

Integrating in the Accusative: The Daily Papers of Interwar Hildesheim¹

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*for my father, Steven J, who makes
anything possible*

Abstract: What are the benefits and drawbacks of using objects as sources for an integrative approach? This essay considers the example of the daily papers in interwar Hildesheim. One read the daily paper initially as a means to express the self, to create integration in the locality, and to negotiate reputation, patriotism, and neighborly concern. Yet daily papers in effect fetishized face-to-face neighborly relations, promoted a mass consumer regime, and helped transform a civil into a fascist society. What began as a form of everyday nonconformity against 'the system' helped create a more powerful form of hegemony and a more tragic system of destruction and terror. By exploring the life history of this everyday object, we gain insight into the dynamics at work in that past life world and into the relatedness and contradictions of things.

Disciplines are in part a phenomenon of tropes. Whether it is an economic individual choosing rationally or a heroic leader deciding world-historically, subject + predicate tropes prefigure agendas for research, strategies for teaching, and explanations in narrative. Borrowing across the disciplines may well cross-fertilize individual research projects but, thanks to these tropes, pirating rarely permits the kind of multiplicity and complexity of insight required for an integrative approach. Perhaps the problem lies in the fact that these tropes are used to validate a single-minded preoccupation with one mode of explanation (causation, creation, structure, system, experience,

exchange, or power); or that these tropes permit us to create a sense of interpretive coherence. Whatever the motive, the domination of any one trope silences the *relatedness* and *contradictions* of our lived reality.

Recent integrative approaches have attempted to circumvent these tropes through the introduction of more general terminology. Gender and ethnic studies replaced loaded notions of specific kinds of subjects with concepts of *identity* and *selfhood*. Cultural anthropologists and historians of everyday life similarly substituted notions of ritualized behavior and intentional agency with concepts of *practice* and *enactment*. A common vocabulary can help enrich diverse agendas through collective discussion and perhaps offer new synthetic ways of knowing. For instance, my dissertation on conviviality in interwar Hildesheim benefited in particular from two decades of groundbreaking work by everyday life historians. *Alltagsgeschichte* is an interdisciplinary movement with participants both in and out of the academy that aspires to re-integrate our understandings of the past through innovative combinations of method, theory, and pedagogy (e.g. Gerstenberger and Schmidt, 1987; Lüdtkke, 1993; Niethammer, 1983, 1988). Yet the deeper I penetrated the life world of interwar Hildesheim, the more I realized that identity and agency were dialectically connected to the things Hildesheimers acted *upon*. I began to wonder whether I could gain a better, if indirect, view of this life world through its objects. In grammatical terms, if identity concerns the *nominative* and practice the *predicate*, and both of these are trapped in disciplinary tropes, can one integrate more successfully in the *accusative*?

Buildings, garbage, tools, documents, etc. represent the fossilized remains of the more transitory categories of self and society. It is the relative resilience of things, in contrast to human frailty, that made them the basis for verifying 'truth' in many disciplines (or more accurately, that enabled them to serve as foundational myths.) Yet an object-oriented approach also has much to offer to the specific agenda of interdisciplinarity. Studies of material culture enable us to explore the tension between the ideals that objects express and variations in personal reception and understanding (Grier, 1996: 561). Said in another way, objects go through many stages in their *life history* (Kopytoff, 1986:66). They are produced, distributed, consumed, redistributed, reused, and so on. They shift in and out of *commodity phases* during which their social relevance lay in their ability to be exchanged for some other thing, like money, services, goods, status, or experiences (Appadurai, 1986:13). As both cultural *schema* and material *resources* (Sewell, 1992), they are used and reused *tactically* (Certeau, 1988) in the negotiations and contestations of everyday life.

In the case of daily papers, for instance, interwar Hildesheimers used to wrap a five *pfennig* coin in newspaper before they threw it to Gypsy street musicians (G/131b, R/320).² It was also common practice to cut pieces of newspaper to use as toilet paper in the outhouse (G/180a, R/75). That is, objects in lived reality do not remain trapped within isolated spheres. Unlike discipline-bound academics, things are not limited by rationalism, specialization, and professionalization. We mark objects with power, agency, creativity, exchange, superstition, adoration, and neglect. They in turn mediate relationships, hierarchies, transactions, interpretations, and meanings, sometimes sequentially, sometimes simultaneously. Rather than any one aspect, it is the multiple valences of objects that animate them, making them into things with a *social life* (Appadurai, 1986).

As any good biographer might tell you, life stories exist within larger historical-cultural contexts; so too with objects. As the context changes, the form, meaning, and use of objects change as well (e.g. Auslander, 1996). Inversely the many individual decisions on how to use and reuse such objects in turn propel longitudinal transformations in culture, society, economy, and polity. Here, interwar Hildesheimers read their daily papers within specific yet changing circumstances to which they responded through their objects and which in turn helped foster these transformations. The life history of these objects is therefore located at the crux of the dynamic relationship between everyday individuals and larger systemic forces; and they can reveal to us the relatedness and contradictions of that past life world.

Everyday life has its own boundaries, rhythms, hierarchies, and categories. Reconstructing a cohesive life world through academic research could play into an imagined sense of integration and authenticity in that past. Where *Alltagsgeschichte* has been accused of this error of romanticization, the reality is that modern life worlds are simply not cohesive. Experiences are multiple within a heterogeneous society and disjunct even within individual biographies (Habermas, 1981; Maier, 1988; Negt and Kluge, 1993). For the sake of accuracy, our integrative approaches should neither deny nor excuse but explain the paradoxes of a varied and incohesive life world, and should thematize the tension between the desire for integration and the forces dividing the life world. An object-oriented analysis can help untangle such paradoxes because our objects are, as we make them, paradoxical. Ordinary individuals respond to the hierarchies of their life world with new categories of experience that can then become both liberating and oppressive. Arguably this dialectic between categorical structure and integrative nonconformity lies at the core of everyday life in the modern world.

It also lay at the heart of how interwar Hildesheimers read their daily papers. Newspapers are an excellent choice for an integrative analysis of a provincial, German town like Hildesheim because these media *related* individual experiences across social and geographic boundaries and were *contradictory* in their cultural and historical logic. Daily papers reported international affairs, literally transmitting knowledge across the globe, thereby expanding the scope of the life world. Announcements in daily papers also communicated critical information between neighbors about the locality. Yet daily papers were neither just text nor just artifact. They informed through the text printed on them, but were also consciously designed in layout and image, and were even useful as paper (while in the outhouse or dealing with Gypsies). Daily papers were tied to critical social messages about personal status, integration, and reliability, so they played a crucial role during contests for power (Appadurai, 1986:33).

In interwar Hildesheim, daily papers lay at the heart of the public sphere, a crucial category of social mediation, economic exchange, and political hegemony. Theoreticians are of many minds as to the political effects of daily papers. On the one hand, it is in part through the control and manipulation of newspapers (along with other media) that authoritarian regimes established their hegemony. On the other hand, discourse in the public sphere is the theoretical cornerstone of both the Enlightenment project for human progress and the liberal-democratic system it inspired. Newspapers hold an enormous symbolic significance to modern sensibilities and a real if sometimes troubled function in a democracy.

According to Jürgen Habermas (1989), one precondition for a democratic polity is a clear boundary between public and private spheres. Only a secure private sphere offers the reasoning citizen a reserve in which she can form an independent decision, on the basis of which society can then make reasonable collective decisions in the public sphere. This distinction dissolved in the twentieth century, Habermas argues, to the detriment of democracy. He blames consumption-oriented mass media and a *fetishism* of community involvement. By this he means discourse simulated on the mass media and observed by alienated individuals in their homes. The daily paper represents a simulacrum of a public sphere, not its reality. Here the objective quality of newspapers assumes a negative connotation as a barrier to face-to-face discourse. In addition to a fetishized public sphere, Habermas also criticizes the tendency in the mass media to make private lives public and to disguise public events in private dress—all of which challenged the integrity of the distinction between private and public.

Meanwhile, Central European society was formally divided into armed camps. The Catholics, the socialist working classes, and the Protestant middle classes each had their own organizations, ways of life, political parties, paramilitary groups, schools, and, of course, newspapers—institutional subcultures that were reflected in long-term voting patterns (Falter, 1992; Lepsius, 1973; Rohe, 1992). Precisely because of the rigidity of Central European political culture, I will use the German word *Lager*, meaning camp, to refer to these social-cultural milieus in Hildesheim. Superficially voting patterns seem to suggest the long-term resilience of camps in Hildesheim (Knott, 1980; Wichard, 1975). Despite traditional allegations by the papers of the national-liberal camp to be 'above politics,' each newspaper-cum-publishing house in interwar Hildesheim was closely associated with a set of social organizations, a specific social group, and a recognizable political position (Aufermann and Schuster, 1992; Barth, 1929; Gerstenberger, 1972).

Lager	Daily Paper	Abbreviation
Catholic	<i>Hildesheimische Zeitung</i>	HeZ
socialist working classes	<i>Hildesheimer Volksblatt</i>	HVb
Protestant national-liberal		
market leader	<i>Hildesheimer Allgemeine Zeitung</i>	HAZ
Hanoverian offshoot	<i>Hildesheimer Abendblatt</i>	HAb
Protestant church circular	<i>Evangelisches Gemeindeblatt für Hildesheim</i>	EGb
völkisch-antisemitic (National Socialist)	<i>Burgwart</i> <i>Hildesheimer lieobcichler</i>	Bw HB

FIGURE 1. Lager and Daily Papers in Hildesheim

Due to a demographic preponderance of the Protestant middle classes, the HAZ always had the largest distribution in town, but the HeZ and the HVb also held a sizable market segment based on their distinct lagers. There were also many smaller papers that competed with the HAZ for subscriptions within the highly splintered national-liberal lager. The present study relied most heavily on the three larger daily paper, but also considered three smaller papers from within the national-liberal lager, as well as the Nazi paper that subsequently absorbed much if not most of the towns' readership, the HB. I combined a qualitative content analysis of these local papers from the first week of June, 1925, and the second week of November, 1938, with a hermeneutic analysis of two-hundred hours of taped, narrative interviews, created from 1992 to 1994, with a 'representative' sample of people who had read Hildesheim's papers during the interwar years. I refer to my interview partners, and the editors and journalists in charge of producing these daily

papers, collectively as *Hildesheimers*.³

Returning now to our story in terms of the traditional narrative of German history, the Nazi regime then destroyed these rigid boundaries of *lager*. Through policies of coordination (*Gleichschaltung*), it replaced *lager*-based institutions with singular Nazi ones, creating the homogeneous society befitting a totalitarian regime. Thus the Nazi regime (or so the story goes) inadvertently fostered postwar stability by laying the foundations for a mass society and promoting the habits of economic desire—two crucial factors for the success of a mass consumption regime and a stable democracy (Dahrendorf, 1965; Schoenbaum, 1966). Such are the cyclical ironies of history. A slightly different story emerges from the objects of everyday life. An overly simplistic example would be the following joke.

"Mommie, do fairy tales always begin with 'Once upon a time...'" "Mommie heard her husband come home from the shop.
"No, my child, sometimes it also begins 'I had a really important meeting.'"

Versions of this joke appeared in the socialist (HVb, 126:7) and protofascist (Bw, 3/19:8) daily papers within the same week of June, 1925. One wonders whether the latter copied it from the former. In any case, the men of both parties shared at least one thing in common: neither could resist the temptation of the local pub. Had we believed in hermetically sealed *lager*, or studied fascists independent of social democrats, we would have never seen this similarity between their lived realities.

Recent research has suggested that the foundations for a mass society had been laid already during the Weimar Republic (Peukert, 1982, 1987). In terms of reading practices in particular, a synthetic audience for popular literature in Germany, one that transgressed the formal boundaries of *lager*, evolved around historical romanticism in the 1930s (Rabinbach, 1991). What makes the concept of *lager* illusory is the fact that it ignores those aspects of the life world outside of *lager* institutions. Common across *lager* boundaries, the everyday experiences of shared historical circumstances and the use of everyday objects—what Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge (1993:186, 236) called the *material infrastructure* of the *life context*—provided the potential foundations for wide-spread political mobilization. The historical effects of this mass culture could be both reproductive and/or transformative, depending on a variety of historical contingencies. In this case, reading the daily paper in interwar Hildesheim transgressed both distinctions of *lager* as well as of the public and private. It was initially a nonconformist, self-expressive response

to the impermeability of formal power relations. On the one hand, it created the subjective experience of integration; on the other hand, it left Hildesheimers dependent on their things for that experience, isolated 'objectively' from direct neighborly contact. This mass culture in turn offered fertile ground for the growth of new forms of hegemony: a mass consumer economy and a terror state, both reaching into the private sphere to attain their sundry goals. Such are the cyclical ironies of history.

A study of an everyday object *upon* which interwar Hildesheimers customarily acted can help us create integrative ways of knowing and, in this case, uncover a tragic dynamics within the Third Reich. Yet by narrating both kinds of integrations in the same essay—one academic, the other historic—this essay will reveal potential pitfalls both with interdisciplinarity in academia and with using objects as the mechanism of transgression in our lived reality. As the example of the Third Reich will show, dissolving boundaries can sometimes be detrimental to human liberty.

Two narrative styles can be found within Hildesheim's daily papers in June of 1925, which I shall (cautiously) label as *front* and *local*. Literally bearing the caption "from far away lands" in the Catholic paper, front page reporting reinforced the Hildesheimers' sense of provincial isolation from the affairs of Great Men. This isolation was not simply a technological problem that would be overcome eventually by radio, television or the internet. It was also a response born from the political system's lack of responsiveness to an existential crisis that had begun with the First World War and continued into the 1920s and 1930s. For instance, the conference of Allied foreign ministers in Paris sent a diplomatic note to the young German Republic in June of 1925. The note concerned the demilitarization clauses of the Treaty of Versailles and the end of the occupation of the Rhineland. The daily papers generally described its contents, as if to give the Hildesheimers a sense of control over international political events. Yet when the note finally appeared word-for-word in the Hildesheim papers, it seemed like a repetition of the Treaty of Versailles, an unfair accord dictated onto them from Paris. Reading front-page articles revealed a seemingly insurmountable hierarchy separating Hildesheimers from the affairs of Great Men. It was also precisely in such front-page articles that the newspapers functioned most obviously as institutions of their lager. Each paper reported different kinds of events, prioritized its associational life, and editorialized according to its own worldview. In this way, each paper constructed a presumed audience according to the socio-political categories of lager.

Daily papers also told stories "from Town and Environs." In "the Marriage

Market" (HAZ, 126:5), an anonymous author describes a beautiful Ascension festival, a rail trip, a day hike around a nearby village, a sweaty dance for the young farmers of the region, escorted by their parents in a room as hot as an oven, and a late evening return by train to Hildesheim, with a 180 kg man sitting on the author's lap. The purpose of this story was not to report the facts of these events, for Hildesheimers were familiar with them. Rather it invoked a familiar atmosphere—of natural beauty and personal comfort, imperfection and toleration, transgression made good by joking assurances of propriety, irony and relaxed contentment. Little bushes with May flowers greeted the sparkling, mighty steel body of the locomotive. Children and chickens complained "and yet it was beautiful nonetheless." The presence of such objects was not circumstantial, but evocative of the spaces in which such objects were found and used—the neighborhood and locality. Similarly the "Marriage Market" read as if the anonymous author had been personally known to the reader and was telling us all about adventures over the holiday.

The difference between front and local pages lay not just in the geographic scope or nature of the events reported but in the style of narration. Front-page articles reported facts, attempting to impose a larger-based subjectivity on the reader. Local-page articles narrated atmosphere as if they were conversations between neighbors, evoking a romanticized subjectivity of an integrated neighborhood and community—a *Helmut* (here: home town).

The big three papers also reported on the expedition to the North Pole led by the Norwegian Roald Amundsen.⁴ Such articles emphasized the risks which Amundsen and his team faced on the edges of human existence, his command over his own destiny, and his participation in the process of scientific exploration. Adventure, excitement, technological advances, even disaster took place at the North Pole. Other sensationalist stories ranging from train wrecks to murders to earthquakes similarly combined exoticism with high risks in the outside world. So if the North Pole was far from Hildesheim, perhaps it was happily so. With that kind of heroism came danger. Contrasting these heroic narratives were self-help sections. In their gardens, kitchens, and courtyards, Hildesheimers helped themselves. Self-reliance had long been a bourgeois norm, but in the context of the Great War, Hyperinflation, Stabilization, and then the Great Depression, supplementary sources for groceries and clothing became crucial for the very survival of most families. In their gardens, Hildesheimers had a sense of control over their own destiny, a limited degree of independence from a capitalist monetary system gone haywire. So daily papers provided advice for gardeners, recipes for cooks, and patterns for making your own clothing.

Viewed through an integrated perspective of their lived reality, Hildesheimers would seem to have had little power to influence the Allies in Paris and little desire to conquer the North Pole. Whether through politicized identities, directives from on high, or the dangers of life abroad, the front page left little room for their self-actualization. By contrast, the local page reinforced a sense of security and insularity, and it created the possibility for successful agency, even if on a limited and contingent scale. These distinctions permeated each of the Hildesheim papers, regardless of lager. Behind formal lager distinctions thus hides an informal similarity of experience. Reading the daily paper evoked identification with the locality as that *relevant* life world under personal control (cf. Schutz and Luckmann, 1973). This local subjectivity abided in tense coexistence with, and was predicated on, that dangerous outside world—the system (cf. Habermas, 1981). Both narrative styles could be found on the same literal page of the newspaper. Yet their intertextuality suggests that Hildesheimers moved tactically between these two kinds of subjectivities as they read their daily paper, using one as a response to the other.

An analogous dynamic can be shown by comparing serial novels from June, 1925, to interview narratives. The Catholic paper offered its readers "Das Wunder von Ammergau," by Felix Nabor (HeZ, 126:6, 127:5, 128:5, 129:5, 130:13), a romanticized account of the first passion play in a village in the Oberammergau during a period of plague. As the villagers prepare and perform the passion play for which their town becomes famous, they increasingly assume the same roles in their village life. Ammergau becomes Jerusalem itself, piety transcends the exigencies of everyday life, and a true community emerges (along with one outcast, the unfortunate man cast in the role of Judas.) Societal salvation, even remedies for the plague, were narratively bound to divine grace in a story that teaches modern Catholic norms in a premodern setting. Reading this story, subscribers felt very Catholic; and the answer to social problems, they learned, lay in Catholic salvation. An analogous process took place in the serial novels presented in the other daily papers: H. Halle Caine's "Die Bürger" (HVb, 126:2, 127:2, 129:5), "Die Brüder," (Bw, 3/17:1-2), and the account of "Johannes Brandis, der Mai-graf" by Hermann Blume of Hildesheim (HAZ, 128:5-6). Each of these tales addressed current social problems pertinent to that milieu through an exotic narrative. The motifs and the resolutions of each tale reflected the respective concerns and world-views of that lager; and each story implied a subjectivity that corresponded to that world-view. In an era of ideological warfare, divergent lager had colonized the serial novel.

Yet it would be incorrect to conclude from this data that reading the daily paper automatically reinforced the division of local society into *lager*. Hildesheimers of all *lager* responded in similar ways to my questions of what their parents read at home: "the daily paper." They mentioned the precise name of the paper only later, or if I asked specifically for this information. Several Hildesheimers elided the HAZ and the HeZ into one category in memory, reflecting not only the fact that the HAZ took over the role of the local paper in the postwar era, but also that Hildesheimers had read their particular local newspaper in the interwar era as if each specific paper was "the daily paper." It is almost as if the name was elided in use to negate the colonization of the life world by divisive *lager* or the outside world; at least the politicized name was not as significant to them as the fact that it was a daily paper. By contrast they defined all nonlocal papers by a specific name and mentioned them only after "the daily paper." Thus Hildesheimers read their daily papers not primarily as organs of a specific political institution, as objects that isolated them in distinct *lager*, but as talismans of *heimat* that integrated them into a collective local community. They read different daily papers, but they did so in the belief that every Hildesheimer read *the* daily paper [*die Tageszeitung*].

This tension between the objective realities of Hildesheim society and its subjective *imaginary* (Castoriadis, 1987) can also be found in the title stories of the local page. In "Silberstunde" (HAZ, 128:5), a certain H. H. described the magical moments of dawn. Located demonstrably within known spaces of locality, H. observes the changes in light and shadow at that moment when "few people run outside along the empty streets [in the shopping/historical center of town] with echoing footsteps; you heard them already from far away and could follow them for a long time with your ears..." That is, H. is alone yet aware of the existence of a civil society from whence he exiled himself. Rather than friends or family, he greets the day and dawn. He observes the emergence of form and color of his neighbors' houses from darkness, objects that stand in for the neighbors themselves. In terms of time and space, he sought out the liminal edge of the social, on the margin between the public and the private—his window sill. In an anecdote about beauty, essence, and wholeness in soft focus, H. described a moment in-between real buildings and surreal desires. "I am awake and yet I dream."

The analogous articles from the other papers are written in motifs appropriate to their milieu; yet the same experience of objective alienation, of observing society from the margins, of experiencing integration only among the *things* of their life world, was common to all. The Catholic journalist

Elsbeth Dücker ("Unter dem 'Goldregen'" HeZ, 128:5) takes a walk alone in a Catholic graveyard in communion with headstones, churches, trees, birds, and dead sinners, contemplating her life of suffering, and seeking salvation. Yet ultimately this stroll evoked only melancholy. O. Leib outlines bad and good ways of taking a walk in the woods around town according to the social scientific, progressive, and antimilitarist rhetoric typical of contemporary social democracy ("Vom Wandern," HVb, 129:7). Yet if his story suggests the possibility of integration in nature, it is ironic then that O. himself walks alone, observing the convivial interaction around him rather than participating in it directly. In all the articles, objects such as architecture, gravestones, rosebushes, little clouds, baby goats, children, all evocative of the locality in their quaintness, substitute for direct integration in the neighborhood. These objects facilitate the transcendence of personal alienation and of the divisions of class and gender within local society. They applied genres, motifs, and customs with which any reader could have identified regardless of lager, such as local poetry or the famous thousand-year rosebush, symbol both of Catholicism in particular as well as Hildesheim in general.⁵ O. asks his local audience rhetorically: "Who has not yet taken a walk and not yet seen people taking a walk? There are probably many who have enjoyed a good walk and many who have taken walks without friends." O. addressed this text not to socialists or men, but to locals.

As Hildesheimers read these articles at home, they could imagine all of the walks they had taken in forests, in graveyards, or at dawn, observing society and longing to belong. For they too were alone. Reading the daily paper was not a collective practice; rather it was a common practice executed in a similar manner by isolated individuals. Families did not share papers among neighbors (if they could afford it.) Few Hildesheimers recalled anecdotes in which reading the daily paper evoked discourse between neighbors or within the family. Typically each adult read the daily paper in the private sphere as a way to relax, if not physically alone then still for themselves and in subjective isolation. At first, this seems to be precisely what Habermas prescribe for ailing democracies—a protected private sphere in which to formulate one's own thoughts in preparation for public discourse. Yet Hildesheimers read alone not for self-reflection but to use this talisman to transcend their social isolation. The daily paper was akin to a looking glass: through it Hildesheimers could observe the social life of neighbors from a safe distance.

Hildesheimers identified with these stories of isolation and its transcendence precisely because they were replicating them at that very

moment. Both the journalist and the subscriber may have been alone, but at least they knew that everyone in their life world was sharing their experience of melancholic isolation. Like their journalist-neighbors, subscribers overcame melancholy and alienation through the mediation of a fetish of heimat, their daily paper. The many layers of correlation in terms of human alienation and object-oriented integration suggest a continuity in local practice that transgressed divisions of lager and gender, author and reader. Indeed the stories written by H., O., and Elsbeth make sense as title articles for the *local* page only within a culture in which locals used objects to create a sense of integration in their community.

By reading their daily paper, Hildesheimers integrated themselves into their local community subjectively, over and against divisions in that society and their own alienation. Such tactics of nonconformist self-expression, what Alf Lütke called *Eigensinn* (1993), challenged the subjectivities and hierarchies imposed by the front page, and are a common response to many modern forms of hegemony. Yet reading the daily paper did not overcome their objective alienation in fact. No matter what they might have felt while reading the daily paper, this fetish of community involvement only reinforced their isolation. Their interaction with neighbors approximated a series of isolated gazes rather than direct communication. Moreover announcing in the daily paper challenged the sanctity of the private sphere.

The announcements printed in the daily papers from June of 1925 helped Hildesheimers find places to live, work, or be entertained. They conveyed news "worth knowing for everyone" (HeZ, 128:8), like the vacation plans of the local ear, nose, and throat doctor (HeZ, 129:8; HVb, 128:3; HAZ, 129:6-8) or that a neighbor was holding a private auction for furniture or piglets (G/34a, R/275; G/34b, R/276). Life-cycle events also constituted public knowledge in the neighborhood, for it was customary in Hildesheim to take part in the lives of neighbors (understood not just as gossip and minor acts of charity, but also as mutual surveillance for the sake of preserving neighborhood respectability). Aware of the limited scope of each paper, Friedrich and Thea Klages chose to announce their nuptials—and to "heartily thank all friends and acquaintances for the acts of attention demonstrated" to them—in both the national-liberal HAZ (HAZ 126:8) and the Catholic HeZ (126:4). Significantly the announcement began with the explanation: "instead of cards"—explaining an all too common deviation from either an earlier or higher norm. Yet Friedrich and Thea could announce in the daily paper instead of sending personalized cards *if and only if they* could assume that their friends and neighbors would read the announcements each day.

Announcing in the daily paper was not just a cheaper and easier substitute for sending personalized cards. Announcing implied that all of Hildesheim would be informed of your private affairs. Ernst Kuhnert and wife announced, on the 2nd of June 1925, the happy birth of a son and heir [*eines Stammhalters*] (HAZ, 128:2). By announcing in the papers, instead of sending cards or not announcing at all, Ernst (and his wife) sought out the public gaze for recognition of their private affairs. In fact all public announcements were in some measure marketing strategies to establish local reputations (cf. Mosse, 1985; Habermas, 1989:194-5). When J. D. announced his take-over of a village grocery store from F. M., no one needed to read their whole names, for the event and the people involved were already common knowledge. Rather than to inform, the announcement sought "to request that the trust given to Mr. F. M. be also transferred over to myself" and to assure his new clientele that "it will be my goal to serve everyone most honestly" (HeZ, 126:8). For both announcers and readers, the daily paper was the culturally legitimate medium through which they could take part in the lives of their neighbors and negotiate reputations in the local life world. As a persistent habit, it presumed and produced a steadfast and penetrating public gaze.

Though this custom has a longer history, I suspect that announcing in the daily paper instead of sending cards acquired dramatically more significance during the First World War. The sudden and massive scale of death in home towns across Europe, and the highly politicized significance of sacrificing your life or the life of your son or husband for the Fatherland, made the public demonstrations of local personal tragedies into an obsession (cf. Kloppenburg, 1923; Vogeler, 1929). At one point in the interviews, Helmut Rabitz described how all the young people on his street volunteered for the army in 1914, never to return. "And I knew them all by sight." He began to recite, house by house, which of the sons and husbands fell during the war, where, and how. Interrupting him, I asked how he learned this information. "It stood in the newspaper. The parents or wife announced it [*bekannt geberi*]. And you also knew them anyway." Helmut continued his accounting and then made a swiping motion, like a scythe. "So, Father Death struck here hard" (G/49b, R/141). During the Great War, as in its interwar memory, neighborly familiarity was measured in death tolls and announced in the daily paper. Reading in the daily paper, Helmut was simultaneously taking part in the lives of his neighbors and publicly demonstrating the patriotic sacrifice of his neighbors for the German Fatherland.

It seems to me that Hildesheimers involved themselves in the lives of their

neighbors for many motives. By reading and announcing in the daily paper, Hildesheimers established local networks of emotional reciprocity, informal connections that helped moderate existential crises. Through these networks, they exchanged the pragmatic and moral commodities of patriotism, reputation, and neighborly concern. The benefit of an integrative analysis is that it reveals precisely this admixture of motives, and links individual needs to systemic consequences. During the Great War especially, Hildesheimers grafted patriotism onto understandable convivial practices, politicizing the everyday custom of announcing in and reading the daily paper. Hildesheimers invited the public gaze into their private affairs to accrue public recognition of their reputation—as honest grocers, proud Germans, and caring neighbors. In this sense, the Great War reinforced proclivities within civil society to dissolve the sanctity of the private sphere (never really sacrosanct in the first place), to expand the scope and intensity of the public gaze, and to intensify Hildesheimers' reliance on objects for their conviviality.

I hope that my argument will not be misinterpreted; the daily paper was not inherently a political panopticon. Only in the context of its customary use, during the specific historical-cultural circumstances of the first decades of the twentieth century, did Hildesheimers give their daily papers this potentiality. Hildesheimers used their daily papers to reassert a sense of control over public events. They both circumvented the front page, and reasserted their control over it, through the local page. In the process, the boundary between public and private collapsed.

My interview partners did not seem to respond to major events reported on the front page with a discussion, so as to come to reasonable solutions. Instead they personalized these events by retelling cynical anecdotes, exclaimed in exasperation, or simply turned the page to the announcements. Helmut's father was a typical example: the first thing he did in the morning was read the obituaries in the daily paper and decide if he should go to the funeral (G/145b, R/250). Other Hildesheimers similarly prioritized the announcements over politics, or simply complained about 'the system' when they read the front page. These tactics for dealing with the front page created an imaginary, apolitical life world in their locality, shielding themselves in fact from the larger world and its crises. This kind of response is hardly surprising, given the powerlessness and fear experienced while reading reports about the Allies in Paris and Amundsen at the North Pole. These tactics expressed the self within a hegemonic system and historical circumstance in which personal agency seems distant and weak by comparison. Indeed it was only in the cacophony of distinct narrative styles

that eigensinn could take place. In the same daily paper, Hildesheimers could shift from front-page reporting to local-page storytelling, from adventures in the North Pole to projects in Hiidesheim's gardens, from fantasies of the far-away to fantasies on the margins of their locality, from politics to death notices. In this multiplicity of contradictory narratives, Hildesheimers could negotiate the chaos of their lived reality.

Reading the daily paper not only circumvented but also re-made the front page in the image of the local. Three days before the publication of the Allied note, the HAZ (128:2) also printed a letter of birthday congratulations sent from Reich Chancellor Dr. Luther to Prince von Posadowski-Wehner. The publication of the demilitarization note reinforced the Hildesheimers' sense of powerlessness over their own future. By contrast reproducing the birthday greeting exchanged between Great Men illustrated that politicians behaved just like Hildesheimers—indeed that Hildesheimers could take part in their lives just like any other neighbors. Habermas suggests that the decay of independent public and private spheres produced a purely receptive consumer, incapable of critical response to political leaders. This case-study suggests a more reciprocal historical dynamic. The life world in German home towns such as Hiidesheim had spiraled into chaos since 1914; beyond the mediation of local culture and local agents, the system seemed uncanny, *unheimlich*. In response, Hildesheimers attempted to regain control over 'the system' by dressing their political leaders in local garb, by using the fetishes of heimat to indigenize the uncanny back into the locality, to make it *heimisch* once again.

But eigensinn also has historical consequences. The things we do with our objects become habits that in turn form the cognitive maps through which we interpret events and respond to them (Bourdieu, 1989). As shown thus far, reading the daily paper in interwar Hiidesheim constituted a nonconformist mass culture in which the distinctions of lager and public/private were disempowered. I will now show how easy it was to graft onto this mass culture a mass consumer and racist society—a *Volksgemeinschaft*.

In the first half of this century, economic competition (Barth, 1929:172-81; Aufermann and Schuster, 1992:168-9) and an emergent local leisure-time industry transformed the newspaper market from one divided by lager (and gender) into local versus national market segments. Politics accelerated this process of concentration. Nazi coordination policies in the 1930s closed the socialist, Catholic, and minor national-liberal papers. Allied denazification policies in the late 1940s in turn closed all Nazi papers. Once these various political authorities had removed competitors from the local market, the national-liberal HAZ became the only local paper in the 1950s. Yet the

foundation for expanded subscription levels and concentration also lay in part in this local mass culture of reading the daily paper. For instance, the daily papers of interwar Hildesheim asked their subscribers to announce life-cycle events in their pages, using the politically hot concept of family to increase their market share (HAZ, 126:8; HeZ, 129:7). Not surprisingly, the Catholic paper was especially skilled at interjecting their consumer product in-between convivial relationships. When the HeZ announced the silver anniversary of "barber Lange and wife, Johanna" in June of 1925, the editors added that "the same are also 25 year subscribers to the [HeZ]. A double anniversary in fact! Hence a doubly hearty congratulations" (129:5-6). Surely the Langes and their neighbors did not read these announcements as evidence of the colonization of conviviality by the mass media. They were hardly different from the other announcements of life-cycle events. Yet this commensurability is precisely the point. The demands of a competitive newspaper industry for aggressive advertising techniques and the public announcement of private life-cycle events for status-maximization coexisted comfortably in the same piece of newsprint.

Only an integrative approach to this object's life history could make this commensurability visible; yet this object's nature was prior to my integrative analysis. Given the real experience of alienation in the modern life world, people seek an experience of synthesis and transcendence. Modern mass media sell precisely this experience in their admixture of fiction and fact. Here, a purchase of the daily paper gave the interwar Hildesheimer both the local and the front pages, bound together in all their narrative and pragmatic dialectics. It jumbled all kinds of announcements on the same page: retail sales, restaurant specials, civic regulations, employment opportunities, life-cycle events, hemorrhoid cures, even men jumping out of balloons with a parachute (which you could observe for a small fee.) The daily paper constituted a *macrocommodity* (Negt and Kluge, 1993: 131-3, 155, 172)—a product that sold an entire life context, its experiences, and I would add, the cultural style of its use, all preorganized in it. Of course, that commodified synthesis-cum-transcendence was a fantasy. Neither indigenizing the uncanny, nor ignoring political crisis outside the locality, nor renegotiating reputations within it, created face-to-face human integration. Still that fantasy, individualized to fit its local target group, came to constitute the local public sphere and the locality itself, in fetish form.

The daily papers did not so much manipulate people's fantasies as exploit the economic opportunities which local customs offered. The anniversary greeting to the Langes represents the successful co-mingling of consumer

capitalism with a mass, convivial culture. Taking part in the lives of your neighbors through a consumer product provided for security and self-expression, ensured status and survival, produced a sense of community and a healthy profit. Consumer capitalism grafted itself onto an informal culture of eigensinn through objects which simulated neighborliness. The engine of the profit motive in turn accelerated the growth of a mass society and the dissolution of the private sphere.

Like consumer capitalism, national socialism grafted itself onto the everyday practices of conviviality in interwar Hildesheim and used the emerging mass society and fetishized public sphere for its political purposes. On 15 September 1935, the Nazi party-state promulgated a series of laws redefining the German polity and society according to racial distinctions. These Nürnberg Laws attempted to prevent many kinds of contact between Jews and Aryans. Most notably they proscribed marriages between the 'races,' conducted both within and outside German borders (Losener and Knost, 1941). The premises of these laws derived from the Nazi party program and were known to Hildesheimers well before 1935. Yet the realization of racism in everyday life in Hildesheim required a renegotiation of public identities. This process took place, as per local custom, in the daily papers.

Needless to say, the *front* pages of Hildesheim's daily papers spoke during the Third Reich with the voice of the Nazi regime. A quick glance at news during the second week of November, 1938, can illustrate this. The two papers to survive coordination, the HB (262:1; 266:1) and the HAZ (263:1), reproduced speeches by Hitler and (his propaganda minister) Joseph Goebbels word-for-word, many of which were also taken directly from the national Nazi paper, the *Völkischer Beobachter* (VB). It was front-page news that the Jewish Pole, Herschel Seibel Grynspan, assassinated Secretary vom Rath of the German Embassy in Paris (HAZ, 262:1, 264:1; HB, 262:1)—after all, these were the stories of Great Men in far-away places. And naturally, Hitler and Rudolf Hess (his deputy) wrote letters of sympathy to the mourning parents of the victim. Like Dr. Luther before them, Nazi political leaders took part in the sorrows of others as if they were neighbors. As in 1925, the front page spoke with the voice of 'the system' and dressed high political events in convivial garb.

The very normalcy of the locality helped legitimize the transformation from a republican to a fascist state. In response to this assassination, the Nazi regime staged its first major, nationwide, antisemitic pogrom, burning synagogues, parading Jews through town, and then deporting them to concentration camps, as well as breaking their store windows, from which

this pogrom's name derived: the Night of Broken Glass. During the same week, however, the daily papers reported convivial gatherings of neighbors around local trees, discussed the morality of female bike riders wearing shorts, announced the opening of the new film, *Heimat*, at the Metropol, and provided recipes for cakes and spinach (HAZ, 264:3, 266:6; HB, 265:6). As if compensating for political excesses, reading the daily paper assured the residents of Hildesheim that normalcy in fact prevailed in the *heimat*.

Nonetheless the local page also spoke with the voice of the Nazi regime. The long anniversary article on the local page about "The November Revolt in Hildesheim" of 1918 (HB, 263:5-6), written by town archivist and bibliographer Rudolf Zoder, did not isolate that local narrative from broader historical events in order to imagine an insular *heimat*. Rather, that local history was placed in a national socialist framework, comparing 1918 to 1938. Zoder argued that Adolf Hitler enabled Hildesheim to recover from that worst moment in its history, and only Hitler offered salvation through a *volksgemeinschaft*. The nature of the new *volksgemeinschaft*—with Aryans enthusiastically participating in the 'one-bowl' Sunday meal program (HAZ 266:3; HB, 265:6) and Jews being forbidden to receive tax credits, carry arms, or manage store or factories (HAZ, 262:5, 265:1, 267:1; HB, 264:1, 266:1)—was news appropriate to both the local and the front pages, for it was to be implemented on both levels. That is, reading the daily paper no longer shielded Hildesheimers from the outside world and its political contests. The entire daily paper was permeated with politics, coordinating the locality of Hildesheim into a racist state, and transforming its civil into a fascist society. Indeed the Night of Broken Glass demonstrated that the daily paper was not just the mouthpiece of Nazi propaganda but the evidence and vehicle of a transformed society. The front page reported the claims of Goebbels that all over Germans responded spontaneously and in self-defense to the assassination with antisemitic violence (HAZ, 262:1, 264:1; HB, 262:1; cf. Graml, 1992:7-16). But now, Hildesheimers saw direct outcomes in their locality: where events in Paris had seemed far away from Hildesheim in 1925, the Jews of Hildesheim suffered directly for events which transpired in Paris in 1938. Their local life world had become international news.

Nazis both exploited local customs of conviviality and transgressed them. Yet it is the latter that held the most tragic consequences. As a news item, a minority of Hildesheim's population migrated from the local page to the front page, as *neighbors* were transformed into *Jews*. This transgression removed the innocuousness from this everyday custom and woke up both Jewish and

Christian Hildesheimers from a self-induced, provincial slumber. Through reports of the burning of the synagog or denunciations of antifascist resisters, reading the front page now informed the Hildesheimers of the growth and arrival of the Nazis to power. Hildesheimers reacted to these national events with local decisions—by joining the party, for instance. Consider Günther Seidner's tale of his forced labor service in 1936. One of his friends got promoted to the post of foreman. He would report the daily news (taken from the VB) to the group for ten minutes at lunch. Günther said that his friend was more clever than he because his friend had conformed (G/83, R/350). Günther told this tale arguably to compare himself to his friend: to show me that he did not fully collaborate with the Nazi state, that he was not a racist, that he fought in the war only for reasons of patriotic loyalty and personal survival. Judgements aside, both Günther and his friend had taken stock of a fundamental transformation in their public sphere. Hildesheimers knew that reading the daily paper was now tantamount to participation in 'the system.'

in this, Hildesheimers were not impotent pawns of a terror state in control of a mass media. Whether one considers the announcements urging Aryans not to buy at Jewish stores, or Günther's friend reading to his neighbors from the Nazi paper, it is obvious that Hildesheimers continued to use the daily paper to negotiate their status and membership within the heimat—though now according to the new rules of race and hatred. As in 1925, Hildesheimers invited the public gaze into their private affairs, grafting politics onto conviviality; they thereby helped the Nazi state transform their lived reality from a civil to a fascist society. Not surprisingly this shift in use also changed the nature of the object. Reading the daily paper no longer constructed a local community in *nonconformity* to 'the system,' as a tool of local, populist eigensinn. It constructed a *volksgemeinschaft* in *conformity* with 'the system,' as a tool of cultural legitimacy for the Nazi state.

Such public demonstrations of private affairs partially alienated Günther, but they totally excluded the Jews of Hildesheim. Consider the example of Dora and Erich (G/1 25b, R/50, 220). Dora Pröbst was a Protestant woman in her mid-twenties who fell in love with a Jewish man, Erich, in the mid-1930s. Since a relationship between them was taboo in Germany, they eloped to England in 1933. They hid their marriage from other Hildesheimers at first by living separately, but the evidence soon grew overwhelmingly obvious as Dora began showing the signs of pregnancy. So Dora did the customary thing: she stopped working and announced her marriage in the daily paper. While this decision may seem astonishing to us in hindsight, it surely made complete sense to Dora. The publisher was supposed to print a relatively small

announcement. Instead the public revelation of Dora's defilement of the race—her regular sexual relations with a Jew—took up nearly half a page in the daily paper. "The publisher had a lot of fun," Dora concluded, succinctly. "It was a difficult time." Just as they had done before 1933, Hildesheimers continued to dress high political events (the Nazi seizure of power) in private garb (Dora's defilement).

Hildesheimers all used announcements in the daily paper to negotiate reputations in their local life world—yet now with broader consequences. When the Jewish ear, nose, and throat doctor had gone on vacation in 1925, or when a neighbor was auctioning piglets, the daily paper informed all of Hildesheim. Yet Hildesheimers learned of the deportation of the Jewish-stockyard owner and the auctioning of his household assets through a combination of whispered secrets and circumstantial glimpses of events (G/86a, R/170, 245; G/87a, R/80; G/105b, R/30). This shift to oral or nonverbal communication represented neither a rejuvenation of a healthy public sphere nor the presence of unmediated conviviality, but a retreat out of the respectable form of neighborly intercourse (announcing in the daily paper) into the realm of the *scatological*—of filth. In a culture in which private affairs had always been announced in the public sphere, the public silence about the actual fate of Jewish neighbors in Hildesheim during the Holocaust must have been a shock to both Jews and Gentiles. This silence reflects the fact that Jews had become anomalies in local culture.

Proper Hildesheimers to the last, Dora and Erich excluded themselves from their locality (G/124a-b, all; G/129b, all). In many ways, Dora and Erich stubbornly refused to make a choice between being Aryan or Jewish at first. Both returned to Hildesheim from a trip to the USA in the Winter of 1937. Erich drove himself to the local prison, where the Gestapo intended to incarcerate him, without real concern for his welfare. Dora even had the courage to confront the Gestapo and demand her husband's files from them. Yet all the while, the daily papers were publishing racist, inflammatory articles about Erich, accusing him of bad business practices and depicting him as a coward during his imprisonment. More than the Gestapo it was the daily papers that motivated Dora and Erich to try to lead a more private life. Dora explained their ultimate exile from Hildesheim in similar terms.

It is like when you lose a beloved person, as if he died! This was even worse. That was the country in which you grew up, in which you were born, where your generations—the Pröbsts go back to the 12th century! And suddenly, you get a newspaper [clipping from a Jewish Hildesheimer exiled to Israel] and

therein stand all the names of the people who have lost their citizenship, the Jews included.... Therein you read: your country does not want you anymore! What do you feel then? I cannot express it very well. But I lost something. It is irreplaceable. I cannot find it again (G/127b, R/1 10, 130).

It seems to me that neither the terror of the Nazi regime, nor physical emigration in 1938, sufficed to alienate Dora from Alt-Hildesheim; she recognized her alienation only within the object-mediated intersubjectivity of her heimat.

There would have been no state-organized racism in Hildesheim had Hitler and his movement (or one like it) not gained power in Berlin. Yet the Nazi regime did not simply impose its politics on an unwilling, moderate locality, as local tradition would have it. The Nazi *volksgemeinschaft* was realized in Hildesheim by Hildesheimers in terms of the local customs for using everyday objects. Since the Great War, Hildesheimers like Dora had been accustomed to contesting and asserting identities through the daily paper. They had developed a tolerance for the politicization of their private lives and for placing public issues in private dress. Not surprisingly, then, Hildesheimers introduced racism into their home town through the innocuous practices of reading the daily paper. When Hildesheimers renegotiated reputations in the 1930s, now in terms of race, they did not do so as equal partners. Those who willfully participated in the Nazi *volksgemeinschaft* stood with the power of a terror regime behind them. Still it was Hildesheimers who determined status and power in their life world. They re-constructed a new local community as per old customs—while reading the daily paper.

In this tragic conjuncture, we can see most clearly the usefulness of an object-oriented approach. By looking at how Hildesheimers like Dora read the daily paper, we can reconstruct her subjective expectations for her community as well as the objective realities of her society. Through narratives like hers, we can then follow these customs into new circumstances, those of the Third Reich. An analysis of the daily paper thus helps us understand the relatedness and contradictions inherent in the local life world, and how the dynamic tension between everyday customs and new social and political realities play themselves out, molding human destinies.

It is often noted that the older generation in towns such as Hildesheim repressed the story of the deportation and murder of their Jewish neighbors, along with their role in the Holocaust, from the younger generations. In addition to the obvious psychological, political, and economic reasons for this repression, I would also like to suggest that the intergenerational silence on the

topic of the Holocaust has cultural origins. As a topic of discourse, the Jews of Hildesheim had become a transgressive, unspeakable, even inconceivable topic within the local public sphere. Arguably this began not suddenly after 1945, in the memory of the Holocaust, but already in the mid-1930s, when the announcement of marriage by neighbors like Dora and Erich shifted from the local to the front page. Jewish neighbors no longer fit the logic of their daily paper; consequently they became the cultural equivalent of filth, to be sanitized first and repressed thereafter. What postwar generations experienced as a silence concerning the Nazi past—a specter of murder that would haunt towns such as Hildesheim for decades to come—followed in fact from an earlier contradiction within everyday material culture.

Deep cultural roots also grew under the mass consumer regime that blossomed during the postwar era. The Allied Occupational Forces and the dictates of Adenauer's Western orientation removed the 'artificial' dominance of the Nazi paper. As the only surviving local paper, the national-liberal HAZ resumed announcing life-cycle events to Hildesheimers, integrating them into the *heimat* no matter where they might be found in the world. Sure enough, a Gentile acquaintance of two Jewish Hildesheimers, both living in Israel as of 1993, has congratulated them every year at Christmas time—through an announcement in the Hildesheim daily paper (G/158b, R/40; G/159a, R/140). Like the Nazi regime before it, the postwar consensus—around political stability, mass production, and repression—grew in part out of the fertile soil provided by the mass culture of reading the daily paper.

Both the Third Reich and the Federal Republic could graft their political and social orders onto the same material culture. This similarity makes sense because neighborly concern, reputation, patriotism, and the daily paper were normal aspects of both civil and fascist societies. The very innocuousness of this object, a quality which seemed to protect the Hildesheimers from the affairs of Great Men, left them unprepared when their neighbors re-used their mass culture during the Third Reich to create a racial community. Nazi ideology and state-structure certainly radicalized the consequences of reading the daily paper (Broszat, 1981), but it was only through a firm foundation in everyday life that such a revolution could take place. Given the long-term continuities in the material culture underlying both republican and fascist systems, we might not want to rest assured that the danger of fascism has been fundamentally eradicated.

Reading the daily paper in interwar Hildesheim constituted a *counterpublic* (Negt and Kluge, 1993). Hildesheimers were alienated from the systemic forces which controlled their lives and from a coherent public representation

of their experience, so they used their daily papers to realize their identities on their own. Mediated by a commodity, however, this counterpublic lacked face-to-face encounters and, together with its local focus, tended towards isolation of the self in the locality and behind the newspaper. Moreover, Hildesheimers accepted the terms of the hegemonic ('bourgeois') public in which an authentic, coherent whole was imagined that excluded those who did not belong to this generalizable self. In this way, *eigensinn* helped promote regressive social changes in Hildesheim. Nonetheless, the habit of reading the daily paper can become a progressive counterpublic in retrospect. This story can serve as an example of the contradictions, relatedness, and consequences of the social life of things. It can become part of a collective, social process of producing and expressing human experiences in all their interrelatedness, multiplicity, and contradictions, raising awareness, teaching tolerance, and inspiring civic responsibility. This is what Negt and Kluge meant by a *proletarian public sphere*, and if anywhere in academia, it is in interdisciplinary studies that we can aspire towards it.

Objects can help us in this endeavor. The things we use record ethnographic data about our life world and transmit historical changes within it, synthesizing anthropological and historical ways of knowing. Because objects have multiple, even contradictory valences, an object-oriented approach offers a tool to create a more sophisticated and synthetic mode for exploring our selves, our societies, and how we transform them both in our everyday lives—for good or for ill. In large part, the successful outcome of this integrative mode of explanation depends on the object chosen for study. In this case-study, the daily paper was useful because it transgressed the boundaries between fact and narration, journalist and subscriber, public and private, local and global, everyday life and 'the system,' even between divergent classes, confessions, and genders. An integrative method for research, pedagogy, and explanation followed naturally from the object under study.

Yet this harmony of narrative raises a serious caution when dealing with objects that are inherently contradictory. We run into the danger not just of misrepresenting the modern life world as far more integrated than it was/is. We also face the danger of following the Hildesheimers down a misbegotten path in the search for an ineffable wholeness and transparency. As this case-study illustrates, the dissolution of the public and private spheres, and growing dependency on things for an experience of integration, did not promote human liberty. This mass culture too easily facilitated totalitarian coordination and racist exclusion. The dissolution of all distinctions in interwar Hildesheim led not to *integration* but to *homogeneity*.

Hildesheimers associated this process with filth. Recall that the daily paper was reused as toilette tissue. Karl Rudolph explained: (G/180a, R/75) "It could be politics, it could be announcements—it had the format!" While reading the daily paper, Hildesheimers moved between multiple, yet distinct narrative styles to negotiate conflicting relationships with their locality and larger, more alienating, political processes. For their eigensinn to work, Hildesheimers needed integrative objects that preserved crucial cultural distinctions while also leaving space for their tactical manipulation. By contrast, all pragmatic distinctions between front and local pages dissolved once and for all during the Third Reich, as in the outhouse.

Karl voiced his doubts as to whether his outhouse story held any significance for the history of conviviality in Hildesheim. I believe that it did. His anecdote illustrated why we should study the dynamic tensions between hierarchy and transgression, distinction and integration, relatedness and contradiction, but not seek analytic forms of homogeneity. In the moment when the front and local page, everyday life and 'the system,' became indistinguishable, the daily paper became essentially asocial, useful only to clean up filth. When Hildesheimers made their neighbors into Jews, breaking the barrier protecting the locality from the affairs of Great Men, the Jews themselves seemed to embody that filth: a conjuncture that gave local cultural legitimacy to their subsequent, and tragic 'sanitation.' By analogy, if academic integrations are to succeed, we should not reconstruct the past as if it were a romantic, cohesive community; we should also avoid dissolving all disciplinary distinctions in our attempts to create integrative ways of knowing. Dirtying ourselves, we would be exiled from the academic and lay culture we hope to inspire.

Integrative approaches must adeptly negotiate both the tactics of eigensinn and the strategies of hegemony. Here we should take our lessons from the objects we study. Our desire for integration should not overpower our tolerance for difference, in terms of personal narratives and self-respecting disciplines. We should recognize and celebrate the multiplicity of our explanations, and the contradictions in our narratives. By doing this we would be reformulating academia to better reflect the nature of our own chaotic, lived reality.

Biographical Note: Andrew Stuart Bergerson will receive his doctorate this year from the University of Chicago in modern Central European history. His research and teaching explores the relationships between history, memory, anthropology, philosophy, technology, and literature; between academic methodologies and public pedagogy; and between micro and macro levels of analysis and practice.

Endnotes

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Integrative Studies at Ypsilanti, MI, on 3-6 October 1996. A more extensive analysis, with more detailed references to the secondary literature and the primary sources, can be found in my dissertation, "A History of Neighborliness in Alt-Hildesheim, 1900-50: Custom, Transformation, Memory," forthcoming from the University of Chicago. Thanks to Leora Auslander, Stanley Bailis, Robert Beachy, James Bell, Beth Casey, Alicia Cozine, Adam Daniel, Michael Geyer, Jeanette Jones, Brett Klopp, Julie Lindstrom, Theresa Sanislo, and Phyllis Soybel-Butler for their advice and comments. Special thanks to the staff of the Stadtarchiv und -bibliothek Hildesheim for the use of their facilities for research and to my interview partners. My research was supported by a generous grant from the Friedrich Weinhausen Stiftung of Hildesheim.
2. References to interviews conducted by me in Hildesheim between 1992 and 1994 will follow a standard format which ensures anonymity for my interview partners: a reference to a consecutive number for the cassette and side, (G/#a or b) followed by an approximate roll number on the counter on my cassette player (R/#). Cassettes are accessible from me or at the Stadtarchiv in Hildesheim.
3. For a systematic description of the social backgrounds of my interview partners, I refer the reader to my forthcoming dissertation. They 'represent' most major social categories present in interwar Hildesheim in terms of gender, class, confession, race, and age. All names are pseudonyms except for published authors.
4. An experienced Arctic explorer, Amundsen was the first man to reach the South Pole in 1911-12. In 1925, he and American Lincoln Ellsworth were attempting to be the first to reach the North Pole by flight. They got within 150 miles (250 km) of their goal without reaching it. In the first week of June, however, the expedition was still out of contact with the rest of the world and some feared them lost. This fear was not unfounded. Amundsen's rivals for reaching the South Pole, an expedition lead by the English explorer Robert Falcon Scott, had all perished on their return journey in 1912. Amundsen himself survived the North Pole expedition of 1925 but lost his life in 1928 while flying to rescue his partner, Italian aeronautical engineer Umberto Nobile, from a dirigible crash near the Norwegian Island of Spitsbergen.
5. Hildesheimers associate the origins of their town with Emperor Louis the

Pious (814-40). While hunting, Louis lost his way and prayed to the Virgin Mary to save his life, whereupon he fell into a deep sleep. When he awoke, snow had fallen all around him, but not where he had slept and not where a rosebush stood in full bloom, as if it were summer. He took this as a sign from the Virgin and swore he would build a cathedral on that spot. His followers found him soon thereafter in a religious fervor. He kept his promise, moving the proposed location for the seat of the diocese from Elze to Hildesheim. Allegedly, the same rosebush still grows on the apsis of the Cathedral. It is a central metaphor for the town itself, as well as its postwar survivability, resurrection, and absolution. "As long as the rosebush lives," or so the fairy tale goes, "Hildesheim will not perish."

6. By this, I do not intend to suggest any simplistic notion that Hildesheimers 'willingly executed' Hitler's racist goals (cf. Goldhagen, 1996). Human agency is both far more complex than the concept of intentionality allows, because it must negotiate multiple and conflicting imperatives without clear ethical solutions, and more mediated than the concept of free will allows: by cultures, habits, and objects. I elaborate a notion of *contingent agency* in my forthcoming dissertation.

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