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TERRORISM AND ITS LEGACY IN GERMAN VISUAL CULTURE 5-2 2014

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TERRORISM AND ITS LEGACY IN GERMAN VISUAL CULTURE
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TERRORISM AND ITS LEGACY IN GERMAN VISUAL CULTURE

NOAH SOLTAU AND MARIA STEHLE

How else to get attention for one's product or one's art? How else to make a dent when there is incessant exposure to images, overexposure to a handful of images seen again and again? The image as shock and the image as cliché are two aspects of the same presence. (Sontag 23)

The idea for a special issue on visual depictions of terrorism in German culture came out of a graduate seminar on *Representations of Radicals and Terrorists in German Literature and Film in the 20th and 21st Century* that Maria Stehle taught at the University of Tennessee in 2011. Based on our discussions in the seminar, we decided to put together a special issue that examines, based on the German case, how historically traumatic events inform visual cultures in the twentieth and twenty-first century. The specter of international terrorism has influenced the aesthetics of a wide range of artworks produced in and about Germany, from film to photography to visual art. A closer examination of these visual art forms aims to further develop the understanding of and vocabulary for dealing with the effects of both domestic and international social trauma. The articles in this special issue examine artists' representations of acts of terrorism and of their social and political effects. We analyze the aesthetic and social discourses in which these cultural products engage and how artworks

inform or influence audiences' concepts of and responses to terrorism and political violence. Our edited volume is positioned at the tail end of a surge of engagement with West German left-wing terrorism, the student movement and so-called "sixty-eighters," and the social and political legacies of the 1960s and 70s in general.¹ By also looking beyond Germany, we position this volume at the beginning of a more comprehensive scholarly engagement with visual depictions of violence and terrorism in a post-9/11 world. In Philip Hammond's introduction to the edited volume *Screens of Terror: representations of war and terrorism in film and television since 9/11* (2011), a collection of essays that seeks to "brings together European and North American scholars working in politics and international relations as well as in literature, film, media and cultural studies to take stock and assess the shape and significance of the post 9/11," (17) he writes:

After a decade of turmoil and instability in world affairs, after two wars that have left hundreds of thousands dead and injured, it may seem frivolous to focus on fictional film and television drama. The impulse to do so, however, is in part given by the nature of the war on terror itself, designed by its architects to be a media-friendly event. Staging the spectacle of 'war on terror,' complete with

sound-bites and photo-opportunities inspired by Hollywood, was an attempt to offset the Western elite's loss of purpose and vision, to fill the 'void of meaning' in Halland's phrase. It could never accomplish that. But what it did do—not so much through the meetings with entertainment industry executives as through its very failure and incoherence—was to prompt others to try to make sense of the contemporary experience of war and terror in ways that aimed to connect with popular audiences. (17)²

In our special issue, only the article by Thomas Riegler discusses mainstream Hollywood films in more detail; the other contributions relate their discussions specifically to the German example and discuss pop cultural, political, and commercial aspects of artistic representations of political violence. Most of the films we discuss and certainly the artist we introduce would probably understand their work as intending to “prompt others to try to make sense of the contemporary experience of war and terror in ways that aimed to connect with popular audiences,” (Hammond 17) rather than as trying to re-establish the power and control of Western nations, here mainly Germany. We would argue that in most cases, the films are engaged in a project that tries to simultaneously do both: at the very least gain control of the representation, but also incite a critical discourse. The fact that terrorism *and* the fight against terrorism are media-friendly events also applies to Germany's specific past experiences with left-wing and global terrorism. This is certainly the case for the terror attacks during the Munich Olympics in 1972—a violent terrorist attack and global media event discussed in Thomas Nachreiner's article as well as in Sebastian Baden's interview with the artist Christoph Draeger—and the terror attacks of the RAF in the 1970s and into the 1980s. The filmmakers and artists we are discussing in this collection use sensationalism, the use of “the image as shock and as cliché” (Sontag), which makes their

products both effective and marketable, a fact that Noah Soltau illustrates in his discussion of the rather successful German film *Der Baader Meinhof Complex*. Most of the films and certainly the artwork, however, also make attempts to critically engage with the problem of violence and media sensationalism and the politics of fear. These two seemingly opposing aspects of “terrorism films” might suggest that they fail to send a clear political message and, consequently, remain politically incoherent. Anja Seiler's essay on the documentary film *Black Box BRD* and Eric Johnson's discussion of genre conventions in the film *Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei* (*The Edukators*) and the vacillation between terror and terrorism film illustrate the complexity of this struggle for political coherence and complexity. Maria Stehle's essay on representation of children in films about terrorism shows that an honest engagement with questions of violence and representation confirms that there is no complete, easily digestible answer, but there are important political questions that need to be addressed. The continued struggle against and with global terrorism and the images this terror produces certainly confirms this point.

Our essays hope to spark further discussions about the complex questions surrounding images and digital images in a global media landscape. The increasing reliance on images over text, of breadth rather than depth of coverage in the digital age, adds urgency to this discussion that is only compounded by recent geopolitical events and their representations, which have as of this writing displaced 51 million people and resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths.³ When we can rely on the Instagram feeds of ISIS fighters for our breaking news from the battlefields in Syria and Iraq, rather than in-depth print reporting or even the nightly news, the ability to parse and analyze the rhetoric and ideology of images becomes increasingly vital. Developing theoretical arguments about the representation of terror and terrorism from events that

represent less recent historical trauma creates an intellectual space for critical engagement that cannot be found in this morning's images of the battlefield.

With this collection, we hope to provide a blue print, a few initial possibilities, for ways in which we can productively critique artifacts of visual culture and the aesthetics of "terrorist" narratives. We view our work as part of a growing need to examine visual culture and incorporate it into wider contemporary cultural debates. As our everyday experience becomes increasingly mediated and digitized, we have to continue to work on new ways to critically engage that media.

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(Endnotes)

1. Historians have engaged with these topics for the last decade; for investigations of cinematic representations, see, for example, the work of Christina Gerhardt or Ilka Rasch; for representations in novels, see Susanne Rinner.

2. See http://www.americanquarterly.org/interact/beyond_delmont.html

3. Nick Cumming Bruce, "Refugees at levels not seen since World War II," *New York Times*, June 20, 2014, accessed June 20, 2014 http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/21/world/refugees-at-levels-not-seen-since-second-world-war.html?_r=0.

AUSSTEIGEN (GETTING OUT) IMPOSSIBLE – MONTAGE AND LIFE SCENARIOS IN ANDRES VEIEL’S FILM BLACK BOX BRD

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Andres Veiel’s 2001 documentary film, *Black Box BRD*, links the biography of Alfred Herrhausen, RAF victim, with one of the 3rd generation RAF terrorists, Wolfgang Grams. In my paper, I trace how the film’s aesthetics introduce an image montage of two life scenarios by establishing both parallels and contrast, and therefore, following Susan Haywards definition “creates a third meaning” (112). I examine how the film establishes an aesthetic concept of *Aussteigen* (getting out)—along of the alive, visible bodies—the contemporary interviewees, and dead, invisible bodies—of Herrhausen and Grams.

Le documentaire *Black Box BRD* d’Andreas Veiel explore la biographie d’Alfred Herrhausen, victime de la Fraction armée rouge (RAF), en lien avec le portrait de Wolfgang Grams, l’un des terroristes du groupe de la troisième génération. Dans mon exposé, je montre les procédés esthétiques du film qui établit des parallèles et contrastes entre deux scénarios de vie par un système de montage d’images, et donc, comme le suggère Susan Haywards, “crée un troisième sens» (Hayward 112). J’examine comment le film met en place une esthétique de l’*Aussteigen* (“se retirer”) - le long des corps vivants et visibles - ceux des interviewés contemporains, et des corps morts et invisibles - ceux de Herrhausen et Grams.

Introduction—What is in the ‘black box’?

The RAF (Red Army Faction) proclaimed its self-dissolution in March 1998. The almost twenty-eight year revolution took its toll—twenty-six dead people in the ranks of the RAF and 34 murder victims, numerous violent abductions, bank robberies, and bomb attacks. At the turn of the millennium, “a chapter” in the Bundesrepublik Deutschland (BRD), the former Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), “closed,” and at the same time an opportunity presented itself for society “to come to terms with the causes,” aftermath and the effects of left-wing terrorism (Volk 9). In terms of the “collective memory” of the RAF, what is foremost present in people’s minds are the iconic images of the first-generation RAF, including Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhof, their arrests, the mug shots, their imprisonment in isolation in Stuttgart-Stammheim, which then led to the actions of the second-generation. Mostly known is the Commando “Big Raushole” (Big Break Out)—the code word that the second-generation RAF used for the planned liberation of Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, and other first-generation RAF members who were imprisoned in Stammheim (Passmore 109).

In his 2001 documentary film *Black Box BRD*, Andres Veiel shifts focus to the more cerebral third-generation that was active between the early 1980s until the liquidation of the group in 1998. Unlike in the 1970s, the RAF was by then quite isolated from the radical left wing in the BRD and without an extensive net of sympathizers (Veiel, “Black Box BRD” 270). The third-generation instead perpetrated specific systematic assaults (Volk 22), such as the bomb attack on the Rhein-Main Air Base on August 9, 1985, the murder of the Deutsche Bank CEO Alfred Herrhausen on November 30, 1989, and the execution of the president of the *Treuhandgesellschaft*

(trust company), Detlev Carsten Rohwedder on April 1, 1991 (25).

The third-generation RAF supposedly carried out ten murders between 1985 and 1993. Wolfgang Grams and Birgit Hogefeld reputedly acted as commandos of these operations (Veiel, “Black Box BRD” 211). Left-wing terror was not yet at an end, but the third-generation itself and then society’s coping with the terror caused by the third-generation took a different path. Herrhausen’s assassination, in particular, “soon disappeared from the headlines.” The “reunification” of the BRD and the Deutsche Demokratische Republik (the German Democratic Republic, or GDR) was right around the corner. “The murder and its aftermath” got lost in the excitement about “the tremendous political changes at that time” (Veiel, “Black Box BRD” 267).

The film, as pointed out in the research, approaches the topic of the third-generation RAF by developing parallel portraits of RAF victim and Deutsche Bank CEO Herrhausen and the murdered RAF terrorist Grams (Homewood, “Making Invisible History Visible” 231) (see figs. 1 and 2). By interviewing associated people from the respective social spheres of both Herrhausen and Grams, Veiel creates a montage of two ‘life scenarios’—a term I use to highlight the constructedness of the “film narrative” (Trnka 4)—that at first appearance do not have much in common (Trnka 11). While some scholars (Homewood, “Challenging the Taboo” and “Making Invisible History Visible”) draw upon theories of “collective memory” to read Veiel’s approach, I will pursue, following Sabine Hake’s labeling of *Black Box BRD* as an “essay film” (211) the question of how the film portrays two human beings in their absence, establishes an aesthetic image concept of *Aussteigen* (getting out), and communicates the driving forces for their

personal and political acts (Volk 9, also Griese, Palfreyman, Trnka). Through the montage of the images of the living and dead, the visible and invisible bodies, also emerges an image of a nation at a specific time period, the beginning of the twenty-first century, which has been coined by the so called ‘*Erinnerungsboom*’ (boom of remembrance) of both the Second World War and left wing terror. Therefore, according to Homewood and Trnka, the two threads of Herrhausen and Grams could also be read on a larger scale as the narrative, namely a montaged portrait of the BRD, as the film title suggests—meant to “demystify” the third-generation (Thomas Elsaesser 12). This ‘demystification’ is still going on today, as there was the twentieth anniversary of Bad Kleinen on June 27, 2013. Twenty years after Bad Kleinen, the media and the research on the topic still discuss, to quote Butz Peter’s book title, *The last myth of Bad Kleinen*.

Veiel, as a director in the early 2000’s, was able to take a neutral stance on the left and right even though he cannot be completely neutral, since he is a product of his society and its historical movement (Volk 9–10). Although the film is a documentary and not a narrative fiction, the director chose the images we see, and thereby manipulates the viewer’s understanding of the topic. *Black Box BRD*’s film aesthetics establish a montage of double subjective narrators—the interviewees that tell their story and the story line cut by the director. This approach is subjective and selective (Volk 10) and highlights the subjectivity of what might be a ‘collective memory’ and how it is a mystification (Assmann 188).

In this essay, I analyze how Herrhausen’s and Grams’s contemporaries represent themselves and are, in turn, represented by the filmmaker in montage. After discussing a few theoretical thoughts on the film’s specific documentary style, I focus on selected images and sequences that capture the similarities and differences between Herrhausen and Grams.

Finally, taking into account Veiel’s book and interview statements, I show how the montage narratives create a “framing” (Hayward 162) of the concept of *Aussteigen*, tying in a larger framework of the nature of the third-generation RAF and Germany’s failure to process this final phase of RAF terrorism.

The factual uncertainty of Grams’s involvement in Herrhausen’s murder makes the approach of this documentary more interesting. Through its refusal to answer this question definitely (Volk 10), the film maintains its tension (Öhner 25). It focuses on the tragic-moral question, which is continually intensified throughout the film, of whether Grams is Herrhausen’s murderer. This effect results from the documentary’s technique of omitting a direct interviewer (Griese 166). It plays with this trope by establishing “a comparative temporal structure that analyzes,” according to Christina Gerhardt in her essay on ‘Narrating Terrorism,’ “events both synchronically and diachronically” (66). On a synchronic level, the film portrays Grams and Herrhausen. “The majority of films about the RAF organize their narratives diachronically” (66).

Herrhausen and Grams—how their paths (may have) crossed

The film starts by elaborating on how Herrhausen’s and Grams’s paths (may have) crossed. On September 11, 1977, the board member of the Deutsche Bank, Alfred Herrhausen wrote a letter with the following words: “In the case of somebody kidnapping me, I do not want the government to respond to the kidnapper’s extortion, which is against the constitutional democracy.” He put the letter in his night table, consciously taking this action five days after the kidnapping of Hanns-Martin Schleyer, at that time *deutscher Arbeitgeberpräsident* (President of the German Employers’ Association) who

was later killed by the RAF on September 18 (Veiel, “Black Box BRD” 118). Herrhausen wrote this testament during the so called ‘German Autumn,’ a set of events in late 1977 that included kidnapping and murder by the second-generation RAF, who demanded, according to their *Big Raushole* commando, the release of RAF members detained in prison. Herrhausen knew, in tragic foreshadowing, that he could be on the list of the RAF (118). Twelve years later, on November 30, 1989, Alfred Herrhausen’s wife Traudl hears a bomb detonate: her husband has been killed on his way to work just a few minutes after he left the house (9).

Today it is still not clear who killed Herrhausen (22), but the third-generation RAF member Wolfgang Grams is suspected “to have been implicated in the murder” (Gerhardt 66), though this has never been verified. He was never charged with the assassination, since he died in an operation by the counter terrorism GSG9 commando on June 27, 1993 in the Mecklenburg town of Bad Kleinen (Homewood, “Challenging” 120). The unit member Michael Newrzella was shot by Grams and died from these wounds. Grams, also severely wounded, died shortly after Newrzella. It has never been resolved whether Grams committed suicide or whether he was mortally shot (Veiel, “Black Box BRD” 275). That led to conspiracy theories questioning the role of the Federal Republic of Germany, confidential informants and intelligence services being possibly involved in the murder of Grams (21–22). The confidential informant, Klaus Steinmetz, who worked for the *Verfassungsschutz Rheinland-Pfalz* (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution Rhineland-Palatine), and who had held a position in the commando level of the RAF since 1991, had initiated the stop at the train station in Bad Kleinen, after he led himself toward the RAF since 1991 (273–74). Grams’s girlfriend, Birgit Hogefeld, also present in Bad Kleinen, got arrested for various charges

FIG. 1, 2.

caused by the RAF (274). She was released in 2011 from prison as the last RAF member.

Veiel identifies two “tension-filled subjects” by linking these two biographies. Furthermore, the film tells us, as the title suggests, about a “blind spot,” the unresolved case, in the history of the RAF terror in the BRD, and it attempts to offer insights in to this black box (Griese 170). The uneasiness of the unresolved case enhances the viewer’s understanding. Pairing Herrhausen and Grams is a way to demystify the unsolved case—a risky approach since one can easily undermine the assumption that Grams killed Herrhausen (Öhner 25).

A black box within a black box—a documentary without commentator

The film succeeds through the montage and the double narrator “without a moderating voice” (Palfreyman 32). At first glance, the story-telling technique uses no explicit narrator. The interviewer Veiel is “visually” and “acoustically” absent (Griese 166). In the interview sequences, no questions are explicitly

FIG. 3, 4, 5.

posed. In addition, old photo and film material is provided and edited in-between the close-up interview sequences. Panoramic shots of Frankfurt alternate with interviews and re-contextualized passed-on images of the main events in the history of the RAF and the BRD to establish a common thread (Palfreyman 29).

Michael Haberlander highlights pointedly in his review that the viewer does not need any “*Denkhilfen*” (clue indications) to “visualize the set of events and the people involved,” and nor even to “see through” to the—“to some extent”—“*hanebüchene Geschwätz*”

(outrageous gibberish) as enacted in the set of the following three scenes (Haberlander): Herrhausen’s twin sister, Anne Koch is positioned in front of deer antlers, as she explains how her brother always worked harder than the mediocre majority of society (fig. 3). The antiquated antlers underline the absurdness of Koch’s expressed Protestant work ethic (Trnka 15). Paul Brandt, a friend of Herrhausen, sits in front of a pole dancer and smirks as he describes how much Herrhausen enjoyed these nights of sexual entertainment (fig. 4). In the next scene, Gerd Böh, a close companion of Grams, sits in front of his bourgeois arbor, wearing a handlebar moustache, as he explains “that one had to see the big bosses” only “*in ihrer Funktion*” (in their function) (fig. 5).

The film enters the hidden politic of a documentary without commentary. It is up to the viewer to balance out the dissonance of the images and statements. It is obvious: The dramaturgy is conceptualized by the director beforehand. It is a montage. In an interview about his documentary style, Viel commented on his film technique: “There’s a fine line between my own dramaturgical wish for the development of a person and its own reality. And naturally they collide.”

I read this as a double subjectivity established throughout the film via a double narrator.

Viel describes his work “as some sort of scientific expedition”: “That means, there are always certain phenomena in reality,” the director states, “that are seemingly fast and easy to explain. And I see my task in [...] digging deeper into these phenomena.” Viel calls this method of documentary film “*Tiefenbohrung*” (deep drilling). The thesis of montage first posed at the beginning conflates with the complexity and depth of the “psychological.” The consequential suggestion is maintained through the film, since it narrates two cases of political murder, avoids putting Grams and Herrhausen in pre-assumed roles

of antagonists—“perpetrator and victim,” respectively (Homewood, “Making Invisible History Visible” 231).

Through its narrative style, the film establishes parallels since the life scenarios are stringently and diachronically reconstructed from childhood to their deaths. At the end, the film suggests, that both were in their own way *Aussteiger* (escapist) and idealists pursuing the same ideological movement: Herrhausen could not support the stringently capitalist course of the Deutsche Bank anymore and recommended the remission of the Third World’s debts (Veiel, “Black Box BRD” 247). Veiel, in his book *Black Box BRD*, revealed that Herrhausen stepped back from being the speaker of the Deutsche Bank two days before his assassination (259). Grams, on the other hand, supposedly had thoughts about *aussteigen* (getting out) as well but failed to find a way to escape life underground (273). He and his girlfriend Birgit Hogefeld stayed in contact with family and friends. She even dreamed about having children and putting the weapons down, according to Matthias Dittmer, a friend of Grams who met him in 1992 while he and Hogefeld lived underground (272–73). Herrhausen and Grams shared, the viewer could assume, the similar status of men who died as a result of their assumed political views. Both seem to have felt uncomfortable in their political boxes. The film plays with this consistent alternation between biographical and political motives of acting. The principle of the “blind spot” (Griese 170), the blank space between the “political sphere and the personal” (167) safe haven, the uneasiness about the unresolved case, reappears as a theme in the interviews of their companions. The film avoids explanations. Rather, like Vräath Öhner suggests in the film journal *Ästhetik & Kommunikation* (Aesthetics & Communication), it might lend the reconstructed life scenarios toward an air of “German idealism,” since both Herrhausen

and Grams are distinguished in their “unconditional commitment to their beliefs.”

The film traces the events and connections of two biographies but does not “investigate further possible evidence for distinction” (Öhner 24). On the contrary, Öhner remarks, “reconstruction of the past results in blurriness.” “Oppositions are softened and convergence established through,” for example, Grams’s father’s past in the *Waffen SS* and Herrhausen attending an elite Nazi school (25). Towards the end, the film furthers this point, most obviously in Herrhausen’s project of debt forgiveness for Third World countries and in Grams’s wish to end living underground.

Following Öhner’s critical statement of ‘blurred oppositions’: Does the film suggest, that RAF member and Deutsche Bank spokesperson, potential perpetrator and victim, in the end both were tragically fighting, but on opposite ends of the political spectrum? It is important to take into account the function of this “blurriness,” Öhner states (25). Through the biographical narration, the political differences of these two enemies would get resolved. This only works because of the film’s “reconstruction of continuities and breaks” in the life scenarios (25). Although I agree with parts of Öhner’s interpretation, I believe that the film does establish significant aesthetic evidence for distinction in the montage of the concept of *Aussteigen* (getting out)—the alive, visible bodies of the interviewees in contrast to the dead bodies of Herrhausen and Grams.

Montage of the contemporaries—alive, visible bodies

How and in which spaces does the film deal with and represent the contemporaries, the alive and visible bodies? *Black Box BRD* is a puzzle of contrary images that uses the question of the legitimation of violence to pursue a higher idea—the “blurriness” (Öhner 25)

FIG. 6, 7, 8.

supports the concept of the idea of *Aussteigen* (getting out)—through the personal and familial development of both protagonists (Griese 167). While this is a reconstruction and a form of remembrance by means of a montage of different voices, it simultaneously describes the slow and inevitable defeat of both Herrhausen's and Grams's ideals. This is in spite of and in addition to their real and abrupt loss of life (172). In the following, I will trace selected sequences showing the montage of the contemporaries to be exemplary of the montage of the "slow erosion" of beliefs (172).

Traudl Herrhausen describes the night before the day her husband was murdered (fig. 5).

She has tears in her eyes as she recalls that they talked about his status as CEO of the Deutsche Bank. He was upset that his financial goals were continually at odds with the board. Traudl tried to take a conciliatory position, to which Herrhausen responded: "If even you don't support my decision, if even you have qualms, if even you don't stand by me, then how should I carry on?"

What Veiel discovered and published in the book was that Herrhausen announced his resignation as the speaker of the Deutsche Bank on November 28, 1989, two days before his assassination (Veiel, "Black Box BRD" 259). The film uses a photograph to introduce the story of Traudl and the couple's first encounter in Texas (fig. 7). It seemed to have been love at first sight; Traudl smirks as she narrates how this gentleman she had just met addressed her formally with the German "*Sie*," saying right away "*I would like to marry you!*"—after knowing each other for three days—"You are crazy! You ARE married!" she replies. Shortly after, Herrhausen was the first active board member in the history of the Deutsche Bank to go through a divorce (Veiel, "Black Box BRD" 114). When Traudl gets the testament letter out of the drawer and reads aloud what her husband has written with regard to a possible kidnapping, it leaves her speechless (fig. 7). The direct confrontation with the past demands much from her, and the letter seems to have become Traudl Herrhausen's own personal symbol of her husband's ability to make the right decisions.

Moments like the one described above illustrate the film's documentary genre and, in particular, a documentary without direct narration. It becomes graspable how subjective memory actually is. This raises a question as to the legitimacy of actively coping with the past through the use of violence since interpreting the past is subjective. Herrhausen's testament was a preventive, rational, and counter-violent act.

FIG. 9, 10, 11.

In the following scene, Grams's father also addresses the issue of violence and rational acting when talking about his own participatory guilt in the Nazi Regime, and he comments on the similarity in structures between the Nazis and the RAF (Trnka 12) (fig. 9). By coping with his own past, Werner Grams reenacts his son's decision and way underground. Trnka states about the often-referenced scene when Grams's father "speaks about his participation in the War": "Palpable discomfort, regret, and fear dominate his expression and body language [...]" (Trnka 13). In this specific scene, Werner grows silent; the spectator experiences how hard it is to

hate even the ones that perpetrated war crimes during the Second World War. The death of his son has changed him (Veiel, "Black Box BRD" 26). He starts to ask himself questions about his guilt in the Second World War: "Joining the Waffen-SS was like an inner compulsion."

The father searches for a fictional dialog—necessary since his son is dead—through the channel of the film. His search illustrates the societal implications of the generational problem, as Griese points out, since Wolfgang Grams always questioned and criticized his father's past (168). Upon reflection, Werner Grams almost believes that his son also experienced a certain "compulsion" in his decision to fight for the RAF. Wolfgang Grams was imprisoned before he went underground. Werner Grams tells about his son's prison conditions and Wolfgang getting reparations for being kept in prison in 1978 for over 152 days without being charged with a crime (Veiel, "Black Box BRD" 161). He seems to understand why his son was fed up with the state's political acts: "They accused him, in a manner of speaking, of being among the sympathizers [of the RAF] and doing courier services, and even supposedly transporting weapons. So I said to him, 'Wolfgang, it is your decision, what you do in your life, by all means, your parent's home remains always open.'" Fig. 9, 10, 11.

Right after the father's emotional engagement with the past, the film enlarges upon the question of how Grams became connected with terrorism and his own legitimization of violence (Homewood "Challenging the Taboo" 119). Gerd Böh, a friend of Grams from the RAF sympathizer scene (Veiel, "Black Box BRD" 122), relates that Grams pushed himself further to dehumanize his targets / enemies. Böh builds on the question of hate but also the legitimization of violence that has been addressed already by Werner Grams. This transition scene approaches this issue from a different, one could say, left wing, insider perspective and opens up, according

FIG. 12, 13, 14.

to Öhner, interesting “converging points” (Öhner 24). Grams believed, according to Böh’s recapitulation one of their many discussions (Veiel, “Black Box BRD” 164), that “one should be able to project so much hate that one would be able to kill somebody with one’s own hands” (Veiel “Black Box BRD” 165).¹ Hanging up a cloth in his arbor, Böh describes this process of dehumanization (fig. 10). Even though the cloth says “The fallen continue to live in our battle [...],”² he and his petit bourgeois settlement seem quite far from any real political radicalization and far from seeing the human being merely as his “function.” He was not able to take this step of radicalization of killing somebody (Veiel

“Black Box BRD” 140). Though Griesse claims that the film “breaks apart old stereotypes and does not establish new ones” (Griesse 172), the aforementioned scene would seem to undermine her argument. Böh himself, a former RAF sympathizer, is portrayed as a conformist. The cloth serves as the last expression of his long gone revolutionary past. Ironically, what Traudl Herrhausen, Werner Grams, and Gerd Böh have in common, are doubts on how they might have contributed to both Herrhausen’s and Grams’ social “isolation” (Homewood, “Challenging the Taboo” 123). And this enactment stands in contrast to the outlined motive of the process of dehumanization. Traudl Herrhausen, Werner Grams and Gerd Böh are far from dehumanized narrators of their memories.

Later when Hilmar Kopper, former Deutsche Bank spokesperson, talks about Alfred Herrhausen’s persistent wish and mission to erase the Third World’s debt, the tendency to depersonalize human beings is reversed in an ironic and tragic way: Herrhausen, in Kopper’s eyes, ignored the impact of possible debt relief on the Deutsche Bank. According to Kopper, Herrhausen did not, however ironically, see the bank in its main function of raising capital. Veiel, in his accompanying book, informs his audience that Kopper was announced as the new Head of the Board one day after Herrhausen’s funeral (Veiel, “Black Box BRD” 264). In the film, Kopper sits in front of a significant artwork, *Couple* by the Russian artist Maxim Kantor (fig. 11). The painting shows two gaunt male figures clinging to each other, seeking shelter. Having himself presented in front of this piece of art raises uneasy questions about Kopper’s loyalty towards Herrhausen. Kopper not only located himself in front of this specific painting in the film, but also had himself portrayed in front of the painting in 2002 by the photographer Wonge Bergmann.³ The gaunt male figures do not speak for Kopper’s empathy. This setting raises questions about Kopper’s “reputation

FIG. 15, 16, 17.

and function as a representative of a bank” and “weakens his credibility” (Ullrich 31).⁴ In the context of the film, the portrait is symbolically laden; it puts another complexion on Kopper’s and Herrhausen’s male friendship, and perhaps symbolizes the possible dependency of the positions in the Deutsche Bank.

The selected scenes illustrate a major element of the film: the characters are filmed in their assumed safe spaces, thereby presenting their backdrops as reflections of their persona. In addition, the film uses a sharp cutting of the scenes by stringing together the specific spaces

and topographies by which Herrhausen and Grams were surrounded (figs. 12–14). The different topographies also are markers for social class (Trnka 15). The air-to-air shots above the financial district in Frankfurt and the glass facades of the Deutsche Bank towers contrast with the enclosed, bourgeois spaces like the dining room of Ruth and Werner Grams. This draws attention to Frankfurt am Main and Wiesbaden as scenes of public, therefore political action (11). The already mentioned dissonance, directness and missing annotation shape the message of the film – the viewer has to deal with the uneasiness of an unresolved case since the film does not explain the context stringently.

The private film recordings of both main protagonists, on the other hand, often appear artificially aged, an aspect that is pointed out by the research addressing “Herrhausen’s generational position between Grams’s father and Grams” (Trnka 15). Private film recordings switch with tracking shots of, amongst others, the Frankfurt financial district, Gerd Böh’s arbor, the living room of Ruth and Werner Grams and Traudl Herrhausen’s house (18). The montage positions the dead bodies of Herrhausen and Grams in the year of the film’s making, in 2001, and claim an assurance of their former presence in this world. It is a look into the “internal structures” of both Deutsche Bank and the left wing sympathizer scene, specifically, how somebody could have decided to go underground and fight radically while some of the former sympathizers decided to go a different path.⁵ These shots, in combination with the historical material, also tell the story of West Germany (Gerhardt 65) and tie the depersonalized mug shots of the RAF members into a larger frame of the private and public political sphere (Trnka 16) (fig. 15). The film, instead of viewing the victim and perpetrator “in their functions,” uses their biographical details to portray them as individuals.

FIG. 18, 19, 20.

Montage of Herrhausen and Grams—dead, invisible bodies

Not only are mug shots of Grams shown, but also pictures from his youth (fig. 16).⁶ As Homewood summarizes, “Super 8mm film footage of a family holiday in Spain shows a playful Grams emerge from a half-buried position in the sand (Homewood, “Making Invisible History Visible” 239).

How hard it is to grasp the gap between the beloved son and the publically hunted terrorist

on the mug shots is shown in the scene in which Ruth Grams presents an art work that her son embroidered underground (fig. 17). The tapestry shows a coast-line, sand, and a ship with hoisted sails. Homewood compares Ruth Grams’s interpretation of the tapestry with “the task of the spectator” (124)—the interpretation of Grams’s character, which is only suggested through the film’s montage. The mother, Ruth, is emotionally attached to the artwork her son produced while living underground. It is one of the few belongings of their son they still possess (Homewood, “Making Invisible History” 240). During his time underground, the parents saw their son only once in 1992 and this should be their last encounter (Veiel, “Black Box BRD” 41). They spent some days with Grams and his girlfriend Birgit Hogefeld, who appears in the film only twice, in a mug shot and in a black and white photograph that the director blended into the background while his film narrates the secret encounter between the parents and their son. The family spoke about the “new orientation of the means and goals of the RAF” (Veiel, “Black Box BRD” 270). The parents still seem to hope for an *Aussteigen* (a pulling out of the RAF), even though the viewer implicitly understands that the engagement in the RAF is a dead end; an *Aussteigen* in a tragic sense seems hardly possible.

Through the use of the montage of old film and photo material, as pointed out by Trnka and Griesse, traditional chronological sequences become warped. Alfred Herrhausen and Werner Grams are close in terms of their date of birth, 1925 and 1930 respectively. As his close friend and former chancellor of the BRD, Helmut Kohl (from 1982 to 1998) says in the film, Herrhausen fell under the “*Gnade der späten Geburt*” (mercy of the late birth), that prevented him from having to participate actively in the war, although he was a student at the elite Nazi school in Feldafing (fig. 18). But since Herrhausen’s appearance in the film is constructed (he is a dead, invisible body and

FIG. 21.

not physically present) he seems much younger. The years between his death in 1989 and the film in 2001 leave no trace on him as they have left in real life on Grams's father, Werner.

Both Herrhausen and Grams are represented as deep, complex and eclectic characters, and both are shown in life-and-death situations (Trnka 18), an aspect that Öhner critiques through stating that their "unconditionality" could not be compared (Öhner 27). In one scene, the former president of Mexico tells about his encounter with Herrhausen and says that he advised him: "Only an alive creditor is a good creditor."⁷ One of Grams friends, Albert Eisenach, removed himself from Grams's social circle because he could not support the

belief that it is "legitimate to kill for an idea," because "nobody has the right to judge what the right idea is."

Tying these abstractions into Helmut Kohl's statement at his inauguration in 1982 (fig. 19) such as Öhner does: "I believe, that what lies ahead of us, also of me personally, is, with all necessity of the economic problems, first of all, an intellectual-moral challenge"⁸ leads the viewer to reflect upon the concept of "patriotism" (25). About Herrhausen's politics, Kohl remarks on his "*gelebten Patriotismus*" (lived patriotism). When in the following scene Gerd Böh hangs up the German flag in his arbor, it becomes obvious that patriotism is a subjective concept. Through this montage, an era of West Germany and its foundation is shown in its disruptions just as the history of twentieth-century Germany is entirely marked by disruption. Even the supposedly autonomous RAF absorbed that idea of patriotism, seeing their actions as a tool to free the people from the hypocritical state.

However, in the film, in contrast to members of the Baader-Meinhof group, such as Andreas Baader, Wolfgang Grams as terrorist is represented autonomously. As already mentioned, Grams's girlfriend Birgit Hogefeld is almost left out of the film. This autonomy is also reflected in the absolute procedure of the murders. The third-generation killed targeted, not randomly. Therefore, as Trnka states,

(T)he only dead terrorists presented in *Black Box BRD* are Meins and Meinhof, whose images provide context rather than focal content, for example when we see an image of Grams in a protest march following Meins' death. Schleyer figures in the film only as a point of reference for Herrhausen's own awareness of his status as a potential object of terrorist violence, the industrialist's funeral as a state event implicitly prompts Herrhausen's request that only speakers

approved by his wife and his friend and priest Pater Augustinus Heinrich Graf Henckel von Donnersmarck be allowed to speak publicly at his burial. (Trnka 11)

Through the visual reminder of the invisible, dead bodies and the former RAF generations, the tragic climax of the deaths gets established right at the beginning. Gerd Böh's interview sequence, which I already mentioned, is sharply contrasted with the three Mercedes driving along the Frankfurt skyline (fig. 20); in the background Pater Augustinus is re-phrasing what his friend Herrhausen said about the possible threat of an attack by the RAF: "We are, in the end, all in the hand of god."⁹ With this statement, the film draws a line back to the beginning. The film starts with shots of Herrhausen's and Grams's places of death.

Montaged history of "open wounds"

Technically, Herrhausen's and Grams's bodies have no point of contact. But the montage history of the BRD (FRG) constructed from the narratives that emanate from two dead bodies, serves as a "metaphor," an immaterial image, for internalized coping with the "trauma" caused by the terroristic acts of the RAF (Elsaesser 21).¹⁰ The film poster has the subtitle "*Der Kampf ist vorbei. Die Wunden sind offen*" ("The struggle is over. The wounds are open"), which, according to Homewood is "underlining that, far from being a closed chapter in the history of the Federal Republic, the terrorist past still needs to be worked on" (Homewood, "Making Invisible History" 246). Veiel finds his position in this re-contextualization of history, and, by re-telling the story through a documentary without commentator, Veiel makes obvious the constructiveness of historiography.

The film looks at the "wounds," a term used by Veiel as well as the research, left in the socio-cultural collective awareness and memory

FIG. 22, 23, 24.

by RAF terror. Berendse in his essay on the "reciprocity of the relationship of political violence and aesthetics" speaks of the "*Wunde RAF*" ("wound RAF") (Berendse "Wunde RAF" 11). Hardly any of the terrorists of the third-generation of the RAF were caught. On the film poster, the faces of Herrhausen and Grams are combined (fig. 21). The montage face has a *Schnittstelle* (cut surface), but it also symbolizes a reciprocal relationship between the terrorist and the victim, a consistent theme within the film. Terrorists and victims are in a relationship of dependence and live in

FIG. 25, 26, 27.

a common sphere of threat, vulnerability and violability (Elsaesser 21). This threat involves more than victim and perpetrator; it also menaces the young democratic nation of the BRD. A “dead aesthetic phenomenon” guides the viewer through the reconstruction of the life scenarios (Homewood, “Making Invisible History” 231).

Fig. 21

Veiel uses, as illustrated in the film poster, the ‘body’ and ‘the wound’ as political metaphors. He said in an interview on the *Deutsche Welle Talking German* show on documentary films that “what interests” him “most are open wounds”—and he explains his interest in investigating them:¹¹

If you go into a wound, you find something of the body. You find something which is normally closed. And so the wound is a chance, not only to test the circulation, to try what is in, in terms of the heart and the

In einem Bekennerschreiben vom 2. Dezember 1989 übernahm die RAF die Verantwortung für den Anschlag auf Alfred Herrhausen.

Ob und in welcher Form Wolfgang Grams an den Anschlägen der RAF beteiligt war, ist ungeklärt. Mit dem Tod von Wolfgang Grams sind alle Ermittlungen gegen ihn eingestellt worden.

Das Attentat auf Alfred Herrhausen und neun weitere Anschläge aus den Jahren 1984 bis 1993 sind bis heute nicht aufgeklärt.

intestines, and also how it works. What are the functions of the body? So, you have to go into the wounds. Otherwise, you are just on the surface.”¹²

Grams’s autonomy as a terrorist transforms him into the object that causes the “trauma”: Thomas Elsaesser speaks of “das Gespenst” (the ghost) in terms of the “afterlife of the RAF” (Elsaesser 21). Also dead bodies can speak. “The dead body of the victim” is a symbol of a “speechless sign,” “while the moribund body of the terrorist becomes a weapon” (Zeller 203). The strict division between perpetrators and victims is dissolved in this dependency (Homewood, “Making Invisible History Visible” 238). Soon it becomes obvious; the life scenarios of both illustrate the motto of the generation of 68: “The Personal is Political” (Colvin 50).

The RAF members themselves used the body metaphor to convey their “belief of the collective” (Berendse “Kampf dem Leviathan”

219) in the phrase “The body is the weapon.”¹³ Gudrun Ensslin, along with Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhof, one of the main RAF terrorists of the 1st generation, said: “The body that is the weapon is the collective, nothing else.”^{14,15} The individual in this ideology is only a part that needs to obey commands, since it dissolves in the collective (Colvin 116). The RAF ideology was very much focused on the body. The state was “personalized”; they wanted “to rip the mask from the leviathan’s face” (Berendse, “Kampf dem Leviathan” 215). They dehumanized police officers by calling them *Schweine*, (pigs) and *Bullen*, (bulls) (Colvin 125). But the statement of Roswitha Blei, Grams’ girlfriend in the 70s, also shows the discontinuities within the left-wing scene: “It was hard for me to distinguish so strictly between ‘the pigs’ and ‘the good revolutionaries.’ But I considered that to be a mistake on my behalf.”¹⁶

How does the film symbolize the past through the ‘body’ metaphor? How do bodies become dangerous or endangered?¹⁷ What is behind the individual’s decision to embrace terror as a political tool? How did Herrhausen come into the sights of the RAF rifle? Trnka analyzes possible forms of protest and situates them in the context of the positioning of a human body in the public space:

Forms of violent and nonviolent political protest that drew increasingly on the artistic forms of the avant-garde tradition and situationism—especially the happening—relied on physical bodies marked as different from or disruptive of larger social contexts in which they sought to intervene. Film as a medium may be particularly suited to convey both acts of highly stylized physical violence aimed at disrupting public spectacle and ideal images of the spectacle itself. When, for example, the viewer experiences the sequence of commune—street fight—ex-militant / isolated garden cabin—elite / social golf and

country club, then disruption, deliberate disorder, and violent confrontation are visually and aurally juxtaposed to the larger social context to which they ostensibly respond. (25–26)

The film depicts a variety of possible positioning of bodies in the public space and political sphere and probes the interdependency of the private and the political. That people’s individual political decisions would lead to larger consequences, that i.e. the street riots in Frankfurt would result in three generations of RAF, could not have been foreseen (fig. 22). But when former chancellor Helmut Schmidt (from 1974 to 1982) appealed to the German citizens after the death of Holger Meins in Stammheim, it became obvious that this struggle was not just between the RAF and the state, but involved every individual citizen within the nation and that every citizen must choose a side, seemingly for the nation or against it (fig. 23):

Every social democrat has to mourn every death that is caused by an ideology of blind hatred. [...] And, after all that the members of this group did to the citizens of our country, it is not permissible, as long as they are awaiting trial, to accommodate them in convalescent home. They have to take on the inconveniences of a prison.¹⁸

The film begins with the iconic image of the burned Mercedes in which Herrhausen was killed (fig. 24). The cars were supposed to protect Herrhausen from possible attacks, but he ends up dying in one of them. Both Grams’ and Herrhausen’s fate appears in the form of three dark Mercedes that appear throughout the film repeatedly. Their ride also reminds the audience of the train at the end of the film—a link to the train station in Bad Kleinen where Grams died. Synchronically with the narration of Traudl Herrhausen about how her husband died, at the beginning of the film, Rainer

Grams, the brother of Wolfgang, retraces the path his brother took at the train station in Bad Kleinen. He shows the spectator the train tracks on which his brother died (fig. 25).

As Veiel in an interview states, “I only make offers with my film, and the projection surface is large enough for various imaginings. [...] BLACKBOX BRD is a film about the present”¹⁹ (Volk 19), the film ends aesthetically with the same message it started with: *Aussteigen* (getting out) is not possible, neither for Herrhausen or Grams nor the contemporaries related to them, nor for the citizens of the BRD, as chancellor Helmut Schmidt stated in his speech, nor for Germany today. In the last scene, the director films from a moving train, showing the landscape. When the train nears the city, a voice in the background gives the announcement: “We are shortly arriving in Bad Kleinen.” Before, however, the train arrives at a full stop, before *Aussteigen* would even be an option, the closing credits begin to roll, again merging the two life scenarios, again reminding, that the case is unresolved. On May 7, 2001, five days before the film release (Veiel, “Black Box BRD” 279), the third-generation RAF almost seemed to take shape, when “by virtue of new DNA-testing technology the ‘Bundeskriminalamt’ (BKA) revealed that a hair found at the scene [of the killing of Detlef Rohwedder] purportedly belonged to Wolfgang Grams, thus linking him to the killing” (Homewood. “Making Invisible History” 238). The BKA, though, did not name Grams as a suspect, since the finding was not considered to be sufficient evidence (279).

In the closing scene, the film, through the aesthetic tool of the montage, wraps up the idea of the *Leerstelle*, a term Winfried Pauleit uses to describe the representations of “politics in German film today” (Pauleit 14). It is the “gap,” the “blind spots” (Griese 166) that allow presenting and constructing

the figures of Herrhausen and Grams both in contrast and in parallel (fig. 26). The montage narratives are aesthetically tied together in the elaborated motif of the *Aussteigen* (getting out). This becomes obvious in little details like the gaunt male figures in the painting in front of which Hilmar Kopper is portrayed or the ship on the tapestry that Grams’ mother is holding on to, as well as in the mentioned closing scene when the spectator is taken on a train ride while the train announcement reports the impending arrival in Bad Kleinen. The screen then turns black, and a last statement appears: “Herrhausen’s assassination, as well as nine additional murders between 1983 and 1994, have never been solved”²⁰ (fig. 27). The viewer has to face the human demand for answers and clarification for facts to solve the dissonances, since the film offers no “completion, closure and truth” (Homewood “Making Invisible History” 244). Understanding violence is much easier when the roles of victim and perpetrator are clear. This highlights the power of images to convey and to pass on images-imaginings. The film is offering a montaged set of images that leave the viewer with this uneasiness of not having cathartic answers to what may or may not have happened (Palfreyman 33), as Veiel refers to this state as a contract: “It is about credibility, no more or less. About the contract between myself as the filmmaker and the audience.”²¹

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Image Notes

(Images 1-20, 22-27 are screenshots, Image 21: Film Poster http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Black_Box_BRD.jpg)

Veiel, Andres; *Black Box BRD*. Zero Film GmbH: Deutschland 2001.

1. Alfred Herrhausen
2. Wolfgang Grams
3. Anne Koch
4. Paul Brandt
5. Gerd Böh
6. Traudl Herrhausen
7. Traudl and Alfred Herrhausen, 1974, Texas, USA
8. Herrhausen's testament from 1977
9. Werner Grams
10. Gerd Böh
11. Hilmar Kopper
12. Frankfurt Financial District
13. Ruth and Werner Grams
14. Deutsche Bank meeting
15. Edition of *Tagesschau* (News on TV) from February 15, 1987
16. Wolfgang Grams – archive footage
17. Ruth Grams with the tapestry of her son
18. Herrhausen, 1942, in Feldafing
19. Helmut Kohl, 1982
20. Frankfurt skyline – reappearing Mercedes
21. Film Poster

22. Street Riots in Frankfurt

23. Helmut Schmidt, 1974

24. Car Wreck in which Herrhausen died

25. Grams's brother Rainer at the train station in Bad Kleinen

26. Closing scene

27. End of the documentary

(Endnotes)

1. I would like to thank Luanne Dagley for her thoughts and help in reading and editing my paper.

2. Black Box BRD: Filmheft von Stefan Volk, Filmheft der Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (BpB), (Black Box Germany: Film Journal by Stefan Volk, Film Journal of the German Federal Agency for Civil Education), Augsburg 2001.

3. According to recent remembrance debates, what finds its way into a society's well of “collective memory” are not just historical facts, but rather a “shared and remembered memory filter”, as Jan Assmann states (Jan Assmann 2011, 5-11). Chris Homewood refers in his research on the film on Assmann's “theory of communicative and cultural memory” (Homewood, “Making Invisible History Visible” 233) and interprets the films approach as a contribution to “break an ostensible taboo namely a ‘them and us’ ideological deadlock” (213) and therefore to “depolarize the victim/perpetrator dichotomy” (238).

4. Veiel, under the same title, also published a book about his film research, which provides additional background information, for example the RAF letters in which they claim responsibility. Also the book connects chronological coherencies; the book makes much more obvious that Herrhausen officially was on the list of the RAF and that the Bundeskriminalamt (Federal Criminal

Police Office) might have failed with their provided personal security service. Since my paper traces how the images in the film reconstruct “internal structures of both RAF and Deutsche Bank”, equally of the BRD, I draw upon Veiel’s material that he gathered beyond the film.

5. “Black Box BRD stands out because of how it accomplishes the shift away from the first- and second-generation RAF members, Berlin countercultures 1977, and Stuttgart Stammheim and which previously unheard narratives it introduces the cinematic history and memory of the RAF. By focusing on Frankfurt as the narrative center of his documentary, Veiel opens up a broader set of historical relations and events than is typical of accounts of German terrorism” (Trnka 10).

6. Claim of responsibility of the RAF: „Am 30.11.1989 haben wir Alfred Herrhausen ... hingerichtet. Durch die Geschichte der Deutschen Bank zieht sich eine Blutspur zweier Weltkriege und millionenfacher Ausbeutung, und in dieser Kontinuität regierte Herrhausen an der Spitze dieses Machtzentrums der deutschen Wirtschaft [...]. Herrhausens Pläne gegen die Länder in der Dritten Welt, die selbst in linksintellektuellen Kreisen als humanitäre Fortschrittskonzepte gepriesen werden, sind nichts anderes als der Versuch, die bestehenden Herrschafts- und Ausplünderungsverhältnisse längerfristig zu sichern ...“ (Veiel 263). (“On the 30th of November, 1989, we ... assassinated Alfred Herrhausen. A trail of blood stemming from two World Wars and the exploitation of millions runs throughout the history of the Deutsche Bank. In this continuity, Herrhausen reigned as the head of this center of power in the German economy [...]. Herrhausen’s plans for the Third World countries, some of which were even praised among the leftist intellectuals as progress,

are nothing more than the attempt to secure existing conditions of power and exploitation on a long-term basis.”) All translations into English, unless otherwise stated, are my own.

7. I use the term “montage” according to Susan Haywards’ definition: “Montage creates a third meaning through the collision of two images.” (Hayward 112). Jamie H. Trnka, Rachel Palfreyman also use the term in the context of the film, as well as Stefan Volk.

8. Jamie H. Trnka points out, “the tension between aesthetics of film form and the politics of personal and public memory” (Trnka 1).

9. See exemplary: Berendse 2011, 19, and Griese, 170.

10. See exemplary: Sven Felix Kellerhoff. “Bad Kleinen - die “Exekution“ war ein Medienskandal.“ <http://www.welt.de/geschichte/article117494112/Bad-Kleinen-die-Exekution-war-ein-Medienkandal.html>, 12/12/2013.

11. See Volk on the commenting function of the montage (15).

12. Griese analyzes the film in terms of familial relationships (167).

13. “Erklärung: Ich, der unterzeichnende Alfred Herrhausen, Solingen Schloss Kaspersbroich, erkläre: Für den Fall meiner Entführung bitte ich auf unverantwortliche Erpressungen, die sich gegen den demokratischen Rechtsstaat der Bundesrepublik richten, nicht einzugehen. Solingen, den 11. September 1977.” Alfred Herrhausen (quoted according to Veiel 2002, 118, in the main text my translation into English).

14. The film plot and the set of events are narrated according to Veiel's accompanying book.
15. „Nach 18 Jahren: Ex-Raf-Mitglied Hogefeld aus Haft entlassen“, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/nach-18-jahren-ex-raf-mitglied-hogefeld-aus-haft-entlassen-a-769730.html>, 12/12/13.
16. Haberland, Michael: Die Guten und die Bösen, <http://www.artehock.de/film/text/kritik/b/blbobr.htm>.
17. Andreas Veiel on documentary film – cine-fils.com (in German, with English subtitle): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ziAocSANrFw>, 09/15/13.
18. No coincidence: Veiel has a degree in psychology (ibid.)
19. Also, Homewood points out the connection to a certain “German idealism” (Homewood “Challenging the Taboo” 123).
20. See also (Homewood “Making Invisible History Visible” 242-243) for his contextualization of the scene.
21. “»Wenn sogar du das nicht mitträgst, wenn sogar du zweifelst, wenn sogar du mich verlässt, dann weiß ich nicht, wie das weitergehen soll«” (Veiel “Black Box BRD” 114).
22. “»Ich möchte Sie heiraten!«” (Veiel “Black Box BRD” 114) And she answered: “Sie spinnen ja. Sie sind ja verheiratet.”
23. “Dass ich bei der Waffen-SS war, das war wie ein innerer Zwang.“
24. “Man hatte ihm praktisch Symphatiantenszene vorgeworfen, und Kurierdienste und sogar soll er Waffen transportiert haben. Da hab ich dann zu ihm gesagt. [...] Wolfgang, es ist deine Entscheidung, was du in deinem Leben tust, aber auf alle Fälle steht dir dein Elternhaus immer offen.“
25. „Du musst jemanden so hassen, dass du ihn mit der Hand erwürgen könntest“ (Veiel “Black Box BRD” 165).
26. “Die Gefallenen leben in unseren Kämpfen weiter [...]“
27. Kopper portraying himself in front of this art work was discussed by Wolfgang Ulrrich in the exhibition “Macht zeigen. Kunst als Herrschaftsstrategie” (Showing power. Art work as hegemony strategy) in 2010 at the Deutsches Historisches Museum, Berlin (German Historical Museum).
28. See also: Biehl-Missal, Brigitte. Wirtschaftsästhetik. Wie Unternehmen die Kunst als Inspiration und Werkzeug benutzen, Gabler Verlag: Wiesbaden 2011, 104.
29. Thomas Moser: <http://www.dradio.de/dlf/sendungen/politischeliteratur/131670/>, 09/15/13.
30. “[...] Veiel problematizes the dominant cultural perception of the organization in which Wolfgang Grams is reduced to the level of his image on the ‚Fahndungsplakaten‘[...] Through the use of photo-fit technology, the 15 February 1987 edition of Tagesschau, included in the film, goes on to detail the ways in which Grams may have changed his appearance to evade capture“ (Homewood “Making Invisible History Visible” 240).
31. “Nur ein lebendiger Gläubiger ist ein guter Gläubiger.”

32. "Ich glaube, dass das was auf uns zukommt, auch auf mich persönlich, bei aller Notwendigkeit der ökonomischen Probleme, zunächst eine geistig-moralische Herausforderung ist."

33. "Wir sind letztlich alle in der Hand Gottes."

34. See also: Elsaesser, Thomas. *Terror und Trauma. Zur Gewalt des Vergangenen in der BRD*, Kulturverlag Kadmos: Berlin 2007.

35. Deutsche Welle TV. Andres Veiel | Film Maker. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRAJ6oNAWL8>, 09/15/13.

36. idib.

37. „Der Körper ist die Waffe.“

38. „Der Körper, der die Waffe ist, ist das Kollektiv, eine Einheit, sonst nix.“

39. Hilgers, Micha: *Die Radikalisierung des Gewissens. Von der Generalisierung des Ressentiments: Die RAF-Protagonisten als totalitäre Persönlichkeiten*. <http://www.fr-online.de/spezials/raf-protagonisten-die-radikalisierung-des-gewissens,1472610,2708748.html>, 09/15/13.

40. "Mir ist es schwer gefallen, so klar einzuteilen in >die Schweine< und >die guten Revolutionäre<. Aber das habe ich eher als einen Fehler von mir angesehen" (Veiel "Black Box BRD" 108).

41. See Schmincke (2009) and Gugutzer (2011).

42. "Jeder Sozialdemokrat muss jedes Todesopfer beklagen, das als Konsequenz blindwütiger Ideologie erbracht wird. [...] Und nach alledem, was die Angehörigen dieser Gruppe Bürgern unseres Landes angetan haben, ist es allerdings nicht angängig sie, solange sie ihren Prozess

erwarten, im Erholungsheim unterzubringen. Sie müssen schon die Unbequemlichkeiten eines Gefängnisses auf sich nehmen" (Veiel "Black Box BRD" 88).

43. "Ich mache nur Angebote mit meinem Film, und die Projektionsfläche ist groß genug für verschiedene Vorstellungen. [...] BLACK BOX BRD ist ein Film über die Gegenwart" (Volk, 19). Quoted by Volk according to www.black-box-brd, (Talk with Annette Schäfer).

44. "Das Attentat auf Alfred Herrhausen und neun weitere Anschläge aus den Jahren 1984 bis 1993 sind bis heute nicht aufgeklärt."

45. Andreas Veiel on documentary film – cine-fils.com (in German, with English subtitle): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ziAocSANrFw>, 09/15/13.

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THE AESTHETICS OF VIOLENCE AND POWER IN ULI EDEL'S *DER BAADER MEINHOF KOMPLEX*

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The confluence of art, politics, and aesthetics has a troubled and troubling history, and the article reflects on that by examining the aesthetics of Uli Edel's film *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex* in terms of its use of iconic historical and—in terms of film history—stereotypical images. The absence of conventional narrative structures in the film opens it up to methods of understanding and critique that use image and montage as a means of analysis, rather than examining a cogent (because absent) narrative. By cataloguing the use of different genre conventions and iconic film images and tropes, the article points toward the development of a “terror(ism)” genre.

Les relations entre art, politique, et esthétique ont, historiquement, toujours été troubles et continuent de résister aux schémas interprétatifs. Cet article propose de repenser ces relations à travers l'esthétique du film d'Ulli Edel: *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex*, dont les images iconiques, représentatives d'une certaine période, et stéréotypées en termes d'histoire de la cinématographie, permettent de renouveler ce débat. En l'absence de structure narrative conventionnelle, le seul recourt interprétatif possible repose sur une analyse visuelle et structurelle du film. On s'aperçoit que le catalogage des conventions et genres cinématographiques, des images iconiques et des tropes, tend vers le développement d'un genre de la terreur et du “terror(isme)”.

Uli Edel's 2008 film, *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex*, is a montage of file-footage, fiction, filmic tropes, and political maneuvering. It purports to tell the story of the actions the RAF took against the West German state without taking a definite political, ethical, or moral position. The film instead adopts an aesthetic position. According to the filmmakers, it is a "shredded drama," with moments and images "ripped" out of their context and put into a sort of "mosaic," connected "in a different way than a film where you identify with the main character: here we have many people, and no ones [sic] to identify with" (Dittgen 26). The filmmakers see the film as a "complex:" a constellation or collage, and not a traditional narrative. The film opens itself to a wide range of critical methods because it lacks a traditional narrative, and it encourages the viewer to focus on moments and images as a method of story-telling. This focus on specific images also allows critics to construct genre conventions and the social aesthetics of the "terrorist film."

Constantin Film, the production company for *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex*, sets up the action of the film in blockbuster style with the following, "Germany in the 1970s: Murderous bomb attacks, the threat of terrorism and the fear of the enemy inside are rocking the very foundations of the yet fragile German democracy." The "radicalized children of the Nazi generation," lead by Andreas Baader (Moritz Bleibtreu), Ulrike Meinhof (Martina Gedeck), and Gudrun Ensslin (Johanna Wokalek), are fighting a violent war against what they perceive as "the new face of fascism: American imperialism supported by the German establishment," many of whom have a Nazi past. Their ostensible aim is to forge a better and more humane society, but by employing inhuman means, they not only "spread terror and bloodshed, they also lose their own humanity." Setting up a classic thriller motif, the synopsis continues, as "the man who understands them is also their hunter:"

the head of the German police force Horst Herold. And while he succeeds in his relentless pursuit of the young terrorists, he knows he's "only dealing with the tip of the iceberg."¹ Already, then, the film is being framed both as a real, historical conflict between generational German ideologies, and as action blockbuster and crime caper. While the film's dust jacket synopsis certainly boils down the action and conflict of the film, it reflects neither the goals of the filmmakers nor the structure of the film itself.

A key to exposing the aesthetics of the film are through the ideas of the "constellation," "mosaic," and story-telling, which are all key concepts in the writings of Walter Benjamin. Benjamin wrote the following of the confluence of art and politics in the early days of film: "The logical result of Fascism is the introduction of aesthetics into political life.... All efforts to render politics aesthetic culminate in one thing: war" (241).² He was concerned that film would be used as a tool of Fascist institutions to incite and propagate war, and he saw Communism as the antidote to this poisoning of art: "This is the situation of politics which Fascism is rendering aesthetic. Communism responds by politicizing art" (241).³ Both Benjamin and Theodor W. Adorno argued that "cultural forms like films can provide 'dialectical images' that illuminate their social environments" (Kellner 16).

This early consideration of the confluence of art, politics, and aesthetics serve the discussion of *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex* and films like it, both fictional and "documentary." These films aestheticize political life. However, they can also politicize art, if Uli Edel can be taken at his word. The confluence of these opposing aesthetic and political tendencies in one film opens a critique of film based on its aesthetic choices, and also allows for discussion of the possibility of a "terror(ism)" film genre. The development of a genre points to an aesthetic code and a cultural sensitivity

that exist beyond the individual film maker or cultural and historical context. Critics can uncover these codes and sensitivities by examining films about “terrorists” and looking at the qualities those films share with other genres and the tools the film makers use to tell the story. In this particular case, the representations of and relationships between Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin, and Ulrike Meinhof create relationships to other genres, and those genres in turn have an aesthetic code and grammar that bears on this film. These relationships, this social aesthetic, could lead to the development of a new genre, or at least a heightened awareness of the effects terrorism has on a culture.

For-profit depictions of left-wing terrorism in a capitalist police-state have a multitude of intrinsic political problems and sources, and there are tensions between totalitarian impulses on both sides. Critics may emphasize the political and aesthetic messages and tropes of the films as a method of cultural critique, which reveals the hidden system of signs and signifiers through which we (as a culture) represent terror, the state, political action, and rebellion. The social aesthetic of the film tells us not only about the historical events it depicts, but also about the culture and political climate in and for which the artwork was produced. According to Karin Bauer, this aesthetic constellation is all the critic and audience can hope to grasp: “The RAF is not simply a terrorist group founded in 1970 and disbanded in 1998, but a continuing and continuous spectacle performed in the public sphere” (3).

The spectacle has diverse political and aesthetic sources, and, to draw on Guy Debord’s concept of the hegemonic spectacle, it is “a social relationship between people that is mediated by images” (12). If that is true, then by examining film, we can come to a better understanding of the relationships we

have with one another, and with our social and political environment. If film is a visual relationship between people, or between groups of people, then those images can be revelatory and deserve attention beyond or despite their role as spectacle. Film, then, is not just entertainment, though many film critics have argued that that is all *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex* is.

Der Spiegel criticizes the film harshly, saying it was “‘event cinema without impetus [...] behind the action and the film’s finesse hides a history lesson that lacks a clear position’ (September 18, 2008)” (Gerhardt 60). While this statement criticizes the clarity of the film, it also reveals the political and aesthetic positions the filmmakers develop through their work. The lack of an ethical or aesthetic one-liner calls into question not only the actions of the terrorists, but those of their antagonists, and the conditions that fostered their extremist violence. It also allows the film’s audiences to develop their own positions.

Walter Benjamin could not and did not foresee the way film would continue to develop, and his binary notion of film’s role in politics and culture demands reconsideration. However, his idea that a spectator of mass media or entertainment can become an expert and a critic capable of nuanced insight has proven true, and is liberating to the audience and professionals in the field (Kellner 46). In order to decode and confront the “terror(ism)” film, though, newer and more nuanced theories of politics, culture, and mass media prove useful. By re-contextualizing some of the films iconic images, drawing parallels across genre, and examining the aesthetic, social, and political messages of those images and genre, the critic and viewer can glean useful insight even from a film in which “detail overwhelmed any analysis: ‘For all the action, attacks and assassinations, there is barely any time to breathe, because all the slogans and rallying

cries that one knew from the era had to be tallied up, all the images recreated' (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 24), indicative of a 'decision to show but not to interpret' (*Der Spiegel*, September 18)" (Gerhardt 60). Critical constructs allow the viewer to enter the film through specific images and tropes in the same way the filmmakers use them to tell a story, which reveal their larger cultural and social-aesthetic functions, and reduce the visual clutter about which the film's critics so loudly complain.

The identity of the "terror(ism)" film lies both in its narrative and in its particular images, which often appear in other genres as well: action movies, crime capers, and melodrama among them. When films from different genres share imagery, they are—per definition—intertextual. This intertextuality in turn leads to a host of conclusions that the viewer can draw about the film(s) under consideration. The filmmakers say the film is about "what actually happened here, exactly," and that, for the style of the film, "[a]uthenticity was key. The French call it *cinéma-vérité*" (Sklar 43). This claim falls apart immediately, first and foremost in the form of a script which is largely based on the eponymous book written by Stefan Aust and the imaginations of the writers. Its second failure comes in the form of the actors, who are some of Germany's most beautiful and well known stars. As Sklar notes:

Performance isn't 'truth,' it's interpretation. Although all three [actors playing Baader, Ensslin, and Meinhof] may have been cast because of a certain resemblance to the individuals they portray, and they're certainly dressed and made up to heighten the similarities, each is undoubtedly more physically attractive than his or her original, and they probably shape more coherent, if reductive, character traits. (43)

This allows a sympathy toward and an understanding of the on-screen figures that the historical ones would likely not enjoy. The film is not about "what actually happened here, exactly." It is about representing the past, and representing difficult and frightening social relationships. How the film does that, and the consequences of its methods, are vital to the social-aesthetic role of film.

The key to criticizing the film is the observation that the audience views representation instead of history and those representations have an aesthetic code that bears meaning. The filmmakers want to remain politically and morally neutral, to "show" the events, and not comment upon them, but the mere existence of the film and the order of scenes always-already produce commentary (Sklar 42). Critics often argue, though, that even as the events were unfolding, representation and narration constantly mediated truth, which contributed to both the myth and the mystery of the RAF. As Bauer puts it: "as a contested site of negotiation, there is, methodologically speaking, no RAF outside of the myriad of myths and imagery of the ghastly spectacle that is continuously performed" (3). The critic's remaining task is to point out the political and social ramifications of the contradiction that is *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex*, which, in its most basic element, is a blockbuster studio movie made about terrorists trying to bring down the system which produces just these sorts of films.

Public and critical reaction to the film reveals much about the power and longevity of the historical representations, and by extension, the power of the contemporary ones. Ewa Mazierka notes that, "The involvement of the television and popular press [...] helped the group shape its identity as a victim of the conservative press and state-run television. Their actions inspired art and were themselves akin to an artistic production" (101–2). The

manipulation of media, images, and narrative is not a twenty-first century development in the RAF's history, but rather was an integral part of building their identity and myth as they gained popularity and infamy. Already at their inception, the media perception of the group had stark political and social hues. Those same political attributes cannot be absent in a re-telling of the RAF's history. Indeed, the filmmakers, by structuring their film around moments and images, confuse the political landscape entirely, giving us glimpses of the "terrorists," their lifestyle, and their personas that encompass the political spectrum.

As Nick James posits in his review of the film, "*The Baader Meinhof Complex* simultaneously mocks and venerates these figures by turning them into Bonnie and Clyde-style bandits. The sexy brooding and posturing with guns of some of Germany's most attractive actors [...] makes the life of the terrorist seem unfeasibly glamorous, though it does make the sympathy of much of German youth towards their cause easier to understand" (5). However, despite how the film glamorizes the terrorists and contributes to their myth at early points in the narrative, the audience later sees a completely different representation of terror and those who perpetrate it. Again, James points out that "the latter parts of the film underline the terrorists' idiocy or insanity. *The Baader Meinhof Complex* therefore takes us on that 'journey' that script theorists eulogize as the basis of all successful films, although [...] many will get lost on the way because the film's ultimate viewpoint remains obscure, and it does not give us enough hard information to allow us to make up our own minds" (5). James is correct up to a point. What he fails to mention here, though he does pick it up elsewhere in his review, is that the audience can make up its mind, but not in a 1980's action film way, where everything is morally and ethically clear, and the good guys always win. Furthermore, from the perspective of the filmmakers and

recent scholarly work, the film's social and political position is clear. In a nod to the post-9/11 ethical and political landscape, the film presents a "complex" of images with diverse moral and political contexts and connotations, many with distinct and conflicting histories and discourses surrounding them.

Rather than detracting from the aesthetic value and truth content of the film, its moral, if not political, ambiguity does the film service. As author, historian, and Vietnam War veteran Tim O'Brien eloquently puts it:

A true war story is never moral. It does not instruct, nor encourage virtue, nor suggest models of proper human behavior, nor restrain men from doing the things men have always done. If a story seems moral, do not believe it. If at the end of a war story you feel uplifted, or if you feel that some small bit of rectitude has been salvaged from the larger waste, then you have been made the victim of a very old and terrible lie. (68)

Now, all war films are not terrorism films, but all terrorism films are war films, in the sense that "terrorists" engage in asymmetrical, ideologically motivated warfare with a State. War films also have an established grammar and iconography with which filmmakers can play and to which they can adhere. As Donald and MacDonald write, "in the social constructions of masculinity found in war films, stereotypes take on meaning beyond manipulations of cinematic grammar: They describe the archetypes of appropriate masculine behavior for their viewers" (42).

Genre distinctions grow more fluid as war films focus less on genre conventions and more on the auteur, or at least, star power (Eberwein 6). As a result, filmmakers tend to focus on moments and motifs instead of plot arcs or convention. Some critics, like Dana Polan, disapprove of the trend, saying that these type of films produce "the glimpsing

of experientiality itself, a pure immersion in temporality, in a duration that only vaguely adds up to either meaningfulness or anything resembling realism” (quoted in Eberwein 6). This is an abstract and normative judgment which places the highest aesthetic value on realism, and disregards both the immersive and alienating aesthetic qualities that develop from a focus on particular filmic moments or tropes. One contentious critical point with *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex*, if it is not a problem outright, is that the viewer sees only particular moments, which means that, as a war film, it becomes a series of “non-cumulative explosions of violence that lead nowhere and mean nothing” (Eberwein 6). This seems congruent with what the filmmakers purported to desire: a collection of moments tied together with the semblance of historical accuracy. The claim that the explosions of violence “lead nowhere and mean nothing,” however, rings polemic. Just because films do not follow conventional heroes who endure conventional trials of combat to reach certain moral conclusions do not devalue them as aesthetic and cultural products. The manly men of the bygone eras of war cinema have no place in a globalized or multi-cultural context, and to tell conventional stories of war is to lie to the audience and perpetuate a system of signs and behavior that leads to conflict in the first place.

Discussions of the role of men and the soldier aside, the grammar and icons of the (white male) warrior and his ways are useful in examining the representation of Andreas Baader, and thereby European terrorism, in the film. The first image that demands attention is that of Baader training at the terrorist camp in Jordan, where he disobeys his orders and, from the hip, empties the magazine of his iconic AK-47 into the practice targets (fig. 1).

The image is a powerful one, because, on the one hand, it reveals much about Bleibtreu’s character, and on the other, it fits into the

FIG. 1.

places filmmakers have made for action heroes in our aesthetic semiotics. As Ayers writes: “Within film scholarship it has often been taken for granted that contemporary Hollywood action films are ‘dumb movies for dumb people’ (Tasker, 1993, 5), viewed as inherently conservative, superficially spectacular, and narratively simplistic” (41). The film undermines this notion and complicates the audience’s relationship to the image by placing the leftist anti-hero into a semiotic slot assumed to be reserved for right-wing, conservative American models of machismo and masculinity.

Baader displays a well-established disregard for rules and authority, both in traditional terms (the setting of the scene is a Fatah training camp), but also in more subtle ways: he disobeys his terrorist instructors, does not speak to them except to curse and complain in German (because he does not speak English), and is generally lazy and uncooperative, which indicates his lack of discipline, and displays the myopia, impatience, and intemperance that allowed him to become the revolutionary he was, but also led to his capture and death. His non-conformist image and attitude make him sexy, infamous, and dangerous at home, but in the company of war-fighters, and “real” revolutionaries, Baader appears impetuous and immature. The contrast of the (relatively) privileged West-German hedonist with his hard-core Islamist hosts highlights all of the traits that make Baader a “bad” terrorist and allow for viewer catharsis at his

subsequent capture and death, which critics find lamentable.

Conversely, in terms of the iconography of (especially) Vietnam- and Cold War-themed Reagan-era action cinema, Baader fulfills the roles and strikes the iconic poses of the action-hero. Disobeying orders and firing automatic weapons from the hip are hallmarks of the hard-body empire built by Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger, among others. Media Arts professor Helena Vanhala contends that “the era can be analyzed well through the [series of Rambo films]. All three films portray the hard-bodied white Vietnam veteran, John Rambo, played by Sylvester Stallone [...] Stallone and the decade’s other masculine hero, Arnold Schwarzenegger, stood ‘for a type of national character—heroic, aggressive, and determined’ as well as for the country” (qtd. in Eberwein 112) (fig. 2).

When Baader goes to the wilderness to find aid and comfort on his mission to defeat the Evil Empire of the West German state, he reminds audiences of John Rambo in *Rambo III*, when he travels to Afghanistan to aid the freedom-fighting-heroes-cum-terrorists, the mujahidin. In fact, that film’s dedication is to “the gallant people of Afghanistan.” That Baader’s and Rambo’s political ideologies and the cultures they represent are diametrically opposed do not enter into the image. The image is not overtly dialectically political—or better—it always already contains both ideologies.

Stallone and Schwarzenegger’s characters embody everything Baader and his group fight against, and yet, at his most masculine and violent moment, Baader precisely resembles the figures he vehemently opposes (fig. 2 and fig. 3).

Baader’s image, then, is politically problematic, which is precisely the standpoint the film claims to take and the filmmakers claim to want

FIG. 2, 3.

to show. Not only is the image troublesome because of its left-and-right wing contradiction (which is a comment on extremism in general), but it has a problematic historical dimension as well. The film participates in a widespread “tendency to reduce a movement to a few trademarked representatives or iconic leaders,” and in doing so succumbs to the melodrama of individual emotional lives, not political “movements” or social statements (Rethmann 47).

Nick James continues this critique and posits that the film, rather than being complex, is politically apathetic, confused, and lazy: “films like *The Baader Meinhof Complex* can cancel out their politics, allowing the apathetic parts of ourselves to say, ah, so that’s life’s rich tapestry, whereas a more provocatively

slanted film prompts the desire in us to find out more” (5). James assumes that the audience is interested in more than mere entertainment and titillation. If his assumption is correct, though, and if the film were concerned with more than images of Baader wielding an automatic rifle and the sexy posing of the film’s female ingénues, many of these images would be politically or culturally problematic within their context. Out of context, though, they are politically and aesthetically significant regardless of the filmmakers’ intent. The film “cancel[s] out [its] politics” because it offers competing narratives and iconography without commentary. It is precisely a critical position that makes a film political, or socially important. The filmmakers have left any meaning and importance their film could have to the critics. James gives a possible explanation for this: “It could be, however, that the vaguer variety of political presentation is one symptom of the decline of the auteur. To get films made and distributed now requires the interference by and collaboration of a great many people” (5).

This truism covers up the real problem at the center of the film: it takes no position, except an aesthetic one of juxtaposition and collage. *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex* is not an action film from the Reagan era. Its paying audience is in large part a group of people sick of war, death, and terrorism in their own lives, but eager for a look at “life’s rich tapestry.” The political action films coming out of Hollywood in the 80s showed how, as Vanhala points out: “The one-man war machine restores pride in American military forces as well as the power of the white male in American society by his denial of women and sexuality” (112–13). This sort of film does not weave a rich tapestry through the warp and woof of its narration and representation. It is a pointed, even one-dimensional, politically conservative statement. Baader, unlike America’s military heroes Stallone and Schwarzenegger, denies neither women nor sexuality and actively opposes

American military forces. His character also does not make a definite political statement in terms of his actions, as Rambo and Matrix do in *Rambo* and *Commando* (Vanhala 112, 115) (figs. 2 and 3). Instead, the film tells a lovers’ tale.

Baader and Gudrun Ensslin form an outlaw dynamic duo of sorts, a West-German-terrorist Bonnie and Clyde. If they make a coherent political statement, as their 1980’s action-hero counterparts do, it comes from Ensslin, and it is this: “Fucking and shooting, they are the same.” Ensslin is on screen for sex and violence, for sultry posing, titillating innuendo, and, like Baader, is a site for the filmmakers to confuse and inhibit clear political interpretations. Though most film critics and gender theorists will immediately adopt a Freudian or Lacanian method of interpretation for the role of strong or violent (and sexual) women in film, Ensslin is not a generic *femme fatale*, though her blonde locks and smoldering stare (not to mention her unabashedly naked body) may remind audiences of Sharon Stone’s Catherine Trammel in *Basic Instinct* (Caputi 329) (fig. 4 and fig. 5).

In fact, one could argue that very basic instincts drive the film’s leading pair: lust, wrath, and sloth among them. Indeed, Carol Hanisch—with whom the historical Ensslin and Meinhof may have been familiar, and with whom the film-makers certainly seem to be—said that “the personal is political,” as Ensslin’s filmic actions aptly demonstrate (Hanisch 5).

Ensslin displays all the hallmarks of a textbook leftist revolutionary: she leaves her infant child with her *Spieß*er partner, renounces her devoutly religious and (presumably) erstwhile-fascist parents, bathes with strange youths in a *Hausbesetzer*-style commune while she reads political theory and talks to and kisses her lover, and engages in acts of terror (or revolution) against the state (fig. 6).

In the first half of the film, she seems to have thrown off entirely the yoke of the Western woman, and become some sort of leftist, hedonist Amazon, interested only in the freedom and liberty of her fellow oppressed Germans. This is a fine caricature and would be appropriate for any number of other films.

Ensslin's strengths, the attributes which make her both revolutionarily viable and attractive to the audience, are those of the classic *femme fatale*. Ensslin, the strong woman, is inevitably punished and killed, effectively exorcised from the patriarchal police state, but her figure (both physically and narratively) remains with the viewer (Tasker 140). Ensslin is active, not a static symbol, she is "intelligent and powerful, if destructively so, and derive[s] power, not weakness, from [her] sexuality" (Tasker 140). This sexuality manifests itself on screen both as nudity (for political and sexual purposes) and as persuasive, even seductive, power over Baader and Meinhof. Ensslin uses sex as a tool, a weapon, and as a simple pleasure.

Despite her superficially strong sexual and political position, in the same scene where Baader exhibits his Rambo-esque pretensions and contradictions, Ensslin reveals other aspects of her character, which do not fit the generic mold of the *femme fatale*. She is a poor excuse for a revolutionary. She can't even hold her weapon correctly on the firing range. For all of her talk and sexy posturing, she's a middle-class *Kleinburger* wearing too much eye makeup, playing soldier in the desert with her boyfriend (fig. 7).

The soap-opera quality of Baader and Ensslin's relationship is carried over in the film's representation of Ulrike Meinhof and her relationship to the revolutionary lovers. In the figure of Meinhof, the critique of the film's simplicity and incoherence becomes most obvious. "[W]hile perhaps we'll never know what drove the brilliant journalist Ulrike Meinhof into the radical underground, she

FIG. 4, 5, 6.

was undoubtedly much more than the meek little lamb that we're given here, gaping with fear and fascination at the macho exploits of the RAF" (Nicodemus 59). The melodrama of their interpersonal relationships distracts the audience from the real psychological and physical trauma the three are experiencing and inflicting on their fellow Germans:

Conventionally, the psychic and social processes at work in the melodramatic imagination perpetuate the patriarchal order and leave the viewer with the sense that traditional family and gender roles are intact. In order to secure the imagination of stable societal and family relations, melodrama indulges in strong emotionalism, moral polarization, and overt schematization. Yet, at the same time as melodrama renders complex psychic and social relations into easily identifiable codes that produce specific emotional effects in the spectator, it also reveals what is repressed in this process. (Pinkert 120)

Edel represents Meinhof as the impressionable child, open to Baader and Ensslin's revolutionary parenting, or the adoring fan following blindly after her murderous rock stars. This characterization describes a confined space in which the historical Meinhof can confront the audience, and her filmic relationship to both Baader and Ensslin leaves both women looking weak and mentally unbalanced, which ultimately robs them of their disturbing qualities and allows the audience to accept their actions as the result of personal weakness, rather than political statement. The melodrama in the film allows for their redemption, where, arguably, there should be none. Anke Pinkert argues that, in this kind of melodrama, "women are ultimately perceived as the locus of responsibility and blame" (130). The audience can blame Meinhof for her turn to the radical left, and they can blame Ensslin for

orchestrating both Meinhof's inclusion in the group and her eventual mental and political collapse. Ultimately, the filmmakers show that the characters' personal relationships are responsible for their acts of terror, not their radical political convictions.

The arch of Meinhof's character development, from discontented middle-class family woman to socially-conscious reporter to wild-eyed revolutionary, would ideally stir the audiences' emotions and sense of social conscience. Ryan Gilbey argues that there is a moment in the film where that social conscience could have been activated: "There is a haunting image of Ulrike's daughters staring out to sea after she has abandoned them—this, remember, was an unenlightened era when women were forced to choose between motherhood and a career in international terrorism" (43). His somewhat caustic remark is evidence of dissatisfaction with the way Edel treats Meinhof as a site of ideological, moral, and political conflict. Gilbey continues, saying: "If the picture had explored even briefly how Ulrike could excise her children from her life as neatly as snipping them out of a family portrait, an invaluable gain could have been made in our comprehension. But faced with the choice between truth and fiction, Edel has taken John Ford's advice and printed the legend" (43). Meinhof, then, is fundamentally gutted of ideological, political, and moral strength. She is a legend in multiple ways: a good story, an unrealizable and unrecognizable model, only real on paper.

She, more than Ensslin and Baader, is initially an understandable character, if not a sympathetic one. "The point is not to win audience sympathy, but understanding. At a key moment, Ulrike Meinhof, until then a sympathetic journalist, flees through an open window after members of the Red Army Faction. The camera stays fixed on the window, through which they've all passed the

point of no return. From then, taking up arms, they're underground, losing touch with the socialist and student movements, more and more isolated, fighting a private war" (Lewis 34). Meinhof's development into an extremist alienates the audience, and her depressive bouts and weakness in front of Ensslin undermine her political and ideological fortitude. "The film suffers for being un-able to decide what kind of ambiguity they want to portray—weak moral condemnation combined with an admission of terror's spectacular allure is the overriding effect of *The Baader Meinhof Complex*" (Power 30).

This sentiment is echoed in other critiques of the film. Meinhof embodies the wide-spread cultural fascination with and horror at the representation of terrorism: Gary Indiana notes that Gedeck plays Meinhof "with a mixture of astute curiosity, willful delusion, and self-abnegation," and this combination leads her, seemingly inexorably, into the ranks of the RAF (73). As Indiana continues, Meinhof could have "feigned horror at the whole business [of Baader's escape] [...]. Instead, while truly horrified by the violence, she, too, makes the leap out the window: The legend of the 'Baader-Meinhof Gang' originates in this leap" (73). This leap of faith, as it were, this blind acceptance of Baader and Ensslin's plans and charisma in the film, contributes to a dynamic in the "Baader-Meinhof Gang" that leaves Meinhof out as a third wheel. Indeed, it "has been noted elsewhere that the group ought to have been called the Baader-Ensslin Group, since Meinhof was, from the outset, routinely dismissed as a 'bourgeois cunt' and denigrated for the comfortable life she had lived before going underground" (Indiana 73). Her role as mere figurehead or hanger-on, and the tension that that bred between her and Ensslin, is a driving force behind the personal drama that develops between them through the course of the film.

The repeated dismissal of Meinhof's value and virtue prefigures the power- and love-triangle reminiscent of day-time television programs, which figures into the emotionally soothing role of melodrama. Meinhof becomes Ensslin's mirror: the quiet, eloquent, and politically astute brunette, affected by her conscience, foiled by the bold, brash, ultra-violent blonde, whose goal is seemingly to "break all ten Commandments" (Indiana 74). The power struggle between the two women, the petty squabbling and torment Ensslin inflicts on Meinhof, especially after their capture, replaces the strong and well-argued political and moral positions the historical Meinhof held in the courtroom. The personal replaces the political in Edel's film, but in spite of that, the triumvirate of dysfunctional and perhaps psychotic personalities still provides useful information about prevailing attitudes toward terror and its representation.

Baader needs and respects Meinhof for her political mind and as the group's media mouth piece (Grawe 174.) In their "war" against the State, she is the RAF's diplomat. Her isolation, mental collapse, and eventual suicide serve as synecdoche for the group. However, whereas Baader and Ensslin are horrifying, alien in their hubris and violence, Meinhof's fall is understandable, and because of that, the audience is able to experience some sort of catharsis. Catharsis might be a staple of Aristotelian tragedy, but the question is whether it is appropriate in the context of the relationship between a culture and its terrorists (Grawe 176.) The overwhelming critical response is "No." As Indiana puts it, the film strikes "many viewers as fundamentally skewed, in attempting to 'balance' the hubristic excesses of increasingly deranged idealists with the predictably excessive reactions of a modern state. 'The six against six million,' as Heinrich Böll dubbed the RAF, accomplished nothing positive and left nothing behind except a still-festering historical wound" (74).

With this in mind, it is useful to return to the filmmakers' goals: to show and not interpret, to show what "actually happened here, exactly." The question that lingers in any dealing with the RAF is that of objectivity, or of objective representation. The historical and critical consensus is that objectivity is impossible. The logical recourse is then to choose a perspective. Edel's perspective, the context in which his film occurs, is within this group (Grawe 176.) The film is fundamentally skewed; it has to be. From Meinhof's perspective, everything, including the members of her own group, is against her. It would make sense, then, that the hubristic excesses of her cohorts and the state's reactions would be commensurate. By that same token, Baader and Ensslin are the vehicles for that "hubristic excess." In representing the terrorists from within their context, Edel does balance the concerns of the terrorists with those of the terrorized. Edel cannot show this kind of psychological drama without Meinhof. Ensslin and Baader by themselves are too extreme, too foreign. Meinhof acts as an emotional bridge between the RAF and the audience; she is a conduit through which the RAF can begin to be reintegrated into the German past, although in her case, that reintegration appears to take place in patriarchal, conservative terms. This demarcated sympathy is most obvious when the audience notices "Meinhof's silence and slightly pained expression when she agrees to Ensslin's proposal that her twin daughters be brought up as Palestinian terrorists, never to be seen again [...]. [The image] cannot but affect the viewers" (Grawe 176).

There are obvious contradictions and flaws in the representations of Baader, Ensslin, and Meinhof, but they can be argued away, as many critics have, as ineptitude or inconsistency on the part of the filmmakers. However, the picture they paint of the whole group lends more support to a consistent representation of the RAF than incompetence on the part of Edel and his cohorts. Naked, pasty, theory-

FIG. 7.

reading Westerners in the middle of desert, "training" with hardened warriors completely alien to their way of life is a paradox, a contradiction, beyond what the filmmakers could accomplish unintentionally. In fact, within this contradiction lies an important aesthetic and social statement: the naked, feminine form can overcome the power of militaristic, fanatic patriarchies. This image fits snugly into the discourse surrounding women and war, where the original and most powerful expressions of violence, of power over life and death, were feminine ones (Caputi 253).

The Western women are alien to the camp and the way of life it represents, and, if what Ensslin says is true, and fucking (and by proxy a focus on the body and sexuality) is like shooting, then the German women are winning the war of representation (fig. 8).

The female warrior, and even more so the suicide bomber, is the most uncanny figure of the action genre (see *Black Hawk Down*, *From Paris with Love*, or *The Kingdom*, among others, for examples of this.) The image of the naked revolutionaries is designed not only to stir the Islamist terrorists, but to disrupt the audience's notions of femininity and the role of violence in the Western world.

This image of the women of the RAF is important for two reasons: contextually, it situates the film historically, because

the filmmakers meticulously recreated the *mise-en-scène* from historical photographic evidence, which gives their fictions historical verisimilitude (Hope-Jones 34). Out of context, however, the image provides a powerful commentary on how culture aestheticizes and politicizes the female form, and shows how film, especially a “terror(ism)” film, can confront an audience with its own ideological failings and epistemological blind spots. The contextual importance of the image is limited and undermined by the film’s other methodological and structural failings, but the filmmakers’ reliance on historical imagery provides the audience with commentary on the roles of women and violence in a post-9/11 society (Hope-Jones 34). Critics argue that, despite its subject matter, *Baader Meinhof Komplex* is a post-9/11 film (James 5). Despite the historical context of the imagery, the film develops an aesthetics that directly engages the violence (both physical and cultural) with which its audience is regularly and systematically confronted. This scene questions the perpetrators and victims of systematic and ideological violence, and this violence is an integral component in the rise and ever-increasing intensity of international terrorism, in particular. The “terrorists” (that is, the members of the Fatah) in this scene are terrorized, “coerced by violence, fear, threats, etc.,” as much by the brash nakedness of the German revolutionaries as those same revolutionaries terrorized their fellow citizens.

The images force the audience to regard bodies, and systems of power relationships, from multiple perspectives. This is one of film’s important social functions, and the “terrorist film,” along with film noir, horror, science fiction, and even action cinema, has a critical role to play in the way filmmakers and audiences engage with the shifting aesthetic and ethical landscape of the early twenty-first Century.

FIG. 8.

The final element of the film, and that which undermines, or at minimum makes ironic, the progressive political or social message the film could contain, is the melodramatic, middle class, Bonnie-and-Clyde story that overwhelms the independent revolutionary stories of the two lovers (fig. 9).

Their star-crossed love story distracts, and the critics argue detracts, from the political and social meaning and conflict inherent in both domestic and international terrorism. It is finally this love story, absent from the classic action blockbusters of the 80s, which cripples the political thrust of the film. The complex of sex, violence, myth and filmic convention are just that: a constellation of volatile elements that build an interesting film. The film’s focus on the emotional lives of the main figures detracts from the historical figures’ main focus: politics and violence. It is in this aspect that Edel’s claim to *cinema vérité* rings most hollow, and the film proves itself decidedly un-political (Sklar 43). Though the historical Ensslin was certainly devoted to Baader, it was her commitment to the overthrow of the (in her view) fascist and oppressive West-German government, and not the excitement of a life of crime and adventure with her lover, that drove her political and revolutionary actions.

The film poster, in particular the one for the U.S. market, tells the story of the film, sets up the audiences’ expectations, before they even enter the cinema (fig. 10).

The film, as advertised, is not about Baader and Meinhof, not about violence and politics and social justice. It is rather a criminal love story, a romantic escapade in period clothing. The film provides an escape, just as Bonnie and Clyde did. In the words of Faye Dunaway, “[Bonnie] wanted to get out of wherever she was [...] But with Bonnie there was real tragic irony. She got out only to see that she was heading nowhere and the end was death [...] She knew the only way to get what she wanted was through her own sheer force of will. She was driven by her own desire. [...] She did] whatever it takes. She wanted to be something special, something out of the ordinary” (Dunaway 131). The tragic irony of *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex* is that it subsumes its strong representation of Ensslin as either *femme fatale* or action hero under her role as a lover. The film’s lukewarm expression of her power and independence do little to break Ensslin out of the mold of a supporting character, or a caricature of femininity (Grant 82).

The romance inherent in Baader and Ensslin’s relationship is their headlong rush toward self-destruction. In their haste to destroy everything the generation before them held dear, including social conventions and cultural traditions, they effectively removed themselves from the public sphere. By alienating themselves, the historical figures doomed themselves to fecklessness. The filmmakers attempt to make their figures sympathetic, and thereby undermine their social impact. The romance undoes the positive social and aesthetic work of the film, it “cancels out its politics” as James claims, though not completely, and not in the simplistic terms in which he couches it. The film still examines some of the causes, symptoms, and consequences of extremism, which most “terrorist” films—or rather, films about terrorists—fail to do. However, romance and the excitement of danger hold such central positions in the film, that the historical, “true”

FIG. 9.

depictions of people and events becomes spectacular, not political.

Despite its narrative failings, *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex* contributes significantly to the possible development of a terrorist film genre and its iconography and syntax. Like the action and horror genres before it, or the style of film noir, the terrorist film can help mediate traumatic social events, and give the audience a vocabulary of images with which to engage their circumstances (Grant 26). The social aesthetics the film helps to foster, taken out of context, allow the audience to evaluate contemporary gender relationships and sexual politics, as well as question the role that ideology plays in everyday life. It is this last point that is the most important. The terrorist film genre is still nascent, and as such, there are no canonical terrorist films, or at least, no films that can provide a comprehensive grammar for the genre. *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex* is therefore not a genre film. From a critical perspective, it is not a particularly good film. It is, however, a complex of images that invite critical attention and are clearly meant to be read intertextually. Just as the noir films of the post-war period, many of which were B movies, developed a style or aesthetic that eventually gained wide acceptance as a genre, films about and influenced by terror will develop an aesthetic and a visual semiotics that will allow audiences to engage in different ways with

FIG. 10.

their social circumstances (Grant 26, 29). The images of the hapless hero-terrorist and his sultry-but-doomed lover allow the audience to identify with the terrorist, the “other,” because they play with well established conventions of filmic grammar. The audience identifies with them enough to break down their dialectic perspectives on “us” versus “them,” but the film also allows audiences to maintain enough intellectual and emotional distance that the audience still experiences catharsis when the terrorists are ritually purged from the screen, and thereby from the collective memory and consciousness. This re-negotiation of social binaries is an important aspect of the *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex*, and perhaps a future genre of terror(ism) films. The examination of these complicated political and aesthetic topics will have to be taken up in future research by a broad spectrum of scholars.

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Image Notes

Figure 1: *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex*. Dir. Uli Edel. Constantin Film Production GmbH, 2008.

Figure 2: *Rambo: First Blood Part II*. Dir. George Cosmatos. Tri-Star Pictures, 1985.

Figure 3: *Commando*. Dir. Mark Lester. Twentieth Century Fox, 1985.

Figure 4: *Basic Instinct*. Dir. Paul Verhoeven. Le Canal +, 1992. *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex*. Dir. Uli Edel. Constantin Film Production GmbH, 2008.

Figure 5: *Basic Instinct 2*. Dir. Michael Caton-Jones. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 2006. *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex*. Dir. Uli Edel. Constantin Film Production GmbH, 2008.

Figure 6: *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex*. Dir. Uli Edel. Constantin Film Production GmbH, 2008.

Figure 7: *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex*. Dir. Uli Edel. Constantin Film Production GmbH, 2008.

Figure 8: *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex*. Dir. Uli Edel. Constantin Film Production GmbH, 2008.

Figure 9: *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex*. Dir. Uli Edel. Constantin Film Production GmbH, 2008.

Figure 10: *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex*. Dir. Uli Edel. Constantin Film Production GmbH, 2008.

(Endnotes)

1. Plot summary for “The Baader Meinhof Complex,” from its official [IMDb](#) page.
2. “Der Faschismus läuft folgerecht auf eine Ästhetisierung des politischen Lebens hinaus. [...] Alle Bemühungen um die Ästhetisierung der Politik gipfeln in einem Punkt. Dieser eine Punkt ist der Krieg” (384).
3. “So steht es um die Ästhetisierung der Politik, welche der Faschismus betreibt. Der Kommunismus antwortet ihm mit der Politisierung der Kunst“ (384).

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ASKEW POSITIONS—SCHIEFLAGEN: DEPICTIONS OF CHILDREN IN GERMAN TERRORISM FILMS

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This essay discusses the appearance of children in films that negotiate the legacies of West left-wing German and global terrorism. The four films discussed in this essay depict children in *Schieflagen* (askew positions), but use these images to create rather different political messages. In *Deutschland im Herbst* (1978), *Die bleierene Zeit* (1981) and *Innere Sicherheit* (2000), children are melodramatic devices that convey a sense of national tragedy, nostalgia for “innocence,” and/or a nationally coded sense of hope. As opposed to representing such an uncanny mixture between melodramatic victim and national symbol, children in the recent film collaboration *Deutschland 09* (2009) are the face of the present. *Deutschland 09* depicts children as disconnected from German history, which relieves them of the burden of national representation and, as a result, offers a potential for a less normative and more diverse perspective on Germany’s history and present. While their missing connection to national history leaves them to appear detached and confused, this confusion can be read as a search for different understandings of history and belonging in twenty-first century Germany.

Cet article examine la représentation des enfants dans des films qui traitent du legs du parti gauchiste de l’Allemagne de l’ouest et du terrorisme international. Les quatre films analysés montrent des enfants en postures critiques (*Schieflagen*), mais utilisent ces images pour transmettre des messages politiques radicalement différents. Dans *Deutschland im Herbst* (1978), *Die Bleierene Zeit* (1981), et *Innere Sicherheit* (2000), les enfants sont des outils mélodramatiques qui communiquent un sens de tragédie nationale, de nostalgie pour l’« innocence », et/ou un sentiment d’espoir national. D’autre part, au lieu de représenter un mélange inquiétant entre victime mélodramatique et symbole national, les enfants dans le récent film *Deutschland 09* (2009) se font symboles du présent. *Deutschland 09* montre des enfants déconnectés de l’histoire allemande, ce qui les soulage du fardeau de la représentation nationale, et par conséquent offre la possibilité d’une perspective moins normative et plus variée sur l’Allemagne des livres d’histoire ainsi que sur l’Allemagne d’aujourd’hui. Bien que leur détachement face à l’histoire nationale les représente comme déconnectés et perdus, cette déroute peut se lire comme une quête interprétative du sens de l’histoire et de l’appartenance à l’Allemagne du vingt-et-unième siècle.

The online version of the British paper *Daily Mail* calls the US American film *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2011) “the worst film ever to be nominated for Best Picture at the Oscars”¹ and tries to explain this nomination by the fact that the film addresses one of the most traumatic events of our times, the terrorist attacks of 9/11, by following the search of a boy for traces of his father who was killed in the attacks. The main complaint in this particular review does not refer to the way in which the film addresses the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks; it focuses on the portrayal of the child, which the reviewer calls “obnoxious,” “contrived,” and “trivializing.” Two years prior to the premier of this film, the critically acclaimed film by Austrian director Michael Haneke, *Das weiße Band* (*The White Ribbon*, 2009), was released. Set just before the outbreak of WWI in a small German village, the town’s children are the “terrorizers.” Most popular media reviews read these abused and suppressed children as representing a generation of Germans that would later support Nazi Germany.² The subtitle of the film, “eine deutsche Kindergeschichte”—“a German children’s story,” further emphasizes what makes this film exceptional: it is a children’s story in that it depicts the lives of children but tells a very brutal, frightening tale full of mystery and suspense.³ These two contemporary and popular films offer rather different representations of children and terror and/or terrorism. Nonetheless, both films choose children as central protagonists to address the topics of terrorism and terror in a broader sense. In both films, the children also appear to be somewhat uncanny and unpredictable; at the same time, the child character(s) are clearly nationally coded and intricately tied to national histories and futures, be it in a search for national healing and recovery in post 9/11 America or as a foreboding sign of Germany’s Nazi atrocities.

National codings of child-characters in terrorism films pose a more general question

about what roles child protagonists play in cinematic depictions of violence, trauma, and terrorism. More specifically of interest to this essay are depictions of children in films about political terrorism and its aftermath in the German context. While scholarly discourse has grappled with German terrorism films in general, especially following the international success of the film *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex* (*Baader Meinhof Complex*, 2008),⁴ not many researchers have addressed the appearance of children, in spite of the fact that children are rather prominent in German films that depict the effects of left-wing terrorism. In this essay, I argue that children in terrorism films are the embodiments of different kinds of *Schieflagen*, a term taken from the title of a short film from the collection *Deutschland 09*. I use *Schieflagen* to describe the “askew positions” that child characters take in the context of these narratives; the term also allows me to explore how, through such child characters, films address the difficult situation that terrorism and violence create in twentieth and twenty-first century Germany. The films interpret these *Schieflagen*—and their implications of Germany, German history, and national identity—rather differently. After first discussing three films that link child characters directly to Germany’s national past and identity, the second part of this essay focuses on the collaborative film project *Deutschland 09*, which complicates the connection between representations of children and national history in its depiction of children as detached from Germany’s past. This detachment means that rather than symbolizing a national past, present, and future, the child characters in *Deutschland 09* pose questions about belonging and progress that go beyond the national perspectives suggested in previous terrorism films.

I understand “terrorism films” as German films that negotiate the legacy of West German terrorism, mainly left-wing terrorism in the 1970s and early 1980. The early twenty-

first century saw a wave of such films, most famously *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex* (2008), but others include *Baader* (2002), *Die Innere Sicherheit* (*The State I am In*, 2000), the docu-drama *Todesspiel* (1997), and the documentary *Black Box BRD* (2001). In parts, this renewed interest in the mainly home-grown terrorism that shook West Germany in the 1970s and into the 1980s is a result of the discussions surrounding global terrorism and the kinds of politics it produced in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. These films about the legacies of German terrorism are also part of a wave of so-called “heritage films” (Koepnick, 2002, 2004) that renegotiate the German past in the aftermath of unification in—in some cases Hollywood-style—fiction and non-fiction films of the 1990s and early twenty-first century.

In this context, *Deutschland 09—13 Filme zur Lage der Nation* (*Germany 09—13 Films About the State of the Nation*), released in 2009, plays a special role. Neither heritage film nor explicitly a film about left-wing terrorism, the film-project positions itself in the historical context of German terrorism films by directly referencing one of the most ambitious German film classics, *Deutschland im Herbst* (*Germany in Autumn*, 1978). As a collaboration between filmmakers of the New German Cinema, among others Kluge and Fassbinder, *Deutschland im Herbst* explored the effects of left-wing terrorism in West Germany in an essayistic format. While in *Deutschland im Herbst*, the contributions by the different filmmakers are interconnected and edited together to create one artistic product, *Deutschland 09* presents thirteen distinct short films that set out to survey the state of the German nation in the aftermath of 9/11. In both film projects, the appearance of children is highly loaded with meaning; however, the two films use children to create rather different kinds of national trajectories.

To offer a critical examination of the role of child protagonists in German terrorism films, I first contextualize my more detailed discussions of four German films about terrorism within a more general discussion of child protagonists in film. Then I survey images of children in two West German films, *Deutschland im Herbst* (*Germany in Autumn*, 1978) and *Die Bleierne Zeit* (*Marianne and Julianne*, 1981), and in a more recent German film, *Die Innere Sicherheit* (*The State I am In*, 2000). The following, more detailed, discussion of *Deutschland 09* (2009) allows me to argue that some of the films in this collaborative film project offer new interpretations of the *Schieflagen* terror and terrorism produces. In the films from the 1970s and 1980s as well as in Petzold’s *Innere Sicherheit*, children are the ultimate victims of terror; at the same time they embody—and are burdened with carrying—a national hope for a better, more peaceful and democratic future. Child protagonists are a melodramatic device that creates a sense of fear and tragedy, and nostalgia for a kind of “innocence” as well as a nationally coded sense of hope. Similarly, the children depicted in *Deutschland 09* are heavily loaded symbols. But rather than presenting this peculiar mixture between melodramatic victim or symbol for a (potentially) better national future, they are the curious faces of a German present: a wealthy country that nonetheless struggles with poverty; a multicultural country that emphasizes integration and education, but struggles with violence and racism; a country that searches for its histories while struggling to get away from it.

Deutschland 09 aims to depict, rather generally, “the state of the nation,” which means that the connection between childhood, terrorism, and trauma in *Deutschland 09* is much more tenuous than in the other films I am discussing in this essay. But the question of national and global terrorism serves as a permanent undercurrent, because most of

the short films understand Germany's current "state" in close connection to twentieth century history, a history that could be told as a story of violence and terror. The films also situate Germany in a global context, which includes the 9/11 terrorist attacks and their aftermath. The children in *Deutschland 09* do not appear as victims of terror or as the potential agents who could overcome a violent or terrorist national past, rather they function as reminders that questions of social justice and inclusion matter in a globalized world.

What unites the rather different depictions of children discussed in this essay is the fact that children and young adults play important roles in films about terrorism and/or national trauma. In her essay on children in film, following psychologist Adam Phillips, Karen Lury states that "the child is [...] perhaps the essential 'subject' in contemporary culture, romanticized and pathologized" (Lury, 307). In this reading, what is often coded as symbolizing "innocence" in the figure of a child, comes to stand for a certain kind of essentialism (see also Lee Edelman, *No Future* 2–3).⁵ The romanticizing depiction of children on the one hand and of childhood as pathology on the other hand is directly related to this essentialism. Children can stand for something pure and, at the same time, for something fundamentally evil and threatening. The child contains an essence that one cannot understand; something about the child remains uncanny. When such childhood images are combined with trauma, they produce images of children as victims, potentially so severely damaged by the past that they become uncontrollable and dangerous. In the face of trauma, however, children can also symbolize hope for a better, innocent and untainted, future.⁶

This tension in the depiction of children in cinema relates to a further point Lury stresses: namely that images of children and childhood

often serve an inherently conservative and normative agenda (see Edelman). Children symbolize a heteronormative understanding of time and progress, of humanity and reproduction.⁷ Judith Halberstam follows a similar logic in *In a Queer Time and Place* when she argues that developing a queer sense of time and place means to position oneself outside of the heterosexual reproductive cycle, which places parenthood and the tasks commonly associated with being a parent at the center of a logic of time, progress, and a "cycle" of life. Childhood, then, signifies a stage that leads to maturity and childbearing/rearing. Lury insists, however, that at the same time as the child embodies a conservative understanding of life, progress, and time, something about the image and the figure of the child remains uncontainable, especially when it comes to cinematic representations of childhood. This often has to do with a rather vague construction of the agency of the child on screen—and I might add intention—that turns the child into something "disruptive, impossible, unintelligible" (Lury 308). Further, while the child stands for a normative cycle of life, he or she, especially when traumatized, under threat, or otherwise in a compromised position, also always signifies the disruption of such a cycle and the threat to normative understandings of order that comes with such a disruption.

Further, and this is crucial for the following discussions of childhood and trauma, the disruptive quality of the child is often enhanced by the fact that child protagonists remain largely silent (see Trnka, 9). When the child on the screen does not speak, his or her agency and intention is a blank screen for projection. The image of a silent, but traumatized or hurt child triggers strong emotional responses in the viewers: parental protectiveness and sadness but also fear of what might become of such a child. Rather than affirming a sense of a predictable life cycle the gaze of these silently

staring children creates a looming sense of instability. Children in German terrorism films embody this tension between progress and hope and a feeling of instability and uncontrollable danger. The films discussed in the following negotiate questions of national history and national belonging via this very tension.

The main historical reference point for most German terrorism films is the culmination of left-wing terrorist violence in West Germany in 1977. Paul Cooke summarized the so-called “German Autumn” as

a period of three months in 1977 that saw an increase in violent attacks by the urban terrorist group Rote Armee Fraktion, or Red Army Faction (RAF), culminating in the deaths of its founding members Jan-Carl Raspe, Gudrun Ensslin and Andreas Baader in their high-security prison Stammheim, as well as one of the group’s high-profile kidnap victims, the industrialist Hanns-Martin Schleyer. (Cooke 328)

In her more detailed account of the events and developments leading up to this culmination of violence, Nora Alter stresses the international context that influenced the actions and the perception of left-wing terrorism in 1970s West Germany (Alter 46-48). She further describes an “atmosphere of paranoia and self-censorship” that “grew dramatically, with the media playing fully into the hands of the government” (Alter 50). This atmosphere is crucial for any attempt to understand what Alter describes as “cultural responses” of the time. In order to examine the discourses in the aftermath of the events of 1977, “a thorough analysis [...] ought to examine the interplay between unconscious trauma and conventional taboo” (53), which includes the complex relationship between understandings of the German Autumn and Germany’s Nazi past. Eric Kligerman, summarizing

Miriam Hansen, points out that “the German Autumn operates in the crevices of historical consciousness, where a ‘collective work of mourning ensues’ (18)” (15), and suggests that visually, the “the iconic images from the death camps [...] are repeatedly reinscribed in these films’ narratives,” which “function as the trigger for both left-wing activism and political enlightenment” (15). German terrorism films, therefore, are—even when they do not directly reference the Holocaust—always also cultural responses to a discourse about Germany’s violent past and Germany’s potential for a democratic future. In addition to this national discourse, in a post-9/11 world, films about terror and terrorism participate in global discussions about political violence, terror, and security.

Many film scholars have described the film project *Deutschland im Herbst* (*Germany in Autumn*, 1978) in detail and, generally, credit it for its innovative conceptual approach as well as the ability to capture a certain cultural and political atmosphere. Cook summarizes:

Framed by documentary footage of the funerals of Schleyer and the RAF terrorists, the film utilizes a range of forms, from World War II newsreels, melodramatic narrative sequences, real and staged interviews, stills of paintings and poems, voiceover commentaries, and fragments of classical and popular music, in an attempt to capture what its creators perceived to be a collective hysteria that had taken hold of society at the time. (Cooke 329)

While, according to Cooke, the film argues for collective mourning,⁸ he also stresses that it offers a rather complex picture of the political questions at hand and that it contains moments of irony and self-reflexivity. This is also achieved through the “hybridity” of the film, its meandering between fact and fiction (see Alter 56). This hybrid form allows the film as a whole to present the German Autumn as

a series of “unresolved events” that remain open and ambivalent (see Alter 59).

Alter further emphasizes the ambivalent message that the film sends in regards to gender (68–71). Women are depicted as revolutionary victims of the state; at the same time, their suppressed violence is used in the gory service of the state. This prompts Alter to restate one of the questions the film asks: “Is it equally important for new generations to question their mothers as well as their fathers?” (71). The question of mothers and sons, of generations and memories, is a thematic thread that weaves itself through the film. The terrorists are the sons and daughters of a generation that came of age under the Nazis. This historical fact is stressed from the beginning of the film, when it opens with a letter Hans-Martin Schleyer wrote to his son while he was a prisoner of the RAF. This letter is followed by a quote from a “mother,” who, during wartimes, simply calls for the violence to stop. The next, and by far the longest, sequence is Fassbinder’s contribution, which prominently features a conversation between him—or his screen self—and his mother.

The only instance of a child protagonist featuring somewhat prominently on screen is the boy who attends the funeral of Raspe, Baader, and Ensslin in the final segment of the film (fig. 1). As Alter points out, the child seems vulnerable, threatened, and “always alone,” and he is “never identified” (72). The assumption that viewers can make is that the child is Ensslin’s orphaned son. The film, according to Alter’s reading, does not suggest that the “bad mothers” are to blame, but that they can be understood as a symptom of a nation in crisis. The final image of the film is of a woman who leaves the funeral with a little girl, trying to catch a ride with one of the many cars leaving the graveyard through the autumn forest—a forest filled with police surveillance (fig. 2). Alter reads the shot of the anonymous mother and child who walk away

FIG. 1, 2.

from the funeral as a symbol of “nurturing motherhood” (Alter 74). This reading is supported by the image that precedes the funeral segment: a drawing of an unborn child in the womb.⁹ In this reading of the final section of the film, children, in need of nurturing motherhood, point to the necessity and maybe urgency for the creation of a better future. At the same time, there is something uncanny about these children since they, once again, witness violence, oppression, and death. It is not clear at the end of the film whether this cycle of violence can and will be broken by this new generation of (German) children and their mothers.

Just like their mothers, these silent children appear to be lost. They observe, but their faces do not only project a sense of innocence;

they also show pain, hurt, and loneliness. In either case, the film stresses the importance of these silent, anonymous, children by giving them a prominent place in the ending sequence. This places them in the center of the melodramatic mood with which the film concludes, emphasized also by the final song's prominent but ambivalent line: "the last and final moment is yours that agony is your triumph."¹⁰ The boy who is leaving the funeral in a car (fig. 1)—a scene depicted in black and white, presumably from actual documentary footage—contrasted with the child walking away with her mother in her bright red sweater and long, floating pink skirt, are the two poles that symbolize the national *Schieflage* that Germany finds itself in and they set the final tone of the film: fear and tragedy and a very vague sense of a stubborn grasp for hope for a better future.

Compared to the brief appearance of children in *Deutschland im Herbst*, film scholars have discussed the role of children in Von Trotta's rather conventionally melodramatic fiction film *Die Bleierne Zeit* (*Marianne & Juliane*, 1981) in much greater detail. The film tells the story of two sisters, Juliane, a journalist and feminist activist, and Marianne, who decides to leave her family and join a terrorist group. The film is, maybe first and foremost, a film about questions West German feminists faced in the 1970s. Rather than relating the images of childhood to the treatment of German terrorism in the film, scholars mostly focus on the relation of children to the feminist message of the film.¹¹

Von Trotta's film connects her complex discussion of terrorism to questions of feminist activism and social responsibility in general. The film's narrative further combines the fight for legalization of abortion (as made explicit in an early scene in the film, where Juliane participates in a demonstration against "paragraph 218," the law against abortion), one of the main agendas of West German

FIG. 3, 4.

feminists in the late 1970s, with a discussion of (feminist) motherhood. Marianne leaves her son Jan with his father when she decides to go underground. Her husband, in turn, leaves the child with Juliane, claiming he has to go abroad for a temporary job assignment. Rather than departing for his assignment, however, he commits suicide and Juliane has to decide what to do with the child. Juliane, feminist journalist and activist, had made a conscious decision not to have children herself. Much of the dramatic tension of the film then results from the tension between the two sister's life choices, as a consequence of both their strict Christian upbringing in 1950s West Germany and their political convictions. Juliane, for example, suggests that the turn to violence in her sister's activism can be explained as a reaction against her previous choices to have a child and a rather traditional family and marriage. The silent child in the film is not only depicted as the victim of his terrorist

mother and of other children who attack him once they find out who his real mother is. He also converts his feminist aunt to a committed mother and thus becomes a conveyor of hope for a different, both less violent and more nurturing future. Nonetheless, the boy's gaze is the gaze of a hurt, traumatized, and sad child.

Hofer further points out that Juliane's choice to take care of Jan is triggered by his attempted murder. In the final scene, Marianne is back in her study, but as Hofer describes, "set in contrast to the opening sequence, Juliane is last seen not alone in her study but with Jan. She sits behind her desk, the typewriter in front of her, suggesting that she has resumed her work as a journalist" (Hofer 51). Susan Linville offers a similar interpretation: "If Jan is a metaphor for his generation [...] then Juliane's care for and exemplary guidance of the boy would also seem a paradigm of women's larger roles in enabling the culture to remember, grieve, and evolve" (108). Throughout the film, the shots of the mainly silent child protagonist emphasize his role as a victim, as an accuser, and as a challenge for the (female) protagonists. His gaze asks for explanations of the past and insists that he deserves a better, more secure and more peaceful future. In this way, the silent boy plays a rather similar role to the children at the end of *Deutschland im Herbst*. He is a melodramatic victim who forces Juliane to both confront the past and work towards a better future. The image of the child ripping apart a mug-shot of his mother and the prolonged shot of a train ride illustrate these two functions of the child protagonist (figs. 3 and 4). This turns Jan into a rather ambivalent carrier of hope: a deeply hurt and traumatized child that needs to be protected and nurtured in the hope that he can overcome the trauma. Jan embodies the *Schieflage* of the German nation in that he remains an uncanny child: he does not laugh or play, rather he sulks and stares. The question of whether Juliane's decision to care for the child can "heal" him and, in effect,

help to create a future for Germany, remains unanswered.

In contrast to the two films discussed above, where children present obstacles for the main characters or serve as symbols in an overarching argument, Petzold's *Die Innere Sicherheit* (*The State I am In*, 2000), released twenty years later than *Bleierne Zeit*, makes an adolescent child, the daughter of two former terrorists, the central protagonist. Her parents are former left-wing terrorists who live underground and—unsuccessfully—try to create a secure future for their daughter Jeanne. Since the parent's plight drives the plot of the film, the film is often read as a critique of the legacy of the 1968ers. The teenager Jeanne is portrayed as a victim of her parents' life choices and her agency is constructed only in tension with and in response to her parents. Stefanie Hofer focuses on this reading of the film:

The State I Am In cinematically scrutinize[s] the life of an adolescent girl, Jeanne, who must come to terms with her parents' terrorist past. At the film's outset, we find the fifteen-year-old girl in Portugal. She is on the run with her parents—the ex-terrorists Hans and Clara—who dream of a bourgeois life in Brazil. Unfortunately for the trio, the money required for their transatlantic travel is stolen, and the family must return to Germany. (39)

Hofer reads the symbolism of the film as suggesting "that it is Hans' and Clara's [the parents'] past-life fights for political freedom that have isolated their daughter from society and the real world" (39). Hofer's reading focuses on Jeanne's choice to create a future for herself either by severing the ties with the past/parents or by developing a constructive relationship to this past (Hofer 39–40). Hofer concludes that "Petzold's portrayal of generations and generational conflict is highly paradoxical" (40). Jeanne "walks with

hanging shoulders as if afflicted with the burden of her parent's past, doomed to suffer what one might consider a transgenerational trauma that Jeanne has unwittingly inherited" (Hofer 41). Especially towards the end of the film, when Jeanne is subjected to what she perceives as "questioning" by her parents, her parents are aligned with Nazi tactics and the family is depicted as the smallest terrorist unit (Hofer 41–42). This means that the film could also be read as a film about the terrors of the nuclear family unit. In the case of this family, the terror they experience is heightened by their situation in the "underground," but the conflicts between parents and adolescent child are much more generally applicable. The emotional intensity of the film lies in its ability to destabilize the security of the family unit.

While this interpretation makes the film rather timeless and not specifically German, Petzold does locate his protagonists very explicitly within a German context. In using clips from *Night and Fog*, for example, "Petzold shows the Holocaust to be the centerpiece for the formation of the 68er's generational identity" (Hofer 43). The ending, according to Hofer, signifies freedom for Jeanne (52), freedom from her interdependency and loyalty to her corrupt and corruptible parents. Not looking at the car-wreck that presumably killed both of her parents, she stares off into an unknown future (fig. 5). This freedom, so Hofer, is not coded positively. Jeanne will become a poor orphan, similar to her boyfriend Heinrich in the film (Hofer 52–53). With this bleak ending, Petzold's film shows that Germany remains haunted by the violence of the past and the silence around it (Hofer 53). The child is a victim of this past, carries this burden within her, and serves as a symbol for the (im) possibility of a better future.

Even though Jeanne is the main protagonist, she does not speak much and when she talks she usually conceals more than she reveals.

FIG. 5, 6.

When her father confronts her and calls her strange and closed off, she responds with a question: "liebt ihr euch wieder?" ("do you love each other again?") The film turns silence into an actual theme on screen. The father suggests to Jeanne that if you find yourself questioned by the authorities, all you have to do is remain silent and it will drive them mad. Jeanne uses this strategy, rather successfully, with her parents. This means that silence in the film not only creates images of a lost, lonely, and disturbed adolescent, silence is also scrutinized as a political strategy.

Jeanne's presence on screen creates similar questions to the films discussed above. She often stares in an accusatory, but also searching, vulnerable, and in some scenes, desperately hopeful way (fig.6). *Die Innere Sicherheit* does, as the English title might suggest, depict the "state" Germany is currently in as stuck between an unresolved past and—possibly as a result—an unclear future. The teenager, who is starting to

develop an interest in relationships and sex and struggles with her dependence on her parents, is a symbol for unstoppable change. She is growing up (fast) and she wants to grow up, but, due to her parents' life underground, her growing up, i.e., going out and meeting boys, puts the whole family unit in danger. This leads to a conclusion that echoes Hofer's interpretation of the film as paradoxical, however, this paradox, or *Schieflage*, as I call it, appears to be a trope in German terrorism films that depict children: children embody the disruption of security and stability; at the same time their presence signifies the urgency for a secure family unit and the need for a more peaceful future.

The films discussed so far deploy images of childhood and children to address questions about Germany's past and future. In that sense, their lives are understood within a rather conventional temporal matrix: the hetero-normative timeline of coming of age is transposed onto a national sense of progress and history. The uncanny child serves as a reminder of the violent past and as a vague, questionable sign of hope for the future. They use child characters as driving forces in violent and (melo)dramatic national narratives. The children signify lives and, by extension, a nation, in an askew position, a *Schieflage*. This *Schieflage* is depicted as a result of a national context: Germany's Nazi past and of the violent political situation in the 1970s.

The children depicted in *Deutschland 09*, a collaborative film project that consists of thirteen short films, do not occupy a clear position in a linear, national history; rather, their uncanny presence marks a disruption of a national, historical perspective. This is particularly noteworthy since the idea of the film project, and its assignment for the participating filmmakers, was to depict Germany's, i.e., a national "state." While the short films do not focus on one

specific political context, as a "remake" of *Deutschland im Herbst*, the film project as a whole offers a complex picture of the effects of global terrorism and, with vague references to German terrorism, Germany's current "state." Paul Cooke describes the project itself:

In August 2007, Tom Tykwer and the German television channel NDR (Norddeutscher Rundfunk) brought together a group of well-known filmmakers to discuss an omnibus film project that would explore the state of the nation in the first decade of the new millennium, years in which the industry has enjoyed levels of success at home and abroad it has not experienced for decades. (327)

Cooke notes that while in direct reference to *Deutschland im Herbst*, *Deutschland 09* is clearly a very different film, "most obviously in structural terms":

While the former interweaves the work of its various artists, the latter consists of a series of self-contained short films, each identified by an individual title and filmmaker. However, critical reception of Tykwer's project failed to notice the thematic links between the two films, as well as the numerous aesthetic echoes which allow us to explore key continuities as well as important differences between these two moments in the development of German cinema. (328)

Cooke insists that "despite its structural difference to the earlier film, on a thematic level, Tykwer's *Deutschland 09* similarly presents a German society in crisis, provoked by numerous factors, not least of which, the film suggests in its strongest echo of *Deutschland im Herbst*, is the government's perceived overreaction to the threat of terrorism" (Cooke 332).

Cooke's reading of the film reveals that its

different contributions have a much more shaky relationship to the past than the other films discussed above. They display, as Cooke describes it a “lack of faith ... in the certainties of the past, even as they are nostalgically invoked” (340). Cooke understands the film’s politics as postmodern, but with an optimistic twist: “while the film evokes the tradition of the New German Cinema, it fails to maintain the political certainties of the previous generation, highlighting important differences between these two moments in film history. Most obviously, *Deutschland 09* points to the potential for a more positive interpretation of German society’s present direction in its inclusion of voices that were either excluded or spoken for in *Deutschland im Herbst*” (341). The films do indeed include voices that the other films discussed here do not include, and while the overall image that the films create of German society is cautiously hopeful, its message remains utterly confused and somewhat cynical. Such confusion and cynicism surface in the representations of children. The children in *Deutschland 09* are not inserted into the life-cycle of the family or their nation. In most films, they appear as parent-less, searching, arguing, floating (even literally so), or lost. They embody rather contemporary askew positions, *Schieflagen* that result from the fact that linear historical narratives and causalities appear to have lost their power to explain “the state of the nation.”

The short film that opens the collection, “Erster Tag,” (First Day) shows a child waking up in her home alone in the morning. The girl talks to her mother, who is already at work, on the phone briefly before she heads out to school. This short film mainly depicts a reality of many children in Germany today, a reality far from the traditional family where a stay-at-home mother has prepared breakfast before she sends her child off to school. Aside from offering a rather neutral, almost documentary-like treatment of a social reality, the shots of

FIG. 7, 8, 9.

the window and the early morning sky do invoke a sense of nostalgia and loneliness (fig. 7). These feelings, however, are not connected in any way to historical or national events. The film, therefore, remains an attempt to show the mundane cycle of every-day-life of many children, not just in Germany, today.

“Gefährdeter” (Endangered) tells a story based on the case of Andrej Holm, a university professor in Berlin who was accused of participating in vandalism of luxury cars in 2007 and was prosecuted as being a member in a terrorist organization. “Gefährdeter,” offers one of the most direct references to *Germany in Autumn*. The topic of this short film is

state-surveillance, state-terror, and in general, the treatment of people who are considered to be a threat to the state. In “Gefährdeter,” the interactions with his children show that the main protagonist, who is taken into custody under false accusations, is a compassionate and loving father who deeply cares for his children. In this sense, the injustice and brutality of his unjustified incarceration is enhanced by the fact that he is taken away from his harmonious domestic life, his wife and his children. The depiction of the domestic as a space of harmony under threat by the state stands in contrast to *Germany in Autumn*, where the domestic has become a space of suspicion and psychological as well as physical violence.

Fatih Akin’s contribution to *Deutschland 09*, “Der Name Murat Kurnaz,” (The Name Murat Kurnaz) tells the true story of a young Turkish man who was captured and taken to Guantanamo Bay as a terrorist-suspect. Denis Moschitto plays Murat Kurnaz who is interviewed by a journalist (fig. 8). The closest comparison to *Deutschland im Herbst* would be the interview with Horst Mahler, the former RAF attorney, in his prison cell. The interview Akin shows, however, is staged and takes place in a hotel room. Further, rather than getting lost in pseudo-philosophical ramblings like Mahler, this interview is a straight forward conversation about the young man’s experiences, his interpretation of the action (or missing action) that German politicians took, and his outlook into the future. An important part of the interview addresses Murat’s petition of German citizenship. This creates the most interesting tension in the film between, on the one hand, Murat’s sense of belonging in Germany and his deep disappointment with the German state, especially then foreign minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who refused to free Murat from Guantanamo, in spite of the fact that “Steinmeier muss gewusst haben, dass ich gefoltert wurde” (Steinmeier must have

known that I was tortured). The film, similar to “Gefährdeter,” shows an innocent victim. It addresses the pressing humanitarian issue of torture in the post 9/11 context, and it involves a conversation about religion and the role of Islam in Murat’s survival of extreme psychological and physical torture. While the content of the interview is bleak, the sense of hope comes from the fact that Murat is speaking, that he is speaking up and has vowed to do that in the future.

This fictional interview, which is in large parts based on a real interview, does not feature a child protagonist but rather a young man. His depiction as vulnerable, soft-spoken, and innocent, however, alludes to images of traumatized children on screen. Aside from the depiction of Germany as a state that closes its eyes even when knowing about torture, but at the same time as the country that Murat wants to belong to, the film contains a second tension: while Murat appears to be a peaceful, religious man, the question of whether such measures vis-à-vis perceived terrorists create more terrorism is an undercurrent in the interview. How could one not emerged scarred and angry from such an experience? This turns him into a “child” as defined above—innocent and vulnerable, but potentially so severely harmed that he could turn into a threat, to himself and or others. Murat Kurnaz’ place within German national history, however, remains contested.

The contribution by Nicolette Krebitz, “Die Unvollendete” (The Unfinished) features Helene Hegemann, a sixteen-year old German author, who landed a surprise success with her novel *Axolotl Roadkill* (2010) last but not least due to the accusation of plagiarism. In the film, Helene arranges a meeting with (the ghosts of) Susan Sontag and Ulrike Meinhof in a rather empty Berlin apartment (fig. 9). In her conversation with her two dead (potential) heroes, she quickly becomes disillusioned. She is looking for a purpose, for

a political calling, for energy that will allow her to “mal echt versuchen Politik zu machen, die Welt zu retten, was weiss ich” (to really get into politics, save the world, I don’t know). In a collage from real texts and interviews by Meinhof and Sontag, both characters fail to offer Helene any guidance and both get lost in their own wordy and lofty discourses, Meinhof is talking about class struggle and patriarchy and Sontag about the power of art and soul and wisdom. Helene feels that they should have met since they might have been able to learn from each other, possibly made the right combination. In the morning, both characters simply vanish and Helene is left where she started, without guidance or orientation.

Helene embodies a current state—she is not depicted as a victim, but as a teenager looking for guidance that the older generation cannot offer her. Helene is not placed in a specifically German context. Rather, her attempt to bring Meinhof and Sontag together aims to place Germany in a transnational frame of reference. Helene in the film does not pose questions about the future. In her post-punk appearance and attitude, she rather looks like a proponent of a “no future” attitude. Her attempt to connect to the past and, possibly derive a plan of action for herself based on these figures from the past, fails. As Sontag and Meinhof vanish, Helene mumbles “ich glaube nicht, dass ich mir aus irgendetwas etwas mache [...]. Aber es ist einfach eingesperrt in seinem Kinderzimmer zu leben” (I don’t think that I care about anything. But it is easy to live locked away in ones children’s room).

Helene shares some characteristics with Petzold’s fictional character Jeanne. However, rather than depicting this adolescent teenager as unable to envision a life for herself that is untainted by her parent’s past, Helene misses any kind of familial attachment. She is looking for a connection to her “mothers,”

to her (feminist) history, but fails to find it. The Helene Hegemann character embodies a *Schieflage* that comes from a disconnection to the past and to (feminist) politics.

Sylke Enders’ “Schieflage” (Askew Position) the film that gave this essay its title, follows a journalist, herself mother of two children, on her visit to a children’s soup kitchen. The journalist wants to do a report on the children and Rolf (presumably a social worker) who runs the facility, but the interview somehow falls short of her expectations. Rolf struggles to find words to describe what he is doing and cannot answer more probing questions about how he makes sure that the children who show up in fact need his help. He ends the conversation by insisting that everything is a lot more complicated than he just made it sound.

As the journalist is about to leave with her team, she cannot find her wallet and accuses one of the children, a boy named Jo who lives with his psychologically disturbed and possibly addicted mother, to have stolen it. The child runs away as Rolf and the journalist run after him only to find out later that the journalist had simply left the wallet in her car. This scene could be read as a reference to Andreas Dresen’s film *Nachtgestalten* (Night Figures), where a businessman accuses an African boy to have stolen his wallet only to find he had left it behind at the counter himself. Instead of the racial profiling that underlies the businessman’s perception, “Schieflage” shows a form of social profiling. The child, however, by running away as if he was a guilty thief, plays with or into the adult’s perception. The shaky camera pans over the faces of the children, often shows Jo, an approximately twelve year old boy with dyed, black hair, and Rolf, who looks tired and tense except when he is with the children. The film also offers a glimpse into the life of the journalist and her two children as they fight in the car and as

FIG. 10, 11, 12, 13.

they fail to express gratitude for an expensive birthday party their mother organized for them.

The children in this film address an often-marginalized issue in contemporary Germany: the gap between rich and poor in Germany. Beyond simply contrasting the realities of the children, the film also makes a comparison: while Jo is depicted as a silent, introverted, and sensitive child (fig. 10), the journalists' children are obnoxious and loud (fig. 11). The children, however, share a sense of sadness. Children in this short film embody the disconnection between the social realities of children growing up in Germany today. What connects these children, who seem to live worlds apart, to each other, however, is the sense that they themselves are—or at least feel—lost.

The short film “Eine demokratische Gesprächsrunde zu festgelegten Zeiten” (A Democratic Discussion Group at Set Times) might be one of the most interesting

contributions to *Deutschland 09*. In what could be read as a nod to Fassbinder's episode in *Germany in Autumn*, where the Fassbinder character discusses democracy with his mother, or other parts of the 1978 film that address the failure of West German democracy, a group of children come together to make decisions in a democratic way. This conversation is facilitated and structured, and, to a certain extent choreographed by their teacher, which indicates the second frame of reference here, the school film.¹² What might be most notable in the context is that similar to many school films, the teacher is a white female who teaches a class with a majority of children with migration backgrounds.

The goal of this roundtable conversation is to educate the children about democratic processes, to teach them how to argue, how to reach a compromise, and to decide what is fair. The idea is that every child can “entscheiden, stimmen, abstimmen” (decide, vote, elect). The first issue is settled quickly: the children find it unfair that their Turkish peers get to take

a day off for *Bayram* (a general term for a national or religious holiday), while the others have to attend school. The compromise is that the class will go on an excursion that day.

The second issue up for discussion is the suggestion that the class never play dodge ball again since it always seems to lead to fights; a long conversation with various suggested solutions follows. The class reaches what seems to be a fair consensus only with the very active participation of the teacher, who suggests that one of the boys, who most children accuse of being the instigator of the fighting, should get another chance. In this sense, what sets out as a democratic conversation, turns into adult intervention, mainly because the children seem to be inclined to agree on rather harsh sanctions for one of their peers. In addition to this interesting twist in the conversation and in what was supposed to be a democratic process, the camera work of the film is most noteworthy. The camera often lingers on the faces of the children and captures their very subtle facial expressions as the discussion takes place (figs. 12 and 13). The children's faces express both, an earnest attempt to resolve the issues at hand and boredom and frustration with going through the motions as the teacher dictates them.

Aside from a rather ironic depiction of the democratic process, the fact that many of the children in this democratic conversation, presumably, come from a Muslim background, adds another political dimension to the film. The film, possibly unintentionally so, asks the question of whether in a post-9/11 world, such a deliberate education to democracy should be a model or if teaching democracy is, as it appears at certain moments of the film, an illusion. The question of whether these children can or should be Germany's democratic future is implicit in this film. What becomes clear, however, is that regardless of their "education," these children change the face of Germany.

Dani Levy's "Joshua" is probably the most complicated film of the collection since it plays with film genres like the absurd comedy, references other films and filmmakers—most notably to Woody Allen, and chooses a humorous approach to a serious issue: the bleak mood that many Germans find themselves in, the fear that drives them, and the question of what kind of "therapy" might help to develop a more positive outlook on the future. In choosing a Jewish protagonist—similar to Fassbinder in *Germany in Autumn*, the filmmaker appears to play himself—and thematizing the awkwardness with which that non-Jewish Germans react to their Jewish *Mitbürger* (fellow citizens), other than the other films in this collection, this film does directly reference the German past. Levy places his screen self in a country haunted by its past; however, this awkward relationship to Jewishness and the issue of bleakness is very much framed as an issue of contemporary Germany, it is Germany's state in 2009. The psychologist Levy sees prescribes a pill, "ein deutsches Heilmittel," (a German remedy), that leads to what Levy perceives as hallucinations. Levy experiences a Germany where everyone is friendly and happy, but eventually, this Germany turns into an absurd nightmare: as Levy twirls his son around when he picks him up from school, the boy starts to float away (fig. 14). Levy complains to the psychologist, but he insists that Levy does not suffer from hallucinations but rather that he sees a "andere Wahrheit" (a different truth). The psychologist insists that the pills are not drugs, since you don't even need a prescription for them; Levy's mind is the drug.

On his search for his child, Levy ends up in trouble with the police, and, escaping the police van, he runs past a group of men, marked as Muslims, who plan a terrorist attack on Berlin's central train station as they sit around in the park. All the while, his son is floating high above the city, past most of Berlin's major landmarks.

FIG. 14, 15.

During one of his stops, the child lands on Angela Merkel's lap during a meeting. At the end of the film, as Levy storms into his psychologists' office, he interrupts a session with Angela Merkel. The psychologist tells Merkel that "Deutschland ist mehr als die Summe seiner Einzelteile. Deutschland ist eine Idee" (Germany is more than the sum of its parts. Germany is an idea), upon which Merkel asks, with a sad face, "was für eine Idee?" (what kind of an idea?) .

The floating child could be read as a metaphor for the future that escapes Levy's grasp, for a future that he cannot have or certainly not control, especially since at the end of the film, his son lands in the midst of a Neo Nazi gathering, in "the first National Socialist village in Germany," where he is crowned the new leader of the movement. As part of the meeting, the camera shows a group of children, most notably a young girl with blond braids, singing a macabre song about death (fig. 15). While Joshua remains innocently clueless

throughout his journey, this singing child depicts the uncanny, evil child in a combination between sweet innocence and uncontrolled violence and death. Obviously, this scene in the village references Germany's past and expresses the fear of a return of history in the future. However, more than a symbol for the future, the child floating away and the Jewish child crowned as a Nazi leader signifies the father's fear of and distrust in the Germany he finds himself living in and the Germany that his child is growing up in. Germany in Levy's film is in a *Schieflage* between the wish and hope for a more cheerful, friendly, country that allows for child-like dreams and happiness and a Germany full of somber, psychologically disturbed people haunted by their past and their presents. History in "Joshua" is not a point of orientation that determines the trajectory of a nation. History mingles with the present and becomes a tangled mess in Levy's hallucinations about the state of the nation.

The children in *Deutschland 09* give a face to what Russian-German writer and cultural commentator Wladimir Kaminer has suggested, namely that Germany in the twenty-first century is "eine wunderbare Illustration des menschlichen Scheiterns" (a wonderful illustration of human failure).¹³ Kaminer describes Germany as a country that is in a constant state of trying to improve and reinvent itself, but continuously fails at this very attempt. The children in *Deutschland 09* embody these attempts and their "wonderful" failures. Childhood in these films is not a symbolic state that connects the past with a longing for or promise of a better future; rather, the children embody the failures of normative understandings of (nationally coded) reproduction and progress. *Deutschland 09* addresses pressing questions like racism, poverty, neo-Nazism, political fear and paranoia in a 9/11 world, and the future of feminism. The children who

give faces to these issues, however, do not offer any answers. They stare at what they experience as a German present, as the state of things. This interpretation does not imply that *Deutschland 09* presents a pessimistic picture of “the state of the nation,” but it refrains from offering any suggestions for an optimistic outlook. Beyond that, taken together, the films question whether a national perspective makes sense to begin with, since national histories and contexts do not appear to offer any sense of orientation.

Eric Kligerman asserts that by “juxtaposing and blurring the borders between different traumatic images and distinct moments of history,” filmmakers like “Alexander Kluge, Rainer Fassbinder, Volker Schlöndorff, Margarethe von Trotta, and, most recently, Christian Petzold submit [...] unique histories to a series of problematic yet illuminating distortions” (13). While Kligerman mainly examines the films’ relationships to the Holocaust and the Nazi past, the above discussion about depictions of children begs the question of what role images of children might play in further illuminating such problematic distortions between traumatic pasts and presents. The image of the child on screen lends itself to depictions of *Schieflagen*, because, as stated above, while child characters project a sense of hope, something about the silent child, the traumatized child, or the confused child remains uncanny and uncontrollable. Children in *Deutschland im Herbst*, *Die Bleierne Zeit*, and *Die Innere Sicherheit* represent a nexus between past and future. At this nexus, the silent children embody a *Schieflage* between national melancholia, despair, and hope. These representations are problematic in that the children embody national progress; they become essentialized symbols of historical time and national progress. At the same time, similar to the terrorizing children in *Das weiße Band*, something about these traumatized children remains uncanny. It is

not clear if, because they are children, they can or will break with what the films construct as a German historical trajectory or if, for the very same reason, this historical trajectory will inevitably continue.

Deutschland 09 depicts children as disconnected from any kind of historical trajectory, which relieves them of this problematic burden of historical, national representation. Detached from clear family structures and from any sense of what national and historical progress might mean, the children in *Deutschland 09* give a face to an askew and unstable present. In that sense, the images of children in *Deutschland 09* offer a potential for a less normative and more diverse perspective on “Germany’s state.” Rather than employing the uncanny child as a tool to refer to a specifically German burden of history that problematically mingles past and present, the films use uncanny and in some cases playful elements of images of children and childhood to pose questions about poverty, racism, and social and political exclusion. In *Deutschland 09*, Germany’s *Schieflage* is not primarily or only caused by a specifically national problem, but by global imbalance.

Discussions about Germany’s relationship to its violent past, national identity, and nationalism are ongoing. While, for rather different reasons, some claim that it is time that Germany and Germans develop a “normal” nationalism and move away from claiming a special status based on its past, others warn against such normalizations since they might resurrect dangerous (German) nationalisms and/or allow for revisionist understandings of history. A selective discussion of depictions of children in terrorism film and their relation to debates about Germany’s past and national identity reveals subtleties and problematic aspects in visual and narrative negotiations of Germany’s history and national trajectory. My discussion of *Deutschland 09* further shows that attempts to create cinematic narratives of

Germany that do not follow a linear, historical trajectory do not necessarily create uncritical depictions of a Germany that has “overcome” its past and has developed a more positive attitude towards national identity. Rather, *Deutschland 09* shows that a visual survey of Germany’s “state” in 2009 can produce a complex set of images that embeds discussions about national identities, violence, and social injustice in a global context.

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Image Notes

Figure 1: Various Directors, *Deutschland im Herbst* (Germany in Autumn), 1978 Filmverlag der Autoren

Figure 2: Various Directors, *Deutschland im Herbst* (Germany in Autumn), 1978 Filmverlag der Autoren

Figure 3: Margarete von Trotta, *Die Bleierne Zeit* (Marianne and Juliane), 1981 Bioskop Film

Figure 4: Margarete von Trotta, *Die Bleierne Zeit* (Marianne and Juliane), 1981 Bioskop Film

Figure 5: Christian Petzold, *Die Innere Sicherheit* (The State I am In), 2000 Schramm Film

Figure 6: Christian Petzold, *Die Innere Sicherheit* (The State I am In), 2000 Schramm Film

Figure 7: Various Directors, *Deutschland 09: 13 Kurze Filme zur Lage der Nation*, (Germany 09: 13 Short Films about the State of the Nation), 2009 X-Filme

Figure 8: Various Directors, *Deutschland 09: 13 Kurze Filme zur Lage der Nation*, (Germany 09: 13 Short Films about the State of the Nation), 2009 X-Filme

Figure 9: Various Directors, *Deutschland 09: 13 Kurze Filme zur Lage der Nation*, (Germany 09: 13 Short Films about the State of the Nation), 2009 X-Filme

Figure 10: Various Directors, *Deutschland 09: 13 Kurze Filme zur Lage der Nation*, (Germany 09: 13 Short Films about the State of the Nation), 2009 X-Filme

Figure 11: Various Directors, *Deutschland 09: 13 Kurze Filme zur Lage der Nation*, (Germany 09: 13 Short Films about the State of the Nation), 2009 X-Filme

Figure 12: Various Directors, *Deutschland 09: 13 Kurze Filme zur Lage der Nation*, (Germany 09: 13 Short Films about the State of the Nation), 2009 X-Filme

Figure 13: Various Directors, *Deutschland 09: 13 Kurze Filme zur Lage der Nation*, (Germany 09: 13 Short Films about the State of the Nation), 2009 X-Filme

Figure 14: Various Directors, *Deutschland 09: 13 Kurze Filme zur Lage der Nation*, (Germany 09: 13 Short Films about the State of the Nation), 2009 X-Filme

Figure 15: Various Directors, *Deutschland 09: 13 Kurze Filme zur Lage der Nation*,

(Germany 09: 13 Short Films about the State of the Nation), 2009 X-Filme

(Endnotes)

1. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-2102372/Extremely-Loud-And-Incredibly-Close-film-review-Extremely-long-incredibly-crass.html>

2. See for example the New York Times Review by A.O. Scott “Wholesome Hamlet’s Horror Sends a Jolt to the System”: “Do the math: it’s 1914. In 20 or 30 years, what do you suppose these children will be up to?” http://movies.nytimes.com/2009/12/30/movies/30white.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

3. I would also suggest reading these kinds of representations of children in reference to the tradition of fairy tales, another form of often uncanny and violent children’s story. Further, of course, an analysis of horror films would be very fruitful in this context. In films of the New German Cinema, children often play crucial symbolic roles, see for example Wenders’ *Alice in den Städten* or his later film *Himmel über Berlin* that repeats Handke’s poem “als das Kind Kind war..”.

4. See Trnka, 2007. This film also offers an interesting depiction of children and motherhood; however, in the context of this argument, the mainly individualized perspective of this film does not add much to the discussion.

5. For more discussions on childhood and film/TV Lury refers to the Screen conference in 2004, see: <http://tech.dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/thedinosaurabyss/message/1779>

6. A very good contemporary example for such an uncanny child is the depiction of Carl, the child in the TV drama “The Walking Dead” (AMC, 2010- ongoing).

7. In order to make this point, Lury quotes Lee Edelman's *Queer Theory and the Death Drive*.

8. In reference to Thomas Elsaesser, *New German Cinema* 260.

9. A further reference to children can be found in Schlöndorff's *Die Stille nach dem Schuß* (*The Legend of Rita*, 2000). Towards the end of the film, Rita gets pregnant and this pregnancy seems to suggest that she might be able to finally enter a "normal" life. In this film, however, any such hopes are disappointed.

10. The song "Here's to you" by Joan Baez.

11. See, for example, Silberman, Linville, or Hofer.

12. See, for example the Hollywood film *Dangerous Minds*, the German TV production *Ghettokids*, or the French film *The Class*, discussed in Stehle *Ghetto Voices*, 90–91.

13. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2fPBaqo0804>.

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“*Inspired by real events*”

MEDIA (AND) MEMORY IN STEVEN SPIELBERG’S MUNICH (2005)

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Steven Spielberg’s 2005 film *Munich* (2005) tells the story of an Israeli counter-terrorist team in the aftermath of the hijacking and massacre at the Olympic Games in 1972. The film spawned broad discussion about its historical accuracy and its political standpoint. While criticism primarily focused on the historiographical representation of the actions depicted, this paper analyzes in two steps the genuinely filmic mode of historical representation of *Munich*. First, the analysis discusses the interplay of two conflicting narrative strategies that negotiate the character development with the political struggle. And second, analysis focuses on the two formal devices at the core of the narrative conflict: The reflexive framing of television in the depiction of the Munich massacre as a traumatic media event and the excessive transformation of its memory in a series of flashbacks. Such elaboration of the narrative and formal strategies reveals the implicit historiographical structures of the film and suggests that the notion of ‘cultural trauma’ serves as the preferential—but problematic—template in telling the history of terrorism and violence.

Le film de Steven Spielberg, *Munich* (2005), raconte l’histoire d’une cellule antiterroriste israélienne suite à la prise d’otages et du massacre qui marquèrent les Jeux Olympiques de 1972. Le film suscita de nombreux débats quant à son exactitude historique et son positionnement politique. À la différence des critiques qui se concentrèrent initialement sur la représentation historiographique des actions dépeintes, cet article analyse en deux étapes le mode filmique de la représentation historique de Munich. En premier lieu, il s’agit d’analyser l’interaction de deux stratégies narratives concurrentes qui confrontent le développement des personnages avec le combat politique. Ensuite l’analyse se concentre sur deux procédés formels au cœur de ce conflit narratif : la mise en scène réflexive de la télévision dans la représentation du massacre de Munich en tant que qu’événement médiatique traumatique, et la transformation excessive de son souvenir à travers une série de flashbacks. Une telle construction des stratégies narrative et formelle révèle les structures historiographiques implicites du film et suggère que la notion de « traumatisme culturel » nourrit la trame privilégiée – mais problématique – du récit de l’histoire du terrorisme et de la violence.

A Reel Event

With his film *Munich* (2005), Steven Spielberg showed twofold virtuosity: Not only did he show his skill in crafting powerful cinematic narratives but he made this movie into a public event, triggering an intense debate. Opening with the slogan “inspired by real events” (fig. 1), the film employs a rhetoric device commonly used to claim a story’s authentic reference to historical events.

Critical reception readily applied such reading and committed itself to a broad discussion about its historical accuracy and the political standpoint taken by Spielberg in evaluating the history of the Middle East conflict. Consequentially, the film about the Munich hijacking of and massacre of eleven members of the Israeli Olympic team by the Palestinian terrorist organization *Black September* in 1972 and the subsequent hunt for the organizers by an Israeli intelligence service team was questioned in respect of historiographical categories: Was there an obligation for historical truth, especially when portraying historical figures like Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir and using historic footage from the event’s television coverage (see Melman/Hartov)? Which historical actions and accounts have been selected and, in contrast, which ones have been omitted as source and elements of the film, especially when held against the moral interpretations derived from it (see Goldberg)?¹ Finally, the question arises, whether the mode of representation was adequate for making reasonable claims about the serious issues in contrast to the allegations of mere sensationalism and exploitation of sex and violence (see Wieseltier)?

While these questions were pondered from a vastly diverse range of standpoints, the reviews declared unanimous consent regarding the allegoric dimension of the film, seeing the September 11 attacks and the following ‘war on terror’ as the real ‘real events’ it

FIG. 1, 2.

was inspired by. The explicit rhetoric of Spielbergian cinema readily paves the way for such allegoric reading on virtually all filmic layers, eventually culminating in the final shot presenting the Manhattan skyline with the then newly built World Trade Center back in 1973 (fig. 2).

Munich starts with the terrorist action turning into a media event broadcasted live, continues with joint military and intelligence reprisals against the (possible) organizers and other ‘enemies of the state’ under the impression of this initial shock, and leading to an increasingly painful pondering over one’s own value system in the light of those reprisals: Avner Kaufman and his team easily lend themselves as silver screen for the projection of American power in the wake of 9/11 as they inexorably drift into a spiral of violence that forces them first and foremost to reconcile their notions of home and identity.

The director himself claimed it to be “a prayer for peace” (Spielberg, as qtd. in Schickel 236), solely meant to raise questions about

the conflict and refusing easy solutions for terrorism in general and the Middle Eastern conflict in particular. The film's nomination for the Academy Award shows the broad acceptance of Spielberg's projection of America post-9/11 into the realm of the Middle Eastern conflict,² mirrored in the account of critic Michelle Goldberg: "*Munich* is about the way vengeance and violence—even necessary, justified violence—corrupt both their victims and their perpetrators. It's about the struggle to maintain some bedrock morality while engaging in immorality" (Goldberg). Despite the considerably numerous indicators for the nuanced portrayal of the different sides, as well as the different acts of violence and/or terrorism (see Foy), such dialectics were quickly charged with allegations of moral relativism:

The Israeli response to Black September marked the birth of contemporary counterterrorism, and it is difficult not to see *Munich* as a parable of American policy since September 11. "Every civilization finds it necessary to negotiate compromises with its own values," Golda Meir grimly concludes early in the film. Yet the film proclaims that terrorists and counterterrorists are alike. "When we learn to act like them, we will defeat them!" declares one of Avner's men, played by Daniel Craig, already with a license to kill. Worse, *Munich* prefers a discussion of counterterrorism to a discussion of terrorism; or it thinks that they are the same discussion. This is an opinion that only people who are not responsible for the safety of other people can hold. (Wieseltier)

Apart from Leon Wieseltier's most obvious mistake, which was to take a random statement in a film as its overall message, his further critique echoes a principal rejection of Hollywood's popular culture for being inherently apolitical:

FIG. 3, 4.

No doubt *Munich* will be admired for its mechanical symmetries, which will be called complexity. But this is not complexity, it is strategy. I mean of the marketing kind: [...] *Munich* is desperate not to be charged with a point of view. It is animated by a sense of tragedy and a dream of peace, which all good people share, but which in Hollywood is regarded as a dissent, and also as a point of view. [...] For the only side that Steven Spielberg ever takes is the side of the movies. (Wieseltier)

Likewise does George Jonas' review "The Spielberg massacre" locate the assumed failure of *Munich* in its imperative of cinematic entertainment. Jonas, author of *Vengeance: The True Story of an Israeli Counter-Terrorist Team*, the book *Munich* is based on, claims and accuses: "My book was all about avenging evil. Then the King of Hollywood got hold of it" (Jonas "Spielberg"). He points at his own research and fully dismisses the character psychology developed in *Munich*, thus emphatically refuting the films disclaimer

“inspired by real events.” At the core of his argument, he criticizes the way Spielberg and his co-writer Tony Kushner “in their effort not to demonize humans, Spielberg and Kushner end up humanizing demons” (Jonas “Spielberg”).

For Jonas, the epitome of Spielberg’s mistreatment of his subject matter is to be found in a crucial flashback, showing a sex scene of main protagonist Avner Kauffman intercut with the Munich massacre (figs. 3 and 4). This particular scene was not only labeled equally vulgar and sensationalist in other reviews, it also hints at the substantial differences between *Munich* and an earlier filmic adaptation of the book, the 1986 TV-production *Sword of Gideon* by Michael Anderson: It refrains entirely from using flashbacks as a narrative device to construct its plot and in doing so, it also employs a differing psychological conflict structure for the main protagonist.

Against this background, the flashback scenes in *Munich* are significant examples for the problem encountered, when trying to relate a narrative and fictional media product to its foregoing reality or its foregoing narratives claiming a closer relation to this reality: The arbitrariness of a particular narrative and narrative in general. Kristin Thompson assesses this problem in the framework of neoformalist film theory:

This total absorption in narrative has some unpleasant consequences for the act of viewing. The viewer may be capable of understanding the narrative, but has no context in which to place that understanding: the underlying arbitrariness of the narrative is hidden by structures of motivation and naturalization. A narrative is a chain of causes and effects, but, unlike the real world, the narrative world requires one initial cause which itself has no cause. The choice of this initial cause is one source of the arbitrariness

of narrative. Also, once the hermeneutic and proairetic codes are opened in a narrative, there is nothing which logically determines how long the narrative will continue; more and more delays could prolong the chain of cause and effect indefinitely. This the initiation, progression, and closure of fictional narratives is largely arbitrary. Narratives are not logical in themselves; they only make use of logic. (497)

In consequence, we might be able to refrain for a moment from looking through the lens of ‘naturalizing’ representation and from projecting the *Munich* onto the real event, but rather focus on the ‘reel event’—which means to follow its inner mechanics in the terms of the filmic narration in the framework of its formal and aesthetic devices. Far from being a self-sufficient academic exercise this leads the way towards a sustaining explanation, how the medium film accomplishes the allegorical transfer and historical connection between two, after all, different historical events. And it shows that being on “the side of the movies” not necessarily implies being apolitical, as Wieseltier suggests. Quite on the contrary, I want to argue, that the political dimension of *Munich* lies in its filmic conception, rather than in its mere depiction of the ‘real’ world. After all, this is because the interpretative schemes allowing for a historically based representation are as much engrained in the basic narrative and filmic structures of the medium.

Conflicting Narratives: The Archaic and the Modern

Starting on such premise, one must not only ask which story is told in *Munich*, but also what kind of story and how it is told. In his review for *Variety* Todd McCarthy discovers a generic conflict, assessing that “the director’s long-gestating meditative thriller [...] takes its own sweet time making obvious points about the Jewish nation compromising its

own values, and in the process forgets to be a pulse-quickenning suspenser.” And while elsewhere it is explicitly hailed that “*Munich* defies easy labeling” by showing “moral and ethical elements, layered atop a story that is ripe with suspense” (Berardinelli), McCarthy only sees a “lumpy and overlong morality play on a failed thriller template” (McCarthy). While generic categories are helpful in attuning production decisions to audience expectation, they often are concepts too broad to provide an analytical close reading of one particular film. For instance, calling *Munich* a thriller certainly leads to the quick confirmation that it indeed shows its central elements, ‘suspense’ and ‘surprise’ being the predominant ones in the film’s communication with the spectator (see Bordwell/Thompson 113). Sticking to the generic scheme then might lead to problems in accounting for the hybridity of the film, as in our case for instance the aforementioned “moral and ethical elements” (Berardinelli), which seem to extend beyond the thriller genre, no matter if they are judged a valuable surplus or rather a unnecessary nuisance slowing down the action.

For example, regarding the development of main protagonist Avner Kauffman’s moral conscience, we encounter several scenes showing Avner pondering over his decisions, usually depicted by symbolizing the double-mindedness by showing his face half-lit, half-shady.

This can serve the generic suspense, for instance when placed in the course of an attack mission (fig. 5)—but especially after the film successively progresses to his state of disillusion, the weighing of the double-mindedness stops serving this function (fig. 6).

To surpass the limitations of the genre concept and reach an integrated analytical account, the first part of the analysis employs a basic model of narration drawn from Rick Altman’s *A Theory of Narrative* (2008). Moving away

FIG. 5, 6.

from the (neo-)formalist conceptions of narration, primarily focused on the interplay between plot and story, for Altman “[t]he existence of narrative depends on the simultaneous and coordinated presence of action and character” (15). Narrational activity then is organized by “following” the characters in their actions, thus being the very act of creating meaning through the creation of a relational order between the single elements of action by succession.

As his central analytical unit, Altman uses the concept of the “following-unit,” being “a series of segments each made up of that portion of the text where a character (or group of characters) is followed continuously” (22). Stringing together following-units happens by the act of “modulation”, sub-divided in the categories metonymic, metaphoric, and hyperbolic: While the metonymic modulation between following units implies a spatial connection between sequences (24), the metaphoric modulation rather operates by similarity or even analogy of concepts (25). The category of the hyperbolic

in contrast eschews the plausible connection and foregrounds the very lack of explicit connection (25–26).³ A narrative then can be described as the pattern that emerges from the modulation of the following units: a more or less distinctive “following pattern” allowing the spectator to understand and thereby map out the fictional filmic world (291–97). Based on this model, Altman subsequently develops three broad categories of narrative systems that describe the constitutive modes of narration in ‘Western’ culture (338–40) along with what might be called their division of focus, its fundamental categories being *single focus*, *dual focus*, and *multiple focus*.

Applied to *Munich*, the model reveals a scheme following the main protagonist Avner Kauffman for the most part of the film: After the initial sequence unfolding the Munich hijacking and its immediate consequences, the subsequent plot organizes its story along two conceptual strands: One follows the retaliation operations for the Munich hijacking alongside the political lines of the wider Middle East conflict; the other follows the development of Avner’s family, beginning with his wife’s pregnancy and the subsequent birth of his daughter, ending in New York eventually. The following-units modulate according to the spatial logic of the events, starting from the mission onset for Avner in Israel to Switzerland for the formation of a five men operations unit, and afterwards to the various locations to prepare and execute the killing of their assassination targets defined by their supposed association with *Black September*. Action is alternating between Avner (in operation) with his team, Avner meeting intelligence informants, and Avner meeting his family—his mother on the one side and his wife and daughter on the other. After several successful killing operations failure sets in, resulting in the death of three of Avner’s comrades, eventually ending the mission for Avner who moves to his family, meanwhile living in New York.

In this structure, we can almost fully recognize the central characteristics assigned to single focus narratives by Altman: The following pattern clearly “concentrates on a single individual” leading to “[a] text generated by a protagonist’s desire, often expressed through a departure into previously unexplored territory, behavior, or thought” (189). This template surfaces in Avner’s exploration of the counter-terrorist operations, previously unknown to him—as well as in his new role as a father. Evenly explicit are the “[s]econdary characters who serve as models for the protagonist, often taking the form of father figure, tempter, mediator, or teacher” (189). These can be found scattered across the ranks of his team, tending to represent different standpoints in the conflict, especially when evaluating the consequences of their violent operations (fig. 7).

Among the most dominant ones is the father figure of the French informant “Papa,” who serves him with elderly advice in the absence of his real father. This is a significant variation to *Sword of Gideon*, where the personal conflict of Avner is mostly negotiated in conversation with his real father and the figure of the French informant does not exist at all.

Thus Avner oscillates between the role of the actor and the role of the observer: While we watch him negotiating his values, he himself watches how others negotiate “[v]alues that depend on private and personal questions (motivation, intention, thought), always subject to interpretation” (Altman 189). For instance, he is confronted with different concepts of “home:” One the one hand it is defined as his nation exemplified by Israeli prime minister Golda Meir, his own mother, and the intelligence leaders; on the other hand the term becomes increasingly coupled to his own family, deriving its notion from a rather private and apolitical framework (see also Klein 110–12).

FIG. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

Likewise, fitting the generalized shape of the single focus narrative, Avner's progress is continuously measured by "moral mirrors, repeated scenes, reiterated locations, or developmental metaphors" that organize the repeated alternation between the "presentation of an event and evaluation of an event" (Altman 189). For example, the killing operations of the Israeli team are always discussed and evaluated afterwards, usually in the framework of a shared meal. Thereby the meal motif is excessively played out while the doubts about their moral integrity are increasingly painful. In sum, *Munich* presents a classic single focus narrative, in which the value system of Avner Kauffman is explored: Starting in a rather stable framework of loyalty to his country he develops ethical doubts that lead him to a readjustment of his categories, eventually giving priority to his family as he cannot find a compromise with his political loyalty.

This consistent scheme would hold for the general interpretation of the film, if there weren't four rather 'cumbersome' following units, which, at least formally, do not fit the general pattern of the single focus narrative. These deviations from the single focus are of particular interest since they form the parts where the title event, the Munich hijacking, is brought into the movie beyond the explicit reference through character speech. And furthermore, except for the sketch of the media event, they do not occur in *Sword of Gideon*, thus particularly marking the narrative style chosen by Steven Spielberg in contrast to other adaptations of the story. The first one is at the beginning of the film: Immediately following the title "inspired by real events" the hijacking operation of Black September is entered at the fence of the Olympic village (fig. 8).

The characters followed are the hijackers entering the house of the Israeli team in a

strictly spatial fashion, until the beginning of the assault (fig. 9). Then the following extends into a sequence one could term the “global media event”: In rapid chronological succession we see about⁴ 16 distinctive sequences that alternate between the different locations and the different actors of the event. A multiplicity of actors, whose specific identity is not further clarified beyond their narrative functions, is shown, ranging from TV audiences in Israel and Palestine to the TV teams in Munich with their control rooms and reporters on location (fig. 10); and ranging from the Israelis officials in front of their TVs to the hijackers, victims and police forces in the Olympic Village watching TV themselves (fig. 11). This metonymic modulation is organized via the television screen as its interface, thereby extending the local space of the event into the wider space of TV exposure—eventually leading to the point when Avner Kauffman is involved watching television like everybody else (fig. 12). Remarkably, his appearance is not before the end of the ‘event proper’, but only during the memorial service for the eleven Israeli victims. On the one hand, this is already the onset of the single focus narrative following Avner Kauffman exclusively, but on the other hand there is still a metaphoric modulation to the control room of the Israeli intelligence service, where retaliation is prepared by showing the pictures and calling the names of the Palestinian organizers—notably in a striking analogy to the memorial service also based on the principle of showing and naming (fig. 13 and fig. 14).

The second, third, and fourth deviation from the single focus narrative clearly have an ambivalent status. Formally framed as (day) dreams of Avner, they seem to be sequels to the beginning of the hijacking, thus filling an ellipsis of action created by the portrayal of the event as media event sketched out above. Seen from such perspective, they also resemble a flashback. While the formal problem of the

FIG. 13, 14.

‘false’ flashback will be discussed in the next chapter, for the moment, we will focus on their narrative status in terms of following and mapping: The entry into the sequences is marked by the gaze of Avner signaling a metonymic modulation shifting from external reality to the interiority of his experience. Yet, if seen in relation to their occurrence within the plot, the flashbacks could be read equally as metaphorical modulations, mirroring the development of Avner.

The first flashback takes place when Avner embarks on his mission flying from Israel to Switzerland. It begins with pictures of the Palestinian hijackers entering the flat of the Israeli team already known from the beginning of the movie. This time the scene expands, not into the media event this time, but into the breaking of Israeli resistance, the taking of hostages, and the killing of two Israeli men. The final scene ends with the second killing, shown in a panning shot that moves with the machine gun salvo from the shell-pierced body to the wall behind getting splattered red with blood (fig. 15).

From this outright image of massacre the flashback fades back into the present of Avner, who still is in the airplane. Apparently under

FIG. 15, 16, 17.

the impression of such ‘shell shock’⁵ he takes of his wedding ring and ultimately the mission begins (fig. 16).

The second flashback finds Avner in an entirely different situation. Meanwhile, the mission of his team progressed with the liquidation of several targets, yet reaching the point of stagnation and backlash. Their attempt to kill their most valuable target, Ali Hassan Salameh, failed and Avner calls his wife in New York from his hotel room in London. Hearing his daughter ‘speak’⁶ he covers his eyes. The flashback enters the Munich hijacking with a hard cut at the very moment when hijackers and hostages in the Olympic village transfer from the flat to the helicopters for further transit to the Fürstenfeldbruck airbase.⁷ By following characters and actions no new information is revealed for the spectator, or put differently: Basically, the narrative progress gets delayed. We simply follow the group entering a bus, see

the busses pass the reporters caught up in live coverage, exiting the bus and again entering, this time two helicopters. At first sight the action seems quite irrelevant, yet there is one particularly significant moment in the scene: While the hijackers are clearly marked as aggressors by their guns throughout the sequence, this impression is disturbed in the end. When entering the helicopter, a hostage stumbles, burying the now helpless hijacker under himself. Although the situation is quickly resolved and order is restored again, we are shown pictures of the aggressor rendered into a helpless terrified victim, virtually indistinctive from a hostage (fig. 17).

Exiting the flashback by a hard cut, we see Avner suddenly awake from this nightmarish impression. Minutes afterwards he has to realize that the first of his team members was killed by a hostile agent. And furthermore he comes to realize that he as likely could have been the victim himself. The relation between perpetrators and victims is shaken, both in the Avner’s present and the remembered past.

The third flashback is the most complex one and marks Avner’s final stage of development. After the mission has terminated without the accomplishment of all objectives, Avner resides in New York with his family, haunted by an almost paranoid fear for the safety of his family. The penultimate scene plays in the marital bed. In this structural counterpart of an earlier sex scene before the beginning of the mission Avner is distracted as his wife starts touching him. His gaze is constantly directed towards the off and never meets the eyeline of his wife until the flashback sets in when hijackers and hostages are at Fürstenfeldbruck airport. The latter ones are constrained by ropes and remain in the helicopters, while two of the hijackers inspect the provided escape plane. When realizing the attempt of trickery by the German police force an extended gunfight sets in, eventually leading to the killing of five of the eight hijackers and

all nine hostages. While the other hijacker sequences are closed off as following units, this last one is open to its narrative frame being intercut with the ongoing sex scene of Avner. The following pattern of the third flashback thus shows a constant modulation stressing the metaphorical relation between the acts of violence in (the past of) Fürstfeldbruck and the (present) sexual act in New York, finally culminating in an excessive alternation of the explosion of one helicopter, Avner's orgasm, and a machine gun salvo killing the Jewish hostages in the second helicopter (figs. 3 and 4). The flashback ends with a hard cut and Avner rests his head on his wife's shoulder, the scene closing with a close-up of the hands intertwined, both of their wedding rings clearly visible. As Susanne Klein suggests, this seems to be a cathartic experience for Avner, allowing him peace in his family home—and enabling him to refuse further services for Israel as he does in the final scene in front of the Manhattan skyline (see also Klein 119) (fig. 2).

It should be noted that these sequences I have labeled as 'deviations' from the single focus narrative are integrated into the single focus framework insofar as they are Avner's mental images—a reading decisively suggested by the appropriated blending techniques. In contrast, or rather at the same time, they point at the narrative scheme of the dual focus narrative. According to Altman “[f]or a text to work in a dual-focus manner, it must establish a space (or series of spaces) and introduce two separate groups laying claim to that space” (91). Its following pattern is alternating between the oppositional groups preferably by “regular movements between the two sides by means of metaphoric modulation” (90). And the ensuing confrontation is framed by established value systems like law or tradition while the dual focus narrative tends towards “[n]egation of time through suspension, circularity, and spatialization” (90).

Although the alternation between the groups in *Munich* is rather asymmetrical by default since almost every scene involves Avner or his conscience, the motif of the claimed space permeates the film on several layers. Starting with the very core of the conflict, Palestine and Israel are described as opponents for the same land throughout the film, both with a similar rhetoric defining the land as “home.” However, the actual confrontation hardly takes place in Israel or Gaza, but virtually everywhere in the global space.⁸ As the film follows the retaliation operations it is moving predominantly across Europe, but also to the Middle East and to the United States. At the same time, several TV broadcasts that are depicted as variations of the initial media event at the Olympics signify that the global confrontation is not only physical, but also situated on the symbolic plain (fig. 18).

Thereby the opponents are bound together metaphorically in the vicious circle of violence, both potentially being perpetrators and victims—occasionally even at the same time (fig. 19).

In the logic of retaliation, time strives towards suspension and circularity—for that each victory triggers another defeat, and for that every killed terrorist quickly spawns a successor. A perspective vividly recalled by Ephraim in the final scene, when he compares the war on terror with the cutting of his unceasingly growing fingernails—while the New York Skyline forms the background. Last, and probably not least, the space under contestation is the space of memory. Given the prominence of the (false) flashback scenes that forcefully enter Avner's thoughts, the perception of the enemy—however fragile in its mediated and remembered instances—is repeatedly evoked as a guiding principle for present actions. Avner is only able to escape this conflict about his memory (and thus his identity) by shifting the symbolic grounds from

FIG. 18, 19.

the political to the private sphere. This being played out in the symbolic form of the sexual act is hardly accidental, since the sexual act is considered as common cultural symbol for the act of taking possession of land, especially in the framework of the double focus narrative (see Altman 78–84).

To make sense of the presence and confrontation of the two different narrative strategies, we might look at their roots in cultural history. According to Altman the double focus mode can be considered the older, more archaic model, also showing strong ties to Jewish history:

For Jews, the Hebrew Bible or Tanakh remains central to every aspect of religious life. The dual-focus tales of Exodus, Judges, Esther, and Maccabees all provide important models for a religion that depends heavily on a distinction between those who are within and those who are without. Just as these books tell stories of the separation of the world into Israelites and their foes, so Jewish life is heavily dependent on rituals that celebrate inclusion while threatening exile for the unfaithful—the ultimate

punishment in a dual-focus system. Books of history, books of law, books of wisdom and prophecy—the Hebrew Bible contains a resolutely dual-focus model for daily life. (Altman 334)

In contrast, the single focus narrative is rather associated with modern market economies and the notion of individual development. Its logic does not derive from circular repetition of stable values, but rather from linear development on the basis of personal decisions that allows for the negotiation of values (334). From this perspective, the story told in *Munich* is a kind of nesting of the older narrative formula (the double focus) within the newer one (the single focus)—or put differently: An archaic formula within a modern formula. Spielberg's "prayer for peace" (Spielberg, as qtd. in Schickel 236) makes its rejection of the spiral violence—biblically speaking: an eye for an eye—plausible by nesting it into the rather modern template of psychological development. However, while the archaic dissolves, it does not disappear fully: The distant but gloomy World Trade Center hints at the both potential and actual return of the repressed archaic formula (fig. 2). Regardless of speculations about Spielberg's Jewish origin this nesting of narrative formulas can be considered to hint at the basic concept of history put forward by *Munich*: Despite modern man's conscience rooted in the ability to reflect upon himself and the morality of his deeds, he is unable to learn from history since the patterns of violent conflict are determined and recurring in nature. This interpretation is further substantiated by a closer look at the formal and aesthetic devices used to construct the narrative.

Cinematic Excess and Media Memory

As the analysis of the narrative strategies suggests, *Munich* is relying on the principles of confrontation. Confrontation is shaped on the level of character interaction, but also

in regards to its temporal structure, thereby producing the paradox of the ‘false’ flashback as Stephen Howe notes: “And if, as one supposes, the Munich scenes are supposed to be running through Avner’s head, we’re offered no reason why he should be so haunted. He wasn’t there. Those scenes weren’t even on TV. Why not any of the equally vicious incidents he’s witnessed, or perpetrated, himself?” Being a dreamlike vision on the one hand, but a kind of memory on the other, the scene is a reference to the instability of memory expressed by formal and stylistic means. Since the flashbacks are not entirely plausible in their relation to the past, they deliberately seem to surpass narrative consistency as already noted while observing the ambivalent relation between single focus and dual focus narrative.

Given this limitation of a merely narratological explanation the category of “style” has to be integrated into our analysis.⁹ Leaving a deeper methodological discussion aside I am going to refer to style in the sense of neoformalist film theory, most prominently associated with David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson. Generally speaking, style results from the repeated use of certain filmic techniques, which usually tend to be camouflaged through narrative motivation—at least in classical Hollywood cinema (Thompson 488). The foregrounding of filmic techniques (or devices) then could be termed “excess,” as Kristin Thompson suggests:

Style is the use of repeated techniques which become characteristic of the work; these techniques are foregrounded so that the spectator will notice them and create connections between their individual uses. Excess does not equal style, but the two are closely linked because they both involve the material aspects of the film. Excess forms no specific patterns which we could say are characteristic of the work. But the formal

organization provided by style does not exhaust the material of the filmic techniques, and a spectator’s attention to style might well lead to a noticing of excess as well. (489)

In *Munich*, two particular devices reveal the tension between style and excess as they linger on the thin line between the unifying and the disunifying structures of the film,¹⁰ and both are associated with the narrative conflict. The first device is the series of (false) flashbacks presenting the Munich massacre as a template for Avner’s personal development. Since its recap to the past cannot be explained by Avner’s perspective alone, it is intrinsically linked to the second device, which could be termed ‘media reflection,’ referring to the strategic use of the television medium in the filmic representation.

Since *Munich*’s initial encounter with the massacre as a media event is highlighting the role of television as an actor within the event, the analysis starts with an examination of the film’s strategy of ‘media reflection’ before turning back to the flashback. In his Essay “Zwischen Selbstreflexivität und Selbstreferentialität” (Between self-reflexivity and self-referentiality) German film theorist Kay Kirchmann suggests the concept of self-reflexivity for the self-portrayal of the medium film within films: To show itself, film has to account for its own status (68). However, this status is not clearly defined, because like any other medium film can be defined by very different constituents. Always according to the actual definition employed it might be seen either as aesthetic product, mass medium, communication device, perceptual matrix, sign system, commodity, or instrument of propaganda. Thus, if “a self-reflexive film addresses one or more of its constituents” (68), it has different options to reflect about itself as a medium. Drawing on this concept of filmic self-reflexivity, I suggest its adaptation

to the filmic portrayal of other media, for instance the filmic reflection of television as seen in *Munich*. This ‘media reflection’ is predominantly shaped in the montage of the television event at the beginning, but also on three other occasions throughout the film: The continuous motif being its coupling to coverage about terrorist action.

The initial event scene, which by far is the most complex and elaborated reflection, functions as a template for the later ones, which basically operate on evoking the cues presented earlier. As argued above—in the analysis of film’s beginning—the montage draws together all actors in the scheme of the terrorist event. Perpetrators, victims, police forces, political actors, and audiences are rendered equal as spectators and observers—not only of the event in Munich, but also of the way television constructs the event (fig. 10). Repeatedly and in quick successions shot and reverse shot combinations mark the relation between the spectators and the television screen (fig. 20 and fig. 21), establishing the status of the mass medium: All individual spectators see the same pictures of the event, thus becoming a unified mass audience despite their geographical separation.

The staging of a (global) mass audience also indicates the permeation of society by television: The television screen becomes the center of public attention (fig. 22) as well as the center of the private homes; Israeli and Palestinian communities alike gather around the screen to follow the event (fig. 23), and even the (Israeli) politicians and the military join in (fig. 20), not having a privileged perception in comparison to the ‘normal’ people.

A constant emphasis is placed on the emotional impact of the television broadcast, defining the medium over its affective impact: From the cheering Palestinians¹¹ at the beginning of the event, over the crying and mourning relatives

FIG. 20, 21, 22, 23, 24.

(fig. 24) of both the hostages and the hijackers in the turmoil of events, onto Avner Kauffman, shown as a devout spectator-participant of the memorial ceremony (fig. 12).

Munich goes even further, suggesting that the ‘window on the world’ allows—and maybe

even forces—communities not only to observe real events, but to participate emotionally. In its shockingly real character, the violent event gains a quite hypnotic quality, clearly signified by the recurrent close-ups of the spectators with their eyes fixated on the television screen. In this sense, the spectators shown in *Munich* are rather helpless victims of the violent intrusion of the medium into their homes: Their perception is firmly defined by the confinements of the television screen which inevitably tends to overwhelm. While this procedure is also repeated for the spectator of the film *Munich*, he is granted the privilege to step back and reflect on occasion. Central to this is the exposition of the production infrastructure of television, showing the studio, the cameras, and the reporters involved in the performance of the media event (fig. 25).

However, the pictures the film spectator dives into when the film cuts into the broadcast do not have the same fictional status as the rest of the film, but are historical file footage from the media event itself. Thus the reality effect of the event is reproduced in the film as a movement from the distanced spectator, who sees television as another nested frame within the film frame, to the involved and participating spectator when the camera moves into the screens, dissolving their boundaries and making the historical pictures fill the whole screen (fig. 26).

In sum, television is portrayed as an actor within the framework of the terrorist event—and moreover even portrayed as the framework itself. In the course of the film, this principle is evoked three more times, always forcing the attention of Avner and his teammates towards the screen. At these occasions they learn about the actions of their supposed opponents and feel the compulsion to react on it. In the first instance, they observe a successful airplane hijacking, grimly declaring the Palestinian hijackers “movie stars.” In the second instance, it is a bomb attack in succession of their second

FIG. 25, 26, 27, 28.

killing mission, leading them to the conclusion: “They are talking to us. We’re in dialogue now.” The third and last instance of television reflection takes place when Avner is meeting with Louis, the French informant, showing another bomb attack—while the television is mainly presented in the background (fig. 27) it abruptly gains importance when we see the screen violence in close-up (fig. 28).

Notably the editing echoes the shock-like intrusion of the media event in the first instance. Notably, the presence of television gets weaker in the course of the film—they only

take place before Avner's second flashback, thus being only intertwined with his actions in the phase of the successful operations, but not in the phase of their gradually failing mission.

The structure of the other device, the flashbacks, seems to be of a different kind, though clearly related to the 'media reflection.' As indicated above, their status is ambivalent in relation to the historical reality of the diegesis: Firstly, the initial sequence—following the title "inspired by real events"—is depicted in the aesthetics of the later flashbacks, thus suggesting that we enter the diegetic reality of the film. Only later on, after experiencing the flashbacks in Avner's imagination, the status of this reality can be questioned. In this sense, the spectator is thrown into twofold uncertainty, as they are not only forced to negotiate the 'real' against the perception of the media event, but also against the mixture of memory and imagination in Avner's flashback. Furthermore, the filmic device of the flashback itself adds to the uncertainty. According to Maureen Cheryn Turim's seminal work *Flashbacks in Film*, the flashback is "a privileged moment in unfolding that juxtaposes different moments of temporal reference" (1), thereby creating an intrinsic link between subjective memory and objective history: "[...] flashbacks in film often merge the two modes of remembering the past, giving large-scale social and political history the subjective mode of a single, fictional individual's remembered experience" (2). Likewise in Avner's case the frame of remembering is clearly linked to the individual, tainted with the possibility of failure and distortion—yet its factual content not negotiable since we learnt about the death of the hostages (and hijackers alike) through television. In this sense the spectator again is made aware of the unreliability of the representation, as they experience different modes of historical representation, which all have their inherent deficiencies in claiming the truth. Regarding the initial sequence the

spectator is even turned into a test subject as they are first made to believe the sequence being the event as history, only to learn later on that its reliability might be flawed.

But the implications of using the flashback in framing Avner's memory could extend well beyond the question of historical objectivity when projected on the shape of history in general:

Many flashback narrations contain an element of philosophical fatalism, coupled with psychoanalytic fatalism [...]. This fatalism presents a cynical view of history cyclical, guaranteed to repeat that which we have already seen; the release from the repetitions inherent in history is then forged in a singular solution that serves a prevailing ideology, such as patriotic identifications or a retreat into the 'personal' as a microcosmic, idealized world. (18)

The template of *Munich* seems to shine through Turim's lines when considering the flashback structure: The first flashback initiates Avner's mission by repeating the beginning assault in the Olympic village. Interestingly, the first severe injury explicitly exposed for the camera is a gunshot through both cheeks, leaving a blood-leaking wound in the face of the athlete (fig. 29), followed by a zoom to close-up and a deadlock of eyelines between shooter and victim, the victim covering the wound with his hand (fig. 30).

Then the musical score is increasingly dominating the diegetic noise of the sequence, even silencing the final machinegun salvo, while the deadly actions are stretched significantly through the use of slow motion. Time is virtually suspended when the blood stained wall is fading into the red morning sky (fig. 15) and the interlude ends with Avner taking off his wedding ring (fig. 16). In relation to the first scene of the film, the

flashback fills an ellipsis: While violence was mostly spared during television coverage of the event, Avner's vision portrays it in very explicit and highly dramatic form. A striking allegory for the return of something repressed; and put differently: the result of a trauma, the Greek word with the meaning of "wound" or "injury" (see Eggers 602). Hardly surprising, its definition in terms of psychoanalysis and cultural trauma theory reads like the character profile of Avner Kauffman, according to Wulf Kantsteiner:

[...] the trauma victim exists in a state of temporal limbo caught between a destructive event that did not register at the moment of its occurrence, and the belated symptoms that unconsciously and obsessively repeat the injury to the person's protective shield without adding to the victim's understanding of her own fate. (203)

According to Eggers the repetition of the injury can surface in the various forms, most commonly however as flashbacks, hallucinations, and compulsive actions (see Eggers 602). Furthermore, traumatic memories return unintentionally and elude their verbal recounting. In *Munich*, the impossibility of recounting spreads from the first flashback onwards: While the image of the face wound symbolizes the inability of speaking (figs. 29 and 30), the whole scene virtually lacks the layer of verbal communication and is generally of little information density for the progress of the narration. The slow motion might be justified by its dream framing, but also lacks an overarching narrative motivation, thus rather foregrounding itself as a form of cinematic excess. Such correspondence of form and content is perpetuated throughout the following flashbacks, both seeing similar appropriations of slow motion, musical score, and the lack of communication, thus shaping a perception of the event that differs considerably from the precedent television coverage. As analyzed in the previous chapter

FIG. 29, 30.

they keep paralleling Avner's development, as his fellow agents, like the Munich hijackers, increasingly become victimized themselves, although they keep on perpetrating violence themselves.

In the third flashback, the montage of gunfight, explosion, and intercourse, radicalizes the self-sufficient elements, above all the muzzle flashes of the machineguns (fig. 3), which represent not only a mise-en-abyme of the concept of flashback itself, but then figure even as an imprint on Avner's orgasmic body (fig. 31).

Thereby not only the time layers of past and present are vigorously intertwined, but cinematic excess also leaves Avner's imagination and reveals its impact on his reality. Eventually, the third flashback is indeed framed as a "release [...] forged in a singular solution that serves a prevailing ideology, such as patriotic identifications or a retreat into the 'personal' as a microcosmic, idealized world" (Turim 18): Hands intertwined with his wife, we see two wedding rings in close-up, one of them being of course the one taken off in close-up when Avner started on his mission (fig. 32). The microscopic, idealized world, after all, is the family.

FIG. 31, 32.

Reel Memories?

The endeavor of this article was to highlight the narrative structure and the formal shape of *Munich*, looking for its strategies of creating meaning beyond the extent of naturalized representation und character motivation. By analyzing two particular techniques, which frame the center of the film's narrative dynamic and which manifest decisive choices of the director in contrast to its precursors on the subject matter, the importance of such strategies could be shown. In this light, the story of the Israeli counter-terrorist team on its retaliation mission after the Munich massacre is not so much about the specific political scenario of the Middle Eastern conflict, but rather about the mechanism of mediated terrorism and its traumatic effects.

Of course no one questioned that the film was meant to be an allegory for 9/11 and its aftermath as much as it was meant to be a historical drama. But while character psychology primarily draws on the concept of identity in relation to culturally defined notions of community (here mostly equating Israel with the USA and Black September with Al Qaida), the analysis presented rather

points at the question of mediation: The film avoids to explicate the initial violence of the film, thus blurring the categories of perception from the very beginning. Subsequently, the event exists for Avner (and the spectator alike) only as television images and in his imagination. Although *Munich* does definitely not deny the reality of violence, there is sort of a reality gap when trying to grasp the actual event behind the cold surface of the television screen. Though television is able to show glimpses of the victims and the hijackers in the course of the event, it eventually does not show them until they are dead and rendered stars of the next media events: The memorial service on the one hand and the man hunt on the other. In this sense, television is presented unable to reflect about the events, and more so, even unable to recap on them as every following instance of television is determined to reproduce the spiral of violence.

In contrast, the stage for the reflection of violence is set clearly in the flashbacks, although the reflection is not accomplished by conscious evaluation but rather literal reflections of the violence most concisely depicted in the flashes of gunfire and the overtly iconic bloodshed. Within the interpretative frame of trauma theory this concurs with the idea of 'working through' the trauma to establish a sense of meaning (and identity) again after a shattering experience (see e.g. Kantsteiner 215). Historically notable, even the psychological concept of "flashback" only came into existence after the proliferation of the filmic technique (see Turim 5). In this sense, the film portrays television as a medium without the capability of memory or reflection, and contrasts it with a genuinely filmic mode of memory that serves to "work through" the trauma. Although Avner cannot overcome the problem of false memory he reaches his personal solution—and in doing so he reproduces the film's bigger scheme: His fiction, inspired by something real and traumatic, seems to help him escape the spiral of violence. Spielberg's film thus is

maybe not so much a “prayer for peace”, but better described as a—very graphic—therapy session.

If the therapy was successful for Avner, why isn't he granted an unambiguous happy end? The political answer was given by Ephraim in the last scene, when he describes the ongoing growing of his fingernails: (Arab) terrorism is going to continue from Munich to New York and possibly onwards. However, the answer of trauma theory is different: Because the repressed is about to return, maybe unintentionally, but most certainly with violent force. Sticking so close to such interpretative framework of trauma *Munich* is exemplary for the concept's intellectual boom—and at the same time is equally exemplary for the problems associated with it: Kantsteiner notes that “[t]he trope of trauma has become a comforting fiction of continuity” (215) and that it “excludes the possibility of radical discontinuity and indifference in the aftermath of historical catastrophe, and in this sense represents just another self-centered academic fiction” (215). Against the background of this verdict we could ponder which choices Spielberg had when telling the history of the Munich massacre and its aftermath—and whether it would have made sense to irritate our sense of historical continuity. Eventually, the answer might be located in the pragmatics of the filmic medium: As long as television can be regarded as the primary mode of shaping history as a continuous and utterly oblivious flow, the stage is set for films to construct reflective stances towards memory and history. In doing so, however, they cannot overcome the implicit assumptions of their stylistic language and compulsively turn every ‘real event’ into a ‘reel event.’

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Image Notes

All images are screenshots from *Munich*.
Dir. Steven Spielberg. Universal Studios,
Dreamworks, 2005. DVD.

Figure 1: Title “Inspired by real events”

Figure 2: Final shot showing the skyline of
New York including the Twin Towers

Figure 3: Palestinian hijacker shooting with a
machine gun

Figure 4: Avner Kauffman’s climax intercut
with the gunfight at Fürstenfeldbruck airfield

Figure 5: Avner hesitates before he triggers
the bomb

Figure 6: Avner awaking from a nightmare

Figure 7: Team discussion

Figure 8: The hijackers climbing the fence of
the Olympic village

Figure 9: The beginning of the assault

Figure 10: TV control room

Figure 11: The hijackers watching themselves

Figure 12: Avner watching the event

Figure 13: Names and pictures of the victims
on TV

Figure 14: Names and pictures of the
organizers in the Mossad headquarters

Figure 15: Fading from the first flashback
back to reality again

Figure 16: Avner takes off his wedding ring at
the beginning of the mission

Figure 17: Stumbling hijacker looking
terrified

Figure 18: The team focused on the TV
during further terrorism coverage

Figure 19: Stalemate between the Israeli and
Palestinian team

Figure 20: Intelligence/military officials
watching the TV event

Figure 21: Reverse shot showing BBC anchor
Peter Jennings on screen

Figure 22: Public viewing in Israel (location
indicated by the subtitles on the screen in an
adjacent shot)

Figure 23: Cheering Palestinians during
public viewing

Figure 24: Crying spectator

Figure 25: Reporters on location with
cameras rolling

Figure 26: Reporter on the television screen

Figure 27: Avner talking to his informant
Louis, TV running in the background

Figure 28: Close-up of the television screen
adjacent to Avner’s conversation with the
informant

Figure 29: Israeli athlete after being shot in
the face

Figure 30: Israeli athlete covering his cheek
wound

Figure 31: Imprint of the muzzle-flash on
Avner’s orgasmic body

Figure 32: Avner and his wife. Hands
intertwined with wedding rings.

(Endnotes)

1. The article by Michelle Goldberg serves also as a concise overview of the politically motivated debate over *Munich* in December 2005 and January 2006.

2. This is not an awkward choice since Islamist terrorism carried out by Al Qaida gains much of its motivation from the Middle Eastern conflict between Palestine and Israel, as the speeches of Osama bin Laden suggest (see Kepel, Milelli). On the other hand, one decisive difference between *Black September* in the 1970s and *Al Qaida* is their spiritual foundation—the latter based on religious beliefs, while the former is resting on merely political grounds (see Klein 92–93).

3. The example presented by Altman for the hyperbolic are the Grail stories, whose single episodes show no explicit interrelation beyond their formal coexistence; another way of understanding the concept might be the surrealist mode of montage thriving “on the unexpected, the apparently unconnected” (Altman 26).

4. The succession and the layers of the montage do not allow for a definitive segmentation into different locations and actors. However, this is not the primary concern as the decisive observation is the occurrence of the high number of modulations between following units that creates the whole part.

5. The term refers to the battle trauma of soldiers explained by Aleida Assmann in her seminal work *Erinnerungsräume* (Memory Spaces, 278).

6. She is still too young to speak properly, she rather makes baby noises.

7. The hijackers pressed the German government for airborne transit to Egypt, while German forces prepared for a raid at the army airbase.

8. Notabene: This is referring to the representation of the film, since there is no doubt whatsoever about the very physical conflict in the Middle East over decades now.

9. Notably this already happened implicitly, for instance when montage patterns were explained during the narratological analysis.

10. For a detailed discussion of the relation between “unifying” and “disunifying” elements also see Kristin Thompson’s “The Concept of Cinematic Excess” (489–91).

11. This particular snippet recalls the CNN footage on September 11 2001 showing cheering crowds in the streets of Gaza.

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“JEDES HERZ...”: TERROR AND HORROR IN DIE FETTEN JAHRE SIND VORBEI

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Hans Weingartner's *Die Fetten Jahre Sind Vorbei*, also known by its American title *The Edukators*, explores the relationship of a young anti-capitalist activist, Jan, with his own friends, the *bourgeoisie* he opposes, and himself. Jan and his friends engage in some relatively benign but disruptive “terrorist” acts. Though the film cannot be said to belong to the horror genre, *Die Fetten Jahre Sind Vorbei* nonetheless employs horror elements and tropes to expose the intrinsically subjective definition of terrorism, and to explore terrorism's relationship with the “other.”

Die Fetten Jahre Sind Vorbei de Hans Weingartner, aussi connu sous le titre américain de *The Edukators*, met en scène le rapport d'un jeune activiste anticapitaliste, Jan, avec la bourgeoisie à laquelle il s'oppose, avec ses propres amis, et avec lui-même. Jan et ses amis commettent des actes terroristes relativement bénins mais perturbateurs. Bien que le film ne puisse être défini comme appartenant au cinéma d'« horreur », *Die Fetten Jahre Sind Vorbei* utilise néanmoins certains éléments et tropes de ce genre afin de dévoiler le caractère intrinsèquement subjectif du terrorisme, en plus d'examiner le terrorisme à travers la question du rapport à l'altérité.

Hans Weingartner's *Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei*, called in English *The Edukators*, explores the relationship of a young anti-capitalist activist with his own friends, the *bourgeoisie*, and himself. The activist and his friends engage in some relatively benign but disruptive "terrorist" acts. Though the film cannot be said to belong to the horror genre, *Die Fetten Jahre Sind Vorbei* nonetheless employs horror tropes to expose the intrinsically subjective definition of "terror."

In *Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei*, a group of "Edukators," to use the American title, vandalizes people's homes to criticize their middle-class, *bourgeois* lifestyle. Jan, the group's ostensible leader, Peter, and Jule, through a series of accidents and misadventures, kidnap a wealthy businessman, Hardenberg. Unsure of what to do, the group takes Hardenberg to a remote mountain cabin. After a long discussion of the merits and disadvantages of their respective ways of life, Hardenberg promises not to inform the authorities of the group's actions, at which point they release him. Hardenberg, however, does not make good on his promise, prompting the Edukators to crash his boat in an act of defiance and protest.

Critics and popular reviewers of *Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei* have not discussed the film in relation to the horror genre—and with good reason. The film ranges between comedy, drama, and what can loosely be called "crime" genre conventions, and is a far cry from the popular conception of "horror film." Horror films often quickly establish the "good" and the "evil" characters. Even when horror films center their plots around the "hidden monster," the final moments most often leave no ambiguity in the nature of the film's characters.

Of course, "terror" and "horror" are also linked semantically. Achin Vanaik presages the necessity of such a linguistic study. In discussing

the uncertainty of the term "terror," he writes that "that kind of effort [to trace the meaning of 'terror'] might etymologically focus on the word 'terror' and then go on to draw out the meaning of terrorism as something that causes and sustains terror" (4164). This definition deconstructs the root of the word, leaving the definition bereft of political content. The word "terrorism," as a function of the root "terror," links the intended effect of "terrorist" activities to the intent of horror films in general. Horror films "frighten and panic, cause dread and alarm, and [...] invoke our hidden worst fears, often in a terrifying, shocking finale, while captivating and entertaining us at the same time in a cathartic experience" (Dirks).

The usual mode of reception of the "terrorist message" further strengthens the link between terrorism and horror. The true difference, then, lies in both the inherently political nature of terrorism and the lack of a "captivating and entertaining [...] cathartic experience" in terrorist activities. Martha Crenshaw differentiates terrorism from other violent movements by describing terrorism as "deliberate and systematic violence performed by small numbers of people [...] to intimidate a watching popular audience by harming only a few" (Crenshaw 406). Films dealing with terror can then be said to be part of terror's "highly optical character" (Derian 23)—in other words, the fetishization of terror imagery. This fetishization manifests itself in the often-replayed video from the September 11th attacks, and films like *Der Baader-Meinhof Komplex*, *Munich*, and *Flight 93*, which present familiar terrorist events as film imagery.

If the purpose of terror, to use Crenshaw's quote, is to "intimidate a watching popular audience," the violence acts only as a means toward a spectacle, as Tyler Cowen suggests. These spectacles "can be thought of as an investment in focality" (235), or in other words, an attempt to draw visibility and

focus to a particular issue. These "investments in focality" are not limited to acts usually described as "terror," but can also apply to organized military actions as well. These "spectacles" mirror the conception of film as spectacle, in which the film seeks to present the viewer with imagery that evokes feeling and thought. Filmmakers design the imagery of film to dialogue with the thoughts and feelings of the audience.

Die fetten Jahre contains elements that can be interpreted diagetically as horror, and simultaneously, through the process of identification with its main characters, the film forces its audience to confront its own fears. The spectacles of fear, key to both terrorism and horror film, provide the audience of *Die fetten Jahre* with a shifting landscape of identification and repulsion. Though a particular viewer may not hold the same values as Hardenberg or the other *bourgeois* families, the sympathetic representation of the film's "terrorist" permits the viewer to identify with their lives and, perhaps, their message.

Jan and Peter's "educational" acts rely on the traditional definition of terror. That is to say, the characters in the film attempt to enact political change by creating a climate of fear, which would then force their "victims" into accepting and subscribing to their views. Jan and Peter's acts mirror the intent of groups like Al Qaida, which expressed an intent to "foment a 'clash of civilizations'" and spread their message across the *umma*, or the community of Islam (Atwan 225). The inactive portions of the *umma* must be brought into the fight through the spectacle of terrorism and war. Though on a much smaller and less violent scale, Jan and Peter seek to "awaken" the *bourgeoisie* by presenting them with images, events, and information that they have not seen before.

The popular definition(s) of "terrorism" inform the filmic convention of terrorism.

This difficulty is only exacerbated by problems with the term terrorism itself. As Peter Kurrild-Klitgaard, Mogens K. Justesen, and Robert Klemmensen state, "[t]he term 'terrorism' is one of those controversial and essentially contested concepts within the discourse of politics and accordingly also in social science research" (290). Conventional wisdom casts terrorism as an attempt to induce political or ideological change through the creation and promotion of fear.

In addition to the traditional meaning of actions causing or creating fear to achieve political goals, the term has come to also mean anyone who battles against the status quo in some way. The differentiation of terror based on power relationships hints at a subjective nature of the term. Crenshaw explains that the term "terrorism" can also be "a pejorative label, meant to condemn an opponent's cause as illegitimate rather than describe behavior" (406). Furthermore, the subjective nature of terrorism also results in a dialectical relationship with "retaliation." Virginia Held posits that "[m]any acts of political violence are described by those supporting them as retaliation for earlier acts of political violence, though described by their detractors as 'new' or 'fresh' or 'renewed' acts of terrorism" (192).

In the film, the *bourgeois* families see Jan and Peter's acts as terrorism, and the pair themselves as terrorists. Jan and Peter attempt to cause fear by violating the perceived safety of these families' homes. For Jan and Peter, however, the families themselves are the terrorists. These middle- and upper-class families control wealth and, as shown between Jule and Hardenberg, they do not hesitate to wield their influence to their own benefit, even at the expense of others.

Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei presents its main characters as ambiguous in the very first moments. Jan and Peter commit acts designed to "intimidate a[n ...] audience," but the film

also shows the pair, and especially Jan, to be sympathetic. In the first scene with Jan and Peter, we see Jan berate Peter for stealing a watch from one of the homes. While Peter seems committed more to youthful rebellion, for Jan the theft undermines the message he wants to communicate. As such, although the audience may interpret Jan's actions as irrational or criminal, the film presents Jan as, at the very least, an earnest believer of his own code. Furthermore, contrary to Jan, Peter, and Jule's views, Hardenberg reveals himself as sympathetic to their cause, and admits that he too once fought against the ideas to which he now subscribes.

Therefore, though horror film uses horror elements and tropes to quickly code characters as either "good" or "evil," *Die fetten Jahre* uses the same tropes to constantly define and redefine the "good" and the "monsters" in the film. This cycle of definition and redefinition reflects the subjectivity inherent in the concept of "terrorism". Furthermore, the shifting identification of the "good" and "evil" in *Die Fetten Jahre* creates a microcosm of the retaliatory nature of political terrorism.

Even before the audience views the film, the movie posters for *Die Fetten Jahre*, before the first second of the film, call to mind other genres, including horror. One poster shows the three "Edukators" standing in front of a red-splattered white wall, looking coolly into the camera. Above, written in coarse red letters, is the title of the film. The gang motif that this poster invokes calls forth posters for films like Rob Zombie's *The Devil's Rejects*, certain promotional material for Dennis Iliadis's remake of *The Last House on the Left*, or even the poster for Wes Craven's *Scream 4*.

Though posters for other films also use the gang motif, the staging of this particular poster actually relates more to the above examples than to posters such as that of

FIG. 1, 2, 3.

FIG. 4.

James Merendino's *SLC Punk*. The scrawled red scree on the white wall does not call to mind the light-hearted anarchy of the poster of *SLC Punk*, but rather the stark consequences of physical violence, in the figure of blood. Another film poster for *Die fetten Jahre* makes this comparison starker. The poster once again depicts red writing on a white background. This time, however, under the title of the film, we see an architectural sketch, presumably of Hardenberg's house. Those who have seen the film will realize that the film's turning point—the kidnapping of Hardenberg—occurs in this house. Even those who have not seen the film would be presented with an image that calls to mind the horrific image of bloodied hands, writing on the white background. In combination with the title, a viewer could easily draw the conclusion that the film deals with the end of the "fat years" through an act of violence.

These posters show an attempt towards visceral reaction. They presuppose a sort of violence that nevertheless only appears towards the midpoint of the movie and, in reality, only for a brief moment. These posters are proleptic of the violence that is only partially resolved in the film. Presumably, these posters were created to give exactly that anticipation of violence, that visceral reaction, as a means of provocation to see the film. Critics leveled these criticisms of

provocation at films like Eli Roth's *Hostel* and James Wan's *Saw*,¹ and it is exactly the same impulse that informs these statements (as well as the initial presentations of these "torture porn" staples) as does the posters of *Die fetten Jahre*.

In the film itself, these same visual motifs persist. The film's protagonist, Jan, and his friend Peter break into the houses of the rich. The group is expressly non-violent and do not steal, but instead Peter and Jan rearrange household items and leave notes with such statements as "Die fetten Jahre sind vorbei," or "Your days of plenty are numbered." The disruption is meant to scare the *bourgeoisie* out of their comfortable malaise by creating an uncanny experience. The antagonism between the *bourgeoisie* and the Educators is further exacerbated by Jule's car accident with Hardenberg, a wealthy businessman, which leaves her in debt.

Jan and Jule, however, fall in love with each other. In the scene the first poster references, Jan and Jule cement their growing bond by happily painting a room together. They use red paint to haphazardly write, "Jedes Herz ist eine revolutionäre Zelle," or "Every heart is a revolutionary cell." While writing this, Jan wraps Jule in the drop cloth they were using. They complete the message with some handprints in red paint, simultaneously covering themselves, and their hands, in red. All this occurs to a pop-punky soundtrack, lending levity and joy to the scene.

The scrawled red letters, in combination with the words "heart" and "cell," cannot help but remind the viewer of blood. Horror films use the trope of the blood-scrawled message, or, as Weingartner uses it here, a message written with a blood surrogate, to foreshadow impending violence, to indicate

a site of earlier violence, or both. The iconic “Redrum” written by Jack’s son Danny in *The Shining* (1980) occurs before any actual bloodshed, but the message contains a threat of carnage to later be realized. In the episode “Innocence” (1998) of the television show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Angelus writes Buffy a message in his victim’s blood, both “signing” his handiwork and implying future violence directed towards Buffy. In a quite recent example, the antagonist in the pilot of the television show *The Following* (2013) leaves the word “Nevermore” in blood as a clue to the protagonist. Similar scenes have been used in recent marketing to evoke campy horror-tinged jocularly, such as *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975), vampires, in the case of *Låt den rätte komma in* (2008), or even the violent malice of the Heath Ledger’s Joker in *The Dark Knight* (2008).

In addition to referencing the red paint as a blood surrogate, the “revolution” of the missive initiates hostility *in potentia*. The word “heart” combines with “revolution” to evoke the idea of a revolution not *of* the heart but *from* the heart. The type of peaceful activism that Jan insists on—limited to reversible vandalism—is designed to change hearts and minds without doing irreparable damage. The pair, as well as their absent third member, clearly envisions themselves as leading a revolution against the *bourgeoisie* to shake them out of their complacency. Jule has only recently joined the “revolution,” and the message stands as her new manifesto. Revolutions, of course, have historically been bloody, violent affairs that forcibly remove the rulers from their stations. Jan and Jule are blissfully unaware of the implied threat which, as the film goes on, they will realize.

The handprints Jule leaves tie into the message as a whole. The bloody handprint appears throughout media forms and genres. The popular website *TV Tropes*² even maintains

FIG. 5, 6.

a list devoted to the bloody handprint. Films like *Shaun of the Dead* (2004) and *Gothika* (2003) use the bloody handprint as a sign of the presence of carnage. In Stephen King’s novel *Carrie*, the titular protagonist leaves a bloody handprint on her teacher after her first period while panicking over the idea that she may bleed to death. In these cases, to name but a few, the handprints indicate human torment and fear. The handprints are usually left by those in pain and bleeding, rather than those causing the pain. The clear symbol of the hand links the sign of struggle to the human form, resulting in a visceral symbol of misery.

Semiotically, the bloody handprint and the message written in blood correspond to the victim and the aggressor, respectively. Weingartner juxtaposes the two images in this scene to blur the lines between victim and aggressor. Visually, the combination of

victim and aggressor in the message on the wall complicates Jan and Jule themselves, positioning them as both victim of the *bourgeoisie* and the activist aggressor.

The handprint also parodies the human connection by standing as a sort of childlike signature. Children, before they can write properly, often make art or sign art as theirs by leaving a handprint in paint. When Jule leaves the handprints, then, she ostensibly leaves them as a type of signature, bereft of violent content. The handprints can then also be read as bringing humanity into their revolution, once again echoing the characters' naïveté over the true nature of their revolution.

One of the oddest visuals in the sequence is Jule's mummification. Mummies have been the subject of horror films since nearly the beginning of horror film as a genre.³ The act of mummification, even deconstructed as it is in *Jahre*, calls forth echoes of films like *The Mummy* (1932) starring Boris Karloff, *The Mummy* (1959), starring Christopher Lee, or the various sequels, remakes, and spiritual successors of these films.

Jule's mummification, however, is not the supernaturally inspired mummy of these films, but rather the type of body horror violation that occurs in films like André de Toth's *House of Wax* (1953) or the more visceral 2005 remake of the same name, directed by Jaume Collet-Serra. In these films, corpses are covered with wax and made to look like simple wax figures, reintegrating the uncanny corpse into a more acceptable (and yet, itself uncanny) wax figure. They fulfill the uncanny by separating the human form from its natural state, while retaining the overall shape and impression.

This mummification is a sort of play-acting for Jan and Jule. The alienated human form of the mummy parallels their own (self-)

alienation from society. The backdrop of the "revolutionary cell" statement, written by the two, presents them as simultaneously alienating themselves and forming blanket manifestos of the human race. Jan directs the violence that seems to undercut the interpersonal relationships of the characters towards Jule. Jan covers Jule's body as a type of initiation that references ritual tattooing or body modification. He alienates her and deforms her in order for her to physically incorporate new philosophies. In combination with the atavistic sign of the handprint, the act reduces Jule to a dependent state. After unwrapping her, Jule is figuratively reborn as a member of the Edukators, having fully internalized their credo.

The Edukators themselves already feel alienated by the society around them. The scene alienates Jule from her previously accepted life and physical form by mummifying her, and then both dealienate her physically and realienate her philosophically by freeing her. This body horror trope also appears in films like *Saw 3D* (2010) to mark survivors who have been mentally and physically changed by their ordeal. Jule's defiant, post-mummification pose is one of cool hostility directed towards the world she now finds herself divorced from. The pose also marks her as a survivor, now indelibly altered by her adopted philosophy. The entire arc of this scene also preludes the restraining of Hardenberg later in the film, as well as his (perhaps faked) character shift while held.

The jovial nature of the scene casts these actions as a sort of terrorist pantomime. The music, the setting, and the demeanor of the characters do not fully overcome the nascent violence in their actions. The two deface their *own* property and bodies with a political and physical activism that Jan has already turned outward. The group's peaceful message belies the aggression in their actions. This barely

hidden impetus towards violent action foreshadows the effect of their revolution, even as the characters themselves remain blind to it.

The turning point of the film comes as the group, almost by accident, knocks the rich *bourgeois* Hardenberg unconscious. The group chooses to hold him in an old cabin until they can decide how to deal with the situation. There, the group gets to know Hardenberg, and Hardenberg comes to know the group. In one telling scene, the Edukators and Hardenberg sit together, discussing their differences in a grim parody of dinner table conversation.

For Jan, Hardenberg is a monster, an other made more frightening by his similarity. He claims to have had similar political leanings in his youth as a member of the 68ers, though whether he lies to sympathize with his captors is unclear. Now firmly within the *bourgeoisie*, Hardenberg stands for everything Jan despises—perhaps more so *because* he was once like Jan. At the same time, he serves as a stern warning of Jan's possible future. When Jan recognizes himself in Hardenberg, he comes to know Hardenberg—and also to know himself.

The concept of the monster who walks among us has always found expression in horror and suspense films. Jason Voorhees was once a child at the same camp at which his victims now work in most *Friday the 13th* films.⁴ The cult classic slasher *Happy Birthday to Me* (1981) makes the uncanny nature of the monster explicit, wherein the killer turns out to be a friend and secret half-sister of, as well as a dead ringer for, the film's protagonist, Ginny. In *My Bloody Valentine* (1981), the protagonists reveal that the killer is actually one of them, Axel, disguising himself as the miner Harry Warden, who died after committing a series of murders some years earlier.

The trope of the monster is so distinct that Carol Clover even subdivides it into two types: *Psycho* types, in which the monster functions in normal society until the final reveal, and the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* or *Halloween* type, in which the film always codes the monster as such (Clover, 30). The uncanny nature of the first type is obvious—the monster is indistinguishable from anyone else until he or she is either caught in the act, or when the evidence becomes overwhelming. However, even when the monster performs the monster role from the beginning, he or she can be coded as sympathetic for an audience. *Halloween II* (1981), for example, reveals that the monster Michael Myers is actually the brother of the franchise's protagonist, Laurie Strode. As for the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* franchise, the recent *Texas Chainsaw 3D* (2013), billed as a direct sequel to the first film (1974), centers on a young woman, Heather, inheriting her grandmother's estate. After coming to Texas to collect it, she finds that she was adopted, and is actually a cousin to the franchise's cannibalistic family.

In this trope, some event, often by chance, changes the lives of these monsters and makes them what they are. The dichotomy of Heather and Leatherface in *Texas Chainsaw 3D*, for example, comes not from genetics or blood relation, but rather, as Heather's character shows, from the environment in which they were raised. In *Happy Birthday to Me*, the lost half-sister, Ann, was abandoned by the characters' shared father, as he left Ann to be with Ginny and her mother. In *My Bloody Valentine*, the antagonist watched his father being murdered by Harry Morgan while he hid.

In casting the monster as someone similar, but changed by a single event into a "deformed and destructive being," to use George Ochoa's term (12), films create the fear of the path not taken. Horror films show the protagonist,

who is often "good" in horror films, but nearly always hapless, as one event away from becoming a deformed and destructive being. By leading the viewers to identify with the protagonist, the films then set up the fear that the viewers themselves may only be separated from the monster by a single event.

Films on terrorism speak directly to these sorts of societal fears. They create an accessible monster. The deformation separates the monster from the *status quo* and creates a *doppelgänger*—a human being so radically altered in mindset and goals as to be strange, and yet similar. As Paul Wells says, "[the doppelgänger] is effectively a 'double', in which humankind confronts its nemesis either through the opposition of an individual and a monster or by the exposure of the two competing sides of an individual—normally, one rational and civilized, the other uncontrolled and irrational, often more primal and atavistic" (8).

In films on German terrorism, the notion of doppelgänger connects to the idea of homegrown terrorists and the fear of "uncontrolled and irrational" persons or groups disrupting the "rational and civilized" world. *Die Fetten Jahre Sind Vorbei* complicates this clear delineation by coding both the Edukators and Hardenberg as both irrational and atavistic and rational and civilized. For the Edukators, Hardenberg is a deformed and destructive being. Hardenberg was, by his own admission, once like the Edukators, belonging to the German youth movement usually referred to as the 68ers. The events of his life led him on a course that resulted in a *bourgeois* life, but it was never, he indicates, a conscious decision to abandon his earlier principles. Instead, events occurred in his life that changed his philosophy. Weingartner also portrays Hardenberg as childlike and greedy. Hardenberg concerns himself at times more with his possessions, or simply that the

Edukators are not playing by the rules, than he does the "rightness" of his actions.

Exactly this relationship mirrors Wells' notion of horror film: "The overwhelming currency of the horror film errs to the view, however, that the Nietzschean perspective is true— 'modernity' has in effect sacrificed the possibility of faith and purpose to arbitrariness and apocalypse. This socio-cultural context is thus bound to give rise to a deep psychological, emotional, and physical malaise [...]" (6). For Jan, Hardenberg has sacrificed any notion of belief for arbitrariness and self-interest—his nice car, his nice house, his *bourgeois* family. He also experiences this malaise, stating, in effect, that his place in the world reflects the natural order of things that can never be broken. The Nietzsche parallel is particularly apt in this situation. Hardenberg justifies his actions with a sort of Nietzschean parable—namely, that the strong will come out on top, and that to not be subjugated, one must be strong within their system.

Jan struggles against this very idea with his actions, as well as his manifesto. He and the other Edukators have been trying to break the *bourgeois* out of their indifference by destroying their sense of safety. Now that he faces a possible logical consequence of life—that aging may force him towards the *bourgeoisie*—he himself can see the dangers of this Nietzschean malaise.

Jan's situation also brings him closer to this malaise. Jan's growing relationship with Jule leads him towards a possible *bourgeois* happy ending. Much of Jan's activism has been predicated on his relationship with Peter. As their relationship strained due to Jan and Jule's love affair, the foundation of the Edukators would seem to be crumbling, leaving only Jan and Jule in a sort of Bonnie and Clyde dynamic. This dynamic plays into the idea of the *bourgeois* pair—a man and a woman. In fact, Hardenberg seems to hint at this in the story of his youth.

Certainly, if Hardenberg is the monster (which, for Jan at least, he is), this moment of stark realization forces Jan to not only know, but also *recognize* the monster. Ochoa deals with this process; quoting Thomas Aquinas's statement that "the thing understood is in the intellect by its own likeness (18)," he puts forth that the understanding of the monster is to have that monster within the mind of the one who understands. In understanding Hardenberg, he also comes to know and recognize him in himself.

Certainly, Jan sees Hardenberg as a monster. However, Hardenberg sits restrained at the table, fearing for his life. For him, a captive under the mercy of terrorists, they are the monsters, and their perceived leader, Jan, doubly so. Therefore, it can certainly be argued that Hardenberg *creates* this 68er persona to shield himself from further harm. The actions of Jan, then, come to form the uncanny in his opposite number.

For Hardenberg, these Edukators are equally uncanny. Unlike the terrorists of Al Qaida or Hamas, these terrorists come from the same place as he does, eat the same food, speak the same language. They are what Hardenberg could have been, or perhaps even was, during his youth. They are what his own children could become. Though, for Hardenberg, the Edukators may act immaturely in their actions, they also have the compassion to let him speak and to let him remain restrained, but otherwise unmolested.

To an extent, Jan represents the failures of Hardenberg's generation. In a review in *Film Threat*, Heidi Martinuzzi casts Jan in this light: "When Jan begins his many speeches about how unjust society is, it seems insincere, spoiled, and frankly, full of bullshit" (Martinuzzi). As he argues the position of his own (perhaps imagined) youth, Hardenberg artificially understands his "monster" Jan.

By feigning an activist youth, he brings the monster into himself, to paraphrase Aquinas. At the same time, the difference in values, which Hardenberg sees as naïve, drives the two apart.

To that end, the horrifying moment in *Die fetten Jahre* comes during this scene, where both the protagonist and the antagonist come to recognize parts of themselves in the monstrous other. The two understand the deformed and destructive being that sits in front of them, at least somewhat, and therefore they take part of that deformation and destruction into themselves. Furthermore, other films on terrorism like *Der Baader-Meinhof Komplex*, intentionally present their terrorists as Weingartner does the Edukators—as similar to their opposite number, but changed by an event or events that, more often than not, was not of their own doing. Thus, the viewer can identify with the terrorists in much the same way they would identify with the protagonist or the antagonist of a horror film, by embracing similarity while fearing the minor differences that create the gulf between them.

In the final scenes of the film, Weingartner seems to begin to show the results of this understanding. Hardenberg takes pity on Jule, and forgives her debt to him. He also promises to keep quiet about the entire affair. At this moment, it seems as if the understanding has been successful—the Edukators have returned Hardenberg to his life, and Hardenberg promises to allow them to do the same. The barriers between them—the uncanny distance—have been dissolved, and they are finally able to come to a sort of peace.

Weingartner, though, quickly shows this to be a farce. As police storm the apartment the Edukators had inhabited, they find nothing but a note stating that "some people never change." The Edukators are then shown

to drive Hardenberg's yacht into television towers, finally making good on the promise of widespread terror immanent in the film.

Essentially, by leaving the tensions between the groups unresolved, Weingartner ends the film almost how he begins it—with a radical group and a *bourgeois* man. Their positions, though, are now amplified by their encounter. The radicals have progressed to full-fledged terrorists bent on destroying property and disrupting the "comfortable lives" of the *bourgeoisie*. Hardenberg's capture also forced him to invoke police protection—a service paid for by taxes—to maintain his comfort and stability and, so doing, to cement his personal stake within the system.

In reading this film through horror, the easy conclusion to draw from this amplified, cyclical ending is the possibility of a sequel. The horror genre is perhaps the genre most likely to include sequels; *Friday the 13th* has nine sequels and a reboot, as well as the original film, and the *Nightmare on Elm Street* franchise already runs into 9 iterations, to give some examples. The desire to know and understand the monster never removes his, her, or its monstrosity. Instead, the films leave the uncanny divide between the monster and the *status quo*, forcing the struggle between them *in perpetuity*. Of course, at least currently, there is no sequel. Instead, the viewer is left with a marked lack of resolution, with no further hope of such. In other words, the experiences of both the group and Hardenberg, and the sharing of their conflicting ideals remain thesis and anti-thesis. Weingartner leaves the apparent synthesis of the preceding scene as an unattained ideal.

In addition, the arc of *Die fetten Jahre* represents a cycle of ever-increasing stakes between the Edukators and Hardenberg. Because Hardenberg led to Jule owing money, the group breaks into his house, which results

in his being kidnapped. Hardenberg calls the police to arrest the Edukators, and knowing this will happen, the Edukators steal his boat and crash it into the towers. In each instance, Hardenberg and the Edukators both see themselves as the wronged party, and the other as the aggressor. The film shows one small, everyday event—an automobile accident—as the catalyst for the entire destructive, disruptive events of the film.

This ever-increasing spiral of retaliation comments on the nature of terrorism in general. The intelligence and military communities use the term "blowback" to describe this sort of retaliation, which is often presented in the media as terrorism (Johnson, Chalmers). As a result, an objective definition of terrorism remains untenable. Instead, the "terrorist" and "terrorism" exist dialectically. The person defining another as a "terrorist" is invariably the person on the receiving end of the "terrorist" acts. The fluidity of the definition of "terrorism" leads to a rhetorical arms race, with each side trying to make a seemingly ironclad case as to why their enemy uses "terror," and why they are simply defending their way of life.

These constant castings of monsters, uncanny doppelgängers, and violence against individuals and society bring *Die Fetten Jahre* in line with horror films. To this end, Robin Wood describes horror films as "at once the personal dreams of their makers and the collective dreams of their audiences—the fusion made possible by the shared structures of a common ideology" (Clover 12). *Die fetten Jahre* can be read in a way that the film would, at first glance, seem to resist. By creating plot tension and character development through horror themes, a horror reading suddenly becomes "fair game."

In *Die fetten Jahre*, Weingartner has created a fictional, personal allegory of a dynamic of terrorism that usually occurs at the national level. Through horror tropes, *Die fetten Jahre* depicts the subjectivity of “terrorism” as a concept, and exposes a dialectic of “terrorist” and “defender of ideals” that resists easy discussion. Though *Die fetten Jahre* does not incorporate all horror tropes and structures and certainly cannot be classified as a horror movie, the validity of horror readings in the film shows the persistence of tropes across what we would often consider to be rigid, clear genre lines. The use of these tropes becomes essential to *Die fetten Jahre*’s nuanced approach to the causes and results of “terrorist” activities.

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2. <http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/BloodyHandprint>

3. Universal's *Mummy* series, the first of which appeared in 1932, for example.

4. In the first film, of course, Jason's mother commits the murders as retribution for her son's death. In later films, Jason abandons Camp Crystal Lake completely.

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“MIRRORING TERROR”: THE IMPACT OF 9/11 ON HOLLYWOOD CINEMA

THOMAS RIEGLER, VIENNA

By drawing upon Siegfried Kracauer’s concept of cinema as a “mirror” of society, this article explores the impact of the “terror years” since 2001 on US cinema. Hollywood was the main cultural apparatus for coping with 9/11, which had left Americans struggling in the “desert of the real” (Žižek). Visual content simplifies traumatic events like the terrorist attacks for audiences—often expressing them in simple Manichean black and white terms and thereby offering moral guidance, unity, and a sense of destiny. Hollywood’s response to 9/11 included all these different aspects: It appealed to an “unbroken” spirit, strove to reassert the symbolic coordinates of the prevailing American reality, and mobilised for a response to new challenges. With time passing, Hollywood also incorporated the mounting doubts and dissent associated with this process. As the review of relating movies of the “terror years” demonstrates, the American film industry has examined, processed, and interpreted the meaning of the terrorist attacks in great variety: Ranging from merely atmospheric references to re-enactments, from pro-war propaganda to critical self-inquiry.

Prenant appui sur le concept de cinéma comme “miroir” de la société chez Siegfried Kracauer, cet article explore l’impact des “années de la terreur” sur le cinéma américain depuis 2001. Hollywood fut un outil culturel crucial dans la gestion du traumatisme du 11 septembre, traumatisme qui a semblé laisser les Américains se débattre dans “le désert du réel” (Žižek). Le contenu visuel des films met à la portée du public des événements traumatiques comme les attaques terroristes (souvent en termes manichéens) ; ce faisant il crée une orientation morale, empreint d’un sentiment d’unité et de destinée. La réponse d’Hollywood au 11 septembre s’est faite sous différents aspects : celui d’un appel à l’esprit national, celui d’une réaffirmation des points cardinaux symboliques de l’identité américaine dominante, et celui de l’instrumentalisation du film en vertu de l’idée de rassemblement propre à réagir à de nouveaux enjeux. Au fil du temps, Hollywood a également incorporé l’accroissement des doutes et des oppositions qui ont accompagné ce processus. Comme en témoignent les critiques des films des “années de la terreur”, l’industrie américaine de la cinématographie a examiné, digéré, et interprété le sens des attaques terroristes sous diverses formes, allant de simples références atmosphériques à la reconstitution historique, en passant par la propagande de guerre et la critique existentialiste.

Introduction: "Let us look in the mirror"

In a 1927 essay film theorist Siegfried Kracauer stated: "Films are the mirror of the prevailing society" (McCormick, Guenther-Pal 99). Again in 1948, he reinforced this argument: "Films supplement real life. [...] They stir our awareness of the intangible, and they reflect the hidden courses of our existence. They point out situations that are often difficult to grasp directly but show, under the surface, what we think about ourselves. [...] Films mirror our reality. Let us look in the mirror" (Von Moltke, Rawson 72). In the course of this article, Kracauer's theme of the cinematic mirror is adapted to sort out various manifestations of socio-political anxieties linked to 9/11 as well as the processing of the terror related trauma and the reaffirmation of America's ideological underpinnings (individual and economic freedom, faith, family). As Kracauer indicated, this engagement is less overt or outspoken, but conveyed indirectly via metaphor, sentiment, and atmosphere. Read this way, "under the surface," the post 9/11 Hollywood pictures express how US society and culture underwent profound changes since 2001: From freedom towards security and paranoia, from perceived stability towards uncertainty.

To start with the origins of the cinematic depiction of terrorism, its modern understanding—as a form of politically motivated violence aiming to achieve mass coverage—was first adapted in the 1970s. Back then terrorism had not yet struck the US directly, the entertainment industry looked abroad for inspiration. Major events like the Munich hostage massacre or the Entebbe rescue mission were re-enacted (*21 Hours at Munich*, 1975, *Victory at Entebbe*, 1976). John Frankenheimer's *Black Sunday* (1977) was exceptional, because it featured Palestinian terrorists targeting the Super Bowl finale (Prince 22–28).

FIG. 1: CRIMINALS POSING AS TERRORISTS
DIE HARD (1988)

This distanced perspective on terrorism radically changed during the 1980s, following the Iranian hostage crisis (1979), the American involvement in the Lebanese civil war (1982–1984), and the resulting confrontation with Shiite extremism. The US became increasingly involved in Middle Eastern conflicts and suffered a string of traumatizing attacks as well as hijackings. As a result, the depiction of terrorism hardened: Its perpetrators were coined as arch enemies of the American Dream, and lacked any legitimate cause (Palmer 164).

The end of the Cold War brought a brief period of easing: Instead of ideological or religious zealots, apolitical terrorists dominated. Fitting the climate of political correctness of the post-Cold War years the movie terrorists of the 1990s are ethnically varied: European radicals (*Passenger 57*, 1992), Irish republicans (*Blown Away*, 1994, *The Devil's Own*, 1997), corrupt Russian military figures in alliance with resentful Bosnian Serbs (*The Peacemaker*, 1997), and Latin American drug lords (*Clear and Present Danger*, 1994). But most of them were homegrown: disgruntled former employees of law enforcement agencies (*Speed*, 1994) and renegade soldiers (*Die Hard II*, 1990, *Operation Broken Arrow*, 1996, *The Rock*, 1996) (Lichtenfeld 170–71).

Among these villains, the jihadist is featured prominently for the first time. His appearance follows in the wake of the bombing of the World Trade Center (1993), the first act of radical Islamist terrorism on US soil. Hollywood reacted swiftly and introduced the

jihadist in films like *True Lies* (1994), *Executive Decision* (1996), *The Siege* (1999), and *Rules of Engagement* (2000) to the screen: Fanatical in his hatred of the US, displaying no regard for innocent life when enacting spectacular violence, and rejecting all possibilities of moderation. Thereby cinema highlighted the emerging danger of religiously inspired mass terror on home soil years before 2001.

After 9/11: Escaping into fantasy, history, and past conflicts

In the immediate period after September 11, 2001, the overriding executive mantra was: “No more movies of mass destruction.”⁴⁵ film projects were either cancelled, substantially altered, or postponed. Some commentators even argued that Hollywood was to blame for 9/11, because its movies had prefigured, even “inspired” the terrorist perpetrators (Maher). Director Robert Altman, for example, claimed that such an atrocity would have been unthinkable, “unless they’d seen it in a movie” (Coyle). There were also promises that Hollywood would provide henceforth a “kinder, gentler” form of entertainment – but as Jim Hoberman has remarked, “audiences, though, were not buying it” (Hoberman). During the first months after 9/11, action flicks like *Die Hard* or *True Lies* were rented three times more frequently than before, as if the often agonising inefficacy of real life counterterrorism had to be compensated for in the sphere of entertainment (McCorkle 171). The sense of insecurity also boosted patriotic and warlike themes—shortly after the US invasion of Afghanistan began on 7 October, 2001, “Hollywood started to march to a military beat” (Newsweek). US box office charts were topped by war movies like *Black Hawk Down* (2001), *Behind Enemy Lines* (2001), and *We Were Soldiers* (2002). “There’s a greater understanding now of how you would feel if your country was under attack,” a director commented on the

reasons for this trend (Andson). None of these war movies engaged with the topic of terrorism and instead re-enacted clear cut battlefield victories in Vietnam as well as US contributions to flawed UN interventions in the Balkans and Somalia in the early 1990s—but it did not matter anyway: “Revisiting past conflicts while America waged a new one, they appear as much *about* the US after 9/11 as Vietnam and Somalia, their historical and geographical locales” (Carruthers).

Before the terrorist strikes, such films would have been read as a plea for a reluctant US role in world affairs, but after the terrorist attacks the plot lines were perceived as pro-interventionist—reflecting George W. Bush’s proclamation of the War on Terror as an endeavour that “will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated.” In case of *Black Hawk Down*, shortly before the release in December 2001, a postscript was added. It suggested that Washington’s decision to withdraw from Somalia in 1993, as well as its decision not to intervene in Rwanda and Bosnia, “was part of a reluctance to wage war that eventually emboldened America’s enemies to attack the Pentagon and the World Trade Center.” That idea was dropped, as director Ridley Scott concluded it was “a good time” for releasing the movie: “We saw that these soldiers were like firefighters and the police officers and the rescue workers, in that they are all people who would go into burning buildings or under fire without thinking of themselves, but only about their duty” (Malanowski).

The wave of military related films soon ebbed away after the highly controversial US invasion of Iraq in 2003—both the World War II epic *Windtalkers* (2002) and the pro interventionist *Tears of the Sun* (2003) were low grossing. Commentators found it difficult to determine whether audiences perceived films that glorified the might of the American

military as morally ambiguous or if they were simply war-weary after watching real-life combat on the news (Holson).

In the wake of the terrorist attacks, some experts had warned of a strategic "pact" between Hollywood and Washington promoting patriotism and even jingoism—just like in aftermath of Pearl Harbour (1941). Shortly after 9/11, Jack Valenti, longtime president of the Motion Picture Association of America, had indeed assured that the industry would answer the call: "Many people in Hollywood are veterans that fought in other wars and they are ready to fight again if their country needs them" (Valenti). But in retrospect, the response proved to be more ambivalent than straightforward propaganda.

A major part was in fact pure escapism: Monumental struggles between the forces of light and darkness were extremely popular after 9/11. In reference to the *Lord of the Rings* (2001–2003) trilogy, critic Lev Grossman explained the fascination of this matter—especially in comparison to the murky struggle against terrorism: "Tolkien gives us the war we wish we were fighting—a struggle with a foe whose face we can see, who fights on the open battlefield, far removed from innocent civilians. In Middle Earth, unlike the Middle East, you can tell an evildoer, because he or she looks evil" (Grossman). Similarly, one of the reasons why the *Harry Potter* (2001–2011) and *The Chronicles of Narnia* (2005/2008/2010) franchises struck a note with audiences was that the stories engaged with notions of war, leadership, dangers of power, heroism, and personal sacrifice—all relevant in uncertain times. "You could look at the Harry Potter series through the veil of 9/11," a *New York Times* critic explained. "It became very difficult not to, with the idea of Lord Voldemort as the evildoer of all evildoers who was going to try to take down [the world]. And the apocalyptic ending reaffirmed that for me" (White).

The simple narrative of the superhero myth was also favoured as if the events had instilled new belief in the need of lone and all-powerful individuals rising up to the challenge. Commenting on the Superman remake *Man of Steel* (2013) and questioning the cultural reasons behind the current burst of the genre, Joe Queenan argued that "superhero movies are made for a society that has basically given up. The police can't protect us, the government can't protect us, there are no more charismatic loners to protect us and the Euro is defunct. Clint Eastwood has left the building. So let's turn things over to the vigilantes" (Queenan).

Christopher Nolan's Batman trilogy was the trendsetter for this realignment of the previously goofy superhero genre: It became darker, pessimistic, and pseudo-realistic. In *Batman Begins* (2005), Gotham City's water supply and public transport system is attacked in order to spread a toxin that instils fear and chaos. *The Dark Knight* (2008) put forward the "Joker," who terrorises Gotham City with such elaborate schemes that Batman has no other option except to fight "fire with fire." According to Douglas Kellner, the Joker is presented „as the spirit of anarchy and chaos of a particularly destructive and nihilistic nature. In the contemporary context, the Joker represents the spirit of terrorism and the film is full of iconography related to 9/11" (Kellner 11). In *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012), Batman has to take on the masked mercenary Bane, who aims to destroy Gotham City in a nuclear explosion.

The more ironic *Iron Man* movies (2008, 2010, 2013) feature the hero, Tony Stark, flying in his mechanical suit pounding a radical-Islamic group called "Ten Rings." *Iron Man 3* finally introduces its leader, a Bin Laden look-alike superterrorist called the "Mandarin", who hacks himself into TV airwaves to present threatening messages. But ultimately, he is revealed as an actor hired to

FIG. 2: RECALLED TO DUTY – CAPTAIN AMERICA. THE FIRST AVENGER (2011)

portray a menace to deflect attention from an out-of-control scientific programme. This sort of plotline exemplifies the contradictory nature of the studios approach to 9/11: “They want to tap into the powerful reactions those events induced, while dodging the complex issues and especially the political arguments that might turn off ticket buyers” (Dragis “Bang Boom”).

While 9/11 references in superhero movies are diffuse and not direct assertions, there is a major shift in the representation of the central characters that captures the pessimism of the post 9/11 mindset. Whether it is Batman, Captain America, Superman, Iron Man, Spiderman, Wolverine, or Thor, these heroes suffer setbacks and humiliating defeats—in fact, they all come across as flawed, traumatised, and ultimately ambivalent, but nonetheless they keep doing what is “necessary” (Pollard 183).

According to some critics, Hollywood’s exploration of the post 9/11 world had started in earnest with Steven Spielberg’s *War of the Worlds* (2005): A modern adaptation of the classic extraterrestrial invasion story by H. G. Wells, *The Guardian* labelled the film „the first piece of multiplex fodder ripped straight from the rubble of 9/11” (Preston). Spielberg remarked on the connections of his film to reality: “I think 9/11 reinforced everything I’m putting into *War of the Worlds*. Just how we come together, how this nation unites in every known way to survive a foreign invader

and a frontal assault. We now know what it feels like to be terrorized” (Abramowitz). Overall, similar to the Cold War era, there was a string of alien invasion scenarios brought to the screen: *Skyline* (2010), *Cowboys and Aliens* (2010), *Super 8* (2011), and *Pacific Rim* (2013). According to director Paul Haggis the *Transformers* series (2007-2011) offered a “fantasy where the message is that if we can’t win over there, we can win it at home on our screens” (Jaafar 20). In these films two races of good and evil robots battle each other right in the middle of downtown Chicago. The teenage hero, who is told by an officer, “You are a soldier now,” absorbs the lesson of the struggle quickly: “No sacrifice, no victory” (Jaafar 16-21). The same message was picked up by *World Invasion: Battle Los Angeles* (2011) and *Battleship* (2012), where the US-military has to fight full scale alien invasions. On the other hand, the more anti-imperialist leanings of James Cameron’s *Avatar* (2009), so far the highest-grossing film of all time, suggested that after almost a decade, a majority of the public had turned away from the Bush doctrine (O’Hehir). President Obama’s subsequent shift from interventionism to drone strikes and special forces missions was addressed in *Star Trek: Into Darkness* (2013): Here, Captain Kirk (Chris Pine) chooses to capture terrorist mastermind Khan, who bombed Star Fleet’s main archive building, for trial instead of killing him extrajudicial with a long range torpedo.

Revisiting the past also offered an approach for filmmakers: By depicting the crusades (*Kingdom of Heaven*, 2005), by replaying the myths of the ancient world (*Troy*, 2004, *Alexander*, 2005, *300*, 2007, *Immortals*, 2011), or by reimagining American history and legends (*Gangs of New York*, 2002, *Alamo*, 2004, *The New World*, 2005, *Good Night, and Good Luck*, 2005, *Flags of our Fathers*, 2006, *There will be Blood*, 2007, *Lincoln*, 2012) the present day situation could

be addressed in an indirect way. For example, film scholar Stephen Prince suggested that *300*—a comic book adaptation featuring the heroic last stand of the Spartans against the superior Persian army—uses contemporary conflicts as templates, “and it provides and an argument and a justification for waging war against Iraq and Iran” (Prince 291). Slavoj Žižek instead proposed a very different reading by setting the rigid, “fundamentalist” Spartan identity in contrast to the “multiculturalist different-lifestyles paradise” of the Persians (Žižek 2007).

The pitched battle scenes in movies like *300* offered clarity and oversight lacking in the “real” world, as well as the certainty that the forces of good will eventually triumph. “This is our way of dealing with 9/11 and how we feel about those foreigners, and those terrorists, whom we are trying very hard to define”, a film historian told the *New York Times* under the headline: “At the movies, at least, good vanquishes evil” (Waxmann).

New age of fear, horror, and dystopia

In a 2008 piece for *The Atlantic Monthly* Ross Douhat argued that after 9/11 Hollywood returned to the “paranoid, cynical, end-of-empire 1970s” (Douhat). There are indeed many similarities between the 1970s and the 2000s: Both were decades of political and social crisis, producing, among other results, a pessimistic cultural outlook. For instance, after 9/11 Hollywood envisioned the dark, amoral world of unregulated and destructive corporate power in a similar way to the 1970s: *The Manchurian Candidate* (2004), *Syriana* (2005), *Blood Diamond* (2006), *Shooter* (2007), *Michael Clayton* (2007), *War Inc.* (2008), *Nothing But the Truth* (2008), *State of Play* (2009), and *Fair Game* (2010) are populated with powerful schemers, who use every means necessary to enhance power, profits, and personal gain. “America isn’t a

FIG. 3: A THOUGHTFUL HITMAN—BRAD PITT IN *KILLING THEM SOFTLY* (2012)

country; it’s a business,” a thoughtful hitman declares in *Killing Them Softly* (2012), and turns to one of his colleagues: “Now give me my money” (Scott “One Bad Turn”). Another distinct 1970s character also returned—the vigilante: *Man on Fire* (2004), *The Punisher* (2004), *Hitman* (2007), *The Brave One* (2007), and *Jack Reacher* (2012) show lonely avengers going on wild rampages.

Another major parallel to the 1970s is the boom of horror. Since 2001, a retro-trend brought remakes of almost all classics, often made by their veteran directors. Notably, George A. Romero returned with *Land of the Dead* (2005), *Diary of the Dead* (2008), and *Survival of the Dead* (2009). Romero integrated certain contemporary influences into his movies: “The idea of living with terrorism—I’ve tried to make it more applicable to the concerns Americans are going through now” (Beale). As during the 1970s, in post 9/11 horror, evil lurks in remote places at home, mostly in red state territory and in the shape of ignorant, reactionary or retarded backwoodsmen, whose “appetite” for slaying youngsters seems insatiable. This reflects the tensions and divisions within American society—whether it is about the difference between city and countryside or diverging opinions on morals, religion, and politics. Thus, like in the classics, the main characters find themselves suddenly beset by savage strangers and deadly threats (*Wrong*

Turn, 2003, *The Devil's Reject*, 2005, *Turistas*, 2006, *Hatchet*, 2007). Some of the recent horror films even had a distinct trademark of their own: *Hostel* (2005), *Hostel: Part II* (2007), or *Saw* (six parts between 2004 and 2009) feature explicit and up-close violence that is administered on the victims in lengthy sessions. Critics labelled this "torture porn" (Edelstein), while director Eli Roth remarked that his two *Hostel* films were simply made through the lenses of 9/11 and the War on Terror (Braxton).

There was also widespread demand for disaster movies: Unlike its 1970s predecessors, the post 9/11 films neither provide moral rallying points nor successful counterstrokes, but appear utterly pessimistic: The US government is too slow to respond to the rapid climate change in *The Day after Tomorrow* (2004). When Earth is hit by a series of quakes and mega-tsunamis in *2012* (2009), elites are concerned solely with their own survival: While leaving the rest of mankind to perish, they survive on board of pre-constructed arks. More realistically, *Contagion* (2011) evokes the spectre of a swiftly collapsing order as a result of a spreading killer virus. A pandemic that turns humans into zombies causes global apocalypse in *World War Z* (2013)—not so much a film about the undead, but a concrete take on government inadequacy and public panic in the face of overwhelming disaster. "The general premise is that anything can happen, in any kind of scenario, on any given day," director Marc Forster commented (*World War Z* production notes).

A threat from the outside is realised in *Red Dawn* (2012), where large parts of the US fall prey to ruthless North Korean invaders: The conservative leaning film hints that the country has left itself open to Communist occupation, because of weak foreign policy, squandering military might, and economic decline (O'Sullivan). *Rise of the Planet of*

the Apes (2011) depicts mankind in the role of the oppressor until mutated chimpanzees and gorillas throw off their shackles and spread havoc: "It's the end of the world as we know it, and the animals feel fine" (Dragis "Apocalypse").

On a more personal level, *Taking Shelter* (2011) features Curtis LaForche (Michael Shannon), a young husband and father, tormented by apocalyptic visions that spell danger to his loved ones. In the progress, LaForche becomes more and more obsessed with providing security for his family, and this paranoia threatens to unravel everything he cares about (Scott "Splintering Psyche"). Once Armageddon has passed, the struggle for survival continues even more mercilessly in dystopias like *I Am Legend* (2009), *The Road* (2009), *The Book of Eli* (2010), *The Hunger Games* (2012), *Oblivion* (2013), and *Elysium* (2013). Supposedly, even god "got tired of all the bullshit"—and so he sends an army of angels to destroy mankind in *Legion* (2010). Pictures like these stress that the only hope for humanity lies in virtues such as love, self-sacrifice, and faith—typical cultural reactions to states of uncertainty.

9/11 arrives on the screen

Drawing up a conclusion on the tenth anniversary of the terrorist attacks, Jim Hoberman observed on Hollywood's output that "the events of 9/11 were to be avenged but not relived." While it formed the emotional background for all kinds of escapist adventures, there was considerably less interest in depicting the actual event. Thus, the first films relating to 9/11 did this in a consciously distanced way, aiming not to attract controversy. According to the *New York Times*, the trauma "quietly arrived, writ small in a series of new pictures that have no political content but that are suffused with a deep, enduring sense of grief born in

the tragedy's wake" (Farber). First came *The Guys* (2002): It featured a journalist helping a FDNY captain who lost nine men in the Twin Towers to compose eulogies. Spike Lee's *25th Hour* (2002), released 15 months after the terrorist attacks, follows a convicted New York drug dealer on his last day of freedom before beginning a seven-year prison sentence (LaSalle).

It took more than five years for the entertainment industry to tackle 9/11 directly: In *United 93* (2006) Paul Greengrass retold the story of the hijacked flight that did not reach its intended target on September 11th. Instead it crashed into a field in Pennsylvania, supposedly because the passengers revolted against the hijackers. Since *United 93* is all about civilian heroism, the motivation and personal background of the terrorists remain completely obscure to the viewer. Oliver Stone's *World Trade Center* (2006) did not even show the planes hitting the towers, instead focused on the miraculous rescue of two survivors from Ground Zero. *The Great New Wonderful* (2005) presented a series of vignettes of incidents taking place concurrently around Manhattan – without mentioning 9/11 (Abramowitz, Horn). The event was further domesticated in the buddy movie *Reign Over Me* (2007), where two former college roommates meet up again by chance on a Manhattan street corner. One of them has lost his family on 9/11 and is unable to cope with the tragedy (Prince 120).

9/11 forms the emotional climax in the love drama *Remember Me* (2010): Tyler (Robert Pattinson) is last seen in his father's office on the 88th floor of the World Trade Center and it is later revealed that the date is 11 September 2001. For that, the film was criticized as "appalling" and "exploitative," because it uses 9/11 as "a simple plot device" (White). *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2011) focuses on an eleven year old New

FIG. 4: SPACE INVADERS TARGET DOWNTOWN MANHATTAN IN THE AVENGERS (2012)

Yorker coping with the loss of his father in the rubble of the World Trade Center. According to Manohla Dragis the film "isn't about Sept. 11. It's about the impulse to drain that day of its specificity and turn it into yet another wellspring of generic emotions: sadness, loneliness, happiness. This is how kitsch works" (Dragis "Youngster with a Key"). Like many other 9/11 movies, the 40 million dollar production was not well received at the box office, but gained an Academy Award nomination nonetheless.

The obvious preference for escapism was again confirmed by the success of the safely immersing *Cloverfield* (2011): It reimagined the terrorist strikes as a sudden devastating attack by a giant monster that topples skyscrapers and major landmarks. A similarly spectacular action showdown in the middle of Manhattan can be found in the superhero film *The Avengers* (2012). The images of urban destruction turn it, according to Jim Hoberman, into a watershed—Hollywood is "no longer afraid to tackle 9/11": "*The Avengers* demonstrates how completely 9/11 has been superseded by another catastrophe, namely the financial meltdown of September 2008" (Hoberman).

From commentary to historization

As mentioned, a direct examination of 9/11 was a sort of taboo in the early stages. Terrorism related films like *Collateral Damage* (2002) and *The Sum of All Fears* (2002), which had been produced before 2001, were suddenly out of touch with the new paradigm. The *Sum of All Fears* was much noticed because it displayed the nuclear destruction of Baltimore, but when it came to the depiction of the enemy—European Neo-Nazis—the film was criticized for being implausible. Hereupon, “9/11 rang down the curtain on Hollywood’s theatre of mass destruction, at least for a while,” Stephen Prince noted (70). But with growing distance, filmmakers began to focus on the War on Terror, its progress and implications, both domestic and international. Stephen Spielberg chose a historical analogy to place a comment on the counterterrorism struggle: His film *Munich* (2005), the adaptation of a novel telling the story of the Israeli revenge for the massacre of its athletes during the 1972 Olympics, explored the cycle of violence engulfing the Middle East. Beyond that, it could also be read as critique of the futility of the War on Terror, with a final lingering shot of the Twin Towers in the distance (Alford 145). Among other issues, *Syriana* (2005) explored how the corruption of the oil business indirectly fuels terrorism, while *Charlie Wilson’s War* (2007) explored the CIA’s collusion with jihadists in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

In productions like these, counterterrorism came across increasingly as an amoral struggle in the shadows—an obvious reaction to the Abu Ghraib scandal and revelations about suspects disappearing in a secret CIA prison network. In *Body of Lies* (2008), agent Roger Ferris (Leonardo DiCaprio) is such a shadow warrior, who sets up a fictitious terror group, equips it with fake bank accounts, and plants messages in fundamentalist chat rooms – in order to flush out an Al Qaeda mastermind

FIG. 5: WESTERN JIHADIST—MICHAEL SHEEN IN *UNTHINKABLE* (2010)

FIG. 6: MANIPULATED INTO THE IRAQ WAR—GREEN ZONE (2010)

(Stevens). Gavin Hood’s 2007 film *Rendition* took on the opposing perspective by depicting an Arab as the victim of unlawful US vigilance. Although being married to an American wife, he is abducted and sent to a North African country for interrogation. While witnessing the brutality inflicted, the local CIA liaison officer begins to doubt the agency’s methods: “In all the years we’ve been doing this, how often can you say that we’ve produced truly legitimate intelligence?” (Alford 150). *The Kingdom* (2007) can be seen as an alternative scenario in its depiction of a successful cooperation between Western and Middle Eastern police forces (Scott 28 Sept. 2007). Due to disappointing box office results, the adaptation of terrorism related themes decreased between 2009 and 2012. *Unthinkable* (2010), a movie about an FBI interrogator caught in the moral dilemma of a classic “ticking bomb” scenario, was released direct-to-video.

FIG. 7: JIHADIST VIDEO COMMUNICATION IN ACT OF VALOR (2012)

Compared to this rather slow adaptation of counterterrorism, the war in Iraq arrived on screen with unparalleled speed: “Not since World War II has Hollywood so embraced an ongoing conflict. It took years for pop culture to tackle the Korean wars, and it took time before the country was ready to be entertained by those politically charged conflicts” (Soriano, Oldenburg). Yet most of the Iraq movies did not focus on the conflict, but instead on the homecoming of the veterans, or the plight of military families left behind (*Land of the Brave*, 2006, *In the Valley of Elah*, 2007, *Badland*, 2007, *Grace is Gone*, 2007, *Stop Loss*, 2008). *Redacted* (2007) and *The Hurt Locker* (2008) took on the perspective of GIs hopelessly entrapped in a “dirty” conflict, which they do not understand and often turn their frustration against civilians. *Lions for Lambs* (2007) and *Green Zone* (2010) openly contradicted the official lineage of the Bush administration in regard to the war effort and addressed issues of political accountability and manipulation. But just like the 9/11 films, most of these productions failed commercially—even the acclaimed *The Hurt Locker* was the lowest grossing Best Picture winner since the fifties (Harris).

In comparison, the Vietnam movies of the 1970s and 1980s had the benefit of hindsight and offered an opportunity to reflect from

FIG. 8: JUSTIFIED REVENGE FOR 9/11—IDENTIFYING OSAMA BIN LADEN (ZERO DARK THIRTY, 2012)

a distance on what had gone wrong (Jaafar 16–21). Compared to past conflicts, the Global War on Terror, despite its length, had always remained enigmatic and distant to the larger public. As Luke Buckmasters has pointed out: “The war on terrorism, as we know it, invokes a muddled sense of time and location. Its themes are both old and new and the enemy is impossible to relegate to a specific geographic area. The trickier enemies are to define, the harder they are to visualise.” (Buckmasters). The surprising box office success of *Act of Valor* (2012) demonstrated that military related themes still resonated with audiences, once they were removed from the messy context of Iraq and Afghanistan. The movie featured supposedly real-life Special Forces operatives on missions in Costa Rica, the Sudan, and Mexico that ultimately thwart the hideous plans of a jihadist network (Pinkerton).

Shortly before the tenth anniversary of 9/11, some key policy decisions and events put both the US counterterrorism approach and its cultural representation in a new framework: The killing of Osama Bin Laden (2011) marked a highly symbolic US victory. Within a year, the US strike was undergoing dramatization in a TV adaptation (*Seal Team Six: The Raid on Osama Bin Laden*, 2012) and a movie: *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012). Also in 2011, the US withdrew its combat troops from Iraq

and scheduled a retreat from Afghanistan for 2014, effectively concluding the Global War on Terror as outlined by George W. Bush.

The outlook on radical Islamic terrorism and 9/11 is therefore set to evolve from social and political commentary to a gradual historization of the subject. For the first time *Zero Dark Thirty* applied this retrospective outlook: Originally outlined as a narrowly focused and closed-ended investigation of the failure of the US military to apprehend Bin Laden in late 2001, the successful raid on Abbottabad had changed the storyline completely. *Zero Dark Thirty* now chronicled the eventually successful ten year manhunt for Osama Bin Laden, while highlighting the moral costs (Harris). According to Manohla Dragis, the movie depicts “the dark side of that war. It shows the unspeakable and lets us decide if the death of Bin Laden was worth the price we paid” (Dragis “By any means”). However, *Zero Dark Thirty* is forceful in its portrayal of the War on Terror as a form of justified revenge for the horrors of 9/11—illuminated in the beginning by featuring emergency phone calls from the burning towers and hijacked planes against a black screen (Westwell 86).

This shifting perspective on 9/11, moving from reality towards history, is further amplified by a loss in significance on part of the counterterrorism struggle: Since 2007/2008 economic woes have increasingly replaced the fear of terrorism as priority No. 1 on the public agenda. The financial crisis and the huge budget deficit also have widespread consequences for the US role in world affairs: In 2012 President Obama pledged that the US would only fight war that “absolutely necessary” (McGreal and Williams) from now on, effectively concluding the era of post 9/11 interventionism. It is likely that the recession and a resulting demise of confidence in the American Dream could affect the public mind in a more lasting way than the shock of the 9/11 attacks. Hollywood has begun to come

to terms with the slump and its effects (*Up in the Air*, 2009, *The Company Men*, 2010, *Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps*, 2010, *Margin Call*, 2011, *Moneyball*, 2011, *Cosmopolis*, 2012, *Arbitrage*, 2012, *Promised Land*, 2012).

By 2013 even the post 9/11 reticence of depicting terrorism as blockbuster entertainment was all but gone: *G.I. Joe Retaliation*, *Olympus Has Fallen*, and *White House Down* featured major institutions of American democracy being taken over and tarnished by terrorists. The fact that audiences seemed prepared to watch the White House, the Capitol, or Air Force One destroyed indicates for some observers that “Americans have mentally recovered from the shock of 9/11.” Others drew a different conclusion in highlighting the paranoid and self-hating notions of these scenarios (Harris “9/11 taboo”).

Hollywood’s stance on terrorism

The following section examines the critical question of how Hollywood movies process the definition and substance of “terrorism” for audiences both aesthetically and ideologically. Although the output varies in relationship to its specific context, the political and ideological subtext conveyed by Hollywood’s terrorism films can be distilled in certain core narratives:

(1.) Terrorism is the product of “mad,” psychotic minds and essentially “un-American”: This used to be the quintessential message of 1970s and 1980s scenarios. Following the end of the Cold War certain enemy stereotypes were discarded, but the terrorist remained as a mere de-politicized “shell”—depicted as a greedy criminal impostor. While this narrative was practically abandoned after 2001, it has resurfaced lately in form of a retro trend: *Die Hard 4.0* (2007) and *A Good Day to Die Hard* (2013) stick to the old formula of criminals or renegades hiding behind a fake agenda. The hijacker in

the remake of *The Taking of Pelham 1-2-3* (2009) bets on media coverage affecting the stock market so that his own investments pay off (Cettl 16). Likewise, the climactic showdown of *White House Down* reveals the devastating attack by a rightwing militia at the heart of government as a disguised coup d'état. Even the controversial choice of North Korean commandos as the enemy in *Olympus Has Fallen* is quickly abated by fact that the group is led by an extremist acting on his own impulse.

(2.) The dark side of counterterrorism, the employment of extralegal and "dirty measures," is not left out of the picture. Critical movies, for instance, highlight the CIA's reliance on proxy forces groups to suppress Latin American guerrillas in the 1980s (*Under Fire* 1983, *Walker*, 1987). In 2001, *Spy Game* recounts parts of the CIA's dark Cold War history: The Phoenix assassination programme during the Vietnam War as well as the unsuccessful attempt to kill a Shiite sheikh in Beirut during the 1980s. In the latter case, the bombing results in considerable civilian "collateral damage." Furthermore, the Jason Bourne franchise (*The Bourne Identity*, 2002, *The Bourne Supremacy*, 2004, *The Bourne Ultimatum*, 2007, *The Bourne Legacy*, 2012) features a corrupt CIA undercover unit orchestrating a string of assassinations concealed as counterterrorism measures (Valantin 103–04). In contrast, conservative films tend to present this escalation of violence as the most practical way to defeat terrorism. Such missions are already outsourced in *The Expendables* (2010) and *Expendables 2: Back for War* (2012): Whether it is overthrowing a Latin American dictatorship or preventing Russian plutonium falling into terrorist hands, a band of mercenaries does the job.

(3.) It is perhaps ironic that despite its preoccupation with terrorism, Hollywood in fact takes little interest in the subject itself. By

FIG. 9: THE FACE OF THE ENEMY "OTHER"—
THE EXPENDABLES (2010)

large the terrorist is simply a "sign" and almost never developed as a believable character. Although it is true that terrorist masterminds repeatedly lay down their agenda and accuse the US and its foreign policy, this comes across as "loony" talk by fanatical madmen (Vanhala 238). For example, *Air Force One* (1997), grants hijacker Ivan Korshunov (Gary Oldman) a moment of explanatory rhetoric, but in the context of the scene, this is nothing but self-serving cynicism put forward by a thug, who threatens women and children (Auge).

In recent films, declarations by terrorists are sparser and less over the top: In *Body of Lies* mastermind Al Sameen brags about future plans of his network: "As we destroyed the bus in Sheffield last week, we will be ready for the operation in Britain. We avenge the American wars on the Muslim world." Yet this megalomania quickly results in his downfall—Al Sameen's drive for publicity exposes him to joint US-Jordanian counterterrorism (Pollard 119). As the mentioned films indicate, there may be blowback stemming from Western policies, but such grievances are no excuse for killing and maiming innocent people. Terrorism is thoroughly illegitimate and has to be met on its own terms (Boggs, Pollard 207).

In contrast, European films like the Western German outlook on the leftwing terrorism of the 1970s tend to deconstruct terrorism (*Deutschland im Herbst*, 1977, *Die bleierne*

Zeit, 1981, *Stammheim*, 1986, *Die innere Sicherheit*, 2000, *Baader*, 2002, *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex*, 2010, *Wer, wenn nicht wir*, 2011). These movies consciously focus on the terrorist personality as well as on the inner group dynamics of terrorist organizations, subjects largely omitted by Hollywood. But overall, the German films explore the political and social environment in which the actors are operating and how it is transformed in the wake of the confrontation with law enforcement. This results in multi-layered accounts instead of clear-cut good vs. evil.

Conclusion

In the wake of the 9/11 some commentators went as far as to proclaim the “end of the age of irony” or a “turning point against a generation of cynicism for all of us” (Kakutani). With the benefit of hindsight, Michiko Kakutani reached a more sober conclusion about the impact of the terrorist strikes on popular culture: “We know now that the New Normal was very much like the Old Normal, at least in terms of the country’s arts and entertainment. [...]. Ten years later, it is even clearer that 9/11 has not provoked a seismic change in the arts” (Kakutani). While 9/11 may have been no watershed, it left a profound impact nonetheless: Terrorism and relating fears, paranoia and insecurity, were all but prime ingredients of Hollywood cinema since 2001.

Anger, brooding and melancholy displayed both by super- and action heroes were indicators of post 9/11 Hollywood’s preference of ambiguities over absolutes. As A. O. Scott has pointed out, this grimness of the heroes “arose less from the moral defect of being tempted by evil than from their intimate knowledge of its depths. They could be lawless, vengeful, guilty and tormented, but only because the enemies they faced were so utterly beyond the reach of compassion or reason” (Scott “Worst Enemies”). The ensuing

Manichean battles were so intense because villains like Voldemort, the Joker, or Bane pursued grandiose schemes that were aimed directly against the established order of things. Their dark conviction, as articulated by Bane (“It doesn’t matter who we are, what matters is our plan”), not only set them apart from traditional criminals, but was reminiscent of terrorist zeal.

Apocalyptic themes, paranoia, and graphic violence were as popular as during the 1970s, a decade of similar upheaval and scepticism in society. After 2001, besides the fear of terrorism there was a growing awareness of further threats like pandemics, natural disasters, or the breakdown of society.

Furthermore, the post 9/11 period gave rise to a whole set of political movies that addressed the Global War on Terror and its consequences. Critic Peter Bradshaw labelled them “liberal fence-sitters”: Agonised, conscience-stricken, “but still unwilling to risk being disloyal to anyone” (Bradshaw). Indeed, as the box office results demonstrated, audiences preferred indirect approaches to overtly political ones. That choice may have contributed to Hollywood’s uneasiness in representing the actual events of 9/11. For a large segment of the public the traumatic event is still too raw, too hard to grasp in its entirety, and thus is considered an unsuitable theme for mere entertainment (Smith). As indicated, the 2011 killing of Osama Bin Laden may herald a new phase of recollection and reassessment, which may leave more possibilities for the sort of catharsis many experts noted was absent so far.

Generally, Hollywood provides valuable insight into the social and political realities of its context. In his complication on cinema in the “Bush-Cheney Era,” Douglas Kellner has observed: “Films can display social realities of the events and phenomena of an

epoch. But films can also provide allegorical representations that interpret, comment, and indirectly portray aspects of an era" (14). In reference to the post 9/11 years, Hollywood has reflected the essence of that period. At the core, it addressed the profound sense of vulnerability and shattered innocence felt in the wake of the terrorist attacks. For the first time since 1941, the US had been hit on home soil. In this specific situation, cinematic fiction came into play as a major cultural means to engage with a radically altered world. Overall, the cultural "mirror" tells of a society deeply affected by fear and uncertainty, while struggling to find new meaning. That may be the "terror years" most enduring legacy.

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Image Notes

Figure 1: *Die Hard*. Dir. John McTiernan. 20th Century Fox, 1988.

Figure 2: *Captain America – The First Avenger*. Dir. Joe Johnston. Marvel Studios, 2011.

Figure 3: *Killing Them Softly*. Dir. Andrew Dominik. Annapurna Pictures, 1984 Private Defense Contractors, Plan B Entertainment, Chockstone Pictures, 2010.

Figure 4: *The Avengers*. Dir. Joss Whedon. Marvel Studios, 2012.

Figure 5: *Unthinkable*. Dir. Gregor Jordan. Lleju Productions, Sidney Kimmel Entertainment, Kimmel International, ChubbCo Film, Senator Entertainment Co., 2010.

Figure 6: *Green Zone*. Dir. Paul Greengrass. Working Title Films, 2010.

Figure 7: *Act of Valor*. Dir. Mike McCoy and Scott Waugh. Bandito Brothers, 2012.

Figure 8: *Zero Dark Thirty*. Dir. Kathryn Bigelow. Anapurna Pictures, 2012.

Figure 9: *The Expendables*. Dir. Sylvester Stallone. Nu Image and Millennium Films, 2010.

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SHOOTING HISTORY: AN INTERVIEW WITH SWISS ARTIST **CHRISTOPH DRAEGER** ABOUT THE REENACTMENT OF TERRORISM IN HIS VIDEO INSTALLATION BLACK SEPTEMBER (2002)

FIG. 1: CHRISTOPH DRAEGER, BLACK SEPTEMBER. 2002.

INTRODUCTION AND INTERVIEW BY SEBASTIAN BADEN

Skype video-interview at Universität der Bundeswehr

(University of the German Army), Munich, Germany, August 31, 2012

This contribution introduces to the video installation *Black September* (2002) by Swiss artist Christoph Draeger and presents statements of the artist given in an interview in 2012. Draeger collects media representations of disasters in order to reconfigure their inherent sensationalism later in his artworks. The video installation *Black September* consists of appropriated footage from a documentary movie and video sequences from a re-enactment of the historical events of September 5th 1972, the terrorist attack during the 20th Olympic Games in Munich. Even the artist himself gets involved in the play in his mimikry of a hostage-taker and terrorist. Thus he questions the conditions of the mutual constitution of cultural memory and collective memory. His video installation creates a “counter image” in reaction to the “omnipresent myth of terrorism”, generated by the tragedy of 9/11 and the media reports in its aftermath. Both terrorist attacks, in Munich 1972 and in New York 2001, mark a turning point in the visual dominance of terrorism. In the case of September 11th, the recurring images of the airplane-attacks and the explosion of the WTC, followed by its collapsing, symbolize the legacy of the “terror of attention”, that would affect every spectator. The video questions the limits of the “disaster zone” in fictional reality and mass media. The artwork re-creates central scenes of the event in 1972. It brings the terrorist action close to the spectator through emersive images, but technically obtains a critical distance through its mode of reflection upon the catastrophe. The installation *Black September* stimulates and simulates history and memory simultaneously. It fills the void of a traumatic narrative and tries to recapture the signs that have been unknown yet.

On présente ici l'installation cinématographique *Black September* (2002) de l'artiste suisse Christoph Draeger, accompagnée des commentaires de l'auteur recueillis lors d'un entretien donné en 2012. Draeger rassemble différentes représentations médiatiques de catastrophes dans le but de reconfigurer leur sensassionalisme dans ses oeuvres. L'installation *Black September* se compose de séquences d'un film documentaire et de vidéos enregistrées lors d'une reconstitution historique des événements du 5 septembre 1972, l'attaque terroriste des vingtièmes jeux olympiques à Munich. L'artiste lui-même participe à la pièce et interprète le rôle d'un preneur d'otages. Il interroge ainsi les conditions de la formation simultanée d'une mémoire culturelle et d'une mémoire collective. Son installation propose une « image à rebours » en réaction au « mythe omniprésent du terrorisme » généré par la tragédie du 11 septembre ses représentations médiatiques. Les deux attaques terroristes, de Munich en 1972 et de New York en 2001, symbolisent une victoire médiatique pour le terrorisme. Dans le cas du 11 septembre, c'est à travers la répétition des images témoignant des attaques aériennes et de l'effondrement du World Trade Center que le legs de la « terreur médiatique » s'installe. La vidéo interroge les limites de « la zone de catastrophe » dans la réalité fictionnelle et les médias de masse. L'oeuvre recrée des scènes centrales des événements de 1972. Les images entraînent les spectateurs au coeur de l'action terroriste, alors qu'en parallèle la technicité du mode de réflexion sur la catastrophe crée une distance critique. L'installation *Black September* stimule et simule à la fois l'histoire et la mémoire. Elle remplit les blancs d'une narration traumatique et tente de capturer des signes encore inconnus.

FIG. 2: CHRISTOPH DRAEGER. THE LAST NEWS. 2002.

The following skype-interview with Swiss Artist Christoph Draeger was conducted on August 31, 2012, during the 11th workshop of the German Network for Terrorism-Research (NTF) at the University of the German Army in Munich. The English translation is an abridged version of the original German-language interview. The artist talks about the production background to his video installation, *Black September* (2002). Draeger's artwork can be understood as a "counter image"¹ created by the artist in reaction to the "omnipresent myth of terrorism" (Ammann 28), generated by the tragedy of 9/11 and the media reports in its aftermath.

Since the early nineties, Draeger's work pivoted around different representations of violence, ranging from natural catastrophes to horrendous accidents and terrorist activities

(Kunstmuseum Solothurn 2003, Baden 2007a). Draeger collects media representations of these disasters in order to reconfigure their inherent sensationalism later in his artworks in photography, video, installation, or sculpture.

After the events of September 11, 2001, Draeger first created the video *The Last News* (2002) in cooperation with American director Reynold Reynolds and animation artist Gary Breslin and subsequently produced his video installation *Black September* (2002) at Roebbling Hall Gallery in Brooklyn, New York. The latter was exhibited for the first time at Magnus Müller Gallery in Berlin, Germany, in September 2002.

For the video *The Last News*, the artist made a montage of footage from several TV news-reports about catastrophes and from

FIG. 3: CHRISTOPH DRAEGER, BLACK SEPTEMBER. 2002.

Hollywood movies such as *Armageddon* or *Independence Day*, simulating an “MSNBC 24 Disaster and Survival News Channel.”² The images include the top of Big Ben as it is being destroyed, the exploding White House, and a bird’s-eye view on Paris which resembles the Ground Zero of a nuclear attack. One short sequence even shows the partially destroyed towers of World Trade Center.

Newscaster Guy Smith comments on this ‘infotainment’ program that runs in the background. Though all found-footage played in the back obviously is fiction, the “LIVE”-broadcasting suggests real media coverage of disasters, terrorist attacks and reports on the „Operation Strikeback with Infinite Justice.” While the program is on air, several eruptions

disturb the broadcasting. The explosions that were limited to their representation on the studioscreen, increasingly affect the studio itself. Finally, Smith’s TV Studio seems to be totally destroyed and he collapses in front of the viewer in a nervous breakdown. Subsequently, Smith loses contact with all his correspondents worldwide and seems to be lost in chaos, to say it with Slavoj Žižek, “in the desert of the real.”³ The television signal of *The Last News* ends in White Noise.

In this condensed 13 minute video, Draeger and Reynolds parody sensationalist newscasting through the imitation of common American news programs which combine information with entertainment. In *The Last News* the newscaster is both eye-witness and victim

FIG. 4: CHRISTOPH DRAEGER, *BLACK SEPTEMBER*. 2002.

of the catastrophe he is reporting about. The video provokes various questions: How can the viewer distinguish between fictional reality and documentation? When even the ‘expert’ reporter is lost in terrible chaos, how is the viewer supposed to cope with bad news? Can evil transcend the safety-screen of our televisions? Where are the limits of the “disaster zone”? (Binswanger 1999: 54–61)

Following *The Last News*, Christoph Draeger created *Black September* (2002), a video-installation with both appropriated footage from a documentary movie and video sequences from his re-enactment of the historical events of September 5, 1972, the terrorist attack during the 20th Olympic Games in Munich.

A group of eight Palestinians, members of the so called “Black September” group, took eleven members of the Israeli team hostage in their apartment in Connolly-Straße 31, right in the center of the Olympic Village.⁴ Two Israeli athletes were shot dead in the apartment. The hostage-takers demanded the release of Palestinian prisoners in Israel and the additional release of Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhof from German prisons, where they served their sentence for terrorist attacks. However, negotiations between the hostage-

takers and the deputies of Germany and Israel were constantly delayed and deadlines postponed. Finally, late at night, during a chaotic confrontation with German Police officers at Fürstenfeldbruck Airbase, all the remaining Israeli hostages, as well as five Palestinians, were killed. The next day the fiasco dominated the international press.⁵

Christoph Draeger’s work *Black September* concentrates on what happened inside the apartment in Munich during that day on September 5, 1972. The core of the piece is a synchronized two-channel video installation which is shown in two separate rooms. The first room is a detailed reconstruction of one room in the Munich apartment according to photographs from the site of crime, including a vintage television set. It shows a bedroom in total devastation with bloody traces on blankets and floor. Many scattered clothes and personal items allude to the violent action that seems to have just recently lead to this chaos. The second room is an empty dark space and accommodates a video projection. Both videos—the one screened on the museum wall and the one that runs on the TV-set—run parallel. They basically show footage from Kevin MacDonald’s official documentary film *One day in September* (1999) that deals with the terrorist attack during the Olympic Games in Munich in 1972.

In contrast to the video-footage that runs on the TV, some sequences on the screen projection are substituted by images that the artist created himself by re-enacting the events. Draeger reconstructed the bedroom of the Munich apartment within the exhibition space of Roebling Hall Gallery New York and re-enacted what he supposed had happened there. He recorded the re-enactment on video. Since then, the setting of this re-enactment, that particular room in the Munich apartment, forms a consistent part of the screening environment in the museum

installation of *Black September*. In a certain way, the artist has created a mis-en-abyme situation that again reflects on the precarious limits of the disaster zone; in other words, he provokes the emersion of the representation into the exhibition space.

The crucial part of the video are the scenes that the artist has created himself and that he intersperses with original documentary footage. The artist teases the imagination of the observer by supposing a scenery, which no one could have really seen from outside of Conolly-Straße 31 in the Olympic Village. As an effect of the montage, the re-enacted scenes and the documentary merge to a coherent unit in the viewer's mind (Ammann 2003: 24). Nevertheless, Christoph Draeger formally retains an amateur filming style to demonstrate the fictional character of the video.

Draeger's artistic process reveals on the one hand the viewer's indiscriminate consumption of images, on the other hand it shows how video images, once they are removed from their context, be it TV movies or news, become increasingly indistinguishable.

The art installation *Black September* questions the conditions of the mutual constitution of cultural memory and collective memory (Assmann 1994). As artefact, the artwork is part of cultural memory. It seeks to fill in the 'blind spots' of the collective memory that the official documentation, such as the footage from *One Day in September*, cannot supply. Draeger's re-enactment of the missing link within the documentary is actually not based on testimony, but on forensic reconstruction of the event. Besides the documentary movie Draeger also uses photographs from newspaper reports in 1972 as inspiration for his artwork. His recreation of the hostage-taking fills a lacuna in the official collective memory, because there are no images of the action within the apartment before Draeger's artistic intervention.

This alludes to the question of the unspeakable and unimaginable within the reconstruction of traumatic events, (see Mitchell 2005) which is part of Draeger's artistic strategy. He—the artist—is the one who proposes a narrative that forms what before was unseen and unimaginable.

Draeger offers a possibility of how the history of this critical moment could be re-written and consequently, how the collective trauma could be accessed and processed. The art installation *Black September*, however, is limited to a museum audience. In a way, this artwork may be considered a prefiguration of what Steven Spielberg's movie *Munich* (2005) would make accessible to a larger public.⁶ In Spielberg's movie, the imagination of how the hostage-taking could have taken place is a key element of the traumatic plot. From this starting point, the collective memory of the Munich attack would be formed. In the course of the film, the imagination of terror is revealed through several flash-backs that show the brutal action inside the apartment and on Fürstenfeldbruck Airbase. The escalation of violence leads to the process of revenge in Spielberg's movie *Munich*.

The artist Christoph Draeger and the Hollywood director Steven Spielberg both offer a successful examination of collective trauma with their video and full length movie, respectively. In comparison to Spielberg's Hollywood movie, Draeger's video installation concentrates on the isolated sequence of the hostage-taking, that he includes within a haptic situation. Though Draeger obviously puts the traces of violence in the foreground, his artwork is more focussed on the topic of observation and self-reflection. The advantage of his artistic strategy is its double bind process of deconstructing the scenery. Through the correspondance between the two channels of the video installation and via split-screen inserts, the artist offers different perspectives

on his video-documented re-enactment. In this mode of comparative observation the trauma that is represented through the images can be seen more clearly. The observers are standing within the site of the event, which means that they are forced to take the position within the scene, either the perspective of the hostage-takers or that of the hostages whom they observe in the video. Through this kind of embedded reception, which Draeger creates in his installation, he puts the audience in proximity to the traces of the re-enactment in *Black September* that is only possible in a video art installation.

Art historian Inke Arns states that re-enactment as artistic strategy unveils the uncanny in Freudian terms, i.e. “something that is actually known but has been repressed, from whence it returns” (Arns 2007: 63, see Hoffmann 2011). Today, re-enactment as an artistic strategy takes on a key-function in the processing of collective memory through cultural artefacts. Only the recreation and subsequent repetition of historic events can emphasize their significance as the decisive moment, which seeks explanation in order to be fully understood. Mostly, this significance is further stressed by cultural artefacts such as paintings, photographs or films that represent what is commonly understood as cultural memory. Especially works presented in the context of art exhibitions evoke a critical distance to the uncanny in history. Like *Black September* demonstrates, these images are part of a construction of memory which is based on media. Inke Arns asserts, “re-enactments are artistic interrogations of media images, which insist on the reality of the image but at the same time draw attention to how much the collective memory relies on media” (Arns 2007: ibd.). Because Draeger’s installation is not a live re-enactment, but a representation of a terrorist act, it creates a critical distance through the remote presentation in the space of the museum. What Draeger presents as

pieces of evidence for what really happened in Munich on September 5, 1972 is based on his imagination of spectacle, violence and murder. The artist himself gets involved in the play in his mimikry of a hostage-taker and terrorist.

When the viewer enters the space of the installation *Black September* by Christoph Draeger, the re-enactment has already taken place and is replayed in the video documentary. The visitors play the role of witnesses after the event. The only evidence left from the re-enactment is a devastated room and a video of fictional representations of the event. The trauma is transferred into a distant closed circuit video-narrative.

One might say, in the situation of *posthistoire*,⁷ the assault on the Israeli hostages in Munich in 1972 is brought back to our collective memory by the artwork of Christoph Draeger and by the subsequent obsession of mass media with terrorism after the 9/11 attacks.

Sabine Himmelsbach explains Draeger’s artwork in the context of contemporary terrorist strategies:

The world stands at shock over the current state of global terrorism, September 11th lingers in our minds, Intifada is unleashed in Palestine, and as such, the background setting for *Black September* informs our reading of both the actual event in history and of Draeger’s representation. The distance in time allows for a fictional element, the myth has replaced the news. But thirty years later the same adversaries are still standing bitterly across from each other. Looking to address not just this condition but perhaps also its roots, Draeger goes on to ask, if the globalization of the image and the globalization of terrorism are not just coincidentally congruent; and asserts that violence and its simultaneous widespread illustration have always gone hand in hand.

FIG. 5: KEVIN MCDONALD. ONE DAY IN SEPTEMBER. 1999.

Both terrorist attacks, in Munich 1972 and in New York 2001, mark the visual dominance of terrorism, which in case of September 11th and through the recurring images of the airplane-attacks and the collapse-explosion of the WTC proof the legacy of the “terror of attention” (Rötzer 2002), that would affect every spectator. Beyond the visibility, the effect of insecurity and fear is proliferated through the media reports about terrorism. This became obvious in the official comments that tried to re-create social cohesion in the US and worldwide after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Every-day life should go on! This was the parole given by New York mayor Giuliani in his words: “Show you are not afraid. Go to restaurants. Go shopping.” (Murdock 2001) In a similar way, Olympic Committee

member Avery Brundage commanded in 1972, “the Games must go on,” there would be no interruption of the sports competition due to any terrorist intervention. The German art historian and theoretician Bazon Brock has coined the term “der verbotene Ernstfall” (forbidden emergency) as coping strategy for such situation. i.e. war and terror only are tolerated in fictional reality or as simulation (Brock 2002).

Both politics and art do not accept any interference through acts of terrorism, but instead try to encapsulate the terrorist trauma in cultural memory. On the one hand, through ritual events, monuments and fictional narrative the terror attacks are kept in remembrance.

On the other hand, the abstract conjuration of the “war on terror” marks a desperate and helpless anti-strategy on how to cope with traumatic events. Quite foreseeable, the trauma is only reinforced by this war.

In the first sequence of Draeger’s video montage, the ABC newsspeaker Jim McKay is uttering the words “They are all gone.” Except for three of the hostage-takers, all hostages and five Palestinians were killed at the Airbase Fürstenfeldbruck next to Munich in the night from September 5 to September 6, 1972. It was one of the most tragic moments in German history after the Second World War, and—again—Jews have been murdered on German soil. This is what caused the trauma in German national memory after the attack at the Olympic Games in 1972 and it lasted 40 years, until the official remembrance started in 2012. Thus, politics finally offer the possibility for public grief and solace. Newspapers like *Der Spiegel* reported on the circumstances of the historic event and how politicians today cope with the challenge of remembrance (*Der Spiegel* 2012).

In addition to this official way of coping with suppressed national memory and history, art provides representations that might be called “counter-history” oder “counter-discourse” in terms of Michel Foucault. The French philosopher explained how history and culture are confronted with counter-narratives that set oppositional or altering interpretations to official or popular definitions of historic events (Foucault 1990: 76). When Draeger frames his re-enactment with sequences from original documentary footage, he creates a reliable context, in which at first glance the restaged images could be taken for real. He thus blends a counter-narrative into collective memory. Within the installation spectators are nevertheless well aware that they are not part of the play. They appear in the centre of the scene - too late though - and can only observe

and try to distinguish between fact and fiction. The stage is left in chaos, only the traces of reconstruction can be seen in the installation. After the event, terrorism has become a virtual phenomenon that can be analysed from a secure position - in both media and art. Terrorist violence has been turned into the “aesthetics of terror”, as curator Manon Slone defines it. Images of terror tend to lose their *signifié* and get a new connotation when they become the icon of a radical-chic consumer culture (Slome 2009). This would create the myth of terrorism according to French philosopher Roland Barthes. In *Mythologies*, he calls the structure of myth a “second-order semiological system” when the original meaning of a sign is covered by new means.

In Christoph Draeger’s installation *Black September* the myth of terrorism is translated into images that aesthetize the origin of the story. And yet, the re-enactment and its representation in the video installation seem like a coping strategy for lost *signifiés*. The artwork re-creates the event. It brings the terrorist action close to the spectator through immersive images, but technically obtains a critical distance through its mode of reflection upon the catastrophe (Baden 2007b). The installation *Black September* stimulates and simulates history and memory simultaneously. The artwork fills the void of a traumatic narrative. It tries to recapture the signs that have been unknown yet. What really happened inside the apartment?

Interview with the artist Christoph Draeger:

SB: Christoph, we are talking via skype. You are in your studio in Vienna. At the end of this conference day, we have just been watching your video *Black September* (2002), which is part of the complex installation on that topic that you have created. The video was made in 2002, it was produced in New York after 9/11. Since then, “war on terrorism” is dominating

FIG. 6: MOVIE POSTER: KEVIN MACDONALD. ONE DAY IN SEPTEMBER. 1999.

the political agenda. In your video, you are dealing with Palestinian terrorists in 1972 in Germany, thirty years before the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. What was your motivation to produce the video and especially this installation?

CD: First of all, I produced this work for my upcoming exhibition at the Müller de Chiara gallery in Berlin in 2002. On September 11, in 2001, I was in New York and very close to the attacks. This had a strong impact on me, especially the unbelievable reaction of all the people and the media coverage on 9/11. Television was occupied by replays of the attack, all the flags that hung everywhere and all the allegiance to “United We Stand” or similar pledges made me feel uncomfortable. This is why I produced a first video as reaction,

The Last News (2002), which clearly is a very sarcastic reckoning with media-reaction to catastrophes in general. It is a totally exaggerated satirical video which comments on a fictionalized terror attack—as innuendo to 9/11. The catastrophe in the video happens within 13 minutes and rapidly leads to the end of the world.

During my research for *The Last News* I found the film *One day in September*, directed by Kevin MacDonal. It is a documentary about the terrorist attack in Munich in 1972 and was the Academy Award Winner in 2000 for Best Documentary Feature. It provoked my thought as I have been constantly dealing with catastrophes and terrorism in my artworks: I

FIG. 7: COVER PAGE. DER SPIEGEL. GEHEIMAKTE OLYMPIA.

should do something in response to 9/11, but certainly nothing that is directly linked. There had been such an overload of reports and images in the media in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, I would have felt absurd to join in. Then I found this documentary movie and instantly knew: that is it, because it deals with a moment in history that in the meantime was almost forgotten. Even in Germany it had been blocked out in a way, probably because the assault had a bad impact on the image of Germany after the Olympic Games.

That's why I decided to appropriate the documentary *One Day in September*. Its producer Arthur Cohn is from Switzerland, he has Jewish ancestors. His movie obviously treats the Palestinians as evil. But through many reports we know that there are reasons for Palestinian terrorism that are likely concealed. However, I only wanted to put

the events in a timeline, just as they happened, without stereotyping the Israeli as victims, the "nice guys," while letting the Palestinians play the role of "evil." I really attempted to objectivize the whole thing—knowing this sounds like a strange intention. I concentrated on the footage of this documentary. Because the director used music to reinforce the atmosphere, I could not separate the original soundtrack from the commentary of the anchorman. Thus I integrated the music into my video, too. Now, it automatically has the same dramatic effect.

After this, I produced the video installation *Black September* in the summer of 2002. I remember it was terribly hot when we did the shooting for the video. I built the set in the gallery space of Roebing Hall and recruited actors from my friends. The fact that I played the terrorist, by the way, was due to an emergency. I did not plan to play Issa⁸ myself, but the main actor, who also participated in the video *The Last News* (2001), did not want to come that day, he simply did not appear, that is why someone had to play Issa. So I did it. Later I showed the video in Germany in September 2002. There were some reactions. I got a few reviews, in the Berlin Zitty-Magazine and in some other newspaper in Berlin, but nothing else happened, I have to admit.

SB: What was in general the status quo of remembering the 1972 attack on the Olympic Games in Munich in 2002, just one year after the terrorist attacks in New York?

CD: In comparison to 2012, when we commemorated the 40th anniversary of the attack, there was almost nothing recognizable in 2002. There was no issue of *Der Spiegel* with that theme on its title, the newspapers only published a few articles that were commemorating the events 30 years ago. All this commemoration-machine, that has just begun to run—probably also because of the current Olympic Games in London in August

FIG. 8 AND 9: CHRISTOPH DRAEGER. BLACK SEPTEMBER. 2002.

2012—did not exist just ten years ago. My installation was shown the second time at Roebling Hall Gallery in New York, but for me it was significant that it was produced especially for a German context and also was shown there first. Hence, my attempt to show the exhibition at the same time as the 30th anniversary in September 2002 worked out and hit a nerve.

SB: From the perspective of art history, we are interested in the production and perception of images. How does the artist work with images, where does he take pictures from, and how does—in comparison—television deal with visual testimony and authenticity? Your installation consists of two rooms that are connected, as we can see on the floor-plan. The situation within the apartment is reconstructed according to the original setting in Munich, Connolly-Straße 31, right in the Olympic Village. All inventory has been composed in the contemporary style of early 1970s design, even the bags, the TV, the clothes. There are churn up beds, litter, traces of blood among all kind of scattered accessoires on the floor. Only the corpse is missing, which is shown in the video and on one of your production stills. On the small TV you can see original footage from the news coverage. In the next room, the video projection shows re-enacted sequences. Obviously, it is important for you to show the visitor the opportunity to look out of the room through the door of the balcony, though in the exhibition there is no real exit, just some light behind a curtain. You have two situations that can be switched, depending on if you first enter the video projection or the apartment. On the one hand, there is the video that shows the restaged events, and on the other hand, the observer enters this set of destruction—and later gets to know what happened when he is watching the video. What motivated you to choose this presentation structure?

FIG. 10: STEVEN SPIELBERG. MUNICH. 2005.

CD: The main idea—and probably the most important one—was to imagine, that both terrorists and hostages could attend the live-broadcasting of their own drama. The concept of my installation is inspired by the imagination to enter the room just like in that moment, when Ankie Spitzer—the wife of one of the murdered Israeli—came in, right after the drama happened. The corpse is missing, only the destruction is visible. And just like a media ‘afterglow’ the TV is still showing the same news that also her husband, respectively all hostages and terrorists have been watching, and which, of course, influenced all the subsequent events. It was the news that informed the terrorists about how the German police tried to take over the situation by assault—going over the rooftops during “Operation Sunshine.” That is why the assault was soon cancelled. For me, this live-feedback was extremely important to conceptualize my artwork.

In fact, the concept of the installation is based on found-footage that I show on the small TV in the destroyed room. You have to know that the documentary timeline is running at the same scale as my reenactment-video in the dark room. The audio-track is the same in both videos, also the framing news run parallel, but on TV you cannot see my re-enactment, you just see the documentary footage.

SB: On the flat rooftop on the opposite side of Connolly Straße 31, the team of the German-Democratic Republic-TV and many other

FIG. 11, 12: CHRISTOPH DRAEGER. BLACK SEPTEMBER. 2002.

teams were live-broadcasting and filming all day. I guess, the crucial point in your installation is the situation of the observer who actually gets the impression of being observed, too. This observation is an exciting moment because in your artwork it does not only refer to the historical moment in real-life politics that is documented in the news-coverage, but also to art history. It is about the self-observation of the observer. This idea of constructing a “closed-circuit” installation was a new artistic strategy in 1972, when spectators become their own observers in the video within the exhibition. US artist Dan Graham invented this construction for his Installation *Time Delay Room* (1974). This way, the situation of the observer within the exhibition is emphasized and the spectator focuses on his own role. That feedback-construction within your installation is the essential connection. Two screenshots demonstrate how you created the montage of the images. The Splitscreen shows the perspective of the news-teams from outside on the left next to an interior scene depicting the re-enactment on the right.

CD: Yes, one might say the point is that this situation in Munich seems as if it was actually created for the terrorists. Of course they took advantage of this global stage, as it has often been confirmed. Hence, concerning the closed-circuit feedback, one of the terrorists could have literally confirmed his media appearance by just stepping on the balcony and turning around to see himself on television. I emphasize this situation by having my artist colleague Rainer Ganahl, dressed as terrorist, stepping out through the balcony-door. Then I made a cut at the same moment, switch to the original footage, to show the real terrorist who was filmed on the balcony in 1972. I tried to bring a logical coherence between the images of the footage and my re-enactment.

SB: I depicted a scene for comparison which demonstrates this cutting point. It is not taken from your video, but from Steven Spielberg's

movie *Munich* (2005) who shot the same scene, of course. Spielberg put the television on the other side of the room, right in front of the curtain that obscures the window. Thus you can see at one glance how the terrorist is filmed from outside at the same time when he is stepping on the balcony. Spielberg shows this observation explicitly, the terrorist's persistent appearance on the balcony to check what's going on outside. The director reduces complexity for the viewer when he pretends to demonstrate the truth.

CD: I have to say, Spielberg made his film after I had done my work. And probably, even after he had seen my video. Hence he said to himself: “I will certainly avoid obvious mistakes in scenography.” (*laughing*)

SB: Spielberg shows explicit violence in his film, like in the brutal scene when Joseph Romano is shot dead. As dramatic strategy he uses slow motion and puts the torn up bodies into the focus of the camera. This is, of course, a big difference to your production, you had less budget and non-professional actors. In your video, the violent aspect is played very elegantly, because of the concealed act of killing. Right at the moment of the execution, when one of the hostages is shot dead, you cut, the image switches to the shooting starter's gun at an Olympic running competition on TV. That is very clever—and no coincidence, I guess?

CD: Of course not. I tried to point out the fact that the Olympic Games went on despite of this murder. Therefore I inserted the starting shot as important symbol. In my video I wanted to combine two aspects. The TV in the apartment was constantly running, hence the hostages and the hostage-takers did not only follow their own drama on television, but probably also saw the live-broadcasting of the Olympic Games, as long as they were going on. That is why I thought it would be elegant to edit the original murder with the starting shot.

Question from the audience (Thomas Nachreiner):

I was wondering, if the crossfade from starting shot to murder could not be understood vice versa, concerning the trigger for memory-culture. Hasn't the attack been the starting point of a media event that we are commemorating for many years and over generations? Otherwise the Olympic Games in 1972 would have been one among many? Is the artwork not pointing to that ambivalence?

CD: The symbolism of the starting shot is rather menacing and does not really relate to the idea of "bright games."⁹ And since 1972, the Olympic Games are not bright any more, but protected by a shield of thousands of police-officers. There is a similarity to civil aviation which also was a bright hobby for rich and wealthy people. However, since 'skyjacking'¹⁰

occurred, travelling has become distressful by all this control apparatus at airports which is of course absolutely necessary. I am even convinced that contemporary terrorists would exploit the current Olympic Games in London 2012, if they only could. But they cannot anymore because there is no access available like before in Munich. That is why I would agree, the starting shot has symbolic significance.

SB: Christoph, let us speak about your own role as an actor in the video. How do you stage a terrorist? You tried to restage the actors and their outfit according to documentary footage. You present several stereotypes: the guy with a machine gun and his mask gives a cliché. Next to him there is Issa. With black shoe-polish make-up on his face and a white hat, he looks like a comedian. There is a third person with Ray Ban sunglasses and a cowboy-hat, similar to a Maverick, that American Western-hero. He is smoking cigarettes. He also reminds me of the Marlboro-Man. What is the basis of such aesthetic? Do these outfits refer to original characters, that you saw in newspapers reports?

CD: That is delicate, because now we speak about having fun in my production. In a certain way, my re-enactment is sort of a game, but it restages extremely sad events. Almost like kids that play cops and robbers. In several scenes you become aware of the ironic alienation that should be a signal not to take the video too serious. I am aware, this does not really fit with the drama and the effect of the events. In many of my works I do not only depict terror, but catastrophes in general. I dare to exploit my artistic liberty, my jester's licence, which is not available to Spielberg in his commercial cinema, for example. He would not be allowed to show ironic exaggeration—I guess—without being punished later, whereas for me, because I work in a smaller, secure space—in art—I take

the liberty of doing so. This way, I can change common layers of perception. If tragedy is not treated really seriously anymore, then you can profit from ironic alienation. This allows some funny effects, like Rainer Ganahl has to smoke in my video—for the very first and last time in his life. He originally is a militant non-smoker. You can see he smokes really badly.

Question from the audience by Eva Herschinger:

Doesn't irony perhaps bring some relief, just like we know from theater? On the one hand, you stifle your laughter, but on the other hand you have the impression that everything is not that serious. This creates a feeling of relief which simultaneously turns into disappointment. Perhaps, the irony that you use as an artist does not always seem to be suitable.

CD: There is still another element—the plot is very dramatic. The drama happens within these 14 minutes. Finally there is a void: death. That is all known, there is no redemption in any sense. You can insert a certain level of alienation into fiction, but in the end, any laughter stifles because there is no escape from fate in this story.

SB: We already talked about the two forms of presentation. How did you change the installation?

CD: There is an endless variety of presentation modes, because every time when I set up the installation, it seems like a new work for me, due to the fact that I am constantly arranging things a little differently. Maybe this relates to shifting memories. Though I have the same elements, I do not use all of them every time.

SB: But you need a kind of a suitcase with requisites, to keep all props like bags, TV, shoes, clothes available...

CD: Those parts wander, of course. They are in stock and I sent them to the exhibitions. Sometimes the dimensions of the two rooms are different, according to the museum space, and it happens that people from the staff get measures wrong or make any other mistake, then I have to adjust the installation. In general, as I said, there is little difference when a visitor has seen the work in Antwerpen in 2006 or now again in Toulouse in 2012. He will say it is the same work. There are no dramatic changes, only subtle variations. There is also the possibility to show only the video as projection or on a single monitor, but that is uncommon. The Centre Pompidou showed it that way. Normally, I insist on the presentation of the whole installation.

SB: If we take a look back, we are now 40 years after Munich, eleven years after 9/11. How do you see your work and its reflection of media and cultural memory in relation to 1972?

CD: It is difficult to judge, because I have not really been close to the events in 1972. I was a child and I can hardly remember, but all I know is of course what everyone knows from movies, the news coverage, books etc. For me, it is challenging to think about the adverb “back then” and what it means, or what impact the global TV-broadcasting had on us. For example, I can better remember the first man on the moon than 1972 in Munich, just because perhaps my parents allowed me to watch the moon landing. They spared me the events in Munich. At that time, when the Olympic Games took place, I was seven years old.

But the way in which terrorists used the world as stage was, looking at the example of Munich, accomplished at a high level of sophistication. It was the first time when Olympic Games have been broadcasted live around the world and the terrorists instantly capitalized on

their chance to get attention. After Munich 1972, the terrorist attacks on 9/11 were much bigger in scope, also because today we have more media coverage, we are far more linked. Everyone saw it on a different screen. In 1972, there were only a few programs available, and radio. Today you could see an event like 9/11 everywhere, and it has constantly been replayed. I think the conceptual difference was much less than we assume, between 1972 and 2001.

Comment from the audience (Simone Egger): Everytime when I am walking through Connolly-Straße, I feel like a movie is repeatedly played in my head. I always try to reconstruct the events in my mind and reflect about what might have happened inside the apartment. I automatically insert the images from the media into my memory. That is why I think your installation exemplifies this reflection much more precisely and more real in comparison to any slick documentary.

CD: It is certainly a method of identifying with the events when I restage things like that. There are societies that are interested in re-enacting historical events, like the battle of Gettysburg. These societies dress in historical costumes and meet annually at the historical site to re-enact the event. There is this famous artwork by the British Artist Jeremy Deller, called *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001).¹¹ For this re-enactment he asked English mineworkers, policeman and volunteers to re-enact the battle they fought with the British police 16 years later. He even put real policemen on the set.

SB: But Jeremy Deller also allowed some actors to switch roles, the policemen played miners and the miners were policemen—just to alienate the conventional way of role-play (Farquharson 2001). The artist cracked the code of representation. He would not do the same as the re-enactment society. That is similar to your work when you play the terrorist in your re-enactment.

CD: I believe re-enactment has much explosive potential because it is not left to Hollywood only. We do this already as children. We try to cope with experience by restaging and simultaneously reflecting what we look like when we play. That is important for many re-enactments, not only mine. I did many re-enactments in the nineties, but my work about Munich was probably the most discussed. Before I did reenactments of violent Hollywood- movies. But anyone could do this. When you look at such a work and you see how the artist has created it by using only few things, a very cheap and rapid shot, like a sketch, like something everyone could do with a video camera, then you know spontaneity is part of the game. This spontaneity allows variations of real facts. Perhaps, improvisation also helps to develop a closer relation to the event and then you can handle it in one way or another. That is what my strategy is. This is the main reason why I do my work at all, I do not want to leave the stage only to Mister Spielberg.

Simone Egger:

Have you shown your video in Munich or why did it not work to show it here?

CD: No, I have not yet. The *Black September* video has never been shown in Munich. But I showed it in very close distance, last year in 2011 at the Museum der Moderne in Salzburg. Nevertheless, 40 years after the Olympic Games attack it would have been perfect to show it here in Munich.

SB: I know, our host today here in Munich, the Bundeswehr (German Army) has a military archive. But it is only for real weapons. They don't collect artworks yet.

CD: A propos Army. In my video, the footage quotes a phrase by the american news reporter after the disaster has been made public on September 6, 1972: "The German Army, because of very complicated laws, was not

allowed to participate.” Thus, the Bundeswehr cannot be accused for the failure of the police at Fürstenfeldbruck Airport, when so many people died at the end.

SB: How do you think the space of the museum and artwork in general can function as an agent for peace and a civil society? Like an institution, similar to a democratic parliament, whose discourse level creates an opportunity to discuss and solve conflicts, but not outside common political processes?

CD: Naturally, we have to stay realistic and admit, that art has no regular impact on society. There are few exceptions, like the Chinese artist Ai Wei Wei who has already been punished because he articulated subtle protest against the Chinese government. When I do such an artwork, I want to offer a dispositive that has not yet had a format of discussion. In addition, I hope someone might see it. But how many people would see the whole installation, if not right at a *documenta*-exhibition in Kassel/Germany? And even if it was shown at *documenta*, on such a big event, everyone is only consuming art just as a “must have”! Within one or a few days you rush through the exhibition without remembering much afterwards. I am realistic, unfortunately, not very optimistic. Art belongs to leisure today, to a general cultural attraction that society creates for itself—I am part of that. And if I would show even more blood or brutality in my video, people would be callous, look into the installation and ask, “oh, what was that?”, then they go to see the next artwork. I am not very optimistic about the efficiency of art as a trigger for social change, but I believe, it has some effects, though, just like your terrorism research-network.¹²

SB: Thank you. We will stick to that.

(Endnotes)

1. The term “counter image” was

prominently deployed by the recent exhibition *Bild–Gegen–Bild/Image Counter Image* at Haus der Kunst München in 2012 (Dander and Lorz 2012). For the origin of the term, see Meyer 2009.

2. http://www.christophdraeger.com/categories/data/categories/04_Videos/LastNews/03

3. After the terrorist attacks of 9/11 Slavoj Žižek’s theory is often referred to as explanation of the shock that was proliferated through the media (Zizek 2002). Zizek himself quotes this metaphor from the movie *The Matrix*, directed by the Wachowski Brothers in 1999. Whereas the Wachowskis refer to French philosopher Jean Baudrillard who already coined the term in 1978 in his book „Simulacres et Simulation“ (Baudrillard 1994: 3). „The desert of the real“ signifies what Baudrillard describes as „hyperreality“, according to the surrealist writings of Jorge-Louis Borges, meaning that reality has been replaced by the indifference of the „precession of simulacra“. In 2001, the notion of simulation has often been discussed by media theoretics in the aftermath of September 11th.

4. The „Black September“-group was founded after the PLO was dispersed from Jordan. It was part of the el-Fatah organisation in Lebanon and the al-Saikah organisation in Syria (See Dietl et. al. 2006: 43–45; Forster/Knieper 2008).

5. The three Palestinian hostage-takers who had been imprisoned in Germany, were released to Lybia in November 1972. Many documents and historical information about the event are contained on the unofficial website: “Die Spiele der XX. Olympiade München 1972.” Web. 5. March 2013. <http://olympia72.de/attentat1.html>, See Reeve 2000; Forster/Knieper 2008.

6. *Munich*, directed by Steven Spielberg, USA 2005. Screenplay by Tony Kushner and Eric Roth, based on the novel *Vengeance: The True Story of an Israeli Counter-Terrorist Team* by George Jonas, first published in 1984.

7. Daniel Binswanger refers to the term 'posthistoire' coined by Alexandre Kojève when he speaks about Draeger's works that are created after the catastrophe, which means they are delayed. „Draeger's ease is a symptom of inescapable tardiness that one attempts to designate as posthistoire.“ (Binswanger 1999: 55)

8. Issa was the name of the leader of the Black September group who negotiated with the state deputies and knew to speak the German language, too; he is the one of the Palestinians with the white hat and black make up face, he also has been photographed the most.

9. In Germany, the Olympic Games in Munich in 1972 were announced as "Heitere Spiele", because they should bring the new "bright" Germany to the attention of the world audience. This should mark the difference to the Olympic Games in Berlin in 1936 that were dominated by Nazi-Propaganda.

10. The term 'skyjacking' is derived from its origin 'hijacking', but especially refers to airplane-hijacking. Most prominent female skyjacker was Palestinian Leila Khaled, photographed by Eddie Adams, See: "A Day With The Arab's No. 1 Lady Skyjacker." *The Victoria Advocate* 29 Nov. 1970: 62. Print.

11. On June 18th, 1984, the conflict between the British National Union of Mineworkers and the British government escalated in a violent clash near the coking plant of Orgreave in South Yorkshire. Margaret Thatcher, who was determined to break

the power of trade unions, sent out police units to disperse the protesting miners. The British artist Jeremy Deller did research on that event and revived history in cooperation with former participants of the „battle“, supported by so-called „re-enactment“ groups, miners and policeman. The re-enactment was documented by Mike Figgis for Channel 4 television, combining scenes from the restaged event on June 17th, 2001, with documentary photographs of the clash of 1984 (Wagner 2007).

12. Since 2007 the German Terrorism-Research-Network NTF e.V. (Netzwerk-Terrorismusforschung) is offering an academic exchange platform for interdisciplinary scholars who do research on different topics in relation to terrorism and political violence. www.netzwerk-terrorismusforschung.org

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Image Notes

Figure 1: Christoph Draeger, *Black September*. 2002. Synchronized two-channel video installation, DVD 14:30 min. loop, destroyed hotel room, dimensions variable, Installation view, Alcala 31 Contemporary Art Center, Madrid 2003. Courtesy the artist.

Figure 2: Christoph Draeger. *The Last News*. 2002, Video, MiniDV to DVD, 13 min, Ed. of 5, videostill, Christoph Draeger and Reynold Reynolds, Digital animation by Gary Breslin/PanOptic, Starring Guy Richard Smith. Courtesy the artist. Web. 13.03.2013. http://www.christophdraeger.com/categories/data/categories/04_Videos/LastNews/06

Figure 3: Christoph Draeger, *Black September*. 2002. Synchronized two-channel video installation, DVD 14:30 min. loop, Videostill. Courtesy the artist.

Figure 4: Christoph Draeger, *Black September*. 2002. Synchronized two-channel video installation, DVD 14:30 min. loop, Installation view, Galerie Müller Chiara Berlin 2002. Courtesy the artist.

Figure 5: Kevin McDonald. *One day in September*. 1999. Videostill. Courtesy Passion Pictures.

Figure 6: Movie Poster: Kevin Macdonald. *One Day in September*. 1999. Web. 13 March 2013. Digital Image. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:One_Day_in_September_Cinema_Poster.jpg

Figure 7: Cover page. Der Spiegel. *Geheimakte Olympia*. 30, 23. July 2012.

Figure 8: Christoph Draeger. *Black September*. 2002. Synchronized two-channel video installation, DVD 14:30 min. loop, videostill. Courtesy the artist.

Figure 9: Christoph Draeger. *Black September*. 2002. Synchronized two-channel video installation, DVD 14:30 min. loop, videostill. Courtesy the artist.

Figure 10: Steven Spielberg. *Munich*. 2005. Filmstill. Courtesy Universal Pictures.

Figure 11: Christoph Draeger. *Black September*. 2002. Synchronized two-channel video installation, DVD 14:30 min. loop, videostill. Courtesy the artist.

Figure 12: Christoph Draeger. *Black September*. 2002. Synchronized two-channel video installation, DVD 14:30 min. loop, videostill. Courtesy the artist .

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