Kai Erikson describes what he calls ‘a new species of trouble’: ‘Indeed, everything out there can seem unreliable and fearsome [...] [T]he ground itself can no longer be relied on [...] People feel that something noxious is closing in on them, drifting down from above, creeping up from underneath, edging in sideways, fouling the very air and insinuating itself in all the objects and spaces that make up their surroundings [...] The point is not that a particular region is now spoiled but that the whole world has been revealed as a place of danger and numbing uncertainty.’ The new species of trouble I will discuss applies to women in general and Germans in particular and results from paradigm shift, not the haphazard disasters Erikson describes (such as nuclear accidents and floods). I am concerned with women’s response to the aftermath of Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* and Germans’ response to the aftermath of Second-World-War-era Nazism. Women and Germans face a new species of trouble: fallout emanating from changes in old, abhorrent rules. Sexism and Nazism, which were once socially acceptable, have become something noxious, able respectively to close in on women and Germans everywhere in the world.

Although new generations of Germans are innocent of Nazi atrocities once championed by the German government, they feel guilty about them. Although new generations of women are highly sensitized to sexism once championed by all patriarchal institutions, they feel vulnerable to existing sexism they cannot nullify.
For Germans and women, ignorance was bliss. Before Friedan, women had no means to articulate the problem which had no name. Before the War’s conclusion, Germans had a means to say that they did not know. Germans and women, now lacking such comfort, face the world in the manner Erikson describes. For women, the whole world (their personal and professional lives) has been revealed as a potential place of dangerous sexism which can appear at any moment. For Germans, the whole world (their German soil and international interactions) has been revealed as a potential place of embarrassing past history which can appear at any moment.

Walter Abish’s *How German Is It* exemplifies why Germans cannot rely upon their own ground. He describes Second-World-War-era corpses emerging from a hole which unexpectedly appears in front of a bakery in a German town. The corpses creep up from underneath and foul the town’s air. Sink holes which routinely appear in Florida are innocuous. Not so for the mass graves routinely discovered in Germany. Not so for the surprise hole, the new species of trouble Abish’s German protagonists face. Innocent, young and middle-aged Germans, when they venture abroad, never know when they will be called Nazis and shunned. Nor can Germans relax in their own country. J. S. Marcus, the Jewish author of *The Captain’s Fire*, the first American novel about Germany written after the fall of the Berlin Wall, has his Jewish-American protagonist explain that trying not to think about Nazis in Germany is analogous to trying not to think about sex in a porno shop. ‘Why go in at all?’ Marcus’ protagonist asks.

Daniel J. Goldhagen’s *Hitler’s Willing Executioners* has closed in upon Germans. The *New York Times* describes the impact Goldhagen’s September 1996 book tour had in Germany: ‘Goldhagen’s book has left ordinary Germans to grapple with his conclusion that it was something evil in their very nature – not just the manipulation of Nazism – that led to genocide.’ ‘We should revise the picture of automatons following orders without free will,’ Mr Goldhagen said in opening remarks that kicked off two hours of bitter discussion followed by a separate television panel debate marked by the same hostility. ‘It became apparent that many Germans are not prepared to accept a picture of their forebears that does not take into account the particular historic circumstances [...] Throughout the postwar era, one of the most difficult questions for Germans to answer has always been why it was they – and not