jahre*, 53.

¹⁸ "Personalities, places, and events that occur in the story are nowhere identical with their equivalents in reality. [...] The scope of this book lies beyond any connections with individuals, organizations, and events of the present time; which is to say, the novel has its own poetic truthfulness." Koeppen, *The Hothouse*, 5. All following quotes and page numbers will pertain to this edition, unless indicated. ("Gestalten, Plätze und Ereignisse, die der Erzählung den Rahmen geben, sind mit der Wirklichkeit nirgends identisch. [...] Die Dimension aller Aussagen des Buches liegt jenseits der Bezüge von Menschen, Organisationen und Geschehnissen unserer Gegenwart; der Roman hat seine eigene poetische Wahrheit.") Koeppen, *Das Treibhaus*, 5.

¹⁹ Edgar Platen, "Bild oder Abbild? Überlegungen zur Frage der 'poetischen Wahrheit' in Wolfgang Koeppens 'Treibhaus'," *Studia Neophilologica: A Journal of Germanic and Romance Languages and Literatures* 71, no. 2 (1999): 203.

protagonist's psychology, however, the novel can still be read as a sociopolitical commentary – the psychological focus, I would argue, even adds further dimension to the sociopolitical reading. Much like his contemporary Arno Schmidt in his 1956 novel *Das steinerne Herz* (*The Stony Heart*), Koeppen was less interested in political activism in itself, rather than in rendering a detailed sociopolitical commentary (*Gesellschaftsbild*) filtered through an extensively rendered narrative consciousness in order to emphasize the internal, psychological effects of the political restoration and the economic miracle on the individual. In his own words, Koeppen's interest was rather to illustrate “the failure of a moralist in Bonn.”²⁰

While it will respect and at times highlight the novel's psychological dimension, the following, topographical reading of the novel will focus on how the novel's political commentary is connected with its spatial configuration in order to create an image of the local culture in Bonn. In fact, there has so far been relatively little interest in the spatial configuration of the novel. Most scholarly assessments have discussed the novel as the centerpiece of a “trilogy of failure” – framed by the novels *Tauben im Gras* (*Pigeons on the Grass*, 1951) and *Der Tod in Rom* (*Death in Rome*, 1954) – all of which chronicle the West German restoration through the eyes of an outsider-protagonist victimized by a mainstream society exhibiting troubling continuities with the pre-Weimar and Nazi past. Mostly disregarding the semantization of topography in the novels, in its focus on sociopolitical matters this approach has often leveled the differences between the trilogy's three principal settings, Munich (*Tauben im Gras*), Bonn (*Das Treibhaus*), and Rome (*Der Tod in Rom*).²¹ In Karl-Heinz Götze's 1985 monograph on *Das Treibhaus*,

²⁰ TV interview in the HR (Hessischer Rundfunk), 1 October 1981; cited in Götze, *Wolfgang Koeppen: Das Treibhaus*, 8.

²¹ Among other things, *Tauben im Gras* uses the setting of Munich to describe a cultural negotiation with the US American occupiers. *Der Tod in Rom* uses Rome as a setting to critique a representative “sample”

for example, any reference to the spatial configuration of the novel is conspicuously absent.²² Indeed, the city setting is a problematic site that has long been marginalized in discussions of the modern novel that tend to privilege character and plot.²³ Hence, the goal of my reading is to balance out the interpretation of the novel between questions of plot, characters, and the novel's spatial configuration. As a result, in my reading of *Das Treibhaus*, Bonn's cityscape emerges as an essential element carrying the novel's message of sociopolitical critique.

Part of this endeavor will be to examine how the city setting is used to emphasize the psychological experience of Keetenheuve's failure. True to modern city literature, there exists an analogy between the city's topography and the character's mind: the fact that Keetenheuve's suicide takes place in an urban rubblescape by the Rhine is by no means a coincidence. Burton Pike points out that in his book *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930), Sigmund Freud drew a problematic, yet arresting analogy between the development of the human brain and the topographical development of cities.²⁴ Building upon Freud's analogy, Pike makes the point that the image of the city in modern literature often reflects psychological states and developments.²⁵ During the nineteenth

of German society in isolation from Germany – *in nuce*, while at the same time exploiting the city as a mythological setting referencing a social decadence which is in intertextual dialogue with Thomas Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig*.

²² Götze is mainly preoccupied with the novel's plot construction, its criticism of the West German restoration, and formal elements: Götze, *Wolfgang Koeppen: Das Treibhaus*.

²³ Compare Hana Wirth-Nesher, *City Codes: Reading the Modern Urban Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 3.

²⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its discontents* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005), 42-45.

²⁵ Pike's observation building upon Freud's analogy between the city and the human brain is by far not the only literary concept with which one could engage with a city's topography as filtered through a narrative consciousness: Andreas Huyssen's reading of Berlin as urban palimpsest, Walter Benjamin's flâneur concept, and Michel de Certeau's "walker" come to mind: Andreas Huyssen, "After the War: Berlin as Palimpsest," in *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsest and the Politics of Memory*, by Andreas Huyssen (Palo

century, Pike argues, “the literary city came more and more to express the isolation or exclusion of the individual from a community,” and during the twentieth century the literary city came to “express the fragmentation of the very concept of community.”²⁶ This is a concept that we see to be very much at work in Koeppen’s novel: *Das Treibhaus* illustrates a community that is out of touch with the idealistic concept of human solidarity that Keetenheuve, who is this community’s sole outsider, represents.

While Koeppen’s work betrays a psychological subtext which imbues parts of the city clearly with psychological symbolisms (i.e. Keetenheuve’s mind = rubblescape), Günter Weisenborn’s *Auf Sand gebaut* is much more straightforward in its structural composition. The novel was published to very modest success in 1956 and is, just like its author, today virtually unknown. It complements the analysis of Koeppen’s work in

Alto: Stanford University Press, 2003), 72-84; Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999); Michel de Certeau, “Walking in the City,” in *The cultural studies reader*, ed. Simon During (Psychology Press, 1999), 126-133. For example, building upon Walter Benjamin’s *Arcades* project, Philip Broadbent has illustrated how Benjamin’s theory of critical pedestrianism is used in Cees Noteboom’s novel *All Souls Day* (1999) to engage with Berlin’s topography. Philip Broadbent, “Phenomenology of Absence: Benjamin, Nietzsche and History in Cees Noteboom’s *All Souls Day*,” *Journal of Modern Literature* 32, no. 3 (Spring): 102. Simon Ward uses Michel de Certeau’s essay “Railway Navigation and Incarceration” as a framework to read Keetenheuve’s train journey to Bonn and his subsequent suicide to the sound of a tram. Simon Ward, “The Passenger as Flâneur? Railway Networks in German-Language Fiction since 1945,” *Modern Language Review* 100, no. 2 (2005): 414-417; Michel de Certeau, “Railway Navigation and Incarceration,” in *Visual Culture: Spaces of Visual Culture*, ed. Joanne Morra (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 114-116. Ward calls Keetenheuve’s wanderings in Bonn “in the footsteps of the flâneur, as it were,” (417) precisely because Keetenheuve is no flâneur: Keetenheuve is no detached spectator, but thoroughly engaged with and even victimized by the society that surrounds him. Unlike a flâneur, Keetenheuve does not stroll leisurely through the city, his perceptiveness does not result from idleness as in Baudelaire’s *The Painter of Modern Life*. (Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1964).

As to Huyssen: Keetenheuve does not uncover palimpsestic pasts in Bonn. Apart from a mythical engagement with the past, he is mainly concerned with the here and now. While Ward’s use of de Certeau’s framework is convincing for his purpose, I would argue that I am tracing a different aspect of Keetenheuve’s “walking” in Bonn, especially with regard to Bonn’s opposing topographical qualities. In terms of Keetenheuve’s isolation and exclusion from the community, Pike’s model fits perfectly as it helps to conceptualize the analogy between different parts of Keetenheuve’s psychology and the corresponding parts of Bonn’s cityscape.

²⁶ Pike, “The Image of the City in Modern Literature,” 242. (Editor’s introduction).

productive fashion, since it offers an archaeological view into other, in the meantime forgotten literary assessments of Bonn. Published three years after *Das Treibhaus* in 1956, Weisenborn's novel is in its difference in focus a document of the progress of the economic miracle. While Koeppen's narrative of 1953 dwells upon a profound mistrust in the parliamentary process which is exemplarily illustrated in the existential political question of West Germany's accession to NATO and a rearmament, *Auf Sand gebaut* has an entirely different focus that speaks volumes about an increasing normalization in West German society. In its focus on a citizen's initiative fighting for a new food law, it is centered on a problem of West Germany's increasingly affluent society, which had in the meantime granted legitimacy to the democratic state.²⁷ However, parallels to Koeppen's work in the semantization of the novel's spatial configuration are striking, in spite of the differences in content. In organizing the novel's narrative space, Weisenborn was able to draw upon his detailed knowledge of the Bonn area, since he had lived there (in Bonn and Bad Godesberg) between 1924 and 1930, while he studied Medicine, *Germanistik*, and Philosophy at Bonn University.²⁸

The book tells the story of Klaus Butzbach, who quits his job at a grain mill upon his discovery that the process used to bleach flour is harmful. Butzbach relocates to his hometown Bonn and together with the young doctor Lenje Haberkorn, his love interest, starts a grass roots initiative against the mighty food industry lobbyists in Bonn, whom he quickly identifies as his main opponent. Butzbach's story is intertwined with other plot lines describing the local culture of Bonn according to disparate spaces and

²⁷ "In West Germany, the success of the emerging postwar consumer economy granted legitimacy to the new democratic state." David F. Crew, "Consuming Germany in the Cold War: Consumption and National Identity in East and West Germany, 1949-1989, An Introduction," in *Consuming Germany in the Cold War*, ed. David F. Crew (Oxford, New York: Berg Publishers, 2003), 7.

²⁸ Manfred Demmer, *Spurensuche: Der antifaschistische Schriftsteller Günther Weisenborn* (Leverkusen: Kulturvereinigung Leverkusen e.V, 2004), 12.

corresponding social circles: while intrigue and corruption reign in the political Bonn, the old Bonn is rendered a community based upon human solidarity and the idea that democracy should benefit the people rather than the lobbyists' interests. In the political Bonn, the wealthy West Berlin industrialist Wittekind blackmails a secretary in the Ministry of Defense in order to receive an industrial commission. The rich banker's widow Violet who has become the political Bonn's most important socialite is in turn blackmailed by her young assistant. Drawing strength from the social circle around his mother, a simple market woman on the town market in the old Bonn, Butzbach and Lenje, together with the help of the journalist Ernesto Schatz and the Christian Democratic representative Rauh, eventually manage to curtail the influence of lobbyism in Bonn. At the novel's end, while the political Bonn is celebrating the annual press ball, Butzbach and Lenje celebrate a humble engagement ceremony and the success of their political grassroots initiative, as a new draft of the food law banning the harmful bleaching procedures will most likely pass through the Bundestag.

A socialist writer and dramatist, Weisenborn established himself as a successful writer of leftist political dramas during the Weimar Republic. During the pinnacle of his prewar success, he had worked with Bertold Brecht in the 1930s.²⁹ Weisenborn led a double life throughout the Third Reich as an outwardly compliant writer and journalist (dramatic adviser at the *Schillertheater* Berlin, head of the "culture department" at the *Großdeutscher Rundfunk*), while at the same time being a member of the resistance group *Die rote Kapelle* (*The Red Orchestra*). This eventually led to his arrest in 1941 and

²⁹ Ania Kepka points out that Weisenborn worked as part of Brecht's "Collective" on turning the Maxim Gorki novel *Die Mutter* (*The Mother*, 1906) into a play, together with Slatan Dudow, and Hanns Eisler. Ania Kepka, "The Relationship of Brecht's 'Die Mutter' to its Sources: A Reassessment," *German Life and Letters* 38, no. 3 (1985): 233. See also Demmer, *Spurensuche*, 15. Weisenborn is also the coauthor of Brecht's political revue *Wir sind ja so zufrieden*. Walter Huder, "Ein Partisan der Menschlichkeit," in *Günther Weisenborn*, by Ilse Brauer and Werner Kayser (Hamburg: Christians Verlag, 1971), 18.

subsequent incarceration in a series of concentration camps until his release in 1945. After the war, he published extensively in the 1950s and 1960s. With an overall print run of over 1,5 million by 1971 and his works translated into eighteen languages, Weisenborn was among the more successful writers of the 1950s and 60s, one whose publication figures dwarfed Koeppen's.³⁰ To far greater degree than Koeppen, Weisenborn was a writer who openly took a political stance. His democratic-socialist, anti-fascist, and pacifist convictions led Weisenborn to oppose the rearmament and the nuclear arms race between the US and the Soviet Union.³¹ Today, Weisenborn is best remembered for having published the first in-depth account of the German resistance against Hitler, entitled *Der lautlose Aufstand* (*The Silent Uprising*, 1953).

Auf Sand gebaut was largely dismissed as a failed novel based on aesthetic criteria, and it quickly ran out of print after the 1950s. Walter Huder characterizes the style of *Auf Sand gebaut* and the equally fameless Berlin novel of the same year, *Der dritte Blick* (*The Third Glance*), as one of an author "more interested in just objectivity than in the escapades of talent."³² Critic Jürgen Kuczynski highlights the "banality of the language," the "deficits in composition," the "silliness in the characterization of the personnel," and the "superficiality in the motivation of the plot."³³ To Wolfgang Ferchl,

³⁰ Demmer, *Spurensuche*.

³¹ His socialist leanings brought him a readership in Russia and Poland, which he travelled extensively during lecture trips, and other socialist countries, such as the People's Republic of China, which invited him twice. In his travelogue *Am Yangtze steht ein Riese auf* (1961), Weisenborn describes a meeting with Mao Tse Tung.

³² "His work speaks of a writer more interested in a just presentation of facts than in the escapades of talent." ("[...] sein Oeuvre weist ihn aus als einen Schriftsteller, dem die gerechte Sachlichkeit wichtiger war als die Eskapaden eines Talents.") Huder, "Ein Partisan der Menschlichkeit," 19.

³³ Cited in Ferchl, *Zwischen "Schlüsselroman," Kolportage Und Artistik*, 220. Ferchl does not provide a quote of Kuczynski's review.

the book is *Kolportageliteratur* (trashy literature), and he explains Weisenborn's turn to the genre by his political ambitions: Weisenborn wanted to appeal to as many people as possible and thus consciously subjugated his artistic capabilities to the motivation for political action.³⁴ Weisenborn once explained his ambitions as a writer as follows: "To be a writer means to move the people, to change their lives. [...] But I believe it is as necessary as never before in today's world that we writers make ourselves understood to the reading public by means of a realistic language."³⁵ Ultimately, Weisenborn's background in didactic theater, his contact with Brecht, and his extensive postwar involvement with the German resistance movement all point towards strong didactic ambitions in his writing, which he articulated in a realist, progressive-Marxist aesthetic that eschewed any kind of aestheticism.³⁶ Weisenborn's motto was "form creates distance," and he saw it as the most important goal of contemporary writers to stay in contact with the masses and to take influence on their lives.³⁷

For my reading of the novels, however, questions of literary "quality" and genre are of no importance. Instead, my examination of the novel will illustrate that just like in *Das Treibhaus*, the organization of Bonn's topography is used in Weisenborn's novel to drive home the book's ambitious agenda, which in Weisenborn's case is more explicitly

³⁴ Ferchl, *Zwischen "Schlüsselroman," Kolportage Und Artistik*, 219.

³⁵ "Dichter sein heißt, die Menschen bewegen, ihr Leben zu ändern. [...] Aber ich glaube, in der heutigen Situation der Welt ist es so notwendig wie nie, daß wir Schriftsteller durch realistische Schreibweise von den lesenden Menschen verstanden werden." Günther Weisenborn, "Von der Wahrhaftigkeit des Realismus," *Neue Deutsche Literatur. Monatsschrift für schöne Literatur und Kritik* 8, no. 1955 (1955); cited in Ferchl, *Zwischen "Schlüsselroman," Kolportage Und Artistik*, 219/220. Ferchl does not provide a page number.

³⁶ Huder, "Ein Partisan der Menschlichkeit," 19.

³⁷ "Form distanziert." Günther Weisenborn, "Die Aufgaben der deutschen Schriftsteller: Rede an der Sorbonne in Paris.," in *Günther Weisenborn*, by Ilse Brauer and Werner Kayser (Hamburg: Christians Verlag, 1971), 29.

political than Koeppen's: it is a plea for interpersonal solidarity and democratic vigilance, embodied in the lead characters Klaus Butzbach and Lenje Haberkorn, who perform exemplary, democratic values for the reader. We will now look at how the novels' narrative agendas are realized with the help of the spatial configuration of the texts.

BONN AS TEXT: THE NOVELS' SPATIAL CONFIGURATIONS AND THEIR FUNCTIONALIZATION IN THE TEXTS' NARRATIVE AGENDAS

A Psychological Perspective on Bonn: *Das Treibhaus*

In a 1988 interview, Koeppen commented on walking the streets of Bonn during the early stages of the *Treibhaus* project, when he was researching local color: "I was intrigued by the city and what was assembled in this sudden capital: the unsettled things, the contradictions, the underworld, the upper world."³⁸ Thus, it is not surprising that the novel is organized around contradictions. These exist between the political Bonn, the "upper world" and the old Bonn, the "underworld." Both narrative spaces, especially the old Bonn, are symbolically charged by reference to a host of mythological references, stemming, among others, from Wagner's *Der Ring der Nibelungen* (*The Ring of the Nibelung*), the Nibelungen saga, and Greek and Roman mythology.³⁹ As Keetenheuve

³⁸ "Mich reizte die Stadt und was in dieser plötzlichen Hauptstadt sich ansammelt an Ungeklärtheiten, an Widerspruch, an Unterwelt und Oberwelt." Christian Döring and Katja Ziegler, "Bericht aus Bonn," *Tip*, April 1988; cited in Hans Ulrich Treichel, ed., *Wolfgang Koeppen: Einer der schreibt: Gespräche und Interviews* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995), 204. Koeppen spent a mere 48 hours in Bonn for on location research. He wrote the novel not in Bonn, but in the basement of a "bunker refashioned as a hotel" in Stuttgart. Döring and Ziegler, "Bericht aus Bonn," 205.

³⁹ For more on the mythical elements in *Das Treibhaus*, see Karl-Heinz Götze's discussion of the mythical elements in *Das Treibhaus*: Götze, *Wolfgang Koeppen: Das Treibhaus*, 90-98. Götze cites Klaus Haberkamm, "Wolfgang Koeppen: 'Bienenstock des Teufels' - zum naturhaft-mythischen Geschichts- und Gesellschaftsbild in den Nachkriegsromanen," in *Zeitkritische Romane des 20. Jahrhunderts: Die Gesellschaft in der Kritik der deutschen Literatur*, ed. Hans Wagener (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1975), 241-275.

wanders through Bonn's dark underbelly, he is confronted by lemures ("Nacht. Nacht. Lemuren." 145), an underworldly symbolism adopted from the wandering spirits of the dead in Roman mythology and adapted to the ghosts of past Germanies, mainly the Third Reich and the Kaiserreich. The mythic references "mythologize" the everyday reality of 1953.⁴⁰ In this they posit the events presented in the plot as part of a mythic conception of history – an inevitable, in its consequence irrevocable tragedy such as the saga of the Nibelungs, one which has the infinite structure of Wagner's *Ring* cycle.⁴¹ Beyond that, the old Bonn, in particular, is a realm determined by numerous spaces that carry explicit associations with death, such as the rubbleescapes along the Rhine, or the city market with its stench of decay.

With regard to their psychological symbolism, the scenes set in the political Bonn emphasize Keetenheuve's failure in a social system based upon rational behavior, the FRG's political system. The old Bonn, on the other hand, spatially anchors Keetenheuve's irrational behavior, his private thoughts, his drinking, and his drives and desires. The entire novel is organized around an incongruity between the two spaces, a phenomenon that is realized on two interpretative levels: the immediate level of Keetenheuve's actions and impressions while interacting within the physical cityspace and corresponding social spheres, and a further abstracting level of Keetenheuve's psychology. On the latter level, the sociogeographic contradiction between the political and the old Bonn is elevated to represent Keetenheuve's psychological conflicts triggered by the inability to achieve his pacifist political goals in the political Bonn, and by his realization that he cannot further numb the sense of loss felt for his dead wife through sex

⁴⁰ Dietrich Erlach, *Wolfgang Koeppen als zeitkritischer Erzähler* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1973), 175; cited in Götze, *Wolfgang Koeppen: Das Treibhaus*, 90.

⁴¹ Götze, *Wolfgang Koeppen: Das Treibhaus*, 92.

and alcohol in the old Bonn. On the level of space and corresponding social sphere there is no connection between the old and new Bonn, and on the psychological level, Keetenheuve is equally unable to unite his official function as a representative with his political ambitions, ethical convictions, and private desires. Ultimately, Keetenheuve's failure in the political Bonn drives him away from the parliamentary district and into the old town. This is mirrored on the level of Keetenheuve's psychology by his resignation as Bundestag representative and his flight into a world of dreams, visions, and desires, which he tries to act out in the old Bonn, which Koeppen (drastically different from Weisenborn) depicts as a city of the dead, a slowly rotting underworld dominated by decay and decadence.

The Political Bonn: The Upper World

In order to set the novel's two interpretative levels effectively into context, Koeppen's rendering of Bonn has to be through an ostensibly realistic setting, especially with regard to the political Bonn. Therefore, Koeppen's literary Bonn is populated with all the symbols of the young West German democracy, many of which have been points of discussion in the earlier chapters. Images of these landmarks were by 1953 becoming known through newsreels such as the *Neue deutsche Wochenschau*, and via magazines, such as *Stern*, *Quick*, and *Der Spiegel*. The reliance on an ostensibly realistic setting highlights the sociopolitical commentary character of the novel.

Keetenheuve is navigating a literary federal district true to scale, outfitted with the usual reference points, such as the Bundestag, the Villa Hammerschmidt, and Palais Schaumburg. He visits journalists in the famous press barracks, he attends debates in the plenary chamber of the Bundestag, he works at his office in the representatives' wing of

the Bundeshaus, and he spends a night in his drab and lonely room in the “*Abgeordnetengetto*” (the housing developments for the representatives). The landmarks of the federal district are introduced over several pages at the novel’s beginning, culminating in Keetenheuve taking part in a guided tour of the Bundeshaus – a representative consciously abandoning his usual point of view and thereby displaying a capability for self-criticism that his peers lack. This visit leads him to famously call the plenary chamber a *classroom* over which the *teacher* (Adenauer) presides – criticizing Adenauer’s authoritarian style of governing, and introducing the federal district as a dysfunctional setting: “A large empty classroom with row upon row of tidy desks. The teacher’s desk at the front, fittingly elevated.”⁴² As discussed in chapter three, the *Klassenzimmer*-reference points to the contemporary discussions about the lack of democratic atmosphere in Schwippert’s design, something that had only come from Adenauer’s explicit criticism of Schwippert’s original circular arrangement of the parliament.⁴³ The classroom reference is present even in architectural works on the Bundestag, an indicator of how thoroughly the novel influenced not only the political debates on Bonn, but also West Germans’ perceptions of the federal buildings.⁴⁴ In the

⁴² Koeppen, *The Hothouse*, 73. (“Ein großes Klassenzimmer mit aufgeräumten Schülerpulten. Der Katheder des Herrn Lehrers war erhöht, wie es sich gehörte”). Koeppen, *Das Treibhaus*, 54.

⁴³ This discussion started in the early 1950s and never fully came to an end until the move of the Bundestag into the new plenary chamber designed by architects Behnisch & Partner in 1992 and culminated in Eugen Gerstenmaier’s famously unjust contention about Schwippert, that he had no idea about how democratic parliamentarism worked. Breuer, *Hans Schwippert: Bonner Bundeshaus 1949, Parlament der jungen BRD*, 68. Breuer cites a letter by Adolf Arndt to Gerstenmaier of 29 December 1962 in which Arndt summarizes some of Gerstenmaier’s statements to the Press: “[...] the man had had not the slightest idea about parliamentarism, because the Bundestag was a lecture hall but no parliamentary chamber. The good pupils would be sitting in the front, with the bad sat in the back; [...]” (“[...] der Mann hätte nicht die geringste Ahnung von Parlamentarismus gehabt; denn der Bundestag sei ein Vortragssaal, nicht aber eine parlamentarische Kammer; die guten Schüler säßen in der vorderen und die schlechten in den hinteren Reihen; [...]”). It is interesting to note that Gerstenmaier uses the term “pupils,” which imply Koeppen’s “teacher.”

⁴⁴ Such as in: Breuer, *Hans Schwippert: Bonner Bundeshaus 1949, Parlament der jungen BRD*, 51.

novel, one fellow visitor, described as “the beery nationalist sort”, dismissively calls the Bundestag a “talking shop” (74), a term which Emperor Wilhelm II coined to refer to the Reichstag and which Adolf Hitler reportedly used as well. Deborah Ascher Barnstone points out that this dismissive commentary was widely in use for the Reichstag of the Weimar Republic.⁴⁵ The reference to the “beery nationalist sort” indicates how little the parliamentary democracy was respected by the electorate of 1953, and points to a troubling continuity of anti-democratic sentiment among West Germans during the early 1950s. This adds to Keetenheuve’s disillusionment with the FRG’s democratic process. Taken together with the description of the actual rearmament debate towards the novel’s end, the Bundestag scenes frame and visually anchor the story of Keetenheuve’s political failure in the federal district.

Keetenheuve’s sense of disillusionment deepens with every setting he visits in the political Bonn. In the Bundestag press barracks, he falls victim to a political ploy of the cynical, senior Bonn journalist Philip Dana and the government party. During a housing committee board meeting at the Bundeshaus, he identifies the style of newly planned housing developments for miners as “SA- und SS-Siedlungen, nur billiger” (108), built by Nazi architects. While Keetenheuve’s reference to the continuity of the “*Nazistil*,” the Nazi style of building, remains unspecific, together with many other architectural references, it alludes to the contemporary discussions about how to signal a break with Nazism on terms of architecture discussed in chapter three.

Throughout the text, narrative space is closely tied to a specific social sphere. Nowhere does this become more evident than in the rendering of Keetenheuve waking up in his apartment in the “Abgeordnetengetto,” where he begins the second and last day of

⁴⁵ Ascher Barnstone’s *The Transparent State* equally discusses the controversial seating arrangement: Barnstone, *The Transparent State*, 133.

the story. The text traces the coming into being of Bonn's federal district on terms of a succession of, albeit, very different ghettos:

Every ghetto was surrounded by invisible walls and was at the same time open and exposed to view from outside. Keetenheuve thought: The ghettos of Hitler and Himmler, the ghettos of the transports and the victims, the walls and perimeters, the incinerator ovens of Treblinka, the uprising of the Jews in Warsaw, all the camps after the war, all the barracks that housed us, all the Nissen huts, the bunkers, the DPs and the refugees – the government, the parliament, officialdom and underlings, and now we are a foreign body in the sluggish flesh of our capital city. (175)⁴⁶

In thus establishing the origins of Bonn's federal district (and of the West German state which it represents), as one whose genesis from a history strewn with human suffering is clearly visible, the text proceeds to posit the "ghetto" of the parliamentarians as a social organism.⁴⁷ Reminding the reader of the panoptical quality of the ghetto, which facilitates the observation of its inhabitants, the representatives' housing development is subjected to analytical scrutiny from a bird's eye view. In other words: the text invites us to read the apartment block setting as one symbolizing larger social contexts, pertaining both to

⁴⁶ "Jedes Getto war von unsichtbaren Mauern umzogen und lag zugleich offen da, zur Schau gestellt jedem Überblick und jedem Einblick. Keetenheuve dachte: Getto der Hitler und Himmler, Getto der Verschleppten und Getto der Gejagten, die Mauern, der Wall, die Verbrennungsöfen von Treblinka, der Aufstand der Juden in Warschau, alle Lager des Nachkriegs, jede Baracke, die uns angeht, alle Nissenhütten, alle Bunker, alle Vertriebenen und Geflohenen – die Regierung, das Parlament, die Beamten und der Troß, wir sind ein Fremdkörper im trägen Fleisch unserer Hauptstadt." Koeppen, *Das Treibhaus*, 151. In the following, all quotations from the English version of the novel will be followed by a footnote containing the German original.

⁴⁷ In my view, Koeppen's use of the term "Getto" is polemical. In referencing ghettos, this section represents a return of the repressed – not for the Bonn politicians in the text, who unlike Keetenheuve continue to repress, but for the West German horizon of expectation of the 1950s. The use of Nazi terminology (an integral element of the narrative multi perspectivism of *Der Tod in Rom*) was a provocation to readers and argues against the trend to repress the memory of the holocaust. Through his choice of words Keetenheuve is insisting that this new state is, in a way, the result of a succession of ghettos. These ghettos were an instrument in the Nazi subjugation and murder of the Jews, but they also were to be found in the destroyed German cities, populated by non-Jewish Germans. All in all, the use of the word "ghetto" for the representatives' housing is to insist that a state of normalcy has not yet been achieved.

recent German Nazi history and to the West German present of the early 1950s. In *Das Treibhaus*, both periods remain intrinsically linked, and here the book intervenes against attempts by contemporary politicians to evade a confrontation with the Holocaust. Thus this passage contradicts the tenor of Adenauer's first declaration of government of 1949 as discussed in the introduction, which, among other things, compartmentalized the problem of the Holocaust for the present by trying to reduce its presence in contemporary society to recent, postwar anti-Semitic incidents.

On the level of the spatial organization of the novel, the comparison of the representatives' apartment block to a ghetto emphasizes the strict segregation of the representatives populating the political Bonn from the old Bonn and its citizens: there is neither contact nor direct political exchange between the two Bonns. Hence, Keetenheuve describes the representatives and the federal district altogether as a "foreign body in the sluggish flesh of our capital city" (175), the characteristic sound of which is, ironically, not the sound of busy traffic as in a conventional capital, but rather the sound of lawn mowers:

Keetenheuve looked out of the window, and he saw the scene like a snapshot, like an interesting setup in a film, a piece of lawn was in shot, and on the fresh green carpet a girl in a starched white apron, and a white maid's bonnet (a maid of the kind that no longer existed, and that had suddenly reappeared in Bonn like a rash of ghosts), was pushing against a clattering lawn mower, then pan down the cool steel, glass, and concrete façade of the ghetto block facing Keetenheuve, to Dörflich's milk shop [...]. (179)⁴⁸

⁴⁸ "Keetenheuve blickte zum Fenster hinaus, und er sah die Gegend, wie die interessante Kameraeinstellung eines Films, ein Stück Rasen war angeschnitten im Bild, und auf dem grünen frischen Teppich stemmte sich ein Mädchen in weißer Dienstschürze, mit weißem Diensthäubchen (ein Mädchen, wie es sie gar nicht mehr gab und wie sie plötzlich Gespenstern gleich in Bonn auftauchten) gegen eine ratternde Grasmähmaschine, und das Keetenheuve gegenüberliegende Gettohaus senkte sich als kühle Fassade aus Beton, Stahl und Glas bis zu Dörflichs Milchladen herab [...]." Koeppen, *Das Treibhaus*, 155.

The lawn mowers' domination of the city's aural experience undermines Bonn's status as capital in cynical fashion. This is not the usual capital, which is typically a noisy metropolis. Rather it is quaint, boring, and provincial, just like the act of mowing the lawn. At the beginning of the novel, Bonn's traffic center, Bahnhofplatz, is described as follows: "a traffic policeman was playacting at being a traffic policeman in the Potsdamer Platz in Berlin" (62),⁴⁹ a sentence which ridicules Bonn's aspirations in spite of the considerable hustle and bustle of traffic and the construction activities taking place there. Bonn may de-facto *be* the capital, yet at the same time the text insists it is an interim arrangement and thus *not* the capital: Berlin is.

More importantly, the image of the lawn-mowing housemaid is an allegorical reference to the restoration of traditional and bourgeois values, which, the text suggests, is driving Bonn politics. In presenting the lawn-mowing housemaid against a backdrop of modern architecture, the scene sums up the experience of Bonn as contradiction, an indeterminate mixture of the old and the new, an ominous alliance of quaint, bourgeois traditionalism and technical modernity. Koeppen's text, however, functionalizes the contradiction between old and new: like Adenauer, a politician socialized during Wilhelminian Germany and now working behind the modernist façade of the Bundeshaus, the image speaks of a modern West German surface under which old, conservative traditions continue to exist. Together with the image of the "parliamentarians' ghetto," the image of the housemaid mowing the lawn makes a strong statement that Bonn's modernist face is merely an exterior phenomenon.

The housing complex is further used to deliver a social cross-section of the political Bonn. The description emphasizes the transitory and flimsy nature of these

⁴⁹ "Ein Schutzmann spielte Schutzmann in Berlin am Potsdamer Platz." Koeppen, *Das Treibhaus*, 45.

apartments (“run up to be taken down” 176).⁵⁰ This only contributes to the air of the scene resembling a house cut open on a movie set, with Keetenheuve’s imagined gaze panning like a camera along different rooms, as he listens to his neighbors going about their morning routines through the paper-thin walls. The narrative pan along the house introduces representative delegate characters like Keetenheuve’s neighbor Frau Pierhelm, the head of a Christian Democratic women’s league. A stereotypical consumer of the benefits of the economic miracle, she is characterized as an “ostrich,” “head buried in a chest of drawers, hunting for clean linen” (177).⁵¹ The Christian Democratic representative Sedesaum, a “professional Christian” (178), lives in the apartment directly above Keetenheuve’s. To Keetenheuve, Sedesaum is a “human frog” (178) – alluding to his walk, but more importantly to his compliant nature as a yes-man:

Small, humble, and vain, small, cunning, and devout, he would hop into the plenary session, a yea-sayer, a singer unto the Lord, and the Lord didn’t in fact have to live over the tented starry sky as the Lord God of Sabaoth, Sedesaum always found a way of squaring his earthly and heavenly duties, so that they harmonized in his conscience and to the world [...] (180)⁵²

Sedesaum is the stereotypical example of the complacent CDU representative who follows Adenauer’s course without questions. He represents the silent majority in the Bundestag who support the government’s policy of integration into the “security pact” –

⁵⁰ “sie waren auf Abbruch gebaut.” Koeppen, *Das Treibhaus*, 151.

⁵¹ “steckte den Kopf tief in den Schrankkoffer, wo sie frische Wäsche suchte”. Koeppen, *Das Treibhaus*, 152.

⁵² “und so würde er, [...] klein, demütig und eitel, klein, schlau und fromm, in den Plenarsaal hüpfen, ein Jasager, ein Sänger des Herrn, und der Herr brauchte nicht unbedingt als der Herr Zebaoth über dem Sternenzelt zu wohnen, Sedesaum fand immer die Formel, irdischen und himmlischen Herrendienst vor seinem Gewissen und vor der Welt in Einklang und Wohlklang zu bringen [...]” Koeppen, *Das Treibhaus*, 155.

an allusion to contemporary debates of 1953 on a West German contribution to a Western defense network, which would culminate in the FRG's accession to NATO in 1955.

While Keetenheuve is mostly amused about Sedesaum, he is concerned about representative Dörflich, who also runs a dairy shop in the ground floor of the building. Keetenheuve feels threatened by Dörflich, whose telling name alludes to the German regulars' tables in pubs, which stereotypically have been viewed as a breeding ground for rightwing political tendencies in Germany.⁵³ Dörflich is characterized as a demagogue who hates Keetenheuve for his intellect (179), and whom the latter perceives as an *ewig Gestriger*, a Nazi waiting to reemerge as such, circumstances permitting. Alerted by Dörflich's opportunistic demagoguery, Keetenheuve muses about him: "Well, who knows, who knows, maybe we'll see each other in the Fourth Reich, Dörflich's ministerial chair will already be parked in among his milk churns, and my death sentence will have been written" (179).⁵⁴

These social observations establish a close connection between social sphere and space, to the effect that the "Abgeordnetengetto" symbolizes the political Bonn *in nuce*. The novel makes the connection between the above-mentioned representative characters and their political power explicit when Keetenheuve, just like the other characters, leaves

⁵³ In this context, and in opposition to the name "Dörflich," the name "Keetenheuve" might also be a telling name, alluding to the founder of the paneuropean movement, Richard Nikolaus Coudenhove-Kalergi. Coudenhove-Kalergi's paneuropean vision, which he publicly began to present in 1922 with the foundation of the Paneuropa Union, was an utopia in an age dominated by nationalism – much like Keetenheuve's utopian vision of a pacifist West Germany in an age of rearmament. The allusion to Coudenhove-Kalergi would underline Keetenheuve's idealistic the disillusion of which is a central element in the novel's plot. A special thanks is due to Katherine Arens for pointing out this similarity. See "Internationale Paneuropa Union - Union Paneuropeenne Internationale - International Paneuropean Union," accessed 17 March 2011, <http://www.paneuropa.org/>.

⁵⁴ "Wer weiß, wer weiß, vielleicht sehen wir uns im Vierten Reich wieder, Dörflichs Ministersessel steht schon zwischen den Milchkannen verborgen, und mein Todesurteil ist geschrieben." Koeppen, *Das Treibhaus*, 154/5.

his apartment to attend the rearmament debate. The plenary chamber of the Bundestag, as the novel's chief symbol of the West German democratic process, is the setting where Keetenheuve ultimately and conclusively realizes that his political efforts as Bundestag representative are futile. During the ensuing debate over West Germany's rearmament, it becomes clear to him that the outcome of the ballot was already determined before the debate: "The journalists doodle on their pads; they'll be fed excerpts from the speeches, and the result of the vote is a foregone conclusion anyway" (190).⁵⁵ This scene is a commentary on the much-criticized style of governing of the authoritarian democrat Adenauer, who tended to present his ministers, and as the opposition regularly argued, even the Bundestag with political *faits accomplis*, as for example in the debates on the ratification of the General Treaty (*Generalvertrag*) of 1952/3.⁵⁶ This final insight into the futility of the democratic process drives Keetenheuve away from the Bundeshaus for good and towards the underworld of the old Bonn, where he first seeks to dull his senses, and ultimately chooses death.

⁵⁵ "Die Journalisten kritzeln Männchen auf ihr Papier; die Reden bekommen sie im Klischee, und das Ergebnis der Abstimmung steht fest." Koeppen, *Das Treibhaus*, 164.

⁵⁶ While generally arguing that Adenauer's authoritarian style of governing was a necessity during the still instable phase of the FRG's political beginning, Kurt Sontheimer acknowledges that in the public sphere of the 1950s the impression prevailed that Adenauer was surrounded by a circle of complacent and obedient ministers, who did not dare to intervene in the official line of governmental policies. Sontheimer, *Die Adenauer-Ära*, 122.

During the debate over the ratification of the General Treaty in 1953, the SPD called the Federal Constitutional Court because it thought that the Federal Government would have needed to alter the Basic Law to officially regulate the relations of the FRG to the US, Britain, and France. Werner Abelshauser and Walter Schwengler, *Anfänge westdeutscher Sicherheitspolitik, 1945-1956: Wirtschaft und Rüstung, Souveränität und Sicherheit* (Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 1997), 278.

The Old Bonn: Narrative Underworld

At dawn, upon leaving the debate, and with the Bundeshaus illuminated behind him, Keetenheuve walks north along the Rhine, which in the mythological superstructure of the novel is the river Lethe, the river of forgetfulness. While the scenes set in the federal district take place by daylight, the events set in the old Bonn exclusively take place at night. This has profound implications for the way the old Bonn is depicted. While the description of the booming federal district's hustle and bustle centers on newly-erected, modern houses illuminated by the sun (although the goings-on behind the façades counter the impression of the shiny surfaces), the old Bonn is a narrative space dominated by standstill and decay – a nocturnal postwar wasteland, in both human and material terms. Correspondingly, the Bonn market, which Keetenheuve crosses after market hours during the first of his two forays into the old Bonn, is not described as a dynamic place of commercial exchange, an indicator of a thriving community, but rather as a locus of decay, a space associated with the abject and ultimately with death:

Keetenheuve walked through the market rubbish, rotten, stinking, decomposing, rancid and spoilt things lay at his feet, he slipped on something, *an orange, a banana, a good fruit ripened to no purpose, picked to be wasted, born in Africa, perished in the market in Bonn, not even consumed, not even metabolized on the journey through the greedy human. Sausage, meat, cheese, fish, and everywhere flies. Heavy bluebottles. Maggots in their bellies.* (145)⁵⁷

The city market, since ancient times an image of economic life and human activity in the city, has long since embodied the “essence of the [early modern] metropolis,” and thus

⁵⁷ “Keetenheuve ging durch den Abfall des Marktes, Fauliges, Stinkendes, Verwesendes, Ranziges, Verdorbenes lag unter seinen Füßen, er glitschte hinein, *in eine Orange, eine Banane, eine schöne Frucht unnütz gereift, sinnlos gepflückt, geboren in Afrika, gestorben auf dem Markt in Bonn, nicht einmal verspeist, reist nicht durch den gierigen Menschen, verwandelte sich nicht. Wurst, Fleisch, Käse, Fische und überall Fliegen. Schwere Brummer. Maden in Leib.*” Koeppen, *Das Treibhaus*, 121.

has served as a key symbol of the city in general.⁵⁸ Turning such a powerful point of identification around by portraying the market as an image of decomposition and decay symbolically charges the old Bonn for the reader as antithesis to the political Bonn – the city’s other, ugly half.

If the prevalent theme of the old Bonn is standstill and decay, its social sphere is rendered in terms of isolation: Keetenheuve remains on his own, with the Bonners forming an amorphous mass around him. This in turn throws Keetenheuve’s individualism into sharp relief, underscoring the futility of his efforts to democratically represent these people: the scenes of Keetenheuve walking the old town ironically symbolize a Bundestag representative walking among his electorate. Keetenheuve feels as much an outsider in the old Bonn as in the political Bonn, for example during a visit to a movie theater, where his individualism sharply manifests itself in his inability to laugh with the crowd (150).

The central setting of the old Bonn, the wine tavern, anchors Keetenheuve’s outsider theme in a symbolical setting that is emblematic of Bonn’s dysfunctionality on political terms. This is where Keetenheuve as border-crosser sets the novel’s two narrative spaces, the political outpost and the old city, into context for one brief but highly significant moment. By letting him, a Bundestag representative, witness the discussions of his electorate at the regulars’ tables, it becomes clear that the two social spheres in Bonn are completely segregated:

The corner tables were discussing the vote in the Bundestag. [...] The corner tables were grumpy and they were displeased at the vote. But their displeasure and their grumpiness were sterile; they were displeasure and grumpiness in a vacuum. The corner tables took exception. Any other outcome of the parliamentary session would have provoked them to equal displeasure and

⁵⁸ Donatella Calabi, *The Market and the City: Square, Street and Architecture in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2004), xxiii.

grumpiness. They referred to the Bundestag with a preexistent irritation; they referred to the most recent debate as to an event that was irritating and presumptuous, but that didn't concern them or make them feel anything. (207)⁵⁹

There is no social exchange between the sphere of politics made in Bonn and the city's old-established citizenry. Neither do the Bonners seem to share their new parliament's political goals, with Keetenheuve musing: "Were they longing for a taste of the whip to make them shout 'Hurrah'?" (207),⁶⁰ which – yet again – points to latent sympathies with Nazism. This confirms to Keetenheuve that there is no hope for the democratic process in Bonn.

Within the overall spatial organization of the novel, the tavern setting allows for Keetenheuve to make social observations in the old Bonn that further concretize his analysis of Bonn's political dysfunctionality. The setting represents, on a different occasion in the story, a rare instance in which the usually amorphous mass of the old established Bonners appears to a certain extent individualized – yet they remain static, flat characters who do not even react to Keetenheuve's analytical glances; they are merely contemplated in social-realist terms as a "human still-life painting," one that contains distinctly allegorical representations of a Catholic-conservative, political mindset. A *Mann mit Hund*, an elderly man with a newspaper accompanied by a dachshund, reading the front-page article on the debate Keetenheuve left behind, stereotypically represents traditionalism and political conservatism, two things

⁵⁹ "Die Stammtische erörterten die Abstimmung im Bundestag. Die Stammtische waren mißgelaunt, und die Abstimmung mißfiel ihnen. Aber ihr Mißfallen und ihre Mißlaune waren steril; sie waren eine Mißlaune und ein Mißfallen wie unter einem Vakuum. Die Stammtische nahmen übel. Auch jedes andere Ergebnis der Parlamentssitzung hätte sie mißgelaunt gemacht und ihnen mißfallen. Sie sprachen vom Bundestag mit einem priziipiell vorhandenen Ärger; sie sprachen von der letzten Tagung wie von einem Ereignis, das zwar an sich ärgerlich und von angemäßer Macht sei, doch das sie nichts angehe und sie nicht berühre." Koeppen, *Das Treibhaus*, 181.

⁶⁰ "Sehten sie sich nach der Peitsche, um 'Hurra' schreien zu können?" Koeppen, *Das Treibhaus*, 181.

Keetenheuve has identified as enemies of West Germany's political new beginning. To further discredit the man as a counterproductive political force, Keetenheuve cynically notes that the dachshund, and not the old man, looked intelligent: "The dachshund had a clever expression, it looked like a statesman" (153).⁶¹ The other figure of interest in this context is a Catholic priest, who is accompanied by a little girl about 12 years old, an uncommon sight. The fact that the priest buys the young girl a glass of wine and proceeds to read the lead article of the (Vatican paper) *Osservatore Romano* produces a provocative visual contradiction, together with a host of associations, ranging from the strong influence of Catholicism on the local culture of Bonn, all the way to its moral corruption. The scene suggests that taken together, the two social forces alluded to form the sociopolitical fabric of the old Bonn: a stifling mixture of political conservatism and Catholicism. The allegorical quality of this scene is emphasized by Keetenheuve's impression of a deathlike air of calm eternity permeating this scene:

The little girl's socks under the table were red. The old man stroked his clever dachshund. It was quiet and peaceful. The waitress was sitting quietly and peacefully at one of the tables. She was reading a magazine serialization of *I was Stalin's Girlfriend*. Keetenheuve thought: Eternity. He thought: Fixity. He thought: Belief. He thought: The peace is deceptive. (154)⁶²

The stillness of the wine tavern testifies to a deadly social ossification that in turn hampers any political activity in the federal district. To make matters worse, it is fatally misguided in Keetenheuve's eyes, as West Germany seemingly steers itself towards another war.

⁶¹ "Der Dackel hatte ein kluges Gesicht; er sah wie ein Staatsmann aus." Koeppen, *Das Treibhaus*, 129.

⁶² "Die Söckchen des kleinen Mädchens hingen rot unter dem Tisch. Der alte Herr streichelte seinen klugen Dackel. Es war still. Auch die Kellnerin saß still an einem Tisch. Sie las in einer Illustrierten den Fortsetzungsbericht *Ich war Stalins Freundin*. Keetenheuve dachte: Ewigkeit. Er dachte: Erstarrung. Er dachte: Verrat. Er dachte: Glauben. Er dachte: Der Friede trägt." Koeppen, *Das Treibhaus*, 131.

The death-like atmosphere of stillness and decay, and the association of the old Bonn with an underworld, a world of the dead, is further amplified by the novel's numerous references to the rubble still dominating the streets of Bonn's old town in 1953 – an absolute inversion of the shiny and new political Bonn. Past, present, and future are conflated in the palimpsestic quality of the rubble, and accordingly, this setting is the one in which Keetenheuve makes larger, analytical observations about the FRG's relationship to its monstrous past and about its likely future.

Above everything else, the reference to the rubble contradicts the forward facing founding discourses as represented by Adenauer's declaration of government of 1949, which, as was shown in the introduction, only incorporated the elements of the German past that were manageable in the present. Wandering the rubblescapes of Bonn, Keetenheuve, in contrast to Adenauer, insists on the traumatic aspects of this past. Not only does he dwell on these traumatic aspects, but through the connecting symbol of the rubble, he highlights the continuation of this past in the present and beyond. In Keetenheuve's eyes, the policy of rearmament will likely lead to another war: "Attack over the Vistula. What else? A war. Graves" (39).⁶³

Given the high symbolic content of the rubble as a leitmotif that conflates German past, present, and future, it is no coincidence that Keetenheuve's last, doomed attempt at establishing human contact, the seduction of Lena, a sixteen year old girl he picks up in a wine tavern, takes place in the ruins of a bombed-out house. As Keetenheuve tries to have sex with Lena, the reader is confronted with a flurry of symbols of Germany's nationalist and fascist past:

⁶³ "Angriff über die Weichsel. Und noch? Ein Krieg. Gräber." Koeppen, *Das Treibhaus*, 22/3.

Everywhere on the stumps of masonry, in blown-out windows, on the broken pillar of the singer's curse, sat greedy heraldic animals, squatted stupid puffed-up murderous eagles with reddened beaks, fat complacent lions from coats of arms, with bloodied mouths, snake-tongued griffins with dark sticky claws, a bear growled menacingly, the ox of Mecklenburg moored, and the SA marched, death's head units paraded, Vehmic killer battalions moved up with blare of brass, swastika banners unfurled from moor-slimed sheaths, [...] (214)⁶⁴

Located at the end of the novel, this scene conflates the novel's two levels of meaning, the political references and the description of Keetenheuve's psychology, and encapsulates the novel's message. Lena's seduction is an act of utter relationlessness (215) that is unable to cover up Keetenheuve's despair in the face of the persistence of the German past in the present. He comes to realize that this experienced, overwhelming temporal simultaneity leaves him no other option but death: "There was no uprising here, there was guilt, no love, just a grave. It was the grave in him" (215).⁶⁵ The novel saves up this insight for Keetenheuve (and the reader) until the very end. It is at the same time a powerful statement about contemporary West German sociopolitical issues, and about an individual, psychological state of mind.

Bonn is not only a contradiction on strictly topographical terms: both parts of the city are associated with opposing temporal references. While the federal district points towards an uncertain future (as embodied by the debate on the FRG accession to a new military defense network), the old Bonn references, apart from the stifling sociopolitical climate of the FRG's present, the unmastered past, insists on the continuing influence of this past on both present and future, and ultimately reveals Keetenheuve's trauma.

⁶⁴ "Überall auf den Mauerstümpfen, in hohlen Fenstern, auf der geborstenen Säule aus des Sängers Fluch saßen die gefräßigen heraldischen Tiere, hockten dumme aufgeplusterte mordgierige Wappenadler mit geröteten Schnabeln, fette, selbstzufriedene Schildlöwen mit blutverschmiertem Maul, zungelnde Greife mit dunkelfeuchten Klauen, ein Bär brummte drohend, ein Ochse sagte Muh, und SA maschierte, Totenkopfverbände paradierten, Fememordbatallione rückten mit klingendem Spiel an, Hakenkreuzbanner entfalteten sich aus moorverschmierten Hüllen [...]." Koeppen, *Das Treibhaus*, 188.

⁶⁵ "Hier war keine Erhebung, hier war Schuld, hier war keine Liebe, hier gähnte ein Grab." Koeppen, *Das Treibhaus*, 189.

Koeppen's text thus illustrates a process of failure that is individual (with regard to Keetenheuve's psyche) and general at the same time.

With the critic's initial, harsh reactions in mind, it is striking that *Das Treibhaus* does not offer an alternative to what it renders as a thoroughly faulted and even downright futile democratic process, even though the novel takes a clear stance against anti-democratic sentiments by means of the negatively-rendered figures of ex-Nazis, most importantly representative Dörflich.⁶⁶ Neither does the novel mention socialism as an alternative – Socialism's main identification figure, the Schumacher-standin Knurrewahn is equally depicted as an ineffective part of Bonn's faulted political process. The fact that the novel is conspicuously void of a solution for Keetenheuve's keenly observed shortcomings of the Bonn democracy makes it less a constructive criticism of the democratic process rather than an introspective and highly aestheticized contemplation on failure. Ultimately, the novel's realism about Bonn remains confined to the city surfaces and subjugated to the novel's psychological narrative agenda.

An Ideological Perspective on Bonn: *Auf Sand gebaut*

With its aim of presenting West Germans with "democratic model citizens," Günther Weisenborn's *Auf Sand gebaut* serves a very different narrative agenda than Koeppen's psychological and reference-laden prose, to the extent that it could even be called *Gebrauchsliteratur* (literature of purpose).⁶⁷ The novel's narrative matter-of-

⁶⁶ Karl-Heinz Götze calls this "abstrakte Negation als Zeitkritik." Götze, *Wolfgang Koeppen: Das Treibhaus*, 77.

⁶⁷ The term "Gebrauchsliteratur" is defined as literature for a political purpose ("Dichtung für den politischen Gebrauch") in: Hans Joachim Schröder, *Die gestohlenen Jahre: Erzählgeschichten und Geschichtserzählung im Interview: Der Zweite Weltkrieg aus der Sicht ehemaliger Mannschafissoldaten* (Tuebingen: Niemeyer, 1992), 27. Wolfgang Ferchl uses the term *Kolportageliteratur* (literature of colportage) and categorizes *Auf Sand gebaut* as low-brow literature due to its numerous "structural

factness and its adherence to narrative conventions of light fiction (linear plot trajectory, a love story with a happy ending) are clearly designed to entertain and to make the text easily accessible – true to Weisenborn’s credo that form creates distance. The exemplary story elements at the same time betray a rigid, interpretative superstructure subjected to an explicit, political purpose: the novel is meant to educate its West German readership as critical, participatory democrats, and as vigilant anti-fascists.⁶⁸ In this, the novel’s practical and optimistic message is diametrically opposed to that of *Das Treibhaus*. The goal of Weisenborn’s novel is not to render in complex psychological detail a highly individualized case of individual resignation in the face of a fundamentally flawed democratic system, but rather to instill in its West German readership a desire for critical democratic participation and vigilance against still-lingering fascist tendencies. In this aspect, the novel can be seen as an outgrowth of Weisenborn’s schooling in Weimar didactic theater.

deficiencies:” Ferchl, *Zwischen “Schlüsselroman,” Kolportage Und Artistik*, 220. The “deficiencies in the plot” notwithstanding, I would argue that this categorization is unproductive for my undertaking (to read the two novels for the spatial organization in reference to the real world Bonn, which as a precondition requires me to compare the two works on an equal level). Furthermore, the antiquated term *Kolportage* in its original German sense refers to a comparatively ancient and therefore entirely outdated mode of literary production (book-like leaflets sold from door to door or by mail). If one were to categorize *Auf Sand gebaut*, I would argue that, especially with Weisenborn’s vita as one of Germany’s most prominent and most active anti-fascists in mind, it could be called “democratic-educational, anti-fascist *Gebrauchsliteratur* (literature of purpose),” since the novel’s plot is meant as an inspiration to Germans new to the democratic system, one that is to foster a vigilant, democratic, and participatory attitude.

⁶⁸ Wolfgang Ferchl argues that the protagonists of the *linksbürgerliche Kolportageliteratur* are confronting a nazistic and anti-democratic, consumption- and competition-oriented society by promoting “solidarity, social justice, redistribution of wealth, real democracy, peace, and so forth.” Ferchl, *Zwischen “Schlüsselroman,” Kolportage Und Artistik*, 215.

Exposing the Shortcomings of the Political Process: The Political Bonn

The purpose of the political Bonn in the organization of Weisenborn's novel is to expose the ostensible shortcomings of the West German political system, which materialize in the text in the form of an overbearing lobbyism that distorts the democratic process and, by example of the harmful bleached flour, ultimately endangers the citizenry. In order to didactically expose the connections between lobbyism and the democratic process, Weisenborn's narrative highlights the flows of money and power to make the argument that Bonn is ruled by an alliance of old money (old industrial and banker families, nobility), well connected ex-Nazis, and greedy lobbyists, all of whom seek to influence a group of politicians lacking the moral backbone of their main opponent, Klaus Butzbach. Accordingly, Weisenborn complicates the division of his narrative space along class and political line to incorporate the city's bourgeois and absolutist heritage, to the effect that the domain of the political Bonn is extended to include the old villa quarter along Poppelsdorf Allee, a short boulevard connecting Bonn's two residential castles, the elector's castle (*Kurfürstliches Schloss*, today hosting Bonn University) and Poppelsdorf castle (*Poppelsdorfer Schloss*).

True to its author's socialist class-consciousness, the novel emphasizes the ties of the old Bonn social establishment to the city's political sphere through exemplary characters like the socialite Violet, a rich banker's widow. Hermetically sealed off from the rest of the old Bonn, this space is populated by what the narrator quite partially dismisses as "all kinds of federal employees and nobility, of which there was plenty in Bonn" (83),⁶⁹ devoid of the positively rendered characters populating the old Bonn.⁷⁰ The

⁶⁹ "allerlei Volk von Bundesbediensteten und Kleinadel, der in Bonn zu Haufen saß." Weisenborn, *Auf Sand gebaut*, 83. There is no English translation of *Auf Sand gebaut*.

text makes the connection between the old absolutist and the new capitalist elites explicit.

During one of Violet's parties, the reader is presented with the following exchange:

A representative from the Christian party, fat and snuffling, introduced himself to another representative who was a prince, adding: "I represent industry." The prince laughed ironically beneath his hooked nose and bowed: "My pleasure; I represent the people." (83)⁷¹

This social travesty introduces the setting of Violet's parties as a locus of schemes, lobbyism, nepotism, and even blackmail:⁷² Violet's assistant Nicol is blackmailing her with his knowledge of an unexploded WWII aircraft bomb located in the foundation of the new bank building next to Violet's mansion.⁷³ A person absolutely out of place at Violet's parties, Butzbach is invited to one of these events with the explicit purpose of having his reputation ruined: the mighty lobbyist Sterzenbach records a conversation in

⁷⁰ In contrast to the 2nd person personal narrative perspective of *Das Treibhaus, Auf Sand gebaut* is rendered in third person authorial perspective, with the narrator often intervening into the narrative by means of didactic social commentary.

⁷¹ "Ein christlicher Abgeordneter, dick und schnaufend, stellte sich einem Abgeordneten vor, der ein Prinz war, und fügte hinzu: 'Ich vertrete hier die Industrie.' Der Prinz lächelte ironisch unter seiner Hakennase und verbeugte sich: 'Angenehm, ich vertrete hier das Volk.'" Weisenborn, *Auf Sand gebaut*, 83. Translation by Lee Holt.

⁷² The cynical and dishonest mode of human exchange prevalent in the political Bonn becomes manifest in the most intimate realm of human interaction: sexuality. It is striking that all the sexual relationships set in the political Bonn are asymmetrical and based upon a pattern of exploitation on terms of a power and gender hierarchy, with powerful men exploiting women who are either of lower social status, or are susceptible to domination due to their emotional dependency, such as Violet. Introducing a tear-jerker element into the plot, the secretary Lolo von Wied is forced to humiliate herself in front of the sexually perverted lobbyist Sterzenbach in order to pay for her mother's desperately needed surgery. In equating a morally corrupted society to an exploitative society, Weisenborn is following a prevalent pattern of the novels of the 1950s, as for example equally manifest in Martin Walser's *Ehen in Phillipsburg*. See Jan Uelzmann, "Die 'schöne neue BRD' und der passive Widerstand des Außenseiters im westdeutschen Roman der 50er Jahre" (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech University, 2006), 63-65.

⁷³ Symbolically, this image lends a volatile aspect to Bonn that has nothing to do with its provisionality: a relapse into militaristic or even fascist behavior could put an end to the new prosperity. A considerable part of the novel's plot is concerned with highlighting the danger to the young democracy emanating from Nazi underground organizations like the "Kampfbund für Gerechtigkeit und Menschlichkeit" that are trying to influence Bonn politics.

which he tricks Butzbach into making statements suggesting that he is a communist. This false information is then forwarded to the *Kampfbund für Recht und Menschlichkeit*, a Nazi underground organization trying to regain political influence. With regard to the *Kampfbund*, the novel is highlighting a troubling continuity of the Bonn establishment with the Nazi past. Thus, Violet's mansion is the embodiment of all that Butzbach's initiative is up against. In this way the area around Poppelsdorf Allee is a spatial manifestation of the text's critique of the new Bonn republic's social roots, which it clearly locates in an old alliance between industry, the nobility, and former Wehrmacht or SS officers.⁷⁴

In its references to Poppelsdorf Allee and the surrounding villa quarter, Weisenborn's *Auf Sand gebaut*, just like *Das Treibhaus* anchors the political Bonn in a number of photo-realistically rendered, "visual" references. Moving on to the federal district as the other part of the political Bonn, this strategy continues in the description of the text's key metonymic symbol of the West German democracy, the Bundeshaus, with the narrator's strong presence often inserting commentary of an almost journalistic nature, as in this description:

The Bundeshaus lies like a white giant between gardens and the Rhine and is adorned with numerous cubistic buildings all around. Rustling poplars stand innocently along the Rhine front, and age-old beech trees, which have already seen Ernst Moritz Arndt and Heinrich Heine, are rustling in the summer wind. Looking through the windows of the Bundeshaus, one can see the tugboats and barges on the Rhine traveling diligently back and forth between Holland and Switzerland. [...] The press barracks one through four are situated on the other

⁷⁴ In this the novel highlights the continuities with a monarchic and militaristic past on much the same terms as Heinrich Böll's 1959 landmark novel *Billard um halbzehn*. Heinrich Böll, *Billard um halbzehn* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1963). By means of an elaborate interpretative superstructure of a "buffalo and lamb semantic," Böll's text traces a continuity of Germany's militaristic strain of character through the Fämel family in Cologne. See Uelzmann, "Die 'schöne neue BRD' und der passive Widerstand des Außenseiters im westdeutschen Roman der 50er Jahre," 88-95.

side of the Bundeshaus. In many cramped rooms the accredited journalists are at work, and sweating they relay their reports to newspapers, agencies, and radio networks. (44)⁷⁵

The Bundeshaus visually anchors the novel's main point of criticism about the West German democratic process: a denouncement of lobbyism. Interested in backroom politics rather than in big debates, the novel has as its main setting within the Bundeshaus not the parliamentary chamber, as in *Das Treibhaus*, but rather the Bundestag foyer. It is populated with "unknown, fat-faced marketers, who eagerly talk at representatives" (55).⁷⁶ The unfavorable description of lobbyists is further concretized, when the reputable elder representative Rauh warns a new Bundestag member (and, by proxy, the reader still new to the West German democratic process):

Lobbyists are mostly hardened businesspeople with icy calculating faces, with voracious eyes, vulture-like percentage-thinking and cold like a prison key, advocates of industrial profit, wranglers of laws, pioneers of the business interests who conjure, fight, demand, and scheme. (56)⁷⁷

The close resemblance of the description of West German lobbyists to stereotypical communist propaganda renderings of capitalists is impossible to ignore here and speaks to the novel's leftist political agenda. As a setting, the Bundeshaus in a nutshell symbolizes the political process in Bonn, which the novel portrays as thoroughly flawed.

⁷⁵ "Das Bundeshaus liegt wie ein weißer Riese zwischen Gärten und Rhein und ist mit vielen kubischen Gebäuden rundum garniert. Rauschende Pappeln stehen unschuldig an der Rheinfront, und uralte Buchen, die schon Ernst Moritz Arndt und Heinrich Heine gesehen haben, rauschen im Sommerwind. Durch die Fenster des Bundeshauses sieht man die fleißigen Schleppzüge auf dem Rhein, die zwischen Holland und der Schweiz unterwegs sind. [...] Auf der anderen Seite des Bundeshauses liegen die Pressehäuser eins bis vier. In vielen winzigen Zimmern hausen die akkreditierten Journalisten und telefonieren schwitzend ihre Berichte an Zeitungen, Agenturen und Funksender" (44).

⁷⁶ "unbekannte, dickgesichtige Händler, die eifrig auf Abgeordnete einreden." Weisenborn, *Auf Sand gebaut*, 55.

⁷⁷ Lobbyisten sind meist harte Geschäftsleute mit eisigen Dividiengesichtern, mit raubgieriger Pupille, geierhaftem Provisionsdenken und kalt wie ein Zuchthauschlüssel, Profitanwälte der Wirtschaft, Gesetzesbändiger, Pioniere der Firmeninteressen, die beschwören, bekämpfen, fordern und intrigieren. Weisenborn, *Auf Sand gebaut*, 56.

However, the novel suggests that the West German democracy is capable of defending itself. In contrast to Koeppen's novel, the press barracks adjacent to the Bundeshaus are a setting of democratic hope. Here Butzbach's friend, the investigative journalist Ernesto Schatz, chronicles the political misdeeds of Bonn lobbyists and politicians. Schatz is an ostensibly impartial voice, and the press is clearly rendered as a medium carrying hope for a more functional democracy. Highlighting the fact that Bonn is still under international scrutiny, Schatz cites from a clipping of a British newspaper:

[...] the decisions of true political importance are not negotiated in cabinet and also very seldom in constitutional committees. On the contrary, they originate among the small group of personal friends of the chancellor, nearly all of whom are Catholics, mostly from Cologne, and most of them in a position which shelters them from any effort of the Bundestag to hold them accountable [...]. (226)⁷⁸

Contrary to Koeppen's text, Weisenborn's version of the press barracks conveys a sense of hope, as it demonstrates the critical role of the media in monitoring the democratic process.

The novel's rendering of the political Bonn finds its climax in a description of the Federal Press Ball (*Bundespresseball*) in the small city of Neuenahr, about 20 miles away from Bonn. The setting of the ball in Bad Neuenahr removes the political Bonn from its main spatial reference point, the Bundeshaus, and allows for an analysis of the political Bonn *in nuce*, since everyone is present in one symbolically charged location, which metonymically represents the political Bonn. In a strange split between feeding the reader's sensationalist desires for details about the lifestyle of this new West German social elite and the author's desire for social criticism, the description of the event is

⁷⁸ ...die Entscheidungen von wirklicher politischer Bedeutung reifen nicht im Kabinett und auch nur selten in den verfassungsmäßigen Gremien. Sie gehen vielmehr aus der kleinen Gruppe persönlicher Freunde des Kanzlers hervor, die fast alle Katholiken sind, die meisten aus Köln und fast alle in einer Stellung, in der der Bundestag sie nie zur Rechenschaft ziehen könnte... Weisenborn, *Auf Sand gebaut*, 226.

fashioned in a journalistic tone, with the narrator adding disqualifactory commentary. The description of the press ball's famous raffle, in the mid 1950s the most important social event in Bonn, anchors the event in a description of the press ball familiar from West German newsreels and newspapers:

The raffle proceeded on the stage, which nearly disappeared beneath the floral decor. The great auditorium was packed with overheated people. One representative called out the numbers, which a film actress then drew from a drum. There was a lot of applause as an automobile, a piglet in a basket, a cow, motorcycles, radio equipment, refrigerators, holiday trips and rugs were handed out to their new owners, everything sponsored and written off as expenses by several companies. Overall there were two thousand one hundred and eighty three prizes that were received with jubilation, laughter, disappointed faces and rapturous cries. The applause went on without interruption. (396)⁷⁹

The closeness of Weisenborn's rendering of the scene with journalistic descriptions of the event becomes apparent when compared with the description of the 1955 press ball taken from the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*:

With spectacular humor, SPD representative Carlo Schmidt played the master of ceremonies during the raffle while Heli Finkenzeller drew the lots. The wife of the ex-SPD Minister of Economics of Hessen and Bundestag delegate Harald Koch won the first prize, an Opel Rekord. Adenauer's neighbor from Rhöndorf won the second prize, the cow Amanda, which was donated by the cattle breeder's association.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ "Auf der Bühne, die unter dem Blumendekor fast verschwand, wurde die Tombola ausgelost. Der große Theatersaal stand gedrängt voll erhitzter Menschen. Ein Abgeordneter rief die Lose auf, die eine Filmschauspielerin dann aus der Trommel zog. Es gab viel Beifall, als ein Auto, ein Ferkel im Korb, eine Kuh, Motorräder, Radiogeräte, Kühlschränke, Reisen und Teppiche ihre Besitzer fanden, alles gestiftet und als Spesen von zahlreichen Firmen verrechnet. Insgesamt gab es zweitausendeinhundertdreiundachtzig Preise, die mit Jubel, Gelächter, enttäuschten Gesichtern und entzückten Aufschreien entgegengenommen wurden. Der Beifall rauschte pausenlos auf." Weisenborn, *Auf Sand gebaut*, 396. Translation by Lee Holt.

⁸⁰ "Der SPD-Abgeordnete Carlo Schmidt spielte mit aufsehenerregendem Witz den Conferencier an der Tombola, während Heli Finkenzeller die Lose zog. Den Haupttreffer, einen Opel Rekord, gewann die Frau des früheren SPD-Wirtschaftsministers von Hessen und Bundestagsabgeordneten Harald Koch. Den zweiten Hauptgewinn, die von den Rindviehzüchtern gestiftete Kuh Amanda gewann Adenauers Nachbar aus Rhöndorf." "Ballgeflüster vom Bonner Pressefest: Minister, Filmstars und Journalisten eröffnen die Ballsaison in der Bundeshauptstadt," *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, 8 November 1955.

Despite the similarities, there is an important difference between these descriptions of the raffle. The narrator's aside of "alles gestiftet und als Spesen verrechnet" (396) in Weisenborn's text disqualifies the event as a mindless celebration of consumerism for an elite few, financed by industrial deductions (allowable expenses), and thus ultimately by the tax breaks financed by the people who are absent from the event, the West German people. Thus oscillating between sensationalism and sociopolitical criticism, Weisenborn's novel remains a narrative contradiction and slave to its didactic agenda, unlike Koeppen's text, which is much more straightforward in its dismissal of Bonn.

The text exploits the realistic yet removed setting of the press ball to make broad observations and judgments about the political Bonn that ultimately dismiss the provisional capital as a mere transition, as the all-German capital Berlin is still looming large in the collective imaginary. In this, Weisenborn's text is commenting on the lingering hopes of West Germans that their capital could one day be relocated to Berlin, the repercussions of which were an important part of the discussion in chapter two. The outcome of this sentiment, the "Berlin crisis" of 1956/7, accompanied the novel's release. In the novel, characters from Berlin keep the awareness of the city's aspirations for capital status alive through the narrative by means of symbolical appearances at the beginning and end of the narrative.⁸¹ Thus, the description of the press ball at the end of the novel is commented on by a voice from the all-German capital in waiting, when an electrician fixing a short circuit in a basement directly under the party in progress remarks in a stereotypical Berlin accent:

⁸¹ The beginning of the romantic plot segment between Butzbach and his love interest Lenje Haberkorn, Butzbach running over Lenje's bicycle, takes place against the backdrop of the tongue-in-cheek commentary of an adolescent boy, who remarks in the Berlin accent to Butzbach: "Nice broad, huh?" ("Duftte Puppe, wa?") Weisenborn, *Auf Sand gebaut*, 23.

“What then, what then? That’s what you call work? What they do during the week? I call that earning money, you know? And us? People who want work today don’t have time any time left for earning money. And I’m s’posed to light up the lousy lot up there for two marks an hour? Nah, leave it, the whole works here is built on sand.” (399)⁸²

The scene’s heavy-handed symbolism (Berlin accent, basement as marker of social status) is explained even further to the reader as the electrician elaborates for his dim-witted rheinish speaking colleague: “Boy, your dime is falling a penny at a time. Built on sand, that means the house is built of the wrong stuff, built at the wrong place, on the wrong corner. The house belongs to Berlin!” (400).⁸³ By means of this scene, the novel directly intervenes in the 1956 political debate on Berlin. While demonstrating to its readers how Bonn could be better run in the present, through the incorporation of the voices of admonition from the former German capital and in siding with these voices, the novel clearly advocates for a move of the capital to West Berlin, as it was demanded by Gerd Bucorius and his peers in fall of 1956.

The Old Bonn, Home of Exemplary Democrats

The political Bonn’s narrative spaces, identified with a misuse of the democratic process, are opposed by settings and by a corresponding social circle located in the old Bonn, in which human interactions ostensibly rest on basic principles of honesty and sincerity. This positively rendered social behavior carries what the text posits as a truly democratic effort to work for a better Germany: Klaus Butzbach’s quest in fighting for a

⁸² “Wat denn, wat denn? Nennste det arbeeten, wat die in der Woche treiben? Ick nenne det Jeldvadienen, varstehste? Und unsereina? Wer ville arbeit, der hat heute überhaupt keene Zeit mehr zum Jeldvadienen. Un dem lausigen Vaein da oben soll’ck Licht machen for zwei Mark de Stunde? Na, laß man, det hier is sowieso uff Sand jebaut.” Weisenborn, *Auf Sand gebaut*, 399. Translation by Lee Holt.

⁸³ “Junge, dein Groschen fällt aber pfennigweise. Uff Sand jebaut, det heeßt: det Haus is aus falschem Material, an der falschen Stelle jebaut, det Haus steht an der falschen Ecke. Det Haus jehört nach Berlin!” Weisenborn, *Auf Sand gebaut*, 400. Translation by Lee Holt.

food law that better protects West Germans from chemicals in their food. Neatly divided by the old city gate from the realm of the corporate capital and inherited power structures that steer politics in the political Bonn, the novel's old Bonn is thus cleansed of the (class) enemies opposing Butzbach's efforts and values as identified by the novel's class-conscious agenda: the social circle of the political Bonn. Just as in *Das Treibhaus*, the protagonist serves as border-crosser: only through Butzbach's presence in both parts of the literary Bonn does the reader gain a coherent picture of the city's problematic presence, and is thus enabled to critically reflect upon the contrast between the city's two parts.⁸⁴

The old Bonn represents the political Bonn's ultimate inversion. If the political Bonn is ruled by greedy profiteers, the corresponding social sphere in the old Bonn is organized around "good" characters, who, throughout the plot, display honest and reputable behavior. In contrast to the newly arrived career officials and lobbyists that populate the federal district, long established natives dominate the old Bonn, together with a few characters from the outside, such as Butzbach's girlfriend Lenje, who came to Bonn from Swabia. Taken together with equally long established narrative spaces such as the famous Bonn market place in front of the town hall, this lends the old town the organic character of a historically grown community and underlines its local character's emotional investments in terms of *Heimat*. This spatial configuration disqualifies the

⁸⁴ To be sure, there are two other characters to appear in both spheres: Butzbach's friend, the journalist Ernesto Schatz, and the Bundestag representative Rauh both appear in the old Bonn during the engagement party that Butzbach and Lenje celebrate at the Butzbach family home at the novels' end. To define these figures as border-crossers, would go too far, however. Schatz is a mere auxiliary character to Butzbach, a friend and ally in the struggle for the new food law, who on a symbolical level stands for the power and the possibilities of a democratic press landscape, as he constantly lectures Butzbach about the press system's potential positive powers and pitfalls. Besides a minor romantic subplot between him and the secretary Lolo von Wied, Schatz does not have an own plot line. Rauh is equally a minor character. He carries a subplot as a representative in doubt about the course and the motivations of the current lobbyist politics being made in Bonn. Both characters carry far too little plot set in the old Bonn in order to set the city's two halves into context.

federal district due to its lack of local, *Heimat* history – it simply is too new and transitory. In this, Weisenborn’s text is also about the conflict between locals and strangers – the circle of old-established upper class Bonners who associate with the politicians and lobbyists in Violet’s salon clearly fall among the strangers according to the novel’s class-conscious agenda. Unlike Koeppen’s novel, the locals in *Auf Sand gebaut* have agency: since they carry the democratic hopes for West Germany, Weisenborn’s old Bonn hosts a dynamic and confident ensemble of characters, who are a far cry from the flat characters populating Koeppen’s socially ossified old town.

We have already seen that Weisenborn’s text extends the narrative space associated with the political Bonn to incorporate the rich district around Poppelsdorf Allee to emphasize the ties between Bonn politics and an alliance of old money and industrial lobbyism. The same happens with the novel’s old Bonn, which is extended beyond the limitations of Bonn’s historic district to incorporate the small town of Beuel, adjacent to the old town, just on the other side of the Rhine.⁸⁵ One central narrative space of the old Bonn is located in Beuel: the Butzbach family home.

The characters’ strong emotional investment in the spaces of the old Bonn is illustrated best through a scene in which Butzbach returns to his family home after he was sacked from his job for confronting his former employer Teusch about the dangers emanating from the flour produced at his mill: “Here was earth, *Heimat*, root, stillness and power for the homecomer, who just had lost a battle. He breathed freely. He was

⁸⁵ At the time of the novel’s conception, Beuel was not yet officially part of Bonn, but was closely connected to the old town by means of the newly rebuilt Rhine bridge, later named *Kennedybrücke*. Beuel was only made part of Bonn in the wake of the 1969 communal reform, which vastly expanded the Bonn cityscape. However, the text regards Beuel as part of the city, when it describes Klaus travelling over the Rhein bridge into “Bonn-Beuel” (89).

happy” (24).⁸⁶ The reference to the home soil is further emphasized by the fact that Butzbach’s mother grows her own vegetables and fruit to sell on the Bonn market.

The second setting in the old Bonn, also dominated by Butzbach’s mother, is the town market in front of Bonn’s famous town hall. The space of the market is, just like the Butzbach family home, a celebration of the local, and steeped in tradition: “He looked forward to seeing it all again, the colorful and shining market place in the bright August sun, the casual people and the new houses, and he looked forward to hearing it all again, the language and exclamations that were the sound of home [...] (18).”⁸⁷ While the market symbolizes home for Butzbach, it also stands for a socially intact community, in which everything is familiar, and where life is not determined by elaborate scheming, but rather, like a town market transaction, as a social exchange based on mutual trust and respect. The text in problematic fashion suggests that this has never changed, the old Bonn being a constant anchor for Klaus and his friends to a specific space from which they draw inspiration and strength.⁸⁸ Much on the terms of Peter Blickle’s insightful approximations to the *Heimat* concept, Weisenborn’s characters of the old Bonn have a

⁸⁶ “Hier war Erde, Heimat, Wurzel, Ruhe und Kraft für den Heimkehrer, der soeben eine Schlacht verloren hatte. Er atmete auf. Er war glücklich” Weisenborn, *Auf Sand gebaut*, 24.

⁸⁷ “Er freute sich darauf, das alles wiederzusehen, den bunten, leuchtenden Marktplatz in der strahlenden Augustsonne, die lässigen Menschen und die neuen Häuser, und er freute sich darauf, das alles wieder zu hören, die heimatliche Sprache und die Ausrufe [...]” Weisenborn, *Auf Sand gebaut*, 18.

Weisenborn wrote in very similar terms about the Rhineland while incarcerated by the Gestapo in 1942: “[...] winzige wimmelnde Menschengewebe, die sich emsig hin und her schieben und lachen, feilschen, schimpfen, flüstern, betteln, lästern und schwatzen, indes du hier unten sinnst. Was sie sagen, ist nichts anderes als überall. Aber sie sagen es anders: Auf rheinisch, Freunde. Auf rheinisch, Freunde, auf rheinisch.” Günther Weisenborn, *Memorial* (Frankfurt am Main: Röderberg-Verlag, 1977), 259; cited in Demmer, *Spurensuche*, 12. The theme of the socially intact Rhinish *Heimat* was thus a recurrent theme in his work, another indication that the novel establishes a positive model of *Heimat* which critically opposes the newly built federal district.

⁸⁸ Weisenborn’s use of the *Heimat* topos creates a fiction of an untouched space in Bonn that withstood certain aspects of technical and social modernity. The employment of this fantasy in his narrative only underlines his novel’s proximity to the conventions of light fiction.

“highly positive and innocent relation to a spatially conceived notion of identity, one that is taken as standing outside of politics and only vaguely related to any past other than the shinningly innocent past of nature and childhood.”⁸⁹ In terms of the *Heimat* construct, the humble, Rheinisch *Volk* opposes the Bonn lobbyists and politicians. These two central images, the amoral scheming in the Bundeshaus foyer and the vital bustle of the market, offer key points of interpretation that drive Bonn’s two parts further apart in the novel. In this logic, it becomes important that the protagonist Klaus Butzbach is a local who was born in Bonn and had his entire socialization there. The text posits this character, just like his mother, as products of their cultural surroundings. Thus, their mistrust in the political Bonn is innate; while they are acting partly out of a rational motivation (as illustrated by Butzbach’s political initiative), the other part driving their actions seems to be a (strongly class-connotated) *Heimat* instinct, activating their protective instincts against influences from the outside (the representatives from all over West Germany).⁹⁰ Accordingly, Butzbach’s mother perceives the political Bonn as a hostile, foreign presence in the city: “These are days, you could hardly believe it! But since we have the politicians in Bonn, there is trouble. My boy! They arrested him! And the crooks walk around freely” (341).⁹¹

The novel’s careful opposition of Bonn’s incompatible spaces and corresponding social circles is rounded off by juxtaposing Klaus Butzbach’s and Lenje’s engagement ceremony, a ceremony taking place under the simplest of circumstances in the Butzbach

⁸⁹ Peter Blickle, *Heimat: A Critical Theory of the German Idea of Homeland* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2002), 157.

⁹⁰ In this context it is interesting that the novel does not mention the occupation of Bonn through the British forces in the aftermath of WWII.

⁹¹ “Dat sind er Zustand heut, dat soll mer nit glauben! Aber seit wir die Politiker in Bonn habe, da is Qualm in der Stuw. Meine Jung! Den dont se verhafte! Un die Lumpe laufen frei erum.” Weisenborn, *Auf Sand gebaut*, 341.

home, with the Federal Press Ball. The following scene explicitly establishes a crucial counter-image to the opulent party of the political establishment, which immediately follows this scene in the book:

While Bonn's entire government district trembled beneath the last excited preparations for the great press reception, while car upon car sped diligently towards Neuenahr, where the ball was to take place, Lenje and Klaus sat at a table in the madam's parlor. It was an old-fashioned, comfortable room with a warm tiled stove in the corner. Old family photos hung in oval frames on the walls. The old garden-master Butzbach looked down morosely, the grandparents smiled stiffly at one another. Wedding pictures, pictures of children, pictures of soldiers. A clock on the wall ticked away sonorously. A crucifix hung in the corner, white and with a myrtle wreath at its feet. The heavy oaken furniture stood dark and confident in the parlor. [...] Klaus and Lenje sat in near darkness. They had spoken together for a long time, in quiet and quite reasonable tones as is appropriate for an engagement day. Nothing but plans, good, objective plans for a life fit for two, a life that one day would come. (380/1)⁹²

In spite of its kitschy romanticization of the old Bonn, with the text's dismissive rendering of the press ball as a celebration of mindless consumerism in mind, this passage assumes a strong symbolical quality through its stark contrast with the press event: while the political Bonn is getting ready to celebrate itself and to indulge in the ostensibly false promises of material wealth, this is a celebration of the quaint, traditional, *heimatverbunden* life in the old Bonn. The simple ceremony, driven by the couple's sincere love and sober planning ("good, objective plans") sums up the novel's exemplary

⁹² Während die Regierungsquartiere von ganz Bonn unter den letzten, erregten Vorbereitungen zum großen Presseball bebten, während Auto auf Auto emsig heranrauschte nach Neuenahr, wo der Ball stattfinden sollte, saßen Lenje und Klaus am Tisch der guten Stube der Madam. Es war eine altertümliche und gemütliche Stube mit einem warmen Kachelofen in der Ecke. Alte Familienfotos in ovalen Rahmen hingen an den Wänden. Der alte Gärtnermeister Butzbach sah grämlich herab, die Großeltern lächelten einander steif an. Hochzeitsbilder, Kinderbilder, Soldatenbilder. Eine Wanduhr tackte sonor vor sich hin. In der Ecke hing ein Kruzifix, weiß und mit einem Myrtenkranz zu Füßen. Die schweren Eichenmöbel standen dunkel und selbstbewußt in der guten Stube. [...] Klaus und Lenje saßen fast im Dunkeln. Sie hatten lange miteinander gesprochen, leise und sehr vernünftig, wie es am Tag der Verlobung angebracht ist. Lauter Pläne waren es, gute, sachliche Pläne über das Leben zu zweit, das eines Tages kommen sollte. Weisenborn, *Auf Sand gebaut*, 380/1. Translation by Lee Holt.

message of human solidarity and sincerity and posits the consumerist excess of the press ball as depraved and alien to the modest Rheinisch culture. This scene celebrates the social circle of the old Bonn as a closely-knit community of friends who – the text leaves no doubt about this – will oppose and overcome the democratic shortcomings of the political Bonn and curtail its curse of lobbyism: Butzbach's grass roots initiative advocating a reform of the food laws is well underway by then.

CONCLUSIONS

Both novels exploit Bonn's character as a city determined by two discrete and contradictory spaces, populated with personnel entertaining contrasting ideas and world views, for their respective narrative agendas. However, the division of the narrative space serves different functions in the texts. *Das Treibhaus* makes use of Bonn's dividedness to embed the text's sociopolitical commentary in an aestheticized meditation on Keetenheuve's individual failure. *Auf Sand gebaut* exploits Bonn's contradictory halves for its narrative agenda by associating them with positively and negatively rendered human character traits and according political programs. This underlines the novel's explicit, political purpose as democratic inspirational literature for West Germans.

Both novels operate within interpretative superstructures; in Koeppen's, there is, at minimum, a mythological and a psychological one, while in Weisenborn's text, the superstructure is ideological. The confrontation rendered in *Auf Sand gebaut* is far older than the Federal Republic itself: in pitting an essentialist notion of the humble Rheinisch *Volk* against the exploitative capitalist, Weisenborn's text contextualizes the current situation in Bonn in discourses of anti-modern backlashes, *Heimat*, and class struggle. This struggle, the novel insists along the lines of Marxist historical determinism, will

inevitably be successful in the end. In *Auf Sand gebaut*, Bonn's divided space embodies a confrontation between two political ideologies and their human representatives. Weisenborn's text establishes thus a clear correlate between Bonn's cityscape and ethical or unethical, even exploitative behavior. In spite of the explicit references towards Bonn's provisionality (the title *Auf Sand gebaut* and the press ball scene), Weisenborn's text, by means of its exemplary young and democratic characters Butzbach and Lenje, also suggests a corrective for Bonn's division. Democratic initiatives fighting lobbyism like the one initiated by Butzbach have the potential to make Bonn a better place, until the capital is moved to Berlin.

The spatial configuration of *Das Treibhaus* has several meanings, out of which I have tried to highlight two. On the level of a political interpretation, the image of the outsider Keetenheuve's suicide contains not even a glimpse of hope: contrary to Weisenborn's sympathetic rendering of the old Bonn, Koeppen's version is rendered as a decaying urban wasteland, and thus equally uninhabitable compared to his political Bonn. Unlike Weisenborn's text, *Das Treibhaus* does not function as democratic edification literature, but remains, beyond everything else, extensively occupied with the failure of democracy (the FRG's rearmament), which in turn mirrors Keetenheuve's personal failure (suicide). In this, the text assumes a second layer of meaning, one that bridges the contradictions between the old and the political Bonn by positing the two halves to be part of one whole. Taken together, Bonn's halves form a whole psychological account of Keetenheuve's story of failure.

In addition to presenting narrative agendas that to varying degrees constitute interventions into the West German public debates of the 1950s, both novels function as archives reflecting numerous contemporary founding discourses about Bonn. In this, they sum up this dissertation's inquiry into Bonn's founding period. From Bonn's air of

provisionality unfolding around the established city being out of touch with its new federal district, over central parliamentary debates on rearmament, the ruptures and continuities in architecture, the Bonn society celebrating itself on the *Presseball*, all the way to Bonn's precarious position in the long shadow of Berlin: the two novels offer an extensive commentary on sociopolitical debates that dominated the time of their publication. In sketching out the literary imaginary about the provisional West German capital, they complete the picture this dissertation tried to establish of the local culture during Bonn's founding years.

Conclusion: Bonn and Beyond

This dissertation has traced a number of representative founding discourses with which West Germans – politicians, journalists, city planners, architects, novelists, private persons, and others – have negotiated their relationship to their new capital in different cultural domains. In doing so, it has highlighted ways in which West Germans employed these discourses in order to integrate Bonn and its associated symbolisms into a complex West German postwar present. This complexity mainly resulted from the necessity of politically managing and containing the Nazi past, while at the same time plotting a course into an uncertain future, which was to a great extent determined by the German postwar division and the geopolitical stalemate of the Cold War.

In shedding light on an exemplary selection of new-beginning discourses about Bonn, this dissertation aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how West Germans navigated the demanding challenges posed by a sociopolitically divided postwar Europe in and from their provisional capital. In the postwar decade, Bonn emerges as sociopolitical and spatial imaginary, a temporary anchor for a modern German identity under intense negotiation after World War II, and a screen upon which West Germans projected their debates about the course the German-German story should take during the unsteady postwar period. As Tony Judt argues, however, the contradictions and contests of an ideologically divided Cold War Europe “were the accidental outcomes of history – and history was thrusting them aside.”¹ Judt’s observation would eventually hold true for Bonn as well. After the monumental changes following the *Wendezeit* of 1989/90, Germans, now united, moved from Bonn to Berlin in order to fulfill their long-standing pledge to what was still widely regarded as the all-German capital, though the decision

¹ Tony Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 2.

was far from unanimous. The formal conclusion to move the capital to Berlin was taken by the all-German Bundestag on 21 June 1991 only after an emotional debate, and by a slim majority of only 18 votes. Quite similar to the prevalent pattern of contradiction inherent to the Bonn founding discourses, the return to Berlin marked, in the words of Konrad Jarausch, “both a return to the past and a fresh start.”² In the nascent “Berlin Republic” the debate on political architecture and its associated symbolisms, for example, was led with renewed fervor, and this time much more publicly. Especially in regard to Christo’s wrapping of the Berlin Reichstag in 1995, and Sir Norman Foster’s spectacular renovation of the building that was completed in 1999, the quintessential architectural symbol of the German nation state and the debate on what it should represent continued to dominate discussions on architecture and politics in unified Germany. Beyond the financial concerns over the huge cost involved in transferring the government to Berlin, some Germans argued that Bonn was a more suitable all-German capital – especially considering the role Berlin had played in the Third Reich. Bonn promoters saw the city on the Rhine as a symbol for the continuity of the democratic new beginning after 1945, as well as for the FRG’s federalist structure and western orientation, and as an ongoing commitment to Germany’s European partners that a reunified Germany would not again aspire to a hegemonic role in Europe. In this context, Bonn as capital even after reunification would have signaled a deliberate continuation of the anti-Berlin and anti-Prussia discourse of 1948/9.

A large part of this dissertation illustrated how the aspect of provisionality was inscribed into Bonn in spatial and symbolical aspects, and how Bonn’s interim status subsequently eroded slowly but steadily, while the Cold War division of Germany – more

² Jarausch, *After Hitler*, 267.

or less simultaneously – became ossified. While this dissertation discusses the very beginnings of Bonn as provisional capital, there still is very little known about how provisionality was reinscribed into Bonn following the decision to move the capital to Berlin after the German reunification. More research is needed on how museums in Bonn and Berlin were used to reinvigorate the provisionality discourse about a city in public memory, when Bonn’s de-facto capital status had become, since Brandt’s 1973 declaration of government, an accepted fact. Museum exhibits in Bonn, like the *House of History (Haus der Geschichte)* and the *Path of Democracy (Weg der Demokratie)* ultimately were an integral part of rewriting Bonn as provisional capital. Museums in the new capital Berlin, such the Bundestag exhibit *Milestones – Setbacks – Sidetracks: The Path to Parliamentary Democracy in Germany (Wege – Irrwege – Umwege: Die Entwicklung der parlamentarischen Demokratie in Deutschland)* at the Deutscher Dom, and the *Deutsches Museum*, which took over the GDR’s *Museum of German History (Museum für Deutsche Geschichte)* and largely displaced the GDR’s perspective on the events between 1945 and 1990, were instrumental in (re)aligning the complicated histories of two German states in terms of a teleology, pointing towards a German reunification. Ultimately, these projects thus reinforced the narrative of Bonn’s provisionality.

Especially the Bonn *Path of Democracy* exhibition is a deliberate effort to reinscribe the aspect of provisionality into the federal district’s cityscape and its buildings. The exhibition, which is part of the *House of History*, a museum complex commissioned by Chancellor Helmut Kohl (CDU), consists of a walking tour through the Bonn federal district. It leads by the buildings that used to house the federal government

in Bonn, most of which are still used by the federation in different functions as of today.³ Plaques and signs highlight the buildings' past and present functions. The language used on the plaques rewrites Bonn as interim arrangement, when in the case of the former location of the Federal Foreign Office the text argues that the building's inconspicuous architecture "underlines the fact that Bonn was only intended as a provisional seat of government."⁴ The torso of the former Bundeshaus, the birthplace of the West German democracy, which was stripped of the parliamentary chamber in 1987 and now hosts the shipping company TNT, is introduced in conspicuously plain language which insists on the provisional arrangement by highlighting the building's former function as teachers' college: "The former Pedagogical Academy was the meeting place for the Parliamentary Council, the German Bundestag, and the Bundesrat."⁵ After mentioning the original architect Martin Witte and Hans Schwippert's renovation, the text matter-of-factly continues: "The constituent session of the German Bundestag was held in the plenary chamber on 7 September 1949."⁶

The *Path of Democracy* was only one means to explain and defend the move from Bonn to Berlin to the German public. While the beginnings of the West German nation building process are currently under critical reevaluation, Bonn's role in the "end of West Germany" (as in the transformation to a united "Germany") deserves more scholarly attention, particularly in light of the single focus on the new capital Berlin since

³ Bonn's status as "Federal City" (*Bundesstadt*) means that the city still hosts as considerable apparatus of administrative authorities, the official seat of the Federal Chancellor in Bonn (Palais Schaumburg), several ministerial branch offices, and other bodies.

⁴ The texts on the signs are both in English and German. The German reads: "Seine schlichte Architektursprache unterstreicht, dass Bonn nur übergangsweise Regierungssitz sein sollte."

⁵ "Die ehemalige Pädagogische Akademie war Tagungsort für den Parlamentarischen Rat, den Deutschen Bundestag und den Bundesrat."

⁶ "Die konstituierende Sitzung des Deutschen Bundestags fand am 7. September im Plenarsaal statt."

reunification. By repositioning Bonn as mere waypoint on the path to Berlin, the *Path of Democracy* overly simplifies the story of Bonn as provisional capital during the Adenauer years. Through the exhibition's naming alone, an illusion is created of a neat, teleological development from the interim arrangement of Bonn to a reunited, permanent capital Berlin, when in fact the path to Berlin as capital was far more complicated. By this dissertation I hope to have demonstrated that the West German perspective on the provisional capital was considerably more complex and contradictory: Bonn served an important function as social and spatial imaginary at a time when West Germans were mapping out their way into the postwar age.

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