

**Date: Fri, 23 Jan 2004 08:40:41 -0000**  
**From: "Ivan Mansley" <ivanman dsl.pipex.com>**

#### HEIMAT Part 6: HEIMATFRONT [The Homefront]

It seems to me that Reitz confronts quite directly the evils of Nazism and the question of how much was known about the atrocities of the Holocaust and the concentration camps in this episode of Heimat. He does this, of course, through his depiction of Wilfried Wiegand. I found Wilfried's cold-blooded and ruthless killing of the injured British airman quite shocking on first viewing for this discussion, and, on second viewing, was able to concentrate on how Reitz achieves this sense of shock cinematically speaking. Wilfried's gun is directly aimed at us, the audience, and as we cringe, the camera returns to the stricken airman, falling back with a bullet through the head. At the end of the episode, during Lucie's musical soiree, he unburdens himself [not very discreetly as he is heard by Pauline and her son Robert] to the other officers: "The final solution is being executed mercilessly. Between ourselves, we all know anyway 'Up the chimney' I mean the Jews" [the last phrase is to Pauline]. I took the "we" to mean at least all the military and SS, and, if a fairly small time functionary like Wilfried knew, then it must have been pretty widely known. That is what Reitz seems to imply. As an aside, although it did point up Wilfried's wickedness, I found the running quarrel between him and Kath perhaps a little "stagey". I did like the way his pompous and windy speech, concerning the virtues of the telephone system in linking Anton and his wife, was punctuated by the sound of Glasisch slurping his soup.

On the subject of Glasisch it was really quite touching how he twice had to ask Eduard to be included in the wedding photo and then had to have his "scabby hand" removed from the elder Wiegand's shoulder. The outsider cries to be let in! It was interesting at the end to see Glasisch outside in the snow with his mocking cry: "Put out that light."

There were moments of great tension in the film, weren't there? The filming of Otto defusing the bomb was quite brilliant. The camera focused on the huge metal pliers and the careful ratcheting of the fuse. One felt at any moment that the thing would explode, blowing Otto into "the stratosphere", as he put it. I liked Otto's idea of the bomb as female "gurgling away" and being relieved of its fuse. The other moment of tension and excitement was Ernst's low-flying exploits over Schabbach. I kept thinking that he would crash at any moment, especially after a dramatic roll manoeuvre. The sudden splash of colour with the falling red carnations was most dramatic.

Many of the transitions and contrasts in this episode were very interesting. For instance, when Martha and Maria are together in the Post Office van, we have feminine conversation with Maria comforting the crying Martha, and talking of "My Anton and your Anton" and "Our boy" who was always "a sensitive boy, really gentle." This inclusive, warm, maternal talk with the two women building their relationship is in beautiful contrast to the cynical, slightly earthy, mocking tone of the masculine conversation of Otto and Pieritz a little later by the side of the volcanic lake. Also, we have the sudden contrast between the talk about the gentle Anton as the van proceeds down the narrow, winding lane and the sudden appearance of the arrogant and cruel Wilfried, strutting through the barn door into the French P.O.W. centre.

I have a number of questions. I hope they can be answered. Shortly after leaving the station in the post van Maria and Martha start singing in a totally tuneless way, or so it seemed to me, some dreadful wordy song. What was it? A folk song? A military song? Both women are happy together. Martha has a vision of Anton in Russia and begins to cry. Maria appears to be quoting when she refers to him "in that vast, terrible country." What is she quoting?

We see Hermann in the yard with the geese and he is observed by Mathias, Maria and Martha. "What a sweet little boy!" We will remember these words. I was rather

disappointed by the casting of the grown-up Anton and Ernst. They looked nothing like their previous selves, particularly the former.

Having become immersed in Reitz's *Heimat* I am beginning to see cinematic quotes everywhere!! Thomas will be pleased! Old Wiegand talking to Anton on the telephone in a crowded room referred back to his call to Wilfried in Berlin. The telephone lines stretching across the snow-covered landscape referred back to the scenes with Hans shooting the porcelain insulators and forward to Eduard's discovery of Hans' death on the Eastern Front, a discovery which affects him deeply. When taking a photograph he remarks to Glasisch, I think that "Airmen are the true heroes. They don't suffer." An enigmatic remark that he has made before, I think.

As an Englishman I liked Otto's words about the precision of English engineering which ironically helps to preserve his life [vbg] but Reitz, the German director, is showing us that there is no room for narrow nationalism amongst the intelligent. What else? Look at Reitz's attention to detail. In the scene at the station when Martha arrives we see a departing soldier kissing his girl-friend, we hear the train whistle as it is ready to depart, and we see Maria's van enveloped in steam for a few moments. It is artifice but it appears authentic. We can see Reitz's interest in film techniques with the filming of Anton on the telephone by the Propaganda Unit and such detail as the use of a tape measure from Anton's head to get lighting and focus correct.

I would just like to return to Lucie's musical evening once more to finish. She is behaving outrageously and flirting with virtually all the men. She has her new protégé, the talented violinist Herr Zacharias. She addresses him by his first name, Helmut. There seems to be something between them! What is the music he is playing after the sheet music has dropped to the floor and been picked up?

I am hopeless at recognizing music but it seemed very familiar. My wife tells me we have it on CD. Is it Mozart? I take it that it is by a German composer. My old headmaster at school was always saying something to the effect of how could a nation produce not only Bach and Beethoven but also Belsen and Buchenwald! I think Reitz may be making the same point. On one side of the room we have music being played divinely [Lucie's description but true] and, on the other, a murderer talking about sending Jews "up the chimney."

As usual, there is much to appreciate in this episode on all levels, intellectual and emotional, thematically, cinematically, as a narrative and character study. It is about us all. I look forward to our discussion.

Ivan Mansley.

**Date: Fri, 23 Jan 2004 15:39:38 -0600**  
**From: "Susan Biedron" <susan jsbiedron.com>**

Ivan,

Once again, thanks for your great introduction. As to your comments on "The Homefront"

- > It seems to me that Reitz confronts quite directly the evils of Nazism and
- > the question of how much was known about the atrocities of the Holocaust and
- > the concentration camps in this episode of *Heimat*. He does this, of course,
- > through his depiction of Wilfried Wiegand."

I always wonder myself how Maria and Wilfried could have come from the same parents. But then your comment at the end of your posting sums it up:

> and My old headmaster at school was always saying something to the  
> effect of how could a nation produce not only Bach and Beethoven but also  
> Belsen and Buchenwald! I think Reitz may be making the same point...

I agree with you on two points:

1) Yes, Katharina's constant ragging of Wilfried is a bit overdone. But I do like the part where she calls him a coward and voices her doubts that soldiers have enough to eat and are not freezing on the eastern front. I wonder if she does listen to allied radio broadcasts! Perhaps she is confident that Wilfried will not report her.

2) The casting of the grown-up Anton and Ernst. I wholeheartedly agree on that. After watching Heimat several times, by now I have gotten used to the grown up Anton, but when I first saw "Homefront" I could not believe how a thin faced dorky boy turned into a good looking young man with a rounded face and big brown eyes. There is no similarity at all.

My comments:

Does Glasisch have a Hitler mustache? Or is that a scab under his nose?

Lucie at the wedding: Why does she keep urging Martha to go to church? Has Lucie found religion?

Sometimes Old Wiegand serves as comic relief.

As a female, I don't like this comparison - but then this was 50+ years ago:

> Otto's idea of the bomb as female "gurgling away" and being relieved of its fuse.

More on Lucie - she is a fascinating character, but I think she is getting a little carried away with her telling how the violinist eats slowly and doesn't wolf his food like the other soldiers. It points out she is a shallow person.

But Eduard is not. Eduard is very upset by the death of Hans. But wasn't Hans practicing shooting the insulators by himself before Eduard went with him? I thought it was the guard at the quarry who first tells Hans he would make a good sharpshooter. But perhaps Eduard blames himself because he encouraged Hans.

I can't recognize the song Maria sings or the melody the violinist plays either.

Susan

**Date: Thu, 29 Jan 2004 21:04:15 +0100**  
**From: "Theresia en Martijn" <theresia\_martijn\_onetelnet.nl>**

Dear all,

It took me some time to write this message but here are my notes made whilst watching episode 4 and 5.

The first scene in 4 when Maria and Pauline go to the cinema together is one of the few scenes of Heimat where I bore myself. It takes so long, too long. It's the same with the cinema scene in 5 and also Ivan writes this in his introduction to part 5. Anyway in this

scene it's the first time that we see there's a real friendship between Maria and Pauline.

There are many poetic suggestions in part 4. Example: Otto who speaks about a dragonfly on the theodolite (did anyone actually see one?).

And Kath she's so wise and seems to get wiser and wiser.

"Those were marvellous times in Berlin with you," who is he addressing? Lucie? Martina? Ivan writes this in his introduction.

Well Ivan, Eduard speaks to both women. In English you've got two personal pronoun forms of you, the singular one and the plural one. You don't have this in German, there you have two different forms, for the singular it's 'du' and for the plural it's 'euch'. This can be confusing when you translate into English because then it may be hard to understand whether they mean du or euch. And you can get a totally different meaning of the sentence. Here Eduard used the word 'euch' so you in plural form.

When Eduard says that "Time ought to stand still" you see this big clock next to him. Which makes his wish even more dramatic. And Lucie who finally longs to see her parents. The only thing we knew about the contact with her parents was that she didn't speak to her mother anymore. Of course we don't know the exact reason for this, it could be that her parents were aware that she worked as a prostitute with an own broddle in Berlin. Now she's become a 'decent' lady the contact with her parents can be renewed again.

This brings me to episode 5.

Lucie wishes to see her parents, takes them to the Hunsrück and kills them in a car accident. So much tragedy. No contact for 5 years and then this.

Someone asked whether we'd seen Herr Pollack already before but I don't think we did. He suddenly appears as Robert's helping hand in the shop. My opinion is that Martina's so desperate for a relation and a man that it's just one of her tricks. Pollack is shy and the whole situation makes it just impossible for him to deny their 'relation'.

I like the detail, when you get a close up from Maria's weddingring on her finger when she starts the pick-up. It's just before Otto and Maria declare one's love for each other. And just before that moment Reitz makes us aware of the difficult situation for Maria as a married woman.

When I watched the long cinema scene I imagined how much work the stylists of the film must have had! A whole cinema full with people, all these clothes, all the make up, all the hairdo and accessories! That takes ages to dress all these people!

Does anyone agree with me that Anton and Ernst look a bit too young now for the age they've reached? And especially Anton's moustache on that children's face looks slightly weird (when he's in Hamburg with Maria).

And doesn't Maria look totally drugged when she's in Trier with Otto? In which world is she?

Now you all need to help me with something I'd never seen before. It's only a detail but it's a strange one. We've many kitchen scenes in Heimat. You've this beam in the middle of the kitchen and the cooker on the left. Next to window on the right side we see a chair most of the time. But in the scene where Maria is helping Otto with his sling we suddenly see a bed standing in that corner. It's the first time I see this and I think it's the only scene where we see this four-poster bed in the kitchen. The kitchen scene before and after this scene is without the bed again. Who saw this too and who can explain this?

Someone also spoke about the telegram. If the mistake of 3 days was in the telegram or made by Eduard. It must have been in the telegram because they read it aloud a few times and everytime they read the same, namely three days.

I would like to end with a personal note to Ivan. I enjoy your introductions so much! Your style, ideas and parts of Eliot and others makes it really special. I lived in England for a few years (in Cheshire) and came back to Holland last year. The style of the English is a style you won't find anywhere else. I sometimes miss that very much on the continent. Your elegant style of writing brings back so many memories to good old England. Watching Heimat 'together' is special but your writing makes it so much more to me. I would like to know if you know the 'Pre-Raphaelites' (19th century English art movement), I expect you do. Everyone talked about the appearance of the apples in part 5, 3 times apples what could that mean? William Holman Hunt was one of the Pre-Raphaelites and he made three paintings which together are a kind of trilogy. The Light of the World (Keble College-Oxford and St. Paul's London), The Hireling Shepherd (Manchester City Art Galleries) and The Awakening Conscience (Tate London), these paintings are full with symbols of moral decay. In the first two Hunt has painted apples, especially in The Light of the World the apples are symbol of temptation. Maybe I dwell too much and go much too far with writing this in a message about Heimat but these apples seem to intrigue us all. Hunt did paint these apples on purpose did Reitz do the same in his film?

Thanks for allowing me to write this rather long message so much later than the whole discussion took place. But I'll try to stick to the schedule again now! (Although I haven't watched part 6 yet, oh dear, oh dear).

Theresia

**Date: Thu, 29 Jan 2004 21:32:52 -0000**  
**From: "Ivan Mansley" <ivanman dsl.pipex.com>**

Thank you for your kind words, Susan. You wrote, concerning Otto's comparison of an unexploded bomb with a female: "As a female, I don't like this comparison - but then this was 50+ years ago". I did not express myself properly or clearly when mentioning this and I apologise if it sounded anti-feminine. What I should have said was, not that I liked Otto's idea of the bomb as female, but that I liked Reitz's depiction of the two brothers-in-arms [Otto and Pieritz] and the way they, as soldiers engaged in a hugely dangerous task, talk of their work and their raw material [unexploded bombs] in a self-deprecatory and affectionate way. Their slightly coarse talk reflects their camaraderie in the face of mortal danger. I meant no insult to the female sex, far from it.

You ask: "Has Lucie found religion?" It would seem she has!! Or perhaps more likely a deep desire to either be, or thought to be, "conventional"; a desire to shake off her past and do everything by the book, as it were. You also comment that Lucie's remarks about the violinist's eating habits show that she is "a shallow person." Yes, I certainly agree. She is also a snob, isn't she? She remarks to a group of officers that she normally only invites officers to her home but she has made an exception for Herr Zacharias, who, although he is only a "common soldier" [her words], has the soul of an artist ["he's got a sort of inner nobility"].

I noted how deeply Eduard was affected by the discovery of Hans Betz' death and you make a telling contrast between Eduard and Lucy. You wrote: "But wasn't Hans practicing shooting the insulators by himself before Eduard went with him? I thought it was the guard at the quarry who first tells Hans he would make a good sharpshooter. But perhaps Eduard blames himself because he encouraged Hans. "Don't you

remember the scene in Part 3 where Eduard prevents Officer Martin from charging Hans with sabotage, after he has continued firing at and destroying the porcelain insulators, and, with a wink to Hans, takes the gun and obviously returns it to him, because, as he is photographing Marie-Goot bleaching the clothes with a watering can [recording traditional ways], he is suddenly interrupted by the crack of a rifle and the disintegration of an insulator above him. Racing across the fields Eduard joins Hans on a flat roof and tries his hand. He misses but Hans does not, of course, and Eduard is so excited he throws his hat in the air and exclaims what a crack shot Hans is. He certainly encouraged his "talent" and now Hans is dead! Eduard is portrayed as a sensible and sensitive man with perhaps a slightly comic side at times.

Enough!!

Ivan Mansley.

**Date: Fri, 30 Jan 2004 14:26:54 -0600**  
**From: "Susan Biedron" <susan jsbiedron.com>**

Ivan,

Yes, I understand! Something like the Allied fighter pilots had pictures of girls on their planes. (Did Germans do that?)

> I liked Reitz's depiction of the two brothers-in-arms [Otto and Pieritz]  
> and the way they, as soldiers engaged in a hugely dangerous task, talk  
> of their work and their raw material [unexploded bombs] in a self-deprecatory  
> and affectionate way. Their slightly coarse talk reflects their camaraderie in  
> the face of mortal danger. I meant no insult to the female sex, far from it.

and on Eduard feeling guilty about Hans' death:

> He misses but Hans does not, of course, and Eduard is so excited he throws  
> his hat in the air and exclaims what a crack shot Hans is. He certainly encouraged  
> his "talent" and now Hans is dead! "

I had forgotten about that. I think I was too busy noticing Maria Goot bleaching wash on the ground.

Theresia on Part 5:

> Does anyone agree with me that Anton and Ernst look a bit too young now for  
> the age they've reached? And especially Anton's moustache on that children's  
> face looks slightly weird (when he's in Hamburg with Maria)."

Yes, I thought the same thing - Anton looks too young to grow a mustache.

I don't remember the bed in the kitchen at all, so I will have to look again at Part 5. This is what I like about this discussion - everyone notices different things!

Susan

**Date: Fri, 30 Jan 2004 23:00:45 -0000**  
**From: "Ivan Mansley" <ivanman dsl.pipex.com>**

Your message was a very welcome tonic, Theresia. I must admit that I was getting a little downcast after there was only one response to my last introduction. I thank you warmly for your kind words. I do appreciate them. Reitz' film certainly repays close attention and if I can bring people closer to it then I am happy, and if they contribute their thoughts I am even happier!

I would like to respond to some of your very interesting points. When I am watching the film and responding and concentrating on the sub-titles I hardly hear the German dialogue. For instance, I did not hear anything about a grasshopper [there was no sub-title] and I didn't see one! I am pleased you explained about the singular and plural "you". I didn't hear the plural word and probably/certainly would not have recognized it if I had. I re-visited the scene, and so quiet was it, you could hear the grandfather clock ticking. ["An angel flew by".] As you say, both a dramatic and effective device.

It was me who asked if we had seen Herr Pollack before. I certainly could not remember doing so. When Otto and Maria meet in Trier they are two souls in torment, aren't they? Maria is struggling with guilt about Paul, torn by her love for Otto, and babbles about the actions of Paul's parents and how she has pressed his old suits. Otto exclaims: "Maria, you're not really here at all." Anton has learnt a poem to recite on Paul's arrival, she says. Does anyone know what it is?

Getting characters to age convincingly is difficult, isn't it? You either have to use make-up and disguise or use different actors. Neither of these routes is entirely successful in the case of Anton and Ernst, is it? I mention the problem in my intro to Part 6. I couldn't see the bed you mentioned. Perhaps I wasn't looking at the right scene.

I found it difficult to decide whether there was a mistake about the time available to settle Paul's Aryan ancestry. On the telephone he says we leave "tomorrow at 3a.m." Lucie reads the telegram to Eduard in the street which states 3 days as time limit. Perhaps the idea of 3 has got carried over! There also seems to be some confusion about the length of Paul's absence. He left in 1928 and his letter arrives in 1938, making an absence of 10 years. Yet Maria weeps: "And that corpse writes a letter after 12 years.." Such mistakes, if that's what they are, would not be noticed in the cinema at all. Shakespeare's plays are full of such things, which are only noticed in the study not in the theatre! One famous anachronism is the reference to "striking clocks" in "Julius Caesar". Date of the invention of such a clock?? No one in the 16th century audience would have noticed the discrepancy.

Your references to the paintings of Holman Hunt interested me very much. The use of apples as a symbol of temptation obviously relates to the Biblical story and I know the Pre-Raphaelites used a good deal of Biblical imagery. I have looked at the pictures you mention on the internet, Theresia, but I am not familiar with them. My favourite from this period is Ophelia by John Everett Millais with Shakespeare's "Hamlet" obviously as its ultimate source. I wonder who was tempting who in Reitz's "Heimat". Martina tempting Herr Pollack but nothing obvious about Robert and Pauline? Perhaps dreams of wealth leading them astray? On a personal note, I visited the house of John Ruskin overlooking Coniston Water last year and a few years ago discovered a wonderful gallery in Surrey housing the works of George Frederic Watts, an artist loosely connected with the Pre-Raphaelite Movement. Were you an Art student, Theresia? You will have to help us out on artistic references.

Best wishes

Ivan Mansley.

**Date: Mon, 2 Feb 2004 0:52:47 +0000**  
**From: <david.mascall ntlworld.com>**

Dear Ivan and group

In response to Ivan's comment:

> I must admit that I was getting a little downcast after there was only one response  
> to my last introduction. I thank you warmly for your kind words. I do appreciate them.  
> Reitz' film certainly repays close attention and if I can bring people closer to it then I  
> am happy, and if they contribute their thoughts I am even happier!".

Ivan - Thank you for your well-expressed thoughts and opinions. Please don't feel that you are commenting into thin air: I have been one of the "silent ones", though I only joined this list just in time to see your introduction to part 6. I didn't know of the discussion group before that point, and I'm finding it difficult to make time to reply fully as most of my internet access at present is via public-access PCs.

Anyway, it gives a great incentive to re-view my stored tapes of Heimat (complete except for instalment 2), and to read the comments - I've found it difficult in the past to share my fascination with the films - especially "Die Zweite Heimat".

I hope to add to everyone else's comments very soon.

Regards

David Mascall

**Date: Thu, 5 Feb 2004 23:26:12 -0000**  
**From: "Ivan Mansley" <ivanman dsl.pipex.com>**

Strictly speaking other than myself only Susan contributed to discussion of Part 6. Theresia weighed in with a back review of Parts 4 & 5. Thus, we had 3 contributors and 6 posts. We discussed some of the characterisation [Lucie and Eduard, Wilfried, Maria and Martha] and the nature of the evils of Nazism.

Ivan Mansley.

**Date: Mon, 12 Apr 2004 12:02:27 +0200**  
**From: Raymond Scholz <rscholz zonix.de>**

Sorry for digging out this old mail on part 6 again but I'm still in the midst of my Heimat marathon...

· On Jan 29 2004, "Ivan Mansley" <ivanman@dsl.pipex.com> wrote:

[Lucie begging Martha of marrying at the church]

> You ask: "Has Lucie found religion?" It would seem she has!! Or perhaps more  
> likely a deep desire to either be, or thought to be, "conventional"; a desire  
> to shake off her past and do everything by the book, as it were.



Watching this scene another possible explanation came to my mind: We never get to know whether Lucie and Eduard did marry at a church. Maybe Lucie feels herself doomed in that "boring Hunsrück" and in her desperation she explains this by not having married at the church. Foreseeing the same destiny for Martha she pleads her for going there.

[Zacharias]

- > She remarks to a group of officers that she normally only invites
- > officers to her home but she has made an exception for Herr
- > Zacharias, who, although he is only a "common soldier" [her words],
- > has the soul of an artist ["he's got a sort of inner nobility"].

Maybe I missed a response during the discussion but nobody mentioned that Helmut Zacharias was a famous violonist, often called "Der Teufelsgeiger". He died in 2002 at the age of 82.

<http://www.gema.de/engl/communication/news/n165/kurzmeldungen.shtml#08>  
<http://www.gema.de/kommunikation/news/n162/zacharias.shtml>

Cheers, Ray