German Cultural Responses to the Red Army Faction (*Rote Armee Fraktion*)

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Contents

Introduction

Aims

This work aims to assess the content and impact of the 'terrorist' in German cultural forms, more specifically to its reception in the German media and academic literature. In mapping the ideological discourses of reception, the main area of focus will be examining how cultural productions help conceptualise the difficult issues which 'terrorism' raises, and how they are intended and used to make sense of, and 'come to terms', with political violence.

There are three main questions to be addressed. Firstly, how these cultural productions have been used in order to conceptualise the phenomenon of the *Rote Armee Fraktion* ('Red Army Faction', or RAF) in the Federal Republic of Germany. This will be indicated by the way the productions were received. The second question is that of attempting to discern a pattern of reception, developments and changes over time. The third main question this work raises is, from the above analysis of cultural productions, which discourses of 'terrorism' became predominant.

There are three specific reasons for doing this study. Firstly, there has been no systematic study on this subject either in Britain or Germany. Two related works on the subject have been published. One is a journal article about 'terrorism' in the 'New German Cinema'. This is limited in that it tackles only one film in depth - Margarethe von Trotta's *Die bleierne Zeit* - and as a journal article adopts a specific theoretical focus, in this instance examining elements of these films from a feminist perspective.[1] The one book on the subject has much useful analysis, but is

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[1] Koch, G., 'Schuld und Unschuld - Das Bild der Terroristin im Neuen Deutschen Film', *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte*, Vol. 21, 1992, pp.335-47

limited to a handful of lesser known works about the RAF in German literature.[2] This thesis will concentrate on principally six presentations by established authors. By focusing on such works a wide media response is guaranteed. Within a wider framework, works which were interpreted as being a response to the issues political violence raised will also briefly be discussed, as will reactions to, for example, documentaries, or works on neo-nazism.

A further reason for this study is that the vast majority of German documents used in this study are not available in the English language. Although many of the cultural productions have been adapted for international consumption, the reaction to these works has not been translated or generally written on outside Germany. Notably works such as Meinhof's television play *Bambule* are not available in a form other than German.

Another reason for this work is to highlight the importance of the role of cultural production within the German context. Whilst the work will have implications for study within other contexts, the specific German historical and cultural setting will be stressed throughout. Much of the political violence of the RAF, it will be suggested, caused controversy and a deep psychological consternation *(Betroffenheit)* because of the links to the political violence of the Nazis. This cultural context also had within it artistic figures who directly involved themselves in the controversies which the response to the RAF and the group itself raised.[3]

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[2] *GeRAVftes: Analysen zur Darstellung der RAF und des Linksterrorismus in der deutschen Literatur*, Dombrowa. B., (ed), (Bamberg, Arbeitsbereich der neueren deutschen Literaturwissenschaft. 1994)

[3] The filmmakers Alexander Kluge, Volker Schlöndorff and Margarethe von Trotta, for example, publically protested with the mothers of two jailed terrorists at the high-point of terrorism in the Federal Republic, against the "terroristic character of the judicial system". 'Mord beginnt beim bösen Wort', *Der Spiegel*, 7.11.77, p.152

The basic argument of this thesis is that an analysis of the cultural productions and the responses to them suggest that German society is gradually 'coming to terms' with the political violence of the RAF. Such productions provide alternative ways of conceptualising the complex and difficult issues which 'terrorism' raises, and, as such, were open to attack from sections of the media who often wished to discursively limit and politically control these issues. There are indications, however, that by early 1990's the RAF had been accepted as a complex phenomenon, a process which the cultural productions may have contributed to by opening up new viewpoints for debate.

The six principal cultural productions which will be analysed in detail are:

Deutschland im Herbst (1977) - A collective film by eleven major German film-makers, including Alexander Kluge, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Edgar Reitz and Volker Schlöndorff

Die dritte Generation (1979) - A film by Rainer Werner Fassbinder

Die bleierne Zeit (1981) - A film by Margarethe von Trotta

Stammheim: Baader-Meinhof vor Gericht (1986) - A film by Reinhard Hauff, screenplay by Stefan Aust

18. Oktober 1977 (1989) - An art series by Gerhard Richter

Ulrike Meinhof (1990) - Choreographic dance theatre production by Johann Kresnik

The History of the Rote Armee Fraktion ('RAF')

As this work focusses on how primarily the RAF were interpreted and received through cultural forms, a brief background detailing the history of the RAF is required in order to establish a context in which these forms were set.[4]

In May 1970 Ulrike Meinhof, a journalist for the radical left-wing journal *Konkret* who had worked closely with the student activists of the late 1960's and who was the intellectual force behind the 'first generation' of the movement, participated in the armed freeing of Andreas Baader (imprisoned for arson attacks on German department stores) in Berlin. Once underground, they announced the formation of the 'Rote Armee'[5], although they were informally christened as the 'Baader-Meinhof-Gruppe' in the West German media. In the summer of 1970 the core of the group underwent military training at an *El Fatah* base in Jordan. From September 1970 to May 1972 the group, which had financed itself through multiple armed bank robberies, bombed police, army, and media targets, as well as assassinating selected police and judicial officials. The core of the 'first' generation of the RAF were arrested in a series of operations in June 1972. Over the next two years hungerstrikes by prominent prisoners followed, claiming that they were subjected to "isolation torture" and not given the same rights as other prisoners. In November 1974 Holger Meins became the first RAF prisoner to die from refusing food. In April 1975 the German Embassy in Stockholm was taken over by a group demanding the release of 26 prisoners, ending in a storming of the embassy by

[4] This section is largely based upon the chronology of events found in Butz Peters' 'RAF:Terrorismus in Deutschland' (Knaur, München, 1993), pp.469-78, and Hans Josef Horchem's 'The Decline of the Red Army Faction', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 3, Summer 1991, pp.61-74

[5] An explanation for the freeing of Baader, probably written by Meinhof, ends 'Mit dem bewaffneten Widerstand beginnen/ Die Rote Armee aufbauen!' ('Start with the armed struggle/ Build the Red Army!'). From 'Erklärung zur Befreiung von Andreas Baader: Die Rote Armee aufbauen' in *Ausgewählte Dokumente der Zeitgeschichte: Bundesrepublik Deutschland (BRD)/ Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF)* (GNN Gesellschaft für Nachrichtenerfassung und Nachrichtenverbreitung, Verlagsgesellschaft Politische Berichte m.b.H., Köln, 1993), p.4

officials, and deaths as the groups' bombs were accidentally detonated. A few weeks later Meinhof was found dead in her cell. Suicide was given as the official explanation, although doubts were raised over this official account by those on the radical left. In March 1977 Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin and Jan-Carl Raspe were sentenced to life imprisonment for four murders and thirty-four attempted murders, in a courtroom bunker built specifically for the purpose of the trial inside the grounds of the prison at Stammheim-Stuttgart.

Further judicial and banking personnel were assassinated in the summer, and in September the business leader, Hans-Martin Schleyer, was kidnapped by the RAF (who killed four of his accompanying personnel in the operation), demanding the release of eleven RAF prisoners. Pressure was increased on the authorities when a Lufthansa airliner was hijacked whilst travelling from Mallorca to Frankfurt in mid-October. After the pilot was killed by the hijackers in Aden, the co-pilot flew the plane to Mogadishu, where a specially-formed German anti-terrorist group ('GSG-9') successfully stormed the plane, killing three of the four hijackers. The same day Baader, Ensslin and Raspe were found dead in their cells in Stammheim, and, in a similar manner to the death of Ulrike Meinhof, the official version of suicide was questioned by those on the political left. The next day Schleyer was found dead following a communiqué from the RAF claiming responsibility for his death. These events of October 1977 became infamously known as *Der deutsche Herbst* ('The German Autumn') as they signified a high-point in the violence.

RAF tactics then changed from hostage-taking to targetting prominent representatives of the 'military-industrial complex'. General Alexander Haig, a Supreme Commander of NATO forces, escaped an assassination attempt in June 1979, and similarly in September 1981, United States General Frederick Kroesen narrowly escaped a rocket attack. At the end of 1982 the leading members of the 'second generation' - including Brigitte Mohnhaupt and Christian Klar - were

arrested. Further arms and bank robberies equipped the '3rd. generation' who joined the French *Action Directe* and the Belgian *Cellules Communistes Combattantes* (CCC) in January 1985, 'for the unity of revolutionaries in Western Europe', in an effort to build a 'West European Guerrilla' group. Although this was a short-lived union - due to the 1987 arrest of *Action Directe* members, and a lack of logistical support from the CCC - up until April 1991 leading business and military figures were targetted with varying degrees of success. At the end of the 1980's a strategic emphasis was placed upon economic targets that contributed to a 'European global power'.

In January 1992 the "Kinkel-Initiative", named after the German FDP party's Minister of Justice, announced the need for some form of reconciliation between the state and the RAF. Three months later the RAF announced a temporary end to its policy of targetting state and business representatives, indicating a will to take part in some form of peaceful political discussion. In the "August Paper" of the same year, the RAF admitted that their policy adopted in 1982 - the assassination of state representatives - could not result in success, and announced a period of inactivity in order to 'build a wide revolutionary basis'. Although in March 1993 a judicial institute was badly damaged by 200 kilograms of explosive, and three months later an exchange of fire at the railway station in Bad Kleinen left a GSG-9 officer and an RAF member dead, there have been no more attacks since. There appear many subsequent indications that the RAF may formally disband, following demands by imprisoned RAF members for the dissolution of the organisation. Helmut Pohl, sentenced to life imprisonment in 1982 for a bomb attack on a United States airbase the previous year, gave an interview to the magazine *Konkret*, in which he derided left wing attacks since the mid-1980's as "A series of shootings...(without any) strategic function".[6] Other

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[6] 'Schluß mit der Schießerei - Gnade jetzt?', *Badische Zeitung*, 14.6.96

recently released people imprisoned for RAF activity have also called for a dissolution of the RAF, and renounced a return to violence.[7]

It may be, therefore, that the RAF in its known form is about to end, even though a declaration was released as late as December 1996. This accused the state of murder, claiming that the group still had support from the legal left for militant actions, and that the authorities still know little about the RAF, despite the recent tactic of lessening the sentences of captured members for information on the RAF.[8] The impact of the RAF on German society has, however, been far-reaching in ways which will be discussed throughout this work. Stefan Aust, a journalist who worked alongside Meinhof in the 1960's, and whose book *Der Baader-Meinhof-Komplex* was the basis for the film *Stammheim*, notes this impact in summing up the death totals up until the autumn of 1977: 28 people died as a result of RAF actions, 17 members of the group lost their lives, and 2 unconnected people were killed accidentally by police bullets. This, he notes, was the 'balance' of seven years of terrorism, years 'which changed the Republic'.[9]

In order to conceptualise and 'explain' the phenomenon of the RAF, various competing discourses arose. As the subsequent cultural productions on the subject of 'terrorism' and the media reception to them drew upon these, it is necessary to examine their nature and use.

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[7] 'Freiheit für die Terroristin', *Badische Zeitung*, 10.5.96
[8] '"Das System braucht den Polizeistaat"', *Tageszeitung*, 5.12.96
[9] Aust, S., 'Der Baader-Meinhof-Komplex' (München, Knaur, 1989), p.592

Discourses of Terrorism

In reviewing a book on the Aldo Moro kidnap of March 1978 in Italy, Uri Eisenzweig notes that the reality of events were overwhelmingly *textual* in nature.[1] 'Terrorist' acts must have an accompanying text to authenticate the event as such, and this text is situated within a social context - the 'paratext' - which determines how the text is read. This thesis will change the emphasis, in that it will regard cultural producers - artists, writers, and filmmakers - as those who provide texts on 'terrorism', whilst the newspaper reactions provide the paratext. The struggle for providing or situating the interpretation of the productions which makes up this paratext is discursive, namely, discourses are created which compete to determine the reading of the text. Paratexts attempt to fix the text in aiming to control it, a difficult, if not impossible task to achieve, given both the resistance of 'terrorism' to conceptualisation, and the politically contentious nature of the subject. This thesis will examine attempts to control and 'fix' the readings of political violence as reproduced in the cultural sphere through discourse.

Discourse theory centers the role of language in constituting a subject through the unstable interpretative possibilities of texts, differentiated by their intention. It is, therefore, not interested in making claims upon 'truth' or 'rationality', as such claims would denote a fictional (although 'successful') discourse. Rather, its purpose is to examine 'some of the ways people talk themselves into doing things...less to distinguish between the rational and the non-rational than to identify the coin by which different rationalities are measured'.[2] Discursive practice may be defined from this as a large, and regular set of

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[1] Eisenzweig, U., 'Terrorism in Real Life and Literature', *Diacritics*, Vol. 18(3), Fall 1988, pp.32-42

[2] Apter, D.E., 'Discourse Theory and Political Violence', *Times Literary Supplement*, 13.2.98

statements which define an object or account of reality by the generation of 'knowledge'. It provides concepts to analyse this object or reality, which in turn shapes the rules about what can (and cannot) be said about it, as well as delimiting who is qualified to say it.

In looking at this functional role of language, discourse theory links language to relations of power. Discourse as language creates "realities" by "experts" which may, through 'knowledge' being discursively structured in response to particular group interests who control, select and organise it, exert a powerful political influence. The discursive labelling of the Branch-Davidians in 1993 in Waco as a child-abusing "cult" (with no substantiating evidence), their dehumanisation, and reduction of the situation to a simplistic morality tale, was, for example, the result of FBI and discredited pressure-group interests provoking a confrontation to renew their damaged credibility.[3]

The relatively small number of deaths resulting from RAF activity in West Germany (noted by Aust, above), and the size of the actively violent organisation (which the writer Heinrich Böll termed 'the senseless war of six against sixty million'[4]) is in contrast to the massive legal and political response which it engendered. By the end of the 1970's, the Federal Criminal Investigation Office (the *Bundeskriminalamt*, or BKA) had amassed computer data-bases containing 4.7 million names, 2.1 million fingerprints and 1.9 million photographs of people. It included people suspected of 'terrorism' since 1970 (often with no corresponding evidence), the names of organisations opposed to job opportunities being blocked because of political conviction, and people who may have been seen in the

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[3] Douglass, W.A., and Zulaika, J., *Terror and Taboo: The Follies. Fables, and Faces of Terrorism* (London, Routledge, 1996), pp.160-71

[4] Böll, H., 'Will Ulrike Meinhof Gnade oder freies Geleit?' reprinted in Böll, H., *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum: Oder - Wie Gewalt entstehen und wohin sie führen kann* (Köln, Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 1992), p.202

company of those already under surveillance, or who had visited 'terrorists' in prison (regardless of whether the association was familial or not).[5] Existing laws were extended. Lawyers representing those under suspicion of political violence could be dismissed, have their written notes scrutinised, and in some cases not allowed to make contact with the defendant.[6] The 'Hamburg Decrees' passed by the German constitutional court in 1975, made applicants for civil service posts prove their "inner committment" to the state. A 1976 law on the 'Protection of Communal Peace' gave the police the power to act against any 'organisation' whose published words were likely to disturb the peace. Subsequently a Baader-Meinhof lawyer was imprisoned for organising an interview with his clients for *Der Spiegel*, and even people distributing leaflets protesting against the solitary confinement of suspected 'terrorists' in custody were arrested. Such measures, one commentator notes, were unprecented in modern Europe, apart from the military dictatorships of Spain and Greece.[7] The actual size of the problem as compared to the massive response, in manpower, expenditure, legal sanctions, 'experts' and texts (including cultural productions) reveals the power of conflicting interests to utilise discourse within their own fields, which sustained this response.

'Terrorist' texts may be constituted by both cultural production and news reports, among many other forms. The variety of discourses in these texts which arise in response to 'terrorism' reveal a chaotic proliferation of interpretative codes, since the ambiguities and moral paradoxes defy a unifying perspective. Newspapers aim both to create and control these codes, as agencies which circulate discourse, as well as controlling the discursive space for speakers and listeners (who is able to speak, and what is said being issues of power). It is in artistic reviews that interpretative codes are best revealed, given the freedom from requirements for

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[5] Aust, S., *Der Baader-Meinhof-Komplex* (München, Knaur, 1989), pp.202-4

[6] Backes, U., and Jesse, E., *Politischer Extremismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Bonn, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1993), p.207

[7] Grosscup, B., *The Explosion of Terrorism* (New Jersey, New Horizon Press, 1987), p.226

'balance' or 'objectivity' which a newspaper would nominally adhere to in reporting political violence. In establishing a historical paratext, a newspaper is attempting to create a "correct" reading of the production, and, therefore, of 'terrorism' itself. It is characteristic of both the majority of the cultural productions on 'terrorism', and the 'liberal' media in this case, to view ambiguity over issues raised more favourably than other sectors of the media. This ambiguity, especially in times of crisis, is often viewed as dangerous, resulting in a multitude of discourses (particularly from the right) attempting to provide a 'closed' reading - the construction of a single and complete interpretation against which other interpretations are excluded.

The focus of this work will be examining such aspects of this 'paratext' in the reaction to cultural productions. In doing this I have included two basic contextualisations. First, because it is difficult for a (para)text to be 'disinterested', I have attempted to provide a neutral description of the cultural production. This is not intended to prejudice the reader, but is designed to provide a context for the analysis of the reception by critics. This, however, raises the issue of whether it is possible, in attempting to be 'objective', to speak of 'good' or 'bad' texts. This work attempts to provide an overview of the formation and entanglements of various discursive positions as 'objectively' as possible, but it will become clear that I regard certain aesthetic forms as more adequate for understanding the phenomenon of the RAF, and therefore for 'coming to terms' with this ambiguous subject. This criteria for evaluating discourse is based upon the (Habermassian) notion that 'rationality' ought to be founded on a consensus achieved in conditions of an 'open' speech situation.

Discourse theory is useful for mapping out and describing discourses, although does not provide such a strong basis for evaluative judgement, particularly as it is sceptical of ideas of free speech. Foucault, for example, thought the self 'constituted in discourses and then re-experienced within all the texts of

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everyday life'.[8] This is problematic, not being able to picture a situation where positions 'outside' of discursive structures may be achieved. In regarding discursive disciplines as excluding elements which do not fit its own truth, discourse theory is sceptical of discourses to be anything other than exclusive. 'Open' conditions of debate, however, may be a means of at least providing awareness of a multiplicity of views, allowing, if not a position 'outside' discourse, then a certain freedom to better judge discursive positions. Such conditions of debate are a precondition of an agreement between free and equal individuals, as opposed to the foreclosing of debate through discursive practices which resist questioning and which impose a coercive exclusory reading. A 'bad' discourse is, therefore, one designed to limit and close off the debate of issues surrounding 'terrorism' (for example by reducing 'terrorist' acts to tropes of criminality or psychopathology). A 'good' discourse allows new perspectives on violence to be opened up, and is, therefore, an attempt to take the problem seriously, exposing prejudicial and dogmatic responses, allowing the complex and ambiguous issues surrounding political violence to be conceptualised in greater depth. An important part of this is the idea of identification on a 'human' level with those who practice political violence. A key theme throughout this thesis is that of 'bad' discourses being supplanted over time by 'good' ones, indicating a better understanding and a more adequate 'coming to terms' with the issues raised.

Secondly, the intentions of makers of cultural artefacts (for example, artists or directors) will be outlined and briefly analysed. This is not to regard this intention as an infallible 'meaning' behind the production (discourse theory traditionally wants to play down the role of the author, since the postulate of the multiple interpretative possibilities does not allow a text to necessarily mean the same for both author and reader). Statements of intent are, rather, texts in their

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[8] Parker, I., 'Discourse and Power' in Shotter, J., and Gergen, K.J. (eds) *Texts of Identity* (London, Sage Productions, 1994), p.36

own right, published alongside competing interpretations of both 'terrorism' in general, and the production in particular. In this particular study such statements also help illustrate the relation of the artist to political issues in Germany, and specifically their right and duty to present themes and perspectives which challenge the political orthodoxy.

Discourse theory maps a subject simultaneously fragmented and constituted by discourse, a subject "decentered" (after Derrida) or "dispersed" (after Foucault) into discursive positions.[9] As this work is concerned for a large part with the 'readings' of cultural artefacts on left wing violence in Germany it is useful to give an example of the discursive sites which emerged to shape different readings of a subject. One way of doing this is to focus on the discursive practices surrounding Ulrike Meinhof, a figure whose recent reassessments and rehabilitation illustrates the struggle over her history. The manufacture of Meinhof into an icon by some is shown by the events surrounding the recent twentieth anniversary of her death. A conference entitled 'A generational meeting on a left wing project' took place at the *Technische Universität* in Berlin. Speakers there spoke of Meinhof in iconographic terms: She was, for one, "the icon for the radical left, a hero without fault and blemish."[10] Amid other praiseworthy assessments of Meinhof her enlarged image was projected onto the wall above the speakers, a move which the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* thought demonstrated an attempt to compare Meinhof to Rosa Luxemburg.[11] *Der Spiegel* noted that in 'numerous' communal houses a picture of Meinhof hangs, which 'has been for a long time like an icon of the Madonna', having taken on a mythical quality as a symbol of the 'German condition' up to the present day.[12] The twentieth anniversary of her death was widely covered in the

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[9] Shumway, D.R., *Michel Foucault* (Charlottesville and London. University Press of Virginia, 1992), pp.102-3

[10] 'Gerührt, nicht geschüttelt', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 6.5.96.

[11] Ibid.

[12] '"Revolutionäres Gewäsch"', *Der Spiegel*, 12.8.96, p.136

German media, which reveals not only a continuing confrontation over the issues she raised, but also suggests Meinhof's representation as central to that confrontation. This representation is , however, fluid, having been appropriated and re-appropriated, leading to a multitude of constructions of her from within different discourses. The German weekly broadsheet *Die Zeit* noted:

'Ulrike Meinhof starb vor zwanzig Jahren als (bitte ankreuzen) Staatsfeind Nummer eins, Märtyrerin, Irre. Seither hat sie es zu einer Art Barbie-Puppe der politischen Popkultur gebracht, jeder kann sie nach eigenem Gutdünken um- und verkleiden'.[13]

In this way, Meinhof as an individual becomes transformed and subsumed into the wider discourses which have arisen to 'explain' the RAF. These explanatory discourses arising around Ulrike Meinhof are particularly instructive because of the many apparent contradictions which surrounded her. Such contradictions allow those seeking an 'explanation' for her actions space within which an act of 'closure' may be performed. There are many contradictions in Meinhof's case that give this act a significance for people who wish to 'explain' her actions: Why was political violence necessary in a country where democratic institutions were designed to assimilate political discontents peacefully? Why was there 'terrorism' in a country which was economically one of the most prosperous in the world following the post-war *Wirtschaftswunder*? Why did a woman behave in this 'unnatural' way by giving up her children to go into the underground and to perpetrate violence, thus 'perverting her nurturing instincts'?

In attempts to explain these apparent contradictions, Meinhof has been discursively represented as 'Public Enemy Number One', a martyr, a lunatic, or a 'misguided' (although politically-engaged) radical. In addition to these, Meinhof's

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[13] 'Ulrike Meinhof died twenty years ago as (please tick as applicable) the state's number one enemy, martyr, lunatic. Since then she has become a Barbie-doll of political popular culture - anyone can dress her up any way they like'. 'Natürlich kann geschossen werden'. *Die Zeit*. 10.5.96.

case is also tied into the wider discursive patterns surrounding the 'causes' and 'nature' of the female 'terrorist'. These may be illustrated by examining Robin Morgan's *The Demon Lover*, and Eileen MacDonald's *Shoot the Women First*,[14] both of which include West German female 'terrorists' in their broader analysis. Morgan takes the view that women are fundamentally pacifists, operating outside the political sphere due to their 'life giver/life lover' role and abilities. Wanting power over someone is claimed as a male 'dynamic', based upon a 'death-loving' instinct. This she calls the 'Eros-Thanatos' dichotomy. Thus the male 'hero' is a hero of death, whilst women are a threat within a heroic construct which trivialises 'pure' love, a love which can only be liberated for the male through death. Whilst not usually violent, those women who are are, for Morgan, imitating men, 'transgressing' their inner nature to take on a male role. This, she notes, was what happened to Meinhof, being one of a group who became involved in violence because they were married to/had a relationship with a violent male, rather than primarily having a political agenda.[15] A broad parallel here is found within the German tradition to Theweleit's study of the fascist literature of the pre-war *Freikorps*, which emphasises the hate of women - manifested by a fear of dissolution through the engulfing liquidity of the feminine - felt by these soldiers, who celebrated violence in order to overcome this fear and armour the male self.[16]

Much of this is contentious. Meinhof's sustained political activism may be traced back to her student days, long before she became the chief ideologue of the 'first generation' of the RAF. Morgan's theory, however, neglects this, offering an attempt to explain the abandonment of the nurturing role of 'mother' and the inversion of the 'life giver/life lover role'. Eileen MacDonald recognises this

[14] MacDonald, E., *Shoot the Women First* (London, Fourth Estate. 1991); Morgan, R., *The Demon Lover: On the Sexuality of Terrorism* (London, Metheun. 1989)

[15] Morgan, op. cit., pp.203-11

[16] Theweleit, K., *Male Fantasies Volume 1: Women, Floods, Bodies, History* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1987); *Male Fantasies Volume 2: Male Bodies, Psychoanalyzing the White Terror* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1989)

paradox in her book. Taking how such women come to be seen as 'deviants' as her starting point, she asks why women have such a reputation for ferociousness that one security force issued orders to 'shoot the women first'. Macdonald advances her own theories for this: First, that women can be violent because they suffer from masculine and political oppression within the patriarchal order; second, that their strong maternal instincts are 'projected' onto their cause which becomes viewed as a child. This explains their (apparent) lack of emotion in killing, a view shared by a (female) historiographer of the Baader-Meinhof group:

> "[Terrorism is] a tremendous outlet for raw emotions and passion...If you accept, for whatever reason, that women are the more emotional sex then it's the male terrorists who are behaving in a female fashion...[they] usually see things with a religious intensity; they picture themselves as the children of light fighting against tyranny. The intensity of such feelings can keep a movement at fever pitch."[17]

MacDonald offers an alternative explanation to Morgan. In her many interviews with female 'terrorists' around the world, the overwhelming picture is of women who do not believe that violence is specifically a male preserve, and who argue that they practised violence for a political cause rather than being seduced into violence by men. The case of the large female membership of the RAF in Germany is given special attention. MacDonald hypothesises both that this is because West Germany is more emancipated than other countries, and that it stems from a 'guilt complex' caused by the relative inability of women to prevent the 'terrorism' perpetrated by the Nazis.[18]

Although each author challenges the liberal notion of gender by proposing a conception of female 'difference', these otherwise contradictory discursive positions reflect the debate within feminism today over ideas about how this 'different voice'

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[17] Becker, J., quoted in 'Deadlier than the Male?', *The Times*. 26.1.87.
[18] MacDonald, op. cit., pp.200-1

can and should be able to change a patriarchally constructed society. For MacDonald the 'difference' is one of an instinctive, pragmatic, and practical superiority, that women are more concerned with social improvements, whilst their maternal instincts give them a dedication rarely found in males. Morgan, however, appears to take these same characteristics and claims that in the case of women 'terrorists' they are subverted by the male death-loving instinct. MacDonald claims that society is more afraid of violent women because they have taken the role of aggressor away from the male domain, whilst Morgan claims women are unsuitable for this male role (women do not usually write war stories and the discourse of war is phallically orientated, for example), and as 'imitators' implies that women are somewhat the less effective practitioners of violence.

Such competing views illustrate both the impulses to provide a 'closed' explanation for complex phenomena and the problems in doing so. It is worthwhile examining the most prominent discourses which were applied in the case of Meinhof, to further illustrate this. Such discourses categorise, and thus function in the Kantian sense, in that they make our experience of the world comprehensible and, in doing so, suggest an appropriate response to the issues which they have identified.

The case of the 'martyr' being made into an icon has already briefly been mentioned. A further example here would be her daughter's contention that Meinhof was a 'misguided' political radical:

> '[Meinhofs] Entscheidung für ein Leben im Untergrund schnitt sie
> von den Möglichkeiten, etwas Wirksames gegen das soziale
> Unrecht zu tun, radikal ab. Von nun an befand sie sich selber in
> einer hilfsbedürftigen, ausweglosen Lage'.[19]

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[19] '[Meinhofs] decision for a life in the underground radically cut her off from the possibilities to do something effective against social injustice. From now on she found herself in a position of hopeless need'. '"...und natürlich kann geschossen werden"', *Badische Zeitung*, 9.5.96.

Opposed to this was the reaction from the conservative media in West Germany, which utilised a legal discourse to depoliticise the declared goals and motives of the RAF, locating them within the sphere of the 'criminal' (labelling the individuals in the group as *Staatsfeinde* - 'enemies of the state'). Thus the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* thought the Berlin conference on the twentieth anniversary of Meinhof's death showed that if the dogmatic language of the RAF is stripped away the true 'criminal' nature of their deeds are revealed.[20]

The interaction of discourses may also be illustrated by examining the accounts of Meinhof's former husband, the former editor of the left-wing journal *Konkret*, Klaus Rainer Röhl. Although his first book on the left (*Fünf Finger sind keine Faust* - "Five Fingers are not a Fist") was basically autobiographical, it was his second book, combining fact with fiction, which caused the most controversy. The book appears to have taken this form as a result of the demands of the market, revealing the commodification of a privileged discursive position. After *Fünf Finger...* sold badly, Röhl noted from reviews that there was more interest in his ex-wife than him. The publisher Fritz Molden, a man with little to do with the political left, however, convinced Röhl that a book based solely upon Meinhof would 'fail' not only because of legal problems, but also because Meinhof as a subject was no longer 'in fashion', and that fiction would provide a better medium for success.[21] The storyline utilises the structure of the thriller genre. A Japanese terror group hijacks a plane carrying the wife of the German Chancellor. The hijackers demand the release of all Baader-Meinhof prisoners, and that 'Katharina' (a thinly-disguised Meinhof, and one of the group of 'terrorists' in prison) be allowed to make a half-hour broadcast to the nation. In the meantime, Michael Luft

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[20] *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 6.5.96, op. cit.

[21] The account of the influences upon the formation and writing of this book is given in 'Aus der Genossin Kapital schlagen', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 21/22.6.75.

(Röhl's figure) has discovered that Baader is a CIA operative. In her talk Katharina claims that the group were only reactively responding to events, refusing to accompany the rest of the group into exile (which is fortunate, as the fleeing group are killed by the authorities).

The assumptions behind Röhl's fiction have sometimes been treated as fact. Jillian Becker, for example, utilises this account to further her thesis that Meinhof was emotionally immature, 'love hungry', insecure, and attracted to politics out of sentiment.[22] Reaction in the left-wing and liberal German media was predictably hostile; *Die Zeit* called it an 'obsession with manipulation and conspiracy' (*Manipulations- und Verschwörungstick*)[23], whilst Röhl's former journal, *Konkret*, objected to Röhl selling the overtly sexual, slightly lesbian figure of Meinhof, who only found satisfaction in Röhl.[24] In a later work Röhl was to rewrite Meinhof's history, advancing the thesis that she was (again) a victim, after being pulled into the organisation by Baader and Ensslin, and as such was actually murdered by her fellow-prisoners.[25]

Becker's book is symptomatic of the fact that the myth may take precedence over any committment to the demands of empirical scholarship. Where the 'closure' of narrative is discursively contested it is difficult to set a clear boundary between history and fiction. Even the most comprehensive and methodologically empirical work on the history of the 'first generation' of the RAF - Aust's *Der Baader-Meinhof-Komplex*, which relies almost solely on official documentation and regards personal opinions in a value-free way - still advances the thesis that Meinhof, in wanting to distance herself from her colleagues but not

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[22] Becker. J., *Hitler's Children: The Story of the Baader-Meinhof Gang*, (London. Grenada Publishing Limited. 1978). Becker quotes sporadically from *Die Genossin* throughout the work, whilst her rather conjectural final assessment of Meinhof is found on pp.330-1
[23] 'Ulrike. verwurstet', *Die Zeit*. 10.10.75
[24] 'Der Genoske', *Konkret*. 31.7.75
[25] 'Lebenslügen', *Focus*, 22.8.94

wanting to appear as a traitor, saw no alternative to suicide, an act influenced by her close reading of Brecht's *Die Maßnahme*.[26]

The discursive constructions of Meinhof, in their attempts to make her into something approaching an unproblematic reality are further complicated by allegations of brain damage and, therefore, of 'madness'. In this particular case this is revealed by the psychological and physical fascination with her brain, crossing the boundaries of the psychopathologic with popular beliefs about 'terrorism'. The background to this is the removal of a swollen blood vessel at the back of her brain and the insertion of a metal clamp to prevent further bleeding in 1962. This, it should be remembered, was a full eight years before she participated in the armed freeing of Baader. In Röhl's *Die Genossin*, however, this becomes a brain tumour, after which she moves to Berlin and is involved in the first shootings with Baader, the two events being causally linked. Although fact can be separated from fiction as far as the events are concerned, Röhl has also been more explicit in this conviction, "...daß nach der Gehirnoperation eine Schwächung der ganzen seelischen Grundstruktur eingetreten ist und schon vorhandene Charakterzüge radikalisiert wurden."[27] Such views rely on a medical discourse which labels the 'terrorist' as 'mad'. In Meinhof's case this was furthered by her history being able to continue to be formulated in clinical terms. She was formally identified by the police after her capture from medical records from the operation and an X-ray of the skull which revealed the clamp. During the preparation for her trial there was a debate as to whether another examination of her brain might be required to ascertain responsibility for her actions (a move which Meinhof opposed).[28] In the aftermath of her death one proposed cause of her suicide was brain damage due to nutritional

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[26] Aust, op.cit. In *Die Maßnahme* a communist allows himself to be sacrificed for the good of his group of communist rebels.
[27] "...that after the brain operation a weakening of the entire mental basis set in, and already existing character traits became radicalised." *Die Zeit*, 10.5.96., op. cit.
[28] 'Ulrike Meinhofs Gehirn wird nicht untersucht', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 29.8.73.

deficiency following a hungerstrike,[29] whilst Meinhof herself at her trial stated that

the prison conditions had mentally weakened the individual members of the

group.[30] We are, therefore, left with possible causes of her death legitimated from

standpoints within a clinical discourse.

Meinhof's case illustrates the difficulties involved for West Germany to

adequately explain the complex phenomenon of the RAF. The responses to cultural

productions use these (often intersecting) discourses of gender, politics, psychiatry,

and law which make up Meinhof's history. The conflicting discourses surrounding

her bear a close resemblance to a case Foucault describes in *I, Pierre Rivière...A

case of Parricide in the 19th. Century*, part of his wider project to map crime as

discourse, viewing it, in a similar way to Eisenzweig, as being located primarily

within the textual. The work follows the fight among discourses - legal, medical

and political - in the case of a peasant man who killed three members of his family,

and subsequently wrote an eloquent account and explanation of the crime. Based

upon the same information (the memoirs and the pre-meditated nature of the

killings) conflicting discourses emerged, the medical profession asserting his

insanity through behavioural aspects, the legal profession asserting his full

responsibility because of his intelligence. Rivière's own narrative of the murders is

itself buried under these other narratives "which at that period formed a kind of

popular memoir of crimes".[31] This, and other documents in the book, reveal the

conflicting power relations within which discourses grow and act. Discourses are

born from relations and practices of power, and are therefore never 'neutral', being

inherently tied to the political sphere. Ability to utilise such discourses of

'knowledge' legitimate a claim to power. The power of 'legitimacy' over Meinhof's

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[29] *Die Zeit*, 10.5.96., op. cit.

[30] Aust, op. cit., p.343

[31] Foucault, M., 'Tales of Murder' in Foucault, M., (ed), *I, Pierre Rivière, having slaughtered my mother, my sister, and my brother...A case of Parricide in the 17th. Century*, translated by Frank Jellinek (Lincoln and London. University of Nebraska Press, 1975), pp.203-4

narrative is contested because the legitimacy of the state appeared to be threatened by the critique of the RAF, particularly as the organisation was an offshoot of the widespread student unrest of the late 1960's. The media reaction to cultural productions about the RAF would also reflect a struggle for power, using these discourses to question or buttress contested aspects of legitimacy, particularly during the *Tendenzwende* - the politically conservative turn in the 1970's - which coincided with the highpoint of RAF violence. Notably, for example, a medical discourse was utilised by the right in an attempt to discredit the RAF and foreclose further discussion, whilst a political and legal discourse was used by the liberal media in order to open up a discursive space within which certain aspects of the state may be questioned.

The way in which different people lay claim to these discourses for different purposes will become clear throughout this work, although these discourses do not act in isolation from each other. One commentator writing at the time of the *Stammheim* trial thought Meinhof's significance lay in the way that her case illustrated how the media, church, intellectuals, public opinion and police react and interact within the most powerful state in Western Europe.[32] This interaction was discursively mediated through, among other forms, the mass media in the Federal Republic.

The German Mass Media: Background

Despite the varied (and often confusing) interplay of discourses on the historically emotive subject of 'terrorism' in Germany, a broad spectrum of opinion and interpretation is allowed due to the wide variety of (West) German newspapers. From these it is possible to map out the conflicts which the subject

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[32] Lasky, M., 'Ulrike Meinhof and the Baader-Meinhof Group', *Encounter*, Vol. 44(6), January 1975, p.14

raises. As this work will draw extensively upon the reaction within the German media to 'terrorism', it is necessary to give a brief political overview of this form of political communication.

The denazification in the post-war period which aimed for a politically plural society in order to prevent a return to totalitarian rule, may be one reason for the media in Germany covering a wide political area. In the immediate post-war period the importance of the press in the denazification process was recognised. All generators of cultural values such as the media, theatres and cinemas were strictly controlled. A 'free' German press was only formally grounded in Article 5 of the 1949 German constitution concerning freedom of expression.[33] Accordingly, the freedom of the press, and expression in general, has been vigorously defended, a debate which significantly extended into the realm of publications by, or about 'terrorists'.

Although a process of concentrating titles under various publishing houses took place in the mid 1950's, there remains a broad representation of newspapers across the political spectrum. To gauge the reaction to the RAF via cultural forms in an attempt to map out responses and conflicts, I will examine (among other sources) the reaction of the six major national (*überregional*) broadsheet newspapers in Germany. The arts reviewers for these papers, it has been noted, are situated within a German tradition of the reviewer having a distinct political responsibility. One commentator draws attention to this ideological function, based upon the legacy of Siegfried Kracauer's claim that "the good film critic can only be

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[33] This includes one's 'right to express and distribute his opinion in words, writing and pictures, and to inform himself without hindrance from generally available sources. The freedom of the press and the freedom of reporting by radio and film is guaranteed'. Yet there are wide parameters of interpretation. Such rights are 'limited according to the direction of the general laws, the legal requirements on the protection of minors and in the right to one's reputation'. *Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Stuttgart, Landeszentrale für politische Bildung Baden-Württemberg, 1993), p.19

thought of as a social critic. His mission is to ferret out the hidden social contents and ideologies ...".[34] This is, in turn, related to the more political nature of the German film, based upon social relevance rather than style, upon 'its ability to reflect a larger social entity...opening onto worlds the viewer would otherwise never see'.[35]

The two largest national newspapers on the right of the political spectrum in Germany are the conservative *Die Welt*, and the more liberally conservative *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*.[36] In the case of the *FAZ* there is a direct link to the German political process as some of its journalists are advisors to Chancellor Kohl's government. Its circulation of nearly 400,000 is almost twice that of *Die Welt*, although the weekly *Welt am Sonntag* has a circulation of over 400,000. The *Stuttgarter Zeitung* (circulation 238,000) is, like the *FAZ*, politically on the centre-right. *Die Welt* was originally a liberal paper on the left, but turned to the right in the 1960's under the publisher Axel Springer. Although the paper has become more liberal after Springer's death, it was consistently on the conservative right within the timeframe of this piece of work. Another national newspaper on the right is the *Bayernkurier* (circulation 166,500), based in the traditionally conservative Bavaria. The two liberal national daily newspapers are the *Frankfurter Rundschau* and the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, with current daily sales figures of 189,000 and 406,000 respectively. Whilst the *Frankfurter Rundschau* is left of centre, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* occupies the liberal-centre ground.

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[34] Rentschler, E., 'American Friends and the New German Cinema: Patterns of Reception', *New German Critique*. Vol. 8, Fall/Winter 1981-2, p.11
[35] Ibid., p.13
[36] The history of the German mass media and the figures given here are found in Maaßen, L., *Massenmedien: Fakten, Formen, Funktionen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 2nd. edition, (Heidelberg, Hüthig, 1996). Additional circulation figures are taken from *STAMM 1996 Tarife: Presse- und Medienhandbuch* (Essen, STAMM Verlag, 1996)

Die Zeit, a weekly broadsheet, has an important place in this work because it not only has the most extensive arts coverage and analysis of the quality press, but also because of its large circulation (currently 470,000), holding the position of being the most widely read weekly newspaper. Another important source for this work is the weekly glossy news magazine *Der Spiegel*, also for reasons of wide circulation (currently one million), and for its control of a virtual monopoly in its class, which has only seriously been challenged since 1993 by *Focus* magazine. Both *Die Zeit* and *Der Spiegel* focus on the political, economic, and cultural, with more background analysis and interpretation. *Die Zeit* politically occupies the centre-liberal position, whilst *Der Spiegel*, established by the publisher Rudolf Augstein as the "front-line weaponry of democracy" (*Sturmgeschütz der Demokratie*) has a tradition of liberal centre-left journalism, often critical of the German state.

Alongside the major six printed news sources, other newspapers were used in a less systematic way when their reaction was particularly noteworthy, among them, for example, the left-wing *Tageszeitung* ('taz', 60,000 circulation), or the *Rheinischer Merkur* which is published by Catholic interests, and which usually adopts a right-wing commentary (circulation 108,000). Local newspapers were not used so much, because their arts coverage is often not as extensive as the major national papers, and, as Petersen noted in her wide-ranging analysis of the reception of Heinrich Böll's novel *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum*, reviews in the local press usually limited themselves to little more than short summaries on the work being reviewed.[37] A variety of literary, cultural, and academic journals were also used if the cultural production was discussed in them. For the films discussed here, for example, *Film Dienst* is published by Catholic interests, the *Fischer Film Almanac* by film enthusiasts, whilst the reports of the

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[37] Petersen, A., *Die Rezeption von Bölls "Katharina Blum" in den Massenmedien der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Kopenhagen, München, Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1980), p.82

Besonders Wertvoll Committee assess films for their cultural value, officially awarding tax relief for films judged to be of a high standard. Although many of these sources were less systematic in their reviews than the German 'mass' media, they often provided critical angles from particularly minority interests in Germany.

A Theoretical Basis for Discussing the Media

The actual effect that the media has on institutions or individuals is a disputed one in social theory. In taking the media reviews of cultural productions involving the RAF as a basis of how the wider society reacted to the phenomenon of 'terrorism' we are assuming that those writers and journalists may be regarded as representative of that wider society. This is problematic as journalists as individuals are bound up in the complex and disputed pressures of the institutional politics-media nexus. Their presentation as reviewers of cultural artefacts of highly-charged subjects has both an audience - what is known as the 'implied reader' in reception theory - and the institution they are working under, in mind.

The relationship of the critic to the artist may be situated within a 'micro-macro' dialectic. The terms of this interaction are adopted from Goffman's model of 'loose coupling' between impersonal, institutional structures, and the ability of individuals to act within, and affect this structure.[38] Goffman prioritises neither the influence of the micro or the macro, thinking that they are of distinct and equal importance, and that the 'filtering' of influences between them is dependent upon specific circumstances. Hence 'Social structures don't "determine" culturally standard displays, merely help select from the available repertoire of them'.[39] The significance of Goffman's theoretical approach is noted by Layder, who maintains

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[38] Goffman, E., 'The Interaction Order', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 48, February 1-17, 1983, pp.1-17
[39] Ibid., p.11

that Goffman links the classical tradition of Marx and Weber in showing how subjective social action is created and limited by the 'reproduced practices' of the institutional, whilst not ignoring the creative potential for change via human action.[40] Goffman's theory provides social theory with an important element of pragmatism, remaining flexible enough to accomodate the circumstances of each case.

For the purposes of this thesis the 'macro' may be considered the dominant discursive forms in the media, discourses which are institutionally rooted, representing basic conventions and the enduring view associated with the newspaper. The 'micro' forms are challenges to the macro from below, representing the individual responses and freedom to act within the macro. Artistic production, therefore, becomes the space for micro experiments which challenge the 'gatekeeping' capacities of the macro. Reviewers, therefore, respond to micro works in a macro-dominated context. This places them in a pivotal position, in that they can allow a micro meaning to question the macro, or reinforce the macro. The status of a review of a cultural production thereby is one of an interaction space, where new micro views struggle for a macro status. The texts examined here were often critical of macro discourses. They may, for example, have refused to unambiguously provide a 'closed' narrative of 'terrorism', and by wanting to open out the interaction order where competing views may be heard, provide tools by which alternative conceptions may be formed.

The dominant 'macro' discourses may be informed by cartoons the West German newspapers printed in the aftermath of the 'German Autumn'.[41] Utilising a 'symbolic' language as a non-verbal signifying text, the conflicting political

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[40] Layder, D., *Understanding Social Theory* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, Sage Productions, 1995), pp. 216-9
[41] These are reproduced in the appendix at the back of this thesis.

discourses are revealed, according to the specific political agenda of the publication. This form of communication allows more discursive license than a normal journalistic text, since cartoons symbolically deform to inform, exaggerate, distort, and caricature in order to discursively illustrate. Newsweek once noted 'Academics - and some political professionals - are a little in awe of the freedom cartoonists enjoy to commit outrages that would read like lunacy in print'.[42] Hence cartoons are a very immediate way to selectively mediate abstractions such as social conflict or political ideologies to the viewer, illustrating elements of reality concealed in a sign system. These images are simplifications of an often very complex social situation, not difficult or abstract to decipher, and usually appeal on an emotional rather than 'rational' level.

The cartoons illustrate two dominant macro positions. The liberal discourse is predominantly one of a fear of the state becoming too powerful - and hence being a threat to civil liberties - through anti-terrorist measures. The cartoon found in *Der Spiegel* (5.12.77) shows a large snake labelled 'RAF' on its tail, wrapping itself around the leg of a man representing the figure of the *Rechtsstaat* (the 'constitutional' state, or that based upon the rule of law[43]). He is wielding a large axe over his head, in an attempt to cut the snake from his leg. In the background a figure yells "Watch out - not in your own flesh", showing the fear that the wrong use of the vast power at the state's disposal may actually damage (permanently cripple) the constitutional state. For *Der Spiegel* this weapon, as well as being a potential defence, may also inflict constitutional damage. Whilst the state's ability to walk (to progressively function) is impaired by the RAF, worse (permanent) consequences for this functioning may be suffered through abuse of its power. The

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[42] Quoted in Harrison, R.P., *The Cartoon: Communication to the Quick* (London, Sage Publications, 1981), p.124

[43] 'Constitutional state' is the translation I will use throughout this work for the German *Rechtsstaat*, with the intention to denote that this is government based upon the rule of law. 'Constitutional state' is, however, a problematic concept, as the rights abuses practised by the Nazi regime were 'constitutionally' sanctioned.

same metaphor of the state laming itself through anti-terrorist leglislation was also used by the *Frankfurter Rundschau* (17.2.78), in showing a representative of the SPD party losing his foot whilst crawling through a roll of leglislative paper. The theme of an overly-powerful state was illustrated by *Die Zeit*, (4.11.77), in a front page cartoon depicting police officers carrying a large computer complete with data banks on their shoulders, with the caption 'Large investigating machinery'. This relates to the fears felt by liberals about the new computer networks set up to counter the RAF, the size of which has been noted previously. The implication is that the mass of such technology may actually hinder, rather than help, the police.

The liberal distrust of the state is more dramatically shown by a further cartoon in *Die Zeit* (4.11.77), which shows an official tip-toeing out of the back of Stammheim prison after having broken the bars of the cell window and tied sheets together to escape. This distrust is illustrated by the semiology depicting the official himself as a prisoner (someone guilty or under suspicion), and the sub-heading: 'The quiet way' (*Die leise Art*), questioning whether the state's explanation of the deaths in Stammheim prison is reliable.

The macro discourse utilised by those on the right also included ones of state power. *Die Welt* (23.3.78) illustrates two women labelled Italian and German Justice respectively. Whilst the Italian figure is sharpening her sword against a grindstone she looks down angrily or distainfully (or both) at the German figure, who, seated, holds her sword with the blade wrapped up, looking upon it indecisively. The caption reads 'Terror-Bekämpfung' ('Terror combat'), and promotes the neoconservative program of wanting to follow the Italian example of greater state power in order to fight the threat of violence from the radical left. The message is mediated on several levels beyond the depiction of the two opposites of action/inaction. The German figure of state is the blond, appealing to national myths of Aryanism, as opposed to the dark-haired figure of Italy. The gendering of

the characters extends to the embodiment of the state as a woman, or more specifically a 'mother' figure who needs protection from their citizen 'sons'. Indecision is signified by the German figure having her finger in her mouth, relating to infantile innocence, naivity and immaturity (the Freudian oral stage of development not being successfully sublimated). Italy's stern gaze from above is really then a 'mother figure' giving an example for this mother figure. Hence the embodiment of German indecision is constructed. Nobody prevents the figure from using the sword against 'terrorism' apart from herself, and the use of mythological figures such as 'Justice' are immortal and 'pure' embodiments of morality, the manufacturing of the timeless ideal implicit in ideology.

There are sigificant parallels between this and the cartoon which appeared in the liberal *Der Spiegel*. Each contains two figures, but whilst one delivers an example for action, the other delivers a warning about the nature of the action. Each has a representative of the 'state', and both hold weapons to fight 'terrorism', although both figures express naivity in their use. The naivety expresses fears about the inexperience of the relatively young (established 1949) West German constitution to adequately cope with a terroristic challenge. Similar signs are therefore ideologically presented, the simplistic symbolic language being used to promote contrary programmes regarding the scale of state power needed to combat violence directed against it.

Cartoons from the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* illustrate other tropes used in discourses which were used to conceptualise and direct readings of 'terrorism' by the right. The theme of 'terrorism' as a joint worldwide enterprise or conspiracy was depicted, (21.10.77), showing members of various violent political organisations (plus a stereotyped Arab, and Chinese soldier) riding over a small world on a horse. The semiology draws upon discourses of millenial doom (the dark horse bringing riders of the apocalyse, with the attendant plagues and

disasters), criminology (the diversity of the figures mitigating against shared political allegiances) and psychopathology (the horse rabidly trailing a wake of spit). This dehumanisation is not necessarily exclusive to the right; the allusion made by *Der Spiegel* to the RAF as a snake serves the function of demonising the RAF into another mythological satanic figure. This further utilises an organic discourse in the snake having the ability to penetrate German society and to spread its poison throughout the body politic.

Another common discursive strategy used the 'totalitarian' thesis. This equated the violence of the RAF as being fundamentally the same as that of Nazis. One cartoon (4.11.78) showed a small, diminutive group of old Nazis being approached by a student demonstration. The irony of the student leader warning the viewer "You would do better watching out for the old Nazis" is apparent by the aggressive nature of the placards which the students are carrying (one reads 'Destroy the state!'). The physical and numerical size of the students as opposed to the "old Nazi's" suggests that they are potentially a bigger threat, thus reversing the criticism made by the students that many Nazis were put into positions of power after the war.

This is linked to the fear from the right of the radical students of the 1960's making the 'long march through the institutions'. A further cartoon (24.10.77) contrasts "today's" 'sympathiser' of violence with "yesterday's". Whilst today's sympathiser is outwardly more respectable, he is also the more murderous. He has shelved his academic books and sewn up his buttonhole to resemble a 'five bar gate', suggestively denoting murders or attacks in the style of a decal on the side of an aircraft marking off completed missions.

Within traditional political discourses of state power (encompassing what it's extent should be, what it should do and who is fit to represent it), discourses

and tropes of criminality, Nazism, demonisation and psychopathology are, therefore, also represented. What will now be done is examine the institutional pressures to adhere to an institutional (macro) discourse, what individual freedoms the journalist may have to depart from this, and institutional pressures which hinder the dissemination of micro discourses.

Within the institutional sphere there are clearly cases where a journalist is never entirely 'free' to write what (s)he wants, through the imposition of editorial, production, and state restrictions. State restrictions in the German case may, for example, be illustrated by the infamous 'Spiegel affair' of October 1962. During the Cuban missile crisis the Hamburg and Bonn offices of *Der Spiegel* news magazine were raided by the police, the Federal Prosecutor claiming that the magazine was about to publish state secrets and was therefore committing an act of treason. Although the resulting widespread protests led to the resignation of the Federal Defence Minister, Franz Josef Strauss, the case illustrates how the state may take action to limit publication of articles considered sensitive. Even the tacitly assumed threat of action may be enough to deter editors from considering publishing such material. 'Terrorism', as a politically sensitive subject, has been subject to intense debate about the nature of its presentation in the media. In Britain, for example, there are strict guidelines that television program makers must follow, including seeking permission to interview 'terrorists', and then permission again for actual broadcast.[44] There is also the fear that the 'oxygen of publicity' which the media provides 'terrorist' organisations is the rationale for the violent acts themselves, and has led to calls for the media to question reporting on such events driven by the idea of 'the propaganda of the deed'. In Germany, for example, Braun has analysed the communiqué put out after Hanns-Martin Schleyer was murdered by the RAF, illustrating how it was designed for media consumption, taking advantage of the

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[44] Negrine, R., *Politics and the Mass Media in Britain* (London, Routledge, 1991), p.131

wide circulation and the credibility that this source offered. A body advising the

German media suggested to journalists after the 'inglorious' role of a few in a 1988

hostage drama, not to let themselves be used as 'tools' of criminals, to be cautious

in reporting threats of violence, and not to let culprits be interviewed during the

events themselves. This raises the dilemma of having to balance, on the one hand,

the need for information to allow people to accurately picture their society, and on

the other hand, the possibility whether desired or not, of providing 'insignificant

extremist fanatics' with propaganda:

> 'In solchen Fällen stehen Journalisten in der Tat vor der Frage, wie
> weit sie bei der Berichterstattung über das Verbrechen (die
> unzweifelhaft zum journalisten Auftrag gehört) auch aus den
> jeweiligen Rechtfertigungs-Pamphleten zitieren - und damit den
> Terroristen zum Erreichen des eigentlichen Anschlags-Ziels
> verhelfen: der Verbreitung der terroristischen Parolen,
> Vorstellungen, Forderungen'.[45]

In this way, therefore, the journalist may also be restricted in publishing material.

'Gatekeepers' higher up the information hierarchy may also prevent a journalist

from critical discursive deviation, as happened in the news blackout during the

highpoint of RAF violence in the Federal Republic in 1977.

Other institutional constraints may also originate from within the media

structure to hinder alternative micro discourses. A journalist working under the

German *Springer* press magnate may, for example, be under pressure to adopt

specifically right-wing political angles. Similarly, the editor may feel constrained in

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[45] 'In such cases journalists are indeed faced with the question of to what extent they quote from the particular justifying leaflet in reporting the crime (which is undoubtedly a journalistic task) - and through this actually helping the terrorists to reach the actual goal of the attack: the dissemination of terrorist slogans, concepts, demands'. Braun, G., 'Die Medien und die RAF: "Propaganda der Tat" - Journalisten als Werkzeuge?' *Kriminalistik: Zeitschrift für die gesamte kriminalische Wissenschaft und Praxis*, Vol. 45(12), 1991, p.761. Such issues are not, of course, unique to Germany, but have been widely commented on. See for example Alexander, Y., 'Terrorism, the Media and the Police', *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 32(1), 1978, pp.101-13

feeling he has to adopt an editorial line within the newspaper's 'tradition'. The power of editors in, for example, the *Springer* tabloid newspaper *Bild* was highlighted by Günther Wallraff in his book *Der Aufmacher: Der Mann der bei 'Bild' Hans Esser war*.[46] Wallraff, an investigative journalist, penetrated the paper's organisation under journalistic cover to expose such editorial pressures and tactics. Finally, no consistent political discursive position in a newspaper may lead to lost sales, and as the newspaper is dependent upon the circulation figures, readership demands could also provide a constraint to journalistic practice.

There are, however, reasons to believe that journalists do have a pivotal space within which they may promote a micro discourse. Whilst, for example, the majority of the reviews expressed an opinion and raised issues which were sympathethic to the broad ideological line of the newspaper, there were notable exceptions. The pattern of deviation from this line allows us to draw conclusions about the nature of reception and conceptualisation of the issues over time. Furthermore, there were individual reviewers who were allied to certain newspapers for a considerable length of time, and who also had distinctive views, notably Peter Buchka in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, and Wolfram Schütte from the *Frankfurter Rundschau*. This status may afford a certain prestige, providing room for further journalistic independence from institutional pressures to adhere to a macro discourse. There is also evidence to suggest that journalists see their role as an active, unrestrained one, even when forwarding what may be an unpopular opinion. Peter Buchka, in reviewing the film *Stammheim*, for example, reacts against 'die Verdrängung, für die wir Deutschen so bekannt geworden sind...Zum Glück gibt es noch ein paar Journalisten und Künstler, die sich den Schneid nicht haben abkaufen lassen'.[47]

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[46] Wallraff, G., *Der Mann der bei "Bild" Hans Esser war* (Köln. Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 1977)
[47] 'the repression, for which we Germans have become so well known...Luckily there are still a few journalists and artists who will not let the fight be taken out of them'. 'Ein sehr deutscher Prozeß', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 30.1.86

The principal thought behind this piece of work is, therefore, that there was a need to explain 'terrorism' in the Federal Republic, given its complex and ambiguous nature. This work aims to examine the competing discourses which arose for this task, not primarily testing any claims upon 'truth', but rather looking at them in terms of the examination of discoursive systems in the production of knowledge, the rules governing them, and their interaction. One way to examine these is not only to look at cultural productions on the RAF, but also the reaction to them, and tentitively to posit this as a more generalised reaction. Discourses built around notions of, for example, legitimacy, psychology and gender situated within the social context were utilised across the ideological spectrum by journalists, (re)producing discourses which may be influenced (but not determined) by macro discourses. Newspapers must, for example, rely on existing narratives which readers understand, but may also re-interpret and develop them.

Discourses and Catharsis

A key theme in this thesis, and one which is developed later, is that the various cultural artefacts aided a cathartic 'coming to terms' with the difficult issues and fears which 'terrorism' raised in the Federal Republic. In order to provide the conditions by which a cathartic release may be facilitated, a many-faceted analysis of the problem is required in order to promote a proper understanding and conceptualisation of the problem. All views need to be understood in a wide, critical sense. A simplistic reduction to a 'closed' discourse can not be the basis for this, since its exclusory nature will not be able to adequately cope with the contradictions which arise when the subject is examined in greater depth.

The increased range of viewpoints which the micro productions opened up against macro discourse structures facilitates this greater understanding and depth

by which catharsis may be achieved. One important aspect for a holistic understanding includes an identification with the practitioners of political violence, something which both the makers and critics of cultural artefacts found initially difficult. There is, nevertheless, much evidence to suggest that this was achieved over time, and that a consensual position, based upon 'good' discourses, gained precedence.

Initially the fears about, and difficulty of adequately conceptualising the violence of the radical left made it a subject of censure in cultural productions in Germany, perhaps explaining why no major cultural production was made on the subject before *Deutschland im Herbst*, in 1977/8. This fear and difficulty was revealed by the critical reactions to productions only indirectly related to 'terrorist' activity in pre-1977 Germany.

Cultural Reactions to Terrorism

The cultural mediation of 'terrorism' is often controversial, a recent example being the dispute surrounding Neil Jordan's film *Michael Collins*, (screened at the Venice Film Festival in 1996), which led to charges of sympathy for the IRA.[1] The controversy over cultural productions about the RAF may be illustrated in the German case by examining the disproportionate overreaction to cultural products which, however, had nothing explicitly to do with 'terrorism'. Behind this reaction there was both the fear of a challenge to constitutional legitimacy, and fears of a societal collapse. This chapter intends to 'set the scene' against which individual cultural productions may be examined, and outline some broad themes contained in more detail in further chapters.

The importance of 'culture' in German political thought is illustrated by the competing claims made about the means of culture for political ends across the ideological spectrum. Nietzsche, for example, asked whether society should be formulated around 'justice' or 'culture'.[2] Nietzsche was much used (and abused) by the National Socialists in their rise to power in Germany, although symbols, mythology, and other 'cultural' aspects were also extensively and effectively used by them. Accordingly, the National Socialists permeated every area of life with their cultural ideals.[3] The role of 'culture' in politics has also held an important place in the German Marxist political tradition. Issues such as the 'autonomy' of art, cultural relations to ideology, and whether art has a permanent moral value outside the social structures, have been debated often acrimoniously on the left (for

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[1] 'Director Brushes off Criticism of Collins Film', *The Independent*, 1.9.96
[2] Ansell-Peasrson, K., *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker: The Perfect Nihilist* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.3-7
[3] See Mosse, G.L., *Nazi Culture: Intellectual, Cultural and Social Life in the Third Reich* (London, W.H. Allen, 1996)

example, the Adorno/Lukács debate over the aesthetics of the avant-garde).

Further Marxist perspectives have been notably provided by Brecht's 'alienation'

aesthetics (the shocking of an audience into a dialectical awareness of the true

nature of the apparently unified system of economic relations) and Benjamin's

examination of how the institutionalisation of art regulates its political content.[4]

The practical significance of such debates is not only reflected by the

practice of the *use* of culture, but also by the *absence* of use, that is, through the

suppression of it. This practice has again been utilised by divergent political

traditions. Both the left and the right in the 1930's attacked expressionist forms of

culture on the grounds of cultural ideology. Whilst Nazis burned the books,

Lukács' denunciation written whilst in exile in Moscow condoned their

censorship.[5] Such censorship would be more difficult in post-war Germany, given

the constitutional status of free speech. Yet censorship *did* take place under the

atmosphere of threat and fear created by the RAF. It is not surprising that texts

which positively condoned anti-state violence should be censored. Relevant

examples here would be *Über den bewaffneten Kampf in Westeuropa* ('On the

Armed Struggle in West Europe'), initially published by Klaus Wagenbach in 1971,

and thought to be written by the lawyer-turned-'terrorist' Horst Mahler. A more

controversial example would be Michael Baumann's autobiography of his life in the

violent 'Second of June' political movement, *Wie alles anfing* ('How everything

began'). This was only published after 380 intellectuals lobbied for the censorship

to be lifted to protect freedom of speech.[6] The more surprising reactions were

against works of cultural production with an extra-textual association to the RAF.

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[4] The debate on these issues may be found in Sarup M., *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism* (London, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1988) pp.134-8; Jameson, F., 'Aesthetics and Politics' in Frascina and Harris (eds) *Art in Modern Culture: An Anthology of Critical Texts* (London, Phaidon Press, 1992), pp.64-73

[5] Kralj, L., 'Individualist and Collectivist Models of Terror in German Expressionist Drama' in Klaic, D., and Orr, J., (eds) *Terrorism and Modern Drama* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1990), pp.99-100

[6] '"Bommi", ein Buch und noch ein Buch', Frankfurter Rundschau, 4.2.78

I will examine the nature of this reaction to three works which have an extra-textual connection to the RAF, and attempt to discern common elements between the cases.

'Moses und Aaron'

In March 1975 a film version of Arnold Schönberg's opera 'Moses and Aron' was due to be shown on German television. The size and international importance of the production was immense. All five German television companies, as well as French and Italian Television and Austrian Radio, participated in its making. The two directors of the film - Jean-Marie Straub and Daniele Huillet - had both studied at the Berlin Film and Television Academy with Holger Meins, a member of the RAF who had recently become the first RAF prisoner to die whilst on hungerstrike. At the beginning of the 105-minute film a handwritten dedication appears for two seconds, reading "Für Holger Meins, J.M.S. und D.H.". This was intended as a dedication to a recently deceased friend and who was, in Straub's opinion, one of the best young cameramen at the Film Academy. All nine directors of the German ARD television network unanimously decided that the film should not be broadcast with this dedication, as it might be able to 'become misunderstood as a political demonstration'.[7] The Frankfurt preview accordingly ran without the dedication, (a decision which was made *before* the RAF kidnapping of the Berlin CDU politician Peter Lorenz). Another committee would only pass the film for public viewing on the condition that the dedication was removed because "der Ausschuß der Meinung ist, daß diese Widmung eine öffentliche Verherrlichung eines offensichtlichen Gegners der freiheitlich-demokratischen Grundordnung bedeutet..."[8]

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[7] 'Gemeinschaftswerk der "Dritten"', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 27.3.75

[8] "the Committee has the opinion that this dedication indicates public glorification of an obvious enemy of the free democratic order..." 'Staatsgefährdende Widmung?', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 11.3.75

Reaction against the decision proved that such decisions did not win
unanimous approval. The writer Peter Handke said that, to his knowledge, the
removal of an author's dedication for political reasons had never happened before
in cultural history.[9] One of the most hostile press responses came from two
commentators writing in the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, who raised issues which are
common to two of the more well-known cases of political censorship discussed
below, and which draw upon a liberal discourse. The first is the fear of a return to
an authoritarian regime through the erosion of civil liberties: "Die ARD-
Programmdirektoren haben einstimmig ein Stück Liberalität der Hysterie geopfert,
die unter dem Vorwand 'den Rechsstaat zu verteidigen', ihn zu diesem Zweck
abschaffen möchte".[10] The journalist compared the censorship to acts of book-
burning undertaken by the Nazis, noting that in a constitutional state one was
presumed innocent until proven guilty (Meins had died before his trial), and that
the programming directors were effectively usurping this constitutional role. This is
related to the 'dehumanisation' of those charged with 'terrorism' (such as not
allowing Meins the dignity of a human burial), a means by which deprivation of
rights accorded in a 'civilised' community may be withheld. Secondly, the
dedication was defended on the grounds that the film was not about 'terrorism', and
that the dedication itself was not a demand for revenge or an incitement to
violence. The controversy over the film may be because of its possible interpretion
as a political allegory. Moses may be considered as an example of an intransigent
revolutionary, attempting to convince a people of a vision which contradicts
previously established norms. (Moses was praised by Machiavelli as one who was
self-dependent and able to make people believe in ideals by armed force).[11] Yet it

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[9] Ibid.

[10] "The ARD programming directors have unanimously sacrificed a piece of liberty to hysteria,
which, under the pretext of 'defending the constitutional state' would like to abolish it for this
purpose". Ibid.

[11] Machiavelli, N., *The Prince* (Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1985),
pp.23-4

is important to note that the portrayal of a man who refuses to compromise the 'truths' of his revolutionary vision was not the declared reason for the film's censorship.

Ulrike Meinhof's *Bambule*

Similar comcerns emerged concerning Ulrike Meinhof's televised play *Bambule*, which the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, nearly a quarter of a century later, called 'one of the most famous cases of postwar political censorship'.[12] Meinhof had already written radio productions as a journalist, some of which attempted to show conditions and consequences of *Erziehungsheime* - homes where children are placed for their upbringing if their parents are thought unable to cope. Her film on this subject is fictional (although based upon her previous works, and tape-recorded interviews with girls in care), and intended as a socially committed piece of work to promote awareness and change. The publisher of the text, Klaus Wagenbach, noted that Meinhof wanted to do this through focussing on one specific case as representative of the wider whole. In numerous discussions with the producer of the film, Eberhard Itzenplitz, Meinhof repeatedly stated the need 'not to get any nearer to facts, but to the truth'.[13]

The play revolves around Irene, a seventeen-year-old girl in an *Erziehungsheim*, based upon the real-life story of Irene Georgens.[14] In the play Irene and Monika (another girl in care) escape over the wall of the prison-like house. Whilst Monika is caught and placed in an 'isolation' room as a punishment, Irene resists recapture. She visits her parents, who appear to care little for her, her

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[12] 'Nun also doch "Bambule"', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. 24.5.94

[13] Wagenbach, K., 'Nachwort' in Meinhof, U.M., *Bambule: Fürsorge - Sorge für wen?* (Berlin, Verlag Klaus Wagenbach, 1994), p.104

[14] Georgens was later to buy the weapons for, and participate in, the freeing of Andreas Baader, and consequently served a gaol sentence after her arrest in October 1970.

elderly, ill grandmother who cannot care for her, and her two friends who support themselves through prostitution. Disillusioned with this outside world she returns voluntarily to the home. Meanwhile the viewer has learnt of Monika's life-story by flashbacks, her previous life under the care of nuns who ruled her life by instilling feelings of guilt, eventually expelling her after reading private letters from her lesbian lover in the convent. Monika's lengthy time in isolation, alongside other conditions in the home, such as being paid twenty Pfennigs an hour to do menial work, being locked up at night, and strict smoking laws, initiates a series of disorganised protests, culminating in a *Bambule* - Berlin slang for 'kicking up a fuss'. This riot has to be broken up by the police.

A full literary analysis of the play need not be given here as it is the reaction that we are most concerned with, although the play is rich in metaphors to illustrate themes of political oppression. The home is clearly intended to act as a microcosm containing the (working class) oppressed and their oppressors. In an introduction to the work, which was omitted from earlier radio transmissions, Meinhof states:

> 'Heimerziehung, das ist der Büttel des Systems, der Rohrstock, mit dem den proletarischen Jugendlichen eingebläut wird, daß es keinen Zweck hat, sich zu wehren, keinen Zweck, etwas anderes zu wollen, als lebenslänglich am Fließband zu stehen, an untergeordneter Stelle zu arbeiten, Befehlsempfänger zu sein und zu bleiben, das Maul zu halten'.[15]

This system, Meinhof continues, is one not only of a strict regime of punishments, but also of menial work and no proper training, no teaching about child labour laws or equal rights, one which does not allow lasting friends or contacts to be made by

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[15] 'An upbringing in care; that is the system's lackey, the cane with which it is hammered into the proletarian youth that there is no point in defending yourself, no point in wanting anything else than to spend your life standing at a conveyor belt, to work in a position of subordination, to be and to remain recipients of orders, to keep your trap shut'. Meinhof, U.M., 'Vorbemerkungen' in Meinhof, U.M., *Bambule: Fürsorge - Sorge für wen?* (Berlin, Verlag Klaus Wagenbach, 1994), p.8

constantly moving the girls between homes. The privileges are only for those who conform to the system, a moral highlighted at the end of the work. Irene is in the isolation room as a punishment after her return. She tells another girl of the need to collectively organise, formulate achievable demands which everybody has discussed and to get people on your side, rather than passively conform to the system:

> "...viel mehr reden, warum wir das machen, was wir wollen - reden! Und den Bunker mit richtigen Sachen vollschreiben. Nich' 'Alles Scheiße', oder 'Peter, I love you'. Nee! 'Heime sind Gefängnisse', 'Wir wollen richtig bezahlt werden!'...Wenn de dich fügst, freuen sie sich', daß se dich fertig gemacht haben"[16]

A clear program for *praxis* is established, premised on an optimistic construct of human nature revealed earlier when the girls, doing menial work, discuss how they would reorganise the *Erziehungsheim*. Work would be voluntary, but would nevertheless get done ('It wouldn't work without any work at all. You've got to do something, after all'), based upon mutual respect and a decent wage.[17] It is interesting to retrospectively note the attitude towards violence for political ends in the play, as the subsequent criticism was based upon the fear that it would be used to gain sympathy or support for Meinhof. In the introduction, Meinhof is clear about the action-reaction nature of violence - violence will produce counter-violence.[18] A speech by Irene illustrates the nature of the problem well. Terror is used against the girls, but if they practice it they lose all opportunity for change by being expelled. Although conforming to the system is self-destructive, opportunities for change may be created by communal discussion and winning over the authorities to their point of view. Violence is, therefore, viewed as

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[16] "...talk much more why we're doing it, what we want - talk! And write all over the bunker the right things. Not 'everything's shit' or 'Peter, I love you'. No! 'Hostels are prisons', 'We want a proper wage!'...If you fit in they're happy, because they've worn you down". Meinhof, U.M., *Bambule: Fürsorge - Sorge für wen?* (Berlin, Verlag Klaus Wagenbach, 1994), pp.100-1
[17] Ibid., pp.41-2
[18] Meinhof, U.M., 'Vorbemerkungen', ibid., p.11

understandable by Meinhof, but it is not a practical course for action. Rather, the play is a parable about how violence originates.

A few days before the film was due to be broadcast Meinhof participated in the armed freeing of Andreas Baader, during which one man was shot and critically wounded. At the last moment *Südwestfunk* (SWF) decided not to transmit the broadcast, stating that Meinhof was the subject of a police search and wanted for attempted murder.[19] Similar to the Moses und Aaron case, there was concern expressed against this censorship, not only that the actual content of the film in no way reflected a 'terrorist' ethos, but also that SWF, as the censoring institution, was declaring itself as judge before any formal legal verdict had been passed. SWF openly used a constitutional argument to defend the decision, not wanting 'shadows' to fall on the 'constitutional faith' of a public broadcasting company.[20] This anticipation of a 'legal' judgement was protested against by over one hundred SWF employees who had helped make the film. Yet it can not be the case that the decision not to broadcast was made purely on *legal* grounds, as other (actually convicted) criminals had had their transmissions broadcast whilst serving a gaol term.[21] We are therefore left with a rather inadequate explanation for its censorship.

Despite the questionable nature of this censorship, this pattern was to continue when SWF rescheduled the film for April 1971. In the meantime, Irene Georgens had been arrested with four other members of the RAF, and the Federal Criminal Office at Bonn had extended their search for the leaders of the 'first generation'. The rescheduling was made into a political protest by some. A Hannoverian speaker from the governing right-wing party, the CDU, called it an

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[19] 'Fernseh-Boykott: Programmdirektoren spielen Richter'. *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 23.5.70
[20] 'Aus dem Giftschrank', *Tageszeitung*, 24.5.94
[21] 'Hickhack um Bambule'. *Sonntagsblatt*, 28.2.71

'insolent' act, one which would have to 'be seen as an afront to the viewers'.[22] This CDU group misrepresented the film, claiming it was about the freeing of a girl from a secure home 'whereby the methods of the Baader-Meinhof group should suspectedly become glorified'. That it was neither about the 'freeing' of a girl, or that it glorifies the activities of the RAF is not disputable. What is notable is the irrational and almost hysterical reaction which the prospect which its broadcast raises.

Such a reaction was acknowledged by one newspaper in 1971, which believed the censorship justified because of the climate of "uncontrolled emotion" which prevailed in West Germany over 'terrorism'.[23] The continuing reaction against *Bambule* continued to be indicative of this "uncontrolled emotion" in 1977, when the theatre director Claus Peymann wanted to stage the production in Stuttgart. The General Artistic Director of the Württemberg state theatre vetoed further work on the production indefinitely after the RAF murder of Siegfried Buback. In response Peymann appealed to the Mayor of Stuttgart, Manfred Rommel, who declined to help, seeing the production as 'tastelessness on the graves of the assassination victims'.[24] Even some 'liberals' were against the production. Günther Ruhle, for example, thought that the production would create sympathy for both 'terrorism' in general, and Ulrike Meinhof in particular.[25] Peymann published a brief open response, in which he claimed that it was the increasing nationwide censorship of artists and journalists which created 'a climate of anxiety and fear'. This road to self-censorship would not only mean loss of artistic freedom, but also an imposed will upon the people. As in previous examples, the state is charged with not upholding one of the basic laws of the constitution - that of supporting policies and institutions that protect free

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[22] 'Protest gegen Fernsehspiel von Ulrike Meinhof', *Die Welt*, 24.2.71
[23] *Sonntagsblatt*, ibid.
[24] 'Peinlicher Rabatz', *Rheinische Post*, 21.12.79
[25] 'Mach was, egal was, mach was!', *Die Zeit*, 28.12.79

expression and tolerance: 'The measure of our condition (*Maßstab unseres Verhaltens*) can only be with what responsibility and freedom we all are able to continue our work'.[26]

Peymann, who would lose his job at the prestigious Stuttgart theatre after making a public request for donations for Stammheim prisoners, was eventually to stage his production of *Bambule* in Bochum in December 1979. News reviews from across the political spectrum thought the production bland and often superficial. Significantly, however, a decade after its inception, it generally received praiseworthy reviews for being well-intentioned. Even the conservative *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* noted that it was 'part of our history'.[27]

There remained conservative elements equally at unease with this confrontation with 'our history'. The controversy over the film was again raised in 1978 when SWF wanted to run a section of *Bambule* as part of a two-day presentation on 'terrorism'. The director, Eberhard Itzenplitz, argued against the viewing in this context, as he thought it not a film about, or for, 'terrorism'.[28] Yet *Die Welt* argued that the section should not be shown since the author's life as a 'terrorist' is inseparable from the production. Calling the consideration to screen 'astounding', the newspaper cited the reason for not screening as being grounded in the belief it would create popularity for somebody guilty of murder. It was a skillful attempt at staging politics, but one which can be interpreted as a call to revolution, preparing for the 'big collapse'.[29] Despite the 'moral' of the production, therefore, there was a fear that through its associations with Meinhof it was a danger to the relatively young West German constitutional state.

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[26] 'Epilog zu "Bambule"', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 3.5.77
[27] 'Gerechtigkeit für Ulrike', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Silvester, 1979. See also *Die Zeit*, 28.12.79, op cit; *Rheinische Post*, 21.12.79, op. cit. for other reviews of the theatre production.
[28] 'Parabel über das Entstehen von Gewalt', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 24.5.94
[29] '"Bambule" ohne Ende', *Die Welt*, 23.3.78

The film was eventually broadcast by SWF in May 1994, after nearly a quarter of a century, and after the text had been available since 1971. Discussions continued to take place within the last 24 hours to discuss the decision.[30] A televised discussion took place afterwards with both Itzenplitz and Peter Voß (the artistic director) participating, which suggests that some form of open debate was no longer being suppressed, a pattern which is apparent throughout this thesis. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* upheld the distinction between the film as work relying solely on its intra-textual form, and locating it as a work which could not be abstracted from the extra-textual reality of Meinhof's subsequent disappearance into the underground.[31] Itzenplitz, however, denied that Meinhof's subsequent politics changed the message of the production, saying about the previous bannings:

> "Der Film ist ein Film, der sich eben ausschließlich in Erzählform
> mit den Zuständen in der Fürsorge Jugendlicher in der
> Bunderepublik beschäftigt...nicht über eine weder latente noch
> versteckte, noch deutliche Aufforderung zu terroristischen
> Akten".[32]

Thus the text is taken up and distanced from authorial intention, whilst being subjected to paratexts which direct interpretation based upon the subsequent actions of the author.

Heinrich Böll's *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum*

A third case which illustrates the nature of the extreme public reaction to the RAF in the 1970's was a debate around the German Nobel Prize winner for

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[30] *Tageszeitung*, 24.5.94, op. cit.

[31] 'Die Treber proben den Aufstand', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 26.5.94

[32] "The film is a film which rather concerns itself exclusively with the conditions of the youths in care in the German Federal Republic...not about neither a latent nor hidden nor overt call to terrorist acts". *Tageszeitung*, 24.5.94, op. cit.

literature, Heinrich Böll. The background to the controversy surrounding his novel 'The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum' may be traced back to the shooting of a police-officer during a bankrobbery in Kaiserlauten in late 1971. The next day the tabloid paper *Bild*, owned by the right-wing Springer newspaper concern, printed the story on its front page, under the headline 'Bankrobbery: Policeman shot. The Baader-Meinhof group continue murdering'.[33] The headline and the subsequent article assume that it was the RAF who were to blame, although in the article the chief of the Kaiserlauten police investigation unit could only say that investigations were focussed on the group, and that the police had 'still no concrete clue that the Baader-Meinhof band are responsible for the robbery'. Shortly afterwards Böll wrote on the incident in the article *Will Ulrike Gnade oder freies Geleit?* ('Does Ulrike want mercy or free passage?') in an essay published in *Der Spiegel*.[34]

Böll's article is contemptuous of the multiple presumptions in the *Bild* report, regarding the article as a 'joke', and *Bild*'s exercise of preemptive justice (the naming of the 'perpetrators' of the crime before constitutionally convicted) as, in a similar way to the previous case studies, usurping constitutional powers. Böll criticises *Bild* for being unaccountable to anyone apart from the proprieter himself, suggesting that this should not be permitted in a constitutional state. This act, for Böll, is on a par with the Nazi administration of justice: 'This is not crypto-fascism any more, not pseudo-fascist, this is pure fascism. Incitement, lies, filth'.[35] Böll continues to relate the present-day debate with Germany's Nazi past, believing it hypocritical that ex-Nazis who committed greater crimes should go free, whilst Meinhof is hunted down mercilessly. He repeatedly appeals to the political

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[33] 'Bankraub: Polizist erschossen. Baader-Meinhof-Bande mordet weiter', *Bild-Zeitung*, 23.12.71
[34] Reprinted in Böll, H., *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum - oder: Wie Gewalt entstehen und wohin sie führen kann* (Köln, Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 1992) pp.193-209
[35] Ibid., p.199

'pragmatists' who were once subservient to Nazism, and who are now in positions of power, to remember what it was like to be persecuted.[36]

Whilst Böll highlights the double-sided nature of 'terrorism' - that acts of political violence may be performed both by the state and against it - it is important to note that, like other figures in the previous two cases, he does not defend the ('senseless') actions of Meinhof or any other 'terrorist'. Rather, the aim of his essay is to suggest that Meinhof should be offered free passage to another country, an idea which had been suggested previously by Klaus Rainer Röhl.[37] Despite this, the essay caused wide controversy, which would in many ways parallel the reaction to *Katharina Blum*. To illustrate some of the more extreme reactions to the former situated outside liberal discourse, I have taken articles from three German 'tabloid' newspapers.[38]

Both *Bild* and the *Deutsche National-Zeitung* adopt a clinical and organic discourse, using the metaphor of the state as an organism, within which there are elements of society which are unclean, sick and infected. The latter concludes: 'It is a precept for cleanliness that this man [Böll] be publically removed, a precept which the German Government cannot free itself from any longer'. For this newspaper he is a 'sympathiser of murderers', compared negatively to 'normal bodies' and 'normal spirits', whose political tendencies can be 'assessed pathologically'. This pathology for *Bild* is one of schizophrenia: 'what

[36] Ibid., pp.203-4

[37] Ibid., p.207; Becker, J., *Hitler's Children:The Story of the Baader-Meinhof Gang*, 2nd. Edition, (London, Granada Publishing Ltd., 1978), p.370

[38] *Freies Geleit für Ulrike Meinhof. Ein Artikel und seine Folgen*, Grützbach, F. (ed)., (Köln, Kiepenheuer and Witsch, 1972). The individual articles are: 'Narren. Hofnarren. blutige Narren: Sie sagen "befreien", sie meinen "zerstören"', *Bild-Zeitung*, 11.1.72; 'Die Bölls sind gefährlicher als Baader-Meinhof, *Quick*, 2.2.72; 'Die Anti-Olympiade des Herrn Böll', *Deutsche National-Zeitung*, 13.2.72; these articles are found on pages 38, 147-8, and 184 of Grützbach's book, respectively.

schizophrenic confusion must rule in the alledgedly progressive heads whose crooked instincts find reasons, excuses and apologies in order to excuse the gang'.

As the *Quick* headline suggests- 'Bölls are more dangerous than Baader-Meinhof' - there is a fear of intellectual 'sympathy' giving credibility and legitimacy to 'terrorist' actions, despite Böll having distanced himself from such. The newspaper repeats the schizophrenic metaphor of *Bild* in its denunciation of the 'split' conscience of Böll and 'like-minded friends'. *Bild* also singles out the 'sympathisers' as those intellectuals, whose 'intellectual arrogance lets them dream of violent change'. *Bild* further discredits Böll by equating his left-wing sympathies with fascism, attemptedly defusing his original criticism of the newspaper as displaying authoritarian traits. Hence Böll's *Spiegel* article 'could be the joint work of Karl-Eduard von Schnitzler and Josef Goebbels'.[39]

Similar analogies to Nazism were repeated after Böll's next novel - 'The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum' (*Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum*) was published. The story concerns Katharina, who falls in love with a small time criminal (Götten). The police storm the flat looking for Götten and take Katharina away for questioning. Although innocent, Katharina is treated unscrupulously by a tabloid newspaper - *DIE ZEITUNG* - , and particularly by the journalist Tödges, who uses a mixture of speculative evidence, distortion and deceit to wage a public campaign against her. After receiving hate-mail, having her friends distance themselves from her, and her mother's death being prematurely hastened by the campaign, Katharina shoots Tödges dead in her flat. The book (and even more so, the film made by Margarethe von Trotta and Volker Schlöndorff with Böll's

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[39] This equation is made clearer by this comparison. Whilst Goebbels was Minister of Propaganda for the Nazis, von Schnitzler was the long-standing chief spokesperson for the SED (the ruling East German party), who, in many eyes, fulfilled much the same role of propaganda dissemination.

cooperation) is favourable to Katharina, giving characters connotative names,[40] and parodying *Bild*, for example, by capitalising *ZEITUNG* throughout the work in the scriptual style of *Bild*.

In examining the roots of violence, and in its critique of of the use of disorganised protest, there is a similarity between *Katharina Blum* and *Bambule*, as indicated by its subtitle - 'How violence originates and where it can lead to'.[41] The figure of Katharina is an embodiment of post-war German history: She has a deprived early life, and a working class upbringing in the immediate post-war years, a life relieved by the relative affluence of the *Wirtschaftswunder* and reconstruction. She is, therefore, a normal representative member of West German society - relatively affluent, intelligent and broadly comformist. It is from this position of naivety that she discovers institutions such as the *ZEITUNG*, which profess to stand for law and order, provoke her into unconstructive anti-social acts of protest, such as kicking over a *ZEITUNG* news stand and shooting Tötges. McGowan suggests that in moving from conformity to this unconstructive anarchy, Katharina is used by Böll as an appeal to the ordinary German public to take action to save the 'mother' figure of Germany, as Böll believes that true German patriotism has been usurped by narrow interest groups.[42] These narrow interest groups are the exploitative mechanisms of market commodification, epitomised by the *ZEITUNG*. In an interview after the making of the film, he said that he saw neither Katharina nor Tötges as evil, merely pushed into their deeds by this culture. For Katharina the realisation she is being exploited in this way is

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[40] Williams, R.W., 'Heinrich Böll and the *Katharina Blum* Debate' in *Critical Quarterly*, Vol. 21(3), pp.54-7

[41] In his *Spiegel* article, Böll briefly refers to *Bambule* as 'valuable and revealing' reading, within the context of the social work that Meinhof and many other terrorists had performed before going underground. Böll, H., 1992, op. cit., p.203

[42] McGowan, M., 'Pale Mother, Pale Daughter? Some reflections on Böll's Leni Gruyten and Katharina Blum', *German Life and Letters*, Vol. 37(3), April 1984, p.226

"schlimmer sogar, als der Tod ihrer Mutter. Daß sie vollkommen
zum Marktwert geworden ist. Und der Reporter auch. Es kommt ja
in dessen Auftritt eine gewisse Unschuld heraus, eine vollkommene
Naivität. Der ist so gewöhnt zu denken, ich habe die berühmt
gemacht, was hat die eigentlich gegen mich, es geht doch nichts
über Publicity...Die Naivität des Menschen, der nur in Marktwert
denken kann".[43]

The reaction among sections of the media was to make a link between the

novel and Böll's supposed sympathy for 'terrorism', rather than regard Böll as a

patriot.[44] In a similar way to the reaction to the *Spiegel* essay, Böll's politically left

wing position was equated with prejudice situated within discourses of fascism.

One paper claimed Böll judges 'humans' and 'fascists' in an unjust way by applying a

different standard to each, a view which stands in contrast to the use made by the

word 'fascist' by the more positive reviews.[45] Gerhard Löwenthal, speaking on a

ZDF program, accused both Böll and Habermas of 'Red Fascism', thinking that 'all

the other so-called intellectuals are not one bit better than the intellectual

pacemakers (*geistige Schrittmacher*) of the Nazis'.[46] A second parallel which may

be drawn is that of the defamation of Böll's character, suggesting that he is

incapable of correctly judging literary, political, or journalistic matters. When this

happens it is accompanied by a lack of societal interpretation of the book, merely

alluding to a biographical background.[47]

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[43] "...even worse than the death of her mother. That she has totally become a market commodity.
And the reporter as well. In his going [to her flat] a certain innocence can be traced, utter naivety.
He is used to thinking I have made her famous, what has she got against me, what higher value is
there than publicity...The naivity of people who can only think in terms of market value". Böll.
V., 'Böll und Schlöndorff zur Verfilmung der "Katharina Blum"'. *Praxis Deutsch*, Vol. 10, 1983,
p.65
[44] Petersen, A., *Die Rezeption von Bölls "Katharina Blum" in den Massenmedien der
Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Kopenhagen, München, Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1980)
[45] Ibid., pp.53-4
[46] Ibid., pp.10-11
[47] Ibid., pp.53-6

Reactions

These reactions illustrate some of the range of discourses which drove the debate in the Federal Republic over the issue of how a constitutional state should respond to violence directed against it. Whereas 'liberal' discourse is based upon the fear that 'the state's power machine unfolds its own logic completely independent of...good and bad intentions',[48] the 'tabloid' response of using organic and medical metaphors, shown in the reaction to Böll, reveals much of the panic inhibiting any 'rational' (open) debate of how to cope with the problem. Such metaphors presume the self-evident ground that a 'disease' must be wiped out, and that defending the constitutional rights of 'terrorists' is analogous to a defence of a cancerous growth. The nature of this argument adopts a Nietzschean 'will to power', the power and provisional truth of the argument not being based upon 'rational' analysis, but upon rhetoric and emotion. When the French philosopher Sartre visited Andreas Baader at Stammheim prison, for example, not only were productions of Sartre's plays cancelled, but the *Bild* editorial also thought: 'Sartre says that "torture" [referring to the alleged Stammheim prison conditions] brings about psychological disturbances. Baader has just had a visit from someone who himself is obviously psychologically disturbed'.[49] The utility of discourses, and their relation to political power is shown by the Schmidt government's use of organic and clinical discourses to justify its actions. The RAF was a 'potentially corrosive influence' to be 'flushed' from the political system, whilst Schmidt himself stated that 'terrorists' should be denied constitutional rights, as these were not made for animals or the insane.[50]

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[48] Negt, O., 'Terrorism and the German State's Absorption of Conflicts', *New German Critique*, Vol. 12, 1977, p.18

[49] 'BILD-Kommentar', *Bild-Zeitung*, 5.12.74. For an example of Sartre's work being cancelled because of this visit see 'Sartre-Stück abgelehnt', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 4.1.75

[50] Grosscup, B., 'The Explosion of Terrorism' (New Jersey, New Horizon Press, 1987), pp.219-20

These reactions to cultural productions is also indicative of the way many felt that cultural productions should be unambiguous in their statements towards 'terrorism', and to show 'positive' loyalty to the state, (in the same manner as civil servants under the *Berufsverbot* laws had to show 'active' loyalty to the state in order to be appointed). Criticisms would, therefore, be directed against productions which had an 'open' narrative structure, not providing a prescriptive direction or a clear moral norm. The linking of political power and cultural legitimation is found within the Debordian notion of 'spectacle' - an institutionalised socio-political form designed to serve power. In applying this specifically to aesthetic politics, Hozic contrasts the 'spectacular' with the 'theatrical', which

> 'preserves an ambivalent relationship with the established order. The world of theatre is rarely a 'pleasuredome' since it enacts the truths which we would rather forget. Theatrical action compels the audience to re-examine its own deeply ingrained world views by confronting it with an existential play on the stage'.[51]

The use of cultural productions to debate and conceptualise the issues which political violence raises reflects the 'spectacular' and 'theatrical', defining their relationship to the legitimation of power structures. The closed narrative 'tabloid' discourse may be likened to the former, where the viewer is not primarily involved in any questioning of the presentation by the producer, the closed parameters of the 'debate' already having been established. The 'theatrical' aesthetic - which the majority of productions examined here adhere to - does not primarily attempt to provide a prescriptive direction, but rather aims to examine points of view not previously considered.

The value in 'theatrical' productions is not only this ambivalence to any one political faction, but also that it does not provide any easy psychological resolution

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[51] Hozic, A., 'The Inverted World of Spectacle: Social and Political Responses to Terrorism', in Orr, J., and Klaic, D., (eds) *Terrorism and Modern Drama* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1990), p.67

to a crisis, examining and questioning hidden conflicts and taboos rather than the satisfaction provided by 'spectacular' productions.[52] 'Spectacularisation' appeals by providing a simplistic explanation to achieve a superficially satisfying resolution to difficult questions, instead of confronting the complexity of the problem. Theatrical productions, utilising micro discourses, open up points of view not considered before. This opening up of micro discourses, as will be presently developed, is more suitable for providing a framework for catharsis, in it being more able to examine and conceptualise a complex and ambiguous phenomenon such as 'terrorism'.

A 'rational' explanation of the issues and concerns surrounding 'terrorism' may prove difficult, as it is not unusual for a society to react 'hysterically' to them. Parts of Israel, for example, were in states of widespread panic after several suicide bombing attacks by the organisation *Hamas*. When a car accidentally crashed into a bus queue in February 1996, the tension among the resident population was so great that the driver was shot dead by a bystander as he left the car, more of whom went on to assault Palestinian youths who were passing.[53] Similar fears were also exhibited in Italy when a pro-Palestinian group 'poisoned' Israeli grapefruits there in 1988 with a harmless blue dye. Despite the immediate declaration by the group that the 'toxin' was harmless and all the Israeli grapefruits in the country being taken off the shelves, Italian research institutes stated the substance *was* toxic, poisoning victims appeared in hospitals, and consumption continued to decreased for several months after the incident.[54]

Such reactions which illustrate the strong psychological effects of 'terrorism', rather than physical and material damage, are reflected among the

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[52] Hozic, op. cit., p.68
[53] 'Fear Turns Accident into Tragedy', *Independent*, 27.2.96
[54] Hozic, op.cit., p.64

wealth of definitions of 'terrorism'. One example which prioritises this psychological discourse is Chaliand, who defines a 'terrorist' act as 'any act the psychological effect of which goes beyond its purely physical consequences. As such, terrorism is the most violent form of warfare...' which aims to 'destabilise values and thus create a psychosis'.[55] It has been suggested that industrialised democracies are particularly vulnerable to this form of warfare as citizens are not used to 'shocks' applied to their 'normal' environment: 'Sociologists have noted that "normal" everyday experience is strung together by the flimsiest of threads...In the United States, with its mobilised and rationalised structure, the archetecture of "normal" existence is extremely delicate'.[56] Taking the example of "reactionary psychoses" from Fanon's study of the French conflict in Algeria, Greisman argues that people in a competitive business environment could, in response to 'terrorist' attacks, suffer a profound reaction in mental health, given the collectively violent reaction over lesser issues.[57] The political similarities between the United States and Germany would plausibly allow an extrapolation to the latter, and although many aspects of Greisman's study are unduly alarmist, his projections may, themselves, illustrate how some people project their fears to the imaginative extremes.

It is in this light that the apparent over-reaction and inadequate nature of justification contained within some of the discursive responses to the Straub/Böll/Meinhof episodes must be seen. Discourses which attempt to coercively close-off debate provide a simple, and superficial explanation ('They are not humans/capable of reasoned judgement, and therefore should not benefit from the norms of civilised society'; 'their "sympathies" are a result of returning to a

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[55] Chaliand, G., 'Terrorism: A means of liberation?' in *Terrorism and Political Violence*, January 1989, pp.21,27
[56] Greisman, H.C., 'Terrorism and the Closure of Society: A Social-Impact Projection' in *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, Vol. 14, 1979, p.136
[57] Ibid., pp.143-4

fascist frame of mind and must therefore be denied legitimacy'). The simplistic ('spectacular') tropes of 'inhuman' and 'fascist', however, conceal phenomena whose complexity can not be adequately addressed in this way. The more 'open', 'theatrical' explanation which involves the *conscious participation* of the spectator in examining both historical and personal conflicts necessarily brings dangerous or threatening feelings to the fore in a process for a cathartic 'working through' of fears. The reaction to one production which refused to apply a closed narrative structure to the RAF, and the apparent need for more 'concrete' explanations which was revealed by the reaction, will now be examined.

The events of the autumn of 1977, when RAF activity reached a bloody
highpoint, labelled it as the 'German Autumn'. This phrase has remained within the
German consciousness so that it is still used 18 years later to speak of the events,
many issues of which remain unresolved.[1] In April of that year the Federal
Prosecutor Siegfried Buback and two people accompanying him were assassinated,
a few months later the chairman of the Dresdner Bank, Jürgen Ponto, was
murdered in his home, and in August an attack on another Federal Prosecutor in
Karlsruhe (which potentially could have caused a large number of civilian
casualties) failed due to technical problems. In September the industrialist Hanns-
Martin Schleyer was kidnapped and all four accompanying bodyguards killed with
the demand for the release of ten RAF prisoners being flown unhindered to a
country of their choice with 100,000 Deutschmarks each.[2] Five weeks later a
Palestinian group hijacked a Lufthansa jet flying from Mallorca to Frankfurt, also
demanding the release of RAF prisoners. After killing the pilot in Aden they
diverted the plane to Mogadishu where it was stormed by a German anti-terrorist
group five days later. The next morning the bodies of Baader, Ensslin and Raspe
were found in Stammheim prison, and there followed a vigorous debate over
whether the official version of suicide could be believed. The day after the
Stammheim deaths the body of Schleyer was recovered in Elsaß, killed by the RAF
in response to the prison deaths.

The impact of the events which took place in the autumn of 1977 was
widespread, and the reaction by the state is indicative of the panic felt, often using
what many felt were unconstitutional means in order to defend itself from the

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[1] 'Ein sehr spätes Stück "Deutscher Herbst"', _Badische Zeitung_. 13.1.96
[2] Peters. B., RAF: _Terrorismus in Deutschland_ (München. Knaur. 1993) pp.245-6

threat. A 'crisis committee' was formed in Bonn which would meet regularly in the following weeks, and cross-party consultation was established. One senior politician suggested executing a RAF prisoner for every hostage 'terrorists' killed as a means to prevent further bloodshed outside the prison.[3] This was in addition to the many specially-made laws introduced to give the state greater powers to combat the threat, subsequently criticised by the 'Russell Tribunal', a body reporting on the loss of civil liberties in the 'authoritarian democratic' rule instigated under the threat of 'terrorism'.[4]

It was in this atmosphere of controversy that the film was made. It was intended as a spur-of-the-moment reaction to the crisis facing West Germany by twelve German filmmakers, notably Rainer-Werner Fassbinder, Alexander Kluge, Volker Schlöndorff, and Edgar Reitz. In a pattern which would be established up until the 1990's, funding was difficult to obtain when 'terrorism' was the subject matter, even for established figures in the arts world. Money was eventually provided by the *Filmverlag der Autoren* (a production company of filmmakers which aimed to bypass the costs of commercial distribution) and Rudolf Augstein, editor of *Der Spiegel*. The film was to be both politically and aesthetically radical, in its use of a *Mischform* aesthetic - a mix of the documentary and fictional. This is related to the formation and theory of montage developed by Alexander Kluge, whose long time collaborator Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus edited the film. The individual films of each of the filmmakers thus became mixed into a collective film, often with no clear connection. Kluge's aesthetic theory, its aims, the way the film was received and what this tells us about the Germany of 1977 will be presently discussed after a brief overview of the film itself.

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[3] Aust, S., *Der Baader-Meinhof-Komplex* (München, Knaur, 1989), p.472
[4] Grosscup, B., *The Explosion of Terrorism* (New Jersey, New Horizon Press, 1987), pp.235-6

The film opens with Kluge and Schlöndorff's film of Schleyer's funeral: dignitaries arriving, a discreet media and police presence, with Kluge reading out a letter from Schleyer to his son written whilst in captivity. Funeral wreaths, notably from Chancellor Kohl, are shown, and Esso company flags fly in the background. On the screen a quote from a woman buried with her children after a wartime bombing raid is silently shown: 'An einem gewissen Punkt der Grausamkeit angekommen, ist es schon gleich, wer sie begangen hat - sie soll nur aufhören.'[5]

Fassbinder's episode takes place inside his dark flat, giving an interview with the constant noise of news reports about current 'terrorist' events in the background. He is shown frantically making phone calls wanting to know the latest position of the Lufthansa hijack, drinks heavily, takes drugs, and fights with his boyfriend. Throughout this section an argument with his mother is repeatedly edited in, escalating in intensity. His mother wants the 'terrorists' shot, greater police powers, questions whether the 'masses' know what democracy is, is afraid to say anything that may label her as a 'sympathiser', and regards the current situation as reminding her of the Nazi era. For her 'the best would be an authoritarian ruler who is entirely good, kind, and capable'. Fassbinder argues that one can understand why 'terrorists' murder, unlike criminals. Hearing a police siren a panicked Fassbinder flushes his drugs down the toilet, fearing the police would shoot if they raided the flat. He then throws out a homeless stranger his boyfriend brought home, illustrating how the effects of state repression and public hysteria promote a private climate of intolerance towards other people.

It is worth examining the next section in detail as this relates directly to Kluge's political-aesthetic theory. This next section introduces Gabi Teichert: 'History teacher. Since the autumn of 1977 in doubt what she should now teach,

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[5] 'When a certain point of cruelty is reached it doesn't matter who started it - you just want it to stop.'

searching for the fundamentals (*Grundlagen*) of German history', dissatisfied with traditional teaching, and attempting to relate disparate elements of German history to each other. Haydn's string quartet in C major (the German national anthem) is played, whilst works of art - Caspar David Friedrich landscapes, and depictions of knights and demons - are shown. The state-ordered suicide of Erwin Rommel, the Nazi war hero who was one of the members of a high-ranking conspiracy to kill Hitler, is noted with footage of his son, Manfred Rommel, witnessing the state burial of his father. Teichert appears, digging in a landscape of snow, not knowing whether she is uncovering archaeological remains or digging a shelter for the next war. Music and narratives overlap, creating a dischordancy. More art of the German aristocracy follows, and a series of pictures showing the death of a woman on a railway line. A clip of old newsreel from the *Deutsche Wochenschau* shows Rommel's funeral and state honours, again overlaid with Mozart's *Requiem*. Teichert washes her feet in the bath "trying to get this thing in perspective". The Schleyer service is overlaid with Mozart's *Requiem*, abruptly cutting to German secret service newsreel of the assassination of the King of Serbia in Marsailles in 1938. In the events surrounding the Schleyer funeral a Turkish man is arrested for carrying a gun. Kluge's voice-over informs us that he wanted to shoot a pigeon to eat. The transmission of the Schleyer burial service is transmitted to the hall of the Daimler-Benz museum (Schleyer's former company), where representatives from all over the world have gathered to watch the enlarged face of Schleyer on video monitors down the hall. On the shop floor there are two minutes of observance. Kluge's voice-over informs the viewer that ninety-five percent of the workers on this section of the factory floor are foreign. The workers are told by a speaker relayed from the funeral service about the neccessity for democracy, and that showing dignity to 'terrorists' is anti-democratic. Preparations for the post-funeral dinner are shown, including a brief interview with the head waiter.

There then follows an interview with Horst Mahler from his prison cell, an ex-lawyer and member of the first generation of the RAF. He notes that the student revolt wanted to understand and come to terms with the causes of fascism in Germany and the United States, arguing that innocent people should not be killed on the Lufthansa plane. The interview is at one point watched with amazement and disillusionment by a (fictional) journalist, Francisca Busch, in an empty cinema. This cuts to a short thriller type section by Ropé and Cloos, when a bloodstained man is let into a woman's appartment. She suspects him of being a 'terrorist', and wants to telephone the police without arousing his suspicions. (The Ropé/Cloos section was later cut from the cinema production).

Sinkel and Brustellin's section features Wolf Bierman, a left-wing song-writer from East Germany (although politically critical of both East and West), reading his poem 'Mädchen in Stuttgart'. This indicates his belief that the deaths in Stammheim prison were out of despair for the rest of the German population, and the dead people were 'alchemists of the revolution'. Francisca Busch is briefly returned to, watching a film parodying a 1920's Soviet revolutionary film. She has her own ideas for a film, but is unable to convince the company owners into making it.

Edgar Reitz filmed the next (fictional) section about a border post in winter, when a car is stopped by the guard. The driver and his partner look on whilst the guard searches the car, remarking that he would rather be the helicopter pilot circling overhead as he would get more money, as well as responsibility for such things as bombs and napalm. 'You see everything but nobody sees you'. On searching another car with a lone woman driver he pretends to recognise her as a 'terrorist' from a 'wanted' list of photographs to frighten her. This runs into another Kluge episode, montaging (in rapid succession) old black and white film of workers in factories, the murder of Rosa Luxemburg (Kluge noting that she

maintained Germany faced the choice between barbarism and socalism), old newsreel footage of people hanging in the streets, and mourners. The German national anthem is again overlaid.

Mainka-Jellinghaus' mini-documentary about the *Standhafte Chatten* military exercises by the *Bundeswehr* begins with armoured vehicles driving through villages, explosions in the distance, and helicopters overhead. A housewife is interviewed saying she is not frightened by the exercises. At a military briefing helmets are ordered to be worn at all times. Schleyer is momentarily cut to, and then Kluge's Gabi Teichert (still on the search for the 'fundamentals of German history') appears once again in black and white footage at the SPD Party conference in Hamburg, watching a speaker say how 'terrorists' in custody remain dangerous because of their contacts in the outside world. Whilst Max Frisch and Herbert Wehner speak Teichert is seen taking notes. Teichert briefly interviews some of the (real) politicians, who are confused by her desire to 'change history here and now'.

This is followed by Schlöndorff's *Antigone* episode, written by Heinrich Böll. This details a fictional story of the difficulties a film of the *Antigone* story has in passing the German censors, who think that the figure of Antigone is too much like a 'terrorist', despite being written originally by Sophocles. They not only want the film to be more distanced from violence, but disclaimers to be also added. Even the modified version is shelved for being 'too topical', whilst the board approves a film on the Roman wars as it is a 'war' not a 'terror' production. 'You must understand that we're fighting with our backs to the wall' explains one of the committee.

The final section, shot by Kluge and Schlöndorff, is of the funeral in Stuttgart of the RAF members Baader, Ensslin and Raspe. Newspaper pictures of

the dead, the coffins, and the empty graves are shown. Manfred Rommel, *Oberbürgermeister* of Stuttgart, explains that he allowed a dignified funeral to take place in a public cemetery because they were figures in German history. Christiane Ensslin, sister to Gudrun explains the arrangement of the bodies in grainy black and white film. A restaurant owner explains that he agreed to host the post-funeral meal as an 'act of humanity' after other restaurants had refused to. The text of the poem 'Oktober Engel' (with its implied associations to the Russian October revolution) by the schizophrenic poet Alexander März appears: 'October angels once came in May, and visited the neigbouring November fog. But someone shot them', followed by a drawing of a child in a womb. Film of the Stuttgart cemetery on the day of the funeral follows, showing mourners with covered faces and banners, batteries of press photographers, policemen in the surrounding woods and air surveilling and filming. There are cries of 'murder!' and "Sieg Heil!", and scuffles with the police, in between which a police officer is interviewed about the preparedness of the security services. Afterwards the cemetery workers fill in the graves whilst police watch the mourners leaving. One view is from the inside of a car slowly negotiating the roadblocks and speedtraps. A woman and small child attempt to hitch a life, and the quote from Frau Wilde is again shown whilst Joan Baez sings the Sacco and Vanzetti ballad 'Here's to you'.

The Collective Intention

The intent of the eleven directors was to undermine a closed reading of history, wanting to self-reflexively illustrate the nature of historiography and its relation to the individual. The collective statement issued by the filmmakers illustrates this function.[6] They admit that they have differing political views, but do not wish to put forward a narrow ideological work anyway - they are not the

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[6] 'Deutschland im Herbst: Worin liegt die Parteilichkeit des Films?', *Ästhetik und Kommunikation.* Vol. 9(32), 1978. p.124

'supreme judges of the age' and do not wish to subject the viewer to a process of discursive 'closure' by supplying the "hundredthousandth correct theory" to explain the events of the autumn of 1977. Instead, the viewer is centered as an equal in the production of meaning ('We are not cleverer than the viewers'). The autumn of 1977, they claim, is the history of confusion: 'He who knows the truth is lying. He who does not know it, looks for it'. They claim to take into account the patience of the viewer, and 'expect' certain things from him: He must view the film carefully, trust the timing of the film, not confused by the unconventional (uncommercial) editing of the film, and tolerate the weak points 'which really belong to us, to him, and to the autumn of 1977'.

The filmmakers also want to stop the 'loss of memory'. This appears not only to refer to a reluctance to discuss the Nazi era, but also refers to the mechanics of the news media which make events into an amnesic short-lived spectacle. This is one German 'weakness' which must not be hidden:

> 'Es ist etwas scheinbar Einfacheres, das uns aufgestört hat: Die Erinnerungslosigkeit...[Auf den Herbst '77] folgte, wie jedes Jahr, Weihnachten '77 und Neujahr. Als wäre nichts geschehen. In diesem fahrenden D-Zug der Zeit ziehen wir die Notbremse. Für zwei Stunden Film versuchen wir Erinnerung - eine subjektive Momentaufnahme - festzuhalten. So gut wir können. Niemand kann mehr als er kann. Insofern ist dieser Film ein Dokument - auch das unserer Schwäche, die wir nicht verbergen wollen'.[7]

Alexander Kluge, one of the filmmakers and the theoretical architect of *Deutschland im Herbst* elaborated this theme in an afterword published two years later. Historical memories, he maintains, become distorted if not properly come to

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[7] 'It is something apparently simpler that moved us: the loss of memory...[The autumn of '77] was followed by Christmas '77 and New Year, like every year, as though nothing had happened. We are putting the emergency brakes on this express train of time. For two hours of film we attempt to hold this memory firm in a subjectively recorded moment. As well as we are able. Nobody can do more than he is able. In this respect the film is a document - that is also one of our weaknesses which we do not want to hide'. *Ästhetik und Kommunikation*, op.cit.

terms with, resulting in man not being an agent of history which is produced by him, but rather somebody pulled by history.[8] This informs the importance he attaches to gaining consciousness of historical processes in order to be able to affect change in the 'public sphere'.

Alexander Kluge's Film Theory

Alexander Kluge is one of Germany's most distinguished filmmakers, and one of the original signatories of the 1962 'Oberhausen Manifesto', which called for the establishment of a German cinema distanced from the vested interests and commercial partners within which it had developed in the post-war era.[9] Writing shortly afterwards, Kluge makes clear his commitment to giving film a social rather than commercial function:

> 'der Film muß sich mit der sozialen Dokumentation, mit politischen Fragen, mit Bildungsfragen und mit filmischen Neuentwicklungen befassen können, was unter den bisherigen Voraussetzungen der Filmarbeit nur sehr begrenzt möglich war.'[10]

Kluge's ideas of the social function of cinematic practice were influenced by Critical Theory and a conception of montage developed in the Ulm school of film, where one of the goals was to provide a new theoretical centre for German filmmakers post-Oberhausen.[11]

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[8] Negt, O., Kluge, A., 'Entwurf' in Kluge, A., *Die Patriotin* (Zweitausendeins, Frankfurt am Main, 1979), pp.26-7
[9] 'Oberhausener Manifest' in *Augenzeugen: 100 Texte neuer deutscher Filmemacher*, Prinzler, H.H., and Rentschler, E., (eds), (Frankfurt am Main, Verlag der Autoren, 1988), p.29
[10] 'Film must be able to concern itself with social documentation, with political questions, with questions of education and with new developments in film, which was possible in only a very limited way under the conditions of film production up until now'. Kluge, A., 'Was wollen die "Oberhausener"?' in Prinzler and Rentschler, op. cit., p.47
[11] Kluge, A., 'Arbeit in Ulm', in Prinzler and Rentschler, op. cit., pp.256-8

A significant part of this is the concept of the public sphere and *Gegenöffentlichkeit* which Kluge and the sociologist Oskar Negt developed. *Öffentlichkeit* is taken to mean the public sphere of social organisation, although for Kluge and Negt this is not currently organised to the advantage of those it claims to represent. *Gegenöffentlichkeit* is the means by which this present organisation of the public sphere may be challenged. The "public sphere" is 'a central category of social theory, which determines the connection between material production and cultural norms and institutions during the process of the constitution of social experience'. This encapsulates the social and cultural experience of individuals which enables them to interpret social reality.[12] A key part of Kluge and Negt's theory is, therefore, the understanding of historical development in not only institutional terms, but also to understand the capitalist productive process on human experience, thereby historicising consciousness in a way which was ignored by classical Marxism.

Kluge and Negt connect the productive and the conscious processes by claiming that it is only in the capitalist stage of history that social relations become dominated by the production process. Human needs and consciousness thus become integrated into, and objects of, capitalist production. Similar to Adorno's conception of the 'culture industry', 'fantasy values and cultural images' are industrially produced[13], aided by 'secondary exploitation' bodies such as the media which capture consciousness and desires. Kluge and Negt, however, identify an area of 'residual potential for experience and action which cannot be integrated into the system of profit maximisation'.[14] This is an important element of *Gegenöffentlichkeit* because of its potential to resist the 'bourgeois' public sphere in

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[12] Knödler-Bunte, E., 'The Proletarian Public Sphere and Political Organisation: An Analysis of Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge's "The Public Sphere and Experience"', *New German Critique*, Vol. 2(4), Winter 1975, p.56-7,55
[13] Knödler-Bunte, op. cit., p.63
[14] Ibid., p.65

organising human needs and interests through political consciousness and activity, and relating productive interests to society in its entirety.

It is not neccessary to elaborate beyond the bare outline of this theory, but merely to note Kluge's belief that film may provide one opportunity to promote the establishment of his 'oppositional' public sphere by stimulating the consciousness of the viewer. In this, Kluge is indebted the critical theory of Adorno. The mass-produced films of the 'Culture Industry', for Adorno, want to create a false illusion of continuity between themselves (and subsequently the viewers) and the practice of everyday life, creating the appearance of a coherence in social reality and consequently naturalising history.[15] Both Adorno's and Kluge's theories are directed against the aesthetics practiced by Hollywood and the conventional forms of cinema in West Germany in the 1950's, which was a product of the Americanisation of German culture after fears about the previous Nazi hegenomy in cultural politics.[16] German culture appeared ready to be colonised unquestioningly, and accordingly only politically benign films were produced and the home film industry collapsed.[17] The result was an uncritical West German cinema, producing 'spectacular' productions which had little potential to change macro discourses. The technically mediated nature of such cultural productions are hidden behind a pretence of unmediated reality and synchronised into a unified whole, leaving the spectator with no space in which to reflect or imagine, and in a state of passive 'distraction'. For Adorno this means that

> 'The sound film, far surpassing the theatre of illusion, leaves no
> room for imagination or reflection on the part of the audience, who
> is unable to respond within the structure of the film, yet deviate
> from its precise detail without losing the thread of the story...even

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[15] Adorno, T., and Horkheimer, M., *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (London, Verso, 1997), pp.148-9
[16] Schlunk, J.E., 'The Image of America in German Literature and in the New German Cinema: Wim Wenders *The American Friend*' in *Literature/Film Quarterly*, Vol. 7(3), 1979, p.217
[17] Corrigan, T., 'New German Film: The Displaced Image' (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1994), p.2

though the effort required for his response is semi-automatic, no
scope is left for the imagination'.[18]

Adorno's earlier, more sceptical statements about film were tempered late
in life by his acknowledgment of the 'Oberhauseners', and the 'progressive' potential
of montage which promoted a more active viewer and worked against a false,
affirmative naturalism. In this way montage was the means by which the subjective
could reassert itself against the superficial realism of the photographic image.[19]
Kluge utilises this idea at the level of a 'stream of associations' within the mind's
eye, which 'establishes a utopian tradition of cinema in people's minds to which
technological inventions like camera, projector and screen only responded on an
industrial scale', providing a link to his conception of *Gegenöffentlichkeit* in
challenging the consciousness industries of social organisation.[20]

This method of challenging aesthetic continuity via the practice of montage
is therefore formalistically suited to a micro discourse. This was taken up
enthusiastically by the political left which considered it was a useful tool to stress
the idea of a constructed consciousness within an audience, and promoting the
ability to stand 'outside' ideology. This has been famously utilised by the Russian
filmmaker and theorist Sergei Eisenstein who regarded it as an aesthetic form
which would empower the spectator to consciously break free from mediated
practices of what constituted 'reality' or a 'natural order': 'Our cinema is a tool
insofar as its fundamental activity is concerned - a tool to exert an influence on
people, and to reeducate'.[21] One prominent example of this thinking in Germany
was the work of the Berlin dadaist John Heartfield, whose photomontages were

[18] Adorno and Horkheimer, op. cit., pp.126-7

[19] Adorno, T., 'Transparencies on Film' in Bernstein, J.M. (ed) *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* (London, Routledge, 1992), pp.154-61

[20] Hansen, M., 'Introduction to Adorno, "Transparencies on Film"', *New German Critique*, Vol. 24(2), 1981, p.195

[21] Eisenstein, quoted in Aumont, J., *Montage Eisenstein*, translated by Lee Hildreth, (Bloomington, Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1987), p.49

politically satirical, confronting the spectator with photographic images which allowed him to deconstruct everyday representations, for example, by the ironic juxtaposition of National Socialist mythology and symbolism with an everyday reality. What the photograph would "naturally" say under normal circumstances is thereby subverted, and an active viewing advanced.[22] The centering of the individual viewer in this process to 'think for himself' is also inherent in Walter Benjamin's concept of the 'allegorist', who takes pieces from the totality of the life context and joins the fragments to construct a meaning, in opposition to a producer of 'closed' art. In this process the viewer is forced to make it 'fit' into their totality and experience.[23]

Kluge suggests that the 'allegorist' is both filmmaker and film consumer, as both participate in the process of production, thus addressing this subjective element:

> 'The concept of production not only indicates the manufacturing of the films but also its exhibition and appropriation by the imagination of the spectator. One might even reverse the argument: it is the spectator who actually produces the film, as the film on screen sets in motion the film in the mind of the spectator'.[24]

This aesthetic tradition of allowing the viewer's mind to work independently of the "author's", allowing meaning to be grounded as the result of the conscious interaction of an individual stimulated by the montage cuts is, one commentator suggests, afforded more weight by Kluge than Eisenstein. Eisenstein's montage is 'representational', whereas Kluge

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[22] Philips, C., 'Introduction' in *Montage and Modern Life*, Teitelbaum, M., (ed), (Cambridge MA and London, The MIT Press, 1992), p.28

[23] Sarup, M., *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism*, (London, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1988), p.135

[24] Kluge quoted in Hansen, M., 'Cooperative Auteur Cinema and the Public Sphere: Alexander Kluge's Contribution to Germany in Autumn', *New German Critique* No. 24-5, Fall/Winter 1981/2. See also Kluge, A., *Die Patriotin* (Frankfurt am Main, Zweitausendeins, 1979), p.294

'aims to dissolve fixed positions of meaning...a concept of montage based on representation, even though it be dialectical, still predetermines the position of the spectator in its overall design, a concept of montage as discourse allows the spectator to choose his or her distance or involvement; the continuous overlaying and unmaking of one discourse by another provides both an excess and an indeterminacy of meaning in which the spectator's own experience can crystalize'.[25]

This emphasis on individual experience is, therefore, central for Kluge. The viewer's autonomous conscious involvement in both recognising the 'indeterminacy of meaning' and integrating his own personal experience into this in order to arrive at political awareness is one suited to a 'cathartic' conception of the arts.

Analysis of *Deutschland im Herbst*

This primacy of 'centering' the viewer is done by many means. The first strategy is the concentration on the banal and seemingly insignificant - the cemetery workers, the servers being given their final instructions at Schleyer's funeral meal, or the Turkish man arrested at the roadblock, for example. The value of concentrating on the peripheral events, away from the 'main' public events (which are only shown fleetingly in the film), was contentious amongst the reviewers. Lothar Schwab, for example, praises the strategy as an attempt to articulate the powerlessness of the time.[26] Opposed to this are reactions which dispute the ability to provide a political 'direction'. Prinzler claims that whilst the view of official media is limited, so is Schlöndorff and Kluge's coverage of the two funerals. In looking ironically at the events on the periphery of the public event it cannot influence 'public' events: ' Auf Menschen läßt sich diese Neugier nicht ein, auf das alltägliche schon gar nicht. Die Kameras suchen die kleinen Widersprüche im offiziellen Ereignis, die Montage unterstützt noch diese Ästhetik der

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[25] Hansen (1984) op. cit., p.182

[26] Schwab. L.. 'Friedhofslandschaft mit Polizei'. *Aesthetik und Kommunikation*, op. cit., pp.127-8

minimalisierten Eindrücke'.[27] Yet Kluge is clear about the need for such 'local'

histories to counteract any grand discursive narrative of a state's history: 'Telling

stories, this is precisely my conception of narrative cinema; and what else is the

history of a country but the vastest narrative surface of all? Not one story, but

many stories'.[28]

The achievement of constructing a notion of a 'real' subject from the

disjunctions and associative stimuli is, for Kluge, reached through a montaged mix

of the fictional and documentary. Whilst the viewer's capability of fantasy is

important (as it is one element that cannot be entirely coopted into the 'culture

industry'), an element of documentary historical perspective is also required:

> 'Mere documentation cuts off relations: nothing exists objectively
> without the emotions, actions and desires, that is, without the eyes
> and senses of the people involved. I have never understood why the
> depictions of such acts (most of which have to be staged) is called
> fiction, fiction film. But it is equally ideological to assume that
> individuals could determine history. Therefore, no narrative
> succeeds without a certain proportion of authentic material, i.e.
> documentation. Such use of documentation establishes a point of
> reference for the eyes and senses: real conditions clear the view for
> action'.[29]

The documentary mode, for Kluge, not only provides the individual history with

historical and social elements, but juxtaposed alongside 'fiction' also provides the

viewer with essentially another fiction - that of the 'constructed' nature of social

reality. Parallels to Adorno are again clear: 'Film is faced with the dilemma of

finding a procedure which neither lapses into arts and crafts, nor slips into a mere

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[27] 'This type of curiosity does not get involved with people, even less with everyday things. The cameras look for slight inconsistencies in the official event, the montage supports the aesthetic of the minimalised impressions'. Prinzler, H.H., 'Gegeninformation: Notizen zu neuen Dokumentarfilmen aus der Bundesrepublik Deutschland', *Jahrbuch Film 1978/9* (München, Wien, Carl Hanser Verlag, 1978), p.59
[28] Kluge, A., 'On Film and the Public Sphere', *New German Critique*, Vol. 8(24-5), Fall/Winter 1981/2. p.206
[29] Ibid.

documentary mode. The obvious answer today, as forty years ago, is that of montage...'[30] Kluge's idea of this 'antagonistic realism', taking both empirical and emotional reality in order to analyse a situation and its place in history whilst at the same time allowing the viewer to construct his own historical 'reality', allows, after Adorno, a sublimation of a social reality within an integral artwork. Hence the artwork takes from social reality but creates a critical distance to that reality by subjecting it to the immanent laws of the artwork itself.

The mix of fact and fiction within the film is bound up with the emotional reality of the viewer. As Hansen notes, the spectator is presented complex models by the (political) filmmaker to allow them to construct and organise their experience for their own ends:

> 'Either social history continues to tell its fiction of reality (*Real-Roman*), regardless of human beings, or human beings tell their own story, or counter-history (*Gegengeschichte*). In this they will only succeed if they measure up to the degree of complexity offered by reality'.[31]

This emphasis on an emotional reality was criticised as part of the reviewers' desire for a clear political direction. The woman and the child at the end of the film attempting to hitch a lift after attending the burial of the Stammheim dead, for example, were seen as having no connection with the previous documentary material, the filmmakers bringing the emotional aspect into the film to fill a vacuum: 'Sie fügen damit historisch Unvergleichbares zueinander, sie runden den Film mit einer emotionalen Perspektive ab, aber sie haben in Wirklichkeit nichts anzubieten. Sie führen uns, die Zuschauer, zu nichts anderem als zu einer geschmacklichen Vereinbarung...'[32]

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[30] Adorno, op. cit., p.158

[31] Hansen, (1984), op. cit., p.189

[32] 'They put incompatible elements of history together, they round the film off with an emotional perspective, but in reality they actually have nothing to offer. They lead us, the viewers, to an agreement which is no more than one of taste'. Prinzler, op. cit., p.61

Inherently tied into Kluge's idea of stimulating individual political awareness is the idea of *Deutschland im Herbst* of allowing the viewer to deconstruct media discourses. Creating this wareness is a thread running through much of Kluge's episodes: the view of the police filming and photographing the mourners in the Stuttgart cemetery, the repeated view of Schleyer on a series of video screens relaying his memorial service to a gathering in the Daimler-Benz museum, or the viewing of SPD politicians through a video screen at the Party conference whilst only having an oblique 'real' view of the side of their faces. Adopting an extreme form of montage may also be seen as a deconstructive strategy by questioning mediated totality through multiple narratives and a non-hierarchical structure, set up in opposition to discourses controlling the production of meaning.

This is also achieved in the film's dialectical structure, which frames two funerals - the opening funeral of murdered industrialist Schleyer (elements of which are intercut throughout the film), and the end section detailing the 'terrorists' funeral. The differences between the two acts is startling because of the political content, emphasised by a series of dichotomies which are established: order - chaos, choirs - provocative chanting, or company flags compared to the black flags of anarchists. Only the press and the police appear omnipresent, and are, therefore, highlighted as the two principle means of power mediation.

These two events go beyond the merely comparative. The repetition of the same ritual in radically different circumstances (although located virtually within the same time and place) centres the spectator around a political dialectic of violence and its relationship to the state. Paul Corrigan notes the way in which the formal structure of the film locates the viewer as its centre, reflecting Kluge's belief of the viewer as producer:

'The structure and thematic irony inherent in the symmetrical
positioning of the two funerals is self-evident: the geometrical
security of the Schleyer funeral misbalances sharply with the
confusion that surrounds the terrorists' own open-air burial. Yet the
more pertinent irony is the one whereby the spectator is situated in
the cross-fire of camera angles, that of the police filming the funeral
and that of the Germany in Autumn collective filming the police. In
the disjunction that supplants what should be closure here, the
viewer becomes the third angle, the point of signification where
meaning is made, and it is his or her acceptance of this opening in
the fabric of film communication that becomes the very point of the
text, its third meaning'.[33]

Furthermore, there is a sense that in using these interlocking themes Kluge
is influenced by Adorno by promoting a form of 'non-identical' thought, for
example, through the contradictions of the Rommel case. Erwin Rommel, the Nazi
war hero and conspirator against Hitler, who was ordered by Hitler to commit
suicide and who was subsequently buried with full military honours, shared an
allegiance to the Nazi state with Schleyer (who was a prominent National
Socialist). Rommel's son, Manfred, granted a burial in a public cemetery to those
suspected of being responsible for the murder of Schleyer (an unpopular decision
among many people) after *their* suicide, or, as some suspected, a state execution.
The viewer is placed within these interlocking themes of suicide, state execution,
staged funerals, and structures operating through terroristic means. Rather than
explicitly present a central idea, there is in Kluge's montaged form an
interconnected 'constellation' of ideas. Revealing disharmony and contradiction
within the form of the work itself is an attempt not to become trapped in any
closed ideological way of thinking and to falsely affirm a fractured social order.
Any claim for thought which affirms a totality is weakened by the emphasis on the
particular through the close reference to individual 'histories' and 'constellations' of
ideas rather than patterns of thought amenable to dogmatic classification. Critical

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[33] Corrigan, op. cit., pp.15-16

thought is thereby promoted through the struggle for meaning and the resistance of a narrative continuity resulting in any deductive conclusion. Insight is gained by constructing 'the whole from a series of complexes of parts'.[34]

These strategies radically orientate the viewer towards an awareness of self within the history of political violence in Germany. The spectator's attention is captured through the emotional and anti-linear nature of the film, whilst the role of *critical* spectator is emphasised through the repetition of mediated images, and that role performed by his being situated at the 'third angle'. The 'official' media - the agencies by which the viewer would usually inform himself about political life - are also questioned through challenging hierarchies of media discourse, particularly through the montaged use of propaganda film, old newsreel, and newspaper photographs of the 'terrorists'. This radical subjectivity and non-identical patterns of thought were, however, antithetical to a traditional discursive prescription and direction which the reception thought such a work should promote in a time of crisis.

Reception

With the goal of the film being the presentation of the complexities and contradictions of recent German history through the use of an open-narrative and montaged structure, the response to the film may allow a contextual grounding of the political currents in its interpretation. Newspapers would be under particular pressure to do this as they may be seen as a part of the macro 'established' media which is radically questioned in the work.

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[34] Adorno quoted in Held, D., *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995), p.212

It is worthwhile to note that some reviews - predominantly in the 'liberal' media - did successfully grasp the 'intention' of the film, regarding it as an adequate and worthwhile reflection of the confusing and contradictory nature of the time. This is best illustrated by reviews in *Die Zeit*,[35] which, whilst berating the poor aesthetic quality of the work, nevertheless regarded it as one of the most important films at the 1978 Berlin Film Festival. Recognising that ready answers are intentionally not provided, they note that in the improbability of an 'orderly balance' being struck, questions appear to be more important than answers. The juxtaposition of many different styles and temperaments do not reveal the film as contradictory, but rather as a 'structure of many sides', each an attempt to document a reality which either appeared unimportant or too troublesome for the 'official' media reporting. Hence the intention of stressing the importance of 'local histories' in the face of dominant media discourses is recognised, as is the place these had in the connected ideas of non-identical thought, significantly locating the 'free' viewer at the centre of the production of meaning:

> 'Keine Bedeutungen, schlüssigen Folgerungen fügen sich aus diesen
> Bildern einer alternativen Wochenschau, sondern disparate optische
> und akustische Eindrücke - ein Angebot an den Betrachter, sich aus
> diesen nicht unter dem Druck des Sensationellen oder gar
> Repräsentativen entstandenen Fragmenten eine eigene Idee zu
> formen. Damit folgt der Film "Deutschland im Herbst" mit seiner
> offenen Struktur am ehesten den ästhetischen Prinzipin Alexander
> Kluges...Nichts davon ist wirklich schlüssig, soll es auch nicht sein,
> aber es setzt Gedanken in Bewegung'.[36]

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[35] 'Deutschland im Herbst'. *Die Zeit*, 10.3.78; 'Lage der Nation: Acht deutsche Kino-Regisseure zeigen Bilder und Töne einer Krise', *Die Zeit*, 24.3.78

[36] 'No meanings and no irrefutable conclusions emerge from these pictures of an alternative newsreel, but rather disparate visual and acoustic impressions, an offer to the spectator to form for himself an idea from these fragments which have not arisen under the pressure to be sensational or even show an official display. In doing this the film "Deutschland im Herbst" follows most closely the aesthetic principles of Alexander Kluge with its open structure...Nothing in this is really conclusive, nor is it meant to be, but it gets you thinking'. *Die Zeit*, 24.3.78. op. cit.

Other reviews in predominantly the 'liberal' press also noted similar views.
Der Spiegel (whose review cannot be seen as wholly objective in that the film's
principal financer was the publisher) draws attention to the film's concern with the
politics of everyday life in the community rather than abstract ideologies, showing
the ruptured state of the nation in which there were no comfortable answers.[37]
Wolfram Schütte's review for the *Frankfurter Rundschau* similarly praised the
documentary sections, hoping that they would inspire the viewer into 'living life on
the political level' by provoking a self-awareness in relation to the state of the
country.[38] Elsewhere Schütte writes that the lack of political and societal analysis
is redeemed by its saving a physical and psychic reality in West Germany.[39] The
Süddeutsche Zeitung also praised the recording of the 'great confusion' as being the
typical reaction to the autumn of 1977, and regarding its acknowledgement as
being the first step to finding out any notion of 'truth', believing it not longer
possible to level the accusation of 'sitting in ivory towers' to German filmmakers.[40]
A review which distanced itself from both the left and right was surprisingly found
in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, which thought the film would be regarded
as a political testimony in years to come of how democracy was endangered by the
escalating violence of the left, and the overreaction of the right.[41] Such a view,
although common over twenty years later, was rare at this point in time.

This was in contrast to the majority of cases, where the open narrative
process was not viewed as an adequate means in the cultural sphere with which to
tackle the present problem of 'terrorism'. A more closed and linear narrative

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[37] 'Bilder aus der Wirklichkeit', *Der Spiegel*, 6.3.78
[38] 'Herbst-Verwirrungen', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 10.3.78
[39] Schütte, W., 'Endlich bei uns angekommen', *Jahrbuch Film 1978/9*, Pflaum, P. (ed),
(München. Wien. Carl Hanser Verlag, 1978), p.33
[40] 'Nach der großen Verwirrung', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 1.4.78
[41] 'Die sanften Filmfrauen im Vormarsch', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 8.3.78. Although the
lack of funding from state bodies is mentioned, this review still tended to a right-wing emphasis.
seeing a radical left-wing threat to the democratic constitutional order. Mahler is speaking as one
who was 'disillusioned', too many police were shown, and the existence of the film is evidence
that a democracy still exists is proof that Germany was not currently living under a police state.

perspective was demanded, seeking an ideological context (in the narrow sense) against which other ideological narratives may be measured. This is revealed most in the reaction to the film from the left and right of the political spectrum. *Die Welt*, for example, objected to the 'torturously drawn-out' funeral of the Stammheim prisoners, and accused the film of spending too much time focusing on the police rather than the victims of 'terrorism'. It can therefore clarify nothing about the fears of the previous autumn:

> 'An ihr [der Polizei] weidet sich die Kamera negativ und gern. Die Opfer des eigentlichen Terrors werden weniger beachtet. Da wird vieles ausgelassen...Er [der Film] klärt auch nichts. Er kann auch die allgemeine Traurigkeit, die Unsicherheit, die Angst und Bedrohung, die er belegen will, nicht dokumentieren'.[42]

Accusations of not revealing a politically balanced presentation was also made by the most hostile review from the right. In a front page article, the *Bayernkurier* regarded the film's title as misleading as the film itself did not proceed with 'intellectual honesty'. In a similar way to *Die Welt*, the absence of the 'terrorist' acts and the victims was questioned. The review appears to suggest that there is an insidious purpose behind the making of the film - it 'purposely narrows its horizon, not giving a picture of Germany at all, but rather wanting to agitate'. The review also clearly saw the purpose of the film as propaganda directed at the ordinary German citizen, who is subsequently praised at length for enduring the measures designed to combat the RAF, for continuing to work, to 'spiritually' continue, and standing behind a free democratic order rather than the Stammheim dead.[43]

These may be considered selective views, the framing of the film around the funerals of both victims and perpetrators of political violence allowing much of the

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[42] 'The camera eagerly seizes on them [the police] to their disadvantage. The victims of the actual terror receive less attention. Much is left out...Nor does it [the film] clarify anything. Nor can it document the general sadness, uncertainty, fear and menace, which it wants to prove'. 'Tristesse unter der Pudelmütze'. *Die Welt*, 8.3.78

[43] 'Film und Wirklichkeit'. *Bayernkurier*, 15.4.78

first half of the film to be devoted to Schleyer's funeral. Yet the same desire for the filmmakers to have presented a coherent 'closed' ideological text to be read, and the postulating of selective elements of the film against which a distinctive ideological position may be built, also took place on the left. One commentator, in a collection of short review essays collected in the journal *Ästhetic und Kommunikation*, notes at length the inhumanity of the funeral of the Stammheim dead and the power of Mahler's interview. But it is the commentary on Fassbinder's section (which otherwise gained wide praise in most of the reviews) that this desire for prescriptive *praxis* is apparent:

> 'Was ist aus den Leuten geworden, die vor wenigen Jahren noch aufrecht gingen mit klarem Blick. Sie sitzen zu Hause und sind unfähig anders zu reagieren als privat betroffen. Nicht länger politisch. Und die Empörung reicht oft nicht weiter, als gegen die Mutter Recht zu behalten und den Telefonhörer so stark auf die Gabel zu werfen, daß das Telefon darunter fast zerspringt...Fassbinder folgte Resignierten in ihre Resignation...Die Aggression, die nicht produktiv wird, nicht politisch, nicht künstlerisch, geht in die Selbstzerstörung, die sentimental ist und eigentlich feige'.[44]

Writing from the feminist left similarly addressed the film from the perspectives of not providing a means by which identification with (especially women's) 'reality' is provoked. Fassbinder's episode, for example, is thus also criticised as showing no political engagement, questioning whether the film may be considered 'radical' at all:

> '...viele Bullen ins Bild zu bringen...heißt noch lange keinen politischen Film fabriziert zu haben. Das bloße Zeigen von vielen

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[44] 'What has become of the people who, only a few years ago, used to walk with heads up looking straight at you. They sit at home and are incapable of reacting in any other way than with private dismay. No longer political. And the rebellion often goes no further than standing up to mother and throwing the telephone receiver so hard against the cradle that it almost shatters...Fassbinder follows the people who have been forced to accept the situation into their resignation...Aggression that does not become productive, not political, not artistic, goes onto a self-destruction which is sentimental and actually cowardly'. Boeser, K., 'Ohnmächtig ohne zu resignieren', *Ästhetik und Kommunikation* Vol. 9(32), June 1978, p.125

Mercedeslimousinen ersetzt noch keine Analyse politischer und
ökonomischer Zusammenhänge. Das leutselige Gequassel eines
Grenzbeamten vermittelt uns nichts über die wirklichen
Gewaltanwendungen des Staates, Hausdurchsuchungen, Verhaftung
von zu Unrecht Verdächtigten...Deutschland im Herbst will ein
Stück Wirklichkeit zeigen und mogelt sich doch pausenlos an ihr
vorbei'.[45]

Heike Hurst writing in *Frauen und Film* also claimed that the film did not

represent reality, accusing Kluge's montage technique as being only for the

educated. The issues which 'terrorism' raised were therefore being examined from

the standpoint of different perspectives (why, asks Hurst, is Mahler interviewed,

giving him a false authority, instead of the many women who have been imprisoned

and who do not share his views?).[46] What is noticeable is that these specific

interpretations are practised in accordance with specific pre-ordained ideologies,

which in itself may be interpreted as defeating Kluge's intention of provoking

awareness of the inflexibility of ideological standpoints.

Whilst such a reaction was to be expected from the specifically politically

committed media, the common criticism amongst the 'neutral' media repeated this

criticism of lack of political direction and commitment, believing that once the

filmmakers had engaged in such a serious subject the issues should not be

fragmented through formalistic experiments. *Film Dienst* is typical in this respect,

thinking that what was intended as a political document was executed as a 'scimpily

thrown-together collection of completely disparate parts', creating a 'lousy arts

pamphlet of corresponding disparity'.[47] In direct contrast to Kluge's theory, such

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[45] '...showing a lot of cops...is far from having made a political film. Merely showing Mercedes
limousines is no substitute for an analysis of political and economic structures. The affable
waffling of a border guard does not tell us anything about the true use of state force, house-
searches, arrest of people unjustly suspected...Deutschland im Herbst wants to show a piece of of
reality, and secretly tries to avoid it at all times'. von Grote, A., 'Das Wetter bleibt trübe', *Ästhetik
und Kommunikation*, op. cit., p.132
[46] Hurst, H., 'vom großen verhau zum großen verschnitt: "Deutschland im Herbst"', *Frauen und
Film*, Vol. 16, June 1978, pp.15-23
[47] Jacobi, R., 'Deutschland im Herbst', *Film Dienst*, Vol. 31(7), 1978, pp.14-15

reviews thought that political sensivity and awareness was not awoken by the juxtaposition of many sequences and authors. *Deutschland im Herbst*, unlike other documentary-type films, did not forge an identification between the subjects and the filmmaker who has taken up their claims, and therefore was criticised for having nothing to offer to the viewer.[48] Such facets of criticism - often thinly-disguised attacks for not taking a 'side' - were apparent even to those bodies who had be seen to be politically impartial. The *Besonders Wertvoll* committee - the film assessment bureau which awards a film of 'special merit' exemption from entertainment tax - cross into the political, despite their claim to only judge the film on purely aesthetic grounds. One side of the committee thought the motives were presented in too superficial a manner to 'make an impression on the problematic of the situation', and the lack of a coherent whole 'did not permit analysing the situation with that detached care which would have been appropriate to the theme'.[49]

Conclusion

Deutschland im Herbst aimed for political progressiveness in revealing the fragmented and contradictory nature of West German history at the level of the *form* of the film itself. The effort to disentangle the intertextual 'constellation' of ideas presented produces, for Kluge, the potential for change within the public sphere. This intent is clearly seen in Kluge and Negt's *The Public Sphere and Experience*, which is concerned with how 'the fragmented elements of social existence are capable of being organized for socialism'.[50] Negt was to emphasise this point in a work two years later:

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[48] Prinzler. op. cit., p.61

[49] Beckmann, E., *et al*, 'Deutschland im Herbst', *Besonders Wertvoll: Langfilme 1977/8* (Verwaltung der Filmbewertungsstelle Wiesbaden, Wiesbaden, 1979), pp.54-5

[50] Knödler-Bunte, op. cit., p.60

'If...the established organizations presuppose a "whole" human being who is allied with them by commitment and membership, then the first political act of a revolutionary organization must lay bare this illusory totality. The "whole" person, whose characteristics, capabilities, interests and needs are fragmented by capitalist production and consumption stands at the end of the revolutionary process, not at the beginning'.[51]

The reception, in this reluctance to think in discursive totalities, may be seen to parallel the Adorno/Lukács debate, in other words, whether art could better represent authentic 'alienation' by revealing the illusion of unity (Adorno), or whether this was an abstraction of the historical process by which no concrete political *praxis* may be applied.[52] What is of note here is that the majority response to the film is that of the latter. The challenge to any conceptions of totality by Kluge and the other filmmakers (in particular Kluge's radical emphasis on the subjective, and the related idea of non-conceptual thought) forecloses traditionally prescriptive political directions, and critiques the production of dominant macro discourses. Yet there appears to be a demand made by the media for an immediate political direction in the face of the 'terrorist' threat. This may be seen as indicative of the state of panic in West Germany in 1977 - from the right who feared for the constitutional status quo, and from the left who feared a neoconservative agenda of an 'authoritarian democracy'. This thesis will presently demonstrate that the presence of an open cultural narrative on 'terrorism' was not, over a decade later, nearly so controversial, by examining another art work on the 'German Autumn', Gerhard Richter's *18. Oktober 1977*. It is now, however, instructive to turn to the reaction to a model of 'terrorism' which adopts a closed narrative for analysis and comparison, filmed by Rainer Werner Fassbinder, one of the *Deutschland im Herbst* collective.

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[51] Ibid., p.75
[52] This debate is detailed in Sarup, op. cit., pp.134-8

Until his death in 1982 Fassbinder was one of the most prolific and political filmmakers in the West German film industry, whose films have received a rare mix of both popular acclaim and academic respect. Although widely praised for revealing his private consternation at the events of the West German autumn of 1977 in *Deutschland im Herbst*, he was also criticised, as detailed previously, for not providing an overtly political perspective. *Die dritte Generation* ('The Third Generation') in some ways may be seen as a counter to this, providing a psychological and socio-political analysis of the 'next' group of left-wing 'terrorists', rather than a reflection on the private effects of political violence. This film, in its unambiguous statement on the motives behind terrorism in West Germany, differed from *Deutschland im Herbst*, and in providing 'concrete' causes has the advantage of providing a more normative function against which critics can justify their opinions. What the reception of the film reveals is a broad satisfaction with the depoliticising of 'terrorism', and its replacement with simplistic tropes, which lend little to understanding the phenomenon.

Film Summary and Authorial Intention

The film form parallels a Menippean satire, using black comedy to show the apparent follies of the forces of law and order, business, and 'terrorism' alike, the absurdity of events resulting in both amusement and contempt. Fassbinder notes that it is a comedy because the terrorists 'behave like politicians', working for the existing order instead of changing it, and hopes that the viewers are shocked when they laugh 'because basically it's not funny'.[1] He also notes in the opening credits

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[1] Spaich, H., *Rainer Werner Fassbinder: Leben und Werk* (Beltz. Weinheim, 1992), p.168

to the work that it is 'eine Komödie in sechs Teilen um Gesellschaftsspiele voll Spannung, Erregung und Logik, Grausamkeit und Wahnsinn, ähnlich den Märchen, die man Kindern erzählt, ihr Leben zum Tod ertragen zu helfen'.[2] It is important to note that Fassbinder suggests a political (and therefore possibly didactic) purpose, in that the film concerns itself with concrete political questions of the apparent apoliticism of the 'third generation'. This is linked to his portrayal of the society from which the 'terrorists' came as violent, claiming that the third generation have less in common with their predecessors than with German society and its violence.[3] In this way the creation of 'terrorism' through the surrounding violent society becomes causally related:

> '...welch ein Geschenk Gottes muß diesem Staat ein Terrorismus
> sein, der ohne Motivation geschieht und so keine Gefahr in sich
> birgt...Und tatsächlich, gäb's sie nicht, die Terroristen, dieser Staat
> in seiner jetzigen Entwicklung müßte sie erfinden. Und vielleicht hat
> er sogar? Warum nicht? Wie, beispielsweise...der Reichstag, der so
> fotogen brannte...'[4]

This 'third generation' are, for Fassbinder, logically the next generation of the RAF, as opposed to the first group (Baader-Meinhof), and the second generation, who appear to have spent most of their efforts attempting to secure the release of imprisoned comrades. For Fassbinder this generation - young, frustrated middle-class people - are not motivated by political or idealistic aims, but rather by hedonistic concerns, seeing their exploits as 'the last great adventure of mankind'. There are therefore many similarities between this film and his *Mutter Kusters Fahrt zum Himmel* (1975), which portrayed 'anarchists' as having no political

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[2] 'A comedy in six parts about social games full of tension, excitement, and logic, cruelty and madness, similar to the fairy tales you tell children to help make their lives which are inexorably moving towards death more bearable'.

[3] Spaich, op. cit., pp.163-6

[4] 'What a god-send must a terrorism be for this state, a terrorism which takes place without motivation and therefore carries no danger...And actually, if these terrorists didn't exist, this state in its present development would have to invent them. Perhaps it has even done that? Why not? Like, for example...the Reichstag which burned so photogenically...' Fassbinder, R.W., quoted in Berling, P., *Die 13 Jahre des Rainer Werner Fassbinder* (Bergisch Gladbach, Bastei-Lübbe Taschenbuch, 1995), pp.401-2

alternative, whose action is 'a mixture of dilettantism and idiocy'.[5] The apolitical aimlessness of the group is also indicated by the codeword Fassbinder gives them - *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*. This adoption of a title of a work by Schopenhauer represents an individualisation of the metaphysical and an anti-theologism, indicating the terrorists' self-centeredness and lack of any goal. This may also be taken to indicate how the world of representation (consciousness) is explicable by reference to its simultaneously determining and determined relations to other objects - that the anti-state violence portrayed in the film is only explicable by reference to its symbiotic state with the other forces of industry and the law. The alternative titles considered by Fassbinder are revealing, in that they indicate other characteristics of his 'third generation': *Die Enkel des Bösen* ('The grandchilden evil') explicitly connects the film to the Nazi era, and the violence of Hitler's regime; *Henker der Hoffnung* ('Executioners of hope') expresses the fears of the democratic left, that the RAF was actually damaging their cause; *Die Knechte von Ruhe und Ordnung* ('The servants of peace and order') indicates the thesis that the threat of 'terrorism' was exaggerated by the state in order to make the transition to an "authoritarian democracy" through the curtailing of democratic liberties; and *Der Krebs - das ist das Ganze* ('Cancer - that is everything') indicates a sick society, its ambiguity emphasising the idea of 'terrorism' being a *product* of a violent society, as well as alluding to the 'sickness - cleanliness' discourse employed by many at the time, and discussed previously.[6]

In the film, Peter Lenz, a representative of a multinational computer company, establishes and finances a terrorist group in West Berlin with the purpose of increasing the faltering sales of his computers which the police are using in their search for terrorists. Fassbinder's film therefore sets the Federal Republic of 1979 in a perverse order: Industry flourishes, the police can continue hunting the

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[5] Iden. P., Karsunke. Y., *et al.*, *Fassbinder* (New York, Tanam Press, 1981). p.166
[6] The alternative titles (without these interpretations) are mentioned by Fassbinder in "'Die dritte Generation'", *Frankfurter Rundschau*. 2.12.78

'terrorists', the latter of which are given the means to satisfy their desire for adventure. This gives the film the same 'political' structure as his *The American Soldier*, which views the police and law-breakers as being in a symbiotic existence, the police winning 'in principle by using exactly the same methods'.[7] The fictional police commissioner in *Die dritte Generation* has a dream that 'Capitalism invented terrorism to be able to defend itself better', an irony emphasising the theme of the state and industrialists using 'terrorism' as an excuse for making incursions into democratic structures. Lenz even lets himself be kidnapped by the group, where he is videoed in captivity claiming to be a "prisoner of the people". An *Agent Provocateur* sends the members of the group to their deaths at the hands of a trigger-happy police force during the carnival season.

In a similar way to Fassbinder's episode in *Deutschland im Herbst*, there is the constant (often montaged) sound of television or radio news in the background, including the many recent developments in current affairs, which link the allegorical to the real. Details of the Schleyer and Lorenz kidnappings and the shooting of the RAF member Willy Peter Stoll in a Düsseldorf restaurant, the raiding of RAF appartment blocks in Nürnberg, as well as the metalworkers strike in Germany, the revolution in Iran, and the television debate between two prominent left-wing student leaders over the nature of socialism (Daniel Cohn-Bendit and Rudi Dutschke) are included. That the 'terrorists' in the film virtually never pay any attention to any of this is indicative of their general political apathy, preferring to talk about mundane, everyday subjects. The story is built up over six parts, each one introduced by a piece of sexist or racist graffitti from a Berlin toilet at the time of filming, each exactly dated and placed. This may have the intention of ironically juxtaposing the theme of violence with a space which is

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[7] Thomsen, C.B., 'Interview with Fassbinder (Berlin 1974)' in Rayns, T., (ed), *Fassbinder* (London, British Film Institute, 1976), p.48, translated by Søren Fischer

simultaneously public *and* private, thus suggesting that the 'political' motivations portrayed in the film have underlying personal causes.

Events, whilst the film was being drafted, and when initially released, might have foreboded a very controversial media reception. As in the case of *Deutschland im Herbst*, and what was to become common for cultural products concerning this subject, there was difficulty acquiring funds to finance the project. In this instance, Fassbinder had to finance the project himself at a cost of 300,000 Deutschmarks after no television company would fund it, and after the Berlin Senate and *Westdeutsche Rundfunk* suddenly withdrew support, despite filming having already started. Although no reasons were given, the 'taboo' nature of 'terrorism', given the previous (and subsequent) relationship of the subject in German culture, are to be suspected. Fassbinder linked the withdrawal of sponsorship specifically to the theme, making the link between it and financial interests and explicit. In a 1979 interview he said that the film was hindered and support withdrawn for 'political' reasons:

> "Der WDR hat schließlich abgesagt uns aus eindeutig politischen
> Gründen. Der zuständig Redakteur hat mir gesagt, in dem Film wird
> eine Meinung vertreten, die er nicht teilen kann und auch nicht im
> Sender sich zu vertreten getraut. Der Vertreter des Berliner Senats
> ist nach einer anfänglichen spontanen Zusage auch
> abgesprungen...Hinzu kam ein sehr merkwürdiger Brief des Berliner
> Polizeipräsidenten, der uns nicht die Erlaubnis gab - er muß sie
> geben - in einer Berliner Bank zu drehen".[8]

The 'controversial' nature of the film was also illustrated by attacks on cinemas showing it by both right and left wing groups, in what was to set a

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[8] "WDR eventually turned us down clearly on political grounds. The editor responsible said to me that in the film an opinion was advanced which he was not able to share or dared to defend to the broadcasting institution. The representative of the Berlin *Senat* also dropped out after an initial spontaneous promise...In addition, a very strange letter came from the president of the Berlin Police, not giving us permission - which he must give - for us to film in a Berlin bank". 'Nur so entstehen bei uns Filme: indem man ohne Rücksicht auf Verluste macht', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 20.2.79

precedent for attacks against cultural productions depicting the left-wing violence. At its presentation at the Hamburg Film Festival approximately 29 right-wing extremists forced their way into the projection room, threatened the projectionist and damaged the film. They also threw oil-filled bags about the cinema, injuring one person. A few hours earlier in another Hamburg theatre the presentation was stopped when unknown people threw pungent butyric acid onto the front stalls. A further attack in Mannheim saw another forced entry into the projection room with liquid designed to damage the film poured over the reels, whilst an attack on the film negatives in Frankfurt by RAF sympathisers used acid. One commentator thought that whilst neo-Nazis read a glorification of the RAF into the piece, the RAF themselves saw themselves slurred, thus continuing Fassbinder's trait of putting himself 'between two stools'.[9]

Reception

The framework of this chapter will examine the issues raised in the *Besonders Wertvoll* Committee report, which granted the film exemption from entertainment taxes.[10] This review denotes the different grounds upon which Fassbinder's conception of 'terrorism' was interpreted. On the one hand Fassbinder may be thought of as politically engaged, by revealing the lack of sensibility of utopias and the errors of the 'political' perspectives shown in the film. The Committee, however, also thought that the theme may be interpreted in other conflicting ways, notably over the issue of whether the object of the film is terrorism in West Germany, or whether it is 'pseudo' (presumably apolitical) terror. This raises the contentious issue of whether the film may be considered 'politically engaged' or not.

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[9] Berling, op. cit., p.401. See also 'Rechts-Links: Anschläge gegen Faßbinder-Film', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 4.10.79; Spaich, op. cit., p.169

[10] Albrecht, G., *et al*, 'Die dritte Generation' in *Besonders Wertvoll: Langfilme 1979/80* (Verwaltung der Filmbewertungsstelle, Wiesbaden, 1981), pp.62-5

Another 'neutral' review also illustrated this theme. *Film Dienst* accused Fassbinder of failing to provide a political direction or a satisfactory model of terrorism from which such a direction may be extrapolated, and regards the film as similar to *Deutschland im Herbst* ('that failed attempt by German filmmakers who are still not able to assess a coming to terms with the present') in thinking that Fassbinder has essentially nothing to say. The worst aspect of this is the simplification of the complex phenomenon of terrorism, using artificially constructed figures which contribute nothing to our understanding of 'terrorism' and may even promulgate myths:

> 'Für Fassbinder sind die Terroristen naive Kinder, die Frauen
> vorwiegend hysterisch, die Männer schlechte Kopien jener
> bekannten Zigarettenreklamefiguren...die Realität ist eine andere:
> Jene, die die Nachfolge von Baader, Meinhof und Ensslin
> angetreten haben, sind nicht so naiv, wie Fassbinder glauben
> machen möchte...auch er huldigt dem überkommenen Feindbild, das
> in Staat und Gesellschaft zwei gegensätzliche Kräfte sieht'.[11]

Such a view of a political abdication by Fassbinder was, however, not always uncritically received by specialist film journals[12], revealing a split which would characterise the wider media reception.

The neutral group provide the principal issues against which the reaction of the wider media must be set, namely, whether Fassbinder accurately reflected the deeds of the 'third generation', whether he was justified in using a simplistic

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[11] 'For Fassbinder the terrorists are naive children, the women predominantly hysterical, the men are bad copies of those well-known cigarette advertising figures...reality lies elsewhere: Those, who have become the successors to Baader, Meinhof and Ensslin, are not so naive as Fassbinder would like us to believe...he also pays homage to the traditional picture of the enemy, which sees state and society as two opposing powers'. Hill, J., 'Die dritte Generation', *Film Dienst*, Vol. 32(20), 2.10.79. pp.22-3
[12] 'Die dritte Generation', *Fischer Film Almanac 1980: Filme, Festivals, Tendenzen* (Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1980), pp.34-5

apolitical model to base them upon, and whether he was politically engaged by giving a serious analysis to the social condition of West Germany in the late 1970's.

The only newspaper on the right to give the film serious coverage was the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* which regarded it a failure because of its 'artistic inconsequence'.[13] The mix of psychology, realism and caricature hindered Fassbinder's conspiracy theory because it tackled the issue on such different levels - the theory of the state sponsoring such terrorists is unbelievable when the figures themselves are ridiculous. Although the reviewer claims that Fassbinder has made an attempt to measure the surface of German 'terrorism' precisely - by mirroring murders which actually happened, or by quoting details from recent RAF kidnappings - the film is nevertheless legitimately located outside the political, the assertion of which is reinforced by the reviewer's opinion that the function of art is also located outside the political sphere:

> 'Alle Einwände, die...Fassbinder Mangel an eindeutiger politischer Stellungnahme vorwerfen, bleiben verfehlt. Kunstwerke sind keine Leitartikel, ihre Aufgabe ist es vielmehr, gerade jene sinnliche Erfahrung nachzuliefern, die in der Abstraktion des Kommentars notwendigerweise verschwinden muß'.[14]

This appeal to the 'sensuous experience' of art invokes the spirit of Susan Sonntag in wanting to reawaken human senses lost in art through didacticism and interpretation, wanting instead to focus on the 'pure, untranslatable immediacy' of the image.[15] This prioritising of form over content is, despite the many 'real'

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[13] 'Terrorismus als Karneval', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 15.5.79. *Die Welt* barely mentions the film's appearance at the 1979 Cannes fringe, merely noting that it was a 'failure', showing 'neither particular originality nor special artistic aspects'. See 'In der Rue d'Antibes stehen die Kinofans Schlange', *Die Welt*, 23.5.79

[14] 'All objections which accuse...Fassbinder with a lack of a distinct political statement cannot be upheld. Art works are no editorials. It is rather their duty to provide just that kind of sensuous experience which is bound to dissappear in the abstraction of the commentary'. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 15.5.79, op.cit.

[15] Sonntag, S., 'Against Interpretation' in Lodge, D., (ed) *20th Century literary Criticism* (London and New York, Longman, 1972), p.657

references to the RAF in the film (and acknowledged in the media reaction), in contrast to the reactions to the other principal cultural productions examined in here which interpreted the 'terrorist' in a politically more real sense.

Not questioning any political form by denying the interpretation of content tacitly supports a model of nihilistic terrorism. This view is reinforced by the comparison to Chabrol's film *Nada*, which also depicts 'terrorists' as nihilistic. For this reviewer, the film never meant to put forward a hypothesis, because of the rapid interchange between psychology, realism and sarcasm. It is, however, regarded as a success on the immediate aesthetic level, where political analysis disappears, which reinforces rather than disputes the model of the 'terrorist'.

The main tendency of the liberal section of the media was, similarly, a broad, unquestioning satisfaction with the model of 'terrorism' offered, and that the film somehow reflected upon the 'real' world in its metaphorical structure, thus allowing a clear insight into it. Typical among this group was the review found in *Vorwärts*, which, contrary to the view expressed in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, thought that the film deconstructed society well through its illustration of how the forces of capital may engender violent groups:

> '[Der Film] demontiert nichts weniger als unsere
> Gesellschaftsordnung, wirkungsvoller als Terroristenbomben...kein
> Terrorist ist jemals vom Himmel gefallen, sie kommen allesamt aus
> unserer Mitte, aber die Verdrängungsmechanismen und ihre Medien
> arbeiten so perfekt, daß sie noch immer Schuldige (man nennt sie
> auch Sympathisanten) produzieren, an denen man sich schadlos hält,
> um nicht das ganze System zu verdächtigen'.[16]

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[16] '[The Film] takes apart nothing less than our social order, more effectively than terrorist bombs...no terrorist has ever fallen from the sky; they all come from within our midst, but the mechanism of repression and its medium work so perfectly that they still produce guilty people (also called sympathisers), to whom the blame is shifted in order not to bring the whole system under suspicion'. 'Unverhüllte Wirklichkeit', *Vorwärts*, 4.10.79

There is a clear liberal discourse in claiming that increasing public violence produces the 'terrorist' violence, and thus is covertly critical of the increasing state power and loss of civil liberties instigated in order to fight it. It is unfortunate that this analysis unquestioningly accepts that 'terrorists' are 'a middle class generation without ideals or sense...knowing no political goals, making terror for its own sake...' The nature of 'terrorism' in this case again becomes depoliticised within a wider 'truth' of the film - that both 'sides' are as aimlessly violent as each other.

Reviews identical in this respect were written in the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, emphasising Fassbinder's declared intention that such nihilistic terrorists are a product of West German modernity. The 'terrorists' are uncritically acknowledged as being without political foundation: 'Von politischer Motivationen, von Phantasie, Intelligenz und Ideologie - ist keine Spur bei den Terroristen; Spuren dagegen von Frustration, geiler Revolutionsromantik, hysterischem Indianerspiel, Apathie und kindischer Unempfindlichkeit'.[17] This does not mean that the film has no politically didactic purpose (despite it being difficult to relate to the 'chaos' in Fassbinder's head), as it acts as a skeleton upon which 'the flesh of the age, their thoughts, witnesses and documents place themselves'. A classical interpretation of the function of a work of art ('to delight and to teach') is therefore evoked in the 'terror of the media' which reflects the *Zeitgeist* of the late 1970's. Fassbinder forces us to listen to our surroundings through the constant montaged news background, which we now accept as an accustomed part of life, and 'from which the ghost of nihilistic terrorism rises'. The link between this sociological analysis to the psychology of violence remains unexplained, concentrating upon such factors as the 'terror of the media'. The stripping of

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[17] 'There is no trace of political motivation, imagination, intelligence and ideology in the terrorists; there are, however, indications of frustration, a great romanticism about revolution, hysterical cowboy-and-Indian games, apathy and childish insensitivity'. 'Ein Feyerabend für die Gemütlichkeit', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 17.9.79. See also similar sentiments expressed in the review of the Cannes presentation (written by the same reviewer) in 'Filme und Konfektschachteln', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 16.5.79

political discourse, and the substitution of the psycho-criminal, veils the nature of 'terrorism' as a political practice.

Der Spiegel similarly thought that the elements of reality included in the film made it a chronicle of the three months in Berlin when it was filmed, and simultaneously an expression of Fassbinder's helplessness. The model of 'terrorism' - frustrated, middle-class and apolitical - is again not questioned, merely constructed as a reaction to state terror. This "third" generation

> 'betreibt Aktionismus als Selbstzweck, ohne Motive und konkrete Ziele, ohne eine gesellschaftliche Utopie und eine echte Verzweiflung. Fassbinder versteht ihre hysterischen Verschwörer-Posen, ihren Terror zum 'Zeitvertreib', als Reflex auf ein vom Staat verantwortetes Klima der Gewalt...'[18]

The theme of violence as a symptom of West German modernity is repeated by the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, which argues that the thesis is 'not so outrageously cynical', validating the story by the 'logic of madness' through the extrapolation of the motives of the second generation: that of the self-preservation of the group above any political ideal. Fassbinder's motiveless third generation are not taken as a subject in themselves, but rather as a end 'to illustrate our socio-political climate'. The reviewer's interest in 'the socio-political climate' does not, however, extend to examining the political motives of 'terrorism'.[19]

Only a few commentators from the media objected to this interpretation of using terrorists as a subsidiary means to illustrate some form of socio-political angst in the *Bundesrepublik*, and not questioning the nature of 'terrorism' itself. The two separate reviews in *Die Zeit* (written by the same reviewer) did not think

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[18] 'take action as an end in itself, without motives and concrete goals, without a societal utopia and a genuine despair. Fassbinder understands their hysterical conspiratorial poses, their terror as a 'pastime', as a reaction to a climate of violence which the state is responsible for'. 'Wackere Chaoten', *Der Spiegel*, 17.9.79
[19] 'Terror als Komödie', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 15/16.9.79

it a film 'diary' reflecting Fassbinder's own life, but specifically a pamphlet about terrorism. The lack of any serious political analysis is singled out for criticism: What could have been a black satire on the current fears of persecution in West Germany becomes, through its style of non-committal quotations, 'a muddled hotchpotch of "radical chic", nowhere thought through to the end, always simply thrown to the audience with meaningful gestures'.[20] It is not a good film (especially in aesthetic terms) as it only gives the viewer Fassbinder's confused thoughts reflecting his anger and cynicism. Although Schopenhauer and Bakunin are mentioned in the film the only thing the viewer is able to take from this is the fact that Fassbinder has 'read a few new books'. Nothing interests him less than the wish to 'come to terms' with the current situation in the BRD through the medium of 'serious realism'.[21] The film was similarly criticised by the left, thinking that other, more positive critics had been 'taken in' (auf den Leim gegangen) by Fassbinder's aesthetic and technical innovations, which express individual and political helplessness, rather than adequately grasping the phenomenon of political violence. The presentation of the 'terrorists' themselves as politically unconcerned is also questioned, in that the distinct references to reality (the montaged news stories, for example,) give rise to 'distinct associations' with terrorism, which should not be mixed with the inadequate representation of the fictional terrorists.[22]

The principal pattern that may be discerned, therefore, is a widespread complacency over this particular model of 'terrorism' which balances the criticism of it. The figures, being allegorical and not 'realistic', are often taken to represent an abstracted 'state of the nation' at the expense of any serious political analysis of 'terrorist' motives. There are several issues assumed by the film, which, being often unquestioned in the reception, lead to important questions regarding the ability to

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[20] 'Das kalte Herz der Technokraten', *Die Zeit*, 18.5.79
[21] 'Ein geisteskrankes Märchen', *Die Zeit*, 14.9.79
[22] '"Die dritte Generation"', *Tageszeitung*, 25.9.79

realistically confront and 'come to terms' with the violence of the RAF in West Germany.

The Criminal and the Political

In asking whether this was a true reflection of the 'state of the nation', Fassbinder's film may be approached initially on a factual level, where there is indeed evidence which may suggest a certain apoliticism of the RAF in the late 1970's. Whilst the 'first generation' acted 'out of idealism coupled with enormous sensitivity and almost pathological despair', Fassbinder bases his nihilistic, apolitical 'terrorists' by extrapolating the deeds of the subsequent generations: "Ich bin überzeugt, sie wissen nicht, was sie tun, und was sie tun hat Sinn in nichts weiter als im Tun selbst, der scheinbar erregenden Gefahr..."[23] The apparent truth in this is based upon the actions of the subsequent (post 1972, after Baader, Meinhof, Ensslin and Raspe were arrested) groups, who had as their main goal not the undermining of the state structure by advancing insecurity, but rather to gain the release of the *Führungskader* ('leading cadre') from prison.

The first of these groups was "Gruppe 4.2", which built up its logistics from bank robberies whilst receiving instructions from the *Führungskadre* in prison, one of which was the instruction to gain their release through hostage-taking (for example, of leading judges, even if unconnected with the Stammheim trial). This group was captured, as was another group with similar aims revealed by the plans they were carrying at the time - the so-called "Haag-Meyer Group".

A further high-profile attempt to release (26) RAF members from prison was the German Embassy siege in Stockholm, where the *Kommando Holger Meins*

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[23] "I am convinced that they do not know what they are doing, and what they are doing has no meaning beyond itself, beyond the apparently exciting danger..." Fassbinder, R.W.. '"Die dritte Generation"', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 2.12.78

(named after the first victim of the prison hungerstrike) took hostages in April 1975. A further group was "Offensive 1977", which had links to the group members in prison and an agenda to free them. Led by Brigitte Mohnhaupt, who knew the leaders of the 'first generation' whilst serving a prison sentence with them, this 'offensive' was designed to release the prisoners as the end goal of a strategy based upon attacks, the purpose of which was to increase the group's prestige and call for demands for them to stop. This was followed by a kidnapping (based on the successful Lorenz affair of 1975) to secure the release of prisoners.[24]

Such apparently self-seeking acts were to legitimate 'criminal' rather than 'political' discourses of the RAF, compounded by statements which the RAF themselves made. In an interview for *Der Spiegel*, in which Ensslin, Meinhof, Raspe and Baader provided collective answers to questions, they expressed the opinion that 'Every proletariat prisoner who understands his position politically and organises solidarity, the struggle of the imprisoned, is a political prisoner, regardless of the cause he became criminalised for...'.[25] Furthermore, statements from East Germany, which refuted their claim to be 'Marxists' by advocating Fassbinder's conception of the left-wing violence of the 1970's, legitimised a psychological discourse: 'They are disappointed middle class children without revolutionary discipline and without fundamental political knowledge'.[26] Such conclusions are not specific to Germany, but appear to be part of a wider structural analysis. A similar conclusion was printed in the journal *Military Review* in 1977, which wanted to discern a transnational 'profile' of the 'terrorist':

> 'These urban terrorists come from affluent, urban, middle-class families...In the universities, these young products of an affluent society were confronted with and provided anarchistic or Marxist

[24] See Peters, B., *RAF: Terrorismus in Deutschland* (Knaur, München, 1993), p.220

[25] 'Wir werden in den Durststreik treten', *Der Spiegel*, 20.1.75. p.52

[26] Wagenlehner, G., 'Motivation for Political Terrorism in Germany' in Livingston, M.H. (ed) *International Terrorism in the Contemporary World* (London, Greenwood Press, 1978). p.197

ideological underpinnings for their otherwise unstructured
frustrations and idealism'. [27]

That certain elements of both the second and first 'generations' of the RAF
may be interpreted as criminal is beyond doubt. It is, however, a big step to claim
that the RAF has no claim upon the political or ideological, as Wagenlehner
does.[28] Fassbinder's strategy of interpreting the complex phenomenon of 'terrorism'
as an apolitical and hedonistic 'last adventure of mankind' has little power to clarify
paradoxical questions or illuminate the complexities of the 'causes' behind the
'middle-class terrorism', and thus may hinder a cathartic 'coming to terms' with the
phenomenon. His model of naive, frustrated people being duped into violence by
the interests of capital, a model widely accepted in the reception, locates 'terrorism'
within psychological rather than political discourse. Yet to ignore the political
aspects of the RAF is to fail to adequately understand and 'come to terms' with
fundamental questions regarding their violence.

The Political and the Psychological

It is common amongst academic and psychological literature to divide
'terrorists' up into three categories: alongside the politically motivated there is the
'criminal' terrorist (motivated by material gain), and the 'irrational crazies'.[29] The
problem of conceptualising an act of 'terrorism' as distinct from a criminal or
psychopathical act remains elusive. Validating a violent act as 'terrorist' usually
confers a political legitimacy upon it which may, at the same time, undermine the
state's own claim to legitimacy and hence the legitimacy of measures to combat the

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[27] Quoted in Schmidt, A.P., *Political Terrorism: A Research Guide to Concepts, Theories, Data
Bases and Literature* (Amsterdam, SWIDOC, and New Brunswick, Transaction Books, 1988),
p.191
[28] Wagenlehner, op cit, p. 203
[29] Simmons, C.H., Mitch, J.R., 'Labelling Public Aggression: When is it Terrorism?', *Journal of
Social Psychology*, Vol. 125(2), p.246. A further example would be Turco, R.M., 'Psychiatric
Contributions to the Understanding of International Terrorism', *International Journal of Offender
Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, Vol. 31(2), p.153

threat. A political distancing, to deprive any notion of legitimacy from a terrorist cause, is therefore achieved by discursively labelling the 'terrorist' action as solely criminal or psychopathic. This was not only desired by the 'official' organs of the state, but also by some on the left, who saw the violence practiced for their cause as being more destructive to it, and providing an excuse for a neoconservative political agenda.[30]

Fassbinder's conception of 'terrorism' does provide a superficial sociological basis for the psychological profile of the 'terrorists' - that of a violent society breeding counter-violence. It therefore has the potential to fit into the psychological model of the 'theory of relative deprivation'.[31] This links psychological frustration, aggression and the sociological environment by suggesting that violent action may be brought about by a discrepancy between what people believe they are justifiably entitled to, and the prevailing life conditions. Despite this theory suffering from criticisms of a tautological nature (questions of when this discrepancy becomes 'big enough', and what 'legitimacy' is, for example), it does make an attempt to define individual action based upon social demands. Fassbinder fails to do this, and in the absence of any demands upon the social system in the name of justice and legitimacy, terrorism becomes "the last great adventure of mankind". In the absence of these social needs from the sociological perspective, 'terrorist' motives no longer contain sociological causality. A brief examination of some of the psychological theories of 'terrorism', and a comparison to Fassbinder, will illustrate this.

A widely subscribed to theory is that of violence having a liberating effect upon the individual. This may be traced back to Bakunin and Nechaev, whose

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[30] This included a severe reaction from the left-wing papers in the latter 1970's. The RAF became labelled as "murderers" instead of "comrades", and the Berlin *Rote Hilfe* paper was particularly critical of the 1977 Lufthansa hijack because of the innocent lives involved. Peters, op. cit., p.276
[31] Cohan, A.S., *Theories of Revolution: An Introduction* (London. Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1975), pp.199-205

famous maxim 'the urge to destroy is a creative urge' appeared in *The Revolutionary Catechism* of 1869, an argument later to be taken up by Georg Sorel in his belief that violence has a purifying function. Franz Fanon also noted the psychological relief which violence confered upon the individual alongside the understanding of 'social truths'.[32] Hence violence is often endowed with an emotional and liberating aspect, and it is not surprising to see some clarifying the violence of the RAF as driven by unpolitical psychopathological urges for self-liberation; one commentator thought that the student movement which gave rise to the RAF and other left wing terror groups in the BRD

> 'did not offer any alternative to the democratic order...They had no constructive ideas, but merely wanted to destroy...It also served as an individual form of liberation. Personal problems and needs provided the inducement. Normally, in the families of the radical left students the mother was dominant and the father was perceived to be a failure...German terrorists were and are basically concerned with the solving of personal problems, be they family, sexual, or professional'.[33]

The characters in Fassbinder's film with their occupational, sexual, drug, and familial problems would easily fit into this model. One character, who had earlier broken down at the employment office, becomes a 'terrorist' because nobody gives him employment. One of the female members of the group is at the same time the secretary to Lenz and lover of her step father, the police commissioner. Another is a drug-addict and injects herself to death, whilst another female member deludes herself that she is emancipated. What is also notable in the above statement, in locating the discourse of 'terrorism' within the sphere of familial psychology, is its

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[32] Dowling, J.A., 'Prolegomena to a Psychohistorical Study of Terrorism' in Livingston (ed), op. cit., p.226

[33] Wagenlehner, op. cit., p.202. A further example of defining terrorists by the purely personal is done by Cooper, quoted in Schmidt, op. cit., p.193: 'Neither politics or ideology make terrorists: the politics of sex are more influential than the politics of Mao, Trotsky or Ho Chi Minh. It is just that the latter, as a rationalization, seems so much more respectable and the terrorist, above all, craves respect'

appropriation of the left's thesis of the 'authoritarian personality', claiming that "fascistic" (violent and intolerant) behaviour has its roots in this sphere.

A further much-used psychological explanation for 'terrorism' is based upon the Freudian theory of frustration in the attempt to recover infantile gratification. In not suppressing these drives, interaction is difficult. Hence Fassbinder's group is portrayed as having infantile behaviour, arguing over properties on a monopoly board, or over their romantic-sounding aliases ('Oskar Matzerath' and 'Louis Ferdinand Céline', for example).[34] One rapturously tape records this new identity. Unstable self-identities are not only indicated by the fight over and enthusiasm for the exotic names, but also for the enthusiasm for dressing in carnival dress and easy adoption of exaggerated mannerisms, for example the 'producer' of the kidnap video, who apes a Hollywood producer. Notably another soils his trousers in a moment of anxiety.

A Freudian theory of 'terrorism' may credibly be extrapolated to include 'political' behaviour. Dowling, for example, corresponds this Freudian theory to the attempted recovery of an 'Edenic myth' by the projection of how a society should be governed as a result of violent actions.[35] This type of belief - related to the millenialistic thought that sudden and violent actions will be followed by a harmonious state - at least leave scope for some visionary political end, no matter how vague or utopian. Fassbinder's model of 'terrorism' does not extend as far as this, as demonstrated by their lack of interest in political events around them (one

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[34] Fassbinder's choice of the alias 'Oskar Matzerath' is particularly significant. Oskar is the principal protagonist in Grass's *The Tin Drum* who claims he does not want to be an adult, protecting himself against the adult world by constructing a false childhood around him, with a desire to return to the womb. Freudian psychologising is also emphasised by Oskar's Oedipal desires, Matzerath being the murdered father. In the wake of Oskar's existential anxieties and ego-centered philosophy lies a trail of the dead, injured and offended, making Fassbinder's views on the 'third generation' explicit.

[35] Dowling, op. cit., p.228

is more interested in a stylish new blouse than the condition of the society), and their satirical use of Marxist rhetoric to justify selfish actions.

The Importance of the Political

It would be wrong to suggest that there is little or no value in drawing upon psychological discourse for individual motivations in interpreting the behaviour of 'terrorists' or 'revolutionaries'. The analysis of Hitler's psychopathological structure may, for example, be valuably interpreted using Freudian analysis.[36] It must however be recognised that such theories are limited in the sense that linking an individual's psychological character with political violence ignores wider social and political concerns, for example, the conditions under which a wide group of people may be inspired to support the aims of this 'revolutionary' character. The importance of this wider support for a revolutionary movement is recognised in counter-insurgency theory. Taber notes that no group fighting against the state can support itself for any length of time without a broad degree of societal support, to supply logistics, accommodation, and ultimately to be the group from which the movement will recruit. Taber, whose book was widely read within United States military circles, is largely based upon Mao's guerilla warfare theory, a theory widely read by the RAF[37] : '[The population] is the key to the entire struggle...Without the consent and active aid of the people, the guerilla would be merely a bandit, and could not long survive'.[38] That the RAF was a social phenomenon may be illustrated by the government's figures for members of politically extreme groups. In 1990, although the number of people who practiced

[36] Cohan, op. cit., p.185, details the conflict Hitler had with his father, devotion to his mother, and how this Oedipal state later manifested itself when the state became the new hated father figure.
[37] Such influences are obvious in works such as 'Das Konzept Stadtguerilla' ('The Concept of the Urban Guerilla'), reprinted in Pulte, P. (ed), *Die neue Linke: Aktuelle Dokumente de Gruyter* (Berlin, New York, Walter de Gruyter, 1973), pp.36-63
[38] Taber, R., *The War of the Flea: A Study of Guerilla Warfare Theory and Practice* (St. Albans, Paladin, 1974), pp.22-3

left-wing violence was estimated at only 4100 in Germany, there were just under 35,000 members of 'extreme left-wing organisations', which had the same goal of removing the existing state and social order. A further 61,000 belonged to Marxist-Leninist and other revolutionary Marxist organisations.[39] Such elements of wider social movements are, therefore, required in an 'explanation' or elucidation of 'terrorism', as without them terrorism would be impossible for any sustained length of time. Yet because this number constitutes a small percentage of the population as a whole, it is easily interpreted as 'abnormal' behaviour, a discursive position which forecloses further debate.

The 'political' is also important as the word 'terrorist' has particular *political* connotations, and that by thereby locating the 'terrorist' solely within the criminal or psychopathic spheres is a means by which political legitimation may be denied. It cannot be argued that rhetorically Fassbinder did not mean 'terrorist', for as shown above he clearly relates the figures in his film to the direction he thought the RAF was taking at that time. It is true that the definition of the word 'terrorist' has been problematic not only because of the emotional aspects attached to the use of violence, but primarily because it refers to political violence, so definitions are made selectively for different purposes. Taylor thinks that the term 'seems to have a promiscuous use, characterised by a multitude of hypocritical, hidden, or implicit meanings'.[40] Lacqueur notes that this results in a theoretical impasse - even though in the late 1960's 650 political scientists thought their specialisation was "revolutions and political violence", there remains widespread disagreement over the definition.[41] But the perceived political nature of a 'terrorist' act is highlighted in a study by Simmons and Mitch, who argue that a different perception of public aggression is formed by people when it is labelled as 'terrorist'. Their methodology involved giving over 400 undergraduate students a 'realistic' newspaper account of

[39] *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1994* (Bonn, Bundesministerium des Innern, 1995), pp.20-1
[40] Taylor, M., *The Terrorist* (London, Washington, Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1988), p.2
[41] Lacqueur, W., *Terrorism* (London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), pp.137-8

an act of public aggression, with varying descriptions of the motivation. The students were then asked to label the event. Accordingly, when the newspaper account described the attacker as a 'political fanatic' the incident was predominantly labelled as 'terrorist'. Simmons and Mitch conclude:

> 'Although political theorists may view terrorists as criminal or mentally ill, the perception of subjects in this study was that terrorists are those who are politically motivated rather than irrational or motivated by financial gain...[subjects selected] life imprisonment and death penalty less frequently for a political fanatic than for a professional killer with apparent criminal motivation'.[42]

Although a similar study has not been made in Germany to my knowledge, it is quite possible that this would be a comparable concept in Germany.

To label a group of people as psychologically 'ill' may also misleadingly carry connotations of a lack of intelligence (although it is of course possible to be emotionally immature as well as intelligent). Specifically in West Germany, for example, the court-appointed psychiatrist who examined the Baader-Meinhof leaders to assess their ability to stand trial found them "intelligent", having no symptoms of psychosis or neurosis, and not displaying any particular "personality type". Social commitment was emphasised above personal gain as he thought that 'they all started out with a serious social commitment, and not to become great terrorists'.[43] The same people were singled out by the Federal Prosecutor at the *Stammheim* trial as being an additional cause of stress to the prison officers in Stammheim because of their intellectual superiority: "Sie waren uns natürlich in allen Bereichen geistig weit, weit überlegen. Wobei ich sagen muß, bewußt haben

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[42] Simmons and Mitch, op. cit., p.250
[43] Holden, C., 'Study of Terrorism Emerging as an International Endeavour', *Science*, Vol. 203, 5 January 1979, p.34

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sie das nicht ausgespielt oder uns irgendwie merken lassen. Aber der einzelne hat es eben doch gespürt".[44]

Whilst it is true that Fassbinder's criticism is not levelled at this 'first' generation, there remain theoretical arguments why 'terrorism' should be understood in a more serious manner, and not be thought of as 'mindless' violence without a social or intellectual basis.[45] Somebody indulging in violence for its own sake does not feel the need to justify that violence, seeing no need to free himself from blame. A 'terrorist', however,

> 'seeks to persuade us of the reasonableness of his acts, fantastical as
> they may sometimes seem. He appeals on the whole to principles in
> ordinary currency...he does not make himself the measure of the
> rightness of his acts, however opaque it may be to those beyond his
> circle'.[46]

Gilbert goes on to note that the mind of a 'terrorist' is essentially no different to that of a state soldier - both obey orders from a higher command chain which they may find morally repugnant.[47] The key elements of a 'terrorist' act are, furthermore, those of communicating and identifying - the communication of a particular cause through action (hence the debate about the role of the media in covering 'terrorist' actions) and the process by which the person practising violence wants people to identify with his cause or by wanting a specific group to identify itself as targetted. In both cases 'mindless' random violence can achieve little.

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[44] "They were naturally far, far superior to us in all intellectual fields. Although I have to say that they did not use it as a trump card, or even let us feel it. But we felt it anyway". Aust, S., *Der Baader-Meinhof-Komplex* (München. Knaur, 1989), p.364

[45] See Stümper, A., 'Considerations a Propos de l'Affaire Baader-Meinhof', *Revue de Droit Pénal et de Criminologie*, October 1973. pp.33-44 for the view that the Baader-Meinhof Group acted out of nihilistic and alienated motives, rather than having any coherent political philosophy.

[46] Gilbert, P., *Terrorism, Security and Nationality: An Introductory Study in Applied Political Philosophy* (London and New York, Routledge, 1994), p.5

[47] Ibid., p.5

The oblique direction by generations of the RAF in the late 1970's to concentrating efforts on gaining the release of imprisoned comrades, led people to postulate possible reasons why this 'generation' of 'terrorists' in West Germany appeared to be more 'criminal' than political.[48] That it had 'neither a common philosophy nor a unified structure' is, however, questionable. Statements of intent and justification for their actions were frequently made. The point of 'terrorism' - to gain popular support through the publicisation of 'justified' deeds - would otherwise be lost. Secondly, before Brigitte Mohnhaupt went underground she testified in detail at the Stammheim trial on the structure and strategic concept of the RAF, in order to refute what was thought to be a misleading statement made by a defector.[49] In the year before Fassbinder started filming, there were also RAF attacks aimed at clear political targets, for example, the assassination of a Federal Prosecutor, a spokesperson for the Dresdner Bank, and a (failed) rocket attack on the Federal Prosecution buildings in Karlsruhe. But the view of the RAF having neither a philosophy nor coherent structure nevertheless continues to have a certain popularity, even in academic literature.

The many bank robberies which the RAF used to fund their operations were also cited as evidence of their 'criminal' nature. This is something recognised by the RAF, who again stressed a political element behind such actions:

> 'Manche sagen: Bankraub ist nicht politisch. Aber seit wann ist die
> Frage der Finanzierung einer politischen Organisation keine
> politische Frage...In den Metropolen des Imperialismus kann die
> Organisierung des antiimperialistischen Kampfes als gleichzeitig
> legalem und illegalem, politischem und bewaffnetem Kampf auf den
> Bankraub nicht verzichten'.[50]

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[48] Wagenlehner, op.cit., pp.195-7

[49] Aust. op.cit., pp.397-9

[50] 'Some people say: A bankrobbery is not political. But since when is the question of the financing of a political organisation not a political question...In the urban centres of imperialism the organisation of anti-imperialistic struggle cannot be done without bankrobberies, a struggle which is at the same time legal and illegal, and at the same time political and military'. 'Dem Volk dienen Rote Armee Fraktion: Stadtguerilla und Klassenkampf', *Ausgewählte Dokumente der Zeitgeschichte: Bundesrepublik Deutschland (BRD) - Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF)* (Köln,

It is not surprising that such statements did little to prevent the conception of the RAF as a criminal 'band' rather than a 'group'. Such semantic differences raised wide public debate in West Germany during the Böll affair after he expressed a preference for the word 'group' in an article printed in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. The tabloid newspaper *Bild* replied with the article 'When is a band a band, Herr Böll?' which thought that the group's bankrobberies earned them the title 'band', with the accompanying criminal discourses which are implied.[51]

Conclusion

Die dritte Generation clearly alludes to politically critical practice. In the opening titles of the film, for example, Fassbinder quotes Chancellor Schmidt who had said in an interview for *Der Spiegel* that he was grateful to a jury who did not examine all the events surrounding the Lufthansa hijack according to constitutional law. Yet to properly understand 'terrorism', neither Fassbinder, nor a substantial section of the reception performed this practice adequately on a political level.

A more concretely 'political' analysis in the reception may have been expected, given the difficulties Fassbinder experienced in financing the film, the (reported) polarised reaction amongst critics at its premiere in Cannes[52], and the political nature of the (real) montaged news items. 'Terrorism', as shown above, indicates some form of political motivation in the public mind, yet one is not able to understand the motives of Fassbinder's thinly-veiled RAF figures which lay behind their anti-social behaviour, not acknowledging the probability that 'violent

GNN Gesellchaft für Nachrichtenerfassung und Nachrichtenverbreitung, Verlagsgesellschaft Politische Berichte m.b.H., 1993), p.26
[51] 'Wann ist eine Bande eine Bande, Herr Böll?' reprinted in Grützbach, F., (ed) *Freies Geleit für Ulrike Meinhof: Ein Artikel und seine Folgen* (Köln, Kiepenheuer und Witsch, 1972), pp.140-1
[52] One critic claimed that the fear of terrorism, even on the screen meant 'No other film work by one producer at the Cannes festival divided the professional public into two abruptly opposing camps'. 'Warum braucht der Fahndungscomputer Anarchisten?', *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 16.5.79

behaviour co-exists with, and is an expression of...[a] complex moral calculus'.[53] The focus of the reception was on the satirical elements at the expense of elucidating political questions, a response which may reflect a reluctance to directly confront the subject of the violence of the RAF, and thereby 'come to terms' with it.

Despite the multiple allusions to the 'real', and the political connotations which 'terrorism' implies, Fassbinder's 'terrorists' draw upon psychological tropes and a closed discursive structure, being apolitical and one-dimensional. What Fassbinder's film does not achieve is a serious portrayal of an individual who was a committed 'terrorist', or an environment from which violence stemming from political contradictions could emerge. More significantly, the extent of the uncritical acceptance of this model reflects a willingness to comply with the *distancing* of the terroristic, indicating a reluctance to examine the complexity of such a phenomenon. To understand what may appear to be incomprehensible and inhuman, it is first necessary to construct figures which are humanly understandable. This lacking identification was noted by one reviewer:

> 'Nie waren Fassbinders Akteure so schlecht wie hier, wo sie
> zusammengekleisterte Kunstfiguren spielen müssen, mit denen sie
> sich nicht identifizieren dürfen, an die sie selber nicht glauben
> können...Hier, wo infantile Früchtchen und ihre karikierten
> gesellschaftlichen Gegenspieler bei ihren Bubenstückchen
> beobachtet werden, wo nirgends eine erkennbare menschliche Figur
> den Rahmen sprengt, also auch keine Gefühle erlaubt sind, hat sich
> Fassbinder selber um seine eigentlichen Möglichkeiten gebracht'.[54]

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[53] Mungham, G., 'The Sociology of Violence'. *New Society*, 13th. October. 1977, p.61. Mungham's analysis is of anti-social behaviour by youths in communities, yet the point - that there are motives and rules behind the simplistic 'tabloid' headlines of violence - is the same.
[54] 'Fassbinder's performers have never been as bad as here, where they had to play stuck-together figures with whom they cannot identify, in which they cannot believe in...Here, where immature mischief-makers and their caricatured opponents are observed with their pranks, where nowhere a recognisable human figure transcends the narrow frame and therefore no feelings are permitted, Fassbinder robs himself of his true potential'. 'Trotziges Scheitern an der Gegenwart', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 16.5.79

This is a significant early recognition that identification on a human level is an important element in gaining a holistic conception of 'terrorism'. As shall be shown, such tendencies and the media's compliance towards them would increase over time.

Such defence mechanisms of avoiding the confrontation of questions concerning political violence are given added significance when elements of political reality are contextualised, only to be later denied by the figures. The constant barrage of news from the West German media about terrorism and reaction to it throughout the film provides reference to a 'real' context, yet in the process of connecting the real with the allegorical, the political is lost. This is despite the presentation of figures which are representative rather than specific not necessarily needing to be depoliticised, as shown by the tradition of German expressionist drama, which shunned empirically based characters for embodiments of attitudes and mass movements.

Fassbinder has denied that 'terrorism' was the principal theme in this film:

> "[Terrorismus] ist nicht das Hauptproblem...Das Hauptproblem ist
> vielmehr, daß gerade Leute, die keinen Grund, keine Motivation,
> keine Verzweiflung, keine Utopie haben, sich günstig von anderen
> benutzen lassen...Es spielt z.B. keine Rolle, ob es jemals einen
> Unternehmer gegeben hat, der Terroristenzellen in Gang gesetzt
> hat, um seinen Computer besser zu verkaufen".[55]

But despite this, that this model of 'terrorism' should remain unquestioned and uncriticised to the extent that it did reflects this reluctance to seriously engage with issues of 'terrorism'. The film is significant as it is the first fictional portrait of the

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[55] "[Terrorism] is not the main problem...The main problem is rather that just those people who have no reason, no motivation, no despair, no utopia, let themselves be conveniently used by other people...for example, it is of no significance whether there was at any time an entrepreneur who put terrorist cells in action in order to sell his computer better". *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 20.2.79, op. cit.

RAF in West Germany and therefore has much greater freedom to explore themes and suggest hopes and fears unbound by the confines of more 'factual' works, which is where the majority of works in this area lie. Yet within this freedom it is important to note how 'In this context of politicised violence, hero, prophet, madman, criminal, have become totally confused'.[56] The reaction to this film may be significantly compared in this respect to Margarethe von Trotta's *Die bleierne Zeit*, a film which was based substantially upon fact, and which also focused on the 'personal', but in a more discursively open manner.

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[56] Leach, E., *Custom, Law, and Terrorist Violence* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1977), pp.21-2

<u>Margarethe von Trotta: *Die bleierne Zeit* (1981)</u>

Margarethe von Trotta is one of the most acclaimed filmmakers in modern

German cinema, and a leading figure in feminist cinematics.[1] Her initial artistic

engagement with the violence of the radical left was playing Gudrun Ensslin in

Klaus Lemke's 1969 television film *Brandstifter* ('Arsonist') about the *Kaufhaus*

arson, for which Ensslin and Baader, among others, were convicted. During the

1970's she became one of the most well-known actresses of the 'New German

Cinema', which, although having many divergent tendencies, was nevertheless

recognised as tackling issues of social and political importance. Her co-production

with Volker Schlöndorff of the popular film version of Böll's *Die verlorene Ehre*

der Katharina Blum established her as a filmmaker, whilst her first solo film *Das*

zweite Erwachen der Christa Klages (the story of a woman turning to crime in

order to finance a child day-care centre) contained elements of her future

'trademarks' of the catharsis of female rebels, and sensibility for the development

and problems of her female characters. *Die bleierne Zeit*, her third film, established

her as an international filmmaker, winning the Venice Film Festival prize for the

best film in 1981, and also prizes for acting and production. The awards which

followed from home and abroad made it the most honoured film produced in

Germany, and one of the most awarded of all time. One German commentator

noted its popularity abroad to be revealed by the integration of the title - *The*

leaden time - into a popular expression of 'the murdrous late-70's era' of the Red

Brigades in Italy (*gli anni di piombo*).[2] The themes of women's relation to violence

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[1] Background details on von Trotta and *Die bleierne Zeit* may be found in 'Margarethe
von Trotta', *Munziger-Archiv und Internationale Biographie, Archiv 50/93, K014579-5
To-ME*, (Ravensburg, Archiv für publizistische Arbeit, Loseblattausgabe), pp.1-3;
Fischetti, R., *Das neue Kino: Acht Porträts von deutschen Regisseurinnen* ('Tende,
Frankfurt am Main, 1992), chapter 8; Schütte, W., 'An Editing Room of One's Own',
Artforum, December 1985, pp.66-72
[2] Schütte, op. cit., p.67

was to continue with the award-winning film *Rosa Luxemburg*, and *Il lungo silenzio*, which was dedicated to Sicilian mafia widows.

The film orginated in a meeting between von Trotta and Gudrun Ensslin's sister, Christiane, in the Dornhalden cemetary in Stuttgart during filming the funeral of the Stammheim dead in *Deutschland im Herbst*. Although von Trotta had never met Gudrun Ensslin, she was well-known enough for her political activism for Gudrun Ensslin to send her a letter from prison, saying she would be glad if she visited. Von Trotta declined:

> "Ich habe es auch immer vorgehabt, ich war nicht dagegen, sie zu
> besuchen, aber gleichzeitig hatte ich eine innere Scheu davor. Ich
> fürchtete, sie sieht in mir eine radikale Frau, die überzeugbar ist, den
> Weg zu gehen, den sie selber gegangen ist."[3]

The resulting film was conceptualised with broader political ramifications than 'terrorism'. In a similar way to many of the cultural products discussed here, it wanted to encompass the wider Germany of the twentieth century, von Trotta saying she had a desire to make a film about Germany with the aid of a personal story which included many of her own post-war political experiences: the repression of the 1950's in familial, patriarchal, and cultural ways, the 1968 student generation, the Vietnam war, and feminism.[4] The film therefore encodes many micro elements - particularly the 'repressed' past, and the feminist confrontation with the relationship between the public and private spheres - within the one theme of 'terrorism', from a personal, subjective view.

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[3] "I always intended to, I was not against visiting her, but at the same time there was something in me that kept me from doing it. I feared that she saw in me a radical woman who was able to be convinced to go the way she herself had taken". Quoted in Mundzeck, H., *"Als Frau ist es leichter, Mensch zu werden": Gespräche mit Dorothee Sölle, Margarethe von Trotta, Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul* (Hamburg, Rowohlt, 1984), p.85
[4] Fischetti, op. cit., p. 169

<u>Summary and Intention</u>

The film details the relationship between the two Ensslin sisters, Gudrun and Christiane (respectively renamed in the film as Marianne and Juliane Klein), who are both committed to political change, Marianne through violent means, and Juliane through *alltägliche kleine Dreckarbeit* - 'dirty little everyday work' - by writing for a feminist magazine.[5] The film is interdispersed with seven 'flashbacks' to their childhood in an oppressively religious and patriarchally-structured home, where their father was an authoritarian minister of religion. These detail the rivalry between the two sisters, and the roles of the 'rebel' and the 'good' girl which were to be reversed later. Marianne's desire to help humanity and find meaning in her life as a teenager is scorned by the Sartre-reading Juliane. Whilst Marianne reads poetry movingly at school, Juliane finds it 'kitsch' and walks out of the class, smokes, and rebels against the school dress code. The two sisters' early political development is illustrated by two Alain Renais films. *Nacht und Nebel*, screened by their father for a youth club in 1955, concerns the conditions in the German wartime concentration camps, after which both sisters are physically sick. The other is a 1968 screening about the Vietnam war, during which Marianne says 'I will never resign myself to the fact that you can not do anything against it'.

When Marianne disappears into the underground the two continue to meet. Private sisterly affection remains, although each is highly critical about the other's methods for political change. This continues in prison during Juliane's visits:

> "Wir arbeiten, Marianne, seit Jahren. Was wir machen, ist wichtig,
> nicht nur für mich. Es waren kleine, manchmal winzige
> Erfolge...aber mit euren Bomben habt ihr alles zerstört, habt ihr

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[5] All quotes in the summary are taken from the published screenplay: von Trotta, M., *Die bleierne Zeit: Ein Film von Margarethe von Trotta* (Frankfurt am Main, Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1981)

unsere Arbeit behindert...Du hast es einfach gemacht. Viel zu einfach".[6]

There is, significantly, no reference beyond this passage which details Marianne's 'terrorist' activities, and no ideological motivations or justifications for her taking up the armed struggle (apart from the assumed comparison between Nazism and the United States' invasion of Indo-China). The contextualisation therefore remains vague, located within the 'leaden times' of the post-war years in the Federal Republic to somehow explain the different reactions of the sisters to the German past and present-day 'injustice'. Juliane continues to visit Marianne, notably during Marianne's hungerstrike for better prison conditions, in spite of the pressures both at home and in the prison. Juliane's long-term relationship with an understanding boyfriend is increasingly put under strain, who accuses her of being unfairly used by Marianne. This relationship between the public and private, stressed by feminist filmmakers, is most visibly indicated through Juliane's treatment by the authorities. She is subjected to humiliating body searches at the prison, is watched by security officers outside her home at night, and has her conversations with Marianne transcribed by wardens during visits. Even when Juliane is viewing Marianne's body in the chapel after her death, policemen with dogs are present. As the visits progress the physical and tactile distance between the two women is increased by the authorities, until at their last meeting there is a glass screen between them and communication is only possible through microphones.

After Marianne's death (the real-life equivalent being the disputed death of Gudrun Ensslin in Stammheim prison in October 1977) Juliane does not believe the official version of suicide, and undertakes years of medical and legal research to prove her case. The psychological bonding, and particularly the identification of

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[6] "We've been working for years, Marianne. What we are doing is important, not only for me. They were small, sometimes tiny successes...but you have destroyed everything with your bombs, you've set our work back...You have made it too simple. Much too simple". von Trotta, op. cit., p.43

Juliane with Marianne, is dramatically shown by Juliane's 'testing' the suicide theory by tying a rope around her own neck, echoing the previous identification with Marianne's suffering which saw Juliane push a tube down her own throat in order to experience the pain of force fed during a hunger-strike. The subsequent investigation is at the expense of her relationship to her boyfriend, who falls ill, feeling that her obsession with the work now makes a relationship with him impossible. Despite this, Juliane refuses to give up. Finally her 'report' is ready, but is ignored by newspaper editors:

> "Ob Mord oder Selbstmord interessiert keinen Menschen mehr, das
> ist, sozusagen, Schnee vom vorletzten Jahr...Ihre Schwester...diese
> ganze Bewegung, gehört in die späten sechziger, die siebziger
> Jahre...Sie kennen die Regeln. Aktuell sein heißt, zum richtigen
> Zeitpunkt die richtige Meldung. Alles andere gehört auf den
> Misthaufen der Geschichte...oder meinetwegen in die
> Geschichtsbücher".[7]

Marianne's child, Jan, is subsequently attacked and hospitalised with severe burns, as revenge upon Marianne's family. Juliane takes him from the care home where he had lived in order for him to live with her. Whilst there he sees a picture of his mother and tears it up. Juliane says that it is not a justified action, as his mother was a 'remarkable' (*außergewöhnliche*) woman. The film ends with Jan demanding to know everything which Juliane knows about his mother.

One of the principal issues which the film raises, and which is a common intention with many of the cultural productions discussed here, is the attempt to raise awareness of the post-war 'repression' of the recent German past, and how this is facilitated by authoritarian structures in both the public and private spheres

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[7] "Whether it was murder or suicide no longer interests anyone. It is, as it were, snow from a couple of years ago...Your sister...this whole movement, belong in the late 60's and 70's...You know the rules. To be topical means the right report at the right time. Everything else belongs on the rubbish heap of history...or perhaps in history books". Ibid., p.70

(by the authoritarian father, or institutions such as the school, for example). This is·
apparent in the title taken from a Hölderin poem, which, von Trotta says, exactly
describes for her the 'emotionless, dreary 1950's'. A further reference by her to this
states that 'Either you choke in it or forcefully free yourself. And both women do
that, but in very different ways'.[8] Von Trotta specifically quotes her own
experience of not being taught about National Socialism at school, and how this
foreclosed not only explanations, but also any questions about a subject which
could not be analysed because it remained 'hidden'.[9] This is a thematic element
which takes precedence above the theme of 'terrorism' itself:

> "Wenn man überhaupt von einem Thema des Films reden kann,
> dann ist es weniger der sogenannte Terrorismus, sondern eine
> Kontinuität deutschen Verhaltens, das sehr oft die Öffentlichkeit
> vergißt oder verdrängt. Es sind immer nur einzelne, die nachfragen
> und nicht vergessen wollen und dies sind in meinem Film die beiden
> Schwestern".[10]

This is particularly important, she suggests, because it appears that Germany has
once again returned to a 'leaden time' in which people have a feeling of political
powerlessness. She notes the Federal Republic's recent involvement in the neutron
bomb (one of the most controversial United States' missile sitings on German soil,
being designed to release large amounts of radiation to kill), and the effect of the
peace movement, claiming that nothing has come of the protests. Prioritising this
theme, the film's agenda may be seen as promoting a political consciousness similar
to that achieved in 1968 when, she claims, one had the feeling that political change
could be effected.[11]

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[8] 'Balanceversuch einer Rebellin'. *Die Zeit*, 8.5.81
[9] Frey, R., and Göldenboog, C., 'Rebellinnen wider eine bleierne Zeit', *Filmfaust*, Vol. 24,
Oct-Nov 1981, p.30
[10] "If you can speak of the film having a topic at all then it is not so much to do with so-
called terrorism, but rather with a German way of acting which often disregards or
represses the public body. There are always just a few individuals who will insist on
asking questions, not wanting to forget; and in my film these are the two sisters". Von
Trotta, quoted in ibid., p.36
[11] Ibid., p.36

A further thematic element in the film which takes precedence over that of political violence is the feminist agenda, which informs the political action of, and between, the sisters. This mix of the public and private, von Trotta wrote in a press release, is a synthesis of her previous two films:

> "'Das zweite Erwachen der Christa Klages' war eine Bestandsaufnahme der äußeren Befindlichkeiten in der Bundesrepublik. Der zweite Film, 'Schwestern oder die Balance des Glücks', konzentriert sich auf das Innenleben, auf Emotionen und Gefühle, die natürlich auch abhängig sind von dem, was wir in unserer Gesellschaft vorfinden. 'Die bleierne Zeit' wird beide Ebenen haben, nach innen und außen blicken".[12]

Von Trotta's declared intention is to locate the film primarily within the subjective and psychological to reveal a political story. An 'objective' report of the Ensslin sisters would lose something which is 'human', whilst a 'subjective' view - the reactions, thoughts and behaviour of a person - are not only personally more exciting for her, but gives the opportunity for the viewer to 'experience our own time' as well.[13] The political activities of Marianne never appear in the film, which, whilst contrary to expectations, von Trotta claimed would have been 'trite' (*wohlfeil*).[14] This narrative dependence upon the personal rather than the political would be one of the most contested issues in the media reception to the film. This may be because von Trotta sees Juliane's pathological obsession with her sister's death as bound up with the process of political rememberance:

> "Juliane wird verbohrt, weil die Allgemeinheit, die Welt um sie herum so schnell vergißt. Das kann und will sie nicht ertragen. Und das ist schließlich eines der Hauptthemen meines Films: errinern und

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[12] "'Das zweite Erwachen der Christa Klages' was a taking stock of the external conditions of the Federal Republic. The second film, 'Schwestern oder die Balance des Glücks' concentrates on the inner life, on emotions and feelings, which are of course also dependent upon what we find in our society. 'Die bleierne Zeit' will have both levels, it will look to the inside and outside". *Die Zeit*, 8.5.81, op. cit.

[13] 'Schwestern auf der Suche nach Wahrheit', *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 18.9.81

[14] Frey and Göldenboog, op. cit., p.31

vergessen. Und es sind meistens die pathologischen Fälle, die eine
Sache überhaupt wirklich ernst nehmen..."[15]

This personal remembrance does have a collective political effect, von Trotta

thinking that Juliane's mourning for her sister is similar to the post-war mourning

which the German people 'were not capable of' after 1945. Questions of guilt raised

by the Stammheim deaths 'are not permitted. *Only when you allow doubts can you

get to grips with your history'* (my emphasis).[16] This may be interpreted as an

attempt to re-orientate the effect of the political to a feminist discourse.

Von Trotta's agenda in this reorientation may be illustrated by her approval

of an essay written by Jutta Brückner on her feminist cinematics.[17] Whilst this may

not be seen as an objective critical viewpoint (Brückner was the co-writer with von

Trotta of the script for the 1976 Schlöndorff film *Der Fangschuß*), it does have the

advantage of Brückner's knowledge of collaboration with von Trotta. This essay

founds itself on principles common to all feminist theories, noting the development

of women without men counters traditional philosophy (in its neglect of seriously

studying female identities and issues), as well as tacitly not recognising the equal

worth of female thought. This refusal to equate 'human' with 'male' experience is

primarily shown through the omission of the (patriarchal) political order in von

Trotta's films, centring the experience of women, which in turn Brückner appears

to equate with an 'ethic of care' rather than that of 'justice' (prioritising

responsibilities and relationships above duties founded on abstracted and

universalised norms).

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[15] "Juliane becomes obsessed because the general public and the world about her forgets
so quickly. She cannot bear that, and nor does she want to. And that is, after all, one of
the main themes of my film: remembering and forgetting. And it is mainly the
pathological cases, who, after all, take a matter seriously", *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 18.9.81,
op. cit.

[16] Von Trotta, quoted in Cohn-Bendit, D., 'Verdrängen oder verarbeiten?', *Tageszeitung*, 25.9.81

[17] Brückner, J., 'Für Margarethe von Trotta'. This unreferenced essay was sent to me by
von Trotta in response to questions about her feminist cinematics. Although it has the
title *Umschau und Kritik*, and is numbered pp.472-8, I was unable to find either this
essay or any journal title of this name in Germany.

This focus in a film will have a problematic relationship with traditional notions of how to approach a historical reality. Brückner reflects upon whether *Die bleierne Zeit* was a 'film' or a (history) 'text' book:

> 'Die Filmemacherin hingegen suchte die historische Wahrheit da auf, wo jeder Filmer sie sucht, in den Personen selbst. Sie besteht darauf, daß die Wahrheit eine ganze ist, aber "ganz" bedeutet bei ihr: zusammengesetzt aus politischer und privater Wahrheit; und es ist eben nicht von vornherein klar, daß die politische die wichtigere ist...Ihre Entscheidung, die politische Biographie Gudrun Ensslins aus dem privaten Blickwinkel der liebenden und hassenden Schwester zu erzählen, verweigert sich allen historischen Totalitätsentwürfen'.[18]

This open structure, therefore, conceivably expresses both a feminist discourse whilst also challenging totalising conceptions of 'terrorism'. Political actions are left out in favour of gestures, words and the views of women, showing the female perspective through Juliane, which has 'never stood at the centre of revolution'. The traditional epistomological dichotomy (the male as a source of rationality, the female as emotionality) is therefore attacked as being weighted towards the masculine, and the subsequent adoption into the political sphere of this one side of 'knowledge'. This rejection of traditional ways of conceptualising history was to prove particularly debatable and controversial in the media reception.

It is also interesting to note that Brückner's view of von Trotta's films rejects a model of liberal feminism in favour of a model of female identity (based upon female 'wishes' which have not been given a conceptual space), the integration of which has been resisted. Despite von Trotta's rendering of the

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[18] 'The filmmaker, however, finds the historical truth where every film maker looks for it, in people themselves. She insists that the truth is a totality, but "totality" for her means: a combination of political and private truth. And it is certainly not clear from the outset that the political is more important...Her decision to tell the political biography of Gudrun Ensslin from the private love/hate angle of her sister refuses to go along with any conception of history as a totality'. Ibid., p.473

Ensslin sisters' story resisting totalising historical conceptualisation, there is nothing, Brückner believes, postmodern in this feminism. Brückner believes that von Trotta is designing a space for this identity constituted from values such as freedom, justice and humanity. This is illustrated in the way that different women are presented as one and the same person in von Trotta's films, despite clear antagonisms between them. Obvious examples of this metaphorical *Doppelgänger* effect in *Die bleierne Zeit* take place during the prison visits. These include the sisters' exchange of pullovers (although this is simultaneously a ploy to smuggle a message hidden in the pullover out of the prison), and the superimposition of their faces in the glass dividing screen in their last meeting alive: 'Daughters, sisters, [female] friends and mothers, who stand next to each other as a mirror image and in crucial situations, see the other in the mirror'.[19] There is the suggestion that the cause of oppression has an ontological basis in that women are defined as 'the other', and any emancipatory program must define women in terms of themselves so as to avoid definition or absorption by patriarchical thinking. Such feminist strands of thought in the film - the centring of female experience and the prioritising of female identity within political processes and actions - also corresponds to the wider theme of (post-war) repression, in that the recovery of a politically repressed gender is another form of the focus on private repression (memory), in order to politicise it.

The main areas of dispute in the reception of this film had their source within these intentions. The 'lack' of the public, political portrayal and motivations of 'terrorism', and the disputed notions over its historical accuracy, as well as other conceptions of a feminist agenda were all contentious.

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[19] Ibid., p.473

As in the previous examples of *Deutschland im Herbst* and *Die dritte Generation*, *Die bleierne Zeit* experienced difficulties over production due to the RAF being a filmic subject which people were unwilling to finance. *Westdeutscher Rundfunk* (WDR), which had collaborated with von Trotta on her previous films, turned down the draft, saying it was not analytical enough. Von Trotta saw this as an attempt to force her into providing a clear 'explanation' of 'terrorism':

> "Was sie mit analytisch meinen, ist meiner Meinung nach das, was die Springer-Presse und Journale wie der *Stern* immer darunter verstanden haben, wenn sie wie im Kochrezept gesagt haben: Man nehme ein bißchen Mehl, ein bißchen Butter und ein bißchen von dem - ein richtiges Kochrezept - dann kommt am Ende ein Terrorist raus".[20]

WDR also wanted her to state her repulsion, criticism and moral judgement on the subject of left-wing violence, which she refused to do. The script was also turned down by *Zweites Deutsche Fernsehen* (ZDF). Only when she met two young producers from *Sender Freies Berlin* (SFB) did von Trotta get partial funding, although she still had to rely upon funds from her previous film after resistance from some in SFB.[21] This desire for cultural productions to provide concrete explanations or absolute moral standpoints was also to be reflected further in the media reception to the film.

The one section of the media which regarded the stating of such 'concrete' viewpoints, in the intersection between fiction and the historical reality, in a relatively unproblematic way was the 'neutral' film journals. The *Fischer Film*

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[20] "What they meant by analytic, in my opinion, was what the Springer media and journals like 'Stern' have always understood by it, whenever they have said recipe-style: Take a little flour, a little butter and a little of that - exactly like a recipe - then in the end you get a terrorist". Frey and Güldenboog, op. cit., p.33
[21] Ibid., p.33

Almanac, for example, believed that, although the emphasis is on the psychological aspects of the *Zeitgeist* (such as the raising of children in a strict protestant household), nowhere are the societal dimensions 'covered over' by the psychological. Rather, German history is used to relate to both the problems of human relationships, and concrete social and historical realities 'which concern us all'.[22] Anticipating the more politicised reactions found elsewhere and the complexity of political violence, this journal does not state the case for a clear political direction, expressing surprise for those who would like a 'flawless representation from the standpoint of [political] class'. *Die bleierne Zeit* is also praised for being one of the 'few and important' German films to contribute to the 'working through' of the recent German past.[23]

A similar conclusion, although with a slightly different basis, was adopted by *Film Dienst*, which regarded the politically authentic as the primary basis upon which a confrontation with the past could be built. The 'delicate balancing act' between the poles of the objectively politically historical, and the subjectively private, has its strength precisely because the characters involved do not have a 'straightforward causality'.[24] *Film Dienst* not only appears to endorse von Trotta's reluctance to provide a formulaic framework which 'explains' the phenomenon of how people turn to political violence, but also parallels von Trotta's wish to provoke political enquiry by not forgetting, and realising the repression of the 1950's in the 'German condition' with regards to the present day. Whilst it may be criticised for aesthetic methodology:

> '...es ist auch ein Film, der sehr mutig und wichtig ist und ein ganz und gar unbewältigtes Thema genau zur rechten Zeit aufgreift - zu einer Zeit, die eben, ähnlich wie die Fünfzigerjahre, "bleiern" zu werden droht. Mariannes kleiner Sohn zerreißt zuletzt das Bild

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[22] 'Die bleierne Zeit', *Fischer Film Almanac: Filme, Festivals, Tendenzen* (Frankfurt am Main, Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1982), p.27
[23] Ibid., p.28
[24] Haslberger, H., 'Die bleierne Zeit', *Film Dienst*, Vol. 19, 22nd. September, 1981, p.22

seiner Mutter. Diese legitime Geste kindlichen Selbstschutzes
gesteht von Trotta dem Zuschauer nicht zu. Ihm erspart sie nicht die
peinigende Pflicht, sich dem Antlitz des politisch Andersdenken zu
stellen'.[25]

This is particularly significant as it defines for the first time a 'coming to terms' with a controversial political history through having to 'directly face' people who think different politically, a crucial element of this thesis which will be developed later. It would appear, therefore, that the neutral (specialist film) media closely reflect von Trotta's intentions, particularly in the desire to examine the potential for reflection and action within both a personal and political framework.

In awarding the film exemptions from some of the Federal Republic's entertainment taxes, the *Filmbewertungsstelle* provided the most non-judgemental assessment of the film.[26] The judgement indicated, however, the principle source of contention in the wider mass-media in the competing discursive viewpoints of the psychological (personal, subjective) and historical (political, objective). Although there is clearly the usual split between the more sympathetic liberal media and that of the right on the political spectrum, doubts were expressed as to the relation between the historical and the fictionalised reality. *Die Zeit*, for example, notes many liberal issues and concerns common to this section of the media which are shown in the film, such as the excessive security measures. But it also expresses concern about the filmic point of view being exclusively from Juliane's perspective, something which can be 'imagined but not believed', and the lack of any analysis of the development of the women (presumably the gap between the flashbacks of 1955 and 1968).

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[25] '...it is also a film which is courageous and important, and which takes hold of a completely unresolved subject exactly at the right time - at precisely a time which threatens to become "leaden" like the 1950's. At the end Marianne's son tears up the picture of his mother. Von Trotta does not entitle the viewer to this legitimate gesture of childlike self-protection. She does not spare him the painful duty to directly face people who think politically differently.' Ibid., p.23
[26] Albrecht, G., *et al*, 'Die bleierne Zeit'. *Besonders Wertvoll: Langfilme 1981/2* (Wiesbaden, Filmbewertungsstelle Wiesbaden, 1983), pp.30-1

'Was man bedenken sollte: Die Regisseurin betont die Authentizität,
sie verweist auf die Vorbilder dieser Geschichte, darauf, daß Briefe
so geschrieben wurden, Gespräche sich so abgespielt hätten. Was
sie dabei übergeht, das ist die Differenz zwischen der Wirklichkeit
der Ereignisse und der Wirklichkeit des Films'.[27]

There was widespread agreement that it was not a film specifically about
the subject of 'terrorism', a view uncritically advanced by the liberal media. The two
reviews in the *Frankfurter Rundschau*, for example, regard the film as a study in
the motives of 'terrorism', but foregrounding the relationship between the two
sisters: 'Wenig verschlüsselt, aber mit allen Freiheiten der poetischen Erfindung...Es
ist ein Film gegen die politischen und moralischen Übereinkünfte, der seine
darstellerische Kraft aus einer entschiedenen Humanität bezieht, ein "Drama des
Gewissens"...'[28]. The reading of the film within a liberal paradigm was also
performed by the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, which noted that, although it was about the
('hardly cryptic') experience of the Ensslin sisters, it was nevertheless so far from a
precise reconstruction of events that it was a fiction, 'concerned more about men
and motives than about the chaotic documentation of passing events'.[29] *Der
Spiegel* repeated many of the above views in this liberal agenda, describing it as a
'normal human story under unusual conditions', and comparing it to Schlöndorff
and von Trotta's filming of Böll's *Die verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum*. For *Der
Spiegel* it is not, therefore, a film about 'terrorism', or a second part to the
collective *Deutschland im Herbst*, as events such as the Schleyer killing and the
Mogadishu hijack are omitted.[30]

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[27] 'What you should consider: The director stresses the authenticity, she points to the real-
life models of this story, to the fact that letters were written like this and conversations
held in this manner. What she misses is showing the difference between the reality of
what happened and the reality in the film'. 'Bilder? Beweise: Was man sieht, und was ist',
Die Zeit, 2.10.81
[28] 'Hardly encoded, but with all the freedoms of poetic invention...It is a film against the
moral and political agreements, a film which draws its dramatic power from a definite
humanity, a "Drama of the Conscience"...' 'Aus bleierner Zeit'. *Frankfurter Rundschau*,
14.9.81
[29] 'Ein deutsches Familienalbum'. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 2.10.81
[30] 'Vom Abtanzball zu El-Fatah', *Der Spiegel*, 14.9.81, p.226

It was precisely this lack of historical contextualisation and extra-filmic reference (an issue which was to be most clearly highlighted in the response to Hauff's film *Stammheim*, five years later) which was one of the principal criticisms in the reception from the right. This section of the media thought that basing the narrative aesthetic solely within the personal point of view of the sister of an RAF member meant that it is *politically* one-sided. There is, therefore, an incompatibility for one reviewer between the public and private as shown by von Trotta, the imbalance of which has the effect of reversing the culprit/victim roles:

> 'Doch hätte in diesen Film nicht auch ein Hinweis auf die
> Grausamkeit des Terrorismus gehört? Nicht als Alibi, als routiniert
> beschworene Leerformel, sondern um der historischen Wahrheit
> willen?...So schrecklich das penible, peinliche Durchsuchen ist, so
> fürchterlich auch das jeder Privatheit entkleidete Gespräch, alle
> diese Einrichtungen, diese Hochsicherheitstrakte...hatten eine
> Vorgeschichte, waren eine Reaktion auf eine Regelverletzung, über
> die der Film sich ausschweigt'.[31]

The film therefore has no 'real' reference to reality beyond that of its ability to discursively and selectively rewrite the history of the RAF, and is thus seen as dangerous, having the potential to support a 'cheap bias' leading it to be 'a malicious product of an imagination, not measurable by the yardstick of reality'.[32]

The dispute over the extent to which *Die bleierne Zeit* could be a legitimate reading of the history of political violence in the Federal Republic provides a background to the arguments over whether it provided a suitable framework within

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[31] 'But would not a hint of the cruelty of terrorism have been appropriate in this film? Not as an alibi, nor as an empty formula recited in a routine fashion, but for the sake of historical truth?...However horrific the pernickety, embarrasing search is, however terrible, too, the talks deprived of all privacy, all these arrangements, these high-security wings...had events leading up to them, were a reaction to infringements of rules, which the film decides to remain silent about'. 'Zwei Schwestern', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 14.9.81
[32] Ibid.

which to understand the complex morality of political violence, and an adequate explanation of how 'terrorism' can originate. The liberal media tended to uncritically assess and accept the open filmic structure which, in their view, refused to politically 'moralise' about the subject. *Der Spiegel*, for example, paratextually framed the production as a 'tragedy', the ethical structure of which then allowed it to declare the film as putting no-one in the right or wrong.[33] The liberal-left newspaper *Vorwärts* used the film to attack the morality of the state's actions, whilst viewing the film as a means by which the private view of Juliane may be utilised for political purposes:

> 'Mag sein, daß die skeptische Perspektive der Schwester die allein
> noch tragfähige Basis ist, die Diskussion über
> Stammheim/Mogadischu hinaus weiterzuführen: über den
> zerstörerischen Idealismus gegen die Lügenhaftigkeit unserer
> Ordnung, über die Gewalt der Isolation und den Zweifel am
> Selbstmord - sowie Klage zu führen gegen die Gleichgültigkeit, die
> eine verlorene Jugend noch einmal verlorengibt'.[34]

In contrast to this recognition that such films extend the range of discourses and responses to the issue of left-wing violence, thereby providing conceptual tools to aid understanding, the media response from the right thought that such responses confused the issues which 'terrorism' raised, perceiving a lack of a moral framework and a failure to deliver an adequate explanation about how 'terrorists' are 'made'. The *Bayernkurier*, for example, criticises the film for failing to denounce violence, thinking it 'understanding of and sympathetic to the actions of the dead'.[35] Whereas this was regarded as beyond the remit of the film or not the

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[33] *Der Spiegel*, 14.9.81, op. cit.

[34] 'It may be that the sceptical perspective of the sister is the only solid basis for carrying-on the discussion beyond Stammheim and Mogadishu: On the destructive idealism against the dishonesty of our social order, on the violence of isolation and the doubts about suicide - as well as to take to task the indifference which makes a lost youth lost once again'. 'Zwei Schwestern der Revolution', *Vorwärts*, 24.9.81

[35] 'Von Trotta und Schlöndorff', *Bayernkurier*, 31.10.81. Elsewhere the same newspaper thought that the film left many questions open, such as the relationship of fact to fiction, and echoed the accusations of *Nestbeschmutzung* from the right to *Deutschland im Herbst*, in thinking that the film did not reflect well on Germany. 'Nach dem Jubel offene Fragen', *Bayernkurier*, 19.9.81

director's intention by the liberal press, it was also the focus of an attack by the *Stuttgarter Zeitung*.[36] Taking a quote from von Trotta concerning how the film was not about 'terrorism' or how people were motivated into political violence, the reviewer accuses her of nevertheless profiting from a political theme without assessing it properly. The result is that the film has an 'iridescent' quality - it 'shrewdly and cunningly leaves in the balance what is expected to be got from it'. Taking up the apparently contradictory statements of intent by von Trotta - the film is from Christiane Ensslin's point of view, although von Trotta admits that there were many moments which had more to do with herself than Christiane, whilst at a press conference von Trotta stressed the more 'objective' subjects of the film such as the Protestantism of post-war West Germany - the *Stuttgarter Zeitung* thinks 'Nothing and nevertheless everything is meant in this way...Frau von Trotta and her intention: Incomprehensible'. The concentration on the private life of an RAF member rather than the omitted process of 'running off the rails' does, however, leave one thing comprehensible:

> 'die Eliminations-, die Verschönerungs- und Besänftigungstaten
> dieser Regie. Die deutsche Terroristin als blondgemähnte Fatah-
> Pfadfinderin, von dunkelhäutigen Kindlein umdrängt - ein Weib,
> dessen Gefährlichkeit nie schlimmer wirkt, als wenn sie nachts die
> Kaffeemaschine aufheulen läßt'.[37]

The semiology used by the *Stuttgarter Zeitung* embodies the thesis (portrayed in the right-wing press in Britain at least) that female terrorists are 'deadlier than the male'.[38] The traditional feminine concerns of caring for children and the utilisation of kitchen implements are used to mask the 'hidden' violent female side, whilst her role as a Fatah agent recasts her as subservient to a (dangerous, foreign) 'Other'.

[36] 'Olle Kamellen und Goldener Löwe', *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 25.9.81
[37] 'acts of elimination, prettifying and pacifying on the part of the director. The German [female] terrorist as a Fatah girl guide with long, blond hair, surrounded by little dark-skinned children - a woman who never appears more dangerous than when she lets the coffee-machine wail in the night'. Ibid.
[38] See, for example, 'Deadlier than the Male', *The Times*, 16.1.85; 'Deadlier than the Male?', *The Times*, 26.1.87

The reviewer also combines his interpretation with normative judgements of left-wing 'sympathisers'. The actress playing Juliane 'plays the role of sympathiser rapturously', although the actual historic figure of Christiane Ensslin (and other 'sympathisers') is subject to a method of dehumanisating discourses through the actress appearing 'too fine, clever and sensitive' to be a 'terrorist sympathiser'.

This compares to the liberal media's unproblematic acceptance of the film not 'explaining' terrorism,[39] and the sisters as having justified grievances, not withstanding the methodology by which they sought to achieve their goals. For the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, for example, they were 'sensitive children who struggle for justice and truth' fighting an 'injustice which both sisters never wanted to resign themselves to'.[40] The *Frankfurter Rundschau* saw the sisters as part of a generation who 'fought against barbarism and repeated inhumanity'.[41]

'Kraftproben'

A notable absence in the reception is a review from *Die Welt*, a newspaper which otherwise in this study normally (and most consistently) constructed discursive positions further to the right than other sources considered. It is, therefore, interesting in this context to examine the reaction from the right to a documentary program about Gudrun Ensslin screened in November 1978 by the German television company ARD as part of a series named *Kraftproben*, which examined individual's lives in unusual circumstances. There are many resemblences to von Trotta's film of three years later, and a brief examination of the reaction from *Die Welt* may be instructive in hypothesising what the reaction from a *Springer* concern newspaper would have been to von Trotta's film.

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[39] See, for example, *Der Spiegel*, 14.9.81, op. cit.. p.227. Usually the subject was just not mentioned in this section of the media.
[40] *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 2.10.81, op. cit.
[41] *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 14.9.81, op. cit.

The similarity to *Die bleierne Zeit* was its emphasis on the personal and subjective, and how this in turn related to the political. Werner Filmer, the producer, thought the program 'a contribution to an attempt to investigate terrorism in a subjective and sincere way'.[42] Accordingly the program was made up of statements from diverse people who had known Gudrun Ensslin from a personal, subjective point of view. The film is built primarily on such interviews and the comments of witnesses at the time, with documentary material and newsreel of RAF attacks being sparse and secondary. A further similarity to von Trotta's film was that it offered no identifiable point of departure from when the church group leader became a 'terrorist', thereby eschewing theories of how terrorists are 'made'. Statements about the 'later' Gudrun Ensslin which will most interest the viewer, one commentator noted, were usually limited to interpretation and guesswork.[43] On the subject of political violence itself, therefore, the documentary was non-judgemental, but rather examined key experiences in (as one regional newspaper termed it) 'the suffering of this sensitive human being engaged in society'.[44]

Die Welt's short commentary on the documentary closely mirrors the response of the right to *Die bleierne Zeit* in its criticism of the failure to apportion blame for who was responsible for turning the major agencies of the 1968 student movement into 'the fatal attacks and the way of death'. The newspaper also expressed fear that Gudrun Ensslin was being honoured by people in positions of authority, and that such a programme might actually encourage would-be 'terrorists':

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[42] Quoted in 'Kraftproben: Gudrun Ensslin', *Badische Zeitung*, 16.11.78
[43] 'Kraftproben', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 18.11.78
[44] 'Versuch einer Annäherung: Kraftproben - Gudrun Ensslin', *Badische Zeitung*, 18/19.11.78

> 'Aber Angst um die vielen verborgenen Ensslins kann einem werden, wenn man den Professor Axel Azzola von der TU [Technische Universität] Darmstadt hört, der die Ensslin mit Jeanne d'Arc vergleicht und meint: "Schrecklich ist es, töten zu müssen, um Leben zu ermöglichen"'[45]

The paratextual response to *Kraftproben* from the right, therefore, may be seen as similar to that of *Die bleierne Zeit*, in wanting to close down this personal, subjective response, for fear that it was too sympathetic to 'terrorists', or making them appear less dangerous than they actually were.

Feminist Responses

None of the national newspaper media mentioned the gender dimension of the film beyond stating that the personal was affected by the political, ignoring important feminist issues such as the relations between political power and gender. Given von Trotta's feminist cinematics, it is surprising that the one West German feminist film journal which published an essay on the film provided one of the most hostile (and subsequently most debated) critiques. Charlotte Delorme, writing in *Frauen und Film*, attacks the film from the position of the feminist left. On a factual level, Delorme sees the film as Christiane's re-writing of the story of the Ensslin sisters, noting that Christiane had not, in fact, visited Gudrun in prison since 1973, thus misleading the viewer into the belief that she was more dedicated to her sister when alive than she actually was. Furthermore, filming from Christiane Ensslin's perspective is tyrannical in that it provides an immovable and exclusive narrative centre, thus marginalising feminist critical space. Her theoretical interpretation of the film views it as anti-feminist on the basis of its conformity to

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[45] 'But you begin to fear for the many hidden Ensslins when you hear Professor Axel Azzola of the Darmstadt Technical College compare Ensslin with Joan of Arc and state: "It's terrible to have to kill in order to make life possible"'. 'Kritik: Erschreckliches Mosaik', *Die Welt*, 18.11.78

the dominant ideology, and commercial exploitation. This is related to the dichotomising of the 'good' and 'bad' based upon erroneous psychologising.[46]

Delorme critiques 'the clichés of tabloid terrorist psychology', which are found in Jillian Becker's work *Hitler's Children*, and the German psychologist Helm Stierlin's *Familienterrorismus und öffentlicher Terrorismus* ('Public and Private Terrorism'). Such works utilise popular discourses of terrorism in hypothesising that 'terrorism' originates from unresolved conflicts of authority in childhood, and advancing the totalitarian 'right equals left' thesis. The film, in the same way as such popular (ideological) discourses of 'terrorism', allows a number of binary oppositions to emerge. The patriarchal good girl/bad girl dichotomy is reinforced by Juliane always 'being in the right', sacrificing herself and subsequently suffering. This, Delorme believes, has parallels to the RAF being analysed in terms of the healthy/sick opposition, linking Marianne's unresolved past, her irresponsibility in both the public and private spheres to her inability to see Juliane's more pragmatic 'healthy' resistance. Delorme suggests a commercial function for this psychological discourse in criticising its 'commercialisation' *(Vermarktung)*. There are, for example, parallels with commercial American film in the melodramatic 'psychological tricks' used, the building of tension and breaking off to create expectation.[47] Both in content, and at the level of form, therefore, Delorme is sceptical that the film can provide any challenge to dominant macro discourses.

Delorme's attack on Christiane Ensslin is also done on a personal level. Juliane's claim that 'One generation earlier you would have been a member of the Hitler Youth, which I have left out of my [journalistic] article' is used by Delorme to not only illustrate the 'totalitarian' thesis, but also to make Christiane Ensslin's claims made in the original article more explicit in the film:

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[46] Delorme, C., 'Zum Film "Die bleierne Zeit"', *Frauen und Film*. Vol. 31, 1982, pp.52-5
[47] Ibid., pp.53-4

'Diese Denk - und Erklärungsmuster sind ein ideales Transportmittel für die Abrechnung der älteren Schwester, und es ist nicht auseinanderzuhalten, was in diesem Film persönliche Rache und was psychologische Kriegsführung ist. Das ist auch völlig Wurscht, weil sich da die Interessen auch treffen'.[48]

Whilst von Trotta does not deny specifically the factual accusations contained in the essay, notably of Christiane's latter neglect of Gudrun whilst in prison, she does confirm a certain animosity between Christiane Ensslin and Delorme, believing (without further elaboration) that the latter's critique of the film 'hat mehr mit der unguten Beziehung zwischen Delorme und Christiane E. zu tun als mit dem Film selbst'.[49]

The response outside West Germany was (initially) very different. In order to understand these different feminist responses to the film it is important to note how the film could be textually read in contradictory ways, according to different feminist methodologies and agendas. The most predominant example here would be the criticism of the good/bad dichotomy which pervades the film, casting Marianne according to melodramatic convention as the 'vamp' versus the 'straight' girl. This usually means

'the positive characterization of a female character...achieved through comparison to another female character who was morally condemned, thus emphasizing normative definitions of women's roles and a narrative interest in the punishment of women who did not comply with them'.[50]

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[48] 'These patterns of thought and explanation are an ideal vehicle for the settling of scores on the part of the older sister. You cannot tell in this film what is personal revenge and what is psychological warfare. It really does not matter at all because they both serve the same function'. Ibid., p.53

[49] 'has more to do with the bad terms which Delorme and Christiane E. are on, than with the film itself'. Letter replying to my question on this subject, dated Paris, 10.7.96

[50] Seiter, E., 'The Political is Personal: Margarethe von Trotta's *Marianne and Juliane*', *Journal of Film and Video*, Vol. 37(2), Spring 1985, p.45

In the film this is reinforced by details such as the clothing and behaviour, which, according to one commentator, conform to the abstract ideal of 'terrorism' as propagated by television news.[51] Delorme, in regarding this good/bad dichotomy as a manifestation of patriarchal film convention and politics, would therefore dispute the feminist value in its application for differentiating between the patriarchal system and its alternatives.

Situating the film within an alternate paratext leads it to being praised by feminists for revealing how Juliane grew up 'outside' patriarchal discourse (the teenage rebel, both within the home and social institutions such as the church and school), and thereby has a feminist essentialism which Marianne departs from, in adopting the masculine mode of attempting to resolve conflicts through violence. This upbringing within a 'masculine' ethic is emphasised by von Trotta in Marianne's favouritism with her strict protestant father (in one of the flashbacks she is seen sitting on his knee whilst he strokes her hair), later manifested by her taking on the role of housewife by making coffee for her male colleagues in Juliane's flat. This is in contrast to Juliane's relatively enlightened relationship with Wolfgang. Linville notes other characterisations of men in the film which would contribute to such a reading of Juliane being awkwardly situated within patriarchal codes, such as her boyfriend being unable to understand her 'political-personal need to know the truth about Marianne', the newspaper editor equating 'truth' with sales figures and topical affairs (thereby declining to publish the results of Juliane's investigation into her sister's death), and the Ensslin father, who, whilst passively projecting the Renais film about Nazi atrocities, keeps public and private roles separate from each other.[52] In many ways Linville's analysis has contextual weaknesses. Her statement, for example, that the RAF 'perpetrates gender-based divisions of labor'

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[51] Silberman, M., *German Cinema: Texts in Context* (Detroit, Wayne State University Press, 1995), p.205

[52] Linville, S.E., 'Retrieving History: Margarethe von Trotta's *Marianne and Juliane*', *PMLA*, Vol. 106, May 1991, pp.452-3

and 'disregard[s] the importance of women's issues' is unsubstantiated, and may be considered dubious given that over half of the membership of the RAF were women,[53] and that the theoretical heads of the first two 'generations' of the RAF were female (Ulrike Meinhof and Brigitte Mohnhaupt respectively). Meinhof's writings also stress women's issues (her work with girls in care which culminated in her play *Bambule* is the most apparent example here). Nevertheless, Linville's analysis of the constructs of the public and private in the film may be further substantiated. In subscribing to the 'propaganda of the deed' through her violent public actions on a large scale, Marianne may again be considered to be operating within the coercive patriarchal paradigm, as opposed to the less dramatic work carried out by Juliane. Her hesitation in writing about Marianne for her newspaper recognises that the personal can not be dissociated from the political. It is in this sense that von Trotta writes about the importance of not distinguishing between the 'large and small events'.[54]

There are many such areas of dispute open to different readings of feminist discourse. The assessment by von Trotta of the family, for example, may also be ambiguous. Possible opposing readings are either, that it is an oppressive patriarchal structure which has been replaced by a Kristevian pre-linguistic and genderless space through the sister's relationship, or alternately, it being the fundamental institution of security and identity.[55] What is significant is that such areas of ambiguity which play a central role in a feminist analysis were (initially)

[53] MacDonald, E., *Shoot the Women First* (London, Fourth Estate, 1991), pp.199-200
[54] von Trotta, 'Female Film Aesthetics' in Rentschler, E. (ed) *West German Filmakers on Film* (London, Holmes and Meier, 1988), p.89
[55] Kaplan, E.A., 'Discourses of Terrorism, Feminism and the Family in von Trotta's *Marianne and Juliane*', *Women and Literature*, Vol. 4, 1988, pp.266-7. This essay was first published in 1985. The position against Delorme was also expressed by Kaplan in an earlier essay, which argued that the film was not a naturalised (Hollywood) vision of a patriarchal order, and that the healthy/sick opposition between the two women was mitigated by a humanised portrait of Marianne through the flashbacks. Kaplan, E.A., *Women and Film: Both Sides of the Camera* (New York and London, Metheun, 1983), pp.104-12

better received abroad, where there was a distance to the threat of radical left-wing violence and the difficult social and political issues it raised. A comparison made to the reception of the film by feminists in the United States may be used to highlight these specific, local differences.

Kaplan claims that American feminists favourably received the film by reference to a feminist individualist framework, prioritising feminist concerns above historical context, as opposed to Delorme's criticism of the film reinforcing popular narratives about 'terrorists' which ideologically buttress the establishment.[56] This alternative prioritisation from Delorme's desire for the film to be more historically and politically situated is crucial in understanding the relative position of German critics. Kaplan herself uses Lacanian psychoanalysis as a basis upon which to deconstruct the filmic discourses, arguing that, whilst von Trotta adopts an essentialist position, her use of filmic techniques distances the viewer from dominant discursive patterns in order to deconstruct the positioning of 'terrorists' as the 'alien other'. For Kaplan, von Trotta does this through the positioning and recognition of the 'terrorist' and the 'capitalist' as dependent upon each other:

> 'Each group fetishizes the other, creating signifiers...that further
> lock each into the polarized positions fostered by linguistic
> binarism. It is this process that von Trotta exposes in first letting us
> see Juliane's use of the establishment view of terrorism in
> representing her sister, and then Juliane's realization of her sister's
> humanity, as she increasingly empathizes with Marianne'.[57]

This ontological notion (defining marginalised groups within the confines of the dominant discourse) is a disputed notion. Such a Lacanian poststructuralist strategy illustrates the *ambiguities* inherent in the film, deliberately leaving political directions open and focusing on the subjective so as to avoid a 'masculine' narrative

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[56] Kaplan, (1988), op. cit., pp.258-60
[57] Ibid., p.263

truth. Such feminists believe that undermining these truths by refusing to provide a conventionally closed narrative is to create an oppositional space. Clearly Delorme is of the belief that the ontology does not contain any emancipatory oppositional space within which either women or the left could create an area of resistance. Rather than exposing the linguistic binarism, the absence of any point of view apart from Juliane's (read Christiane's) results in an exclusory reading, not an ambiguous one.

In an essay comparing the response the film received from feminists in the United States and Germany, Seiter also advances the thesis that Delorme's criticisms of the film must be situated within the context of someone located within the political and historical framework of Germany at the time.[58] Seiter defends Delorme in wanting a more specific political framework, particularly the state reaction to the RAF and Gudrun Ensslin's political activities before her turn to violent means, as these too have feminist implications:

> '[Gudrun Ensslin's and Ulrike Meinhof's] treatment by the German
> government and the way that their media images were constructed
> are feminist issues. For it was precisely because they were women
> engaging in violence, and because they had rejected the roles of
> wife and mother, that they were subject to the greatest moral
> outrage...In Marianne and Juliane we see the consequences of the
> terrorist actions of Marianne portrayed as personal tragedy...but we
> never understand the decisions which led to those actions'.[59]

What is needed is an understanding of why von Trotta's statement that it was not a film about 'terrorism' was less controversial in countries where that terrorism was not taking place. Seiter's idea that Delorme's attack must be examined from the local political perspective is significant as it would appear to be confirmed by much of the (non-feminist) reception already discussed. This questioned the

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[58] Seiter, op. cit., pp.41-6.
[59] Ibid., p.46

historical and political accuracy of the film, and debated whether the emphasis on the private was able to help in adequately conceptualising the phenomenon of political violence. The position of the left in West Germany at the time is a further element in this contextualisation. Kaplan refers to the 'impotence' of the left in the face of terrorism, being trapped between its 'logic' (lesser strategies for effecting political change had largely failed), and the inhumane consequences which they were not able to condone.[60] In this context, the frustration from the left that the film provided 'no way out' is more understandable.

In later years American critics such as Seiter were more sympathetic to Delorme's position. Byg, for example, closely parallels Delorme's argument. The repeated destruction of the Marianne's image in the film leaves Juliane as the 'sole master of discourse', contributing to the effect of Marianne as the 'forbidden Other' which must be destroyed.[61] He further argues, with Delorme, that von Trotta utilises the patriarchally-constructed codes of the 'culture industry' (the conventions of the thriller and the *Film Noir*, for example). In the absence of specific political and historical explanation, this conforms to an 'international' (American-led) popular culture, playing upon the German population's need for historical identity in the post-war period, addressing 'real concerns and fill[ing] real needs, but without disrupting the social system'.[62] The links between the Nazi era and left-wing violence in the film which Delorme illustrates is, for Byg, also the assimilation of any critical message the film may have, as both are represented as violent political disruptions in the otherwise 'harmonious German family'. There are many problems with Byg's essay,[63] although it contains parallels with Delorme's essay in

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[60] Kaplan, (1988), op. cit., p.260

[61] Byg, B., 'German History and Cinematic Convention Harmonized in Maragrethe von Trotta's *Marianne and Juliane*' in Frieden et al (eds) *Gender and German Cinema - Feminist Interventions Volume 2: German Film History/German History on Film* (Providence and Oxford, Berg, 1993), p.267

[62] Ibid., p.268

[63] Byg, for example, claims that von Trotta plays upon people's sympathies for victims in the 'questionable historical connections' of showing victims of the Nazi concentration

demanding a specific historical context, and in stating that the film is ambiguous through the tension between von Trotta's radical intent and the traditional film genres used. This latter criticism was previously made by Daniel Cohn-Bendit (one of the student leaders of the 1968 movement) who, whilst thinking much of the film impressive, criticises von Trotta for remaining within the bounds of a traditional film aesthetic, which does not do justice to the biased focus on the subjective and emotional viewpoint in the film.[64]

This may help explain why the dominant mode of analysis in West Germany was not based upon post-structuralism, as such a methodology necessarily recognises ambiguity. Linville, for example, suggests that the ambiguities which this mode of analysis reveals in the film was dealt with by Delorme through "interpretive reductivism".[65] The implicit assumption here is that a German critic would find the free play of post-structural ambiguities difficult to subscribe to, given the need for political contextualisation and direction. What makes the ferocity of Delorme's attack surprising is that post-structuralist strategies themselves are not necessarily inherently anti-feminist. Linville, in interpreting von Trotta's film as a deconstruction of Marianne's politics, defends such "strategies of ambiguity":

> '[They] create a viable political position because they stress
> alternative stances towards violence and other forms of political
> action instead of affirming decisive choices and offering the

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camps and the Vietnam war, and linking this to Marianne's face, distorted or in the process of destruction. Byg then claims that this represents the overcoming of the evil threat posed by Marianne, yet ambiguously states that such an aesthetic strategy could also provoke sympathy for her as a 'victim'. He later claims that von Trotta manipulates history for her narrative, suggesting that chosing a child of non-Aryan appearance avoids 'obvious uncomfortable implications', but legitimates a 'nationalistic consensus' which incorporates ethnic 'otherness' into a mythic national unity. It would apparently seem, therefore, that Byg places von Trotta in a no-win situation, as a child of Aryan appearance may also have reinforced Byg's 'nationalistic consensus' thesis through identification with the German race as suffering.
[64] Cohn-Bendit, D., op. cit.
[65] Linville, op. cit., p.449

spectator a secure position. The spectator sees the complexity of each political choice...'[66]

This, therefore, would stress the complexity and diversity of alternative micro discourses and open discursive conditions through the recognition of there being no easy explanations for 'terrorism'. This is a view echoed by other critics. Weedon, for example, sees a post-structural analysis as a useful means by which the practical implications of various forms of feminism may be assessed, and establish which theories may be utilised for political change.[67] Moi similarly wants to avoid totalising differences between strands of feminism, adopting an 'appropriation of deconstruction' (defining femininity, after Kristeva, as marginalisation by a patriarchal order rather than by any form of essentialism, hence deconstructing the traditional values of masculine/feminine), which at the same time 'confront[s] the full political force and reality of such categories'.[68]

Whilst it may not be surprising that Delorme does not adopt this position, later German feminists, whilst viewing the film more favourable and outwith a rigid ideological framework, still do not adopt this post-structuralist ambiguity. Koch, for example, places less emphasis on the historical circumstances of the RAF, focusing on the inner form of the work itself (how Juliane's 'cathartic' enlightenment gives a 'higher' insight into the moral good, and how the film breaks out of cynical power relations through a feminine essentialism).[69]

[66] Ibid
[67] Weedon, C., *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory* (Oxford, UK, and Cambridge, USA, Blackwell, 1994), p.6
[68] Moi, T., 'Feminist Literary Criticism' in Jefferson and Robey (eds) *Modern Literary Theory: A Comparative Introduction* (London, B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1992), pp.219-20
[69] Koch, G., 'Schuld und Unschuld - Das Bild der Terroristin im neuen deutschen Film', *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für deutsche Geschichte*, Vol. 21, 1992, pp.335-47

Conclusion

Von Trotta recognised that the reception of *Die bleierne Zeit* would be marked by a need to conform to a specific ideological set of guidelines, in that the left would want 'objective' social factors, whilst the right, condemnations:

> "Die Linken werden sagen, ich ginge viel zu subjektiv an die Sache heran, vernachlässige das Allgemeine, Zeitgeschichtliche - und die von rechts werden mir übelnehmen, daß ich angesichts der Handlungen der sogenannten Terroristen keinen vordergründigen Abscheu empfinde".[70]

This need for some form of positive political prescriptive direction which was initially seen with *Deutschland im Herbst* is apparent. The immediacy and topicality of the production - it was seen in the German cinemas just before Christiane Ensslin's investigations into the death of her sister were published - may also have similarly influenced critics to demand a concrete response to ongoing events, rather than events which may be considered as historical. The *Kommando Gudrun Ensslin*, for example, attempted to assassinate U.S. General Frederick Kroesen in Kahlsruhe on the 15th. September, and bombs were found the following day on the route to the U.S. airbase there. Prominent trials of RAF members were also in progress at the time, notably a medicine student who helped plan the Ponto murder, and Rolf Heißler, who admitted to shooting border guards and robbing banks for the RAF in a war which he claimed was 'right, possible, necessary and justified'.[71] Shortly afterwards there followed a controversial debate initiated by a Federal Prosecutor who suggested in a *Süddeutsche Rundfunk*

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[70] "The left will say that my approach was far too subjective, disregarding the general contemporary element - and those from the right will hold it against me that I do not feel a superficial repugnance in the face of the goings-on of so-called terrorists". Quoted in Hochmuth, D., 'Margarethe von Trotta: Die Balance von Erwachen und Wahn' in Gehler. F. (ed) *Regiestühle International* (Berlin Henschelverlag. 1987). p.249
[71] These news events are found in 'Bomben auf Bahnlinie zur US-Airbase', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 17.9.81; 'Prozeß um Ermordung Jürgen Pontos eröffnet', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 23.9.81; 'Rolf Heißler bekennt sich offen zur "Roten Armee Fraktion"', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 22.9.81

interview that there was a legal allowance for lesser sentences for those who wished to 'drop-out' of the 'terrorist' scene.[72] Christiane Ensslin's investigation was, within this context, sceptically received from the right, one commentator suggesting that von Trotta's film was an unrealistic documentary to promote the report.[73]

The immediacy of the production is not the only reason for the continued need for a 'direction' within the context of present-day developments and debates. The film is not only ambiguous in its narrative sense, but also fails to provide any positive model, as Donougho points out:

> 'No positive options - feminist or political - are shown. If anything reform is shown to be more hopeless than terrorism; the media hardly seem a fit medium for self or group expression, private or public; communal projects have shrunk to individual responsibility'.[74]

His view is similar to much of the reception outside the liberal discursive mainstream of the West German media, who were unable to tolerate 'voids' in historical explanation or an ambiguous interpretative strategy. This latter point may be linked to von Trotta's statement regarding the importance of raising questions and doubts about recent German history, and in this way is similar to the reluctance of the filmmakers of *Deutschland im Herbst* to provide 'answers'. This doubt has a personal as well as collective dimension for von Trotta, although despite this feminist emphasis, feminists such as Delorme also wanted to frame the difficult questions which the RAF raised into a rigid interpretative, prescriptive framework.

[72] 'Rebmann befürwortet Hafterleichterungen für RAF-Aussteiger', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 12.11.81
[73] *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 14.9.81, op. cit.
[74] Donougho, M., 'Margarethe von Trotta: Gynemagoguery and the Dilemmas of a Filmmaker' in *Literature/Film Quarterly*, Vol. 17(3), 1989, p.155

Die bleierne Zeit was undoubtedly controversial because of its close reference to real events (in many ways it may be considered a docu-drama). The dispute over the basis for interpreting 'real' events would be one of the central points in the reception of Hauff and Aust's film *Stammheim*.

Reinhard Hauff's film proved to be the most controversial of the major cultural productions on the subject of 'terrorism' discussed here. It's proposed objectivism would initiate debates concerning the interpretation of the German legacy of political violence, the uncovering of 'taboo' themes and subjects, and hence become the subject of a highly charged ideological debate in its reception. The polarised and often extreme nature of the reaction from all sides of the political spectrum proved that many conflicts and fears persisted in West Germany - the inability of a constitutional liberal state to adequately deal with radical opponents, fears of repressive state measures, and the relative values of security above civil liberties.

The screenplay of the film was written by Stefan Aust, based on the fourth part of his book *Der Baader-Meinhof-Komplex*. Aust's own personal history placed him in a good position to write on the subject, and since much of the subsequent debate over the film revolved around the 'objectivity' of the material, it is worth briefly noting this history. During the student unrest of the late 1960's Aust worked as a journalist on the same left-wing magazine (*Konkret*) as Ulrike Meinhof. During this time he also briefly knew the RAF member Jan-Karl Raspe, and shared a flat with Peter Homann, later to be one of the people to participate in urban guerilla exercises with the RAF. Aust also 'rescued' Meinhof's children from Sicily for their father whilst they were en-route to a PFLP training camp in Jordan, sent there by their mother after she went underground. For this he narrowly escaped a RAF assassination attempt. Aust remained in journalism, keeping an interest in the subject of the RAF- notably the television documentary *Tod in Stammheim - der Weg der Ulrike Meinhof* (1976), and a documentary on the Schmücker murder in 1974. In a 1986 interview he claimed to have spent one to

two months every year on the subject of 'terrorism' since 1970.[1] After becoming editor of *Spiegel TV* in 1988 he was later to become chief editor of *Der Spiegel* in 1994, a magazine which had always taken a pro-civil-liberties stance in relation to internal security measures against the threat the RAF presented.

Film Summary and Controversial Issues Raised

The film is a 107 minute abridgement of the 192 days of the trial of the 'First Generation' of the RAF, in the specially constructed high security courtroom within the prison where the accused were being held at Stammheim, a suburb of Stuttgart. The film action takes place almost entirely in an exactly reconstructed courtroom, and is based upon legal files, documents, court transcipts and eye-witness accounts. Many of these, Aust claims, were difficult to get from the authorities, for example an inside *Bundestag* Committee report, or transcripts of the talks which Baader, Ensslin and Raspe had with government representatives shortly before their deaths.[2] There is only one brief 'fictional' scene, where the prisoners reflect upon their position in a prison wing, constructed from letters and secret messages between them. Aust was confidently able to claim that 'texts, dialogues, scenes are one hundred percent authentic'.[3] The film presents neither the state nor the RAF in a favourable way - the constitutional difficulties which the case presented, and the Machiavellian way the state attempted to overcome them, are offset by the disruptive actions of the defendants within the court, eye-witness descriptions of the horrific effects of their bomb attacks outside the court, and newspaper photographs of the attacks.

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[1] '"Die Geschichte, die ich recherchiert habe"', *Tageszeitung*, 23.1.86
[2] Ibid.
[3] 'Jedes Wort ist authentisch', *Saarbrücker Zeitung*, 1-2.2.86

The formal film aesthetic also lends itself to this authenticity. The film opens with a brief documentary film of the capture of some of the leading figures in the RAF, followed by actual police photographs of them, and short, spoken biographical details. Only after this short introduction are the opening credits shown, and the charges against the defendants read out. Similarly at the end of the film the surviving defendants' sentences are read out, with a brief synopsis in an unemotional tone of the proceding events: The Schleyer kidnap, the failed hijacking of the Lufthansa plane, and the subsequent deaths of Baader, Ensslin, and Raspe. The film refuses to speculate over the cause of death, merely noting that 'the state prosecutor's verdict was suicide'. Film technique is cut down to a minimum, and camera positioning is usually that of a detached observer, with little camera panning and characters being seen as 'talking heads'. Between the scenes of the trial the repeated motif of the outside of the real courtroom and prison is shown at a distance, as a reminder that the film dialogue is taken from the actual court procedings themselves. Newspaper pictures of RAF attacks, and news film footage of the protest outside the prison after Meinhof's death are also shown. Hauff admitted that this style was not very dramatic, but necessary to capture an objective style:

> "As director, I was more interested in a kind of reduction. You can do a lot with camera work, with lighting, with montage, you can manipulate the emotions...but we did [the film] in a very pure way. I felt that there was so much craziness in the material itself that I wanted to make the film as minimal as possible".[4]

The principal issues of the film concern the state's constitutional and juridical response to the RAF. The normative content of the 'Basic Law' of the Federal Republic wishes to balance a respect for human dignity whilst preserving a democratic order. Within the confines of the principles of "militant democracy",

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[4] 'Stammheim - An Interview with Reinhard Hauff'. Brunette. P.. *Cineaste*, Vol. 16(1-2). 1987-8. p.54

however, there are clauses permitting use of illiberal means to preserve the democratic Basic Law. There was much debate over the interpretive scope that was applied to emergency leglislation (what was "reasonable suspicion", what constitutes an "insult" to the FRG and its constitutional order, for example). Finn, in wishing to defend 'legitimate political criticism' distinguishes between the 'normative commitments' which define constitutional democracy, and the preservation of the state or regime, a distinction which was often neglected in the anti-terrorist leglislation of the 1970's.[5] The many controversial issues which the film raised centered around the debate about a 'militant democracy'.

Despite the legal process having taken place a decade previously, the media reception to the film suggests that the many underlying conflicts which the trial (and therefore the film) highlighted remained unresolved. The film opens with the dismissal of Baader's initial lawyer of choice before the trial began, to be replaced by court-appointed lawyers, with whom Baader, along with the other defendants, refused to cooperate. The argument escalates until the defendants' microphones are switched off so that they cannot be heard (something which was to subsequently happen frequently) and they are eventually led away from the courtroom. The film then highlights several themes and issues which illustrated why this was a controversial trial, through issues of legal difficulties, "extra-constitutional" behaviour, and conditions of custody.

The first issue highlighted is the fitness of the defendants to stand trial. After the lawyers of choice walk out of the trial over this issue, the prison doctor is summoned, who admitted that better conditions would improve the health of the defendants, and that the prison conditions at Stammheim were, in his experience, unique. He declares the defendants fit for the legal procedings, which was

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[5] Finn, J.E., *Constitutions in Crisis: Political Violence and the Rule of Law* (New York, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991). See especially pp.206-18

countered by their claim of their conditions of imprisonment constituting 'isolation torture', and that the court was trying "psychologically broken prisoners". Meinhof protests:

> "Ich erkläre, daß ich verhandlungsunfähig bin...Die Zweckes die mit der Isolation verfolgt werden, sind natürlich nicht wirkungslos geblieben. Und das, womit wir zu kämpfen haben an Assoziationsschwierigkeiten, ist natürlich ungeheuer. Völlig absurd, völlig absurd zu glauben, diese drei Jahre wären an irgendeinem von uns spurlos vorbeigegangen".[6]

After further walk-outs and court expulsions three court-appointed doctors are called to examine the prisoners, who declares them unfit to stand trial, being weak, unable to concentrate, underweight, and suffering from low blood pressures. They recommend more group interaction and shorter trial days. This leads to the the presiding judge expelling the group from the courtroom whilst the procedings are in progress by means of a specially-made law.

Difficulties over the legal status of 'terrorists' are therefore raised. Whilst operating within a (political and military) declaration of 'war' would accord prisoners rights, there is little recourse to international law for internal insurgents in a criminal case. Yet the conditions of imprisonment which the film draws attention to provides evidence that the state was not operating within normal peacetime legal procedures. When a constitutional state trying a 'terrorist' organisation is charged with human rights violations, the state justification rests upon utilitarian grounds, with the assumption that the existing form of the state is the most desirable, and that the circumstances are exceptional enough to avoid the charge of self-defeating and contradictory behaviour. The problems with this justification go beyond

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[6] "I declare that I am not fit to stand trial...The intentions which are being pursued by isolation have naturally not been without their effect. And of course the difficulties of association that we have to fight against are enormous. It is completely absurd, completely absurd to think that these three years would have been able to go by without having any effect on any one of us."

notions of natural human rights. Legal sanctions which may violate rights aim to have a restitutive effect. The state must, however, successfully appeal to the exceptional nature of the particular case (a constitutional state being founded upon consistency in areas of law and due process) so as to not undermine its own legitimacy.

The second issue concerns laws which were specifically made for the Stammheim trial, for example, Paragraph Two of the Criminal Procedure Protocol. This law allowed for the court case to procede in the absence of the defendants, justified by the judge on the grounds of saving time (in what was to become the longest trial in the Federal Republic) and to ensure 'that a defendant does not hinder the course of the trial through essentially self-inflicted unfitness to plead', a move which one lawyer claims destroys the idea of a constitutional state. Related to this are the stretched interpretations of existing laws designed to cope with 'terrorism'. The film highlights above all the issue of freedom of speech and privacy. As mentioned above, the defendants' microphones are often turned off during heated exchanges, and the defendants themselves are often (sometimes by their own design) expelled from courtroom sessions for abusive language towards the authorities. More contentious is their silencing whilst making 'political' statements, a symptomatic expression of the inability of two sides to 'communicate' with each other, the overcoming of this, as will be mentioned presently, being one of Hauff's intentions in making the film.

A further controversial issue is that of the state bugging conversations between the defendants and their lawyers. This was an issue which was to be pervasive throughout the trial, but which came to a head at the end of the trial when a defence lawyer unsucessfully called for the Interior Minister to be questioned in order to ascertain whether bugging had taken place. Shortly afterwards all the lawyers, including those appointed by the state, move a motion

to suspend the trial until the issue had been clarified. The judge suspends the trial after one lawyer notes 'What is taking place in this legal process can not be called anything less than the destruction of all constitutional guarantees'. The authorities later admit that bugging had taken place, but for purposes of crime prevention and with no relevance to the Stammheim trial. (Aust points out in his book the actual extent of the bugging, and how it breaks Articles Two and Seven of the German Constitutional Law, whilst it was justified by ministers under a provision of a "justifiable emergency" at the time.[7])

These examples of the normal law being unable to govern in times of crisis raises difficult questions about the relationship of the state to the constitution. A constitutional theory of the state sees the state as protecting the constitution, being regulated by its laws, rather than the state using the constitution to govern. The constitution, in creating the state, has a different order of juridical precepts: 'The state therefore exists to perform the legal or juridical purpose for which it was constituted. It declares and enforces, subject to the primary rule of the constitution, a body of secondary rules...which regulates the relations of its members as "legal persons"'.[8] The Marxist-based critique which the RAF levelled at the legal process used this distinction to highlight a number of legal contradictions and political objections. One of these is that the community may or may not recognise state laws - the 'body of secondary rules' - a view which implicitly suggests that the state is not acting in the interests of the citizenry, but rather in its own interest.[9] The difficulty of judging this question is compounded by moral justifications the state uses, for example, that the laws enacted serve the utilitarian end of preventing

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[7] Aust, S., *Der Baader-Meinhof-Komplex* (München, Knaur, 1989), pp. 428, 425
[8] Barker, quoted in Vincent, A., *Theories of the State* (Oxford and New York, Basil Blackwell, 1987), p.79
[9] Speaking of the *Berufsverbot*, for example, one commentator noted "One wonders...whether the prime purpose of the *Berufsverbot* is to protect the constitution's 'free democratic basic order' or whether it seeks by restrictive constitutional interpretation to protect a particular economic and social system against criticism and reform". Dyson, quoted in Finn, op. cit., p.217

conflict rather than sectional goals. But this in turn assumes that the state structure is a disinterested body. The only body able to enforce order is at the same time contested, and so does not fundamentally answer the dilemma. There are instances when state action may not be interpreted as being in the community's interest - for example the loss of civil liberties. Therefore an offence against the state may not neccessarily constitute an offence against the community, and hence the emphasis upon the fact that the RAF attacks (of the first generation) were 'justified' by the perpetrators as not being directed at the wider community, but rather United States' military installations, and agencies of 'right-wing propaganda' such as the right-wing *Springer* newspaper offices in Hamburg.

A further controversial issue related to the failings of the state judicial machinery which is shown in the film is that of the partial conduct of the first presiding judge, Dr. Theodore Prinzing. One of the defending lawyers discloses that Prinzing had sent police and court documents (concerning one of the lawyers allegedly smuggling a letter from Gudrun Ensslin out of the prison) to a higher judge responsible for allegations of legal misconduct, in an attempt to get them published by *Die Welt*. One of the court-appointed lawyers also challenges the judge after the initial challenge is disallowed, and it is revealed that Prinzing made a phone call to that lawyer in an attempt to get him to drop the challenge. Following this Dr. Prinzing is dismissed from the case.

The film also details the controversial claim made by the defendants that the trial was a political rather than criminal process. It was through the argument - that if the defendants were to be charged with criminal actions then the state must also be open to charges of criminality for its 'terrorist' actions - that the defendants attempt to politicise the trial. Meinhof notes at the beginning of the trial that it is the first political trial in the Federal Republic of Germany since 1945, making the link to the Nuremberg trials of Nazi war criminals in which the state was regarded

as a criminal actor. This is later to be countered by the judge's claim that "we have no political prisoners". It was in the state's interest to class the case as a criminal procedure, to avoid giving political legitimacy to the RAF. Threats originating internally within a country are preferentially categorised as 'criminal' by the state, as it avoids a military response which has the political characteristics of undermining the state's claim that it can uphold the law through normal criminal procedure. This leads to restrictions upon the nature of the state's counter-action. Declaring the terrorist threat to be criminal rather than political is a declaration of operating within the law to keep it, thereby denying that the state's action may be classified as 'criminal', which, as discussed above, is problematic. Other related issues are raised here, for example, although the state classified the RAF as 'criminal', the extraordinary measures - isolation, specially constructed court-room, laws made specifically for the trial - indicate a distinction between the group and 'ordinary' criminals. One commentator writing on the general reaction of states when fighting 'terrorism' notes a response which is particularly applicable to the Stammheim process:

> 'Denied political status in prisons they are nonetheless tried in special courts, subjected to prolonged investigative detention or given particularly severe sentences. And these are justified by the special dangers terrorists pose, as if those were the dangers of particularly ruthless and well-organised crooks, when evidently they are the dangers of unresolved political issues'.[10]

The problem is whether all those who proclaim themselves to be "enemies of the state" should be treated as prisoners of war under the Geneva Convention, rather than ordinary criminals, and one which rests upon contradictory and controversial notions of legitimacy, based upon debates surrounding coercion, and 'true' interests.

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[10] Gilbert, P., *Terrorism, Security, and Nationality: An Introductory Study in Applied Political Philosophy* (London, Routledge, 1994), p.163

A further problematic issue which the film raises is that of the *tu quoque* argument, that is, if the state itself is founded upon and perpetuated by violence, whether it is hypocritical to condemn counter-violence as immoral. In this instance the realist notion of the state is being invoked by the RAF: that superior force means superior morality. Hauff's own interest in this was stated in a 1987 interview, when he notes the change in the law at the time, forbidding the sheltering of anyone from a criminal organisation:

> "Just letting them a night in your flat was a crime, and all of us had done that for many of them for many nights...If you say anything against the Red Army Faction - and you know, 1 think it's really fascistic what they do - you still have to ask the same questions about some things the government is doing".[11]

The accusation of 'state terrorism' in *Stammheim* is raised by Baader's attempt to read out an *International Institute for Strategic Studies* report on the tracking down and killing of terrorist leaders, or the issues of rights violations. The point is principally made in the film through the issue of the actions of the USA in Vietnam, aided by West Germany. Meinhof accordingly argues that it is the state which is the 'terrorist' organisation:

> "Terrorismus ist die Zerstörung von Versorgungseinrichtungen, also Deichen, Wasserwerken, Krankenhäusern, Kraftwerken. Eben alles das, worauf die amerikanischen Bombenangriffe gegen Nordvietnam seit 1965 systematisch abzielten...Die Stadtguerilla bekämpft den Terrorismus des Staats".[12]

The Federal Prosecutor challenges these applications, and after adjournments the judge decides that the witnesses are not applicable to the trial as "The Vietnam war

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[11] Cineaste, op. cit., pp.54-5

[12] "Terrorism is the destruction of utility installations like dykes. waterworks, hospitals. power stations. Exactly that which the American bomb attacks against North Vietnam were systematically directed against since 1965...The urban guerilla fights the terrorism of the state".

is not the subject of this trial". One of the defending lawyers notes the political nature of state crimes to make the defendants' case a political one: "Ob man nämlich solche Mordaktion dulden oder verschweigen durfte oder ob es gerechtfertigt war, gegen diese Mechanismen und gegen eine Apparatur, die diese Mordaktionen durchgeführt hat, anzugehen. Darum geht es".[13]

The problem is that it is easy in this instance for counter-force measures by the state to appear morally *less* justified because an 'act of war' is not declared, even though the state regards its counter-measures, usually adopted in war, as legitimate. The declaration of war by the state is resisted for political, not military reasons, as it is precisely a military response which insurgents want in order to substantiate their claim for moral equality. Given the inherent problems in basing the legitimacy of the state constitutionally, Gilbert argues that it is very difficult for the state to adequately refute the *tu quoque* argument.[14]

The difficulties which the state experienced in the Stammheim trial must, however, be put into context with previous problems and judicial shortcomings experienced by the German state. The process against the RAF may be contrasted with that against Hitler, after the failed *putsch* in November 1923. This precedent contained many elements which the court in the 1970's wanted to avoid. Hitler was allowed to speak at length during his trial (four hours on occasion), which not only allowed him a platform for propaganda, but also gave him the opportunity to present himself as a leader: "The man who feels called upon to govern a people has [a] duty to step forward".[15] It may have been in the light of this precedent that the Stammheim defendants were often prevented from speaking, or having political

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[13] "Whether you should put up with or are silent about such murderous acts, or whether it was justified taking action against the mechanisms and apparatus by which such murderous actions are carried out. That's what it's all about".

[14] Gilbert, op. cit., pp.140-1

[15] Hitler, quoted in Flood, C.B., *Hitler: The Path to Power* (London, Hamish Hamilton, 1989), p.580

speeches curtailed. The Stammheim court depoliticising procedings may therefore be interpreted as an attempt to prevent another political stage being created after this dangerous historical precedent.

Such factors illustrate the problems which the Constitutional State was designed to overcome. It is in the attempt to prevent a repeat of such judicial failures that the trial must be contextualised, yet it was the unconstitutional actions of the court which paradoxically would also threaten to undermine the concept of the *Rechtsstaat* in the attempt to preserve itself. Defenders of these controversial policies, however, used the Nazi era to justify their implementation under the idea of a 'militant democracy'. Of the Public Servant Loyalty Decree (*Berufsverbot*), for example, Chancellor Willy Brandt (who co-sponsored the resolution) later said

> "...you must look at this in the context of the way in which we believed ourselves called upon to prevent a repetition of Weimar...Those who reject its [a democracy's] basic elements must not be given power to dispose of it".[16]

This idea of a 'militant democracy' has its roots in Carl Schmitt's theory of the 'political'. Schmitt was a pre-war German legal scholar who wrote on the nature of state power and its relation to the 'political', which is defined by the ability of the state to distinguish between 'friend' and 'foe'. Drawing from a realist tradition, Schmitt thought that war was an 'ever present possibility', and wished a sovereign state power, above general law and party politics, to decisively distinguish enemies of the state. Delaying action through the process of liberal debate was the weakness of the Weimar Republic. He explicitly states that internal enemies may be fought by overriding the constitution to prevent threats to the 'way of life' which the state provided.[17] Hence, the German Basic Law reflects 'the courage to be

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[16] Quoted in Finn. op. cit., p.209
[17] Schmitt. C.. *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago and London. University of Chicago Press, 1996) p.47

intolerant towards those who wish to use a democratic system in order to kill it off'.[18]

Such controversial debates surrounding the film may have contributed to the violence and disruption which accompanied its premier showings and exhibition at festivals.[19] The worst of these occurred at an evening presentation in Hamburg, at which the film was to be shown, followed by a theatrical presentation (Georg Tabori's *Epilogue*) and a discussion about the Stammheim trial and its effects in the Federal Republic. Lawyers of RAF, the political scientist Professor Irving Fetscher, the RAF defector Michael Baumann, and Klaus Bölling (the right-wing Social Democrat speaker for the Schmidt government at the time of the trial), among others, were to take part in this. At the start of the evening the artistic director of the Thalia Theatre announced that there would be a delay due to the film having to be prepared for showing. In fact, in the same afternoon the film had been stolen by unknown people, the loss of which was only noticed shortly before the presentation was due to begin. Another copy was obtained but the reels were incorrectly rolled, and in the delay the first firecrackers were set off in the theatre. When at 10.00pm the film was still not ready it was decided to begin the discussion, and it was whilst the members of the discussion panel were making their way to the front that more firecrackers were let off and Klaus Bölling was attacked by a group who held him from behind whilst punching him in the face. These people (*Die Zeit* estimated 40-50 in number) had allegedly gained access to the theatre by overpowering and seriously injuring a doorman. In this atmosphere of violence Jürgen Flimm decided to cancel the evening's events, influenced by the chairman of the discussion, Frankfurt lawyer and publicist Sebastian Cobler, who

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[18] Schmid, quoted in Finn, op. cit., p.189

[19] Reports on the violence surrounding the film rather than the film itself can be found in 'Kein "Stammheim" in Hamburg: Filmuraufführung und Taboris "Epilog" verhindert', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 1.2.86; 'Stammheim-Film gestohlen', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1.2.86; 'Hoffnung RAF?', *Die Zeit*, 7.2.86

said he did not feel able to hold an objective discussion in such a threatening

atmosphere. The violence was blamed on RAF insiders inciting the radical left-

wing occupants of Hamburg's Saint-Pauli *Hafenstraße* to aid the disruption. The

motives for disrupting the film were perhaps the view that the film "falsified" the

history and motives of the RAF, and that the panel selected for the discussion did

not represent someone who held a truly adversarial position to state power. A

critique of the film had been distributed at the door by 'spokespeople for political

prisoners' claiming that the function of the film was to 'finally destroy the

revolutionary hopes of ordinary people, and to force divisions in the left-wing

movement'.[20] Security controls on entry and access to areas were rigorous at the

rescheduled event, as they were at the Berlin Film Festival, at which stink bombs

had been let off beforehand in the auditorium.[21]

Intention

Hauff takes the arguments between the constitutional state and the RAF as

a means to exploring the ideological nature of discursive power and its interaction.

Omitting speculation over the deaths in custody focuses attention on the issues of

the state's methods of dealing with opponents who radically reject its legitimacy,

the nature of resistance, and West German postwar history. Although Hauff has

not published works on film philosophy in the same way as Alexander Kluge, there

appears to be a shared interest between the two filmmakers in their intention for

film to influence the public sphere. Hauff's statements concerning the intentions

behind *Stammheim* (as well as his more general statements on film) parallel

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[20] 'Stammheim-Film-Premiere geplatzt', *Tageszeitung*, 1.2.86. The other views were expressed in the left-wing press concerning the violence at the premiere. See the letters which appeared in *Tageszeitung*, 11.2.86; 12.2.86

[21] See 'Die Umstände waren tödlich', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 24.2.86; 'Lehrstück Stammheim', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 20.2.86; '50 Bodyguards sicherten "Stammheim"', *Tageszeitung*, 20.2.86

Habermas' critique of an instrumental rationality, and express his desire for norms based upon 'intersubjective' communication as part of an emancipatory project.

The unmelodramatic construction of the film illustrates Hauff's intentions as regards an 'objective' form of filmmaking, aiding the open reportage-style which Hauff believes will help the viewers 'take part' in the discussion of the issues he wants the film to raise. This, he believes, is particularly relevant to those who want to think politically rather than have impressions formed by the artistic ingenuity of the director.[22] The importance of film in introducing issues into the public sphere is central to Hauff's philosophy, as revealed in a 1993 interview upon his appointment as director to the German Film and Television Academy in Berlin. This interview also revealed the importance he attached to opening up 'repressed' factors in recent German history. One of the principles he wanted to emphasise in his teaching at the academy was the fostering of a 'dialogue and argument culture' (*Gesprächs- und Streitkultur*):

> "Auf der Schule müssen sie [Filmmacher] wieder konstruktiv über
> Inhalte reden, über Angst und Nöte unserer Zeit, die Sehnsüchte
> und nicht nur über Film im Film an einer Filmschule. Diese
> inhaltliche Diskussion haben auch die Regisseure meiner Generation
> immer mehr verloren..."[23]

German film should 'provoke and fascinate', especially by concentrating on German issues which have more conflicts than in recent years: "Why shouldn't someone be successful with a film which goes beyond the superficial, provokes the collective unconscious and lets it explode emotionally. The producers of my generation have also increasingly let slip this discussion about content".[24] Provoking this

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[22] '"Stammheim" trifft einen Nerv'. *Vorwärts*, 1.3.86

[23] "They [the filmmakers] must again talk in a constructive way about content, about the fears and difficulties of our time, about the longings, and not just about film in the film of a film school. The directors of my generation have increasingly lost sight of this discussion over content". 'Die Zukunft des Kinos', Interview with Wilhelm Roth. *EPD Film*, Vol. 10(5), 1993, p.6

[24] Ibid., p.7

(presumably German) 'collective unconsciousness' is clearly the intention in *Stammheim*, which directly confronts the relationships between state actions and political violence, both in the Nazi era and in recent postwar German history. This 'dialogue and argument' culture has a similar basis to Habermas's 'communicative rationality', found in his *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. This proposes that understandings may be reached to conflicting validity claims based upon a normative consensus, through claims and counter-claims being advanced within an interactive realm of open discussion. Whereas institutions determined by power relations do not allow for a free exchange based upon genuine information, and equality and reciprocity between the participants, the hypothesised public sphere - the form of civil society where rational argument may be conducted against established ways of thought and patterns of belief - is based upon potential equality and accessibility for all.[25]

A 'dialogue and argument' culture would help develop what Habermas calls an "ideal speech situation". Influenced by Weberian theories of the bureaucratisation of society and party politics, Habermas postulates in *Toward a Rational Society* that the ever more complex nature of social life, brought about by population increase and specialisation in various fields, results in inequalities as the free exchange of ideas and a democratic communicative process are hindered. The accompanying process of 'rationalisation' - the development of spheres of expert knowledge - is used as a substitute for the ever more complex process of communicative action, to judge competing claims of validity, and as a way of reaching a consensus. This, however, has the characteristic of using an 'instrumental' rationality, the Weberian idea that the empiricisation of politics stresses efficiency of means and control, rather than ends and values which, in their

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[25] Holub, R.C., *Jürgen Habermas: Critic in the Public Sphere* (London and New York, Routledge, 1991), pp.3-4

complex nature, are more problematic to determine.[26] Ideology therefore becomes a tool with which the 'technocratic' social order is justified: '...politics becomes the sphere for the technical elimination of dysfunctions and the avoidance of risks that threaten "the system"'.[27] For Habermas this is detrimental to achieving a discursive consensus, a consensus whose 'truth' is based upon the normative result of otherwise uncoerced conditions.

The erosion of the means by which an "ideal speech situation" can take place means that people are alienated from areas of knowledge which now reside with experts. The corresponding idea of utility over content was expressed by the first generation of 'critical theorists' who thought it an aid to a system of domination. Within this tradition, Horkheimer and Adorno note in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* that systematic philosophies of history not only legitimise acts of brutality, but are in part empowered to do this. This is because the nature of such narratives is 'the rejection of anything not already analytically assimilated', the measure of rationality being determined by those who are on the inside of the system. Critical or dissenting thought thus becomes labelled as irrational.[28] When asked whether it would always be an "irrational" act to oppose the state, as the Baader-Meinhof Group did, when the state has coopted the discourse of rationality, Hauff replied that he did not believe

> "...that the state has taken over this discourse, because what the government in my country is doing is completely irrational, from my point of view. I have a clear view of another kind of society, but I am against all ideological blinders and fanaticism, because this always leads to Stalinism - which is what the Baader-Meinhof group had by the end".[29]

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[26] See Held, D., *Political Theory and the Modern State* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1989) pp.79-81; Layder, D., *Understanding Social Theory* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Dehli. Sage Publications), pp. 186-98

[27] Held, D., *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995), p.251, 256

[28] Ibid., pp.150-1

[29] Cinéaste, op. cit., p.55

Clearly Hauff does not regard the 'rational' (and particular) interest of the state to be the interest of the wider community, and in his parallel criticism of the Red Army Faction illustrates that the two enemies of a practical discourse - one which may be communicatively shared and so be capable of consensus - are the (bureaucratised) expert authority, and the 'ideological fanatic'. The film accordingly emphasises the constitutional 'instrumental rationality' which an approach based upon communicative action is designed to overcome. The problem of who 'controls' rational discourse and its utilisation to adjudicate between competing validity claims is made apparent not only by the judge's conviction that it was a 'normal *criminal* process', but also in a criticism made by Meinhof (which was also used in the film):

> "Die Bundesanwaltschaft und das Gericht sind nicht intelligent genug, im Objekt ihrer Vernichtungsmaßnahmen auch das Opfer zu sehen. Die Bundesanwaltschaft und das Gericht sehen nur den Feind, den sie erschlagen wollen...Sie sind immer nur formalistisch".[30]

Such procedural criticism is symbolically represented by a sub-textual critique of the ideologies of *both* the state and the RAF being unable to contribute to an "ideal speech situation", shown by the repeated actions of forcefully banning the defendants from the courtroom according to specially-made laws, switching off their microphones so that they could not be heard, and the deliberate tactics of disruption employed by the defendants themselves. Systematic political power is revealed to be based upon the transformation of political questions into questions of technical control, and it is this substitution of 'technocratic consciousness' for public discussion which undermines the basis of reasoned decision found in the process of 'communicative action'.

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[30] "The Federal Prosecutor and the court are not clever enough to see the object of their destructive action as a victim. The Office and the court only see the enemy which they want to kill...They always only observe the formalities".

This critique of both ideological 'sides' being unable to advance an emancipatory project and wishing to introduce limitations into the public discursive sphere[31] is linked to Hauff's anti-ideological intentions. Despite the difficulties associated with such a project (the pragmatic regulations and empirical restrictions needed to organise practical discourse was recognised by Habermas to be 'almost always difficult and sometimes actually unobtainable'[32]), there is a need for everybody to be involved politically:

> "Das Vertrauen in ideologische Fronten ist verschwunden, Gott sei Dank. Es gibt keine ideologischen Ruhestätten mehr, sondern jeder muß sich selbst fragen, wo stehe ich, wo bin ich beteiligt. Daß dieses Verteilen von Gut und Böse nicht mehr ganz so einfach ist, finde ich sehr positiv. Aber es ist nach wie vor schwierig, diese Geschichten emotional und dramatisch zu erzählen".[33]

The end goal for Hauff is, therefore, a utopian transcendence of existing ideologies - the "propaganda" of the capitalist and existing socialist countries - as they have 'nothing to do with reality'. This again parallels Habermas' belief that 'ideology' is a coerced consensus - belief patterns which, as one commentator notes, 'can maintain their legitimacy despite the fact that they could not be validated if subjected to rational discourse'.[34] Although Hauff relates this to the German situation, he also repeatedly states the need for countries other than Germany to find a 'third way'

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[31] Habermas himself broke with the student radicals of the 1960's on the grounds that their program was aiming to restrict thought and action rather than provide the grounds for emancipatory potential. See Held, (1995), op. cit., p.251

[32] Habermas, quoted in McCarthy, T., *The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas* (London. Hutchinson, 1978), p.332

[33] "The reliance in ideological façades is no more, thank God. There are no longer any ideological resting places, but rather everybody must ask themselves where they stand, where they are involved. I think it is very positive that there is no longer a simple apportioning of good and evil. But it is just as difficult as before to tell these stories emotionally and dramatically". 'Weg von ideologischen Fronten: Gespräch mit Reinhard Hauff', *Film Dienst*, Vol. 44(17), 1991, p.14

[34] Schroyer, quoted in Held, 1995, op. cit., p.256

after the previous existing systems have been unable to solve 'the problems'.[35] In a similar way to Kluge, this is achieved by the active reflection of the viewer, forced upon him by the film not having a closed narrative or ideological bias:

"Ich glaube, daß mein Film eine Verunsicherung, eine Beunruhigung geschaffen hat, die Reaktionen geradezu herausfordert. In meinem Film fehlt das Glaubensbekenntnis für die eine oder andere Seite, und dadurch fühlen sich viele ganz emotional getroffen. Sie sind einfach gezwungen, nachzudenken".[36]

Whilst it would be impossible to have a truly 'objective' film, as the process of decoding will always presuppose some form of interpretation, what was intended was an artistic rejection of the Manichean in favour of a framework which has many methodological parallels with the Hegelian reading of the Greek myth of *Antigone*. Antigone, sister of the slain rebel Polynices, is moved by the rights of family piety and the burying of the dead to bury her brother, an action forbidden by the ruler Creon under his rights to protect public welfare and state security. There is no harmonious outcome; Antigone herself is killed, whilst Creon loses his son and wife.

There are two 'objective' rights here which come into conflict with each other, making the Hegelian tragedy: 'in what is truly tragic there must be valid moral powers on both sides which come into collision'.[37] Both 'sides' work within their own framework of justification, but when such rights are brought into conflict with each other by individuals who dogmatically stand by them, there is disaster.

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[35] *Cinéaste*, op. cit., p.55; *EPD Film*, op. cit., p.7. For the nature of the problems confronting existing ideological practices and an argument for such a 'third' way, see Held, 1989, op. cit., chapter 6

[36] "I believe that my film has created an uncertainty and unrest, which demands a response. The creed for one side or the other is missing in my film, and because of this many people feel stung emotionally. They are simply forced to ponder on it". *Vorwärts*, 1.3.86, op. cit.

[37] Hegel, quoted in Lamb, D., *Hegel: From Foundation to System* (The Hague, Boston, London. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1980), p.68

Stammheim parallels this interweaving of two self-contained objective perspectives, the agents of which inflexibly adhere to their positions.

The important element in this analysis is that the authors refuse to validate either one of the competing two perspectives. A Hegelian tragedy does not contain a crude moral theory of good triumphing over evil, as the figures are simultaneously innocent and guilty, with no prior privileging claim: 'they bring themselves to destruction through their own justified, but guilty actions'.[38] The RAF members are given life sentences and die shortly afterwards in their prison cells, whilst the ideal of the constitutional state undermines itself in the act of attempted self-preservation.

It is finally worth recalling Hauff's intent to force the audience to reflect, as this parallels 'reconciliation', a further Hegelian element of tragedy. The viewer is placed in a privileged position in being able to see both 'sides', rather than acting from the abstracted view of one side. This position allows the viewer to develop a reconciliation of principles which are not developed in the work itself: 'a feeling of a greater good which the hero has failed to grasp'.[39] This process therefore suggests a dialectic, achieved through the unrestricted access to the competing claims, which has links with Habermas' project of an 'ideal speech situation'.

This active reflection may be read as being an integral part of Habermas' emancipatory project against tendencies of instrumental reason, acting as a means to self-understanding.[40] This confrontation proved to be particularly difficult and subject to controversial political interpretations since, as presently discussed, the

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[38] Hegel, quoted in Houlgate, S., *Hegel, Nietzsche and the Criticism of Metaphysics* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986), p.206
[39] Lamb, op. cit., p.70
[40] Held, (1995), op. cit., p.254

"taboo" subject of the 'terrorism' of the RAF was caught up in and analogised with the disputed subject of 'coming to terms' with Nazi terror.

Reception

It is ironic that Hauff's wish to open up a more pragmatic political discourse resulted in the most ideologically polarised reception of all the works examined in this thesis. It is also ironic that a work which aimed at an impartial and discursively open assessment of the problems of the Stammheim process should have the concept of impartiality as its principal criticism, and be subject to paratextual responses which, in many cases, aimed to undermine open discursive communication. Although taken from court transcripts of the actual procedings, the charges of bias were based upon the film limiting itself to events inside the courtroom. The need to locate the film within definable ideological parameters meant that the most common strategy in the mass media was to historicise the events surrounding the trial according to the newspaper's own ideological imperatives, and in many cases the contextual situationalising of the film eclipsed views on the film as a product in its own right.

The 'neutral' media unanimously praised the film for its impartiality. Hauff's credo, *EPD Film* claims, is to portray genuine reality, with the result that the film has an almost documentary representation:

> 'Gerichtsverhandlungen und Haftbedingungen wie hier machen
> Menschen kaputt, erschüttern die Glaubwürdigkeit des
> Rechtsstaats. Und: Kampfaufrufe, deren Welt- und Menschenbild
> zwischen kaum anderem als imperialistisch und anti-imperialistisch,
> zwischen Schweinen und Menschen unterscheiden kann, lassen auch
> heute noch nicht vermuten, daß hier Wegbereiter einer
> menschlicheren Gesellschaft am revolutionären Werk sind".[41]

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[41] 'Legal processes and conditions of imprisonment. like those portrayed here, break people and shake the credibility of the constitutional state. And: Calls to arms, whose portrayal of the world

An important element which some of these reviews recognised as missing, and necessary for a full understanding of the events was that of historical context. The biographies of the accused (presumably other than the brief biographies presented at the beginning of the film) have to be assumed by the viewer[42], whilst one review criticised the screenplay author, Stefan Aust, for not making apparent the causes of thought and action, and how people were related to the time.[43] It was on this ground that the West German mass media discursively fought to recover and manufacture ideological interpretations of the judicial, constitutional and political events.

The location of the film almost solely inside the courtroom allowed reviewers to paratextually construct their own selection of events outside the immediate film content. Whereas the 'neutral' reviews were usually content to note its absence, the rest of the media often went to extraordinary lengths, using the film as a means to propound ideological views on the 'real' events, rather than the events shown in the film, regardless of whether they were based upon court transcripts or not.

The 'liberal' media, in contrast to reviews on the right, saw the limits of impartiality being upheld in the presentation of the difficulties the constitutional state had in trying the defendants. This was best expressed by the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*:

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and humanity can barely make distinctions other than the imperialist from the anti-imperialist, the pig from the man, do not allow any assumption today that here forerunners of a more humane society are at work in a revolutionary way'. Kühn, D., 'Stammheim', *EPD Film*, Vol. 3(2), 1986, p.30

[42] 'Stammheim', *Fischer Film Almanac: Filme, Festivals, Tendenzen* (Fischer Taschenbuch, Frankfurt am Main, 1987), p.253

[43] Hill, J., 'Stammheim', *Film Dienst*, Vol. 39(3), 12.2.86, p.30

> 'Unter Hauff's unbestechlichem Blick erweist sich Stammheim als zu extreme Belastung: Jene, die diese Spielregeln, also das Gesetz, zu verteidigen haben, verändern und modifizieren es. Und jene, die den Bruch mit der gesellschaftlichen Ordnung längst vollzogen haben, nehmen nun eben jenes Recht für ihre Verteidigung in Anspruch, dem sie eigentlich den Krieg erklärt haben...[Hauff] schiebt nicht die eigene Persönlichkeit und Meinung in den Vordergrund. Hauff überzeugt durch Genauigkeit, durch eine Redlichkeit, die dem Zuschauer allemal genügend Raum für die eigene Meinung läßt'.[44]

The lack of bias was, however, usually not considered enough to promote a reading in accordance with the ideological direction of the newspaper within all political discourses. Therefore a strategy of framing outside 'facts' to make sense of the film was adopted. The *Frankfurter Rundschau* stressed not only the facts about Vietnam expressed in the film, but also the failure of guerilla movements in Latin America and Europe, which have resulted in a 'scepticism against internationalism', and the further control of 'conservative reactionaries' who have benefitted from the emergency laws.[45] A different approach was taken by *Die Zeit*, whose reviewer met Baader in the 1960's and found him 'injured and sensitive', craving human contact. The psychologising of Baader's past for this reviewer (which is compared to Adorno's *Minima Moralia*, presumably to evoke the subtitle 'Reflections from a Damaged Life', of a person living within a society, the values of which he is estranged from) is essential to understanding the 'senseless, draining exchange of punches' portrayed in the film, which only shows the end of Baader's life.[46] This psychological discourse almost takes precedence over the subject of the film itself, which is not mentioned in the first half of the review at all.

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[44] 'In Hauff's unwavering view Stammheim shows itself to be too extreme a burden: Those who have to defend the rules of this game, i.e. the law, alter and modify it. And those who have long since made the break from social order now claim just that right for their defence on which they have actually declared war...Hauff does not push his own personality and opinion into the foreground. He convinces through exactness and honesty, which leaves the viewer in any case enough room for their own opinion'. 'Ein sehr deutscher Prozeß'. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 30.1.86
[45] 'Ideendrama an mehrfachem Tatort'. *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 30.1.86
[46] 'Endstation eines Traum'. *Die Zeit*, 31.1.86

Among the 'liberal' reviews it is *Der Spiegel* which politically contextualises the RAF to the greatest extent, detailing (and quoting) at length Ulrike Meinhof's conditions of isolation in prison, looking into the 'hearts' of the prisoners by parallelling them to Dostoevsky's *The Demons* (A fictional Russian revolutionary group), and situating the motives for the actions of the RAF within wider world events:

> 'Hätte denn die Pfarrerstochter Gudrun Ensslin jemals Feuer in
> einem Kaufhaus gelegt, hätte die Bildungsbürgerin Ulrike Meinhof
> einen Gefangenen befreit, hätten je beide eine Bank überfallen,
> wenn der Krieg in Vietnam nicht gewesen wäre und der
> aufgewühlte Geist der rebellierenden Jugend auf beiden Seiten des
> Atlantiks?'[47]

In a similar way to sentiments expressed in other sections of the liberal media, *Der Spiegel* thought the episode of terrorism 'a present to the people of law and order who thought there was too much freedom and too little intimidating state power in the Republik...to live out their base instincts in the name of justice and security', thereby alluding to the pathological discourse of the 'authoritarian personality'.[48]

In contrast to the media from the liberal left the view from the right of the political spectrum was an almost unanimous condemnation of the film as biased against the political establishment, in content, aesthetics, and the context outside the courtroom by which the state justified its reaction. *Die Welt*, for example, thought that the defendants were portrayed as being at least morally equal to the law, and that the talk of torture and mutilation focussed on the 'isolation torture' of the prisoners or judicial guilt for the hungerstrikes, rather than on the victims of

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[47] 'Would Gudrun Ensslin, the vicar's daughter, ever then set fire to a department store, would the middle class intellectual Ulrike Meinhof have freed a prisoner, would both of them have robbed a bank, if the war in Vietnam had not taken place and the spirit of the youth on both sides of the Atlantic had not stirred up?' '"Das Gefühl, es explodiert einem der Kopf"', *Der Spiegel*, 27.1.86, p.165
[48] Ibid., p.168

'terrorism'.[49] Other elements found in this review form the basis of criticism found in the rest of this section of the media, that the court is portrayed as an organisation of censorship, that the transcripts are not impartial, and that the judge is made into a figure of ridicule.

Several strategies were adopted by this section of the media to justify these objections. The first is simply a favourable interpretation of the events and characters portrayed in the film. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (in a review entitled 'Recent History Restaged'), for example, saw the judge as a figure who showed his 'humanity' in trying to get a normal legal course in the face of the constant court disruptions. The study of him in the film is 'a little removed from reality'.[50] Another related strategy similar to that found in the liberal media, is an extensive ideological contextualisation of the events, in this case to justify the neo-conservative program of 'authoritarian democracy' introduced to combat the RAF. The *Bayernkurier*, for example, criticises the 'fragmentary' portrayal of the legal process and the omission of what went on outside the courtroom, thinking that the events in the court distract attention away from what 'terrorism' actually is. Although Hauff claims he wants a 'fair' film,

> 'Wer in diesen Tagen im Kino den Film 'Stammheim' gesehen hat,
> wer mitanschaut, wie junge Menschen - um die wahren
> Zusammenhänge im unklaren gelassen - gegen Staat und Justiz
> aufgebracht werden, wie mit billigen filmischen Tricks versucht
> wird, den Zuschauer an die Seite der RAF-Terroristen zu bringen.
> und wie damit unweigerlich Sympathie für die Baader-Meinhof-
> Bande ausgelöst wird, in dem werden Zweifel an der Wehrhaftigkeit
> der Demokratie gegenüber ihren erbittertsten Feinden wach'.[51]

[49] 'Don Carlos Baader?', *Die Welt*, 4.2.86

[50] 'Die Zeitgeschichte nachgestellt', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 29.1.86

[51] 'Whoever has recently seen the film 'Stammheim' in the cinema, whoever witnesses how young people - left in the dark as to the real facts and connections - are incited against the state and the courts, how an attempt is made with cheap filmic trickery to bring the viewer onto the side of the terrorists, and thus how sympathy is inevitably elicited for the Baader-Meinhof gang, will begin to develop doubts about the abilitiy and readiness of democracy to defend itself against its most bitter enemies'. 'Halbierte Wahrheit', *Bayernkurier*, 15.3.86

The majority of this 'review' is then given over to a paragraphed chronology of the actions of the Baader-Meinhof Group in May 1972, and actions by the RAF during the trial itself. Such events, which are not mentioned in the film, the reviewer believes, should be known by the viewer in order to 'understand' this legal process.

A further strategy is the discrediting of Hauff in either a conspiratorial way, or by questioning his state of mind. *Die Welt*, by not acknowledging the possibilities of integrating art into a form of documentary, thinks that Hauff's film must presume justified grounds for 'terrorism', or else his heroes would not have 'succeeded': 'In ihr liegt eine Einseitigkeit zugunsten derer, die viele schlicht für Mörder halten'.[52] The most vitriolic attack on Hauff's character was contained in another essay in the *Bayernkurier*.[53] Hauff is viewed in a sinister way through his refusal to give away the sources for the screenplay (this is despite many interviews with the screenplay writer Aust who speaks at length about his sources, withholding a few names, often of policemen, in their interests). He is also insinuated as being of a weak mental frame, one of those 'with frail heads, democratic in appearance only, capable of being seduced' by the 'extremists'. This is the only time when a cultural producer, rather than the characters portrayed, has been subject to clinical tropes, in this case to inform the reading of the film from the right.

A final device used by the media on the right also draws upon political events outside the film, and is that of presenting a 'threat' to the reader by reference to modern day political events in West Germany. This went beyond printing the latest number of 'terrorist' attacks and their relative increase to the previous year:

[52] 'A bias lies in it which is in favour of those whom many would simply call murderers'. *Die Welt*, 4.2.86, op. cit.
[53] 'Der Terror und sein Mythos', *Bayernkurier*, 8.2.86

> 'Sosehr dieser Spielfilm Geschehnisse aufzeigt, die über zehn Jahre
> zurückliegen, so wenig darf übersehen werden, daß in unserem
> Lande der Terrorismus weiter wütet. Wie verantwortungslos und
> wie gefährlich also ist es, angesichts dieser Tatsache hier Emotionen
> zu schüren und Sympathien zu wecken...Kult für Terroristen und
> Mythos für den Terror?'[54]

More sinister is the idea that the film shows the West German citizenry must be
wary of radicals in positions of power, alluding to the idea that the students of the
1960's were making the 'long march through the institutions'. The *Frankfurter
Allgemeine Zeitung*, for example, cites the case presented in the film of contents of
a file being kept secret. Two of the lawyers at the trial ('confidents' of the accused)
who protested against this are now, the *FAZ* states, active for the Green Party and
working together with the former justice minister Hans-Jochen Vogel, present-day
leader of the SPD and at the time of the Stammheim trial one of the most vigorous
defenders of keeping the file secret.[55] These lawyers are, therefore, equated with
defending 'terrorists' *morally* as well as legally. Today's 'hypocrisy' is
retrospectively extrapolated to question the lawyer's character at the time of the
trial, whilst at the same time providing a warning that the people who legally
defended the RAF hold political posts. The contextualisation of the trial within the
context of present-day politics was also presented in *Die Welt*, from the viewpoint
of the mechanisms of funding. The city of Hamburg gave up to 1.3 million
Deutschmarks (approximately 800,000 pounds) for the financing of the film,
although the production has only very tenuous links to the city and the film itself is
unlikely to give any return on the investment. It would not be the first time, the

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[54] 'Although this film portrays events which lie over ten years behind us, it must not be
overlooked that terrorism continues to rage in our country. How irresponsible and dangerous it is,
therefore, to stoke the emotions and arouse sympathies bearing this fact in mind...[Is it a case of]
a cult for terrorists, and a mythology of terror?'. Ibid.
[55] *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 29.1.86, op. cit.

review notes, that the Hamburg Film Office had paid out on purely political grounds.[56]

The reaction from the right mirrored that of the left. Even before the film was premiered *Tageszeitung* adopted a sceptical hostility to it, questioning Hauff's reconstruction and the film's aesthetic value, scornfully noting that it may be better presented under the title "Stammheim: The Comic".[57] In the same edition two notable commentators contributed essays criticising Aust's book upon which the film was based. Fritz Teufel, one of the student leaders of the '1968 generation', saw the book and film as the start of the commodification of the 1960s protest movement. Aust's objectivity is questioned, claiming the book is ridden with clichés (the 'demon' Baader, the 'witch' Ensslin, and the 'bewitched' Meinhof), and, similar to reviews from across the entire political spectrum, criticised the lack of context.[58] Identical concerns were expressed by Gottfried Ensslin, the brother of Gudrun, who noted similar clichéd psychologising, and lack of objectivity in that Aust's sources were principally those who had 'dropped out' of the RAF, and who thus had a political agenda. At the expense of a context within which the RAF may be understood (Ensslin suggests that the RAF's critique of US imperialism is not taken seriously) the book becomes a thriller, filled with anecdotes and 'juicy details'.[59] Further responses to the film in the newspaper were mixed, although notably the issue of the lack of contextualisation was a constant underlying theme.[60]

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[56] *Die Welt*, 4.2.86, op. cit.

[57] 'Stammheim: Der Film', *Tageszeitung*, 23.1.86

[58] Teufel, F., 'Eine schnelle Mark mit Stammheim', *Tageszeitung*, 23.1.86

[59] Ensslin, G., 'Stefan Aust - der Hackwriter und seine Gruselstory', *Tageszeitung*, 23.1.86

[60] See, for example, '"Stammheim: Der Film"', *Die Tageszeitung*, 1.2.86; 'Unbefriedigend', *Tageszeitung*, 26.2.86; 'Statt der Amnestie ein Goldener Bär', *Tageszeitung*, 27.2.86

Terrorism as a 'Taboo' Subject in West Germany

In addition to the disputes concerning the alleged bias in the film, a further conflict which the media reviews of *Stammheim* revealed was the deeper socio-psychological issue of whether or not 'terrorism' was being used as part of a wider 'taboo'-making process (*tabuisieren*) in West Germany. The roots of this lay in the response to the violence of the Nazi regime, and the difficulty with the process of 'coming to terms' with the recent past (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*).

Much was written in the liberal media praising the film's attempts to break the 'taboo' subject of political violence, and virtually all of the reviews noted 'terrorism' as a current taboo in Germany. Often this was made with explicit reference to the post-war 'taboo' subject of the Nazi era. The *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, for example thought it '...a piece of repressed history...Coming to terms with the past for a generation who at one time accused their fathers of not being able to do this'.[61] *Der Spiegel* similarly thought

> '...das öffentliche Bewußtsein, gerade bei den Jüngeren, hat
> Stammheim als Vergangenheit und Gegenwart in einem riesigen
> Gedächtnisloch versinken lassen; nicht nur die alten Deutschen,
> auch deren Kinder aus der 68er-Generation sind Meister im
> Verdrängen'.[62]

For many reviewers this 'taboo' nature was revealed by the fact that (like other films or cultural productions concerning this subject) funding was difficult to obtain; the film was turned down by all the West German broadcasting corporations, and only when Jürgen Flimm, the artistic director of the Thalia Theatre from Hamburg, intervened, was money forthcoming from the Hamburg

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[61] *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 30.1.86, op. cit.

[62] 'The public consciousness, particularly among the young, has caused Stammheim past and present to sink into a giant hole in the memory; it is not just the old Germans who are masters of repression, but also their children of the '68 generation'. *Der Spiegel*, 27.1.86, op. cit.

State Film Bureau. Flimm himself regarded the topic of 'terrorism' as comparable to anti-semitism and the holocaust, all of them being controversial because they were 'German traumas yet not worked through'.[63] The film reception was therefore to become a part of the ideologically discursive fight over recovering and interpreting the German past via the application of 'taboos', real or imagined, whose lineage descended from a 'normalising' of the Nazi period in German history.

Ideas about what constitute a 'taboo' subject in German history are varied and have been selectively used according to ideological ends. When writers, journalists and intellectuals began to criticise the official and popular ways of examining the Nazi period in the late 1950's, it was taken to mean breaking with traditional ways of nationalism which had led to Nazism. It became increasingly used in the sense of examining, and more importantly recognising, the effects of the past on the present day and future. Among other works, this was the basis of *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauen* ('The inability to mourn'), a best-selling book written by Mitscherlich and Mitscherlich in 1967, which thought that taboos were to be seen in behaviour which did not recognise the present reality of a divided Germany being a result of German fascism. The concept of *Nachholen* was developed - 'making up' for something which was previously omitted or done badly.[64] This allowed the conservative Christian Democratic government in West Germany from the 1970's to present itself as 'taboo-breakers', to congratulate itself on 'mastering' the past via judicial or restitutive payments to the Jewish community, and so to claim that the Nazi period was an abberation in German history which had been overcome. A contradictory impulse from the right was to defend the silence which had grown up about the Nazi era in West Germany on the grounds of tactfulness,

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[63] 'Deutsches Trauma: Ein Interview mit dem Thalia-Intendanten Jürgen Flimm'. *Die Zeit*, 7.2.86
[64] Peitsch, H., 'Discovering a Taboo: The Nazi Past in Literary-Political Discourse 1958-67' in Jackson, D. (ed) *Taboos in German Literature* (Providence, Oxford, Berghahn Books, 1996), pp. 146-8

claiming that some writers had achieved both atonement and national honour in writing about the past. Concepts used by defenders of taboos from the right included *Nestbeschmutzung* (literally 'dirtying ones own nest') and *auf den Gefühlen herumtrampeln* ('riding roughshod over feelings').[65] The link between the 'Hitler era' and the left-wing violence of the 1970's in building (and maintaining) taboos over shameful events in the past is seen in a book review by the right-wing *Die Welt*. The book, a collection of short essays by 47 writers, concerned issues such as the present-day condition of West German democracy and latent 'fascism'. It was probably these issues which prompted the reviewer to make an allusion to *Deutschland im Herbst*. This 'cinematic monster' leads to the conclusion that 'dirtying ones nest is an honourable thing'.[66]

The response from the right to the Stammheim reviews which regarded the film as contributing to the *Nachholen* process was given in a short *Die Welt* essay.[67] Although this contained many elements of simple abuse (directed at arts reviewers 'who think that they are intellectuals' giving 'trumpeted reviews' to a film honouring 'terrorism'), this piece encapsulates the many elements of the response from the right over the nature of repressing parts of West German post-war history, at a time when the so-called 'Historians Dispute' (*Historikerstreit*) split the academic community.

The first element in this critique from the right is the simple denial that taboos exist, or rather that they have been created by those on the left, and are debilitating to West Germany's present status. For the *Die Welt* essayist, taboos created about the RAF and the juridical difficulties the constitutional state had with the group are much talked about, although

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[65] Ibid., pp.153-4
[66] 'Nestbeschmutzung ist Ehrensache', *Die Welt*, 22.5.79
[67] 'Nebelwerfer vor Stammheim', *Die Welt*, 8.2.86

'die Unterstellung, die Deutschen hätten den politischen
Hintergrund der Morde verdrängt, ist schlicht unwahr. Vielmehr
sind es die Bewältiger selber, die eine Tabuisierungskampagne
inszenieren und von Vietnam bis Repression alle möglichen
kuriosen Alibis für die Mörderbande zu verkaufen suchen...'[68]

Such a view could easily be parallelled to that of the right-wing German historian
Michael Stürmer who thought that the confrontation the generation of 1968 made
with the Nazi era was not only detrimental to a German identity (because of an
over-emphasis on the Third Reich), but also that it locked Germany into "endless
guilt feelings", the like of which were the downfall of the Weimar Republic. He
suggests that such guilt is a left-wing conspiracy,[69] which mirrors *Die Welt*'s claim
that those who stage a campaign of making things taboo are supporting terrorists,
described as 'prosaic communists who want to force their system violently upon
us'.

A further important strategy which the right used to refute claims that
issues in the past were 'taboo' was a relativisation in order to 'normalise' a sense of
German historical continuity. This is done by *Die Welt* by parallelling the RAF to
other countries, by asking whether the Germans are more enlightened than Italians
who support the 'terror and power' of the Mafia, and noting the 'similars' to the
RAF in Spain, France, Italy, Austria and the Near East. This process is also
achieved by claiming the RAF is part of the same authoritarian tradition as the
Nazis. The film, and the reaction of the liberal left to it shows that:

'Es soll den Deutschen also eingeredet werden, daß die Justiz des
Rechtsstaats die Baader-Meinhof-Bande ebenso rechtswidrig

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[68] 'the insinuation, that the German people had repressed the political background of the deaths,
is simply untrue. Rather it is those who would come-to-terms themselves, who stage a campaign
of making things "taboo", and who seek to promote all kinds of curious alibis for the murderous
bunch, from Vietnam to repression...' Ibid.
[69] Evans, R.J., *In Hitler's Shadow: West German Historians and the Attempt to Escape from the
Nazi Past* (London, I.B. Taurus and Co. Limited. 1989), pp.103-4

verfolgte wie Hitler-Deutschland die Demokraten oder Juden, und
daß wir das wieder einmal nicht wahrhaben wollen...Die Motive der
Baader-Meinhof-Mörder werden verklärt, als besänge eine Wiking
Jugend ihren weiland Führer und dessen Autobahnbauten'.[70]

It may appear that relativising the RAF and the Nazi era is contradictory to
the program from the right to 'normalise' the fascist epoch in Germany by regarding
it as an aberration. The continuation of a 'totalitarian discourse' was not only to
demonise the RAF, but also to relativise the Nazi period, making the assumption
that the crimes committed by the Nazis were not 'unique'. In this way there was an
increasing pattern in the *Tendenzwende* to simplistically regard the 'terrorism' of the
right and left as the same phenomenon. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, for
example, thought that left and right wing tyrannies 'may not be identical, but should
be assessed in the same way'. The CDU party in Weimar accordingly wanted to
turn the site of the Nazi concentration camp at Buchenwald into a memorial 'for
the victims of all dictatorships', not merely for those victims of the holocaust.[71] In
the same year that *Stammheim* was shown in West German cinemas, Chancellor
Kohl caused a controversy when he claimed in a *Newsweek* interview that Nazism
and Communism were similar, comparing Gorbachev to Goebbels.[72] With regards
to the violence of the RAF this phenomenon had already been noted by critics on
the right. In 1977 the British journalist Gillian Becker made the comparison a
central tenet of her thesis in *Hitler's Children*, whilst the point was also made in
Germany by the psychologist Helm Stierlin in *Familienterrorismus und
öffentlicher Terrorismus* ('Private and Public Terrorism').[73]

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[70] 'The intention is to talk the German people into believing that the courts of the constitutional
state pursued the Baader-Meinhof Group just as unlawfully as Hitler's Germany pursued the Jews
or supporters of democracy, and that we just do not want to admit it again...the motives of the
Baader-Meinhof murderers become transfigured, in the same way as if members of the Viking
Youth [a radical right-wing youth movement] were praising their former leader and his
construction of motorways'. *Die Welt*, 8.2.86, op. cit.
[71] Buruma, I., 'Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan' (London, Vintage,
1995), pp.216-7
[72] Evans, op. cit., p.18
[73] This comparison, it may be remembered, was made by Delorme in her review of *Die bleierne
Zeit*. See Delorme, C., 'Zum Film "Die bleierne Zeit"', *Frauen und Film*, Vol. 31, 1982, pp.52-5

Such a process of relativisation was a major issue in the 'Historians Dispute', which took place at the time that *Stammheim* was first screened in West German cinemas. The crux of this dispute was whether Nazi crimes were unique, or subject to comparison. If such crimes are said to be comparable, as those on the right argued, Germany may construct a strong national identity for itself by dismissing the Nazi era as an unpleasant (but not unique) historical episode. The dispute was initiated by President Reagan's visit to the Bitburg war cemetery in May 1985, where members of the Nazi SS leadership are buried. Reagan noted that these soldiers were victims just as much as the people who died in the concentration camps, and had initially refused to visit the Bergen-Belson camp as the Germans "have a guilt feeling that's been imposed on them, and I just think it's unneccesary".[74] This process of relativisation, however, may open the door to apologists. On the one side, critics such as Habermas saw this process as part of a neoconservative agenda, appealing to antiquated traditional forms of collective identity to ease legitimation pressures on modern economic and political institutions.[75] On the other side, historians from the right, such as Ernst Nolte, saw themselves as fighting against the repressive politics of the 1968 generation, claiming that the holocaust was in fact no worse than the atrocities of Stalin's *Gulags*. For Nolte, every country (except the United States and Great Britain) which had a claim to power had had a 'Hitler period', and only through such relativising can Germany construct a positive identity. In his more notorious works of the 1980's, Nolte claimed that Nazi violence was always defensive and reactive against war initiated from the political left. For those on the right, the left's lamentations were seen as holding back a truly modern Germany; for those on the

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[74] Evans, op. cit., pp.16-7
[75] Pensky, M., 'Universalism and the Situated Critic' in White (ed) *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp.75-6

left, the right was refusing to recognise the influence of the past upon the present.[76]

The debate over the sub-textualised Nazi (and, therefore, 'taboo-breaking') content of *Stammheim* continued into the summer of 1986, with a reaction from the left against those who had protested against the style and content of the film. Noting at length the 'objective' structure of the film which forces questions upon the viewer, another commentator reasserts the 'taboo' nature of 'terrorism'. This is again linked back to the Nazi era:

> '...soll eine politische Wahrheit durch Kosmetik verschönt werden? Immerhin acht Jahre war das Stammheim-Thema aus dem Bewußtsein bundesdeutscher Öffentlichkeit verbannt, war so tabuisiert, daß keine Westdeutsche Fernsehanstalt es wagte, Hauff materiell unter die Arme zu greifen...Errinern wir uns, was Stammheim vorausging. Eine studentische Generation artikulierte in den sechziger Jahren ein neues politisches Selbstbewußtsein und stellte beispielweise die Frage an die Älteren: Was hast du gegen Auschwitz unternommen?'[77]

It is not surprising that much of the media reception and subsequent controversy was based on notions of the 'terrorism' of the 1970's being a 'taboo' subject, not only because the film coincided with this debate about how to approach Germany's past, but also because of the explicit link made between the RAF and fascism in it.

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[76] A comprehensive account of the *Historikerstreit* may be found in Maier, C.S., *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity* (Cambridge, MA. and London, England, Harvard University Press, 1988). See also Evans, op. cit., pp.24-34 and 53-61 for a summary of Nolte's views, and a critique from the perspective of the left.
[77] 'Should a political truth be superficially beautified? The subject of Stammheim was, after all, banished for eight years from the public consciousness of the Federal Republic, was made taboo to such an extent that no West German television company dared to give material help to Hauff...Let us remember what preceded Stammheim. In the 1960's a student generation articulated a new political self-consciousness, and, for example, posed the question "What did you do against Auschwitz?" to the older generation'. Günther, J., 'Stammheim', *Film und Fernsehen*, Vol. 14(6), June 1986, p.41

The declared intentions of RAF members to fight against fascism - and the 'repression' of it - is made both in statements and cultural productions. Horst Mahler, a lawyer turned founder member of the RAF, declared that he felt shame about being a German at a young age, and that "It was our moralism which led us to terrorism. Many of us (in any case Ulrike Meinhof and Gudrun Ensslin) came the same way...How could we escape from the...society which once again mixed itself in a war: that of Vietnam?"[78] Similarly, Silke Maier-Witt, one of the RAF members who participated in actions aimed at gaining the release of the 'First Generation', specifically names the inability of her father's generation to talk about their actions in the war, and the fear that such behaviour lay latent in West Germany, as her motives for joining the RAF:

> "When I read how many Jews were killed, I thought I could never be accepting my father's generation...He never answered my questions. I couldn't believe they never knew anything about it. He got mad at me for asking...I felt fascism was coming up again and I had to do something".[79]

One commentator writing on Germany's attempts to come to terms with its Nazi past notes that, despite their methodology, the RAF 'could count on some sympathy among the generation of '68, if only because it dared to do what the majority of Germans had failed to do when it really mattered, some thirty years before'.[80]

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[78] Mahler quoted in Schmidt, A.P., *Political Terrorism: A Research Guide to Concepts, Theories, Data Bases and Literature* (Amsterdam, SWIDOC, and New Brunswick, Transaction Books, 1988), pp.198-9

[79] Quoted in Taylor, P., *States of Terror: Democracy and Political Violence* (London, BBC Books, 1993), pp.69-70. Such declarations are common; another RAF member from the 1970's, Jürgen Boock, claimed that the stories of almost every member of the RAF cannot be understood or interpreted without reference to the Nazi era. See 'Die Wunde Stammheim', *Die Zeit*, 7.2.86

[80] Buruma, op. cit., p.188

Conclusion

The theme of the 'repression' of (hence making a taboo out of) the era of
National Socialism is common to many of the cultural productions made in West
Germany on the subject of left-wing 'terrorism'. The title of von Trotta's *Die
bleierne Zeit* is used by her as a reference to the repression of guilt in the 1950's
over the Nazi past. Fassbinder declared the title of *Die dritte Generation* to have
multiple meanings, not only refering to the present generation of the RAF, but also
to how a previous generation had experienced the Nazi era, and how postwar
hopes for a freer and more humane society had not been realised.[81] The collective
film production of *Deutschland im Herbst* also focused on the connections
between the two generations through the relationship between the RAF and the ex-
SS officer Schleyer, as well as the controversy surrounding the decision by
Manfred Rommel (son of Erwin Rommel) to allow the Stammheim dead to be
buried in a public cemetary in Stuttgart. Specific analogies to the Third Reich
during the trial are included in *Stammheim* - Raspe's paralleling the Stammheim
process to Nazi courts, Meinhof's contention that she is being tried at the first
political trial in West Germany since 1945, or Baader's claim that at least the courts
set up under fascism had the courage of their convictions. More specifically, the
legal problems over the nature of 'resistance' are made by the lawyers drawing
parallels to resistance groups fighting Nazism. One asks the court to imagine a
defendant prosecuted for a bomb attack on the security headquarters of the Third
Reich:

> "Würden Sie einem solchen Angeklagten verwehren, darüber
> Beweis erheben zu lassen, daß über das Reichssicherheitshauptamt
> die Vernichtungsaktion, die Ausrottungspolitik gegenüber jüdischen
> Mitbürgern koordiniert und durchgeführt worden sind? Jedermann,
> der einmal Rechtskunde studiert hat, weiß, daß im Bereich eines
> Notwehr- oder eines Nothilferechts ein solches Recht unter

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[81] Fassbinder, R.W., "'Die dritte Generation'", *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 2.12.78

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Umständen auch in Anspruch genommen werden kann, wenn die
Nothilfe oder Notwehrhandlung dazu führt, daß jemand ums Leben
kommt...Das sind die gleichen Bilder: das jüdische Kind im Ghetto,
das mit erhobenen Händen auf SS Leute zugeht. und die
vietnamesischen Kinder, die schreiend, napalmverbrannt..."[82]

Against these disputed normative standards which envelop 'terrorism',
Hauff and Aust repeatedly state their intention of making an 'unbiased' film. Whilst
Aust recognises the limitations of 'objective' reporting - he claims he is neither a
historian of the RAF nor does his work have any 'academic' claim - he does claim a
journalistic distance 'from the outside': "Mein Ansatz war journalistisch...Ich kenne
meine Grenzen, bin nicht jemand, der grosse politische Analysen machen kann oder
will. Ich wollte so genau wie möglich aufzeichnen, was sich abgespielt hat. Und
nicht interpretieren".[83] Within this 'unbiased' framework it was their intention to
reveal the limiting nature of existing ideological discourse in a way which parallels
Habermas' desire to create an "ideal speech situation". There is, therefore, a stress
on an open discursive space and free communicative exchange to overcome
problematic validity claims. When asked whether they had a political position or
not, Hauff answered

"Nur weil wir nicht eindeutig pro RAF oder pro Staat sind, wirft
man uns vor, wir hätten keine Position. Wir wollten ganz einfach
die Tragödie der Nicht-mehr-Kommunikation aufzeigen, hinter der
ja unsere Sehnsucht steht, daß es nie wieder so weit kommen möge,
daß die Leute sich nicht mehr verstehen. Das ist unsere Position.
Daß der Konflikt schon viel früher angegangen werden müßte".[84]

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[82] "Would you prohibit such a defendant from trying to present the proof that the security
headquarters of the Reich coordinated and carried out the actions and politics of extermination
against Jewish citizens? Everyone who has ever studied law knows that in the area of the right to
defence of self or others, such rights may also be laid claim to under conditions when the
defensive actions lead to loss of life...The Jewish child in the ghetto going towards the SS men
with his hands up, the Vietnamese children screaming and burnt with napalm are the same
picture..."
[83] 'My approach was journalistic...I know my limitations. I am not someone who wants or is able
to make a big political analysis. I wanted to record as exactly as possible what took place, and not
interpret'. 'Cool. stur und strikt an die Prozessakte gehalten', *Weltwoche*, 20.2.86
[84] "Only because we are not unambiguously pro-RAF or pro-state are we being accused of having
no position. We simply wanted to highlight the tragedy of a breakdown of communication,
behind which there is our desire that it will never reach this stage again, that people do not

Under these conditions it might be expected that the discursive strategies of the media would form a consensus around this 'unbiased' portrait of the events of the previous decade. Hauff and Aust's intentions were, however, only uncritically grasped by the liberal media. The *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, for example, thought it not only fair and 'objective' to both sides, but also being critical of the 'mechanical' way in which the German legal system acted when threatened, making the film 'explanatory, educational, stimulating everybody's sense of citizenship'.[85] Yet even the liberal media extensively contextualised in order to construct a paratext to direct an unambiguous (although often limited) reading. This may not only be because of the problematic nature of the constitutional challenge which the RAF presented, or the disputed way the constitutional state defended itself. Such a reaction may also be because it was subject to disputes of opening up 'taboo' subjects, and the controversial nature of recently emerging historical discourses of the Nazi past. Coinciding with the *Historikerstreit*, the film was subject to the highly contentious and often ideologically polarised struggle for a German historical identity. Whilst the film did open up a public discussion on issues of the nature of political violence and German identity, it is also important to examine the content of this discussion, which was often counter to Hauff's intention to provide 'rational' (open) conditions of debate.

The crisis in postmodern historiography was a fitting time in which Gerhard Richter's art series *18. Oktober 1977* was to be produced three years later. As will now be examined, the differences between the way these two works were received indicates a turning point in the way Germany was able to debate (and cathartically confront) its 'terrorist' past.

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understand each other any more. That is our position. That the conflict would have to be tackled much earlier on". *Vorwärts*, 1.3.86, op. cit.
[85] 'Vergebliche Revision?', *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 31.1.86

<u>Gerhard Richter: *18. Oktober 1977* (1989)</u>

Richter was raised in East Germany, and initially studied art in Dresden under the dictates of 'Socialist Realism'. Dissatisfied with the corresponding lack of artistic freedom, notably not being able to study Impressionism and Expressionism for doctrinal reasons,[1] Richter fled to the West weeks before the Berlin Wall was erected to study at the Düsseldorf Art Academy. There he worked under the leading figure in the German "Informal" movement, Karl Otto Götz, whose use particularly of abstraction, and experimentation with photomontages and electronic pictures not only ran counter to Socialist Realism, but also influenced Richter. Richter's own scepticism of ideologically-motivated artistic guidelines was revealed through his use of elements of pop art which he adopted shortly afterwards. His *A Demonstration for Capitalist Realism* (1963), both parodied doctrines of 'Socialist Realism', and treated Western consumer goods with an ironic distance.[2] Richter was also part of the *Fluxus* movement which used the everyday and public imagery in order to provide a critical distance, the effects of which are to be seen in the *Oktober* cycle. Today he is considered to be the most successful contemporary German artist after Joseph Beuys. His works sell for over a million Deutschmarks, and he was the first non-British painter for over ten years to exhibit at the Tate Gallery. It was, significantly, the *18.Oktober 1977* cycle (*Zyklus*) which established Richter internationally.[3]

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[1] Cork, R., 'Gerhard Richter: A Divided Germany - An Interview'. *Apollo*. Vol. 135 (January, 1992), pp.48-9

[2] Küper, S., 'Konrad Lueg und Gerhard Richter: "Leben mit Pop - Eine Demonstration für den Kapitalistischen Realismus"', *Wallraf-Richartz Jahrbuch*, Vol.53 (1992), pp.289-306

[3] Brief biographical details may be found in *Munzinger-Archiv/Internationale Biographie Archiv 20/95*, K017491-3, 'Gerhard Richter', Ri-ME (Ravensburg, Archiv für publizistische Arbeit. Loseblattausgabe). pp.1-2; Van Bruggan, C.. 'Gerhard Richter: Painting as a Moral Act'. *Artforum*, Vol. 23, May 1985, pp.82-9

The *Oktober* cycle marked a return to the grey monochrome works of photo-realism which characterised his work from the mid 1960's to 1976, encompassing a range of subjects from landscapes to banal everyday objects. The photographic representations were made imperfect by the drawing of a brush over the still wet canvas to simulate photographic imperfections such as blurs, camera shake, and out-of-focus prints. The cycle is comprised of fifteen pictures, all based upon photographs of the first generation of the RAF which Richter found in police archives. The title, taken from the date on which Raspe, Ensslin and Baader were found dead in their cells after the failure of the Mogadishu hijack (which also represented the high-point of the 'German Autumn' of 1977) predominantly reflects the theme of   their deaths. Three of the paintings show the upper body and head of Jan-Karl Raspe as photographed shot dead on the cell floor, blurred to varying degrees (*Toter* - 'Dead Person'). There are two similar paintings showing the torso, head and outstretched arm of the dead Andreas Baader on a prison cell floor, blurred by Richter (*Erschossener* - 'Shot Person'). Three paintings based upon police identification photographs of Gudrun Ensslin whilst she was still alive are the basis for *Gegenüberstellung* ('Confrontation') in the same style, showing her defiantly looking at the camera, or turning away from it. In addition to this there is a large (200x140cm) blurred painting of Ensslin hanging from the bars of her cell window (*Erhängte* - 'Hanged'), and a similarly sized blurred picture of a book-lined cell, belonging to one of the members (*Zelle* - 'Cell'). Two blurred pictures of the June 1972 arrest of Holger Meins - an RAF member who was to die on a hungerstrike in Stammheim - show the view down onto appartment blocks, surrounded by armed police vehicles (*Festnahme* - 'Arrest'). One of the clearest of the pictures is a small (62x62cm) copy of a portrait of Ulrike Meinhof posing for the camera as a teenager (*Jugendbildnis* - 'Child's Portrait'). A slighter larger and more blurred picture shows Baader's record player, surrounded with cable and pieces of carpet, in which the gun Baader was supposed to have used to kill himself was thought to have been hidden (*Plattenspieler* - 'Record Player'). The largest of

the paintings (200x320cm) is a picture of the three coffins being carried through a crowd of mourners in the Stuttgart cemetery in October 1977, and is one of the most distorted (*Beerdigung* - 'Burial').

Intention

As a celebrated 'anti-ideological' artist Richter refuses to attach any 'direct political concern' to the pictures, distancing himself particularly from the tradition of political painting performed by the left as a critique of 'bourgeois-capitalistic conditions'.[4] Such ideological scepticism shapes the intention behind the *Oktober* series, and may be traced to his experience of living under Nazism as a child, and then under Communist rule in the German Democratic Republic: "I grew up with Nazi ideology and then, overnight, we had Marxism. For years Marxism told us that the capitalist system was about to collapse, and this never happened".[5] This scepticism is allied to his fear that the German people are particularly susceptible to ideological extremes and 'fanaticism', whether fascist or Marxist,[6] a thesis of radical thought in Germany which has been noted ouside the country. Southern, for example, believes that German political protest stems from a 'Romantic hostility to the modern world', and examines similarities in the philosophies of Marx and Nietzsche, both of whom have been used as justifications for political terror in Germany. Radical protest being supported by such theories may be found in the phenomenon of the RAF, Southern believes, since 'the old Romantic hostility to the bourgeois world and modern industrial society' is to be found in the writings of Meinhof, which simultaneously reveal a moral absolutism and a moral nihilism.[7] In

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[4] 'Gerhard Richter', *Journal of Contemporary Art*, Vol. 3.2, (1990), p.34
[5] Magnani, G., 'Gerhard Richter: For me it is absolutely necessary that the Baader-Meinhof is a Subject for Art', *Flash Art*, May/June. 1989, in Museum für Moderne Kunst und Portikus, Frankfurt am Main (ed) *Gerhard Richter 18. Oktober 1977 Presseberichte* (Köln, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König, 1989), p.68
[6] Cork, op. cit., p.49
[7] Southern, D., 'Radical Thought in Germany', *Contemporary Review*, Vol. 236, Number 1370. March 1980, pp.113-7

recognising this thesis, Richter accordingly does not want to claim that the *Oktober* series has a particular ideological value, and restrict it through political interpretations. In notes made for a press conference for an exhibition in Krefeld in February 1989, Richter writes that it would anyway be impossible for him to interpret the pictures because of their highly emotional content - they are 'an expression of speechless emotion', an almost helpless attempt to give feelings of pity, mourning and terror a form.[8] Given his recognition that the paintings are not able to provide any closed sense of narrative through their open form, and lack any accompanying interpretative text, important issues are raised about the authorial intention for the functions of the work, as it is by this authorial purpose that the interpretations made by the media of this open textual form may be measured within a context reliant upon traditional political discourse.

The primary intent is to state a scepticism about 'ideological thinking' through the portrayal of the 'terrorists' as *victims* of ideology. Richter delimits 'ideology' by an appeal to rationality, in the same way as Hauff reflects Habermas' critique of the term in making *Stammheim*. It is "against all common sense...ideology controls the brain so thoroughly that there is no possibility to see the facts objectively; and the more the facts turn against the ideology, the more relentlessly it exerts control".[9] He makes it clear that he has no sympathy with the RAF as far as their methodology or ideology is concerned,[10] although he does express sympathy that they were caught up in this process of ideological thinking which led them to their deaths. When asked whether the Stammheim dead were victims of their own ideology, he replied that they were not victims of a *specific*

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[8] Richter, G., 'Notizen November 1988 (für die Pressekonferenz Februar 1989 - Museum Haus Esters, Krefeld)' in Obrist, H., (ed) *Gerhard Richter: Schriften und Interviews* (Frankfurt am Main und Leipzig, Insel Verlag, 1993), p.164
[9] *Journal of Contemporary Art*, op. cit., p.41
[10] Magnani, op. cit., p.67

ideology, but rather of ideological behaviour *in general*.[11] There is, therefore, in a similar way to Hauff, the implication by Richter that 'rationality' is a measure of how open an Habermassian-type discursive space is.

By their sacrificing themselves to an idea rather than material gain, Richter distinguishes the 'terrorist' from the 'criminal'. He considers this episode in German history an 'exceptional catastrophe' because of the

> "...öffentliche Anspruch dieser Leute, eben das Nicht-private,
> sondern die übergeordnete, ideologische Motivation. Und dann die
> ungeheure Kraft, die erschreckende Macht, die eine *Idee* hat, die bis
> zum Tod geht, das ist für mich das Beeindruckendste und
> Unerklärlichste, daß wir Ideen produzieren, die doch fast immer
> nicht nur gänzlich falsch und unsinnig sind, sondern vor allem
> gefährlich".[12]

In order to escape from such consequences of ideological thinking Richter advocates a pragmatic approach to solving the problems of 'misery, injustice, war and catastrophe', regarding every form of rigid belief structure from astrology to religion as 'superfluous and life-threatening'.[13] This transcendence of ideological thought, similar to Hauff's intention, appears to suggest a 'third way' between existing patterns of political thought which, for Richter, may be dialectically achieved: In sympathetically recognising that they were trying to change a world they found 'unacceptable', he historically views their violence as "part of a corrective...We will find other attempts at criticism eventually which will be less sentimental or superstitious and more realistic and therefore more effective".[14]

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[11] 'Wir sehen auch unser eigenes Ende', *Frankfurter Rundschau (Zeit und Bild* Supplement), 29.4.89
[12] "...public claim of these people, the ideological motivation which is placed above the private. And also the enormous power, the terrifying force that an *idea* has which leads onto death. The most impressive and inexplicable thing for me is our production of ideas, which are not only virtually always entirely false and nonsensical, but, above everything else, also dangerous". Ibid.
[13] Ibid. See also *Flash Art*, op. cit., p.68
[14] *Journal of Contemporary Art*, op cit, p.35

This transcendence may be achieved by the individual reflecting upon works which accord to Richter's view of the moral function of art. The vast consumption of art reveals, for Richter, 'an almost religious longing', and the 'moral' component of art is its potential to provide a "pure belief" which can prevent the "misbeliefs" of, for example, the totalising discourses of religion and ideology.[15] Richter never makes the distinction between "pure" belief and misbelief explicit beyond the above-mentioned appeals to 'rationality' and the negatively-formulated critique of existing religious or ideological belief structures. He does, however, suggest a procedural program through which the recognition and countering of ideological tendencies is central. His paintings in themselves have a form of "pure" objectivity - "They don't claim anything - they make no statement, they cannot fool us".[16] Elsewhere he notes that his photo-painting allowed him to see photographs with "no style, no composition, no judgement...There was nothing but a pure picture".[17] In the case of the *Oktober* cycle, the effect upon us is to confront the personal experience of these forms of thinking, of the 'terrorist' within ourselves:

> "Und das ist ja verboten. Also dieser Terrorismus in uns allen, der macht uns Wut und Angst, den will ich nicht, will ihn genausowenig wie den Polizisten in mir - wir haben ja nicht nur eine Seite, sondern sind immer beide: Staat *und* Terrorist".[18]

Hence a critique involving the confrontation of the individual with ideological mindsets and behaviour is formulated, rather than a critique of any specific ideology. The process of confronting this behaviour, which the pictures are supposed to initiate, is related to Richter's optimism in a human ability to learn from historical experience. Self-recognition - why we murder, and above all our

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[15] Ibid., p.40

[16] Ibid., p.42

[17] Van Bruggan, op. cit., p.85

[18] "And that is, of course, forbidden. I do not want this terrorism in us all, which makes us angry and fearful, as little as I want the policeman in me - we have not only got one side, but rather we always have both: State *and* terrorist." *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 29.4.89, op. cit.

capacity for what is feasible - is more important than dogmatic thinking.[19] Although he acknowledges that the pictures raise questions of political statement or historical truth, he claims not to be interested in these factors, but rather in the determination to change and create conceptions of a 'better reality' through knowledge of the 'frightfulness' of an unacceptable (unjust and hopeless) reality.[20] The positive nature of the paintings for Richter is that, despite their inherent scepticism, they illustrate people who were not prepared to settle for their powerlessness, and therefore reveal a 'moment of hope'.[21] In this context Richter's labelling of the Stammheim dead as 'victims' becomes clear: victims of ideological behaviour in their desire to change an 'unacceptable' world. His anti-ideological intentions do not, therefore, result in a political or moral nihilism, or the necessary denial of a revolutionary potential in denying a meta-narrative. In wanting to provoke the viewer into reflection, the Frankfurt Museum of Modern Art (which currently houses the cycle) wrote in their catalogue that

> '...they are anti ideological pictures and should be conceived of as cathartic. They have a function! Jürgen Ponto, a victim of the RAF, said in 1973 in a speech full of passion and conviction that the artist is qualified for keeping the age on an even keel...Gerhard Richter has created a work which runs in this direction'.[22]

As shall be developed presently, this cathartic process is not only informed by the formalistic qualities and intentions of Richter's work, but also reflected by the discursive response found within the media.

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[19] *Journal of Contemporary Art.* op. cit., p.41

[20] Richter, op. cit., p.165

[21] *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 29.4.89, op. cit.

[22] Museum für Moderne Kunst: Frankfurt am Main, *Museum für Moderne Kunst: Frankfurt am Main - 2. Informationsheft zur Architektur und Sammlung* (Frankfurt am Main, Museum für Moderne Kunst, 1989), p.96

Finally, the importance of not making 'terrorism' a 'taboo' subject for art is also stressed by Richter, not only for aesthetic reasons ('Then we would only produce things of no importance'), but also because the picture

> "...kann uns zu neuen Einsichten bringen. Und es kann auch der
> Versuch sein zu trösten, d.h. einen Sinn zu geben. Es geht doch
> auch darum, daß wir so eine Geschichte nicht einfach vergessen
> können wie Müll, sondern versuchen müssen, anders damit
> umzugehen, angemessen".[23]

Richter's Aesthetics of Postmodernity

Richter's position as an 'anti-ideologue' has led to his works being labelled as 'postmodern', particularly for the interplay of styles which his *oeuvre* has progressively utilised (his mixing of pop-art with classicism), his scepticism of meta-narratives, and his indeterminacy. What constitutes the 'postmodern' is, however, problematic and contested due to its nebulous nature. There is, for example, a similar acceptance of the fragmentary and discontinous in conceptions of modernity, a fundamental presupposition of postmodernity, as well as doubts about the stability of the 'grand' narratives of modernism.[24] Jennings brands Richter's work as 'neo-modernist',[25] whilst Klotz (who places Richter under a heading of artists between formalistic definitions of modernism and postmodernism) states that the alternation between modernism and postmodernism simply does not apply in Richter's case, as his paintings are both, and at the same time, beyond such 'either/or'.[26] The *Oktober* cycle may, however, be regarded as

[23] "...can lead us to new insights. And it can also be an attempt at comforting, i.e. to provide a meaning. But it is also not a matter of our simply forgetting a story as though it were rubbish, but rather having to try to tackle it another way, an appropriate way". *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 29.4.89, op. cit.

[24] Harvey, D., *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, MA, and Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 1994), pp.44, 51

[25] Jennings, R., 'The Godfather, Parts One and Two'. *New Statesman and Society*, Vol. 4(176), 8.11.91, p.30

[26] Klotz, H., *Kunst im 20. Jahrhundert: Moderne-Postmoderne-zweite Moderne* (München, C.H. Beck, 1994), p.94

having sufficient elements of the 'postmodern' within it for it to be subsumed within this aesthetic category. This has significance beyond mere labelling as it also carries with it significance with regard to the ways in which the RAF was debated in Germany, and the *opportunity* for critics to ideologically contextualise and historicise 'terrorism' in West Germany. The absence of this, as will be presently discussed, signals a gradual 'coming to terms' with this episode of political violence.

The conceptualisation of Richter's work as belonging to the 'postmodernist' genre may be briefly illustrated by examining Jameson's critique of postmodern assumptions and cultural forms. Whilst the cycle clearly contains elements of Jameson's conception of modernity - the alienated, isolated, and socially fragmented, - the ambivalence and pluralistic possibilities of the paintings (accompanied by an absence of political statement) are based within the conception of an image as the already known, critically regarding the discursive spaces which have grown up around it. Jameson's distinction between 'parody' and 'pastiche' are also helpful in making this difference clear. Whilst the singular subject of the modernists allowed an individual style to be parodied, with the disappearance of this author (photo-realism may be considered to work against any notion of a personal style), and the absence of normative judgements and a 'healthy linguistic normality', there can only be 'pastiche' - the 'mere neutral mimicry, mere imitation of dead styles'.[27] It is this pastiche, comparable to Baudrillard's notion of the 'simulacrum', which places the cycle within the postmodern genre.

Baudrillard asserts in *The Ecstasy of Communication* that the world we live in has lost sense of what is authentically 'real'. The continual presence and

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[27] Jameson quoted in Docker, J., *Postmodernism and Popular Culture: A Cultural History* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.119. Chapter ten of this book critiques Jameson's *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1984)

determining nature of the images produced by modern communications media (television, computers, and advertising may be included within this) replace the 'real' by the 'simulacrum' - a copy for which there is no original. Richter draws attention to the simulacratic by painting the black and white photographs from the police files which were already familiar to the West German public by their distribution through media sources. Richter admits to the 'loaded' nature of the works. The viewer will know, for example, that the record player is not any record player painted in his earlier photo-realistic style of representing the banal and everyday, but the player within which Baader was supposed to have hidden the weapon which he used to kill himself.[28] The perception that these are essentially copies of copies behind which different (macro) discourses were mediated is raised through the deliberate blurring techniques, allowing an uncertainty about photographic means widely regarded to be an 'objective' means of representation. Buchloh notes that forms of representation are historically divided into resemblence (photographic development), and the 'liberation of painterly means'. In their situation between these two, Richter's photopaintings

> 'have consistently opposed the universal presence of that gaze and
> its ubiquitous instrumentalization of the look...It is in the
> construction of this dilemma, marked by both the conflict in medium
> - painting/photography - and the conflict in ideas about
> representability - the painting's self-referentiality/photography's
> "transparency" to the event - that Richter's work testifies to the
> contemporary difficulties in the production of historical
> representation in painting'.[29]

In bringing together these two forms of historical representation Richter may be seen to 'collage together incompatible source materials as an alternative to choosing between them'[30], thus lying within the postmodern. In both lying outside,

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[28] *Journal of Contemporary Art*. op. cit.. p.37
[29] Buchloh, B.H.D.. 'A Note on Gerhard Richter's *October 18, 1977*, reprinted in *Gerhard Richter 18. October 1977 Presseberichte*, op. cit.. p.49
[30] Taylor in Harvey. op. cit., p.49

whilst at the same time subverting previous dominant genres of representation, the images, in their superimposition of ontologies, contain hybrid characteristics, instead of the presentation of a single text.

This questioning of the way in which historical events are narratively represented is emphasised by Richter's reluctance to offer any political interpretation, and by the absence of any discursive 'master-code' within the paintings themselves to this end. The images, based upon 'official' sources distributed through the media, focus on the surfaces rather than any essential meaning. And it is in this way that the relationship between the signified and signifier breaks down: there is a concentration on the signifier (the images of cells and violence), rather than on a concrete connection to the signified (concepts of justice and 'terrorism'). By refusing to interpret the works Richter is intentionally undermining his authorial position, forcing a deconstructive strategy upon the viewer who questions the images which were previously viewed as fixed systems of ideological representation.

This intention not to make the cycle an authoritatively finished product is related to Richter's anti-ideological beliefs. It is at the individual, local level that the cycle should produce meaning, avoiding narrative 'closure'. In this way Richter's desire to avoid fixed belief systems and to act in a pragmatic way is aesthetically revealed. But we are also left with a vacuum of traditional ideological discourse, which may readily be filled or criticised in the process of reception.

Reception

There was a widespread consensus both in the German and foreign media that Richter's cycle had produced a controversy rarely seen with a German cultural production. Yet the nature of this controversy was in many ways different to

previous cultural productions on the theme of the RAF, and it is within these differences that a change in the way Germany viewed the phenomenon by the late 1980's may be detected.

The difficulties with obtaining funding for the project from institutionalised financial sources and corporate sponsors did, however, continue. In this case, banks which the RAF had targetted withdrew financial support. In the most famous case the *Dresdner Bank* wanted to promote and patronise the new Museum of Modern Art in Frankfurt. Negoiations had progressed to the advanced stage of drawing up articles of association when the question of the permanent loan of the *Oktober* pictures was raised. At this point the bank pulled out in protest, as one of their board members, Jürgen Ponto, had been murdered in 1977 only a few days after Baader, Ensslin, and Raspe had been sentenced to life imprisonment, in what was considered an act of revenge by the RAF.

Unlike previous controversial funding cases, however, this move was not widely supported by the press from the right. Shortly after the Bank's withdrawal, Eduard Beaucamp wrote wrote critically of the decision in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. For Beaucamp the pictures were not biased, but rather an attempt to examine national feelings over an 'uncompleted trauma', and were to be interpreted as a 'warning sign' of 'false and dangerous ideologies'. He considered the Bank's attitude unacceptable on the grounds that the pictures did not glorify the RAF, nor was the Bank expected to purchase them. The article concludes implying that the bank was exercising a form of censorship in an era when art and economics had engaged themselves in a 'marriage'.[31] This is in contrast to the attitude of the 1970's, when the media on the right uncritically accepted censorship of cultural productions which less directly concerned 'terrorism'.

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[31] 'Ein Test', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 27.10.89

This article is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, that the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* should adopt a liberal discourse by citing support for 'taboo-breaking'; and secondly, that it should express scepticism that private funding alone can uphold the 'rights and freedoms' of art. This liberal agenda in a newspaper traditionally on the right goes against the dominant post-war German ideology of artistic production, noted by one commentator as conservative:

> 'dominated by a concept of the collective nature of the project at hand and that its main ambitions lie in the direction of the restoration of a culture that has been decimated from the *inside* [presumably by the fascist use of artistic culture], the wide-scale dissemination of this restored culture and finally an emphasis on its unifying properties'.[32]

Richter's cycle clearly does not promote a restitutive function for cultural practice, and thus will conflict with those who would promote a hegemonic cultural ideology. The attack by the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on the Bank's patronage policy for the Frankfurt Museum is indicative of the way in which the news media were becoming more flexible and less dogmatic in their approach to critically regarding cultural productions on the violence of the RAF.

The Bank publically defended its actions two months later in a letter to the newspaper headlined 'Without regard to human feelings'.[33] Doctor Wolfgang Röller of the Bank denied the accusation that the Bank was obstructing the exhibition policy of the city, not regarding it as 'conceited enough' to advise on themes to be included in exhibitions. But he claimed a right in this 'very personal concern' to express the Bank's disquiet over the trauma of the victims of the RAF, and concern for the feelings of their families. Röller refutes that the case has

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[32] Rogoff, I., 'Double Vision: Politics between Image and Representation' in *German Art Now* (London, Academy Group Ltd., 1989), p.57
[33] 'Ohne Rücksicht auf menschliche Empfindung', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 29.12.89

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[32] Rogoff, I., 'Double Vision: Politics between Image and Representation' in *German Art Now* (London, Academy Group Ltd., 1989), p.57
[33] 'Ohne Rücksicht auf menschliche Empfindung', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 29.12.89

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anything to do with the liberal ethics which the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* defended:

> 'Dieser Fall ist denkbar ungeeignet als Test für Liberalität...Es geht hier nicht um einen Konflikt zwischen den Interessen der Wirtschaft in der Kunst. Es geht um Sensibilität, die man nicht allein vom Förderer gegenüber der Kunst, sondern ausnahmsweise auch einmal von den berufenen Sachwaltern in Feuilletons und Museen gegenüber elementaren menschlichen Empfindungen erwarten darf'.[34]

Museum directors attempted to express their case against this by referring to the murdered Ponto (an enthusiastic art patron) in the Museum catalogue introducing the cycle, quoting his belief that art can help stabilise social relations.[35]

In a separate, although thematically related incident, Thomson questions another Bank's attitude to their Richter collection in the light of one of their chairmen, Dr. Alfred Herrhausen, being murdered by the RAF in November 1989. Thomson is critical of the *Deutsche Bank* downplaying the political impact of the paintings (whilst at the same time describing Richter's art as "nihilist", thus allowing the Bank to appear liberal in their regard for Richter's *oeuvre* as a pure art form rather than a political one), thereby separating art from its political and historical context.[36] Despite continued controversy over funding cultural productions concerning 'terrorism', both these cases suggest a victory for the "liberal" discursive paradigm, notably in the case of the *Dresdner Bank*, where both 'sides' in the dispute appear to normatively lay claim to liberal values.

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[34] 'This case is conceivably unsuitable as a test for liberalism...This is not a case of a conflict between the interests of economics in art. It is a question of sensitivity in the face of basic human feelings which you not only expect from sponsors of art, but, exceptionally, from the experts in art papers and museums as well'. Ibid.

[35] Museum für Moderne Kunst, op. cit., pp.38/96

[36] Thomson, M., 'What Banks Buy and Why', *Art Monthly*, Vol. 145, April 1991, pp.9-10

In other ways the reception of the cycle was less controversial than previous productions using this theme. There was a small demonstration to protest against the decision by Walter König, the organiser of the Portikus exhibition of the works, not to hold an official exhibition opening. The demonstrators - a group allegedly primarily composed of Green Party members - accused König of secretively 'smuggling' the works into the Frankfurt art market and, through the ommision of an official opening, furthering 'the continuation of the isolation of [RAF] prisoners via the means of the art market' by effectively hiding the works. This was despite the wide publicity for the exhibition undertaken by König through the media and television.[37] The group read a 'poem of struggle' (*Kampfgedicht*) by Erich Fried and distributed flyers entitled "Art gets to the point" (*Kunst geht zur Sache*). But there are significant differences between this protest and the protests against the other works previously examined here. Primarily the attack was not directed against the art works themselves, but rather against the manner in which they were exhibited. Notably the demonstration was a peaceful one, and had a clearly political goal - that of publicising the current hungerstrike by three imprisoned members of the RAF, 'providing a context', as one commentator notes (who nevertheless remained critical, thinking the protesters sought a convenient political platform, rather than a serious engagement with the work, in order to build political consciousness).[38] The replacement of the violence experienced in the cases of *Stammheim* and *Die dritte Generation* by a peaceful public gathering wishing to protest about the lack of contextualisation to the modern-day position of imprisoned members of the RAF, suggests that the subject of 'terrorism' was gradually being assimilated into less radical and more open ways of protest.

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[37] 'Streit um Richters "Stammheim"-Bilder', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 2.5.89
[38] Butin, H., *Zu Richters Oktober-Bildern* (Köln, Verlag der Buchhandlung Walter König, 1991), pp.35-6

It is in the media reception that the differences between Richter's work and the previous productions discussed are best revealed. The first difference is in interest; although the cycle was widely written about in art journals, the reception in the national media was less extensive. No review appeared in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, and a review only appeared in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* over two years later, when the works were installed in the new Frankfurt Museum for Modern Art.[39] This was despite the subject of the RAF keeping a high news profile. Three RAF prisoners (Karl Heinz Dellwo, Ingrid Barabaß, and Helmut Pohl) had started a hungerstrike in March 1989, there was a heated debate about whether prisoners serving sentences for 'terrorist' crimes and who had subsequently renounced violence should be pardoned, and the assassination of Herrhausen by the RAF.[40]

The lower profile of this production would appear to suggest that such forms, whose task it was to express, and mediate concerns about the role of violence, either by the state or a 'terrorist' organisation, were no longer required to the same extent as experienced previously. It seems unlikely that the status of Richter as a cultural producer is somehow 'lower' than other producers discussed here, given his cultural significance (as discussed above). That these concerns were being 'worked through' (the commonly-referred to process of *Aufarbeitung*), is further evident from the qualitative analysis of the reception. One of the most striking elements within this when compared to the *Stammheim* film of three years previously, is the lack of contextual framing of the history of the RAF within the review in order to produce a paratext to direct a reading of the works according to the traditional political discourse of the newspaper. A brief, neutral contextualisation was ubiquitous across the national newspapers, reviews parallelling that found in the most hostile review of *Die Welt*: that the title of the

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[39] 'Vom Erschrecken zur Erkenntnis', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 17.7.91
[40] Butin, op. cit., p.32

work refers to the day when the prisoners committed suicide.[41] Whilst *Die Welt* has judgemental rhetoric over the suicides and lives of the prisoners (they are 'deaths without morality...from those who felt justified in killing others'), none of the reviews explicitly state what external events they felt should be prescriptively 'included' in the works in order to 'properly understand' them. One of the rare exceptions to this rule in the wider journal reviews is Benjamin Buchloh's essay from the left, in which he asks for the more tolerant (and successful) Italian response to left-wing anti-state violence. Richter's intentions in painting the RAF was to 'commemorate' significant individuals whose crimes were largely unproven, and whose deaths were never properly investigated.[42]

This is related to the widespread opinion that the pictures are unbiased, in stark contrast to the reception of Aust and Hauff's *Stammheim*. Butin claims that 98 percent of the German media reviews thought the depiction of the terrorists did not make them into martyrs or legitimise their deeds, whilst it was a characteristic feature of the reviews that the pictures were seen to contain statements of emotive, personal consternation *(subjektive Betroffenheit)*. The reviews were, for the most part, favourable to very positive.[43] The left-wing *Tageszeitung* , for example, favourably compares Richter's works to *Stammheim*, claiming that the cycle was the more objective: 'Gegenüber solchen künstlerischen Verarbeitungen des zeitgeschichtlichen Traumas von 1977 sind die Bilder Richters objektiver und politisch brisanter...Diese Bilder verewigen Orte und Situationen'.[44] This 'objectivity' was also reported in the art journals by comparison to other recent

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[41] 'Die erneute Erfindung der Historienmalerei', *Die Welt*, 31.3.89

[42] Buchloh wrote the introduction to the cycle in the official book publication of the pictures, see Buchloh *et al*, *Gerhard Richter: Band 2 - Text* (no publication details listed in this book), pp.47-53. Another essay (Buchloh, 1993, op. cit., pp.48-52) is a shorter version, similarly concerned with Richter's relation to the 'history painting', and published in English rather than the original German.

[43] Butin, op. cit., pp.36, 32-3

[44] 'Richter's images are more objective and politically more explosive compared to such artistic processing of the contemporary trauma of 1977...These pictures give the places and situations a permanence'. 'Kunstbetrieb paßt nicht zum Thema', *Tageszeitung*, 18.3.89

works which (photo-artistically) represent past German controversies, such as Robert Morris' painted-over pictures of concentration camps. Unlike Morris (and Arnulf Rainer who painted over images of Hiroshima):

> 'Sein Thema behandelt er nicht durch eine persönliche, expressive Auseinandersetzung, er macht keine plakative Politkunst...Er gibt mit seinen Bildern eine Distanz zum Thema vor, die den Bildern von Rainer und Morris nicht eigen ist. Er fordert nicht schnelle Betroffenheit und schnelle Stellungnahme, sondern Geduld, Klarheit und Distanz.'[45]

A new perceived political objective 'distance' to the subject is shown by the reviewers referring to their own personal subjective meanings. It thus appears that the paintings met with an atmosphere where 'objectivity' over the issue of 'terrorism' was seen as possible, where an artwork was not viewed in a coercively discursive way (in contrast to former cultural productions which strived for such objectivity), and there was less demand from the outside for 'sides' to be taken or political positions made concrete. This is despite the open opportunity for this which the pictures allowed, and Richter's potentially provocative statements regarding the subjects as *victims* of political thought. Instead, the reception concentrated on them as humans meeting death. The historicisation and contextualisation, which was particularly pronounced in the *Stammheim* reception was, therefore, replaced with very personal responses to the work, echoed by the art magazine *Das Kunstwerk*: 'Gerhard Richter gelingt es in dem Zyklus "18. Oktober 1977", die toten Terroristen nicht als Objekte für persönliche Auseinandersetzung oder politische Überzeugung zu zeigen, sondern als tote Menschen'.[46] In an earlier review of the Krefeld exhibition, for example, the

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[45] 'He deals with his subject not through a personally expressive analysis; he does not make billboard political art...With his pictures he demonstrates a distance which the pictures of Rainer and Morris do not possess. He does not demand a quick emotional response, or a quick answer, but rather patience, clarity and detachment'. Jahnsen, A., 'Gerhard Richter: 18. Oktober 1977', *Das Kunstwerk: Zeitschrift für moderne Kunst*, Vol. 42, June 1989, p.90

[46] 'Gerhard Richter succeeds in showing the dead terrorists not as objects for personal confrontation or political conviction in the cycle, but rather as dead human beings'. Ibid., p.90

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung examined the 'triptych' of Gudrun Ensslin as a filmic sequence, whilst aesthetic details provide 'movement, breaking through the static and mere facts of the pictures', whose 'cautious emotionalism' make them 'sensitively introvert'.[47] The second *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* review (written by a different critic) also notes a strong emotional component to the cycle, thinking that 'the visitors to this exhibition will hardly be able to escape the feeling of oppression'.[48]

This is linked to the idea that culture can help cope with the legacy of political violence in recent German history in both the public and private spheres. This was, as may have been expected, voiced from the left. *Tageszeitung* was the most colourful, thinking that the completed work 'hält in der Kunst und in der Geschichte etwas fest, was Wunde und Stachel im Fleisch unserer jüngsten Vergangenheit bleiben muß. Er wirkt gegen das Verdrängen und Vergessen in einer Form, die kein Vergessen erlaubt'.[49] This is also a theme which runs through the *Der Spiegel* review - would it be sensible, or even possible, to forget the identity of those depicted, it asks.[50] A further significant difference was that not only was the remembering of the recent past treated favourably by the media traditionally aligned to the political right,[51] but there was also a significant absence of the use of the word 'taboo' by all political sides. Instead there was the more discursively neutral talk of a "leaden trauma", a "German trauma", a "dark chapter of German history" across the traditional political divides.

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[47] 'Das Terroristentrauma', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2.3.89. This review was written by Eduard Beaucamp, the same journalist who criticised the Dresdner Bank's decision to withdraw its funding from the new Frankfurt Museum of Modern Art on the grounds of the content matter of the cycle.

[48] 'Zum Untergang verurteilt', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 6.5.89

[49] 'fixes in art and history something which must remain as wounds and thorns in the flesh of our most recent past. It works against the repressing and forgetting in a form that does not permit any forgetting'. *Tageszeitung*, op. cit.

[50] 'Das Ende der RAF, gnädig weggemalt', *Der Spiegel*, 13.2.89. p.228

[51] The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, for example, notes that in the 'shadowy' world of the paintings 'uncertain memories become concrete...sharpening the sight, waking the unconscious'. 2.3.89. op. cit.

This consensual position which formed is also notable in the way that the reception regarded the works as 'history paintings' (*Historienmalerei*), with a wide reference across the media being made to this tradition (a history painting may be considered as a work which shows historic or legendary events in a grand way). This is contextualised by Benjamin Buchloh within the problems which now face the constitution of such paintings, claiming that the resemblances between *Burial* and Courbet's *Burial at Ornans*, and *Dead Person* and Manet's *Dead Toreador* are references to 'two of the central images from the complex prehistory of the destruction of history painting in the nineteenth century'.[52] Richter wishes to portray 'the historical dimension of painting...[as] primarily the discursive history of the medium' recognising the reality of the 'prohibition of representation' in the twentieth century. As the *Oktober* cycle does not have a clear attitude towards the historical subject it suggests both a transcendence of this new reality without adhering to the "polit-kitsch" myth-making of painting.[53] Whilst the frequent linking of the cycle to the history painting made in the media may be taken as symptomatic of some desire to give a sense of narrative to the pictures, the reviews in the national media did not apply overtly ideological contexts to the work. This is despite the ambivalent relationship which the cycle had to the history painting (simultaneously alluding to, yet denying it). The debate focused instead on *whether* the cycle should make a concrete statement, rather than *what* it should say.

A review of the cycle from the right in *Die Welt* (under the title 'The renewed discovery of the historical painting?'[54]) is illustrative of this. Richter, the reviewer thought, is an addendum to the 'history painting' genre, although must

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[52] Buchloh, op. cit., p.48, ff p.52. The *Der Spiegel* review of the cycle also thought that the works are part of the 'great art history', with comparisons to Manet, Monet, Oelze, and Holbein. *Der Spiegel*, op. cit., p.229

[53] Buchloh, op. cit., p.50

[54] *Die Welt*, 31.3.89, op. cit.

strictly be excluded from the thematic canon because the deaths did not give a direction for further action. History paintings have always been biased, and requiring of an explanation, even if the result has tended towards the 'kitsch' of Socialist Realism. *18. Oktober 1977* is different because it contains pictures

> 'die das Ereignis zwar benennen, aber nicht erklären. Es sind
> sozusagen Meditationstafeln zum Thema Terrorismus. Aber da sie
> selbst nicht eindeutig sind, wird jeder in ihnen nur das lesen, was er
> vorher zu wissen glaubte. Das beunruhigt nicht, provoziert
> niemanden, obwohl die Aussteller so tun, als hätten sie sich da auf
> eine ganz heikle Sache eingelassen..."Sprich, damit ich dich sehe"
> hieß einmal eine Hörspielsammlung... [Richters Zyklus] spricht
> nicht.[55]

There remained, however, reviews which extrapolated from this viewpoint the conclusion that the Stammheim events remained too important in German history for ambiguity. This was expressed in a regional magazine which thought that, unlike Richter's previous photo-realistic paintings denoting violent events:

> 'Was wohl fehlt wäre eine Aufklärung *en detail* dieser
> schummerigen Staatsaffaire. Das können und wollen diese Bilder
> aber nicht leisten...Was wir sehen ist die Bestandsaufnahme eines
> Falles, der in bestimmten Kreisen sicherlich anders interpretiert wird
> als es Gerhard Richters Darstellung suggeriert'.[56]

The significant difference between this critical review of the *Oktober* cycle and those of other works on the RAF is that there is no direct accusation that this work is 'aiding' or promoting 'terrorism', or sympathic towards violence from any

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[55] 'which admittedly show the events, but do not explain anything. They are, so to say, tablets for meditation on the theme of terrorism. But since they themselves are not unambiguous everyone will read into them only what they believed to know already. That does not disturb or provoke anybody, although the exhibitors behave as if they had become involved in a very delicate matter. There was once a collection of radio plays entitled "Speak so I see you"...[Richter's cycle] does not speak'. Ibid.
[56] 'What is completely missing would be a detailed explanation of this shady affair of the state. These images neither can, nor will, achieve this...What we see is a snapshot of a case which in certain circles is certainly interpreted in a different way than Richter's presentation suggests'. 'RAF und Wohnzimmerrevolution'. *Marabo: Magazin fürs Ruhrgebiet*, Vol. 3, 1989, p.82

political position. From the national press this may be obliquely inferred only once by *Die Welt*'s ironic claim that Richter's anti-commercial intentions for the work - that the pictures must remain as a collection rather than be split up and sold - would only make them worthy of a 'museum shrine'. Such a use of religious or mystical discourse given as an ideological expression to the social participants of anti-state violence, has been shown by Steuter to be pervasive in certain sectors of the American media as a tool of delegitimisation.[57] This mechanism, however, remains at a secondary level, and despite this connotative semiology, the text in *Die Welt* does not explicitly make any of the 'open' accusations of supporting the RAF which characterised its previous reviews on such cultural productions.

Conclusion

It might have been expected that, due to the disputed relationship between art classed as 'postmodern' and politics, the reception of Richter's paintings would have been very different. The contentious nature of postmodern art and its relation to the (de)politicisation of issues may be illustrated by reference to two opposing essays written in the mid 1980's.[58] Hebdige believes that postmodernist aesthetics are able to confront contemporary crises in their 'honesty' and ability to see the complexity of events in their ambivalence. The recognition of the discontinuous and the fragmentary (in this case the often contradictory discourses being formed around 'terrorism' in West Germany) and the rejection of norms (Richter revealing the polymorphous nature of the relationship between image and political representation) frees us from constraining metanarratives and 'a paranoid obsession with certitude and fixed and single directions'. Eagleton, on the other hand,

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[57] Steuter, E., 'Understanding the Media/Terrorism Relationship: An analysis of Ideology and the News in *Time* Magazine'. *Political Communication and Persuasion*, Vol. 7(4), 1990, p.264
[58] Hebdige, D., 'A Report on the Western Front: Postmodernism and the "Politics" of Style' in Frascina, F., and Harris, J., (eds) *Art in Modern Culture: An Anthology of Critical Texts* (London, Phaidon Press Ltd., 1992), pp.331-41; Eagleton, T., 'Capitalism, Modernism and Postmodernism'. *New Left Review*, Vol. 152, July/August 1985, pp.60-73

examines both the theoretical and practical limitations of this aesthetic. Postmodernism is unable to signify alienation, as works of modernism could presuppose a depth which postmodernism refuses to acknowledge. Similarly, it is unable to reflect the world because of its abandonment of the pursuit of 'truth', which is resigned in favour of acquiesence to the 'performativity' and 'power' of a capitalist order, not resisting commodification, refusing to learn from history and thereby giving up the 'struggle for meaning' and providing no alternatives to present-day oppression. A modernist aesthetic, Eagleton suggests, does potentially have elements within it for social change (to 'detotalise' an oppressive ruling class), despite the retreat into an autonomous sphere.

Accompanying this theoretical dispute at the time of Richter's cycle, the relationship between the political and the postmodern was also subject to dispute in the field of historiography in the Federal Republic[59], with its indeterminate political agenda allowing scope for ambiguities to be contextualised and filled. This, as seen above, was not the reaction to Richter's *Oktober* pictures, despite the recognition of ambiguity, and neither was Richter subject to a widespread criticism for not giving a political direction in the work.

Richter's *Oktober* cycle may, therefore, be contextualised within the wider framework of this shift in Western thinking to accommodating a more open postmodernist discursive thought, and regarding 'terrorism' itself as a phenomenon to be analysed within this paradigm. Other examples affirm this change. At the same time as it was being first displayed, for example, a conceptually identical art display by Sarah Charlesworth in Los Angeles examined the front page photographs of the international media in response to the 1978 Moro kidnapping in Italy. Entitled *April 21, 1978*, the 45 photographs were presented in their original

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[59] See Maier, C.S., *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity* (Cambridge, MA. and London, Harvard University Press. 1988), pp.168-72

size and without their accompanying texts. Both the Moro kidnapping and the construction of the American 'terrorist' Patty Hearst have also been academically analysed in terms of postmodern discourse.[60] In a similar way, metaphors of terrorism have become part of a 'playful', interactive postmodern discourse. Eagleton speaks of the student movement of 1968 being 'flushed off the streets and driven underground into discourse', epistomologies engaging in 'guerilla skirmishes', and Lyotard's 'games of scientific language' as 'terroristic techno-scientific'.[61] Baudrillard, in talking about the issues of Stammheim and the Mogadishu hijack, illustrates this by regarding the system encompassing the killers, leaders, and media as terroristic: 'Everything in terrorism is ambivalent, and reversible: death, the media, violence, victory. Who plays into the other's hands?...*it is this uncontrollable eruption of reversibility that is the true victory of terrorism*'.[62]

The subject of the Baader-Meinhof group was previously used in Germany by Joseph Beuys, the best known and most influential post war German artist, on a number of occasions during the 1970's. In the 1972 *Documenta*, for example, he reacted to the debate over Heinrich Böll's advocacy of 'free passage' for Ulrike Meinhof by displaying a copy of the book *Heinrich Böll: Freies Geleit für Ulrike Meinhof - Ein Artikel und seine Folgen* (which details the media reactions to Böll's original essay published by *Der Spiegel*), together with his *Rose for Democracy*. This signified 'that revolutionary impulse alone is not sufficient without new strategies of political struggle', and his desire to bring the RAF into 'a wider understanding of freedom'.[63] The same impulse was behind the work 'Dürer, I will

[60] Eisenzweig, U., 'Terrorism in Life and in Real Literature'. *Diacritics*. Vol. 18(3), Fall 1988, pp.32-42: Webster, D., '"Nobody's Patsy": Versions of Patty Hearst'. *Critical Quarterly*, Vol. 32(1), Spring 1990, pp.3-21

[61] Quoted in Sarup, M., *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism* (London, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1988), p.115; Eagleton, op. cit., p.63

[62] Baudrillard, J., quoted in Webster, op.cit., p.10

[63] Tisdall, C., *Joseph Beuys* (London, Thames and Hudson, 1979), p.274

personally conduct Baader and Meinhof through Documenta 5' (*Dürer, ich führe persönlich Baader+Meinhof durch die Dokumenta 5*). This consisted of fat-filled felt slippers (fat and felt were Beuys trademarks; the slippers themselves were of the type used by museum visitors to prevent damage to museum floors), upon which rested placards with the title of the work. Thorns (representing suffering) were planted in the slippers, which were placed facing a wall (representing the dead end of political violence). Despite the intention behind the artworks - understanding the nature of politics and reactions to it, and looking for alternatives to terroristic actions to effect political change, 'the work was oversimplified by the media as another example of sympathy in the cultural world for terrorist violence'.[64]

The reaction within a 'postmodern' framework seventeen years later to Richter's paintings, the majority of which was referential to the disputed deaths in Stammheim prison, denotes an almost consensual ground upon which the circumstances surrounding the deaths themselves were not discussed, but rather the nature of death as a product of self-reflexive analysis. The difference between the reactions to the cycle and Hauff's *Stammheim* is, therefore, extreme despite there being only three years between the two, and may be dichotomised as political understanding as opposed to personal understanding. There are many differences between the two productions. *Stammheim* deals with the 'concrete' issues of legal response and civil liberties, whilst the cycle has no such 'concrete' issues; *Stammheim* allows political 'statements' from both 'sides' of social participants, whilst the cycle deliberately makes no statements for fear of ideological contamination; and Hauff's anti-ideological project is negatively formulated, whilst the cycle, although Richter has anti-ideological intentions, has neither a positively nor negatively formulated project in the absence of statement. Yet there remain

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[64] Tisdall, op. cit., p.274

similarities between the two productions in their open narrative, and the associated refusal by the authors to endorse any existing ideological program. The acceptance of this more open discursive space in response to the works signals how a micro discourse is interacting and influencing that of the macro, to itself become a macro discourse.

It may appear that a lack of concrete statements is less provocative than statements from ideological sides balanced against each other. This would be to disregard the previous demand for such statements by many reviewing productions, and the discursive vacuum which provided the media with the potential to contextualise Richter's pictures within their own ideological narrative framework. That this did not occur, and that ambiguity was more readily accepted than on previous occasions, is illustrative of a new distancing and self-reflection upon the 'German Autumn' of 1977, and, as will presently be discussed, is indicative of a 'coming to terms' with political violence in the Federal Republic. This pattern is further illustrated by the examination of the media reaction to a work which *does* have a strong ideological narrative - Johann Kresnik's choreographed theatrical dance production of *Ulrike Meinhof* (1990).

Johann Kresnik: *Ulrike Meinhof* (1990)

Johann Kresnik, one of the innovators of modern dance in the Federal
Republic, differs from many of the previous cultural producers discussed here in his
specific committment to socialism as an emancipatory program. The notion of
political progress as defined in terms of struggle is revealed in his aesthetics, which
are often attacked for its violent content. Kresnik's own sense of a disharmonious
political world was made apparent to him by witnessing the execution of his father,
a Nazi soldier, by Slovenian partisans on his family farm when he was only three
years old.[1] His subsequent raising by a Communist stepfather was to influence his
political development, and consequently his dance productions. He left his native
Austria for Germany to avoid national service and the obligation of holding
weaponry which this entailed, and during his early years in Germany he was a
member of a Marxist organisation in Köln, continuing from his previous
membership of the Austrian Communist Party. His dance influences at this time
included Aurel von Millos and Leon Woizikowsky (with whom he studied under in
Köln), both 'revolutionary' figures in the world of dance. Von Millos attracted
opposition for his use of expressionism and deliberately shunning virtuousity, and
Wojeikowsky for the role he played in Serge Diaghileff's ballet, which, as part of a
process of re-inventing the Russian ballet rejected elements of realism. Such
aesthetics were to be applied in a political sense by Kresnik. His radical aesthetics
and political break with his classical ballet training was revealed in one of his first
productions which was stylistically closer to modern theatrical dance, and which
concerned the assassination attempt made on Rudi Dutschke, one of the leaders

[1] The following background information on Kresnik and his works have been taken from 'Johann
Kresnik'. *Munzinger-Archiv und Internationale Biographie*, 12/94. K018679-2, Kr-ME.
(Ravensburg, Archiv für publizistische Arbeit, Loseblattausgabe) pp.1-3; 'Gespräch mit Johann
Kresnik: *Ich bin immer ein Gegner des Publikums*' in Kraus, H., (ed), *Johann Kresnik* (Frankfurt
am Main, Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1990), pp.49-86; 'Theater der schreienden Bilder'. *Der
Spiegel*, 29.10.90, pp.272-80

and ideologues of the 1960's student movement (*Paradies?*, 1968). This was the first German political choreographic production since Kurt Jooss' *Der grüne Tisch* in 1932, and marked a theatrical 'act of liberation' from the confines of classical ballet, being influenced by his being gaoled for two days for protesting with students in Bonn against the introduction of emergency laws. It was also at this time that he adopted his slogan *Ballet kann kämpfen* ('Ballet can fight'), synonymous with his intention to reinstate political expression into the medium which he now termed "choreographic theatre". Recurring political themes in his subsequent works include fascism, family and group repression (implicitly linked to fascism through Adorno and Horkheimer's "Authoritarian Personality" thesis), the relationship between sexuality and power, consumerism, and the fate of outsiders in society. Specific targets have included the American war in Vietnam (*PIGasUS*, 1970), the arms industry (*Kriegsanleitung für jedermann*, 1969), consumerism (*Traktate*, 1971), the Catholic Church (*Jesus GmbH*, 1977), and repression in the public and private spheres (*Familiendialog*, 1980). The 1960's were, for Kresnik, the most important times in German post-war history because of his belief that it was then that people refused to ignore the Nazi era, issues which remain relevant because 'they concern problems which endure today and which still have not been solved'. He acknowledges that even his productions which do not have anything directly to do with the political disturbances of 1968 are nevertheless rooted in the change in thinking which took place at that time. When many of these themes are collectively considered as constituting areas of political interest which Meinhof herself contributed to, it is not surprising that Kresnik should have chosen her as a subject. Yet the production is not only intended to be retrospective, as Kresnik's direct return to the themes of 1968 are also a result of modern day historical change in Germany, including the rise of the radical right and the unexpected fall of

the Berlin Wall, both of which he believes provide grounds for the reassessment of German history.[2]

Ulrike Meinhof: Summary

Ulrike Meinhof, which premiered at the *Theater am Goetheplatz* in Bremen on the 10th. February 1990, was a collaboration between Kresnik and the dramatologist and biographer of Meinhof, Mario Krebs. Each performance lasted one and three-quarter hours.[3] Before the curtain (made up of the colours of the German flag) lifts the sound of a typewriter can be heard, whilst throughout the performance an incarnation of Meinhof above the stage furiously types and throws down typed pages, representing her prolific work as a journalist prior to her disappearance into the underground.

The first part ('The Return of Ulrike Meinhof') is set in the present-day of a newly-reunified Germany. According to Krebs, Kresnik wanted to ask 'How would Meinhof have viewed the world today had she survived? Would she regard her life as wasted? Would she still have a utopia, and what would that be?'[4] Figures writhe across a stage full with waste packaging, overshadowed by a large and colourful "MacBurger" advertising sign, cramming fast-food into their mouths and occasionally running across to the side of the stage to be sick in large steel basins, before returning to gorge themselves once more. Meinhof sits beneath a wall (symbolising the newly torn-down Berlin Wall) looking on in horror, eventually buttoning her coat over her head to block out the sight. People attempt to push the food into Meinhof's mouth which she vigourously resists. The common Kresnik

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[2] 'Rechtsgeruckel', *Wochenpost* (Berlin), 9.2.95
[3] The performance details which follow are taken from the ARD television production of Kresnik's *Ulrike Meinhof*, which was virtually identical, although 15 minutes shorter.
[4] Krebs, M., 'Gewaltige Strecken durch zerklüftete Landschaften' in Kraus, H., (ed), *Johann Kresnik* (Frankfurt am Main, Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1990), p.118

themes of a socially alienated individual and consumerist waste are therefore prominent. The stage is swept up by workers using over-sized 100 Deutschmark notes as brooms whilst their mouths are filled with bank-notes (suggesting that mass political acceptance is bought in the reunified Germany), as Heino and Roy Black (popular German singers who sing in a conservative 1950's style) sing as an introduction to the second part. Many figures, cultural and political, populate the stage, dancing the *Polonaise*. Hitler and Stalin, for example, are crammed into one pair of *Lederhosen* and occasionally kiss, whilst Meinhof herself is forced into a marriage with an Uncle Sam figure, and has flowers placed in her mouth by the Hitler/Stalin figures. The cultural and political are, therefore, represented as indivisable, shaped by authoritarian doctrines and a dominant American culture.

The second part concerns Meinhof's childhood, marital separation and subsequent turn to violence. Her failed marriage to Klaus Rainer Röhl is shown by him tearing up her writing, chewing the pages and spitting them at her, whilst she hits them back with a violin case. This escalates into a ferocious fight. She rejects a life of female domesticity (symbolically throwing off the hoods worn by a circle of women, under which she hears the cries of babies and vacuum cleaners). She involves herself, instead, with the student unrest of 1968, treading in the chalked footsteps of the agitators after a Marilyn Monroe figure has appeared on the Wall over the body of a bloody Vietcong soldier (a further allusion to a political-cultural imperialism). The wider societal reaction to the anti-war and student movements is represented by Meinhof being crushed between two overweight German archetypes in an aggressively sexual way.

Meinhof's private commitments are portrayed as antagonistic to the political work which Baader wants her to do. After the birth of Meinhof's daughters (represented by two painted balloons), Baader kicks away the children's clothes after Meinhof has fallen over and burst the balloons. After the *Kaufhaus* arson case

involving Baader (seen igniting fireworks at the side of the stage) Meinhof is also seen to be torn between the legal and illegal methods of political change. Whilst more of Meinhof's writings rain down from above she alternates between dancing with the high society, and Baader, alternately being dragged across the stage by Baader and dancing inbetween the citizens, whilst Baader himself ignites devices across the stage (at one point she is seen to toy with a gun which Baader subsequently picks up and fires). Kresnik then makes clear his view that Meinhof was 'compelled' by Baader and Ensslin into a life of violence. She is dragged across the stage and shaken between Baader and Ensslin. Two Meinhof figures - one wanting armed resistance and the other the way of legal journalistic practice to affect political change - struggle against each other within the body of one dress. Eventually the Meinhof wanting to practice 'terrorism' cutting herself free with a giant pair of scissors which Ensslin had previously stuck into the stage in front of Meinhof. Figures from the fashionable left of society dance around her in furs, eventually throwing them off to tear up her manuscripts and symbolically wash their hands of her. It is then Baader who gives her a lighted match to throw into, and ignite, a giant rubbish container. She continues to be at war with herself, the typewriting alter-ego alternately accepting and repelling the 'terrorist' Meinhof's embraces.

The third section of the performance choreographs Meinhof's life after her turn to violence, and is ironically titled *Modell Deutschland* after the 1976 SPD party slogan (the title being chosen to question the present-day audience over the nature of the 'new' reunited Germany).[5] The predominant themes running through this section of the performance concern Meinhof's political powerlessness and alienation. Figures representing the security forces dressed in welding helmets and long aprons hose down the 'terrorists', invoking the organic discourse of the state.

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[5] Ibid., p.122

Meinhof, after being 'disinfected' over one of the giant wash basins, stuffs papers placed on her into her mouth and spits them out, kneels in front of a typewriter and paints a child's face on each of her breasts whilst other prisoners writhe in the background. After light-hearted dancing by the security forces they pull their welding masks down and clear the floor of the prisioners with giant meat-hooks. These are subsequently used by both the other prisoners and the security figures to hang Meinhof from the lowered scaffold (indicative of the thesis that Meinhof was alienated from her former comrades before she died) whilst she desparately clutches onto her torn-out typewriter ribbon. The deeds of the 'second' generation of the RAF are represented by a bloody murder, which Meinhof becomes distressed and frantic over, wrapping the typewriter ribbon about her and eventually collapsing. Her prison isolation is represented by two security figures torturing her from the scaffold above with giant tongs. Whilst during a hungerstrike the prisoners are force-fed by having their faces pushed down into bowls of food, Meinhof, taped down, is force-fed through a large funnel, spitting out the food whenever possible. Afterwards, left alone on the stage, she cuts out her own tongue with a knife as a gesture of her powerlessness, whilst Heino sings all three verses of the German national anthem. Her iconisation after her death is represented by the respectably-dressed Meinhof (as opposed to the figure in the prison uniform who has just cut her tongue out and who now watches in the background) being screwed down between two pieces of plexiglass, a fixed form of representation to which Meinhof herself is no longer able to affect.

Intention

Kresnik's intention in staging *Ulrike Meinhof* can not be separated from his political intentions for the function of theatre. The critique of a mass consumer culture may, for example, be reflected in Kresnik's belief that a theatrical aesthetic must differentiate itself from wider culture, and his belief that it must contain an

element of autonomy to allow true political engagement. This is suggestive of a desire for micro perspectives to challenge what he views as dominant discursive positions. In a 1995 interview he states:

> "Es geht mir darum, nicht Unterhaltungstheater zu machen wie die
> 40 Fernsehkanäle auch. Wenn man die Spielpläne der deutschen
> Theaterlandschaft betrachtet, erkennt man: Überall der gleiche Mist.
> Wie will man da mit den Politikern diskutieren?..Wir müssen uns
> wieder einmischen, damit die Politiker nicht mit den Theatern
> machen können, was sie wollen. Damit sie von der demokratischen
> Gesellschaft gebraucht werden"[6]

Theatre may, therefore, be used as a political space for Kresnik, where the audience may organise a critical public sphere, separate from a cultural hierarchy. This transformation of the theatre into a centre of political resistence is also shown formalistically by Kresnik. He affirms the influence of classical ballet on his work in that it was the medium in which he was trained. But prohibited to 'create classical dance out of the world' he mixed his theatre with more modern dance, thinking that dancers should move more like sportsmen and 'discover new situations'. The policemen beating the students in *Paradies?* was, according to Kresnik, entirely new because it was not 'elegant'. He made his theatrical police run across the stage in the same way as they ran across the street, and this, he claims, was the beginning of a new choreographic theatre.[7] This subversion of a traditional ballet aesthetic synthesised into a new choreographic form by 'secular inelegancies' is necessary for Kresnik to politicise an art form which has traditionally been viewed as apolitical. This apoliticism may be linked to a lack of serious philosophical enquiry about dance as a political form, as the existence of a form of art alone is not enough to generate such enquiry: 'It is necessary that the art should occupy at the relevant

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[6] "It's not my aim to make entertaining theatre like the 40 television channels. If you look at the programs of the German theatrical landscape, you will recognise the same rubbish everywhere. How shall you discuss with politicians in this way?..We must get involved again so that the politicians can't make want they want out of theatre. So that they can be used by the democratic society". *Wochenpost*, op. cit.

[7] Kraus, op. cit., pp.53, 62

time a culturally central position, or that the ideology of the art could be integrated with a culturally prevalent ideology'.[8] Kresnik's integration of the classical dance form within a theatrical context is clearly intended to enable the politicisation of that form. He disagreed with one of the most famous choreographers of this century Georges Balanchine, who believed that movement should be subordinated to music in dance. It was this which led Kresnik to break with this form in the latter 1960's, wishing to replace forms of the 'old hierarchies' in ballet with 'content' (by 'content' Kresnik implies the means by which outside structures influence the individual). Accordingly, stage design as well as music must serve the content of the choreography.[9] He is also critical of other leading German modern dance choreographers such as Reinhild Hoffmann and Pina Bausch who, he believes, are not making enough effort to work for this 'content' in their productions.[10]

Kresnik's emphasis on the social aspects which impress themselves on the individual may be contextualised within his situating himself on the political left. This political emphasis is freely acknowledged by Kresnik as being a product of his communist upbringing:

> "Daß mir beim Tanz inhaltliche Aussagen so wichtig geworden sind,
> ich die Möglichkeit gesucht habe, auch innerhalb meiner Arbeit
> politisch Stellung zu beziehen, gesellschaftliche Strukturen,
> Rahmenbedingungen in meine Geschichten aufzunehmen, hängt
> auch mit der politischen Erziehung durch meinen Stiefvater
> zusammen, der aktiver Kommunist war".[11]

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[8] Sparshott, F., 'Why Philosophy Neglects the Dance' in Copeland, R., and Cohen, M., (eds) *What is Dance?* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1983), p.95

[9] Kraus, op. cit., pp.52, 70. This is similar to the Wagnerian concept of music serving theatre rather than vice-versa.

[10] Regitz, H., 'Ein politischer Provokateur', *Ballett-Journal*, Vol. 37(4), 1989, p.46

[11] "That statements with a dance content have become so important to me, that I have looked for the possibility of taking up a stance politically, even within my work, of taking up societal structures, and conditions as a framework into my stories, is linked to my political education by my stepfather, who was an active communist". Kraus, op. cit., pp.53-4

With all his productions he wanted to mediate his dissastisfaction with his life 'in a capitalist-orientated country, and with which he is not in entire agreement'. The mediation of such concerns is for Kresnik the task of theatre, otherwise it appears 'a bit empty, dead and tired'.[12] He appears to be more politically aligned to an existing form of ideology than any of the previous cultural producers examined here, stating:

> "Ich kann mich einfach nicht damit abfinden, daß der Sozialismus
> für immer aus unserem Denken verschwunden sein soll. Mit dieser
> Vorstellung kann ich nicht leben. Wir brauchen eine Utopie, und für
> die mache ich Theater".[13]

Kresnik repeated his idea of theatre being able to produce visions of an alternative society in a 1995 interview. Wary of a suggestion made by the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* that his works creates a class consciousness (such a term is too broad, he claims), he nevertheless thought that his task was to reflect upon the circumstances under which a 'democratic socialism' would be able to exist.[14] This element of Kresnik's thought which suggests that theatre has the capacity to produce utopian images is, as will be shown, an important element in the assessment of the reception.

His political vision informs what he regards as the 'duty' of the theatre. The state-subsidies his theatre receives mean it has an obligation to 'shock' in the sense that modern German theatre must be more provocative, needing 'much more disturbance, provocation, anarchy'.[15] The means by which the spectator may be 'shocked' out of his complacency to his everyday social conditions and relations was dramatologically developed by Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*, which gave the

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[12] 'Der Politiker und der Choreograph', *Die Deutsche Bühne*, Vol. 64(3), March 1993, p.13
[13] "I simply can not resign myself to the fact that socialism should disappear for ever from our beliefs. I can't live with this idea. We need a utopia, and for this I create theatre". 'Von rechts droht Schlimmes', *Der Spiegel*, 1.11.93, p.264
[14] *Wochenpost*, op. cit.
[15] *Der Spiegel*, 1.11.93, op. cit., p.264

individual theatrical elements an autonomy, creating an alienation to the work as a 'whole', thus distancing the spectator into critical awareness.[16] Unlike Brecht, Kresnik's theatrical elements work (often ironically) together, rather than being in tension with each other. Kresnik's 'shocks' which provoke the spectator into this critical awareness are, rather, contained within his portrayal of brutality, designed to show man's cruelty to man, in the tradition of the critical *Volksstück*. This anti-genre form of the traditional 'folk play', revived by the 1960's student movement which was influential upon Kresnik, aimed to effect political awareness through the shock of ultrarealistic brutality and obscenity. Although this is shown to be a result of moral inflexibility and structures of authority, it would be presented on the surface as being the 'natural' basis of everyday life in order to give political meaning to the work. There are key similarities with Kresnik's work, notably the theme of a culture institutionalising a violence which pervades both the public and private. Brutal acts in the critical *Volksstück* are largely attributed to economic organisation or mass culture, although this goes unrealised by the characters themselves. The dramatic goal of this genre was also to bring the audience to an awareness of how violence on this microcosmic level was actually institutionalised at the macrocosmic level.[17] This 'shocking' of people into realisation such is bound up for Kresnik in the theatre having the possession of imagery (which he terms *Bildhaftigkeit*) in a similar way to other forms of media production.

The political power of Kresnik's brutality is enhanced by the (literally) physical nature of the performance, and the attempts to 'inscribe' marks of power upon Meinhof's body. This may be paralleled with Foucault's notion of the centrality of the body in the system of legal punishment: 'Power relations have an

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[16] Kellner, D., 'Brecht's Marxist Aesthetic: The Korsch Connection' in Weber, B.N., and Heinen, H., (eds) *Bertolt Brecht: Political Theory and Literary Practice* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1976), pp.31-3

[17] Cocalis, S.L., 'The Politics of Brutality: Toward a Definition of the Critical Volksstück', *Modern Drama*, Vol. 24(3), September 1981, pp.292-313

immediate hold upon it [the body]; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs'.[18] Whilst this is visually obvious in pre-19th. century Europe with its public executions and torture designed as a spectacle to reassert a monarchical power upon the criminal, under the modern disciplinary system the body remains subjected by subtler means which 'may be calculated, organized, technically thought out; it may be subtle, make use neither of weapons nor of terror and yet remain of a physical order' in order to reform rather than directly punish.[19] The knowledge to master the body, as well as the mastery itself constitutes its 'political technology'. It is notable that the RAF physically made their bodies the site of struggle whilst in prison. Manfred Grashof, a member of the RAF, noted whilst on hunger-strike that the final and strongest weapon of the RAF was the body itself, whilst Baader allegedly planned a prison hunger-strike to deliberately ensure the group was not physically fit for trial (as opposed to the more positive goal of securing better conditions).[20] Kresnik's portrayal of the staged torture which Meinhof endures is based within this idea of centring the body as the focus of power relations, drawing upon Kafka's *In the Penal Colony*, which also marks the body-surface of the convict.[21]

Foucault's theory is sceptical of the ability of the human subject to escape from the confines of such forms of cultural construction, yet he is unable to adequately dismiss the notion that there may be a body ontologically separate to this construction which may be a potential site of resistance.[22] Kresnik significantly displays a demonstration of this resistance in that the only marks which succeed in

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[18] Foucault, M., *Discipline and Punish* (London, Allen Lane, 1977), p.25
[19] Ibid., p.26
[20] Aust, S., *Der Baader-Meinhof-Komplex* (München, Knaur, 1989), pp.271, 284
[21] It is, of course, notable that Kresnik not only portrays the penal system in this way, for example by the prison warders torturing Meinhof with giant pincers from above the stage, or her being force-fed and hung on meathooks, but also the physical pain which the wider German 'culture' inflicts upon her. The opening scene, for example when a hamburger is forced into her mouth, is clearly to be linked to the 'torture' of force-feeding suffered in custody.
[22] Butler, J., 'Foucault and the Paradox of Bodily Inscriptions'. *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 86(11), November 1989, pp.601-7

inscribing themselves on Meinhof's body are those made by herself (the painted

children's faces on her breasts, or the self-mutilation of her tongue, for example).

This element of Kresnik's *Bildhaftigkeit* endows it with a positive power in the face

of an otherwise sceptical view of effecting political change.

Through this concept of *Bildhaftigkeit* Kresnik believes people who have

the power to mediate this within the theatre have a moral obligation in a

democratic society to perform productions 'in keeping with the age'.[23] This political

working within a democratic society mediates between antagonistic voices.

Theatre, allowing the expression of differing views, helps indicate where

democracy is weak through such dialectical conflict:

> "Unsere Aufgabe am Theater ist es, das Publikum, die öffentlichen
> Medien zur Meinungsäußerung zu bringen, zum Streit vielleicht
> sogar. Da wir in einer Demokratie leben, müssen wir mit den
> Fingern dahin zeigen, wo es brennt".[24]

In a similar way to many of the other cultural productions discussed here,

therefore, Kresnik expresses a desire for an open discursive space within which

many views may freely interact.

Kresnik's most comprehensive statements of intent for *Ulrike Meinhof* are

to be found in a regional newspaper interview, and in the public program notes for

the performance.[25] The 'reassessment' of history noted previously is apparent from

both sources. The dismayed entrance of the hypothetically 56-year-old Meinhof

into the consumerist waste of a reunified Germany is intended to present her

recognition "daß sie umsonst gekämpft hat. Es hat sich nichts geändert... haben sich

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[23] 'Neues von Johann Kresnik', *Bremer Magazin*, January 1993. pp.68-9

[24] "Our task in the theatre is to bring the public, the public media round to expressing their
opinion, perhaps even to dispute. Because we live in a democracy we must point out where the
flashpoints are". *Wochenpost*, op. cit.

[25] 'Es wird ein rabiater Abend', *Weser-Kurier*, 3.2.90; *Programmheft: Ulrike Meinhof* (Bremen,
Theater der Freien Hansestadt Bremen GmbH, 1990)

auch die Menschen grundlegend geändert, so wie es die Meinhof anstrebte?"[26] This hypothetical return to a country in which nothing has changed is emphasised by Kresnik's (edited) publication of three of Meinhof's essays written as a journalist, indicating Kresnik's sympathy for her political goals (though not necessarily for her eventual methods), promoting them as a basis upon which a reassessment may take place. The first (*Provinz und kleinkariert*) is an indictment of the ideas of Adenauer, levelling complaints about the domestic state of West Germany (the re-establishment of Nazis into positions of power, and the 'prejudices', 'taboos' and 'illusions' of the German mass media which prevent people from making independent judgments and seeing their own interests). It also attacks Germany's role in international affairs; politicians and the media not taking international affairs seriously, for example, or not considering any alternative to the NATO alliance. The following essays are more specific to Meinhof's own interests. *Vietnam und die Deutschen* quotes extensively from senior United States politicians to illustrate the war in Vietnam is a means by which an American global hegenomy may be maintained, and again criticises the mass media in the Federal Republic for misrepresenting demonstrations against the war, and their failure to tackle the substantive issues which the demonstrators wanted to highlight. 'Free and rational' discussion was being replaced, she maintains, as surely as the non-cooperative Western media in Saigon were being suspended. Finally, *Jürgen Bartsch und die Gesellschaft* blames societal institutions for the criminalisation of a youth who would eventually murder four boys. The reproduction of this article suggests a sympathetic link to Kresnik's desire to highlight social and familial pressures in theatre. In particular a poor parental background (and the wrong instruction in raising a child - 'orientated towards the time requirements of industry rather than the requirements of the child'), time in repressive care homes (parallelling Meinhof's interests illustrated in her play *Bambule*), feelings of guilt which people

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[26] "that she struggled for nothing. Nothing has changed...have people fundamentally changed themselves in the way Ulrike Meinhof strived for?" *Weser-Kurier*, op. cit.

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suffer for being labelled homosexual, and exploitation in the workplace. The article ends suggesting that the legal institutions and media ought to examine societal conditions rather than solely blame the youth.

The program notes also contain a chronology of Meinhof's life by the author and dramatologist of the production Mario Krebs. Krebs' broad sympathy for the position which Meinhof found herself in are apparent. Listed are Meinhof's fear of a police state if the major parties formed a coalition with the right-wing NPD, the 'thousands' of legal cases against APO[27] members whilst a Nazi judge who had sentenced many to death during the war was released uncharged, her feeling that she was obliged to participate in the freeing of Baader as an 'act of personal emancipation', the subsequent police search concentrating on finding the well-known journalist which made her return to her previous life impossible, and having to live an 'unforeseen' life in the underground. On the question of her death Krebs reports that an 'International Commission of Experts' (*Internationale Gutachterkommission*) cast doubt on the official version of suicide (the conspiracy theory which suggested the death was a state execution, although widely reported, has also been rejected by many on the left who have examined the case in detail, notably Stefan Aust[28]). This is a slightly different emphasis from the one Krebs uses in his analysis in his biography of Meinhof, where he notes the exceptional conditions of imprisonment and doctors reports testifying to her health problems:

> 'Angenommen, Ulrike Meinhof sei am 9.5.1976 tatsächlich von
> eigener Hand zu Tode gekommen. Wer könnte da angesichts der
> beschriebenen Haftbedingungen ernsthaft davon sprechen, sie habe
> in freier Entscheidung von ihrem Recht Gebrauch gemacht, sich das
> Leben zu nehmen?

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[27] The APO, *außerparlamentarische Opposition* or 'extra-parliamentary opposition', was a reaction against what the left saw as a dangerous consensus in Bonn after the SPD formed a "grand coalition" with their long-term political adversaries the CDU. The APO predominantly protested against this new consensus on support for the United States against Vietnam, as well as other aspects of Adenauer's cold war tactics and foreign policy, alongside the SPD's acceptance of a market economy.

[28] See Aust, op. cit., p.377

Es gibt keinen Freitod hinter Gittern'.[29]

Both these viewpoints, however, emphasise Meinhof as a *victim*, part of the presentation subsequently adopted by Kresnik, being that of an ideologically correct journalist pulled into violent actions both out of ideological commitment and through the influence of others, where she was a reluctant particpant:

> "Ich glaube, daß sie eigentlich nur durch den Einfluß von Andreas
> Baader, Gudrun Ensslin und anderen Mitgliedern des 'harten Kerns'
> vom ideologischen auf den kriminellen Weg geführt wurde, wobei
> mir nicht bekannt ist, ob sie jeweils selbst geschossen hat, obwohl
> sie Pistolen mit sich trug...im Grunde hat sie das, was sie getan hat,
> für uns getan. Soweit verstehe ich Ulrike Meinhof".[30]

In this way Kresnik's *Ulrike Meinhof* is Röhl's theory in performative practice (see p.12).

Kresnik's strong political views on the 'duty' of people working within this performative sphere may, therefore, be seen as to mediate concerns about society and to provide visions of an alternative society, especially those marginalised from discursive practice. His formalistic manipulation of the ballet aesthetic in order to achieve this, and prioritising content above form (overturning the traditional dance hierarchy), allied to his sympathetic portrayal of Meinhof might be expected to provide the basis for a strong political reaction in the media reception. Whilst Kresnik states that he does not understand the RAF 'right up to the present day', he

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[29] 'Let us assume that Ulrike Meinhof actually died on the 9.5.1976 by her own hand. Who would seriously be able to say that she had exercised her right as a free decision to take her own life when faced with the prison conditions described? There is no voluntary death behind bars'. Krebs, M., *Ulrike Meinhof: Ein Leben im Widerspruch* (Hamburg, Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995), p.267. The chronicle also contains more general concerns of the liberal left such as the exaggeration of the threat by the media, using terrorism as a means by which the state security apparatus was expanded, and the *Berufsverbot* laws.
[30] "I believe that she was actually only driven from the ideological into the criminal way through the influence of Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ensslin and other members of the 'hard core'. It is not known whether she herself did any shooting at the time, although she carried guns...basically, what she did, she did for us. I understand Ulrike Meinhof to this extent" *Weser-Kurier*, op cit

does admit two contentious points, namely, that he is staging a 'rehabilitation' of Meinhof, and that this rehabilitation is done entirely from her own viewpoint, refusing, as one interviewer put it, 'to also show the societal reality, which Meinhof filled with outrage'.[31]

Reception

Aspects of the reception of *Ulrike Meinhof* which lay outside the media reaction were favourable. After the premiere there was an enthusiastic audience response which lasted over twenty minutes.[32] Its run at the *Theater am Goetheplatz* in Bremen was such a public success that in a printed review of seven years work at the theatre the production was headlined as a "money-magnet" (Ulrike Meinhof *als Kassenmagnet*), and within this seven year period the run of 48 performances was only bettered by six other theatrical productions, out of a total of 184.[33] The production was invited to participate in the prestigious Berlin *Theatertreffen* in May, which led to political recognition of Kresnik's productions through his works collectively winning the Berlin Theatre Prize, with which, in the view of the judges 'he has resisted two very German evils for 20 years...the collective repression of injustice and guilt...[and] the hopeless entanglement in family and group pressures'.[34] The success of *Ulrike Meinhof* was further indicated when it was filmed in February 1991 for broadcast on the ARD television channel later in the summer, the first of Kresnik's productions to be filmed.[35]

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[31] Ibid.

[32] '"Ulrike Meinhof" bleibt uns nichts schuldig', *Bremer Anzeiger*, 14.2.90

[33] *Bremer Theater 1985-92: Eine Dokumentation* (Bremen, Bremer Theater, Theater der Freien Hansestadt Bremen GmbH, 1992), pp.84, 89-93

[34] 'Berliner Theaterpreis für Johann Kresnik', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 7/8.4.90

[35] For details on the filming see 'Leises Nadel-Klappern aus dem dunklen Off', *Nordsee Zeitung*, 21.2.91; 'Ein deutsches Frauenschicksal', *Weser Kurier*, 11.7.91. The former notes that the producer, Hanns Menninger, changed nothing of the content, whilst the latter stresses Kresnik and Krebs' control of the production in the studio.

The theme of the RAF in a German cultural production retained the potential for contention. The premiere in Bremen was conducted under police supervision, who searched cars and land around the theatre after anonymous threats were made to newspapers and the artistic director of the theatre that the theatre would be bombed if the production went ahead.[36] The anonymous nature of this threat (it could have equally come from either the radical left or right) and the lack of any political statement accompanying it mitigates against it being taken as a serious political statement from an organised group. Rather, what the public and cultural institutions' reception of the production reveals is not only the success of *Ulrike Meinhof*, but also the acceptance that by 1990 analysing complex social issues around such a controversial figure need not be confrontational.

There was a common reaction within the newspaper media to note Kresnik's one-sided nature of the production in portraying events only from Meinhof's point of view and neglecting the 'wider' issues. The *Stuttgarter Zeitung* thought the production an impressive display of a 'mindless, prosperity-crazy society with no political feeling or responsibility', even though

> 'Die terroristische Methode, die diesen Zustand wenden will, aber in eskalierende Gewalt übergeht und in der Katastrophe endet, ist hingegen außer acht gelassen. Die Faszination des Grausamen, der verzweifelten Wut und der Ohnmacht Ulrike Meinhofs teilt sich indes auch demjenigen mit, der weder bereit noch fähig ist, sich so vorbehaltlos selbstquälerisch mit dem Schicksal der Meinhof als Mensch zu identifizieren wie Kresnik es tut'.[37]

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[36] 'Bombendrohung gegen Spielhaus', *Tageszeitung*. 14.2.90

[37] 'The method of terrorism, which wants to change this state of affairs, and which, however, results in escalating violence ending in catastrophe, is, on the other hand, neglected. The fascination of that which is cruel, of the desparate rage and powerlessness of Ulrike Meinhof even communicates itself to those who are neither ready, nor capable of identifying with the fate of Meinhof as a human being in such a tormenting way as Kresnik does'. 'Faszination des Grauens'. *Stuttgarter Zeitung*. 13.2.90

There was (apart from a review in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, discussed presently),

however, a general willingness from other commentators in the liberal media to

acknowledge Kresnik's bias in a significantly uncritical way. The *Frankfurter*

Rundschau thought Kresnik to be 'politically schizophrenic, gullible, at times

foolish, but fair to this socially-engaged fanatic'.[38] *Die Zeit* similarly thought the

production 'consciously anarchist, intentionally tasteless, injuringly unjust, and

angrily one-sided...a theatre play of breath-taking rage, a political passion rarely

seen in the dance theatre and of shocking contemporary relevance'.[39] A dance

journal also interpreted this bias as a defiant gesture:

> 'Er ist ein ratloser, mitunter rasender Rebell, den Älterwerden kaum
> müde macht. Der inkarnierte Widerspruch: empfindsamer
> Berserker, differenzierter Simplifikator, weiser
> Ungerechter...Warum auch sollte er sich auf einen Begriff bringen
> lassen, solange er und wir die Welt, so wie sie von andern
> verunstaltet wird, weder begreifen noch hinnehmen wollen'.[40]

The (for the most part) uncritical recognition of Kresnik's bias is perhaps

indicative of the 'safe' nature of approaching the subject of the RAF by 1990. This

is made clearer by reference to the wider discussion concerning whether such a

form as Kresnik's choreographic theatre could adequately represent or mediate any

notion of the 'real' political world. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, for

example, noted that the attempt to portray Meinhof as a historical figure in this

way was 'more than open to criticism', although the 'mean forcefulness' of the

images reveals how nonsensical it is to actually measure the production by any

sense of (presumably strict representational) reality.[41]

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[38] 'Ein Requiem für Ulrike Meinhof', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 14.2.90

[39] 'Deutschland, blutig Vaterland', *Die Zeit*, 23.2.90

[40] 'He is a perplexed and at times furious rebel whom the aging process does not significantly tire. The embodied contradiction of a sensitive madman, someone who simplifies yet pays attention to detail, a wise and yet unjust person. Why ever should he let himself be easily labelled as long as he, and we the world as it is turned upside down by other people, are not willing either to understand it or put up with it'. Merschmeier, M., 'Der Gesellschaftstanz', in *Theater 1990: Das Jahrbuch der Zeitschrift "Theater Heute"* (Orell Füssli und Friedrich Verlag, 1990), p.79

[41] 'Klage des Spielverderbers', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 12.2.90

The development of a narrative of 'terrorism' based upon allegory and metaphor provides a new way in which the phenomenon may be analysed from the point of the symbolic. The nature of this mimical world may be viewed as inextricably tied into discursive power relations as it 'aims at influence, appropriation, alteration, repetition; it operates by means of new interpretations of already existing worlds'.[42] The political dimensions of this, which may be applied to the creation of one particular historical 'reality' such as that of Ulrike Meinhof, is made up from an intensified political signifying power:

> 'The history of mimesis is a history of disputes over the power to make symbolic worlds, that is, the power to represent the self and others and interpret the world. To this extent mimesis possesses a political dimension and is part of the history of power relations.'[43]

This illuminates the function of Kresnik's *Bildhaftigkeit* - the recognition that public interpretation of an image has a potential political power. His declaratory 'rehabilitation' of Meinhof may intend to achieve the semiological subversion of the already existent media-given images through the various discourses which have grown up around this figure. The most obvious example of this is Kresnik's use of the 'disinfectors' who spray the prisoners, which simultaneously invokes and subverts the metaphor of 'terrorism' as a 'disease' within the body politic, used by neoconservatives in Germany in the 1970's. Franz Josef Strauß of the CSU, for example, referred to the RAF as 'weeds' (*Unkraut*).[44]

It would be expected that the aestheticisation of politics through the transference into a new symbolic world would be controversial when such

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[42] Gebauer, G., and Wolf, C., *Mimesis: Culture-Art-Society*, translated by Reneau, D., (Berkeley, California, University of California Press, 1995), p.316
[43] Ibid., p.3
[44] Grosscup, B., *The Explosion of Terrorism*, (Far Hills, New Jersey, New Horizon Press, 1987), pp.219-20; *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 14.2.90, op. cit.

politically and historically contentious figures as Meinhof are represented. For this reason such a form of mimeticism is not unproblematic in the political-aesthetic sphere, going beyond the mere attention to the details of everyday which exist - the attention to detail which Lukács terms "strict representationalism", a naturalism which Lukács argues is itself ideological in its veiling of a social totality.[45] Derived from the Greek for *imitation* in the arts (including dancing), the term now has been used so extensively that it is difficult to recover any authentic meaning the Greeks may have attached to it. Over time the term has been subject to contradictary uses, resulting in dichotomies of realism/fiction, historical reference/self-referentiality, objective truth/subjective truth.[46]

Aristotle's conception of mimesis[47] stresses the importance of the 'universal' in art. As opposed to the historian, who merely records the particular events (and whose search for a supposedly 'objective' detail overlaps with the realism of strict representationalism), for Aristotle, the artist's function is also to envisage what *may* have happened, not aiming at an objective analysis of how things were, but a utopian prescriptive projection of how things *should* be. Opposed to the Platonic conception of art (artists' illusions must be separated from 'reality' to make progress possible), for Aristotle the autonomy from reality is viewed as a means by which a universalised 'higher' reality may be achieved. Mimesis for Aristotle is not, therefore, merely the production of aesthetic images, but also the production of a fiction in which a historical subject matter is raised to a level 'higher' than reality. This is achieved through a process of 'copying and changing', it being the duty of artists to gloss over a person's faults and instill a 'goodness of character', and for a vision to form through the freeing of the plot

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[45] See Denning, M., *Cover Stories: Narrative and Ideology in the British Spy Thriller* (New York, Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1987). pp.27-8

[46] Hillis Miller, J., 'Is Literary Theory a Science?' in Levine (ed) *Realism and Representation: Essays on the Problem of Realism in Relation to Science, Literature, and Culture* (Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), p.155

[47] Gebauer and Wolf, op. cit., pp.53-9

from a historical reality. Kresnik's belief that we need some form of socialist 'utopia' to inform our political life is put into practice by *Ulrike Meinhof* being negatively formulated as a dystopic vision. Although much of Kresnik's work is substantially reliant on historical detail, Meinhof's hypothetical return to the consumer-driven Germany of 1990 is the production of such a fiction through the juxtaposition of a historical figure and a present-day context.

It is this notion of a 'higher' reality mediated through the production that the media reception centered around. The left-wing *Tageszeitung* noted that it might have been a respectable 'initial working' of the theme in 1976, but much of it now appears 'trite'.[48] The review in *Die Zeit*, however, defends the production from such charges of crassness which had been laid against it by quoting the political columnist Joseph von Westphalen, who called for a theatrical production to show the harsh realities of a re-unified Germany: 'Only through the protection of art and its roles can the most inconsiderate meanness sound upon the stage'.[49] The most explicit statement of the production achieving a 'higher reality' was made in a yearly review by a dance journal. Noting that choreography is a 'seismograph' moved by society in which 'images of reality become stage-images because, in the kaleidoscope of artistic perception and understanding, they are distorted into that which can be recognised', Kresnik's 'crass' images are defended:

> 'Krasse Sichtweisen. Kresnik spitz zu, überspannt, aber erst im
> Zerrspiegel ist ein Gutteil verdrängter Wirklichkeiten zu sehen. Wie
> man zum Terroristen wird, beispielsweise. Wie Engagement in den
> sechziger Jahren unterdrückt und in blutigen Radikalismus getrieben
> wurde...Wo die Dramatiker sprachlos sind, hat das
> Choreographische Theater seine eigene Ausdrucksdomäne - wenn
> es sich, wie hier, auf das Zeitgeschehen einläßt und nicht erstickt im
> schicken Arrangement'.[50]

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[48] *Tageszeitung*, 14.2.90, op. cit.

[49] Quoted in *Die Zeit*, 23.2.90, op. cit.

[50] 'Crass perspectives. Kresnik heightens, exaggerates, *but it is only in a distorting mirror that a large part of the repressed reality is to be seen*. For example, how people become terrorists. How political committment in the 1960's became suppressed and was driven to bloody

This distortion of (everyday) reality to containing fictional or idealised elements as being necessary to mediate the higher claims upon reality was also tacitly invoked by a local newspaper which suggested that although man's inhumanity to man could never totally be 'uncovered', through this means Kresnik is able to present the closest 'bearable' portrayal of the horrors of the RAF and wider society. The same review considered Kresnik as using Meinhof as a key with which the audience could abstract themselves from the everyday reality and reach a critical awareness. If the thought-provoking entrance of an embittered Meinhof into the Germany of 1990 had not happened, it believed, then the ridiculous and caricatured society portrayed initially would not be 'harmful' to anyone.[51]

Such a view was not unproblematically accepted in the reaction to the production, some regarding Kresnik's *Bildhaftigkeit* and a mimetic mediation of a universalisable reality as containing political deficiencies. The critique found in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* criticised any sense of a 'higher' reality as flawed because of the basic misapprehension made by Kresnik about the interactive nature of societal structures and citizens. This is a deviation from the rest of the traditionally 'liberal' press, not excusing the lack of 'cool balance and analysis':

> 'Kresnik freilich interessiert nicht die politische Theorie; er laboriert
> auch nicht an den blutigen Rechtfertigungen der RAF-Mitglieder
> der ersten Generation, die Meinhof verfaßt hat. Ihn interessiert ihre
> Biographie. Dabei unterläuft ihm der gleiche Fehler wie dem
> Meinhof-Biographen und seinem Dramaturgen Mario Krebs.
> Kresnik sieht ihren Lebensweg nicht als mögliches, jedoch jenseits
> der Norm liegendes Ergebnis einer verlogenen, restorativen
> Gesellschaft, sondern er sieht die Meinhof als Opfer von Anfang an,
> das keine Wahl hat, dessen Schritt in die Illegalität ein, wenn auch

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radicalism...Where the dramatists lack a voice, there the choreographic theatre comes into its own - when, as is the case here, it takes up topical themes and is not choked by pleasant artistic arrangement', *Theatre 1990*, op. cit., p.78 (my emphasis).
[51] 'Ein deutsches Schicksal', *Bremer Nachrichten*, 12.2.90

gewaltsamer, Befreiungsakt aus überkommenen Abhängigkeiten darstellt'.[52]

This contestation of Meinhof as a victim because of social forces directly contradicts Kresnik's apparent convictions that those forces in every political sphere - the private family life or group pressures in public life - are the defining formative factors upon the individual.[53] The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* extends this criticism by noting a structuralist framework between Ulrike Meinhof and previous works by Kresnik: 'Röhl tramples on Ulrike Meinhof like Hughes tramples on Plath...you recognise her from many Kresnik productions...[his] variations on this theme remain irritating'.[54] Kresnik's conception of social construction (his concentration on which, as previously noted, was stressed and shaped by his upbringing) may be informed by a structuralist-Marxism, having an Althussian distrust of individualism and the placing of the human 'subject' at the base of social analysis; society is a constraining force through social reproduction being founded upon the mutually reinforcing nexus of economic, political and ideological factors.[55] The opening *Rückkehr der Ulrike Meinhof*, with its emphasis on the reunified Germany being driven by a consumerism in which people willingly choke to the point of sickness on fast-food or large bank-notes, and the emphasis on the cultural as *ideological* (the images of nationalist kitsch literally furnish the stage in the form of a sofa emblazoned with *Schäferhunde*, for example), sceptically regard

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[52] 'Kresnik is, however, not interested in political theory; he also is not troubled by the bloody justifications of the members of the first generation of the RAF which Meinhof penned. He is interested in her biography, and for this reason makes the same mistake as her biographer and dramatic advisor Mario Krebs. Kresnik sees her life not as a possible (yet, however, beyond the normal) product of an insincere society intent on healing the wounds of war. Rather he sees Meinhof as a victim from the beginning with no choice, whose step into illegality is portrayed as an act of liberation, even if a violent one, from traditional dependencies'. 'Blutige Phantasien über Deutschland'. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 13.2.90

[53] Kresnik's emphasis on societal structures, as discussed above, were put into practice during his time as ballet chief in Heidelberg when he concentrated on family structures and individuals because of 'the societal situation in which they live which impresses itself upon them again and again'. *Ballet-Journal*, op. cit., p.46

[54] *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 13.2.90, op. cit.

[55] Althusser's arguments are most succinctly outlined in Althusser, L., 'Ideology and the Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an investigation)' in *Essays on Ideology* (London, Verso, 1976), pp.1-60

individual action within the social system as irrevocably culturally shaped towards the demands of hierarchical relations of (economic) authority. This rather rigid conception of social interaction is emphasised by Kresnik in his scepticism that his theatre can directly 'change' anything.[56]

The challenge by the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* to this *Weltanschauung* places the paper on more traditionally humanist liberal grounds, as opposed to other liberal media sources which did not address this aspect of Kresnik's social thesis, but which, with the left-wing press, accepted the figure of Meinhof as a 'victim'.[57] Yet the most critical review of the production came from the left, using this 'victimisation' of Meinhof as a starting point. Wildenhain, writing in an annual theatre journal review, claims that the concentration on Meinhof as a victim, a role which Kresnik does not allow her to break out of, is at the expense of the 'political collective'. The motives which the RAF used to legitimate themselves are not shown, as one is not able to understand the RAF solely in terms of a critique of consumerism and particular cultural forms. Understanding of the motivation of the group should be based upon the (omitted) living conditions of the disadvantaged and unemployed. These 'real' conditions are missing in the emphasis on the (minority) high-society, whilst Baader, portrayed as the only person who can take her out of this society, is demonised. In the absence of this social understanding, the left-liberal consensus which pathologises Meinhof hides an ideological agenda.[58]

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[56] Kresnik claims that 'Unfortunately we won't change anything in either life or society from the stage', suggesting that theatre can do little more than indicate shortcomings in democracy. *Wochenpost*, 9.2.95, op. cit. This must not, however, be seen in a wholly negative sense, as it may also be viewed from Marcuse's perspective that art 'cannot represent the revolution, it can only invoke it in another medium'. Marcuse, quoted in Held, D., *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995), p.86. The potential of the body as a site of resistence for Kresnik has also been suggested above.

[57] See, for example, the liberal *Die Zeit*, 23.2.90, op. cit., which agrees with the left wing *Tageszeitung*, 14.2.90, op. cit., that Meinhof was 'dragged' into the underground.

[58] Wildenhain, M., 'Fleischerhaken, postmodern', *Theater 1990*, op. cit., pp.80-1

The accusation that the production substitutes 'propaganda' for 'reality' parallels the claim made by the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* that deficiencies within representation prevent a mediated 'higher' reality. Although both reviewers have radically different political agendas, they both take issue with Kresnik at this mimetic level. Wildenhain regards Kresnik's aesthetics as incapable of mediating the 'reality' of the economic situation or collective struggle 'because the primitive pleasures of dance can legitimate incendiary or explosive mixtures or the shooting of men just as little as naive folk-tunes done in sepia'. So whilst the 'terrorists' linking up across the stage is designed to show a collective struggle, this is a 'false' reality as collective social politics are excluded.[59] What Wildenhain indirectly lays down is a set of prescriptive aesthetic guidelines similar to Lukács' formulation of the conception of 'reflection' and 'realism'. This has similarities with the Aristotelean mimetic tradition in that a distorted reality may bestow a wider sense of order beyond the surface representation, that there is a sense of autonomous reality. For Lukács' Marxist framework this is achieved (as Wildenhain also suggests through his critique) through the social and historical contradictions of capitalism being portrayed. Unlike much of the media reception the 'key' to universalisation should not be through the collapsing of historical and social processes into an alienated and anomic individual, as this would result in an 'unmediated totality'. In this way, Wildenhain's criticism of *Ulrike Meinhof* corresponds to Lukács' criticism of *type*, whereby a prominent individual in the work must be portrayed instead in terms of class and its relation to history to achieve a totality.[60] The omission of the collective politics which formed as a result of the economic conditions of one class, and Kresnik's situating Meinhof only within the 'minority' high society, would not, from this point of view, be able to mediate the antagonism between the relevant (historically significant) *social*

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[59] Ibid., p.81

[60] Lukács' ideas on 'form' and 'type' are summarised in Forgacs, D., 'Marxist Literary Theories' in Jefferson, A., and Robey, D., (eds) *Modern Literary Theory: A Comparative Introduction* (London, B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1992), pp.170-4

groups. The production for Wildenhain is therefore class-based, as witnessed by the composition of both the audience and those involved in the reception process, and those who actually participate in the process of cultural production:

> 'Zuschauer und ein Großteil der Kritiker haben offenbar keine Mühe, sich mit der mehrfachen Opferrolle der so einsichtig vorgeführten Ulrike Meinhof problemlos zu identifizieren. Sie, die zwischen Selbstfindung und Therapie durchs leidlich angenehme Leben schaukeln, leiden ebenso wie die drei Tänzerinnen, welche die Meinhof darstellen sollen...Arbeiter wie Arbeitslose, Deklassierte im allgemeinen haben deshalb Recht, wenn sie den Theatern fernbleiben, obwohl ihre (nicht gezeigten) Lebensumstände das Handeln der Roten Armee Fraktion in einem weit größeren Maß motiviert haben dürften als beispielsweise Heino und das Volksliedgut der Hitparaden'.[61]

The criticisms of the production based on the notion of an mimetic aesthetics therefore centred upon whether this could provide a prescriptive politics. Whilst Kresnik may be said to adopt elements of the Aristotelean conception, widely accepted by the reception for its universalising qualities, this was disputed by a small minority of reviewers, who adopted more politicised views on mimetic function.

Conclusion

The previous cultural productions discussed here on the subject of the RAF were, with the exception of Fassbinder's *Die dritte Generation*, based substantially upon historical reality: The documentary sequences in *Deutschland im Herbst*, the

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[61] 'It is obviously easy for the audience and the majority of the critics to identify with the role of multiple victim in such a perceptive presentation of Ulrike Meinhof. Those who, between self-discovery and therapy, wend their way through a reasonably comfortable life, suffer just as much as the three dancers who are meant to portray Meinhof...Workers as well as the unemployed, the socially disadvantaged in general are for that reason right in staying away from the theatre, even though their (not portrayed) circumstances might have motivated the activities of the RAF to a much greater degree than, for example, Heino and the folk songs of the charts'. Wildenhain, op. cit., p.81

thinly veiled portrait of the Ensslin sisters in *Die bleierne Zeit*, the documentary style of *Stammheim*, or the reference Richter makes to photo journalism in his *Oktober* pictures. Kresnik's production is therefore the first to examine, specifically with names, the RAF within a context substantially reliant upon allegory.[62] This had already been done outside Germany, when, one year previously a production of *Ulrike* (an opera by the Flemish librettist Leo Geerts and the Dutch composer Raoul De Smet) premiered in Gent. Its theatricality is indicated by a musical irony; sections within the score include titles such as 'Sexist Left-wing Cop' and 'In the Capitalist's Trap'.[63] Both Geerts/De Smet and Kresnik wanted to answer the question as to why Meinhof chose the illegal struggle instead of her work as a political journalist, and hence the examination of conflicting levels of morality (notably achieved through *Ulrike* being structured on the basis of a Greek tragedy). Both also have less of a political thesis, and more of a desire to develop a human understanding for Meinhof through this question, as Geerts noted:

> "Ich identifiziere mich nicht mit den Taten der Baader-Meinhof-
> Bande. Das Stück hat keine politische These. Aber ich habe es mit
> Verständnis für diese Leute geschrieben, wollte ihre menschlichen
> Züge und moralischen Probleme herausarbeiten"[64]

Kresnik's similar construction of Meinhof as an aesthetic departure from the realism which characterises most of the major works discussed this far may be considered a form of the Weberian 'Ideal Type'. Weber considered the essence of any social 'reality' impossible to grasp as a totality as there are many different ways

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[62] At a special showing of Hauff and Aust's *Stammheim* there was, after the film, a short theatrical production performed by the actors in the film hypothesising about the events of the night of the 18th. October 1977. This encompassed such issues as state censorship, whether violence was necessary for change, and portraying the terrorists in a more 'human' way. Since this was a single event it will be disregarded here, although details on and intentions of the performance can be found in an interview with the artistic director in 'Baader-Meinhof, das ist schon Legende', *Die Zeit*, 7.2.86

[63] For performance details see 'Requiem für einen Spuk', *Der Spiegel*, 6.2.89, pp.195-6

[64] "I do not identify with the deeds of the Baader-Meinhof group. The play has no political thesis. But I have written it with understanding for these people; I wanted to develop their human traits and moral problems." 'Baader-Meinhof-Bande jetzt auf Opernbrettern', *Nordsee-Zeitung*, 4.2.89

in which this may be constructed. For the moral and political complexities which the RAF embodied, 'Ideal Types' have a simplifying function, reducing this social phenomenon to essential elements by exaggeration, selection, and enhancement of the features deemed central. Any Ideal Type does not pertain to accurate historical realism, but instead aims at constructing models distinct from historical exemplars in order to clarify meanings and provide a conceptual order, 'approximating' social reality rather than 'mirroring' it.[65] This is an interpretative strategy, rather than one designed to arrive at any normative evaluation, and whilst it would be difficult to claim that there is no normative programme behind Kresnik's presentation of Meinhof, the production is predominantly founded upon the need to provide some form of understanding of Meinhof's behaviour within the wider patterns of social meaning and action, to which the Ideal-Typical model is suited.[66]

In this refinement there is an overlap with the Aristotelean mimeticism of Kresnik instilling a goodness of 'character' into his 'rehabilitated' Meinhof. That there was not such a controversial reaction against this intent may signal a gradual 'coming to terms' with the violence of the first generation of the RAF as a (now largely historical) phenomenon. This is not only because of the (continued) recognition of the possibility that 'terrorists' may be considered 'victims', either of erroneous thinking or social circumstance. It is also reflected in the relatively unproblematic acceptance of this discourse at the level of form, the mediation of a 'higher' reality through *Bildhaftigkeit* deliberately subverting older macro discourses to produce critical awareness. It was performed to widespread public and institutional acclaim, one commentator thinking that the invitation to Kresnik to perform *Ulrike Meinhof* at the Berlin *Theatertreffen*, along with the fact that the

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[65] Parkin, F., *Max Weber* (London, Tavistock Publications Ltd., 1982), p.28
[66] Mommsen, W., *The Political and Social Theory of Max Weber: Collected Essays* (Cambridge, Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1989), p.122

production was able to be staged unchallenged in a German state theatre, lent hope to Kresnik being politically as well as aesthetically acknowledged.[67]

The largely uncritical reception remains surprising, given that the production is the most politically-orientated discussed here, and one which Kresnik wanted to use as a method of historically 'rehabilitating' Meinhof through a radically new aesthetics (although the reception to Fassbinder's *Die dritte Generation* was also relatively favourable, what distinguishes this piece of allegory from Kresnik is the overtly *political* thesis of the latter's). The absence of a review in *Die Welt* is disappointing, as there were no hostile reviews from the right, even in traditionally right-wing papers such as the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. The reception pattern is one which continues to reflect the shift away from criticising productions for not providing a positive political direction. The strongest commentaries do, however, remain reminiscent of the reception of *Deutschland im Herbst* in 1977 in certain paratextual strategies, although these constitute a small minority. There is also evidence to suggest that the mass media themselves may be beginning to break out of their traditional political positions with regard to this subject. This is suggested in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* review, which, whilst breaking with other 'liberal' responses did not identify itself with the role of the state either, noting that Meinhof experienced

> '...daß ein winziger Bruchteil der Verschleierungstheorie der RAF stimmte. Wo sich der Staat derart massiv getroffen findet, hört die Liberalität auf, der Staat schlägt zurück. Für Ulrike Meinhof bedeutet das Folterung durch totale Isolation und Tod'.[68]

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[67] 'Blutig einig Vaterland', *Tagesspiegel*, 18.5.90
[68] '...that a tiny fragment of the cover-up theory of the RAF was correct. When the state finds itself seriously attacked in this manner liberalism stops and the state hits back. For Ulrike Meinhof that meant torture through total isolation and death'. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 13.2.90, op. cit.

The effect of this political flexibility, combined with other elements of the media reception of this production, is indicative of the wider process of learning how to understand the violent actions of the RAF, and thereby 'coming to terms' with it, as shall now be examined.

Before I suggest that there are elements shown by the reception to these works which suggest a 'coming-to-terms', it is important to repeat at this point just how deeply parts of the German population were affected by the RAF, particularly in the 1970's, as shown by the reaction even to dead 'terrorists'. When the hungerstriker Holger Meins was buried in 1974, for example, concrete was sunk over the coffin to discourage people from desecrating the grave.[1] Meinhof's suicide in 1976 was celebrated by some with drinks parties, and by others who placed notices of thanks in newspapers expressing gratitude 'for her decision to depart from this life', signed 'in the name of like-minded tax-payers'.[2]

Indications of a 'coming to terms' with the hatred revealed by these reactions to political violence may be gained from four issues concerned with cultural productions. First, how the works themselves presented the 'terrorist'; second, what the public reaction (peaceful or violent, for example) was; third, whether the state or significant institutions were willing to fund these productions; and fourth, what the paratextual reaction to this was, whether rigid conventional positions were adopted, or whether a flexibility was used in analysing new ways of approaching the subject.

How these works presented the RAF may be analysed in terms of a cathartic effect, providing a psychologically beneficial 'cathartic' release from fears of, for example, societal collapse. The modern basis of cathartic theory is derived from Freudian psychoanalysis, which aimed to uncover the repressed elements within the human psyche through the provocation of an emotional crisis, and a directing of the

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[1] Aust, S., *Der Baader-Meinhof-Komplex* (München, Knaur, 1989), p.299
[2] Brückner, P. *Ulrike Meinhof und die deutschen Verhältnisse* (Berlin, Klaus Wagenbach Verlag, 1979), p.108; 'Blutige Phantasien über Deutschland', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 13.2.90

subsequent psychic discharge. The subsequent development of a wide range of cathartic psychotherapies were, despite their differing methodologies, all based upon the principle that an increasingly repressive emotional content needed to be 'purged' in order to allow clarity of thought and action. The arts have been linked to this process in that both dreams and literature are primarily linguistic in nature, and, like dreams and other sublimated forms of the repressed, the literary process may be the manifestation of such fears and desires, especially through the dependence upon figurative devices. These devices 'allow' fears that would normally be unacceptable to the ego to be disguised, allowing the 'forbidden' to become 'permitted' in a 'safe' form. This 'disguise' must be good enough for the repressed to pass the ego which would normally censor such thoughts from the conscious, yet still contain elements of the repressed for it to be unconsciously recognised. Literature, like psychoanalysis, was therefore hypothesised to be a means by which repressed inner conflicts and fears may be expressed without ego conflict, and so harmonising conflicting psychological demands.[3]

This theory of literarture-as-catharsis has several shortcomings, the term originating from a short and ambiguous statement in Aristotle's *Poetics*, which describes it as "Tragedy through pity and fear effects a purgation of such emotions". The meaning of the concept has subsequently become disputed, with the process never achieving any commonly accepted explanation. Empirical studies into 'catharsis' have furthermore been predominantly psychological studies based upon catharsis as aggression-reduction, rather than an emotional-behavioural 'over-coming' of fears.[4] This may be because of fundamental problems of scientifically quantifying an

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[3] The relation of such ideas to literature are discussed at length in Lesser, S.O., *Fiction and the Unconscious* (London and Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1975)

[4] The lack of this wider perspective has more recently been criticised within the psychological community. See, for example, Copeland, G.A., and Slater, D., 'Television, Fantasy and Vicarious Catharsis', *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 1985, Vol. 2, pp.358-9

'emotional release', identifying the capability of an individual to develop this ability, and with which mediated forms it may be achieved.

There are also qualitative problems with this theory. Aesthetic theories, such as Artaud's 'Theatre of Cruelty', aimed to bring to consciousness repressed terrors and conflicts by means of catharsis.[5] Artaud saw this in the personal rather than political sense of social norms repressing Dionysian impulses which must be confronted directly in order to be overcome. Yet it is also important to stress the link between such theories and social and historical circumstance, as they are based upon materialist assumptions about the 'making' of the human subject, and the socially specific relations between individuals.[6] The theory also assumes that the reader is relatively 'passive' in the face of the text. As has been demonstrated with the productions discussed here, there was often a wide range of political discourses in the reaction, undermining any notion of recovering a 'stable' interpretation. A further problem is based upon the assumption that the function of a narrative structure is to organise a chaotic experience, so that we may reassert control over that experience. According to this view, most of the works discussed here fail to provide any clear prescriptive analysis which might aid that control, a process which 'closes' the narrative (such a closure tends to idealise the real situation). In the majority of the cultural productions examined here, an easy and reassuring hierarchy of meaning is hindered by the absence of a closed narrative, allowing a multitude of extra-textual discursive positions to arise. This is in part due to the modernist aesthetic which many of the works take. As has been illustrated, Kluge's focus on *how* the work says what is says and how it is formed by the foregrounding of technical means, rather than *what* it says, overthrows

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[5] See Plunka, G.A., 'Antonin Artaud: The Suffering Shaman of the Modern Theater' in Plunka (ed) *Antonin Artaud and the Modern Theatre* (London and Toronto, Associated University Presses, 1994). pp.20-22. In the German literary-philosophic tradition, this cathartic function is perhaps best exemplified by Nietzsche, whose *Birth of Tragedy* not only saw this as encoded in the specific form of tragic Attic drama, but also saw transcendental life-affirming properties to replace the disintegration of 'life sustaining myths'. See Schacht, R., *Nietzsche* (London and New York, Routledge, 1995), pp.497-8

[6] Eagleton, T., *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1983), p.163

any essentialist meaning. In destroying any sense of a harmonious unity the therapeutic value of these works is brought into question, at least in terms of the classical theory of catharsis.

Given these questions raised over the working processes of 'catharsis', it is important to define what I mean by this process within this context. This is also important since many reviewers of the cultural productions examined here, particularly on the liberal left, freely used the associated term of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* without further explanation of its nature. In the absence of any elucidation, such statements appear merely as an ungrounded affirmation of the art-works in question.

A defensible theory of catharsis may be formulated by adapting the perspective of Kellermann, which entails a close examination of the process with the social context within which it occurs. This therapeutic view advanced in relation to art avoids many problems of catharsis by not regarding a cathartic release itself as curative. Rather, other factors need to be involved to ensure that an emotional release has cathartic value, since a release has no utility if it does not encourage the acquisition of skills for future individual and social use.[7] What is significant here is the structuring of the 'environment'. This stresses open expression within a wider, interpersonal context of other responses. This environment is one designed to '*make a person more ready to listen to others* and to reconstruct the perception of a total situation' (my emphasis).[8] The realisation of a 'total situation' is one achieved by the individual 'working' through the problem, and not having it 'solved' for him. It is a process done by the protagonists themselves, without having their expressions manipulated. This suggests an 'open' communicative process, involving (in the case of 'terrorism') discourses which open up

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[7] The following ideas concerning the role of cartharsis and psychodrama are taken from Kellermann, P.F., 'The Place of Catharsis in Psychodrama', *Journal of Group Psychotherapy, Psychodrama and Sociometry*, Vol. 37(1), 1984. pp.1-13
[8] Ibid., p.8

new channels, rather than closing them off through tropes of criminality or psychopathology.

The role of such 'psychodramas' are, therefore, to provide the 'right environment' within which this may take place, and it is through examining this that we see that the majority of the productions examined here are conducive to providing this environment. They may be parallelled with 'psychodramas' in their open narrative structure, which demands a response from an active recipient (as opposed to easy answers and automatic responses), and their 'loosening up fixated positions'. The conflicts upon which positions are based must also be addressed. Hence Kellermann argues (after Moreno) that a true catharsis also requires an 'integration' and 'ordering':

> 'This integration involves restoring order in the internal emotional chaos, new learning of coping strategies...identification and differentiation of feelings, reconciliation between opposing feelings...and assisting the protagonists ego to find the best way of controlling unadaptive effects'.[9]

This 'integration and ordering' is not the construction of closed-off categorisations, but rather stresses ways of coping through active, communal, and interpersonal conflict resolution.

It is through this process, of diverse cultural productions being able to formulate ways in which a morally ambiguous phenomenon such as the violence of the RAF may be grasped, that such an environment may be formed. 'Integration' and 'ordering' suggests that enduring internal reconciliation with difficult realities can not be achieved by simple categorisations which close off alternative viewpoints and realities. I wish to suggest that the majority of the micro cultural productions examined here have avoided such closure, challenging macro discourses and providing the *conditions* whereby a cathartic 'coming to terms' over a length of time may be aided.

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[9] Ibid., p.10

This can not be supplied in any depth by a superficial 'popular' culture (by 'popular' I mean such features as a unified narrative structure, and explanations for such phenomena as 'terrorism' being presented in a simple manichean manner). Such representations would undoubtedly provide a 'cathartic' release, but this would be of only temporary value. When the rather obvious discrepancies between this simplified form and reality become apparent, the same feelings of helplessness and lack of understanding are likely to re-appear. Productions which do not have such easy moral superiority or a closed narrative, however, rely much more upon the viewer working with the production, and it is this in-depth examination of the problematic which provides a firmer, more pragmatic and distanced basis for future action.

The personal involvement of an individual in the 'psychodrama' which these works provide are aided by a direct confrontation, through their making reference to the social realities of political violence. Most of the cultural productions discussed here directly confront the subject and subjects of 'terrorism'. Kluge's inclusion of documentary sequences, both from the funerals of 'terrorists' and their victim as well as from Nazi newsreel, von Trotta's personalised story, Hauff's documentary-style film, Richter's confronting the viewer with (de)familiar media images of 'terrorism', and Kresnik's intimate portrayal of Meinhof, all concern themselves with concrete, real figures, rather than the more 'hidden' allegorical reference to terrorism which Böll parodies in his screenplay for Schlöndorff's section in *Deutschland im Herbst*. With the possible exception of Fassbinder, (although even here a distance is not completely permitted through the constant background montage of media-reports) there are no techniques utilised to avoid a more direct confrontation, such as setting the characters in a different age or the allowing of a recognition that the characters portrayed have no relevance to the everyday lives of the population. There are, however, varying degrees of identification with the figure of a 'terrorist', which illuminates the cathartic process.

Previous studies suggest an important element of this process is an understanding of the individuals involved, and it is at this point that the value of identification with such people in this process of 'integration' and 'ordering' is apparent. It is this identification which is an important initial process in being able to view the events portrayed at a true 'distance' in that it is an element which provides for a direct confrontation with the subject, rather than automatic dismissal. Lesser suggests that catharsis is a process by which the reader moves from a position of involvement to one of spectatorship.[10] We initially identify with the main protagonist to obtain 'emotional gratification', yet when it becomes apparent that the actions will inevitably lead to a downfall this identification is relinquished, and the move to spectatorship made. Although the protagonist has been repudiated there remains sympathy and the attendant emotions:

> 'our sympathy steadily increases; by the time the final blow falls we are
> overwhelmed by feelings of "pity and fear." We feel these emotions
> and are purged of them as spectators, but behind our solicitude for the
> hero it is not difficult to discern our concern about ourself. "There," we
> have every reason to know, "but for the grace of God go I"'.[11]

Identification, therefore, is an important part of the cathartic process, achieved by 'pity' being provoked through the spectator realising that he may conceivably do the same under similar circumstances, and 'fear' because of the arbitrary nature of the circumstances one may find oneself in. Understanding the phenomenon of violence in both political and human terms does not necessarily mean in this case a sympathy with 'terrorist' acts - none of the cultural producers here actually condone what the RAF were doing - but rather an attempted analysis of the situation at every level so as to encourage general questioning as to why the problem arose, and how better to tackle it.

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[10] Lesser, op. cit., pp.248-51
[11] Lesser, op. cit., p.250

One study which places this artistic identification at the centre of a cathartic analysis of postwar Germany is Mahlendorf's examination of the role literature has to play in the process of confronting the fascist past, based upon the notion that a direct confrontation (as identification) is an indicator of 'coming to terms'. In subdividing literary output in the post-war period in West Germany into three 'waves' she examines the portrayal of Nazis and relative identification.[12]

The 'first' generation contained writers such as Brecht, who made efforts to examine the economic, psychological and historical forces which gave rise to fascism, or Thomas Mann who made the first attempt to uncover possible fascist traits within the writer himself. Like the 'second' generation (those writers of the age to be young participants during 1933-45) there was, however, no 'direct psychological portrayal of an outright Nazi'.[13] This is despite the specific political program which a literary group such as *Gruppe 47* initiated to tackle the issues such as collective guilt, and the deformation of the German language by the Nazis.[14] Although these writers were not afraid to use the Nazi era as a subject for their work (and, in a similar way to much of the reaction in the right-wing press to portrayals of the RAF, were often faced with the accusation that they were dishonouring Germany), the process of identification was lacking. Mahlendorf hypothesises this was because the 'unmasking' of fascist traits was difficult for the participants. Hence the subject was not confronted directly, but was avoided by techniques such as writing from the point of view of a child, or 'adult outsider', thus providing an innocent protagonist who may passively observe the effect of the political upon private lives. For Mahlendorf, the frequent turning-against the child by the parents in these works illustrates not only the process of a 'nation at war with itself', but also the desire to abdicate responsibility by the writer himself.

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[12] Mahlendorf, U., 'Confronting the Fascist Past and Coming to Terms with it', *World Literature Today*, Vol.55, Autumn 1981, pp.553-560

[13] Mahlendorf, op. cit., p.555

[14] Demetz, P., *Postwar German Literature: A Critical Introduction* (New York, Schocken Books, 1972), pp.48-50

Mahlendorf notes that it is 'surprising that not a single serious inner picture of an environment or of individuals who were convinced and committed Nazis exists in the Federal Republic from the participant generation'.[15] It is only in the postwar generation of writers (born between 1940 and 1955) that such 'serious' portrayals are to be found, often from the perspective of grown-up children assessing their parents. This is also the generation whose social critique was to be manifested in the student unrest of the 1960's, and upon which the violence of the RAF was to be founded.

The significance of this process of identification with narrative characters (whether fictional or not) and events, and its relation to a cathartic 'coming to terms' with Nazism has also been noted by Buruma. In discussing the post-war trials of Nazi leaders, he notes that the trial provided a 'comfortable distance' for the population, a distance confirmed by the fact that few German cultural productions feature Nazi leaders, whilst their biographies have been written predominantly by foreign writers. Buruma mistakenly terms this *Berührungsangst* - a 'fear of contact' - when perhaps it should more correctly be termed *Identifikationsangst* - 'a fear of identification'. This attempt to evade identification is an unsatisfactory strategy since it ignores the historical context which influenced support for fascism, and thus denies any learning process upon which identities may be formed.[16] Buruma's study, although a rather polemical comparison between the way in which the German and Japanese people have coped with war guilt, is nevertheless valuable in investigating an issue which is not amenable to a more scientific analysis.

Such feelings of anxiety in confronting violence, Fraser notes, may be particularly pronounced with the realisation that an 'ordered' violence is possible (along with the recognition that violence may be justified for some as 'rational'). This is

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[15] Mahlendorf, op. cit., p.556
[16] Buruma, I., *Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan* (London, Vintage, 1995), pp.150-3

particularly germane in the German post-war context, given the bureaucratic efficiency of the industrial-style killing of the Nazis.[17] The realisation in Germany that ordinary people could become part of, and acquiescent to, a process of violence was one of the legacies of the Nazi era, and provides a frightening recognition that such deeds were possible in a modern society.

The nature of this fear, and one which may help illustrate aspects of the reaction to the Baader-Meinhof Group, was demonstrated in 1996 when a Harvard Professor, Daniel Goldhagen, wrote *Hitler's Willing Executioners*. The central thesis contended that the second world war was essentially a racial war against the Jews rather than a conflict of national rivalry, and that the ordinary German citizen was willing to be organised as a (violent) participant in this 'final solution'. Only "an insignificant scattering" of the German population objected to the racism practised against Jews, whilst the ordinary man, alongside Nazi Party members or officers in the hierarchy, participated in murder and torture.[18] The subsequent debate which the book provoked in Germany was, for a work of academic history, extraordinarily widespread. Over five and a half months *Die Zeit* produced nineteen full-page features on the debate, with many more related articles and letters, whilst *Der Spiegel* gave two title pages to the debate in three months. This debate within the media, and the wide coverage on television, boosted sales of the book in Germany to 3000 copies per day, appearing at number four in the *Der Spiegel* bestseller list in its first week.[19] Although ideological divisions may be clearly seen in the reception of the book, one commentator asserted that the book could only have become a bestseller in 1996 since the previous two generations were still those 'burdened' by the war, leading to the

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[17] Fraser, J., *Violence in the Arts* (London, Cambridge University Press, 1974), chapter 5

[18] For the background to the book see 'The Hate of the Common People', *Independent Weekend*, 30.3.96

[19] Thiele, M., 'Goldhagens willige Mitstreiter', *Agenda: Zeitschrift für Medien, Bildung, Kultur*, Vol. 26, November-December 1996, pp.39-43

conclusion that the debate was not conducted between the political left and right, but rather between the generations of young and old.[20]

The conclusion that the book sold well on account of a new willingness to debate illustrates the nature of identification now that the distance of time has removed a generation from the conflict. In the first instance it may be argued that it was dangerous for the population to avoid a confrontation with the Nazi era, which they did by separating themselves from the events by the public (spectacular) trials and executions of the few at the top of the Nazi hierarchy. Goldhagen's book - despite the methodological problems exposed by the academic world - in implicating the ordinary citizen as a 'willing executioner', made this confrontation impossible to avoid. Bringing up this uncomfortable possibility is an important part in raising awareness of the nature both of violence and those who practice it, as individuals and as groups, which may help us understand the phenomenon. For this reason an empathic identification with such figures, or conceptualising an 'inside' understanding of the 'Other' beyond manichean caricatures, is crucial in dealing with the problem.

This notion of identification has not, however, been unchallenged. Brecht is the most obvious example of a playwright who wanted to purposively avoid identification with any character on the stage. His 'alienation technique' (*Verfremdungseffekt*) employed a 'politics of separation', where un-unified, autonomous aesthetic elements 'distance' the spectator, preventing a sentimental enjoyment and passiveness on his behalf through the disparate juxtapositions created. The critical didactic function of Brechtian theatre is based upon this denial of pleasure by this distancing, allegedly giving the spectator the freedom to critically assess the construction of societal forms and human behaviour within it. This form of analysis, therefore, equates identification

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[20] Thiele, op. cit., pp.42-3

with a figure with what Kellner terms a 'passive immersion', which is an obstacle to critical reflection.[21]

Orr also adopts this aspect of Brecht's theory in discussing recent theatre productions on 'terrorism', claiming that such drama 'works best' when devices distance the spectator, or the 'tragic action' provides distance by 'gestic means of time and space'. The most successful forms of terrorist theatre are those 'which dramatise terror by distancing us from it, while re-staging its menace and its climate of fear...by the power of ultimate detachment, a detachment embedded in stagecraft and form'.[22] The distancing from terror as a 'spectacle', therefore, allows the audience to critically judge the work. Yet the works here do not fall into the realm of the 'spectacular', and are often openly critical of the 'society of the spectacle'. Such is the case in the scene in *Die bleierne Zeit* when, for example, the newspaper editor refuses to publish investigations into Marianne's death, since the topic now belonged 'on the rubbish heap of history'. It is also untrue that identification with a figure automatically leads to a passive sentimental enjoyment, as Brecht suggests. Kresnik's portrayal of Meinhof's struggle to resist armed violence, for example, places difficult political and private dilemmas at the forefront of the viewer's mind.

Such theories on the value of identification are not, however, incompatible, both being interested in creating some sort of a 'distance' from the subject with which to regard it in a more dispassionate manner. Identification with such a figure (which may even be melodramatic, *Die bleierne Zeit* being the most obvious example) is, as previously mentioned, an important initial stage in the process of cathartically regarding the figure. Looking at the personal rather than purely Brechtian 'societal'

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[21] Kellner, D., 'Brecht's Marxist Aesthetic: The Korsch Connection' in Weber, B.N., and Heinen, H., (eds) *Bertolt Brecht: Political Theory and Literary Practice* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1980), pp.31-3

[22] Orr, J., 'Terrorism as Social Drama and Dramatic Form' in Orr, J., and Klaic, D., (eds) *Terrorism and Modern Drama* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1990), p.55

causes of political violence is an essential part in understanding that violence as a whole. It provides a further dimension (amongst others) which illuminates the phenomenon, so long as this does not itself collapse into the generalised psychologising of the 'terrorist', as appears to be the case in Fassbinder's *Die dritte Generation*. A measure of identification also prevents demonisation, and a consequently limiting discourse being legitimated.

In many ways it is difficult to conclusively compare the post-war evaluation of the Nazi period with the response to left wing violence. Not only has the pattern emerging from confronting the Nazi past taken place over a much longer period of time, there was also no 'collective amnesia' over the latter, and it was not on the same scale. The similarities between the two episodes, however, go beyond the resort to political violence. The actions of the RAF, as have been illustrated previously, actually evokes Nazi violence, in the aims of the radical student movement and the RAF to 'uncover' the repressed past, and also protest against old Nazis in prominent positions of power. If the crucial theme of identification is examined, it becomes apparent that the sequence outlined by Mahlendorf can also apply chronologically to works about the RAF (with the exception of *Die dritte Generation*, as Fassbinder presents a deeply ironic critique of 'terrorism'). *Deutschland im Herbst*, with its emphasis on the individual spectator's construction of meaning, did not specifically identify with any 'terrorist' figure. This is because of the authors' decision to feature many disparate figures rather than just one or two as a principal protagonist, as well as seeing the 'terrorist' through the 'objectification' of newsreel and media image. Although designed to create an emancipatory public space by the spectator analysing the construction of public discourse, a specific identification with the 'terrorist' was lacking. The images of the RAF suicides are only briefly shown, whilst the closest the viewer comes to a personal perspective on the dead RAF members is the brief interview with Christiane Ensslin, talking about the position of the coffins in the grave. Von Trotta's *Die bleierne Zeit* offers a much stronger identification with a single figure, although this is

still not from the position of a practitioner of violence, but rather from the personal

view of a sister. Identification with Fassbinder's 'terrorists' is prevented not so much by

the figures being fictional constructions, but much more by the author's black humour.

Hauff and Aust's *Stammheim* also has little identification with the figures. An

important change in the perspective, however, is that for the first time *real* RAF

members are the principal protagonists, and there is a certain degree of personal

identification, despite the restricted means of the screenplay which are based upon

official court documentation. This is done principally through the description of prison

conditions, and especially through the inclusion of a short, emotive passage of

Meinhof's personal writings on 'isolation torture':

> 'das Gefühl, es explodiert einem der Kopf (das Gefühl, die
> Schädeldecke müßte eigentlich zerreißen, abplatzen) - das Gefühl, es
> würde einem das Rückenmark ins Gehirn gepreßt, das Gefühl, das
> Gehirn schrumpelte einem allmählich zusammen, wie Backobst z.B...'[23]

Richter's art *Zyklus*, painted in the late 1980's, increases this identification with

real RAF figures as individuals. Like Kluge, Richter bases his art on the copying of

already-existent media images in order to examine the social construction of the

'terrorist' as the 'Other' in the media. Unlike Kluge, this is also achieved at a personal

level through the representation of the *Stammheim* dead as individual victims of a

corrupting ideology, a view widely accepted in the media reception. Identification with

one 'terrorist' figure in German cultural productions is achieved in Kresnik's *Ulrike*

Meinhof through the examination of a prominent individual from her own perspective.

This empathic reconstruction (and it is important to repeat that Kresnik, as all the

other cultural producers discussed here, did not in any way condone the actions of the

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[23] 'the feeling one's head is going to explode (the feeling that the top of the skull would really tear apart, break off) - the feeling the spinal cord would be squeezed into the brain, the feeling the brain would gradually shrivel up like, for example, dried fruit...' See Meinhof, U., 'Ein Brief Ulrike Meinhofs aus dem toten Trakt', *Bundesrepublik Deutschland/Rote Armee Fraktion: Ausgewählte Dokumente der Zeitgeschichte* (Köln, GNN Gesellschaft für Nachrichtenerfassung und Nachrichtenverbreitung, Verlagsgesellschaft Politische Berichte m.b.H., 1993), p.41

RAF) is done on both private and political levels, concerning the theme of an individual being inextricably 'caught up' in a misconceived form of ideological practice.

There is also extra-aesthetic evidence that the Federal Republic has gradually managed to diffuse its fear of 'terrorism', by the change in public reaction to such productions. Although there is no evidence to suggest that the debate over *Deutschland im Herbst* went beyond the media and academia, subsequent productions, notably *Die dritte Generation* and *Stammheim*, were subject to violent disruption, in these cases involving films being stolen and damaged, and theatre and theatre-goers being subjected to riots and injury. Gradually by the end of the 1980's this had been assimilated into peaceful protest and a form of dialogue (a more open form of communicative process) through the distribution of leaflets when Richter's paintings were first exhibited. Although Kresnik's production of *Ulrike Meinhof* was subject to security alerts, no evidence was found to suggest any form of action beyond threats. These two last cases are significant as Richter's art would certainly have been the most open to any form of direct attack (not an impossibility given the previous damage done directly to, for example, the film negatives of Fassbinder's and Hauff's productions), whilst Kresnik's theatre production was the most 'sympathetic' portrayal of a member of the RAF to date.

If the general public as private individuals were overcoming anxieties about the RAF, this may also be shown by public institutions in their willingness to fund such cultural productions. As was shown previously, initially in the early 1970's there was a fear in public institutions that *any* reference to 'terrorism', no matter how oblique, was cause for censorship on the grounds of its potential support for anti-state terror. Public media institutions, therefore, delayed transmission of Meinhof's *Bambule* for almost a quarter of a century, Straub and Huillet's dedication to Holger Meins was erased in their film *Moses und Aaron*, and Heinrich Böll's *Katharina Blum* novel was widely subject to criticism, especially in the tabloid media, where he was openly branded as an

apologist of the RAF. It is, therefore, not surprising that there was resistence from the established media, financial or governmental institutions to fund subsequent cultural productions. All of the films discussed here had difficulties finding funding from public sources of financial support, usually either television stations as co-producers, or government committees. This was to continue into the late 1980's, when financial institutions were to withdraw sponsorship for the Frankfurt Museum of Modern Art because of the Richter exhibition.

An indication of a new willingness to help examine 'terrorism' by public bodies is revealed by the case of Kresnik's production, which was not only funded, but also invited to the prestigious Berlin Theatre Festival. Although there is much to be said against Gröning's production *Die Terroristen* (to be examined below), this too did not have any difficulty in finding sponsorship through sources of public media institutions. The ideologically anodyne nature of the film may have helped in this instance, although its portrayal of 'terrorism' is virtually identical to Fassbinder's production of 14 years earlier, which did experience problems in funding. As with many of the other productions concerned here, the film had to be funded largely out of the producers' own private financial resources.

Finally, the paratextual reaction of the mass media will be considered, using it as the most readily-available source of the various discursive positions which were formed. Tracing the debate in this way, whilst not being able to necessarily measure the influence upon people's thinking, may act as an indicator of the fears of and the issues raised in the wider population about 'terrorism'.

It is important to locate *Deutschland im Herbst* as one of the first micro responses to a subject which had hitherto been predominantly mediated by more simplistic macro patterns of discourse. By 1978 there was an ample stock of 'tabloid' characterisations on 'terrorists' and 'terrorism'. After such images had been internalised,

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in a state of constitutional controversy it is not surprising that there should have been a strong reaction when these were challenged. Although the majority of the 'liberal' media grasped Kluge's intentions of reflecting upon the confusing and contradictory nature of the time (for example *Die Zeit* stating that questions at this time were more important than answers), there was a reaction against the 'open' narrative structure as not being adequate to cope with the phenomenon of political violence. This was particularly pronounced amongst those critics from an established ideological (macro) background, in that both the right and left thought the film an abdication of political responsibility at a time when political engagement was necessary. The less politicised neutral media, in thinking that political violence was too serious a problem to be treated in such an ambiguous manner, also reflected this. There was, in their view, the urgent need for some direction from the cultural sphere as to how to concretely conceptualise 'terrorism', so as to either aid understanding of it, or provide a prescriptive political course. That Kluge *et al* were criticised for not wanting to provide this direction (the 'hundred-thousandth correct theory', as the filmmakers termed it) reveals not only the urgency of this, but also is an indicator of the hysteria and inflexibility in the face of an alternative micro discourse. It also illustrates how, within the context of violent action, one feels driven to decisively chose a recognised position, as Fraser notes:

> 'It is in violent encounters…that one is required most obviously to reaffirm or reassess one's own values and to acknowledge the necessity of having as strong and clearly articulated value-system, as sharply defined a self, as much alertness to others, and as firm a will as possible'.[24]

The problem here for the liberal-left was that their 'middle' position could be interpreted as increasingly untenable in the German autumn of 1977, with the apparent contradiction of giving democratic liberties to those who apparently wanted to deny them to others. Kluge's agenda was also deemed 'unsuitable' for this time as it was also

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[24] Fraser, op. cit., p.157

difficult to identify its meaning, being aesthetically based upon a political awareness of the 'fragmented' nature of the Federal Republic.

It is interesting to compare this film with Fassbinder's *Die dritte Generation*, shown a year later. This was diversely appraised by the media, much of which accepted it as a good allegory to the 'real' world from a politically engaged director. Given the short time span between this and *Deutschland im Herbst* it is necessary to ask why two cultural productions involving political violence received different responses. Part of the answer lies in the nature of the identification promoted. Fassbinder's use of dehumanised, apolitical caricatures allows for uncritical pleasure, loss of moral sensibilities, and avoids a potentially painful identification. The omission of the political motives for 'terrorism' as well as its political nature also provides the viewer with an easy moral framework. This unsatisfactory way to confront real fears is because of the ironic detachment of black comedy. Lesser notes that it is the taking of man seriously which gives tragedy its full cathartic force, as this makes the fall of an imperfect being who cannot compromise between extreme alternatives 'terrible'. Comedy is not so satisfying as it takes such weaknesses lightly. Although comedy serves a function in saving us from high expectations, there is not the satisfaction of the more hard won process of the ego having to reconcile conflicting demands for intrapsychic harmony.[25] It may be that the comic production provides an immediately more satisfying model of relief. This is because of it offering an unrealistic characterisation as a means by which fears may be more easily relieved through a lightly-won counter-aggression. This is, however, at the price of failing to grasp seriously the phenomenon of 'terrorism', particularly from the point of view of identification with real needs and grievances. By a simplistic reduction to a form where 'enemies' are identified in this unrealistic way, the resultant peace of mind is gained only through an illusory satisfaction, because of the lack of comprehension of the

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[25] Lesser, op. cit., chapter 11

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relationships which give rise to political violence (and thereby the fears associated with the incomprehensible) have not been resolved.

Although the media reception of von Trotta's *Die bleierne Zeit* illustrated a continued demand for a 'correct explanation' of the RAF and firm moral standpoints on 'terrorism' from cultural producers, there were several mitigating factors which also illustrated a 'coming to terms', suggesting a micro influence on macro discourse. There was the first mention of the need to 'face directly' people who think politically differently, and the liberal media did not attack the lack of a conventional moral in the film, which signified a gradual change from *Deutschland im Herbst*, 'allowing' ambiguity as a credible discursive position instead of insisting on a straightforward political prescriptivism. There was also a recognition in this section of the media that, although wrong in their methods, the RAF had legitimate grievances, something which reviewers had hitherto not spoken of. There was a tendency in the reception to place more emphasis on the private rather than political sphere. The balance between the two spheres was, of course, essential to von Trotta's feminist agenda. The liberal media, in its consensus that the film was not principally about 'terrorism', may be accused of not placing enough emphasis on this, although such a 'private' perspective on the subject was a new micro discourse which examined the issues political violence raised, helping open up a wider debate. The diversity of approaches with which the cultural producers discussed here explored the phenomenon must be seen positively, as each new micro perspective provides new tools with which the RAF may be understood.

The reaction from the right to von Trotta's film was an example of a macro discursive position closing off debate, regarding the new discourse of the private sphere as an inadequate and restricted perspective with which to regard the violence of the RAF. The personal point of view of Christiane Ensslin drew attention away from the need for a political contextualisation (on the terms of the right) in order to justify

repressive state measures. The need in Germany for making the historical and social situation more concrete rather than abstract was also demanded by Delorme, writing from the position of the feminist left. Because the production was not located satisfactorily within the ideological parameters of elements of either the right and left, both concerned themselves with 'unmasking' von Trotta's (and Christiane Ensslin's) intentions. Hence Delorme's attack on Christiane Ensslin, accusing her of wanting to benefit in personal terms from the film, and also her criticism of von Trotta's aesthetic, which she saw as anti-feminist in the alleged adoption of a macro discourse of popular commercial culture. On the other hand, the right, in their desire to portray von Trotta as 'sympathetic' to 'terrorism', tacitly dehumanised the figures associated with the film. There is, therefore, a reiterated desire by those on the right to have simplistic 'terrorist' figures, which may be easier to denounce on account of offering a position of superior morality at no cost to oneself, whilst the left wanted to emphasise the specific social circumstances under which 'terrorism' arises.

The need for contextualisation by the media, locating the production within a paratext to control a "correct" reading, was expressed most clearly in the reaction to Hauff and Aust's *Stammheim*. Locating discourses of 'terrorism' within the media's own ideological imperatives attempted to limit and define the debate. Although Hauff and Aust's intentions were to make an 'objective' documentary-style film, it was the production most heavily criticised by the right, who regarded it as biased, ridiculing authority, and, as in the case of *Die bleierne Zeit*, not giving the opportunity for state power to justify the introduction of repressive legal measures designed to combat the RAF. The extreme strength of feeling is illustrated by the strategies which this sector of the media adopted. This included conspiratorially discrediting the production, tacitly questioning the frame of mind of the filmmakers (a reversion to a clinical discourse which was also seen in the reaction to *Die bleierne Zeit*), and stating that the film would lend support to radicals in the present-day Germany. The question why *Stammheim* provoked one of the most hostile responses in a process which otherwise

indicates a macro acceptance of micro ways of examining the RAF, especially given Hauff and Aust's intention of providing an open discursive space designed to overcome simplistic responses, is, therefore, important. It may be, for example, that this 'objective' treatment, in making the biggest claim upon 'reality' of all the productions discussed here, should be open to criticism on this ground (von Trotta, for example, stressed that *Die bleierne Zeit* held a distance from historical reality). The media reception also has to be located within the context of West Germany in the mid 1980's. The political culture, orientated to the right after the *Tendenzwende* of a decade previously, began to examine notions of German identity in the so-called *Historikerstreit*. This search for identity was hindered by the left, raising questions over collective German guilt for war crimes, and the fears of a new latent 'fascism' which the RAF protested against. The idea that political violence was a 'taboo' subject also presented the right with excuses for closing down the discussion of the Nazi past.

The response to Gerhard Richter's art cycle *18. Oktober 1977* would mark a turning point in the political assessment of productions concerning themselves with left-wing violence. The almost universal acclaim, and the shift in the appraisal to a concentration on aesthetic rather than political discourse, made these artworks subject to a radically different reception from the film *Stammheim*. This is surprising, given that the two works were separated by less than three years, that, like *Stammheim*, there was a 'neutral' framework which could easily be subject to very different ideological interpretations, and Richter's potentially controversial intention to show the Stammheim dead as *victims*, whilst choosing not to paint their victims. There are, however, mitigating factors to Richter's work. The artist's well-known 'anti-ideological' label may have led some critics to feel politically 'safer', by not feeling the need to contrast their own politics (or the politics of the media they were writing within) to any political program the producer has (for example, Kluge), or clearly defined political persuasions (for example, Fassbinder or von Trotta). By defining the work within the discourse of an 'emotional tragedy', it avoided political definition. Richter,

by situating the Stammheim dead within a romantic emotionalist register rather than the Brechtian social realist mode of Hauff's film is, however, making a move similar to that in von Trotta's film, which was subject to much more criticism. Related to this is Richter's statement that the 'terrorists' were 'victims' of ideological thinking, which may have defused criticism of the work by allowing the liberal left to define the practitioners of left-wing violence as players in an emotional tragedy, whilst simultaneously allowing the right to claim that the natural result of following a 'terrorist' ideology was death.

Even if these factors were taken into account, the reception of Richter's work was very different to previous productions on the subject of the RAF. The media did not feel the need to adopt coercive discursive positions, which may indicate a willingness to open up the debate in the postmodern era after the *Historikerstreit*. This is substantiated by other factors in the reception. There was agreement across every section of the media that it is important to remember the past, and in discussing this the ideologically volatile word *tabu* ('taboo') was virtually never used. The debate over recovering the past was therefore reframed in a language which was more neutral, and less contentious. Other elements revealed a new awareness of the 'postmodern' condition which emphasises the interplay of discourses above any grand narrative. The paratext no longer consisted of a demand for statements for a particular political course within which the debate over 'terrorism' should be conceptualised. Rather, questions concerned whether one such position is possible, or whether it should have one at all. There was also no explicit accusation made against Richter that the works could encourage sympathy for, or aid, violent protest. Richter's *Zyklus*, when compared to the 1972 spontaneous *Aktion* of Beuys, or a work like *Deutschland im Herbst*, is the most illustrative of the changing attitudes and a process of a cathartic recognition of the complex nature of 'terrorism'.

In comparison to Richter, Johann Kresnik has a strong ideological narrative.
Despite this, *Ulrike Meinhof* may be seen as a continuation of the process of strong
identification with RAF figures as individuals, rather than being merely bound up in the
political activities of group dynamics or through a secondary perspective. It may also
be seen as a continuation of examining the phenomenon from new micro perspectives
which different aesthetic forms allowed. Kresnik represents perhaps the most radical
break with the previous productions in this respect, in his reliance upon theatrical
allegory, which, unlike *Die dritte Generation*, extracted a 'real' figure from the outside
world. Art's claim for freedom to produce representations differing from reality (where
strict representational realism is the closest to the canons of 'objective' reasoning), by
the use of fantasy and utopian visions in order to achieve a 'higher' truth unobtainable
through 'realism', is most pronounced in this work. Kresnik's 'bias' (his intention to
'rehabilitate' Meinhof, and the focus in the third act on the cruelty of the state in
dealing with the RAF, rather than on the deeds of the RAF outside the prison, for
example) was largely accepted as legitimate. There remained critical voices from
'traditional' political discursive positions, the left criticising the portrayal of societal
relations in the production. There was also evidence of a new flexibility in critical
assessment, further illustrating the shift away from the desire to 'come down on one
side', and a recognition of the complexity of the issue.

These different micro perspectives provided 'tools' of conceptualisation which
would eventually shift the predominant macro discourse into an acceptance of more
open debate, thus providing a cathartic framework which enabled 'terrorism' to be
more capable of being conceptualised and understood. Public hysteria arises when
people are confused by a complex and dangerous phenomenon, having no means of
adequately dealing with it. Productions which approach 'terrorism' from these differing
angles allow people to label and identify its complexities, thereby helping disarm the
subject. The cultural productions examined here were initially contested because the
previous macro conceptualisations were thought inadequate by the producers. They

predominantly wanted to move to a more open, theatrical (as opposed to spectacular) production, which raises questions in the viewer's mind rather than provide easy answers. The viewer has to actively 'integrate' and 'order' (both a personal and socially cathartic process) to establish the ground for the purging of fear. There was a cost in the attempt to understand the violence of the RAF which, as the reception of the works showed, many people wanted initially to reduce to a simplistic moral judgement rather than grasp the complexity of the motives.[26] The intricate and varied examinations which the phenomenon was subjected to by cultural forms initially provoked strong reactions, although the multiple micro perspectives which were to be afforded by the 'theatrical' works, both aesthetically and ideologically, gradually facilitated an awareness of the complicated nature of political violence.

Alongside cultural productions being used as 'tools' to understand and thereby aid the disarming of a threatening subject, the pattern of reception may also illustrate the relationship between art and a political urgency in times of crisis. As noted above, violent action or its threat may impel people to chose a clear position for one 'side' or the other. The initial tendencies when the violence of the RAF was at its highpoint in West Germany in the 1970's was for some reviewers to demand a didactic function of art, prioritising its political function, in the same way as the pre-war dictates of Soviet socialist realism or the Nazi romanticisation of art were instigated in the service of countering an opposing ideological threat. This demand was to gradually diminish, yet, significantly, every production met with some objection on political grounds to varying degrees. During the 'hot' autumn of 1977 the need for a decisive and recognised standpoint highlights the competing discursive practices in terms of a Nietzschean 'Will to Power'. This way of interpreting man's interaction with each other and the world has the Schopenhauerian presumption that everything in the world may be reduced to this

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[26] This is emphasised by Ditton speaking of Goffman's stress on the importance of examining conceptions of 'normality' if the socially 'deviant' is to be understood. Ditton, J., *The View from Goffman* (London, MacMillan, 1980), p.95

'will' (*Wille*) to master and control the external environment.[27] This is done through conceptualising and categorising the environment to make it understandable and predictable, as the discursive 'reality' is one of instability and continual change. Questions of whether these categories can actually lay claim to 'truth' values are secondary in discourse theory, as 'truth' is regarded as created rather than discovered.[28] This is perhaps most notable by the selective nature of external 'facts' in the paratext, directing readings of *Stammheim*. The technique of 'closing off' further debate on issues of political violence by, for example, the dehumanisation of 'terrorists' or the producers of cultural productions examining the phenomenon, is notably absent from reviews after *Stammheim*. This reveals a further indication of a readiness to examine the RAF in a more open and 'cathartic' way. The human need to extend our mastery of the world (even by means of false judgements which may have utility) would be particularly pronounced in conditions when the individual felt powerless in the face of a threat, and hence the high number of moral judgements which characterise the earlier newspaper reviews. Towards the end of the period examined, however, we see a form of consensus emerging from these competing positions. A new openness in 'working through' this episode of political violence in Germany (as opposed to previous attempts to manipulate or prescribe the conditions for debate) is not only, therefore, reflected by the cultural productions, but may also have aided the process. In creating an aesthetic environment which provide the conceptual tools for the 'integration' and 'ordering' of inner conflicts, the ability to tolerate and discuss opposing views may be facilitated.

These more 'open' conditions of debate appear to indicate that the political discourse which 'wins' through is that of the liberal left. There was, as well as the reluctance to discursively limit the debate, a recognition of the need not to forget

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[27] For a general discussion of this term see Williams, L.L., 'Will to Power in Nietzsche's Published Works and the Nachlass', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 1996, Vol. 57(3), pp.447-63
[28] This has origins in Nietzsche. See Ansell-Pearson, K., *An Introduction to Nietzsche as Political Thinker: The Perfect Nihilist* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.16

(repress) issues of political violence (both of which may be considered the political equivalent of the construction of a 'total' situation), the dangers of an over-powerful state as well as the futility of violence from either side, and the recognition that public money should be used to fund potentially controversial productions to promote a pluralistic cultural sphere. These latter points are in contrast to the politics of the neo-conservative *Tendenzwende* of the 1970's. It is now worth briefly examining whether more recent 'terrorist' activity in Germany, for example of neo-Nazism, has been subjected to this same process in the cultural sphere.

Postscript: Future Directions

The decline of left-wing violence and the rise of neo-Nazi aggression in the early 1990's brought about a shift in cultural productions on political violence to concentrate almost exclusively on right-wing radicalism, revealing the quick response with which artistic forms mirror societal concerns. In 1991 the violence used by right-wing radicals who could not express themselves politically in the far right wing constitutional parties formed in the 1980's (including the *Republikanische Partei*, led by ex-SS Officer Franz Schönhuber) overtook the number of violent acts perpetrated by the radical left. This would qualitatively shift the media emphasis. In 1992 there were 'almost daily' reports of attacks from the extreme right.[29] According to a 1994 report by the German Federal Ministry of the Interior (*Bundesministerium des Innern*), right-wing membership and violent acts with suspected right-wing grounds peaked in the years 1992-3, the latter increasing eight-fold between the years 1990 and 1992.[30] Such events had implications for cultural life, leading to new government controls on lending libraries regarding publications with a right-wing content, which were to be only borrowed by adults for 'scholarly' (*wissenschaftlich*) purposes.[31]

Neues Deutschland was a quick filmic response to the arson attacks in Mölln[32] in November 1992, and was to be viewed as a successor to *Deutschland im Herbst* with its five short contributions from producers, which mixed fact and fiction in its

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[29] Backes, U., Jesse, E., *Politischer Extremismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Bonn, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1993), p.120

[30] *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1994,* (Bonn, Bundesministerium des Innern, 1995), pp.77-81

[31] 'Rechtsextreme Literatur nur an Erwachsene ausleihen', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 17.7.93

[32] The Mölln attacks on Turkish homes killed two women and one ten year-old child. Those claiming responsibility had ended their anonymous calls to the authorities with "Heil Hitler!" 'Nach den Mord-Anschlägen von Mölln ermittelt der Generalbundesanwalt', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 24.11.92

presentation of right-wing violence.[33] Although the film was acknowledged at festivals (Dani Levy's contribution won the *Film Förderpreis* at the Munich Film Festival in the summer of 1993), as was the case with *Deutschland im Herbst*, *Neues Deutschland* was widely criticised across the media political spectrum for not providing any connection between the individual contributions, at the cost of a clear overall perspective.[34] As clearly as *Neues Deutschland* attacks all aspects of neo-Nazi violence - from the attacks on the disabled, Jews, political opponents, and asylum seekers - it would appear that there remains a strong desire to formulate an even stronger statement against right-wing violence through positive means, rather than by regarding the issue from the (negatively formulated) point of view of the victims. It is also notable that in only one case was there a demand for a political analysis of the causes behind the phenomenon of right-wing violence.[35]

In this respect there are many parallels to another film concerning extreme right-wing violence. Schlingensief's *Terror 2000 - Intensivstation Deutschland* parodies both the German right and left, taking place in the fictional town of 'Rassau', a thinly-disguised Rostock, another town subject to neo-Nazi violence. Two right-wing extremists settle in Rassau as a priest and a furniture salesman after a life of criminal activities, deciding to 'clean' the town of asylum-seekers. Only after the murder of a Polish family and their German social worker does the Federal Criminal Office intervene, sending an incompetent and corrupt officer to investigate. Many groups subsequently attempt to use the situation for their own interests, including neo-

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[33] For background on the film as well as a review, see 'Sprache verschlagen', *Der Spiegel*, 28.6.93; 'Schiefes zur Lage der Nation', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 5.7.93

[34] See, for example, 'Angst vor der rechten Gewalt', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 3.7.93; *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 5.7.93, op. cit.; '"...kein Sender würde ihn ausstrahlen" - 15 Jahre später: West 3 zeigt "Neues Deutschland" und erinnert damit an "Deutschland im Herbst"', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 3/4.7.93

[35] 'The unanimity of the perspective, intensified by bleak, symbolically pregnant linking text, omits what is curious about the phenomenon, the view behind the curtains of the new violence, missing the provocation. So the project, planned as a television documentary about the hot autumn of 1992, is unintentionally a reflection of the weaknesses of German cinema'. 'Rauhe Stellen, kleine Ritzen', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 7.7.93

Nazis and politicians. Rather than provide any systematic analysis of the phenomenon, or attempt to come 'closer' to understanding the individual within the dynamics of the group, the film instead appears to stress right-wing violence as part of the 'German condition' after reunification.

The doubts over reunification (major cultural figures such as Günter Grass and Heiner Müller were two who expressed scepticism) have been linked to the rise of neo-Nazi violence, stemming from the difficulty of joining the two states with 40 years of cultural and political difference. German 'national' identity has been historically problematic, exacerbated in the post-war period by the problems of the Hitler legacy and the founding of new political systems for two nations created from the outside.[36] The subsequent emphasis placed on 'common kinship', the idea of prepolitical identity and questions of a German 'identity' has fed rascism against such minority groups as Turks and gypsies.[37] On the question of neo-Nazi violence there was a view in the reception to *Terror 2000* that the screen violence (presumably satirically) 'exposed' provocative truths and the violence of the right.[38] Only one specialist media reviewer was concerned with the question over whether such representations may actually help people to usefully analyse neo-Nazism, criticising 'stylised, eccentric' characters, which ignores the fact that much 'fascist' activity is of a more inconspicuous "white-collar" kind.[39]

There is, therefore, an apparent reluctance for the traditionally politically-orientated media to fully 'learn' from the experience of the treatments of the violence of

[36] Fulbrook, M., 'From "Volksgemeinschaft" to Divided Nation: German National Identities and Political Cultures since the Third Reich', *Historical Research*, Vol. 62(148), June 1989, p.193
[37] For the problems of reunification and the debates surrounding it see Le Gloannec, 'On German Identity' in Mertes *et al* (eds) *In Search of Germany* (New Brunswick and London, Transaction Publishers, 1996), pp.149-66
[38] See, for example, 'Blut! Glück!' *Die Zeit*, 6.11.92; 'Weit weg von Deutschland - ganz nah: Amokläufe durch die Gegenwart', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 3.11.92; Hamacher, R., 'Terror 2000 - Intensivstation Deutschland', *Film Dienst*, Vol. 46(6), 16.3.93. p.30
[39] Horst, S., 'Terror 2000: Intensivstation Deutschland', *EPD Film*, January 1993, Vol. 10(1), p.39

the radical left in cultural productions and grasp the complexity of the issue. This provides a parallel with the early reaction to cultural forms depicting left-wing violence, in that a new and threatening situation dictates a strong counter-position, leaving little room for solving the problem through a more thought-out understanding of its causes. Furthermore, the films prefer not to show the perpetrators, or to produce satirical figures which are unable to mediate what it is like to be a human perpetrator of racist violence.

There were, however, also productions which did attempt to formulate a clearer understanding of the phenomenon through the examination of the personal and 'everyday' lives of the perpetrators of violence, a perspective which, as detailed previously, indicates a 'coming to terms'.

One such example was Heise's *Stau*, premiered in the immediate aftermath of neo-Nazi violence, in November, 1992. This was a documentary film based upon interviews with violent young right-wing extremists. The standpoint is almost apolitical, concentrating on the individual rather than the political. There are, accordingly, interviews with a disillusioned unemployed youth in the group who had given up his apprenticeship as surveyor because he was unable to draw, one youth talking about the effect the death of his mother had upon him, and another whose hobby is cooking, proudly showing his baking off to the camera. The political is, however, not neglected. The film accompanies the youths on a trip to the Buchenwald concentration camp, provoking arguments within the group about violence, one claiming that it is the society within which they are brought up which is violent, not they themselves. Yet elements of the public reception were not so positive to this approach, leading to cancellations in Berlin, for fear of a repetition of a riot which took place three weeks before in Halle. Here left-wing extremists attacked the cinema

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with tracer bullets and paving stones, before having a pitched battle with right-wing

extremists, after fliers calling for an "active" boycott of the film were distributed.[40]

There were also indications that such films had an effect on how the media

regarded political violence. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, for example, in

noting a heated discussion which took place after a public viewing of *Stau*, appeared

to want to move away from inflexible ideological positions as being incapable of fully

understanding the motives behind political violence:

> 'Was an der Debatte im Saal - zeitweilig ist es nichts als eine Schreierei
> - verblüfft, das ist die zwanghafte Wiederholung der Standpunkte, die
> gänzliche Unfähigkeit, aus dem Zirkel auszubrechen...Wer das
> Gespräch will, muß ein Minimum an Respekt zeigen, und das ist
> gegenüber der militanten Rechten eine starke Zumutung. Wer zu dieser
> Zumutung nicht bereit ist, der kann seinem Gegenüber nur noch den
> Rücken zeigen oder die Faust'.[41]

There is, therefore, the recognition that not only is an 'open' speech situation

necessary, but also that dogmatic political discourses may be a hindrance to this

process. Given such different examples and responses, the case of the cultural

portrayal of right-wing terror, therefore, appears ambiguous, leading to no definite

conclusion on the issue of whether 'lessons' from the case of left-wing terror have been

'learnt' in confronting political violence.

The post-1990 presentation of left-wing 'terrorism' is similarly ambiguous in

this respect. Philip Gröning's 1993 film *Die Terroristen* (which won a 'bronze leopard'

at the Locarno Film Festival in August 1992, and which was broadcast on national

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[40] Details about the film and the reaction to it may be found in 'Gewaltstau', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 27.11.92

[41] 'What is surprising about the debate in the room - sometimes nothing more than a shouting match - is the obsessive repetition of standpoints, the complete inability to break out of the circle....whoever wants dialogue must show a minimum of respect, and this is asking a lot of the militant right. Whoever is not ready to accept this imposition can only turn his back or show his fist to those opposing him'. Ibid

television by *Südwestfunk* in November) is a black comedy set in the immediate post-reunification era, telling the story of three young adults who plan to assassination the "fat statesman" - a figure which was widely assumed to be Helmut Kohl. After financing the operation through a bank robbery, they plan to blow up the Chancellor's motorcade, failing when the bomb does not detonate. Keen to remove all traces of their action they return to the flat and clean it meticulously. Despite this, the estate agent arbitrarily declares that they must forfeit their deposit, an action which allows the group to unload their pseudo-political frustration upon him. Jürgen shouts that the "anti-imperialistic struggle" is beginning whilst Michael shoots the estate agent. Claudia then boobytraps the flat, killing a neighbour. On the run at a railway station kiosk, the three take pleasure in the next day's news headlines before dividing the rest of the money from the bank robbery between them, and then going their separate ways.

There are many comparisons to Fassbinder's *Die dritte Generation*. Predominantly this is the apolitical stance of the 'terrorists', there also being notably no reference to violent activity from either the right or the left, in contrast to Fassbinder's montaged news reports on the subject. Claudia enjoys reading aloud political tracts by Marx and Mao, but despite her enthusiastic gestures delivers them in a monotone, and declares that she does not want to discuss them, just read them. This apoliticism is also apparent in the ridiculing of their acts of 'terrorism', for example Michael's "attack" on a chemists store when he demands a box of tissues with his stocking mask on. An assassination attempt, the film suggests, is a device to relieve their boredom, emphasised by the contrasting colourful television images, and the group's immersion in computer games. The film aesthetic is also reminiscent of Fassbinder's 'terrorists', notably the background of topical media debates through the editing into the film of television and video recordings, such as the opening of the Berlin Wall, Kohl's speech promising a better future, and the Chancellor's motorcade. Sound is similarly montaged with, for example, advertisements for the Christian Democratic Union party,

songs sung at the Brandenburg Gate, as well as pop music and department store Christmas jingles.

Examining Gröning's stated intentions help illustrate the relationship of the filmic to the political. The film, Gröning claims, does not concern itself so much over whether the figures subscribe to concrete political concepts such as democracy, but rather about the confused nature of German (political) identity in the 1990's, compounded by a society of 'leisure, media, and consumerism':

> "In ihrem Umgang mit Politik steckt natürlich etwas sehr Politisches.
> Die ganzen Mao- und Marx- Zitate sind zwar nur so übergestülpt, wie
> man sich eine teure Lederjacke überstülpen würde, sie sind aber nicht
> unbedingt weniger wahr".[42]

In the year after reunification, therefore, there is an apparent need for the continuation of the search for a common German 'identity'. The anomic isolation and alienation from any conceptions of communal (political) interests takes on an added dimension when one considers that, unlike Fassbinder's 'terrorists', Gröning's are not led from the outside as puppets of a conspiracy to break the democratic structure.[43]

Gröning believes that this in itself is a "political" statement. The political as a fashionable spectacle, commodified into a consumerist ethic and capable of being easily coopted, is to be detected not only in the 'terrorists', but also in the government:

> "Daß die Sprüche lose an den Figuren hängen, ist ja schon auch wieder
> politisch...Die Vision, wie man handeln könnte, ist ja nicht nur meinen
> Figuren, sondern auch unseren Politikern verloren gegangen. Es geht
> doch in der Politik nur noch darum, Probleme möglist schnell vom

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[42] "There is, of course, something very political about their dealings with politics. All those Mao and Marx quotes pulled on, like you would pull on an expensive leather jacket in fact. They are not, however, any the less true". Quoted in 'Surfbretter und Plastiksprengstoff', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 7.7.93
[43] Voester, C. E., 'Die Terroristen', *EPD Film*, Vol. 10(5), May 1993, p.41

Tisch zu kriegen. Eine Vorstellung davon, was man will, ist nicht mehr da".[44]

The loss of the political vision which this entails would appear to stress Gröning's desire for the politically authentic, the loss of 'reality' being emphasised by the montaged media world which the 'terrorists' are blinded by. As *Der Spiegel* notes, since Helmut Kohl does not come out of the television set, 'the three adventurers decide to go to their Chancellor, with an act which is grand enough for television'.[45]

The subsequent debate, however, was to centre almost entirely upon the issue of violence in the media rather than any political element, despite Gröning's belief that his apolitical 'terrorists' paradoxically revealed the essence of modern day politics in the Federal Republic. The Chancellor's office, after reading a preview of the film in *Der Spiegel*, attempted to block the broadcast, although it was broadcast after the SWF director general ensured that the (fictional) Chancellor survived the attack. The German Ministry of the Interior, however, investigated the film to assess whether it could be prosecuted for 'glorifying violence'.[46] Helmut Kohl involved himself personally in the debate by writing an open letter to the Chairman of the SWF broadcasting advisory committee. Kohl's criticisms are not only about the distress the film caused him from a personal point of view, but also fearing a political reaction:

> 'Der Film "Die Terroristen" erweckt durchaus den Eindruck, daß ein Attentat auf mich in bestimmten Situationen als ein möglicher Ausweg aus einem Gefühl der Hilflosigkeit erscheinen könnte...Tragen Sie dafür Sorge, daß künftig im Programm des SWF keine Sendungen ausgestrahlt werden, in welchen die Ausübung von Gewalt gegen die Repräsentanten unseres Staates dargestellt wird'.[47]

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[44] "That the slogans hang loosely on the figures is also again political...The vision of how you would be able to act has become not only lost on my characters but also to our politicians. In politics it's only about sweeping problems off the table as quickly as possible. A conception of what you want is not there any more", *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 7.7.93. op. cit.

[45] 'Bomben im Bad', *Der Spiegel*, 23.11.92

[46] 'Personalien', *Der Spiegel*, 30.11.92, p.318

[47] 'The film "Die Terroristen" indeed gives the impression that in the view of some people an assassination attempt on me in certain situations could appear as a possible way out from feelings of helplessness...Take care not to broadcast any program on SWF in the future in which the committing

This is particularly significant, he adds, due to recent attacks on leading figures in Germany (attacks from the extreme right are also alluded to), as well as a recent *Bundestag* sitting condemning the trivialisation of violence. The decision to broadcast was both 'insensitive and irresponsible' as it could provoke the support or awakening of political violence.

Kohl's attack must not only be contextualised within the framework of the rise of attacks from violent right-wing organisations, but also in the face of the widespread concern felt in Germany at the time about the possible detrimental effects on children when watching 'video violence'.[48] On the right, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* criticised SWF for broadcasting *Die Terroristen* - 'which quite consciously encouraged hate and murder', and which used public funds to do so. One feels, they claim,

> '...daß im Zentrum der Mediengesellschaft nur noch purer Wahnsinn
> herrschen kann...Man fragt sich, was in den Köpfen der Entscheider
> eigentlich vorgegangen ist. Was versprach man sich von einem Film,
> der ein Attentat auf Helmut Kohl zum Inhalt hat und den Terrorismus
> als Lebensform anpreist?'[49]

The reaction from the liberal media to the debate which films such as Gröning's raised was predictable, and most strongly expressed in an essay which appeared in *Der Spiegel*.[50] This specifically accuses the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* of not providing any intellectual rigor in its argument that Gröning's film encourages hate and murder, and accuses Chancellor Kohl of using the issue of media violence to distract

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of violent acts upon representatives of our state is portrayed'. 'Terroristen: Helmut Kohl protestiert', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 28.11.92

[48] See, for example, '"Die rasten einfach aus"', *Der Spiegel*, 12.10.92, p.46; '...damit die Grausamkeit ein Ende hat', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 26.11.92 for concerns expressed by teachers, psychologists and politicians, and an example of a pressure group demanding "childfriendly" broadcasting.

[49] '...that only pure madness must lie at the centre of the media community...You ask yourself what goes on in the heads of those who make the decisions. What do they hope to get from a film which has an assassination attempt on Kohl as its content and which extols terrorism as a lifestyle?'. 'Terroristen', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 27.11.92

[50] Seidl, C., 'Mit Voodoo-Zauber gegen die Gewalt', *Der Spiegel*, 7.12.92, pp.270-3

attention away from recent right-wing attacks and onto the soft targets of authors and directors. Noting cases of film censorship by the government, the author suggests that the government had been previously accustomed to an acquiescent television which it used to its political advantage:

'...kein Wunder also, daß ein Politiker irgandwann all das, was das Fernschen zeigt, für die Wirklichkeit nimmt und echte Attentäter von gespielten nicht mehr unterscheiden kann...Wer heute die Gewalt in der Kunst und in den Medien anprangert, der steuert die Aufmerksamkeit weg von der wirklichen Gewalt und hin zu Autoren und Regisseuren, mit welchen man natürlich auch viel leichter fertig wird als mit rechten Kriminellen'.[51]

It is not surprising that the film was used by the media as a way of referring to actual neo-Nazi violence. This contextualisation may help explain the vehemence of this attack. Kohl, for example, is someone who is out of touch with reality, acting like a 'voodoo priest' in order to avoid his own potential assassination.

There was, therefore, a clear shift in this case away from regarding presentations of left-wing violence in a political way, concentrating almost solely upon the possible societal affects of the perspective within which it is set, and a framing of the 'terrorist' in apolitical discourse, as a marginalised and anomic individual. It is difficult to say whether this indicates a defusing of fears of violence from the left, or a case of it not being taken seriously any more. In the face of this ambiguity it is instructive to examine a production which did tackle the issue of the violence of the RAF in a direct manner.

Todesspiel, first broadcast by ARD in late June 1997, was a two-part three hour dramatisation of the Schleyer kidnap, the Lufthansa hijack, and the death of the

[51] '...it is, therefore, not a surprise that a politician takes everything that the television shows as reality, and cannot differentiate true assassins from staged ones any more...Who denounces violence in art and media today steers attention away from real violence and towards authors and producers, who are, of course, much easier to destroy than right-wing criminals'. Seidl, op. cit., pp.271-2

leaders of the first generation of the RAF in the specially-built Stammheim prison. Costing seven million Deutschmarks to make, it was directed by the documentary film-maker Heinrich Breloer, who used a mixed aesthetic of interviews with many of the key figures of the time, news footage of the period and a staged re-enactment of the autumn's events. The atmosphere of a documentary is heightened by the precise dating and timing of the staged sequences, and the mixing of old newsreel - such as of that showing the bodies of Schleyer's bodyguards being carried away from the scene of the kidnap - with the staged sequences. The film revealed a new openness about the events: much of the news footage was previously unreleased due to security measures, notably more of the video the RAF made of the captured Schleyer (only 15 seconds of which were publically released at the time, the *Bundeskriminalamt* (BKA) fearing that the emotional pictures of Schleyer pleading for his life would place public pressure on the government's hard line). Breloer conducted interviews with 50 figures who played a role in the events of the 1977 autumn, including the then-Chancellor Schmidt, the government spokesman Klaus Bölling, the head of the *BKA* Horst Herold, the RAF members Silke Maier-Witt and Peter-Jürgen Boock, and the first ever interview with the co-pilot of the hijacked airliner "Landshut", Jürgen Vietor. Important insights are given into this episode in German history, the official documents of which will only be publically opened in 2007. Breloer stated, above all, his fascination with the opportunity to utilise untold elements of this episode of recent German history.[52]

A significant aspect of the work was the emphasis on personal as well as political tragedies. Notable examples were Silke Maier-Witt, an RAF member active in the Schleyer kidnap, clearly remaining troubled by uncertainty when asked whether she would have used her gun if she had been discovered. In his interview, Schmidt appears emotionally moved while recounting how he watched the video of the captured Schleyer in his office, knowing that his actions may (and indeed did) lead to the

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[52] For background information on the production see 'Portrait-Gast: Heinrich Breloer'. *Parlazzo*. 19.11.96

murder of the businessman. Schleyer's family talk candidly about his role as a member of the wartime SS, and Silke Maier-Witt speaks of her embarrassment of discussing the advantages and disadvantages of capitalism with the captured Schleyer. An understanding of the complexities and human dilemmas of both sides is achieved, and it is this understanding which, as elaborated above, provides an important element in learning to cathartically tackle and cope with such issues. The reconciliation of divisions created by political violence currently being undertaken by the South African 'Peace and Reconciliation Commission' is based upon the principle that a truthful historical record is essential for reconciling past political violence.[53] This process, as illustrated by *Todesspiel*, appears to suggest a similar, if less politically institutionalised process in the German examination of the RAF.

The docu-drama was watched by an estimated five million people, revealing that the subject retained the power to provoke wide interest and debate, as shown by the subsequent series of full-page articles in *Die Zeit*, including contributions from academics, the victims' families, and a rare interview with Schmidt.[54] The reaction to the broadcast was one of praise for its sober and reflective nature, the *Rheinische Merkur*, for example, thinking it was filmed 'without unnecessary speculation or action...Breloer creates a personal atmosphere in the relations between criminals and victims...which distinguishes itself from today's television bloodbaths by its honesty, sensitivity and precision'.[55] This reflected a journalistic consensus across the political spectrum. In the debate which followed the programme, the left-wing press, for example, agreed that the 'terrorist' episode in Germany's post-war history was an ineffectual series of murders, a conclusion which was also recently reached by former RAF members meeting in Zurich.[56] Former members of the RAF who have renounced

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[53] Hird, C., *The Terror and the Truth* (London, BBC Learning Support, 1997), pp.14-16
[54] 'Ex-Terroristen die Hand reichen? Nein!', *Die Zeit*, 4.7.97; Delius, F.C., 'Die Dialektik des Deutschen Herbstes, *Die Zeit*, 25.7.97; Harpprecht, K., 'Schuldig? Wodurch, warum?', *Die Zeit*, 1.8.97; '"Ich bin derjenige, der weiterleidet"', *Die Zeit*, 1.9.97
[55] 'Kritik: Todesspiel', *Der Rheinische Merkur*, 27.6.97
[56] 'Haunted by Ghosts of Revolutions Past', *The Observer*, 13.7.97

violence now speak openly of the personal difficulty of adopting a critical attitude to one's past. Judgements continue to be reserved as to whether *all* violence for such ends is morally wrong, and significantly, there remains a declared distrust amongst the RAF dissidents (*Aussteiger*) of speaking to the German press, suggesting a complete reconciliation is still to be achieved.[57]

Political violence has always been a controversial subject in post-war German history because of the legacy of fascism, as was most evident in the debate surrounding *Stammheim*, and continues to be linked as part of the 'German condition' with the violence of the RAF. *Der Spiegel* commentating on the assessment of history which *Todesspiel* offered, thought that 'Much about the German Autumn lies nearer to 1945 than 1997 when seen today'.[58] Such debates and controversy continue to pervade the cultural sphere. The son and niece of Wolfgang Wagner have both accused him in separate books of being a secret supporter of Hitler. At the same time an exhibition of previously unpublished photographs of Nazi atrocities and letters providing evidence of *Wehrmacht* involvement in killing Jews ran into controversy as Chancellor Kohl's government kept silent whilst the Bavarian CSU protested against the works as 'offensive' and 'historically incorrect and manipulative'. A similar controversy emerged when Leni Riefenstahl, the film director and 'last surviving cultural figure of the Nazi era' (whose works glorified a superior German race) had her photographs exhibited and sold in a Hamburg gallery.[59] Less controversy now exists over the legacy of the violence of the RAF, despite the claims by Irmgard Moeller, one of the few unrepentant RAF members left in prison, that the Stammheim prisoners were murdered by the state.[60]

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[57] This interview with former members of the RAF was conducted with a Danish broadsheet.
'Den ubesejrede fortid', *Weekendavisen*, 17-23.10.97 (Translated by Sørensen, L.)
[58] 'Leutnants im deutschen Herbst', *Der Spiegel*, 9.6.97, p.172
[59] 'Wagner Soap Opera rages over Keys to Bayreuth', *The Times*, 28.2.97; 'Kohl's Right-Wing Allies try to ban War Crime Pictures', *Sunday Times*, 2.3.97; 'Twilight of a Nazi Goddess', *The Guardian*, 18.8.97
[60] *The Observer*, 13.7.97, op. cit.

There is a sense within the sphere of cultural productions that the more recent political violence may be better understood and 'worked through'. An instructive essay appeared in the film journal *EPD Film*, for example, under the title of discussing the current debate about violence in films, but which presently becomes substantially an essay devoted to (not necessarily violent) films about neo-Nazism.[61] Kuhlbrodt argues that the usual comforting Hollywood formula of establishing a moral high-ground cannot provide a 'coming to terms' or 'working through' as this is located within the film and not the spectator. In a similar way to Kluge, Kuhlbrodt argues for an active viewer, locating the moral judgements within the viewer rather than the film narrative, a process which, as previously detailed, can help facilitate a cathartic process. Only then can the violent 'other' be looked directly in the face, 'accosting' our violent side in order that violence can be actively 'worked through'. Parallelling Mahlendorf's thesis, this looking at the 'other' directly and at the level of the 'everyday' is a disturbing and difficult process as the easy (Hollywood) picture of the 'enemy' is deconstructed when 'de-demonised' (*Entdämonisieren*). There is a continuing recognition, therefore, that the necessary (although difficult) identification with the figures of violence promotes an active viewing which may allow a 'working through' of fears. It is, however, not surprising that the German government itself wants definite moral judgements in art forms because of the fear of such productions having the potential to encourage politically-motivated violence.[62]

Although inconclusive, there are, therefore, indications which suggest the techniques of conceptualisation which Germany's episode of left-wing violence raised are being used in other instances of political violence. German artists are unparallelled in Europe for bringing the political issues into the open to be debated, whether on an

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[61] Kuhlbrodt, D., 'Gewalt im Film', *EPD Film*, Vol. 10(7), July 1993, pp.8-9
[62] See Speck, M., 'Medien und Gewalt' in *Extremismus und Gewalt* Vol.3 (Bonn, Der Bundesminister des Innern, 1994), pp.81-7

individual level or in groups such as *Gruppe 47*, or the 'New German Cinema'. Edgar Reitz's film *Heimat* may, for example, be seen as a precursor to the Goldhagen debate in its portrayal of the 'everyday' life of villagers before and during the Nazi era, whilst the film *Stammheim* ignited issues of reconciliation (*Versöhnung*) with repentant ex-RAF figures.[63] Reconciliation with former 'terrorists' may be a difficult process in Germany, given the difficulties of politically reconciling the large number who acted in the name of Nazi Germany, and more recently those who are now known to have informed for the East German *Stasi*.[64] It is through the contribution of cultural productions and the reactions to them that debates such as those surrounding the RAF may be mapped out. This not only provides a reflection of attitudes, beliefs, and values held within the community, but also may provide means by which the phenomenon may be understood better, leading to solutions and reconciliation.

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[63] See, for example, 'Ende der "bleiernen Zeit"?', *Tageszeitung*, 1.2.86; 'Signale der Versöhnung', *Tageszeitung*, 3.2.86; 'Amnestie für RAF-Aussteiger!', *Tempo*, October 1987, pp.39-42. The latter, although written a year and a half later, includes the views of Stefan Aust on the subject.
[64] Hird, op. cit., pp.5-9

Appendix: Cartoons

The page numbers refer to the page in this thesis, not to the pages in the newspaper or journal where the cartoon was orginally printed.

'"Vorsicht, Mann, nicht ins eigene Fleisch"', *Der Spiegel*, 5.12.77, p.274

'Anti-Terror Gesetz', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 17.2.78, p.274

'Großer Fahndungsapparat', *Die Zeit*, 4.11.77, p.275

'Die leise Art', *Die Zeit*, 4.11.77, p.275

'Terror-Bekämpfung', *Die Welt*, 23.3.78, p.276

[No title], *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 21.10.77, p.276

'"Paßt lieber auf die alten Nazis auf!"', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 4.11.78, p.277
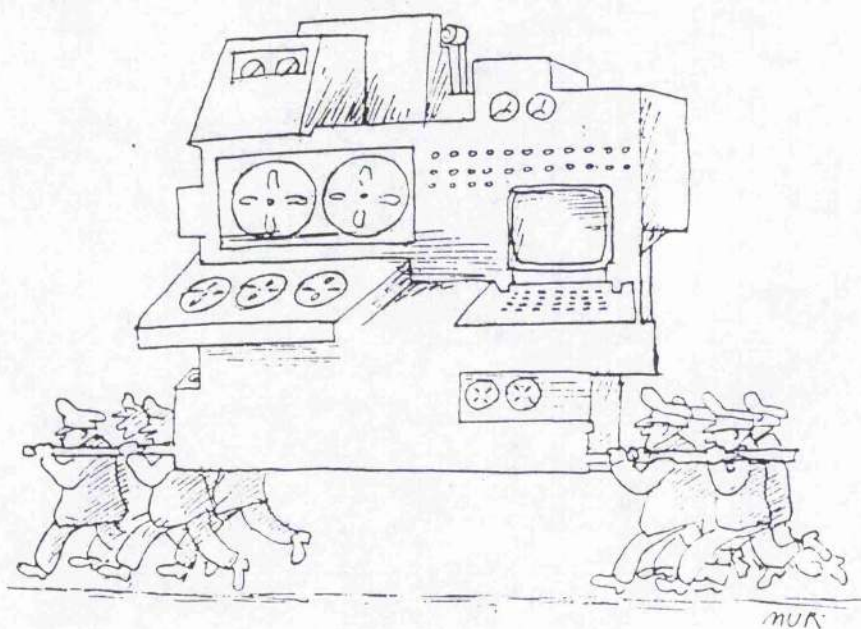
'Sympathisant', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 24.10.77, p.277

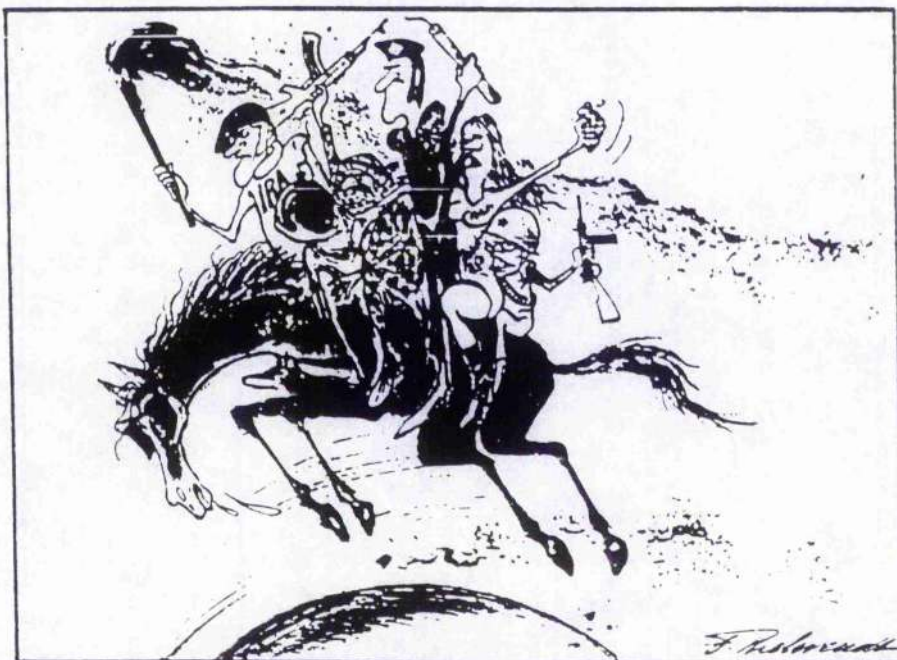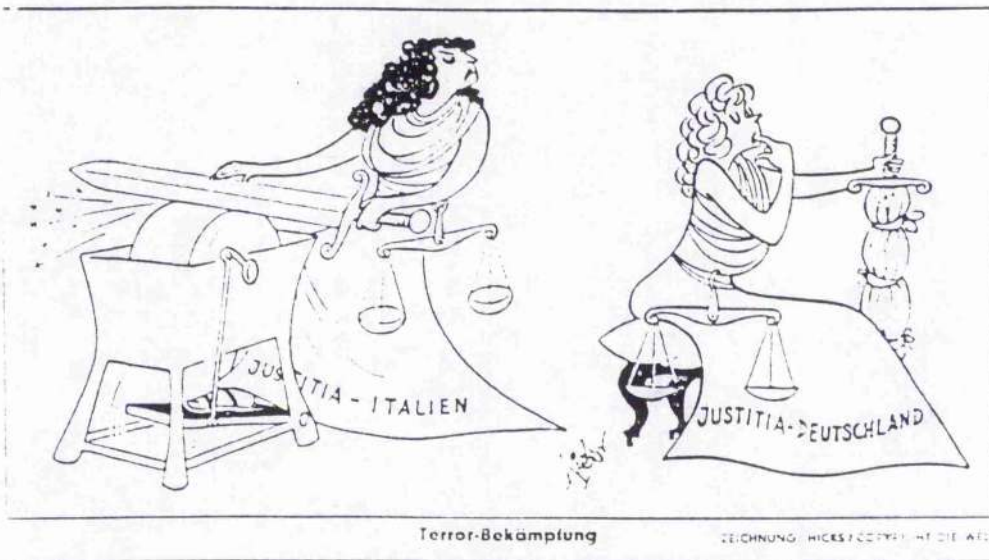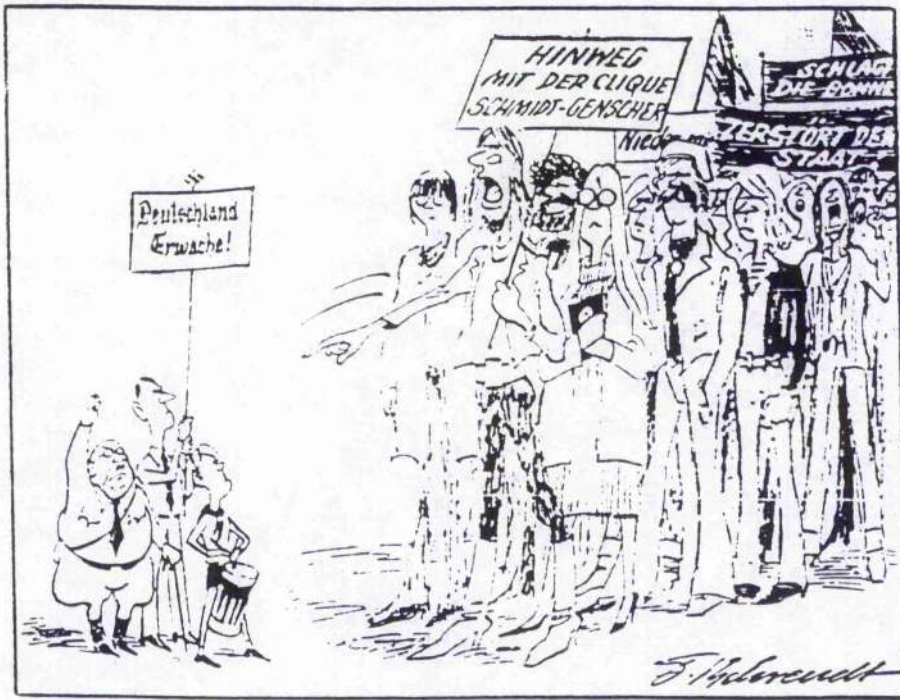„Vorsicht, Mann, nicht ins eigene Fleisch"

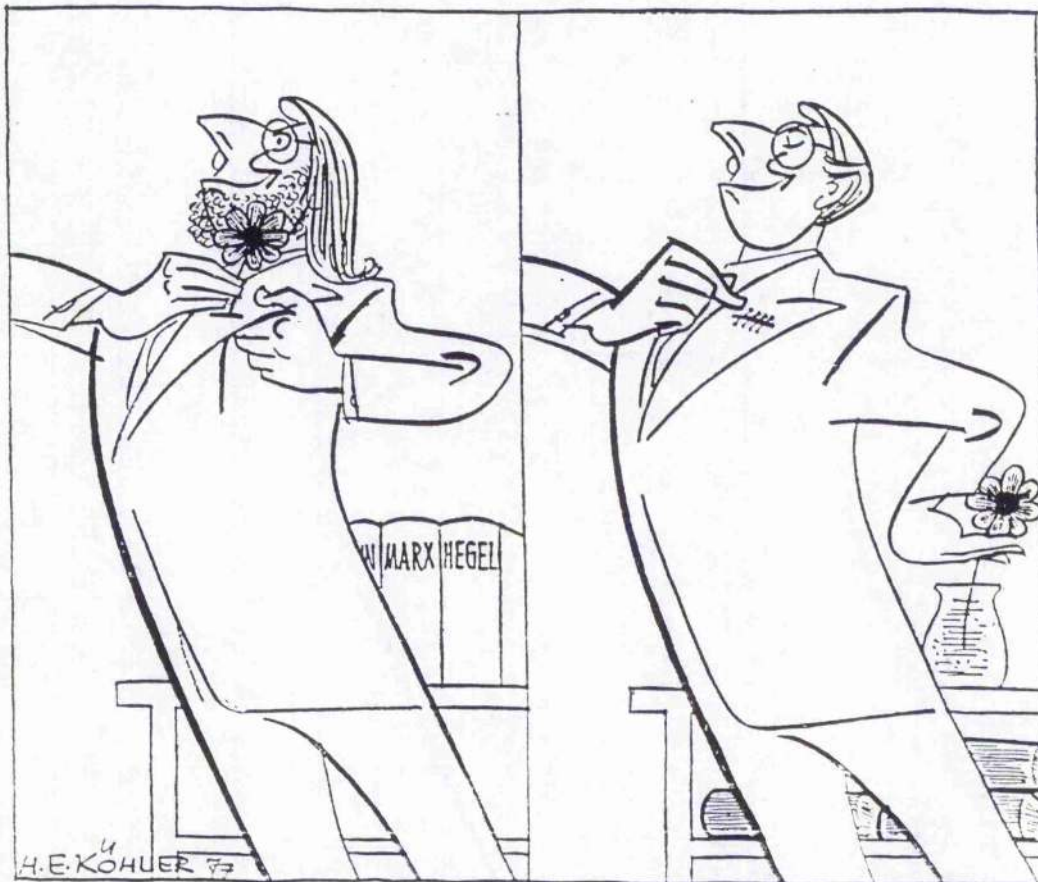Nebelspalter, Schweiz

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Großer Fahndungsapparat

Die leise Art

Terror-Bekämpfung

ZEICHNUNG: HICKS / COPYRIGHT DIE WELT

"Paßt lieber auf die alten Nazis auf!"

H.E.KÖHLER 77

Vorgestern   Sympathisant   Heute

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