

Rammstein's Rage

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R*ammstein*—the name is a made-up word meaning, more or less, “ramming stone”¹—is a popular German band. *Very* popular. Rammstein released its first album, *Herzeleid* (“Heartache”), in 1995. Within days, it topped the German Media Control Charts. It stayed in the number one position for five weeks, then remained in the top ten for two years, an unrivaled achievement in Germany’s notoriously fickle pop music market. Their next album, *Sehnsucht* (“Longing”), was more successful still: The best-selling album in Germany from the day of its release, it immediately went double platinum. In 1998, their video *Engel* (“Angel”) was awarded an Echo, the German equivalent of a Grammy. In the same year, Viva, a mainstream German television station more or less like MTV, awarded Rammstein their prize trophy, the Comet, effectively declaring them the preeminent ambassadors of German popular music. The year 1999 brought Rammstein another Echo for *Sehnsucht*. Their album *Mutter* (“Mother”), released in March 2001, immediately sold a million copies, bringing their total album sales over the four-million mark. Their most recent album, *Reise, Reise* (“Voyage, Voyage”), released last November, surpassed all of their previous sales records. With *Reise, Reise*, Rammstein became the best-selling German-language band in history.

Let's read Rammstein's lyrics.²

Rammstein

Rammstein
A man is burning
Rammstein
The smell of flesh lies in the air
Rammstein
A child is dying
Rammstein
The sun is shining

Rammstein
A sea of flames
Rammstein
Blood is coagulating on the asphalt
Rammstein
Mothers are screaming
Rammstein
The sun is shining

Rammstein
A mass grave
Rammstein
No escape
Rammstein
No bird sings anymore
Rammstein
The sun is shining

Here are a few more lyrics:

Do You Want to See the Bed in Flames

Do you want to see the bed in flames
Do you want to perish in skin and hair
You want to stick the dagger in the sheet as well
You want to also lick the blood from the sword

You see the crosses on the pillow
You mean the innocence may kiss you
You believe it would be hard to kill
But where are all of the dead coming from

Sex is a battle
Love is war

The Master

Run!

Because the master has sent us
We announce the downfall
The rider of malice
Feed his ulcer of envy
To announce it, is oh so bitter
It comes to you in order to destroy

Because the night lay in death
We announce the day of judgment
There will be no mercy
Run, run for your lives

The truth is a choir of wind
No angel comes to avenge you
These days are your last
It will break you apart like little sticks

The lyrics of “The Master” are particularly suggestive. John Felstiner, the biographer of the poet Paul Célán, notes that the word *Meister* in German “can designate God, Christ, rabbi, teacher, champion, captain, owner, guildsman, master of arts or theology, labor-camp overseer, musical maestro, ‘master’ race, not to mention Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister* and Wagner’s *Meistersinger von Nurnberg*, which carries overtones of the 1935 Nuremberg racial laws.”³

Here’s one more Rammstein song for good measure:

White Flesh

Red welts on white skin
I hurt you
And you cry loudly

Now you are scared and I am ready
My sick existence cries for redemption
Your white flesh becomes my scaffold
In my heaven there is no god

In both form and imagery, Rammstein’s lyrics have a distinct history in German poetry. The source is the *neue sachlichkeit*—new concreteness—of the 1920s, of which Georg Trakl is the best-known exponent. These poets aimed to represent reality in concrete images, and their reality, as it happened, revolved around a preoccupation with blood and smashed faces. The influence of poets like Trakl is particularly obvious in the band’s fascination with gore and despair.⁴ Rammstein’s lyrics also have something in common with the notorious *Morgue* cycle of Gottfried Benn, the Berlin venereal

disease specialist who pledged his allegiance to the Nazi Party until it expelled him for perversion.⁵ Their imagery is suggestive as well of postwar German expressionist paintings, in particular those of Otto Dix, who having spent four years in the trenches had a fine pictorial feel for what things looked like after an exchange of artillery. Songs by Rammstein with sado-masochistic sexual themes, such as *Mein Teil* (“My Part”)—a homage to the German cannibal Armin Miewes, who in 2002 shared a final meal with his willing victim of the man’s severed, flambéed organ—would not have been out of place in Julius Streicher’s *Der Stürmer*, a newspaper even many Nazis found excessive in its pornographic obsessions and sensationalism.

Next, let’s listen to Rammstein. Much of it can be downloaded from the Internet. Initiates should begin with the song *Reise, Reise*, played at top volume. Push your subwoofers to the limit. That is the way it is meant to be appreciated.

Formed in 1993, Rammstein comprises six working-class musicians, all born and raised behind the Berlin Wall: Vocalist Till Lindemann, keyboardist Flake Lorenz, drummer Christoph Schneider, bassist Oliver Riedel, and guitarists Paul Landers and Richard Kruspe-Bernstein. Their music is extremely sophisticated and superbly orchestrated. They blend metal, industrial, techno, and classical musical techniques, employing a vast range of sound effects—studio-distorted guitars, sampled ghostly wailing, Arabic choirs, melodic whistling, string arrangements, chanting crowds of thousands, the sound of marching jackboots, and a full symphony orchestra. The orchestra is one of Germany’s best, led by a professional conductor.

This point must be made perfectly clear. Rammstein is the inheritor of the German tradition of musical genius. Their rhythmic craftsmanship—unerring and precise—is unmistakably German, as is their intuitive command of musical tension and release. Their bombast, particularly, is reminiscent of Wagner, and so is the music’s eerie hypnotic quality. Carl Orff’s influence may be heard in Rammstein’s use of orchestral arrangements.

String passages explode into skull-crushing onslaughts; low, synthesized chords follow and then recede, the effect eerie and thrilling. By comparison, American heavy metal bands seem clumsy, childish, and anemic. In keeping with a long German musical tradition, Rammstein's vocal lines are, like Schubert's, entirely integrated into the musical texture; they are not merely arias with accompaniment. The German language functions almost as an instrument in its own right. With its sibilants, harsh fricatives, unique phonotactics and stress rules, German lends itself particularly well to powerful, rhythmic song—as it does, of course, to powerful, rhythmic rhetoric.

Themes from Nordic and German mythology appear throughout their videos. *Sonne* (“Sun”), for example, features a coke-sniffing, sado-masochistic Snow White.⁶ *Dalai Lama* originates in Goethe's *Erlkönig* (“Elf-King”). *Reise, Reise* is based on a German sea chantey; it represents the master's call to sleeping sailors. Although the words are translated by the band as “Voyage, Voyage,” they are also a reference to the Middle High German, *Risen, Risen*, meaning “Wake up.” To hear the phrase sung this way is to be reminded of *Deutschland Erwacht*—“Germany, Awaken!”—a Nazi brown-shirt slogan. I have seen Rammstein perform this song in concert, in Berlin. It is clear that the audience takes the chorus as a verb.

Reise, Reise begins with the sound of lonely waves and seagulls, an ominous warlike pounding, and the primitive chanting of sailors on a galley. Suddenly the listener is steamrollered by smashing drums, violent bass, and a full choir, amplified to unspeakable levels. A written account is a pale simulacrum. The song is powerful, stirring, and unbelievably effective, engorging the listener with thrilling aggression. If you're in doubt, download the song and play it through your headphones when you next lift weights. You'll be impressed by your athletic achievement.

Most compelling is lead singer and lyricist Till Lindemann, a massive former swimming champion from Schwerin. He commands a sinister, low bass rarely utilized in contemporary pop music. His voice is untrained but electrifying. His rolled “r”s are familiar: To some ears, they are a reference to

Hitler's oratory style.⁷ He is immensely muscular, with a voice so powerful and erotic that even women who understand Rammstein's lyrics find themselves mesmerized by that voice, by its beauty and masculinity.

The experience is disturbing, to say the least.

Now let's watch Rammstein perform, in concert. The performance begins with Lindemann setting himself on fire—literally—then spraying flames into the air with handheld rockets. Soon the entire stage is ablaze. In the band's early days, if fans were insufficiently attentive, Rammstein doused the dance floor with kerosene and set that alight as well. It got them hopping every time. An unfortunate accident put an end to that practice, and now the band's pyrotechnics are coordinated by professionals.

When Lindemann sings *Bestrafe Mich* ("Punish Me"), he flagellates himself with a whip. He punctuates *Du Hast* ("You Hate") by firing a gun in the air to a jackhammer rhythm.⁸ During a rendition of *Ich Will ficken* ("I Will F— You") he sports a monstrous black appliance about his waist. This is followed by a performance of *Bück Dich* ("Bend Over") in which he simulates the sodomization of his keyboardist, Flake Lorenz. Lorenz then smashes a fluorescent light tube against Lindemann's chest. All the while the auditory assault is relentless, machinelike, a musical moving Panzer division. In 1998, Rammstein was invited to the United States to open an event billed as the Family Values Tour. Authorities in Worcester, Massachusetts, watched the show, then threw Lindemann and Lorenz into jail on obscenity charges.⁹

This is martial music. Without the music, the lyrics might be misinterpreted as expressions of adolescent angst. But these are grown men performing: They are in their late thirties and early forties. Separated from the music, the power of the lyrics is severely diluted. Try reading them again, this time nurturing a vivid image of Stuka dive-bombers swiftly obliterating the Polish Air Force while eight motorized and six Panzer divisions slice

through Poland. Imagine the Wehrmacht marching toward Warsaw as German tanks steamroller Brest-Litovsk and stormtroopers slam shut the escape routes across the Vistula. Then you'll have something of a feel for it.

Rammstein's performance of *Ich Will* is particularly evocative. When the insane pounding and relentless march of the drums and the orchestra cease, there is nothing but a hypnotic melody from an acoustic guitar and a warbling, unnerving whistle from the synthesizer. Lindemann hisses:

We want you to trust us
We want you to believe everything from us.

Then the hypnotic lull is over, and the musical tanks roar back into action. Lindemann's voice swells to a massive imperative, dominating the thrashing guitars and the booming bass. He thunders to the audience: "Can you hear me?" The enormous crowd roars back, in frenzied but perfect unison, a stadium of synchronous German voices:

We hear you!
Can you see me?
We see you!
Can you feel me?
We feel you!

Lindemann says he is baffled, *hurt* even, by the way certain fans are inspired to respond to these capers with Nazi salutes. "Our tour manager," he has said, "is required to come up on stage as soon as the fascists start using the Hitler greeting."¹⁰ Keyboardist Lorenz shares Lindemann's bewilderment about the persistent charges that in Rammstein's performances there is a hint of the old Volk, Reich, and Führer. "How silly can they get?" he complains.¹¹

You can, you want and will never forgive
And you condemn his life

You drift in the insanity from
Excessive anger, destruction and vengeance,
You were born to hate

My rage does not want to die
My rage will never die
You ram your hatred like a stone
Into him Ramming stone—
You have pursued, hunted, and cursed him
And he has taken his heels, crawling

Lorenz insists that only silly, joyless martinets would read bloodlust between those lines, or find nihilism in words like this:

Nothing is for you
Nothing was for you
Nothing remains for you
Forever

In fact, Rammstein's members claim to be *incensed* by the persistent intimations that their music and performances have any political resonance at all, no less a disturbing one. Their publicist has set the matter straight: "There is no political content whatsoever to their music. Their songs are about love."¹²

This rejoinder, the band feels, should have been the end of the matter. Yet some critics seem determined to perceive something sinister in the spectacle of Rammstein performing "White Flesh" before ten thousand drunken Germans, each with his fist raised. "There is a perfect explanation for this," Lindemann has remarked of the critics' animadversions. "Narrow-mindedness."¹³ Guitarist Paul Landers shares his indignation. "Absurd," he has exclaimed.¹⁴ But, he has added helplessly, "if some of the journalists want to stick us in the Nazi corner, we can't help it."¹⁵

Well, actually, Paul, you probably *could* help it, if you really tried. Here's my first suggestion: *Don't use Leni Riefenstahl footage in your promotional clips*. Narrow-minded though it may be, when your videos feature scenes from *Olympic Games*—a documentary commissioned by the Nazis in 1936 as “a song of praise to the ideals of National Socialism”—journalists will be apt to stick you right in that Nazi corner. “We are not Nazis,” they protested again in an official statement, adding that they simply chose the film because it was a “visionary work of art.”¹⁶

Given their propensity to feel saddened by these accusations, some of Rammstein's aesthetic choices seem especially hard to fathom. For example, the cover art of their debut album *Herzeleid* reminded enough people of a Nazi propaganda poster—the six shirtless band members, enormous, muscular, iron-jawed, looming into the camera lens in what looked to some observers like an archetypal celebration of the master race—that the band was forced to replace it with a different cover in subsequent editions.¹⁷ For the portraits in *Sehnsucht*, the Austrian artist Gottfried Helnwein photographed the musicians in facial bandages, their lips and eyes stretched wide apart by hideous medical instruments. There is an echo of Trakl, again, in these “cold metal straps.” But it is unreasonable, the musicians protest, to think that images such as this might evoke obscene historical memories. “It's just reverse discrimination because we are German,” says Lorenz. “If we were Spanish or Dutch, there would be no problem.”¹⁸

Then again, it is hard to conceive of a Spaniard or a Dutchman composing *Links-Zwo-Drei-Vier* (“Left-Two-Three-Four”) and performed, exactly as the title suggests, to the rhythm of soldiers on the march. A crooning verse is followed by a furious, even apocalyptic chorus, accompanied by the unmistakable sound of metrically precise, marching jackboots. A crowd—in perfect synchronicity—screams “*Hi!*” after each refrain. It is quite close to the sound “*Heil.*” Then, in a growling bass whisper, Lindemann urges the audience: “*Think with your heart!*” The National-Socialist Speaker's Corps was instructed to use those words exactly when addressing their audiences.¹⁹

Lorenz has declared that he has no idea how Rammstein has acquired its neo-Nazi reputation. “Just because we play hard German and martial music doesn’t make us Nazis. We are definitely not Nazis and the song *Links* should help to end this stupid gabbing.”²⁰

Why he believes this is unclear.

Now, let’s watch a Rammstein video. In fact, let’s watch the video that accompanies the song *Links*. Shot in black, white, and brown, the animated video depicts ants. To the sound of marching boots, a giant ant pumps his right feeler in the air. We see the giant ant on stage, before thousands of ants, all identical, all returning the salute, like pistons. Ants swarm out of tunnels. The colony surges. For an instant we glimpse something in the background that resembles a military helmet. We see a series of symbols, variations on Rammstein’s insignia, which itself is a variant on a Nordic rune, and very much like an Iron Cross. (Neo-Nazis frequently sport the Iron Cross and other Nordic runes as surrogates for the Swastika, which is banned in Germany.)²¹ One such symbol mutates into a headless stick figure. Performer and leader, it conducts the audience, pumping its arm into the air. The massive ant-audience pumps its feelers in unison to the sound of the jackboots. We see two brief shots of Nordic runes mutating against a grainy black background. The effect is like a wartime propaganda film.

We cut to the band members. Leader-ant becomes Lindemann, his massive swimmer’s physique looming. The footage is grainy and stuttering, as if shot in the 1930s. His eyes are full of madman’s ecstasy, his body thrashes in time with the music. Flash now to the ants, so closely packed that we see only the tops of their carapaces, like helmets. Flash back to Lindemann—an expression of glee on his face, now for *just one glimpse* sporting a short black mustache, so briefly it may be a trick of the lighting.

The ants organize themselves into columns, pulsing in time to the jackboots. They pour out of tunnels by the thousands, throbbing. We see an

image from the sky: The ants converge before a massive tower. They form a giant, pulsating rune reminiscent of the Iron Cross. They part in columns again. Row after row of ants pump their fists in the air. Anyone who has seen Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* will recognize this scene. It is strikingly reminiscent of the Nuremberg Rally.

Another video. The recently released song "Mein Teil," which may be chastely translated as "My Part," treats the true saga of the cannibal Armin Meiwes, who recently slaughtered and ate a forty-two year-old Siemens engineer from Berlin. Meiwes videotaped the entire event. The advertisement Meiwes placed on the Internet, searching for a victim, forms the song's epigram:

"Looking for a well-built 18-30 year-old to be slaughtered"
—*The Master Butcher*

The song begins with the sound of a knife being sharpened.

Today I will meet a gentleman
He likes me so much he could eat me up
Soft parts and even hard ones
are on the menu

Because you are what you eat
and you know what it is

It is my part—no
My part—no
There that's my part—no
My part—no
The dull blade good and proper
I'm bleeding heavily and feeling sick
Although I have to fight to stay awake
I keep eating while in convulsions

It's just so well seasoned
and so nicely flambéed
and so lovingly served on porcelain
And with it, a good wine
and gentle candlelight
Yes I'll take my time
You've got to have some culture

The video was directed by the brilliant Zoran Bihac, who also directed the video for *Links*. Originally, the band had hoped to use Miewes' own footage of the event, but to their disappointment, the police would not release it from their custody. In the end, the band decided upon another approach. Guitarist Kruspe-Bernstein, who founded the band, explained the creative process to me when I spoke to him recently in Berlin:

Someone came and said, "You guys should go in there, everyone by himself, and perform, for two hours, whatever you want to do from listening to the song." That was really interesting. We wouldn't know what the others were doing, you know? I was wrestling with myself. That's what I did for two hours. Like a double. Like a wrestler. I was wrestling. And everyone did something else. It was the first time to perform, to act, to do something that we felt. Normally what we do is act. We play-act, in a role. But this time we were really doing something that we felt. It was weird. That was different.

What, then, did the members of the band spontaneously think to do when given this chance to do what they *really* felt? Lindemann, eyes wild with rage and lust, teeth rotting out of his head, rapes an angel, then rips the feathered creature apart with his teeth and bare hands. Lorenz dances in ballet shoes. Schneider dresses as Miewes' mother and, clutching a handbag, takes the rest of the snarling, snapping, nearly naked men for a walk on leashes. There are brief shots of each of the men howling, their faces contorted with pain and terror. Kruspe-Bernstein shovels the angel's feathers into his mouth and, as he said, wrestles with himself.

The video was controversial in Germany, although not for the reasons one might expect. Critics focused on the grotesque treatment of cannibalism, completely overlooking the far more astonishing images spliced into the film. Shot in black and white, they are portraits of Riedel, Rammstein's bass player. He is skeletal and naked but for a filthy rag wrapped around his waist. He is writhing on the ground and screaming in agony. His ribs are protruding, his eye sockets are sunken, and his skull appears hollowed-out. His head is shaved. He appears more dead than alive. When told to "really do something that he felt," Riedel's first impulse was to reenact Auschwitz.

It is hard to say which possibility is scarier—that the makers of this video realized this consciously, or that they didn't.

I met the members of Rammstein for the first time, in Berlin, in March 2003—on the day American military action commenced in Iraq. Looking for my hotel, I saw graffiti on the street:

Out, America, occupiers!

Out, America, terrorists!

Out, America, inventors of the atomic bomb!

Out, America, inventors of anthrax!

I saw anti-war demonstrators carrying signs likening President Bush to Hitler. The massive protests had shut down the center of the city.

I met the band in a discreet office above a gloomy, anonymous warehouse in East Berlin. This is the neighborhood where Rammstein met and played before the fall of the Wall. To deter fans, there was no sign on their door. In person, they were bland and pleasant, clean-shaven, tall and handsome, dressed in neatly pressed chinos and cotton polo shirts. I had heard that journalists who asked about Rammstein's politics were apt to find themselves ejected from the interview, but after making a bit of small talk, they held forth marvelously.

Why, I asked, did *they* think Rammstein's music inspired such controversy?

"People take the lyrics out of context," guitarist Kruspe-Bernstein offered. "The romantic, lyric quality gets a bit lost in translation."

A good translation, then, should clear up any confusion? I read out loud, in English:

My black blood and your white flesh
I will always become hornier from your screams
The cold sweat on your white forehead
Hails into my sick brain

Your white flesh excites me so
I am just a gigolo
My father was exactly like me
Your white flesh enlightens me

Well, yes, said Kruspe-Bernstein, there is that. But he held that this sounded much more romantic in German.

"Our music," he explained, "is *German*, and that's what comes through. What's naturally in the music is what makes it so German. We are simply trying to make the music that we are able to make. The classical music, the music of our ancestors, is passed down in a certain way. We have a feeling for it. American music, black music, we don't know how to do that—"

"We have no soul," interjected keyboardist Lorenz.

"And we know how to play on the beat," added Kruspe-Bernstein. "We know how to make it straight, how to make it even."

"Angular and straight," echoed Lorenz with satisfaction.

"We like it heavy, bombastic, romantic. Like the direction that Wagner takes," said Kruspe-Bernstein. "No other Germans do it the way we do it. We're the only ones who do it the way Germans *should*. The others try to imitate the English and the Americans. We're almost too German for

Germany.” The thought seemed to pain him. “The Germans are a bit ashamed of their nationality. They’ve had a disturbed relationship to it since World War II. We’re trying to establish a natural relationship to our identity.”

Landers agreed. “It’s time to stop being ashamed about what comes out of Germany and to establish a *normal* way of dealing with being German.”

I read aloud:

Secretly I will rise from the dead
And you will plead for mercy
Then I will kneel in your face
And stick my finger in the ashes

Kruspe-Bernstein informed me that the band’s essential good nature had been misunderstood. “If people don’t understand the lyrics, their interpretations can be more gruesome than is actually the case. Fantasy can be at work. It can make things more intense, worse than things actually are.” Again, I read out loud:

You can, you want and will never forgive
And you condemn his life
You drift in the insanity from
Excessive anger, destruction, and vengeance,
You were born to hate

My rage does not want to die
My rage will never die

You ram your hatred like a stone
Into him Ramming stone—

You have pursued, hunted, and cursed him
And he has taken his heels, crawling

After reading these lyrics, I asked, why might listeners remain concerned? The negative reactions, Kruspe-Bernstein told me firmly, “have to do with the hard sound of the music and the short haircuts.”

Lorenz reported himself devastated by the persistent intimations that Rammstein’s aesthetic was reminiscent of the Nazi era. “We overestimated the public. The people don’t understand it. We thought it was so obvious that we weren’t right-wingers that no one would see these right-wing elements in what we do.”

The members of the band were tired of national self-reproach, they said. “The Americans aren’t ashamed about the fact that they killed the Indians,” said Kruspe-Bernstein. “If the *Germans* had eradicated the Indians, *we* would have had a bad conscience. *We* would have had to be ashamed.”

“The Americans aren’t ashamed of what *they* did,” Landers agreed. “Our music is about the revival of a *healthy German self-esteem*. When people come to our concerts, they can experience something which they can perhaps otherwise not experience.”

“*Ja*, like soccer,” said Kruspe-Bernstein. “Soccer is popular because that’s the only place in Germany where one can call out *Germany!*”

“It’s like a Terminator movie,” Landers said. “Everyone likes him because he’s so strong.” I wasn’t sure whether he was referring to Lindemann or the Terminator. “At our concerts people can feel *anger*. We feel that Germany is longing for some identity. We had an evil history and everybody is ashamed. ‘Our parents or grandparents did *this* and they did *that*.’ We just inherited this history. Now we have to live with it and we don’t want to. We want to do what we *feel*. Without always feeling responsible for history.”

I asked them about the song *Links*, and about the way it does seem awfully reminiscent of the old *this* and the old *that*. They appeared frustrated by my determination profoundly, even willfully, to misunderstand their

intentions. In fact, they said, the suggestion that these lyrics—*Left, two, three, four! Left, two, three, four!*—might be evocative of a darker moment in German history was frankly defamatory. You see, they explained to me, the song had precisely the opposite meaning. It was all about being on the Left.

The *Left*? Yes, agreed Lorenz firmly, the *Left*. He held that life was better under Communism. In what way? “In all ways. I could live without worries about life. No one wanted to do evil to anyone. There was nothing to win or gain.”

What about the Stasi? I asked.

“The secret police? Every country has that.”

Links, said Lorenz, was written to clear up all this misunderstanding about Rammstein. “We intentionally show that one can be evil and be on the Left. People say that right-wing music is hard, and we’re saying, ‘We too can be hard.’”

I’d had no doubt that one could be evil and on the Left. I was intrigued by his use of the word “hard,” though. The Nazis conceived of *hardness* as the hallmark of the new Nietzschean super-human. Members of the band used this word often, I noticed, as did their fans.

“We made this song for Germany,” said Lorenz.

I asked Lorenz whether the allusion to the Nuremberg Rally was intentional. Pique played over his odd, pointy features. “There is no reference to the Nuremberg rally. This is the first time I’ve ever even *heard* of that. It never would have *dawned* on me. We purposely did a video without people and symbols. I think it’s a very nice video. It’s almost my favorite video. The ants are so cute.”

Look, I said to Lorenz, *come on*: If Rammstein is a left-wing band, *why use all this right-wing imagery?*

“We wonder about this ourselves,” he replied, as if the answer were somehow unknowable. “We never thought that people could see it as right-wing. We can’t see things from the audience’s perspective. We just use blood and these symbols because the songs are about violence and aggression.”

“We use them to *enthrall* the audience,” he added. Lorenz is the runt, the only member of Rammstein who isn’t huge and handsome. “It’s a difficult question because everyone has the right to listen to the music they want to listen to,” he offered in response to a question no one asked.

Kruspe-Bernstein reflected. “We are interested in lyrics that reach and move people and trigger something in people. We try not to refer to things by name, or to name them directly, but to refer to things obliquely, between the lines.”

When I visited Berlin again recently, I spent some time chatting with the owner of a restaurant near my hotel. He was a thirty-six year-old Berliner from the former East, and close to the members of the band. He had known them for many years. They often ate at his restaurant. “Yes,” he told me, “if you didn’t understand them, you could look at them and be very frightened, because yes, maybe they sound just exactly like Goebbels or something. But they don’t mean it. They’re playing.”

The proof? Rammstein, he said, like most of Germany, had opposed the war in Iraq. “Everyone here, even children too young to understand, opposed the war. We are against war now. That united us like nothing else has done since World War II. For the first time we were proud again to be German.” The restaurateur was gentle and sweet-natured, with soft, pleading eyes. While we spoke, he insisted the kitchen bring out bratwurst and beer and sweet elderberry chasers. He wouldn’t accept payment.

By his logic, Germans had through their pacifism earned the right to enjoy Rammstein without fretting overmuch about how the band looked. “Rammstein made it possible for artists to play with these themes from our history, to bring them out in the open,” he said. He likened the members of the band to the contemporary German painter Neo Rauch, who also grew up behind the Wall, and whose paintings are filled with sardonic tributes to the propaganda of the East German regime.

Rammstein, he added, was helping Germany to rediscover its identity.

As for Germany's pacifism, how can we disapprove? Who, after listening to Rammstein, can be anything but grateful that the Germans have renounced war?

But perhaps that pacifism requires some scrutiny. For Rammstein, pacifism is linked, as it so often is in Europe, to deep suspicion about America. When I was last in Berlin, I spoke to Jeffrey Gedmin, an American scholar of European studies who directs the Aspen Institute's Berlin campus. His is perhaps the most prominent voice of American foreign policy in Germany these days.

We met at a Starbucks in the now entirely reconstructed and Westernized section of East Berlin. It was easy to see from the Starbucks why some Germans might think they were living in America. The place was a perfect replica of any Starbucks in the United States, down to the piped-in Christmas carols, in English. I'd taken a taxi there through a less fashionable East Berlin neighborhood. We drove through street after street of bleak Soviet-era concrete apartment blocks, featureless and colored only by angry smears of graffiti. Little in Berlin looks German, since the original architecture was reduced to rubble by Allied bombers.

I asked Gedmin what he made of German pacifism and anti-Americanism. "I do think," he said, "that we underestimated how hard it was for a country with a grand tradition of history, literature, culture, and music—one that committed an act of insanity that lasted for thirteen years—to end up divided, lacking sovereignty, and so heavily, heavily dependent on the United States. A young editor for one of the papers here put it this way to me. He said, 'Imagine this: You're from the grand nation of Germany, and you're responsible for fascism and the Holocaust. You can't liberate yourselves, and you're liberated by gum-chewing Negroes from America.' That sat rather deep with some people. Part of it is understandable. No one wants to be divided, lacking sovereignty, and so heavily dependent. But part of it was that their sense of cultural superiority took

a big blow for those forty years. Then comes the fall of the Wall, and these things start bubbling up.

“It’s not malign. They’re not invading countries. It’s a democracy. They have a free press. They have all these things, don’t get me wrong: I’m not in the school that says, ‘Beware, democracy is crumbling in Germany.’ But what happened is this: On the East German side, a lot of people figured, I guess, ‘Bring the Wall down, pump in subsidies, give them elections, and they’ll be liberal, democratic, and Western.’ But they went from one dictatorship to another. They had sixty years of continuous dictatorship, with its institutions and indoctrination. And we know that democracy is institutions. But it’s also learned habits and values and behaviors. Much of the country wasn’t exposed to those habits and values for over a half a century. You pump in subsidies and give them free elections, but that doesn’t mean the virus doesn’t keep going around. Not that some East Germans aren’t absolutely loyal, brilliant democrats, but some are not. *They’re just not.* They’re consuming Western goods and they’re voting, but... look, this city is an example. Fifteen years after the fall of the wall, one out of four East Berliners votes for the post-Communist party. Twenty-five percent, fifteen years later? It’s a little bit high, and a little bit strange, don’t you think?”

How, I asked, did he understand German anti-Americanism? “It’s envy, resentment. Some of it’s because of the imbalance of power, some of it’s residual because of their dependence on us during the cold war. But all that bubbles up.”

And German pacifism? “They wear that as a badge of honor, but people say funny things, you know. I’ve asked people, ‘Why are you so agitated about certain aspects of American foreign policy?’ And they’ll say, ‘Because *we* would like to assert ourselves that way and we can’t.’ I’ve heard a journalist say that. ‘Because we would like to assert ourselves that way and we’re not allowed to. We have to be quiet. We have to be meek. We have to be reticent. We have to be *pacifists.*’”

And Rammstein? “Yeah, something is happening here. During the Iraq war, I did a fair amount of writing and a fair amount of television.

I supported the war. I expected to get lots of criticism. I got a very heavy amount of very violent hate mail. Beyond, you know, ‘You’re an idiot.’ Threatening. Mail that we had to give to the police. ‘I will find you one day and beat the s— out of you and pour napalm on your face.’ A lot of it was anti-Semitic. I’m not Jewish, I’m Catholic. Nevertheless, a lot of it used that sort of language. By the way, a lot of it came in E-mail, suggesting that these weren’t 70-year-old Nazis. A lot of it used language like, *You son-of-a-whore*. I got that 100 times, *son-of-a-whore*. *Nigger* was used a lot. ‘*Jew-f—er*’ was used a lot. It wasn’t ten or twenty letters. It was a couple of hundred. Of course every society has their racists, and every society has their bigots. This is a country of 82 million people. I didn’t get 82 million letters. But I got a lot. And these were letters that were beyond, *I disagree vehemently. I think that’s reckless and irresponsible*. This was really the kind of stuff where you felt you had to give it to the police. We found red paint one day on the door of the institute, which I guess is supposed to represent blood. Again, that could happen elsewhere—people get out of hand, there are radicals.

“I guess the biggest thing I would say is that Germany is finding itself. There’s a reaction against taboos, anything that they feel was imposed from the outside, and there’s this reflex to go in the opposite direction.”

Was there no sense, I asked, that authentic pacifism, or at least an authentic stand against fascism and genocide, would dictate a more vigorous opposition to Saddam Hussein’s regime than to ours?

“No.”

Why didn’t they connect that logical circuit?

“Mostly, it wasn’t *about* Saddam Hussein—it was about us. *Here’s a big power, a hegemon, throwing its weight around without consulting us. This is not the world order we’re trying to create*. I think they were afraid of us failing in Iraq, but they were also afraid of us *succeeding* in Iraq. Seriously. Now, you know, we’ve had problems in Iraq. But if we hadn’t had problems, that would have cost us great German resentment too. Because we would have removed him, the Iraqis would have liked us—and *that* was not what they wanted either. A lot of it is about power, and pathology, and payback.

“By the way, it’s the same with Israel. I just saw a new poll—more than 50 percent of Germans believe that Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians is worse than the German treatment of the Jews under the Nazis.” I had seen the same poll.²² I looked around the café and wondered whether more than half of the pleasant, well-mannered people around me, sipping their eggnog lattes and reading their newspapers, really believed that.

“Look, the Germans have a chip on their shoulder. They have a chip on their shoulder because, as this journalist friend of mine said, Americans did them the ultimate injustice. We liberated them. We protected them for forty years. When unification came, and Europe was against them, we stood up and supported them, and... they’ve had enough of that! And with Israel, one could say, they just will *not* forgive the Jews for putting them in the black box of history. Now you might argue that *they* were guilty of the Holocaust, but somehow, weirdly enough, it gets contorted to, *if Germans have a bad reputation, it’s because of those friggin’...*” He didn’t need to finish the sentence.

If being for peace means threatening to pour napalm on American faces, then perhaps, I thought, I should not be reassured by German pacifism. Not, of course, that Rammstein has threatened to pour napalm on anyone’s face. It’s not even napalm they use in their concerts, it’s a stunt inflammable called lycopodium. It only looks like napalm.

I met the members of Rammstein for the second time, again in Berlin, last December. They were back on tour in Europe for the first time in two-and-a-half years and once again packing stadiums. Hours before they played the Velodrome, thousands of fans crowded the entrance. They appeared to comprise a wide demographic. Some had arrived in jeans and anoraks; others had come in leather, and one had shown up on a dog leash. There were children in the crowd, and a lone elderly man in a tweed jacket with elbow patches. Many fans were wearing T-shirts with the legend, “You are what you eat,” a reference to the cannibalism song. Despite the long

wait, the crowd only once burst into the traditional skinhead anthem—“Oi! Oi!”—and this, only half-heartedly. They then returned to drinking their beer, eating their bratwurst, and rubbing their hands together against the bitter cold.

“We love Rammstein because they make it so hard, so dark, so evil, and that makes it so interesting for us,” said a woman in her late thirties with a hard, lined face. “Rammstein wants to be provocative, they want Germany to open its eyes. Every song has a deeper sense. Germans don’t want to open their eyes—they don’t want to talk about these things.”

I ran into Lindemann several minutes later, in the corridor backstage. He scowled. “I don’t speak. *Nein*,” he said, and stomped off. He looked bloated and unwell. He had deep circles under his eyes, and his dark stage makeup was smeared. Guitarist Landers, who was holding court in a small office backstage, was more forthcoming. I asked him about Rammstein’s role in German culture. “The Germans,” he said, “definitely have a problem. Before, it was *Deutschland uber alles*—Germany above everything. And now Germany is below everything. Rock bottom. Our problem is that we actually think Germany is pretty good. But almost nobody thinks that. Every-body’s very embarrassed to be German, and there’s no German identity. Our aim is to help Germany not to be overly patriotic like the Americans, but to be patriotic, and not be ashamed. Every country has its strengths and weaknesses. Some of them have more character, some of them have less character. In my opinion there’s a certain type of character that Germans have that no other nationality has. It’s hard to describe. It would be a shame if that disappeared.” When I asked him what that was, precisely, he told me that Germans made good cars. “I’m a German too, and like all Germans, we haven’t a completely clear conscience. Other people don’t do what we do, don’t use the images we do, because they’re too cowardly. A rock band has to provoke—it’s their task, their duty. We love doing it, we love provoking people. It’s fun. It’s a lot of fun. We love getting attention. We love getting people upset, shocking people—but we think that’s good. But it’s just fun to do, that’s the most important thing. It’s the way things have turned out. It’s just the way things have happened.”

“At first, we thought it was our duty to provoke Germany, to get Germany going in a certain direction. That was at first. But then we realized, it doesn’t work that way. It takes time. What we can do is set a certain example. We can show the way. Blaze a trail. But it will take a long time—it will take at least sixty years until things go in that direction. You can’t change history, it just doesn’t work that way—you see it in Iraq, when you go in, you get into trouble. It just takes time. History takes time. A hundred years.”

His assistant interrupted us and hustled me off to meet Kruspe-Bernstein, who was waiting in another anteroom. In his makeup and a costume with a high bat-winged collar, he looked a bit like an escapee from the set of *Dracula*. Kruspe-Bernstein now lives in New York. He was warm and friendly—charming, in fact. His English had improved markedly since the last time we met, and we no longer needed a translator.

“You know,” he said, “it’s funny, I was reading yesterday about fifty reviews of the last shows, in Germany—and not one of them was any good. Not one. And it’s so interesting, I just wonder, because we toured through all of Europe, for the last two months, I guess. And everyone really liked us, they thought we were really good, but coming back to Germany not one person, not one writer, not one journalist likes the show? I mean, come on. There’s something weird there. I don’t know... I think Germany still has a big problem with us. I can’t really figure it out. You know, it’s almost like a man who would never admit he likes to go to a bordello or something—but he still goes. It’s kind of the same with Rammstein, you know? It’s a guilty pleasure. It’s weird.”

So how did he account for this?

“The biggest problem about Germany is that they have either too much respect for themselves or too little respect for themselves. They never have a balance, you know? They still suffer from the last war. I kind of represent, like, myself, just to friends, you know, like living in New York City, and getting involved in discussion, like, don’t be afraid, to say that you are German, you know, and try to have a balance, and try to use the German as kind of humor, you know? That’s what we actually do, with Rammstein. But, to

go back to humor... everyone knows that humor's not the biggest strength Germany has. I asked why, what is it that brings humor out? And I came to the conclusion that you have to be confident about yourself to laugh about yourself. And that, coming back to Germany—I think Germans aren't confident about themselves. And Rammstein is something, we can use humor right now, in a way. In quiet confidence.”

Two things came through very clearly in my conversations with the band: The never-ending guilt of anyone born German, and the growing, peevish disgruntlement that guilt provokes. Rammstein perfectly captures the sentiments of a nation at war with its forbidden impulses, and indeed, when Kruspe-Bernstein surprised himself with his desire to wrestle his own image in the video for *Mein Teil*, he happened upon an excellent metaphor.

Perhaps the song that best characterizes this attitude is *Los*, in which the band taunts its critics:

We were nameless
We have a name
We were wordless
The words came
Still we are
A little songless
Yet still we are not toneless
One still hears it
We aren't flawless
Just a bit anchorless
You will become soundless
Never get rid of us

Never get rid of us—this is an ancient theme in German history, this resentment, this sense that the German nation does not occupy its proper place, that the German people have been unjustly oppressed. Historically, it is nothing new to see these sentiments coupled with outrage that those

goofy Americans should by contrast be so powerful. We see this resentment in Wilhelminian Germany's obsession with its encirclement prior to World War I. Hitler skillfully exploited it in his rise to power.

The scariest thing about these men is that they appear not to have learned a thing from history. They're just sullenly seething about the way it's oppressing them.

Whether their songs are about love or war, and whether they are on the Left or the Right, one thing is certain: Rammstein's music is not European, but *German*. A sensibility has been passed, from generation to generation. The Danes do not make music like this, and neither do the Portuguese. Nor do the Irish, the Macedonians, or the Belgians. This music could not have its mesmerizing power in any language but German. As keyboardist Lorenz correctly observes, "The German language is very suited to our musical style." To confirm this point, imagine Rammstein's lyrics sung in French. For particular hilarity, imagine them sung by Maurice Chevalier.

It has often been remarked that people reveal their souls in the music they create, and that a nation's music bears a relationship to its social, moral, and political life. Plato devotes considerable attention to this subject in the *Republic*. "Music," he writes, "is the movement of sound to reach the soul for the education of its virtue." Later, he cautions that "the introduction of a new kind of music must be shunned as imperiling the whole state; since styles of music are never disturbed without affecting the most important political institutions."²³ His views are echoed by Aristotle, Rousseau, and Nietzsche, all of whom acknowledge the unique capacity of music to stir human emotions, for good or ill.²⁴

Nowhere has the close relationship between music and the soul been more evident than in Germany. The barbarians of Germania, Gibbon noted, were fascinated by music.²⁵ Nietzsche remarked that the German imagines even God singing songs.²⁶ The German, Wagner observed, far from looking upon the practice of music as an empty entertainment, "religiously

approaches it as the holiest precinct in his life. He accordingly becomes a fanatic, and this devout and fervent *Schwärmerei*, with which he conceives and executes his music, is the chief characteristic of German music.”²⁷

The killers at Columbine reportedly loved Rammstein. According to Russian authorities, the murderers at Beslan were listening to Rammstein during the school siege. It is doubtful that they understood the lyrics, but they certainly understood the aesthetic. Why is it that they found themselves inspired by *German*, not Chechen, music? What is it about the German musical tradition that has this force?

I am not sure. But at the extreme, it is clear, music becomes a form of exhortation, one that can inspire the spirit and encourage decisive action. And this raises an interesting question: Was Plato right about the dangers that new music can pose?

Or, to put it another way: Has Rammstein had any influence on the German body politic? It’s hard to say. Rammstein certainly returned the aesthetic of the Right to the German pop culture mainstream, and their vaulting commercial success has inspired scores of imitators. Last September, far-Right and neo-Nazi parties sent a chill through Europe by scoring major victories in Germany’s regional elections, particularly in the formerly Communist East. Did the cultural transformation associated with Rammstein’s *Neue deutsche Härte*—the new German hardness—help these parties return to the mainstream? Who knows? It probably didn’t hurt.

According to the Laeken Declaration, issued in late 2001 by the European Council, the unification of Europe is near. “At long last,” the document reads, “Europe is on its way to becoming one big family.” Cheerful news. And this brotherhood is all very touching, considering that it replaces century upon century of unmitigated slaughter and butchery among the European peoples, a tradition of virtually uninterrupted warfare since the sack of Rome. But for the sake of argument, let’s accept the assumption. *E pluribus unum!* Thank goodness Europe is a family now. One

feels such the spoilsport in pointing out that certain members of this new European fraternity seem to retain rather a bizarre preoccupation with the smell of burning flesh, the coagulation of blood on the asphalt, and the sound of screaming mothers. How churlish one would have to be to point out that they are still gibbering dementedly about the *horniness* they feel when you scream in fear. And surely, this preoccupation with the enlightenment of white flesh, with doomsday, with destruction, with mercilessly breaking you apart like little sticks—it would be unbrotherly to find that odd? He asks where all the dead are coming from, whether you want to perish in skin and hair; he says that love is war and he tells you to run; he warns that there is no escape and no one to save you; you might plead for mercy but none will be given; he kneels in your face and sticks fingers in the ashes; his father, he admits, was exactly like him. But what can you do? He's family. Doesn't every family have one like that?

"I think it's really nice when the countries are also proud of their traditions," said Lorenz.

I certainly think it is possible that the members of Rammstein believe their own party line—they do not see themselves as Nazis; they hold themselves to be harmless musical herbivores. No member of the band, from what I can tell, is personally genocidal, an enemy of the Jews, or a particular partisan of the Aryan Nation. There is something all the *more* frightening about the fact that they do not consciously recognize what they are doing: It suggests that this stuff comes out of them by sheer instinct.

But even that's not the point. Whether or not the members of Rammstein adhere to the Nazi *weltanschauung* is irrelevant. Hugo Ringle, for example, an official of the Munich *Reichspropagandaleitung*, recalled the way Hitler seduced his audiences: "In a thousand ways," Ringle wrote, "it was proved true that often it was *not so much the contents of the speech as it was the manner in which it was delivered* that influenced the listener and won him to us."²⁸ Rammstein certainly knows how to deliver its message in a manner that influences the listener to open his wallet. As Lorenz puts it, "We can deliver whatever we like, and they'll play it. When no one knows

you, they say it's glorifying violence and not suitable for broadcasting, but when you hit the charts, it doesn't count anymore. Then you can make what you want anyhow, and they'll play it."²⁹ In contemporary Germany, it so happens that the *manner of delivery* that best influences the listener is very much like the Nazi manner.

That's right. *The Nazi manner*. We can speak frankly among ourselves now. Just go down the checklist, the very one that Susan Sontag so brilliantly offered in her discussion of the Nazi aesthetic: "The color is black, the material is leather, the seduction is beauty, the justification is honesty, the aim is ecstasy, the fantasy is death."³⁰ And this is what today dominates German popular culture. It is the *Germans* who are fascinated by Rammstein, who are gobbling up this virtually undisguised Third Reich revivalism, devouring it as if they've been starved for years. But that's not Germany, you say? Just a handful of jackbooted Teutonic nihilists who happen to be German? *Then who bought all those albums?* It sure wasn't the Liverpoolians. They just wanna hold your hand.

Now, I am *not* arguing that Rammstein's popularity evidences a full-throated recrudescence of Nazism in Germany, nor that German democratic institutions are under immediate threat. I am arguing that culturally, the Germans are unlike any other nation in history; this is equally true of the French, the British, the Spanish, and the Greeks. And one cannot think of a European future without first recognizing that *never in history* have mature, fully formed nation states of such cultural disparity united to form an effective and coherent single actor—neither economically, politically, nor in foreign affairs—for more than a few decades, and *never in history* have massive waves of immigrants been successfully assimilated into this kind of state. Indeed, the overwhelming tendency of states cobbled together from diverse ethnic groups is to disintegrate, swiftly and violently. The immigrants tend to get killed when this happens. In this regard, one

can only read with deep unease such editorials in German newspapers as one written by a Professor Hans-Ulrich Wehler, in *Die Zeit*, about “The Turkish Problem.”³¹

Perhaps Rammstein are refulgent Nazis in the truest and most sinister sense of the word, or perhaps they’re clowns, guilty of nothing more than outrageous blindness to their own appearance. Perhaps they’re somewhere in between. That’s not the point. The point is that Germany loves them. The point is the persistence of a German national personality so distinctive, so historically continuous, that it is risible to imagine these people as the brothers of the French or the sisters of the Belgians or the cousins of the British.

The European Union is a marriage of convenience; the acceptance of massive immigration a matter of economic necessity. A salad of nations and peoples is now tossed together because the arrangement is politically and economically imperative, however grimly distasteful they find one another, however unsuited their temperaments, however grossly they have betrayed one another in the past. I am certainly not opposed to the unification of the European people, nor to their cheerful acceptance of a flood of immigrants from faraway lands of which they know nothing. It would be glorious if brotherhood among men were at last to prevail upon this tormented and schismatic continent.

I am simply listening to Rammstein and thinking: Don’t bet on it.

Claire Berlinski is a writer living in Paris. She is currently working on a study of the challenges facing the European political order. Her last contribution to AZURE was the essay “The Hope of Marseilles” (AZURE 19, Winter 2005).

Notes

1. It also alludes to the U.S. Air Force base, Ramstein, in West Germany, where 69 people were killed and approximately 500 people were injured (most of them burned), when three jets collided above the crowd at an air show on August 28, 1988.

2. Lyrics by Richard Z. Kruspe-Bernstein, Paul Landers, Christoph Doom Schneider, Till Lindemann, Doktor Christian Lorenz, Oliver Riedel. Copyright © TamTam Fialik Musikverlag, Musik-Edition Discoton GmbH, courtesy of BMG Music Publishing Germany. The translation is mine. For brevity's sake I have selected a representative sample. A complete catalog of Rammstein lyrics in German and their English translation may be found at www.herzeleid.com/en/lyrics.

3. John Felstiner, *Paul Célan: Poet, Survivor, Jew* (New Haven: Yale, 2001), p. 39. The translation is Felstiner's.

4. Consider these lines from Trakl's *De Profundis*:

Cold metal straps on my forehead.
Spiders search for my heart.
There is a light that dies in my mouth.

Cited in www.littlebluelight.com/lblphp/quotes.php?ikey=27.

5. See, for example, Verse 4 of Benn's *Nigger Bride*. Gottfried Benn, *Morgue and Other Expressionist Verse* (1912-1913), at www.supervert.com/elibrary/benn.html.

6. It is instructive to contrast this song, Rammstein's interpretation of *Here Comes the Sun*, with the Beatles' original.

7. See, for example, www.rammsteinsite.com/articles3.html; www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/Rammstein; www.religioustolerance.org/sch_vio6.htm.

8. *Du Hast* means *You have*. *You hate* is properly spelled *Du Hasst*. But Rammstein officially translates the song as "You Hate." This translation is on their official website; it is the translation they send to fans upon request, and it is the way they sing it when they sing the song in English.

9. The two were subsequently sentenced to six months' probation and a fine. See <http://members.lycos.nl/feuermeister/eng/press/pulsemay01en.html>. When a journalist asked whether Rammstein truly represented what most Americans might imagine as family values—particularly since Rammstein's songs are obsessively preoccupied with incest—guitarist Kruspe-Bernstein explained that these were "just love songs from extreme angles." Paul Gargano, "A Foreign Flair for Family Values," *Metal Edge*, January 1999, at www.rammsteinsite.com/articles1.html.

10. Wolfgang Spahr, *Billboard*, August 7, 1999, p. 11.

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11. Winston Cummings, "Teutonic Values," *Hit Parader*, December 1998, at www.rammsteinsite.com/articles3.html.
 12. Colin Devinish, "Rammstein Raise Furor Over Video With Nazi-Era Footage," August 1998, at www.vh1.com/artists/news/500908/08311998/rammstein.jhtml.
 13. Gabriella, *New York Rock*, November 1998, at www.nyrock.com/interviews/rammstein_int.htm.
 14. Chris Gill, "Rammstein: Battering Ramm," *Guitar World* 6/9, at www.rammsteinsite.com/articles6.html.
 15. www.newsfilter.org/antimtv/bands/rammstein.htm.
 16. "Nazis? Heil No!" *London Records*, 2001, at www.nme.co.uk/news/562.htm.
 17. www.planetrammstein.com/en/faq/22.php. Examples of posters in this genre may be found at: <http://motlc.wiesenthal.com/gallery/pg01/pg9/pg01931.html>; www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/posters/rad.jpg.
 18. Cummings, "Teutonic Values."
 19. Hugo Ringler, for example, an official of the Munich *Reichspropagandaleitung* (Party Propaganda Central Office), recalls Hitler's rise to power in this essay, published in 1937 for the edification of the Nazi Party's propagandists: "[He] *spoke not to the understanding but to the heart*. He spoke out of his heart into the heart of his listener. And the better he understood how to execute this appeal to the heart, the more willingly he exploited it and the more receptive was the audience to his message. One could not at all at that time persuade the German people by rational argument; things worked out badly for parties that tried that approach. The people were won by the man who struck the chord that others had ignored—the feelings, the sentiment or, as one wants to call it, the heart." Hugo Ringler, "Heart or Reason? What We Don't Want from Our Speakers," *Our Will and Way*, 7 (1937), pp. 245-249.
 20. Interview with Flake Lorenz, *Deutscher Video Ring Magazin*, May 2001, at www.rammsteinnicage.com/media/interviews/deutschervideomay01en.html.
 21. The Nazi Iron Cross had a superimposed Swastika. The Anti-Defamation League's catalog of Nordic runes favored by neo-Nazis as Swastika surrogates may be found at: www.adl.org/hate_symbols/updates.asp.
 22. Etgar Lefkovits, "Poll: Over 50 Percent of Germans Equate IDF with Nazi Army," *Jerusalem Post*, December 7, 2004. The poll was conducted by researchers at the University of Bielefeld. The researchers found that 51 percent of Germans believed Israel's present-day treatment of the Palestinians to be equivalent to the Nazi atrocities against European Jews during the Second World War; 68 percent
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believed that Israel was waging a “war of extermination” against the Palestinians; 82 percent were angered by Israel’s policies toward the Palestinians; 62 percent were sick of “all this harping on” about German crimes against Jews; and 68 percent found it “annoying” that Germans today were still held to blame for Nazi crimes. In a triumph of understatement, the German pollsters remarked that the findings “may be worrying.”

23. Cf. Plato, *Republic*, 398d-402a, 424b-c.

24. Aristotle, *Politics*, Books VII-VIII; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Letter to D’Alembert, Project concerning some new signs for music, Dissertation on modern music, Letter on Italian and French Opera*, etc.; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Out of the Spirit of Music in Birth of Tragedy*.

25. See Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. Hans-Friedrich Mueller (New York: Modern Library, 2003), vol. i, pp. 202, 931; vol. ii, pp. 286, 734.

26. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. Duncan Large (Oxford: Oxford, 1998), maxim 33.

27. Richard Wagner, *Über Deutsches Musikwesen*, Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen: vol. i, trans. William Ashton Ellis, Wagner Library, Edition 1.0 at <http://users.belgacom.net/wagnerlibrary/prose/wagongm.htm>.

28. Ringler, “Heart or Reason?” pp. 245-249.

29. Andrea Nieradzick, “Beautiful Sons,” *Musik Express*, March 2001, at http://herzeleid.com/en/press/2001-03_musik_express.

30. Susan Sontag, “Fascinating Fascism,” *Under the Sign of Saturn* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1975), p. 109.

31. Hans-Ulrich Wehler, “The Turkish Problem,” *Die Zeit*, September 12, 2002.