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When the Children Touched the Paintings: The Afterlives of the  
New German Cinema and the Red Army Faction

by

Rudy Ralph Martinez

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

2022

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Cinema and the Red Army Faction

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Rudy Ralph Martinez

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal  
Studies in satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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Date: 4/6/2022

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## ABSTRACT

When the Children Touched the Paintings: The Afterlives of the New  
German Cinema and the Red Army Faction

by

Rudy Ralph Martinez

Advisor: Ria Banerjee

The 1960s provided us with some of the most iconic protest images of the late-20<sup>th</sup> century. This was the result of worldwide unrest and the proliferation of filmmaking equipment, which led to a flood of photos and films depicting war and activism. Many of these images and films played a pivotal role in shaping the ever-evolving discussions surrounding the '60s. However, too often, radical imagery finds itself subsumed by consumer culture, a degradation that flattens radical imagery and turns it into consumer products. With this in mind, the work that follows is an analysis of one of the little-discussed chapters of the 60s and 70s, and it is that of the New German Cinema movement and its relationship with the Rote Armee Fraktion, or Red Army Faction (RAF), an armed Marxist-Leninist group founded in West Germany in 1970. The RAF arose out of a milieu which included student activists protesting Western military involvement in the Vietnam War, civil rights activists, and third world guerillas. The actions undertaken by the group throughout their first decade in existence, including bombings, and assassinations, would create West Germany's most dire political crisis since the Nazi era, culminating in a crisis of legitimation remembered as the German Autumn, which saw the suicides of several of the militants and the assassination of SS officer-cum-prominent industrialist, Hans Martin-Schleyer. Throughout the 1970s young

filmmakers associated with the New German Cinema sought to analyze the political situation as it was unfolding, their films contributing to the public discourse in concomitance with the government and the media. Four notable examples of these films are Volker Schlöndorff and Margarethe von Trotta's *Die Verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum oder: Wie Gewalt entstehen und wohin sie führen kann* (*The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum, or: How Violence Develops and Where it Can Lead*) (1975), a dark drama about the media's role in forming public opinion, *Deutschland im Herbst* (*Germany in Autumn*) (1977), an experimental collective work released mere months after the German Autumn, Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Die Dritte Generation* (*The Third Generation*) (1979), a satire about an inept cell of radical militants, and *Die bleierne Zeit* (*The Leaden Time*, alt. title: *Marianne and Juliane*) (1981), an intimate portrayal about two sisters whose activism leads them down disparate paths. The filmmakers of the New German Cinema refused to underline their films with the Manichaeic claims respectively espoused by the RAF and the government. These complex portrayals found offspring in films such as Christian Petzold's *Die innere Sicherheit* (*The State I Am In*) (2000), a portrait of a family on the run after the reunification of Germany, but were countered by glossy high-budget portrayals such as Uli Edel's *Der Baader-Meinhof Komplex* (*The Baader-Meinhof Complex*) (2008). In focusing on the aesthetic structure of these films in relation to the political atmosphere of late-60s and 70s West Germany, I hope to shed light on questions concerning spectatorship, surveillance, the role of journalism, how politics disrupts personal relationships, and the kinship between artists and so-called terrorists.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, as I've been saying for the better part of a decade and especially in the months in which I've been mired in writing this thesis: Long live the Red Army Faction! Long live the Red Army Faction and long live anyone willing to risk their life in the struggle against capitalism and the horrors it has wrought upon our world. Shout out to my parents, Colombian immigrants, for doing as much as they could for myself and my three sisters. Blanca Rosalba Marin y Rodolfo Antonio Martinez, los quiero mucho. Shout to friends who gifted me zines on the RAF, and to those who watched these films with me or, even worse, were very patient whenever I wanted to discuss these films while incessantly smoking cigarettes. Shout out to everyone I met during the Uprising, I'll never forget that summer when, for a brief blissful moment, the world had become clay. Eternal praise to Ria, my advisor, for being such a superb guide through all of this. Without her, I would've merely written a 50-page polemic that would've belonged in 1968. Thank you, Justin Rogers-Cooper, who has been nothing short of brilliant in teaching my Thesis Workshop class and whom inspired the novelized introduction to this work. Thank you to all the professors at the Graduate Center, from Amy Herzog to Susan Buck-Morss, who have nurtured such brilliant conversations in the last two years, and a very special thank you to all those who disagreed with me during said conversations—I'll see you when I decide to get a PhD. Lastly, shout out to myself.

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## Introduction

*Wherever there is turbulence in the 1960s, a decade underlined by protest, revolution, and counter-revolution, a camera is not too far behind. In 1963, on a busy intersection in Saigon, Thích Quang Duc, a Buddhist monk, self-immolates. His martyrdom signals a protest against anti-Buddhist repression in South Vietnam. War would engulf the nation for the next decade. In 1966, in California, a group of gun-toting beret-wearing black militants march through the state capitol, in a display asserting their right to self-defense against an oppressive and racist government. This is the birth of the Black Panther Party. In 1967, in Bolivia, famed militant Che Guevara, an architect of the Cuban Revolution and an inspiration to freedom fighters the world over, lies dead, surrounded by his assailants, some of them CIA operatives. Lying in state, the young long-haired Guevara, thin and bearded, resembles Christ. In the days following his death, villagers visit his body carrying a reverence the religious hold for the only son of God. That same year, in West Berlin, a young woman looks up in disbelief from the dead body of Benno Ohnesorg, a young protestor who has been shot by the police. The next decade in West German politics will be a violent identity crisis.*

The 1960s provided the world with some of the most iconic images of protest and resistance of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This was the result of worldwide unrest and the proliferation of filmmaking equipment, which led to a flood of photos and films depicting war and activism. Many of these images and films played a pivotal role in shaping the ever-evolving discussions surrounding the '60s, particularly in the instances referenced above. However, too often, radical imagery finds itself subsumed by consumer culture, a degradation that turns the above images, and many others, into consumer products. This degradation flattens the radical act, removes it from its context, such as

Guevara dying as he fought to ignite revolution throughout Latin America, and places it on a t-shirt mass-produced at a sweatshop. With this in mind, the work that follows is an analysis of one of the little-discussed chapters of the 60s and 70s, and it is that of the New German Cinema movement and its relationship with the Rote Armee Fraktion, or Red Army Faction (RAF), an armed Marxist-Leninist group founded in West Germany in 1970. The RAF arose out of a milieu which included student activists protesting Western military involvement in the Vietnam War, civil rights activists, and third world guerillas.<sup>1</sup> The actions undertaken by the group throughout their first decade in existence, including bank robberies, bombings, and assassinations, would lead to West Germany's most dire political crisis since the Nazi era, culminating in a crisis of legitimation remembered as the German Autumn, which saw the suicides of several of the militants and the assassination of Hans Martin-Schleyer, a former SS officer turned prominent West German industrialist.

Throughout the 1970s young filmmakers associated with the New German Cinema sought to analyze the political situation as it was unfolding, their films contributing to the public discourse in concomitance with the government and the media. This essay is an attempt to rescue, so to speak, the films of the New German Cinema from a flattening or commercialization of their radical and at times obtuse representations of the RAF. This will be done by analyzing the aesthetic decisions made by several directors of the New German Cinema, and how these decisions impacted cultural discourse in 1970s West Germany.

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<sup>1</sup> Propelled by the writings of Frantz Fanon, the Cuban Revolution, the Algerian War for independence and several other anti-colonial revolutions across Africa in the late-1950s, the 1960s were the heyday for guerilla movements. Notable groups founded during the decade included Nicaragua's Sandinista National Liberation Front, founded in 1961, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP), founded in 1964, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), founded in 1967. Revolutions across the global south would also usher in a new era of filmmaking, most notably the movement known as Third Cinema. Discussed in more detail below, Third Cinema would put cameras in the hands of the newly liberated, granting them the opportunity to share their stories with the world.

The approaches of the New German Cinema filmmakers took on a myriad of forms, including experimental and collective works, reflecting the varying complexities of the political situation, resulting in films taking on the form of social realism, satire, and familial dramas, amongst others. Of specific interest for this project are four films: Volker Schlöndorff and Margarethe von Trotta's *Die Verlorene Ehre der Katharina Blum oder: Wie Gewalt entstehen und wohin sie führen kann* (*The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum, or: How Violence Develops and Where it Can Lead*) (1975), a dark drama about the media's role in forming public opinion, *Deutschland im Herbst* (*Germany in Autumn*) (1977), an experimental collective work released mere months after the German Autumn, Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *Die Dritte Generation* (*The Third Generation*) (1979), a satire about an inept cell of radical militants, and von Trotta's *Die bleierne Zeit* (*The Leaden Time*, alt. title: *Marianne and Juliane*) (1981), an intimate portrayal about two sisters whose activism leads them down disparate paths.<sup>2</sup> Focusing on the aesthetic structure of these films in relation to the political atmosphere of late-60s and 70s West Germany sheds light on questions concerning spectatorship, surveillance, the role of journalism, how politics disrupts personal relationships, and the kinship between artists and so-called terrorists.

The question of spectatorship underlines much of the analysis featured below. The various manifestos written in the 60s and 70s by young filmmakers set the stage for the New German Cinema by calling for more active participation by both directors and audiences alike. The four films I have chosen from the 70s and early 80s were explicitly attempting to create a discourse about the RAF and filmmaking in distinction with the bombastic narratives perpetuated by the state and media. By doing this, many of the films of the New German Cinema synthesized film

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<sup>2</sup> Regarding the difference in titles, one can imagine that for an American audience, *Marianne and Juliane*, hinting at a melodrama revolving around two women, sounds much more marketable than *The Leaden Time*, which hints at a more abstractly overbearing weightiness or heaviness of plot.

aesthetics with politics. Transposing these difficult and complicated stories onto the screen were political statements themselves, even if the intended statement complicated the Manichaeian view of the RAF versus the state. Spectatorship analysis also permeates my later analysis of RAF-centric films in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as these films were relating stories of a bygone era to new audiences, notably audiences living in post-Cold War Europe. Members of the RAF, the New German Cinema, and the majority of their audiences came of age as part of the post-War generation. So, while their political beliefs and practices were far from uniform, there were common concerns among them, such as the increasingly pervasive surveillance tactics being utilized by the state in the name of stopping the RAF, a so-called terrorist group.

In terms of these surveillance tactics, I will examine how different directors in the New German Cinema commented on the expansion of the West German surveillance state during the nationwide hunts for the RAF. The various directors analyzed herein either dedicated a handful of scenes, or even bits of dialogue, to this topic, as seen in *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum* and *Germany in Autumn* or, as was the case with *The Third Generation*, made entire films whose plots were underlined by the state's surveillance practices. These practices ushered in a ubiquitous sense of paranoia, fear, and distrust, taking its toll on the personal relationships of many. We see this occur in *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum*, where the eponymous protagonist has all her personal relationships upended by journalists and police alike. These personal ruptures also underline *The Third Generation*, in which the militants featured erroneously place their trust in people who eventually have them killed. *Germany in Autumn* and *Die bleierne Zeit* zero in on this topic by centering around familial ruptures caused by the West German political atmosphere. The former film features Fassbinder arguing with his mother and partner about the state of things in West Germany, while the latter film focuses on two sisters whose varying forms of political activism becomes an inescapable specter. Picking up several decades after the heyday of the New

German Cinema and the RAF, Christian Petzold tells his own story of familial dynamics under political distress with *Die innere Sicherheit (The State I am In)* (2000), a portrait of a family on the run after the reunification of Germany.

Expanded upon in the next chapter, I also have an interest in exploring the intersection between art and terrorism or, specifically, their respective practitioners, the artist and the terrorist. Upon closer inspection, both art and terrorism share key structural elements, such as the “symbolism of the chosen stage, timing, and the importance of the audience’s reaction.”<sup>3</sup> It is via this performativity that the artist and the terrorist interact with their “audiences,” altering their perceptions of political and cultural dynamics.<sup>4</sup> The most profound pieces of art, whether they be film or performance theatre, elicit similar ruptures in what one had hitherto considered possible. It was not by mere coincidence that the New German Cinema and the RAF rose to prominence in near simultaneity, and even less so that the former commented upon the actions of the latter. As we will see in chapter one, the line of demarcation between art and political radicalism was continually blurred throughout the 60s, and this dissipation had worldwide ramifications.

Chapter one, “The Kids Are Not Alright: The Rise of the New German Cinema and the Red Army Faction,” provides historical background for the collection of filmmakers who would eventually be known as the New German Cinema and shines a light on the worldwide political eruptions that would birth the Red Army Faction. This background will mostly be provided via an analysis of several film manifestos released throughout the 60s and 70s and the RAF’s own founding document, “Build Up the Red Army!.” In terms of the several manifestos which gave rise to the New German Cinema, the Oberhausen Manifesto of 1962 sought to alter the course of West

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<sup>3</sup> Nicole Magney, “The Intersection of Art and Terrorism,” *Georgetown Security Studies Review*, May 2016, accessed April 1 2022, <https://georgetownsecuritystudiesreview.org/2016/05/23/the-intersection-of-art-and-terrorism/>.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

German cinema, seeking to place the future of the film industry in the hands of young filmmakers. In the years to come, there would be several follow-up manifestos, with two released in the mid-to-late 60s and a third, the Hamburg Declaration of German Filmmakers, appearing in 1979.

In chapter two, “The Lost Honour of *Bild Zeitung*: Yellow Journalism, Surveillance, and Usage of Genre,” I will explore to what extent *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum* and *The Third Generation*, films who utilize the melding of genres in very distinct ways, commented upon the state’s usage of increasingly intrusive surveillance tactics and the media’s negative and sensationalistic portrayal of the RAF. *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum* was an adaptation of a Heinrich Böll novel, with the novel itself a critique of a media landscape that had accused the author of being an apologist of the RAF’s violent actions after he criticized what he deemed as the media’s vitriolic portrayal of the group. I argue that the pessimism underlining *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum* resonates more deeply than Fassbinder’s satirical *The Third Generation* in the wake of state repression. I make this argument for several reasons, as *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum* follows a strong opening scene with a captivating exploration of what ends the media will pursue to label someone a “terrorist,” while *The Third Generation* follows its own strong opening by morphing into a darkly comedic film that loses itself in trying to criticize both the state *and* the militants who stand against it.

Chapter three, “Be Quiet or Be Killed: Germany’s Long Autumn and the Statement of a Generation,” asks if the collective work underlining *Germany in Autumn* eschewed a taut statement on the political state of West Germany in favor of a display of solidarity in the face of turbulence. Of specific importance to this discussion are the dual funerals of Hanns Martin Schleyer and several RAF militants who had committed suicide while imprisoned. The disparate approaches to these respective funerals, one for a valorized agent of the state, the other for young militants who

had given their lives in their struggle against said state, showed an impoverished approach to reconciliation, a necessary practice for a society attempting to move on from an era defined by fraught political relations and violence. Personal relationships, between friends, family members, and lovers alike also suffered during this complicated chapter of West German history.

Fassbinder's work in *Germany in Autumn* engages with these upended relationships head on, as the director cast himself, his mother, and his then-lover to put these dynamics at the forefront of his filmic discourse. The chapter ends with a brief exploration of another tumultuous family portrait, as Margarethe von Trotta's *Die bleierne Zeit* also explores how political violence upended the lives of one family and, in particular, two sisters.

With chapter four, "The Terrorists Go to Hollywood: Representation of the RAF in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," I explore how the RAF has been portrayed in the decades following the collapse of the USSR and the reunification of Germany. Both of these events hailed the end of the supposed global ideological struggle between capitalism and state socialism, the Cold War. The establishment of a unipolar world had a profound impact on the RAF in terms of the disappearance of nation-states supportive of their cause behind the now drawn Iron Curtain and across the global south. The two films I'll be analyzing in this chapter will be Christian Petzold's *The State I am In* (2000) and Uli Edel's *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex (The Baader-Meinhof Complex)* (2008). I've chosen these films due to their being disparate in terms of form and function. Petzold's film centers around a family on the run. Hans and Clara, Two ex-militants, are trying to escape to Latin America while having to deal with the burgeoning adolescence of Jeanne, their daughter, who no longer wants to live the life imposed upon her by her parents. The film is an excellent display of inter-generational dialogue and a shattering look at a family unit caught between the crosshairs of history. On the other hand, Edel's *Baader-Meinhof Complex* is a stylized biopic depicting key events from the RAF's first decade of existence. In this analysis, I coin the term "revolutionary karaoke" to

describe the film's flattening and commercialization of the RAF and the political situation in 1970s West Germany. Revolutionary karaoke refers to my arguing that the film merely has its cast lip-sync through revolutionary verbiage and historical events, failing to garner true emotional attachment. Edel's film is a glamorous product that provides audiences with an easy onramp to history at the cost of presenting the necessarily complex portrayals seen elsewhere in this body of cinema. While *Baader-Meinhof Complex* is by far the most popular and widely watched film in this survey, it is merely history as seen through the looking glass of the culture industry.

With these, and numerous other issues in mind, we'll explore what impact filmic techniques have on cultural memory, public discourse, and how it is that societies reflect upon traumatic epochs. I conclude this paper by relating some of my research to personal experiences I've had during our own political epoch, while providing final thoughts on the importance of discourse in the face of ever-growing repression. Learning about the New German Cinema and their aesthetic decision-making during the 70s and 80s goes beyond merely focusing on a decade in West German culture and politics—it concerns going back in time to a troubled era, an era in which so many upended their lives for utopian beliefs and explore what artistic statements arose from the turmoil. In doing so, I hope that we can find a reflection of ourselves, as we continue to navigate our own era of political eruptions. However, for now, it is time to revisit the decade of toil and trouble, the 1960s, and meet “the children” who wanted figuratively to touch the paintings in every stuffy museum, and who would grow up to have a lasting impact on West German culture and politics.

## Chapter One

### The Kids Are Not Alright: The Rise of the New German Cinema and the Red Army Faction

In April 1968, during a year underlined by global political tumult, two student activists by the names of Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ennslin set fire to Frankfurt department stores using incendiary devices. Though no one was injured in the attack, and damage was minimal, in retrospect, the event is notable for several reasons. Not only would Baader and Ennslin become founding members of the RAF, but the act itself was symptomatic of a growing impatience with nonviolent tactics on the part of Western activists the world over.<sup>5</sup> The bombing was partly a response to the killing of Benno Ohnesorg on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 1967, when he, along with hundreds of others, were protesting a state visit of the Shah of Iran Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. According to Christina Gerhardt, writing in *Screening the Red Army Faction: Historical and Cultural Memory*, this event “established the beginning of West Germany’s ‘1968.’”<sup>6</sup> A culmination of the Vietnam War, revolutions in so-called Third World countries throughout the ‘50s and ‘60s, and the murder of Ohnesorg paved the way for the radicalization of the West German student movement, and the subsequent birth of the RAF.<sup>7</sup> While the bombing occurred in 1968, it wasn’t until Baader escaped from prison in 1970, with the help of prominent journalist Ulrike Meinhof, that the notion of the RAF was born in the public mind.

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<sup>5</sup> In the United States, a group calling itself the Weatherman Underground, named after a Bob Dylan lyric, were heading down a similar path of violence. For a comparative study of both groups’ divergent trajectories, see Jeremy Varon’s *Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground, The Red Army Faction, and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2004).

<sup>6</sup> Christina Gerhardt, *Screening the Red Army Faction: Historical and Cultural Memory* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), p. 39.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

Occurring almost concurrently was the appearance of the New German Cinema movement. The birth of this movement can be traced via three documents: The Oberhausen Manifesto (1962), its untitled follow-up (1965), and the Mannheim Declaration (1967).<sup>8</sup> In 1962, young filmmakers had been meeting and exhibiting their work in the town of Oberhausen. That year, 26 of them, including future New German Cinema directors Alexander Kluge and Edgar Reitz, collaborated on the Oberhausen Manifesto, which declared, “[T]he future of the German cinema lies with those who have shown that they speak of a new language of the cinema.”<sup>9</sup> This new language captured the disillusionment felt on behalf of these young artists with the old guard’s running of the film industry, underlined by a frustration with economic obstacles to filmmaking, and a distaste of popular films’ propensity to portray the effects of Nazism but not the causes, amongst other things. Most interesting for the conversations below, specifically that of the multi-chapter *Germany in Autumn*, the signatories of the Oberhausen Manifesto viewed the short film as a training ground for their ambitions. In their words: “[T]he short film has become in Germany a school and experimental basis for the feature film.”<sup>10</sup> This basis, they believed, would give birth to a new kind of film, free from the constraints of commercial and special interest groups. The spirit of the experimental short would pervade German cinema and save it from rampant commercialism.

Unfortunately, experimentalism proved difficult to foster and sustain on a broader level. In 1965, a second, untitled Oberhausen manifesto would be widely distributed at the city’s film festival. The untitled manifesto takes aim at a perceived lack of progress in the three years since the publication of the Oberhausen Manifesto. In the eyes of these signatories, including a young Jean-

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<sup>8</sup> Scott Mackenzie, ed. *Film Manifestos and Global Cinema Cultures: A Critical Anthology* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> John Sandford, *The New German Cinema* (New York: Da Capo, 1980), p. 13.

<sup>10</sup> Scott Mackenzie, ed. *Film Manifestos and Global Cinema Cultures: A Critical Anthology* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2014), p. 154.

Marie Straub, the selection committee of the festival had “rejected films whose authors dared to take reality into serious consideration.”<sup>11</sup> Instead of presenting audiences with films engaged with the social realities of the time, the West German film establishment was giving preference to films engaged in the “art of camouflage.”<sup>12</sup> A specific example cited in the text was the rejection of documentarian Peter Nestler, whose 1963 *Aufsätze (Essays)*, features the everyday lives of school-aged children in a small village. This document is most notable for its language, which accuses the selection committee of “contempt, stupidity, and helplessness.”<sup>13</sup> However, this animosity notwithstanding, 1966 was to be a momentous year for the burgeoning movement.

1966, the “annus mirabilis” of the New German Cinema, saw not only the making of films by these young directors, but their recognition on an international scale. Films by Kluge, Schlöndorff, and Jean-Marie Straub would garner acclaim and awards at the Venice and Berlin Film Festivals.<sup>14</sup> These three directors would remain active during the ‘70s and would ultimately collaborate on *Germany in Autumn*. Nevertheless, the rise of this movement was being threatened by a Film Funding Law in West Germany that favored large distributors and large-scale publications. So, once again, led by Jean-Marie Straub and Edgar Reitz, the filmmakers drafted a third manifesto, giving birth to The Mannheim Declaration in 1967. The Mannheim Declaration expressed a fear that West German filmmaking was devolving into its pre-Oberhausen form. In contrast to the profit-driven Film Funding Law, which sought to alienate the young artists, they declared, “The future of an industry is only as good as its younger generation.”<sup>15</sup> If an injection of rambunctious youth is what was needed it would arrive in 1969, with the release of *Love is Colder*

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<sup>11</sup> Scott Mackenzie, ed. *Film Manifestos and Global Cinema Cultures: A Critical Anthology* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2014), p. 154.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> John Sandford, *The New German Cinema* (New York: Da Capo, 1980), p. 13.

<sup>15</sup> Scott Mackenzie, ed. *Film Manifestos and Global Cinema Cultures: A Critical Anthology* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2014), p. 155.

*Than Death*, the debut film of enfant terrible Rainer Werner Fassbinder. With an idiosyncratic appreciation for American genre filmmaking, most notably the melodramas of Douglas Sirk, Fassbinder would eventually become the towering figure of the New German Cinema until his untimely death in 1982.

In a diversion from the male-authored film manifestos of the 60s, Gudrun Ennslin would author the RAF's founding document, "Build up the Red Army!," in 1970.<sup>16</sup> The manifesto was written after the RAF helped to break Andreas Baader out of prison. In it, Ennslin denounces a need to explain the group's actions to the West German government, writing "[T]here is no point in wanting to explain what is right to the wrong people."<sup>17</sup> Instead, she opts to declare that Baader's prison-break is merely the opening salvo in a war of liberation against the police and its government overseers. Ennslin also criticizes the notion of reform, arguing that reform only leads to "[B]etter means of discipline...intimidation...and exploitation."<sup>18</sup> For Ennslin and the RAF, this war had already begun in Cuba, Vietnam, Watts, Guatemala, and China, amongst other flashpoints. With this orientation, the RAF specifically placed itself within the wider sphere of global unrest, which included armed guerillas in the so-called Third World, and connected urban uprisings in so-called wealthier nations to political unrest elsewhere. The manifesto ends with a demand for the people to go find willing fighters in state homes, among them "proletarian women," for they are ready to fight.<sup>19</sup> This last point was a reference to the work several RAF members, including Ulrike Meinhof, had done in children's and adolescent's homes. It is important to mention "Build up the Red Army!" in correlation with the film manifestos to display the preferred method of communication for both artists and activists alike: Brief yet strongly worded documents meant to

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<sup>16</sup> Gudrun Ennslin, "Build up the Red Army!," *Agit 883* (West Germany), June 5<sup>th</sup> 1970.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

arouse their audiences into action—at least in their initial stages, the New German Cinema and the RAF shared urgent political concerns, and saw art along a trajectory of action spurred by politics.

The RAF and the New German Cinema would undergo disparate changes throughout the 70s. Whereas the filmmakers, such as Schlöndorff and Fassbinder, would rise to international recognition, with the former winning an Academy Award for *The Tin Drum* in 1980, the RAF's first decade in existence would end in tragic bloodshed. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of October 1977, three members of the RAF, including Baader, Ennslin, and Jan-Carl Raspe, lay dead in their cells at Stammheim maximum security prison—the cause of death was listed as suicide. The deaths of these three young militants signaled the end of the German Autumn, during which members of the RAF exerted pressure on the West German government to release their imprisoned comrades. What resulted was the kidnapping and subsequent assassination of Hanns-Martin Schleyer, a prominent industrialist and former member of the *Schutzstaffel*, or SS, and the disastrous hijacking of a Lufthansa flight, which ended in a raid by West German special forces in Mogadishu, Somalia, resulting in the deaths of three hijackers and one crew member. It is crucial to keep this timeline of the RAF in mind when noting the releases of the films analyzed herein, as a fluctuating political situation, I believe, bore influence on the thematic decisions made by the directors. Loosely speaking, the shifting political situation in West Germany went from concerns revolving around the media in the early and mid-70s (*The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum*) to concerns of surveillance and the aftermath of the German Autumn (*The Third Generation* and *Germany in Autumn*), and a focus on the intimate in the early 80s (*Die bleierne Zeit*).

Their eventual paths notwithstanding, the birth pangs of the RAF and the New German Cinema were tied to the global youth movement associated with the 60s, in general, and a growing political consciousness among these young filmmakers and activists of their nation's dark past and

their parents' reticence to engage with it, in particular. The relationship between the RAF and the New German Cinema, between so-called terrorists and artists, is crucial to the analysis that follows. Beyond the temporal and material relationship underlining this research, I assert that there is a bond that ties terrorism to art. Of course, on the surface, those engaged in political violence and those crafting artistic statements seem like odd bedfellows, the comparison understandably comes off as an insult in some cases. The so-called terrorist is seen as an immoral actor, one who has taken transgression to the point of irremediability. However, both so-called terrorists and artists seek to "alter consciousness, shape and influence the 'inner life of culture' ...for the ultimate purpose of shaping and influencing the culture's outer life..."<sup>20</sup> Both the so-called terrorist and the artist seek to transcend individuality in the name of undoing dominant structures, both economic and social. In the 60s, the line of delineation between artistry and militancy was blurred to near non-existence. "Towards a Third Cinema: Notes and Experiences for the Development of a Cinema of Liberation in the Third World," written by Argentine filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, called for a "cinema of subversion."<sup>21</sup> This filmmaking approach, to be adopted by the colonized and newly liberated peoples of the so-called Third World would utilize cinema as an emancipatory tool. Where Solanas and Getino saw filmmaking hitherto as merely reinforcing dominant ideologies, they saw the revolutionary of the 60s wielding a gun in one hand and a camera in the other.

As we shall see, the motivation to upend established orders, both politically and culturally, has consequences which resonate on both micro and macro scales. The actions of both the filmmakers of the New German Cinema and the RAF impacted their personal relationships,

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<sup>20</sup> Frank Lentricchia and Jody McAuliffe, *Crimes of Art and Terror* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 18.

<sup>21</sup> Michael T. Martin, ed., *New Latin American Cinema, Vol. 1* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), p. 33.

moments which were sometimes dramatized or even filmed in a documentary fashion. The latter segments of this essay deal with the fallout of fraught political atmospheres in families, both during said political episode or decades afterwards. Specifically, Fassbinder's intimate family portrait in *Germany in Autumn* displays how the actions of the RAF upended his physical and emotional state, while his desire to stick to his artistry upended his personal relationships. Wallace Stevens once remarked that the imaginative process presupposed knowing "desire without an object of desire."<sup>22</sup> It is this desire, embodied in the *doing* of art and militancy, that undergirded the lives of the RAF and the New German Cinema—a desire for an unknown newness, pursued even though the reactions of their respective "audiences" was impossible to foretell (and, in many ways, would change throughout time). The rise of the RAF and the New German Cinema heralded a proverbial invasion in 70s West Germany—where the RAF sought to invade the consciousness of the masses via armed resistance, their filmic counterparts launched their own invasion via the image. As we'll see in the next chapter, via an analysis of *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum* and *The Third Generation*, these invasions were ambitious and complicated, as their intentions in the form of aesthetic decisions and genre usage were not always made clear.

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<sup>22</sup> Frank Lentricchia and Jody McAuliffe, *Crimes of Art and Terror* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 18.

## Chapter Two

### The Lost Honour of *Bild Zeitung*: Yellow Journalism, Surveillance, Satire, and Usage of Genre

*The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum*'s critique of the lightning-speed with which misinformation and conspiracy theories spread, the lasting damage they cause, and the demonization of left-wing activists, or those even suspected of being sympathetic to left-wing causes, was a masterful mediation of West Germany's increasingly torn and fragile political moment. Along with Fassbinder's *The Third Generation*, the pair of films actively protested the West German state's disproportionate response to the RAF, whose membership never expanded beyond several dozen militants.

Released in 1975, *Katharina Blum* was adapted from a 1974 novel of the same name by Heinrich Böll. Both the book and the film detail five days in the life of the eponymous protagonist (played with an almost Joan of Arc-like essence by Angela Winker), a young housekeeper, seemingly oblivious to the roving gangs of leftists running amok across West Germany. After a chance encounter with Ludwig Göttel (Jürgen Prochnow), a character ambiguously coded as a member of the RAF, at a dance party, wherein they quickly fall for one another, she awakens the next day to highly militarized *Polizei*, knocking down her door and raiding her apartment. She is taken into custody and accused of harboring anarchist-on-the-run Ludwig, with the police painting their chance rendezvous at the party as more a "reunion" than anything else. Throughout the film, Werner Tötges (Dieter Laser), a journalist employed by a tabloid outfit simply known as *The Paper*, works with the police to stalk the many people in Blum's life, to turn the affable woman into a hardened terrorist in the eyes of the public. After Ludwig's capture, Blum arranges an exclusive interview with Tötges at her apartment. After he insinuates the two can work together to

make Blum a media star, and insists they have sex, Blum shoots him dead. The film ends with Tötges' funeral, attended by influential individuals from all sectors of West German society, while the owner of *The Paper* hypocritically gives a speech about the importance of the “freedom of the press...one of the most precious commodities of our young democracy.”<sup>23</sup> At its core, the film is about a woman terrorized by sensationalistic journalists, who twist even the most innocuous facts into bombastic headlines, and an overzealous police force desperate to present itself as efficient in its efforts to restore “order” in West Germany. But to fully comprehend the context underlining *Katharina Blum*, it is helpful to look at the political situation in West Germany in the years leading up to the release of the film. The context is crucial because the three films analyzed herein were chosen due to the disparate political climates in which they were respectively released.

By 1972, numerous armed groups besides the RAF were active in West Germany. According to Gerhardt, these groups were responsible for dozens of “arson attacks, bank robberies, and bomb attacks...between November 1969 and May 1972.”<sup>24</sup> The surge in militant political activity did not go unnoticed by the media, especially the tabloid *Bild*. *Bild* had already become notorious in years prior for playing a role in the 1968 shooting of Marxist thinker and student activist Rudi Dutschke by a far-right fanatic. The paper had even gone so far as to label Dutschke “State Enemy #1” mere days before the shooting. Another headline from the same period read, “Stop Dutschke Now!”<sup>25</sup> Dutschke survived the shooting, but he sustained injuries that would cost him his life a decade later. The shooting was a rallying cry for students across West Germany, as thousands took to the streets to protest the paper’s deadly approach to language. As the sustained

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<sup>23</sup> *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum*, directed by Volker Schlöndorff and Margarethe von Trotta (1975; West Germany: Cinema International Corporation, 2003), DVD.

<sup>24</sup> Christina Gerhardt, *Screening the Red Army Faction: Historical and Cultural Memory* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), p. 116.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas Meaney, “Bild, Merkel and the Culture Wars: The Inside Story of Germany’s Biggest Tabloid.” *The Guardian*, July 16, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/16/bild-zeitung-tabloid-julian-reichelt-angela-merkel-germany>.

demonization of student militants by *Bild* had zeroed in on the RAF, Böll penned an article for *Der Spiegel* titled “Will Ulrike Gnade oder freies Geleit?” (“Does Ulrike Want Mercy or Safe Conduct?”)<sup>26</sup> In it, the author eviscerated the paper for hastily jumping to conclusions about the RAF’s guilt whenever a bank was robbed, or a police officer was shot (“*Bild* knows”).<sup>27</sup> These conclusions were usually reached without sufficient (or any) evidence to provide its readers. He also accused *Bild* of “wrecking the German language itself with ‘primitive *bon-mot*-ism.”<sup>28</sup> According to a 2002 interview with Schlöndorff and von Trotta, conducted to coincide with the film’s Criterion release, Böll was heavily criticized after the release of the article, with one journalist accusing him of being “the spiritual father of the violence [that followed].”<sup>29</sup> The article, its subsequent backlash, and the RAF’s bombing of the offices of Axel Springer, *Bild*’s publisher, in the same year, set the stage for Schlöndorff and von Trotta’s film. Regarding the events surrounding the novel and the film, Schlöndorff jokingly, yet soberly, referred to the film as “*The Lost Honour of Heinrich Böll*.”<sup>30</sup>

Functioning not only as directors but as political agents reflecting upon the socio-political reality of West Germany, Schlöndorff and von Trotta repurpose *Bild*’s yellow journalism to make the audience aware of the latter’s malevolence. One of the ways in which this is accomplished is by subtly decorating those characters the states view as “terrorists” with religious symbolism, as is seen in the film’s ominous opening. In this scene, the perspective of the audience shifts from traditional shots of Ludwig Götten on a boat to that of a police officer, posing as a tourist, standing just far enough to avoid Ludwig’s suspicion, gathering 16mm surveillance footage of him. When

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<sup>26</sup> Heinrich Böll, “Will Ulrike Gnade oder freies Geleit?,” *Der Spiegel* (West Germany), January 9, 1972.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum*, directed by Volker Schlöndorff and Margarethe von Trotta (1975; West Germany: Cinema International Corporation, 2003), DVD.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

shown from the perspective of the 16mm camera, Ludwig is overlaid with a cross within a frame surrounded by the frame which situates us.<sup>31</sup> The cross is a symbol of the martyrdom of, not only Ludwig, but of those who have chosen the revolutionary struggle throughout the '60s and early '70s. The notion of the revolutionary tied to Christian martyrdom gained significant traction with the advent of Liberation Theology in Latin America and the Christ-like images of Che Guevara after his 1967 death. This is also enforced by the framing of the shot to make it look as if Ludwig were caught in the crosshairs of a rifle scope.<sup>32</sup> On top of that, this framing is a structural indictment of the intimate relationship between the conservative church, the police, and the media, a critique which is developed throughout the film.

Furthermore, the shifting perspective in the opening scene implicates us, the audience, with agents of the state. The implication occurs as thus: Before knowing who Ludwig is, let alone judging whether he is innocent or not, we are presented with a man who *must* be guilty—for why else would the police be gathering this footage? The dual gaze of the police and detached spectator creates a mood of confusion and paranoia much akin to the mood perpetuated by the government and media in times of conflict. Jan Vacano, the cinematographer of the film, said that the opening aimed to thrust the audience right into the plot.<sup>33</sup> Seeing Ludwig filmed by the police is not dissimilar to picking up the newspaper and seeing his photo on the frontpage, under a headline reading, “Terrorist!”—the idea of guilt is forced upon us (see: the aforementioned Rudi Dutschke). However, in forcing the spectator to hastily jump to conclusions about Ludwig, the film criticizes the power the mass media wields in forming public opinion. Jack Zipes, writing in “The Political

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<sup>31</sup> Lester D. Friedman, “Cinematic Techniques in The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum.” *Literature/Film Quarterly* 7, no. 3 (Special Issue: New German Cinema) (1979): 244–52.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum*, directed by Volker Schlöndorff and Margarethe von Trotta (1975; West Germany: Cinema International Corporation, 2003), DVD.

Dimensions of Katharina Blum,” analyzing the formal effectiveness of both the book and novel, describes the situation in 1970s West Germany as such: “the establishment’s perspective will always be *imposed* upon the populace through legal institutions and the mass media which it controls.”<sup>34</sup> It is this sentiment, that of manufacturing consent, which the opening scene brilliantly conveys. Zipes criticism is echoed in Böll’s aforementioned article, as he sardonically accuses *Bild* of always *knowing* of the RAF’s guilt. However, the critique on the part of the directors is mired in subtlety, much like the actions of the police, and the difficulty of using polemic art to criticize polemics stymies the film’s otherwise clear political intentions.

In further analyzing this opening scene, lasting nearly four minutes, the policeman holding the 16mm camera is essentially faceless. The obsessive way the camera is being held, close to the face with overt placement *over* the face using his arm and hand, obfuscates him to both Ludwig and the audience. The readings of this pose are multiple. In a simplistic reading, the officer is hiding from Ludwig, his intended target. However, on a symbolic level, the film’s directors are commenting upon the banality of evil, a banality that has a specific context in post-War West Germany. Further, the policeman’s pose of anonymity can be connected to the anger underlining the West German student movement—an anger directed at the older generations perceived perfunctory relationship with World War II and Nazism. This anger arose partly from the post-War reconstruction of Europe under the Marshall Plan, which saw the United States providing economic support to a nation that lay in shambles. Not only did the Marshall Plan impact subsequent political development in what would become West Germany, but it also impacted the development, or lack thereof, of its film industry. In political terms, former Nazis would take on positions of power in West Germany, while culturally, Allied censorship and economic opportunity in the eyes of

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<sup>34</sup> Jack Zipes, “The Political Dimensions of The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum.” *New German Critique*, no. 12 (Autumn 1977): 75–84.

Hollywood would lead to a shallow output of filmmaking.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, the anonymous policeman is a placeholder for various makers of West Germany's destiny: the occupying Allied Powers, and the very real ghost of the nation's Nazis past, a ghost which took refuge in the upper echelons of power in West Germany. This inference connects the RAF to their New German Cinema counterparts as those upset with what their country had become in the decades after the War.

Where Böll's novel was primarily focused on gossip and journalistic sensationalism, the film's opening scene gives birth to an added level of discourse: mass surveillance. In a 2020 essay for The Criterion Collection, film scholar Amy Taubin remarks that the film, upon its release, was considered "too wedded to old-fashioned social realism...to have any place in film history" by other filmmakers of the New German Cinema. Of course, this criticism would prove incorrect, as the film not only became the New German Cinema's first box-office success but has renewed significance in our own era of the so-called War on Terror. I also push back, like Taubin, against the claim that the film was "wedded to old-fashioned social realism." While the film very much adopts a dramatic character as the plot unfolds, the opening scene described above synthesizes experimental formal techniques with social realism to present its criticism. Ludwig's supposed guilt is what underlines the dramatic tension of the scene, while the multiple points of view given to the audience underline an experimental approach.

In another case of a notable opening sequence, Fassbinder's *The Third Generation* also presents the audience with multiple ideas with which to engage in critical discourse. *The Third Generation* functions as a dark comedy told in six parts, following the follies of a West German terrorist cell who, in their attempts to kidnap an industrialist, unwittingly become pawns to an increasingly repressive government. In typical Fassbinder fashion, the plot unfolds surreally, as the

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<sup>35</sup> See: the Oberhausen Manifesto.

militants, sometimes in extravagant disguises, are underlined by a certain self-referential cynicism while set against a backdrop of luscious interiors.

The establishing shot in the opening scene shows a snow-covered West Berlin, with the film's title card, a shade of blue just dark enough to differentiate itself from the sky, flashing on and off, as if we are watching the nightly news. Sonically, there is the droning of synthesizers, the humming of machines at work, symbolizing the ubiquity of technology in contemporary urban environments. The camera slowly zooms out, and we find ourselves in a room well above the city's streets. When the meandering camera finally pauses, the frame consists of three devices, a computer, a television (in the midst of screening a program), and a recording device. In the background, we hear a character speaking on the phone, which adds another layer of sound to an already disconcerting pallet. As the camera continues to zoom out, the triptych of machinery is juxtaposed with a spectator via an angle where we only see the back of his head. When a character on the television screen in the film pulls out a gun and shoots someone dead, the following quote is displayed on our screen: "In retrospect, I would like to thank the legal experts of Germany for not challenging the constitutional legality of everything. (I refer to the operation in Mogadishu, and maybe other things related to Mogadishu?)" The quote is from Helmut Schmidt, the Chancellor of West Germany at the time of the German Autumn, and he is referring to the rescue operation of the hijacked Lufthansa flight. The juxtaposition of this quote and an anonymous individual glued to the television functions as a layered critique of the mass consumption of culture, allowing governments to behave in legally dubious ways behind the backs of their citizenry. Like in *Katharina Blum*, the subtle use of framing is key. But it is here that the similarities between both films ends.

Fassbinder's film is most confounding in his freedom fighters being nothing more than the caricatures painted by West German society's tabloids and conservative factions. They exhibit bourgeois tendencies, are misogynistic, TV-obsessed, and frown upon addiction. I say

“confounding” in comparison with the fatal seriousness of *Katharina Blum*, the tonal contrast with Fassbinder’s own addition to *Germany in Autumn*, and the juxtaposition of the opening scene with the rest of the film. Released less than two years after the German Autumn, I had to ask myself if this was the most effective way to portray the RAF. The realism in *Katharina Blum* opened up an avenue for audiences to empathize with Katharina and Ludwig. Throughout the film, Katharina is a stand-in for the audience, a passive protagonist who can only react to everything being thrown at her by the state and the media. It is that passivity, one we have all felt when confronting or even considering the power of institutions, which draws us ever nearer to her. Meanwhile, Fassbinder’s satire is detached, and makes it difficult for audiences to care for the militants as they began to fall one by one at the hands of the police. Such experiments with form that require a great deal of nuance and sophisticated viewership to decode, perhaps inadvertently intensified the negative stereotypes of the RAF prevalent in German mass media in the late 70s.

The feeling of confusion I felt as a spectator is compounded not only in juxtaposing the usage of genre in *The Third Generation* with *Katharina Blum*, but in comparing the former with another satire of the same era, Sidney Lumet’s *Network*. Released in 1976, Lumet’s film, based on a screenplay by Paddy Chayevsky, was a blistering attack on a media culture that was hastily eschewing reporting for entertainment. Regarded as cynical upon its release, a contemporary audience would find it difficult to view it as satire, given how the contemporary US media landscape has shifted in the last decade or more. A subplot within the film features a fictional leftist terrorist group, the Ecumenical Liberation Army (ELA), eventually becoming the pawns of a struggling network. The network executives, eager to profit off the counter-cultural and antiauthoritarian sentiment of the 1970s, make a show which features the ELA engaging in bank robberies, bombings, and assassinations, during a primetime show called *The Mao Tse-tung Hour*. An especially harrowing, though hilarious scene, finds network executives and the ELA discussing

distribution costs and syndication at the latter's remote hideout—the joke being that revolutionaries discard their politics as easily as the network executives when faced with the lure of money. It is a scene which can best be described as berets being filled with big bucks. This comparison to the mainstream *Network* should only emphasize the far more complicated politics and filmic aesthetics espoused by Fassbinder, who was not working on big budget Hollywood productions, but continued to hold to his experimental and subversive cinematic roots. Though Lumet and Fassbinder are telling sardonic stories about militants being utilized to drive profit, the former does not lose its critique in its hilarity. To invoke Karl Marx, *Network* is the tragedy to *The Third Generation*'s farce.<sup>36</sup> In the final analysis, though, audience's embrace and the continuing popularity of the Lumet film points to some of the difficulties of filmmaking in the Fassbinder mode, where interpellated critiques create a fragile edifice, whose meaning is too easily upended without extremely close and contextual readings.

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<sup>36</sup> The quote is the first line of Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Napoleon Bonaparte* and reads as follows: "Hegel observes somewhere that all great incidents and individuals of world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce."

## Chapter Three

### “Be Quiet or Be Killed!”: Germany’s Long Autumn and the Statements of a Generation<sup>37</sup>

*Deutschland im Herbst* (*Germany in Autumn*) is a filmic reflection of the eponymous events which counted Fassbinder, Schlöndorff, and Alexander Kluge amongst its 11 directors/collaborators. Filming began just four days after the end of the German Autumn, with the film even helping to coin the term. Shooting would take a mere four weeks, with its release occurring at the Berlin International Film Festival on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 1978, six months after these momentous events had shaken West Germany to its core.<sup>38</sup> As Gerhardt describes it, *Germany in Autumn* is an artifact of interest, for it “responded to events when they had not yet settled into history.”<sup>39</sup> As I’ve argued throughout this paper, this responsive approach was at the root of New German Cinema films regarding the RAF, with *Germany in Autumn* being the ultimate embodiment of this mission. The rapidity with which the film was shot and released is not only a testament to the events’ importance but also was a response to a self-imposed media blackout on events related to the German Autumn and the RAF (a topic commented upon in Fassbinder’s portion of the film). According to Gerhardt, the film served as a “contemporary witness to the events depicted and shaped the discourse surrounding them.” In being able to do this, the film was a “demonstration of group solidarity that was perhaps New German Cinema’s finest hour”—the filmic statement of a generation.<sup>40</sup> I agree with Gerhardt’s assessment in terms of this “finest hour”

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<sup>37</sup> The title for this section was inspired, in part, by the Screemers, a seminal Los Angeles electro-punk band. In their song, “122 Hours of Fear,” Tomata du Plenty, the band’s charmingly vicious lead singer, describes a fictional account of the Lufthansa hijacking.

<sup>38</sup> Christina Gerhardt, *Screening the Red Army Faction: Historical and Cultural Memory* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), p. 137.

<sup>39</sup> Christina Gerhardt, *Screening the Red Army Faction: Historical and Cultural Memory* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), p. 139.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

being defined not by the quality of the film as a whole, but instead in terms of the sense of urgency and solidarity underlining this effort.

Amongst the various chapters in the film, of specific interest when watching *Germany in Autumn* are the two funerals bookending the film, both of which were filmed by Kluge. The first is the state memorial service of Hans Martin-Schleyer, the famed industrialist who met his fate at the hands of the RAF. The other is, in some ways, a more muted affair, and it is the joint funeral service of Andreas Baader, Gudrun Ennslyn, and Jean-Carl Raspe, the three RAF militants who had been found dead in their respective cells the day before Schleyer was found dead in an abandoned vehicle. The cause of death of Baader, Ennslyn, and Raspe, refuted by many, was suicide (such was the debate over the cause of death that a national commission had to investigate the matter).<sup>41</sup> The West German state's handling of these two respective services was troubling, to say the least—and, as a researcher, I am beyond grateful that both events were captured on film. There is no way of obfuscating that Schleyer served in the SS. Upon closer inspection of Kluge's footage, boasting the mourning faces of the West German elite, one notices "former" Nazis in attendance. Yet, regardless of Schleyer's past or the connections he maintained after the collapse of the Third Reich; we send him off "in the solemn hope that he be with Christ."<sup>42</sup>

Schleyer received a send-off worthy of a transcendent statesman, one of the fathers of Germany's Post-War economic miracle, as the service was littered esteemed mourners and journalists, hoping to paint a specific portrait of Schleyer to the West German population. On the other hand, the funeral of Baader, Ennslyn, and Raspe, occurring two days later, was rife with controversy. As Ennslyn's sister remarked, "...when I came back from my vacation, the first thing I

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<sup>41</sup> Martin Blumenthal-Barby. "Germany in Autumn: The Return of the Human." *Discourse* 29, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 140–68.

<sup>42</sup> Various. *Germany in Autumn*. DVD. Kairos Film, 1978.

read in the paper was: ‘Into the sewage’...’Let them rot!’”<sup>43</sup> This disparity in posthumous treatment is the subject of analysis in Martin Blumenthal-Barby’s “*Germany in Autumn: The Return of the Human*,” where he cites the difficulty of burying people “who stand outside society.”<sup>44</sup> If grieving, a symbolic act meant to ensure “societal order and continuity for the polity,” is denied to those deemed enemies of the state (and its conduits in the media and the church), then societies are denied the opportunity to properly engage in reconciliation.<sup>45</sup> For a society whose perceived perfunctory attempt at denazification had, in part, given birth to the RAF, finding itself unwilling to mourn its progeny, regardless of their perceived crimes, was a troubling development. Relegating the dead members of the RAF to the dustbin of collective memory risked continuing cycles of violence.

Martha Minow tackles the question of collective remembrance in *Breaking the Cycles of Hatred: Memory, Law, and Repair*. Minow’s book focuses on how societies collectively transition from periods of mass violence and trauma, such as war and genocides. The question central to her study is: *how should we remember?*<sup>46</sup> For Minow, criminal tribunals, reparations, and truth commissions function as ways to put an end to cycles of violence between groups of people. In the context of the German Autumn’s aftermath, with a government functioning within a dubious definition of legality and a bitterly divided public, a truth commission focusing on Schleyer’s Nazi past and the government’s mistreatment of RAF prisoners could have forged a path between vengeance and forgiveness. Truth commissions have the potential to “expose and document torture,

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<sup>43</sup> Martin Blumenthal-Barby. “Germany in Autumn: The Return of the Human.” *Discourse* 29, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 140–68.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Martha Minow, *Breaking the Cycles of Hatred: Memory, Law, and Repair*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002, p. 16.

murders, and other human rights violations that would otherwise be denied and covered up”<sup>47</sup>

Instead, what we see at the funeral of Baader, Ennslin, and Raspe as filmed in *Germany in Autumn*, is a deluge of journalists and a heavy police presence, including a helicopter flying overhead, keeping a watchful eye on masked mourners. The state’s reticence to engage in any reconciliatory activity is best summed up in the waning moments of the film, as mourners departing the funeral are harassed and arrested, the justification being a smashed headlight. If there has been any thread underlining this analysis, it is that of uneven responses regarding disparate political actors’ actions and the deaths.

The film’s most memorable sequence, and the most direct engagement with not only the German Autumn, but 1970s West German politics as a whole, is the Fassbinder section. Fassbinder’s chapter features three main characters, Fassbinder himself, his actual mother, and Armin, his then-lover. It takes place in two locations, an apartment shared by the lovers and his mother’s kitchen. The sequence arrives after Schleyer’s funeral, the two sequences separated by a title card reading: “Once a certain level of atrocity has been reached, it’s irrelevant who is responsible. It simply has to stop.”<sup>48</sup> The quote is from a German civilian speaking in April of 1945, in the latter days of Germany’s destruction and subsequent defeat in World War II, in what is yet another allusion to the nation’s dark past. As we shall see below, the sequence is marked by a synthesis of the personal and the political, as Fassbinder brings the viewer into his home, displaying the odds with which he stands with in regard to his mother and his lover. It is an invitation into the mind of one of the more prominent film directors of the 1970s at a very dangerous moment when State censorship and police interventions were immanently real.

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<sup>47</sup> Martha Minow, *Breaking the Cycles of Hatred: Memory, Law, and Repair*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002, p. 24.

<sup>48</sup> Various. *Germany in Autumn*. DVD. Kairos Film, 1978.

To open the sequence, we find Fassbinder in the midst of an interview, eviscerating the notion of marriage. He denounces marriage as “artificial,” and expressing a hope that those who are married can begin to “deal with marriage in concrete ways” after watching his movies.<sup>49</sup> This is a reference to a film Fassbinder was to collaborate on with Kluge titled *The Marriages of Our Parents*.<sup>50</sup> Ironically, the film cuts from this interview to Fassbinder and Armin’s apartment, where they engage in a political debate reminiscent of what one would expect from a married couple. Armin mentions to Fassbinder that, not only would he have the hijacked plane in Mogadishu blown up by “the state” (presumably with the passengers and hijackers onboard), but he would also like to see to it that the RAF prisoners at Stammheim are either shot or hung. In a very elementary way, Armin believes that doing so would wipe West Germany’s hands clean of the situation. Fassbinder challenges his lover, demanding to know who gives the state the right to engage in such barbaric acts. Armin responds: “If they [RAF] don’t follow the law, the state doesn’t have to either.”<sup>51</sup> This response, displaying Armin’s apathy towards the erosion of any semblance of democracy, infuriates Fassbinder and, after a brief physical spat, he kicks Armin out. Fassbinder’s impatience and rudeness towards Armin will define their interactions throughout the sequence.

Before further laying out the plot, I want to briefly pause and analyze what Fassbinder is doing cinematically. It was not uncommon for him to cast friends and lovers in his films, but here, we see the lovers cast against one another, symbolizing the fraught nature of the German Autumn. The sense of animosity in the opening moments of this scene is further enhanced by the tightness of the framing. When Fassbinder and Armin quarrel, first verbally and then physically, they are in a narrow hallway in their apartment, with Fassbinder fully clothed and Armin merely wearing a

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<sup>49</sup> Various. *Germany in Autumn*. DVD. Kairos Film, 1978.

<sup>50</sup> Christina Gerhardt, *Screening the Red Army Faction: Historical and Cultural Memory* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), p. 143.

<sup>51</sup> Various. *Germany in Autumn*. DVD. Kairos Film, 1978.

towel around his waist. The inescapable narrowness of the hallway draws us into the quarrel, much like how many West German citizens were drawn into the debate revolving around the RAF's actions and the state's responses. The subtle decision in costume design tells us a lot—Armin's apolitical, if not dangerous, stance towards the RAF has no clothes, has no basis. It is worth considering that Armin is shown to simply lay about all day, ignoring the news, but his elementary argument nonchalantly echoes what a fascist would say about the RAF. Whereas we have Fassbinder, fully clothed, his voice underlined by a nervous passion, viscerally impacted by the developing situation. Though the two men were involved romantically, and not married, their quarrel can be viewed as a metacommentary on Fassbinder's desire for his films to challenge or even break apart the institute of marriage.

The following scene features Fassbinder and his mother, discussing the current political atmosphere. Mother Fassbinder recalls an occurrence in which a friend of hers badmouthed Heinrich Böll, whose own saga is recounted above and, upon defending him, she is labeled a “sympathizer” of the RAF. Here, Fassbinder does an excellent job in utilizing the intimacy of this scene to display how the widespread discussions had about the RAF, the state, and the media impacted the daily, seemingly casual, interactions of millions of citizens. Instead of being defiant in the face of this fear, Mother Fassbinder says, “I wouldn't encourage anyone to talk in the current situation.”<sup>52</sup> Mother Fassbinder's expression of this sentiment is troubling, to say the least. The media had already engaged in self-imposed blackout and now she is wishing for the public to do the same. While her fears of social backlash are understandable, her desire for people to remain mum on the situation removes one of the foundations upon which democracies are built, public discourse. Public discourse is also at the root of, not only this sequence, but the film as a whole.

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<sup>52</sup> Various. *Germany in Autumn*. DVD. Kairos Film, 1978.

Fassbinder finds himself flustered, as his mother says that the current situation reminds her of Nazi Germany, “when people just kept quiet to stay out of trouble.”<sup>53</sup> The scene ends abruptly, and we now find Fassbinder and Armin in bed, in the middle of the night. Fassbinder calls a friend in Paris and notifies them of the suicides of Baader, Ennslin, and Raspe. He sardonically explains how the RAF members committed suicide, with Ennslin hanging herself, and Baader and Raspe having shot themselves, all the while expressing a disbelief in the state’s narrative. As Fassbinder matter-of-factly states that Stammheim is the “most secure prison in the world,” Armin’s reflection is shrouded in darkness in the background, as both he and the audience are fed this information.<sup>54</sup> Here, both Armin and Fassbinder are naked, confined to the tightness of the frame, denied the truth of the deaths of Baader, Ennslin, and Raspe.

We return to Fassbinder and his mother, as he poses the question, “What has to happen these days before you talk again?” As the camera slowly zooms in on her, Mother Fassbinder vaguely explains that those who “have authority have to use that influence.”<sup>55</sup> When prompted to name who these figures are, she names Alexander Mitscherlich, Carl Jung, and Heinrich Böll (the first two of whom were notable psychoanalysts). The frame continues to tighten on her face, as she explains, “...the masses don’t make a democracy. They haven’t grasped what it is.”<sup>56</sup> Once again, Mother Fassbinder’s words deliver chills to the audience. In essence, she wants to relegate discussion of the RAF, the state’s heavy-handed response, and all associated topics to the philosopher-kings of West Germany. Her so-called “masses,” of which she is a member, aren’t intelligent enough to grasp the complexity of the situation, hence they should remain quiet, even though they will have to deal with the repercussions of the state’s actions (i.e., surveillance) for

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<sup>53</sup> Various. *Germany in Autumn*. DVD. Kairos Film, 1978.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

years to come. We cut once more to Fassbinder, once again on the phone, expressing concern about the heightened state of surveillance, predicting that these draconian measures, such as phone taps, will stay in place long after the manhunt for remaining RAF members. These draconian measures were already in place in *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum*, and their ubiquity has only increased as the political situation has further devolved. Another reference is made to Fassbinder and Armin's parallel to marriage, as the latter laments, "I go shopping and you don't eat," a parallel to the trope of the working husband and the domestic wife. Fassbinder's increasing paranoia and visible distress causes physical illness, as he throws up in his toilet. After throwing up, Fassbinder calls a drug dealer, and arranges for a delivery of cocaine. In all the confusion and anger surrounding the events of the German Autumn, Fassbinder has relapsed, as Armin futilely comments, "I thought you'd quit that stuff." Fassbinder's response: "Well, I thought so too."<sup>57</sup>

Once more, we are brought to the conversation at the epicenter of the sequence: Fassbinder and his mother. Fassbinder is pushing back against her, demanding to know why it is that she wishes to delegate all control to the "system." The system here is the West German government, which Mother Fassbinder trusts because she delegated control to them when she cast her vote. Speaking in-between drags of a cigarette, she confidently declares, "...reason will prevail." Here, Fassbinder utters my favorite line of dialogue in the entire film, when he asks, "So reason must come from above?"<sup>58</sup> Though off-screen, his utterance cuts through the cigarette smoke permeating the kitchen, forcing Mother Fassbinder to look down in contemplation. After a brief thought, she admits that there are many things to be upset about, and "criticism is necessary," but not at this very moment. "That's a rejection of democracy!," Fassbinder screams.<sup>59</sup> This exchange, within the wider exchange unfolding between the young Fassbinder and his middle-aged mother, is symbolic

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<sup>57</sup> Various. *Germany in Autumn*. DVD. Kairos Film, 1978.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

of the generational divide between the War generation and those children of the '60s who partook in counter-cultural and revolutionary activity. The War generation allowed from reason to come from above and, as Mother Fassbinder described earlier, were quiet in the face of it. This silence contributed to the rise of the Third Reich, the Holocaust, and the destruction of Germany.

After a shot in which Fassbinder ingests several lines of cocaine, the debate between him and his mother continues. Fassbinder reminds his mother that, for every hostage shot in Mogadishu, she would like to see one of the Stammheim prisoners shot in public. Mother Fassbinder admits that this retribution isn't democratic, "but hijacking the plane wasn't democratic either." She freely admits that democratic means aren't enough in responding to the hijacking, which opens the door to considering what else she would allow the state to do to political dissidents. This exchange premediates discussions in the United States and Western Europe in the aftermath of 9/11, in which civil liberties were curbed in the name of the so-called War on Terror. Returning to Fassbinder alone, now high, he attempts to record himself discussing a script for a forthcoming film. As sirens are faintly heard in the background, the camera swiftly zooms in on his face as he becomes visibly frightened. Looking out his window, he realizes that the police have stopped in front of his apartment building. He quickly calls for Armin, who then watches Fassbinder flush all their drugs down the toilet. As Fassbinder tells Armin that the police are outside, he is confused and says, "Now I really don't understand."<sup>60</sup> This exchange cements Fassbinder and Armin's respective positioning in two different worlds, with the former consumed by the paranoia of the German Autumn and the latter decidedly oblivious to it all. With Fassbinder's face pressed against the front door, he hears the policeman race past their apartment, going upstairs. Armin chastises Fassbinder for overreacting, but Fassbinder counters by saying that,

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<sup>60</sup> Various. *Germany in Autumn*. DVD. Kairos Film, 1978.

had they come in, one false move could've resulted in their being shot. The distance between both of these characters, and their relationship, grows when Armin claims that those who are shot by the police are the ones at fault. Armin leaves to go drink, leaving Fassbinder alone.

Continuing on from Mother Fassbinder's ghastly desire to have the Stammheim prisoners publicly executed, she attempts to save face by saying, "...I do care about laws." Fassbinder is fuming, loudly deeming her mother an anti-democrat. The acting here, on the part of Mother Fassbinder, is extraordinary, as she continues to look away off-screen, averting the angry gaze of her son. The conversation then centers around what, if anything, makes the RAF different from "normal," or apolitical murderers. The difference isn't solely that a so-called normal murderer "has bad reasons, or none at all" for committing their crimes. Instead, and here Fassbinder's emotions crescendo, the difference is posed as a question: "Isn't the bad thing about the terrorists that they have reasons that you can understand?" Mother Fassbinder can't bring herself to look up when she quietly responds, "But the means are wrong, Rainer." The scene comes to a roaring conclusion when Fassbinder gets his mother to admit that West Germany would be better off under authoritarian rule, as she wears a slight smile while saying, "The best thing would be a kind of authoritarian ruler who is benevolent, and kind, and orderly."<sup>61</sup>

The rawness of Fassbinder's sequence is due to a variety of factors. As noted above, he cast himself, his mother, and his lover, contained the story within dimly lit interiors and, perhaps most notably, shot the sequence within a week of the conclusion of the events of the German Autumn.<sup>62</sup> Beyond this, it is exhibitionist—there are various instances in which we see Fassbinder and Armin naked and there isn't anything holding back Fassbinder from screaming at his mother. We are witnessing the private lives of individuals unfolding, as if Fassbinder's apartment is rigged with

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<sup>61</sup> Various. *Germany in Autumn*. DVD. Kairos Film, 1978.

<sup>62</sup> Christina Gerhardt, *Screening the Red Army Faction: Historical and Cultural Memory* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), p. 143.

cameras to surveil his activities. The sequence is a display of the immediate impact of the events on Fassbinder's psyche and the dynamics underlining his interpersonal relationships. As Gerhardt keenly points out, the German Autumn is visibly and auditorily absent from the sequence.<sup>63</sup> Instead, its absence *amplifies* its ubiquity. We don't see television broadcasts or hear anyone on the radio discussing the events, but instead are provided with an intimate family portrait whose very essence is infused by the German Autumn. This entire sequence, while playing out like an investigation into the thoughts of three distinct individuals, leaves us with no answers, as the next chapter begins after Mother Fassbinder expresses her longing for a benevolent fascism.

Fassbinder's family portrait served as a prequel to a fourth manifesto written after Oberhausen, the Hamburg Declaration of German Filmmakers. Written in 1979, 17 years after Oberhausen, this manifesto reflected on the heights achieved by the New German Cinema and where it could go on the eve of the 1980s. Notable signatories of the manifesto included Fassbinder, Werner Herzog, and Wim Wenders. The document's thesis statement was "We will not let ourselves be divided." This was a call for unity, not merely amongst filmmakers themselves, but a unity in their varying film forms. The Hamburg signatories sought to dissipate the division between feature and documentary film, established directors and newcomers, and films "that reflected on the medium...from the narrative and commercial film." Fassbinder's work in *Germany in Autumn* blurred the line between narrative and documentary filmmaking (as did Kluge's bookending of the film with documentary footage of the respective funerals for Schleyer and the RAF members). While the scene was carefully scripted, there isn't anything to connote separation between the real-life versions of him, his mother, and his partner from their onscreen portrayals. In doing so, it is also comments upon the form of the autobiographical film, eschewing the notion of

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<sup>63</sup> Christina Gerhardt, *Screening the Red Army Faction: Historical and Cultural Memory* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), p. 144-5.

casting anyone to play him or those closest to him. The conclusion of the German Autumn, its omnibus filmic depiction, and, in particular, Fassbinder's intimate family portrait, signaled a shift in filmmaking about the RAF. In 1981, Margarethe von Trotta, one half of the directing team behind *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum*, would provide another entry into this canon of films with *Die Bleierne Zeit* (*The Leaden Time*), a story based on two siblings whose activism leads them down disparate paths.

Released in 1981, four years after the German Autumn, von Trotta's *The Leaden Time* (the American title was *Marianne and Juliane*), picks up where Fassbinder leaves off, in a sprawling portrait of the eponymous siblings. Regarding the difference in titles, one can imagine that for an American audience, *Marianne and Juliane*, hinting at a melodrama revolving around two women, sounds much more marketable than *The Leaden Time*, which hints at a more abstractly overbearing weightiness or heaviness of plot. Though melodramas are usually underlined by weightiness, the foregrounding of the two sisters, as opposed to the foregrounding of history, the "time" in *The Leaden Time*, presents a more consumable product. The decision-making behind titles will be further explored in chapter four, specifically in the differing messages invoked by the ambiguous *The State I am In* and the tabloidesque *The Baader-Meinhof Complex*.

The film is partly based on the life of Gudrun Ennslin from the point of view of her sister, Christiane. Functioning as a presentation of Juliane's (Jutta Lampe) memories of Marianne (Barbara Sukowa), the film contains several plotlines, including various prison visits made by the elder Juliane to the younger more militant Marianne, the fragile fate of Jan, Marianne's son, and the strain Marianne's imprisonment and eventual suicide has between Juliane and her partner, Wolf. As seen via flashbacks, the sisters endured the latter stages of the World War II, growing up in a strict religious household in the 50s under the auspices of their old-fashioned father. Growing

up, it was Juliane who was the rebel, as she is seen reading Sartre, smoking cigarettes, and donning black jeans to school. Meanwhile, Marianne is devoutly religious and attached to her authoritarian father. However, it is now Marianne who is disgusted by what she sees as Juliane's bourgeois lifestyle, in which she is an activist for reproductive rights, a writer for a feminist publication, and in a long-term relationship with the Wolf, whose relationship to leftist politics is peripheral, at best.

*The Leaden Time* attempts to make sense of the disparate paths taken by the sisters by showing its audiences formative moments in their upbringing. Of particular interest for this survey, von Trotta decides to show two instances in which the sisters watch harrowing films, one being Alan Resnais' momentous Holocaust documentary *Night and Fog*, and the other a documentary on the Vietnam War. When watching *Night and Fog*, the girls are of school age. Here, von Trotta employs an interesting use of the gaze, as we, the audience, watch the sisters along with their classmates, also functioning as an audience, looking at the sprawling concentration camps built by Nazi Germany and the strewn corpses left behind in the wake of the Third Reich's defeat. The Jewish victims of the Holocaust not only cast their gaze at the sisters but at us as well. As we are watching the sisters react to being exposed to the darkest chapter in their nation's history, we notice that both Marianne and Juliane are visually taken aback. As Marianne decides she can no longer stomach the film, we hear Resnais' narration ominously ask, "Who is to blame?" The following scene finds us in the bathroom with the sisters, the narration still faintly heard in the background, as it is revealed that the film has made them both made physically sick.<sup>64</sup> Their vomiting is the physical manifestation of their initial encounter with the ghosts of the Third Reich. Later in the

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<sup>64</sup> It should be noted that, upon its release, *Night and Fog*, was banned from French television. The reason for its censorship revolved around this question of "Who is to blame?," as Resnais muddled the distinction between German Nazis and the rest of Europe. In doing so, it was harder for the French, with the ghost of the collaborationist Vichy government looming large, to distinguish between "us" and "them." By focusing on apathy and human folly, Resnais presents his own study on the "banality of evil" seven years before Hannah Arendt's momentous and controversial study of the Adolf Eichmann trial. Von Trotta's inclusion of the film also builds a bridge from the French nouvelle vague, or New Wave, to the New German Cinema.

film, we find the sisters, now older, watching a similarly graphic documentary about civilian suffering during the Vietnam War. However, this time, as they once again are looking on at the victims of an inexcusable atrocity, Marianne whispers to Juliane, “I’ll never agree that nothing can be done about that.” With this utterance of dialogue, it is made clear that Marianne has undergone significant changes since her first experience with this type of hardship. Where she was once a helpless and sick spectator, a young religious girl sitting on her father’s lap, she is now ready to become a political agent intent on making sure that the systematic elimination of entire swaths of people is no longer repeated, whether in West Germany, Vietnam, or elsewhere. This scene underlines von Trotta’s desire to establish a dialogue with the past. Interestingly, it is the only film presented in this survey to take its audiences back to the complicated and sometimes confusing representations of World War II and the Holocaust via the insertion of a film within the film—an exploration of a legacy which fueled the actions of the RAF. The RAF was not only fueled by their nation’s dark past, but by the worldwide movement against American involvement in the Vietnam War. With this in mind, von Trotta’s two sequences establish a psychological basis, but not a justification, for Marianne’s actions as a member of the RAF later in life while simultaneously displaying the various results social-historical acknowledgement incurs. On the latter point, Juliane and Wolf also watch the Vietnam War film, yet Wolf is framed off to the side, a passivity veils his face, as he is presented as a passive spectator. To showcase where Wolf’s passions lie, Susan E. Linville points out a moment later in the film, when Wolf is watching a football match. On the edge of his seat, his face now donning a mask of worried anticipation, Wolf is presented as more concerned about a football club than the wanton massacre of civilians.<sup>65</sup> This dual portrait of Wolf also comments upon where and how media is disseminated. The viewing of the Vietnam War film

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<sup>65</sup> Susan E. Linville. “Retrieving History: Margarethe von Trotta’s Marianne and Juliane.” *Modern Language Association* 106, no. 3 (May 1991): 446–58.

is at a public space, perhaps due to the footage (i.e., the film reel) not being widely available. While scene featuring the football match is situated within Juliane and Wolf's apartment, with sporting events, functioning as entertainment, are broadcast in countless homes. As the plot continues to develop, the strain between Wolf and Juliane proves insurmountable, as the former leaves the latter.

The legacy of Nazi Germany and Marianne's decision to live the life of a militant loom over every personal relationship in the film. There are several scenes in the film in which Juliane visits Marianne in prison. And, while the two sisters at times lovingly reflect on their adolescence, the visits often devolve into political debates akin to the ones seen between Fassbinder and his mother in *Germany in Autumn*. Where Marianne never passes up an opportunity to accuse Juliane of cowardice, saying things such as, "Ideas are not actions," Juliane at one point very bluntly tells her younger sister, "Born 30 years earlier, you would've been a Hitler fan." The preceding accusation, while uttered in a moment of heightened emotion, displays Juliane's concern that her sister has become a fanatic, trading in the religiosity of her youth for secular Marxism. While the sisters are bonded by love, this love does not stop them from accusing each other of grave personal miscalculations. Juliane's pointing of her finger and essentially accusing her sister of being a fascist makes most sense in the political context of West Germany, seeing as how the nation was mere decades removed from the Nazi era. Elsewhere her insult could be deemed as the flattening of political theory, a verbal cheap shot. Here, however, Juliane is afraid that Marianne's fervent hatred of their nation's Nazi past has blinded her to her arguable similarities with Nazi party members who used violence to attain and maintain political power. These concerns and insults notwithstanding, Juliane is heartbroken when she discovers that Marianne has allegedly committed suicide at Stammheim Prison. Although Fassbinder and von Trotta have unique filmic vocabularies, their depiction of the interconnections between close family members, and the havoc

wreaked by political conservatism in such intimate spaces, makes these films difficult to watch in their raw emotionality.

Not believing the story told to her by the authorities, Juliane devotes her life to proving that Marianne was killed. This obsession clouds the third act, as Juliane adopts an obsessive nature mirroring Marianne's commitment to political change. After several years of research, Juliane finally has evidence to counter the state's suicide narrative. However, when she reaches out to a journalist, he deems the Marianne and the RAF as old news. He bluntly tells Juliane, "Today, it's the Third World that's news: Islam, the energy crisis, survival in a post-industrial age!" This remark displays the media's propensity to simply move on to the next marketable event, and the ease with which societies can simply move on from an event as severe as the German Autumn. Linville describes this as a criticism of the media's "decade think," as they believe, "[T]ruth-value is reduced to what sells, and all that has currency is the absolutely current."<sup>66</sup> But, for Juliane, there is no moving on. She is to bear the legacy of Marianne for the rest of her life. This burden is embodied when she decides to become the caretaker of Jan, Marianne's abandoned son, who has been under the auspices of childcare services for several years. Upon reuniting with Jan, Juliane discovers that the young boy has been badly injured in a petrol bomb attack. He was attacked, and nearly killed, due to his assailants knowing who his mother was—signaling, yet again, the inescapability of the specter of Marianne. When Jan is finally taken home by Juliane, he expresses a desire to know everything about his mother's life, demanding that Juliane spare no detail. The film ends with a frozen frame of Juliane, preparing to commence an intergenerational dialogue with her nephew. The frame, featuring the concerned and thoughtful gaze of Juliane, looking at both Jan and the audience, allows space for us to contemplate the respective sacrifices made by both

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<sup>66</sup> Susan E. Linville. "Retrieving History: Margarethe von Trotta's *Marianne and Juliane*." *Modern Language Association* 106, no. 3 (May 1991): 446–58.

Marianne and Juliane, for whom the personal is inextricably tied to the political.<sup>67</sup> These sacrifices have been analyzed throughout this entire survey, proving that the lives of activists and artists, and the lives of those in proximity to these individuals, incur many a burden. While the filmmakers of the New German Cinema sought to portray the difficulties of those the RAF, making this art also proved controversial. From Heinrich Böll's tussles with the West German tabloid media, to Fassbinder's familial turmoil, and von Trotta being accused of sympathizing with Gudrun Ennslin in making *The Leaden Time*, the creation of alternative political discourse, of complicating events where the government and the media want to paint a Manichaeian portrait, is a path fraught with difficulties.<sup>68</sup> Taking these difficulties into account and realizing the intentions of these directors was never to laud this or that political ideology, makes the films discussed above crucial for anyone seeking to agitate dominant discourses during times of political volatility.

*The Leaden Time*, with its themes of familial ruptures, intergenerational dialogue, and the inescapability of the past serves as a sturdy bridge from the height of the New German Cinema to the films about the RAF made in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, when works such as Christian Petzold's *The State I am In* carried the torch of RAF-centric filmmaking into a new visual and political era. As we'll see below, the legacy of the RAF is complicated, perhaps unresolvable in any concrete way, yet ceaselessly fascinating in terms of its political ambiguities and what their legacy meant, in both political and cultural terms, for a post-Cold War Europe.

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<sup>67</sup> Ellen Seiter. "The Political Is Personal: Margarethe von Trotta's *Marianne and Juliane*." *Journal of Film and Video* 37, no. 2 (Spring 1985): 41–46.

<sup>68</sup> Susan E. Linville. "Retrieving History: Margarethe von Trotta's *Marianne and Juliane*." *Modern Language Association* 106, no. 3 (May 1991): 446–58.

## Chapter Four:

### The Terrorists go to Hollywood: Representation of the RAF in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

It has been nearly 45 years since the end of the German Autumn. While the RAF would remain active, in varying degrees, until 1998, the end of the Cold War, the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union, and the reunification of Germany essentially made the RAF ideologically obsolete in the late-80s. Gone were the days of believing that a worldwide Marxist revolution was right around the corner. Capitalism, in the form of liberal democracy, had won and “history was over.”<sup>69</sup> On top of that, the various regimes under the Soviet sphere of influence that provided material support to the RAF and revolutionary groups across the world disappeared, most notably, in this case, East Germany. This event signaled a grand epistemological shift for leftists around the world. Multi-polarity, at least for the time being was gone, and with it had left imagining alternatives to capitalism’s dominance. However, while the ideological battle between capitalism and Soviet-style communism which gave birth to the RAF may be long behind us, the filmic imagination of directors still views the group as an object of fascination. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, numerous films, of varying degrees of popularity and quality, have been released featuring portrayals of the RAF. This section will look at two films in particular: Christian Petzold’s *The State I am In* (2000) and Uli Edel’s *The Baader-Meinhof Complex* (2008). I have chosen these two films due to their disparate aims and filmic methods. Petzold’s film, much like the intimacy found in Fassbinder’s work in *Germany in Autumn* and von Trotta’s *Marianne and Juliane*, is an

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<sup>69</sup> When the USSR collapsed, many theorists, most notably Francis Fukuyama, asserted that “history was over.” For them, the days of major ideological conflict was over, as capitalism had surfaced as victor of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, with its spread to every corner of the globe all but inevitable. Of course, in the decades since, defined by the resurgence of global terrorism, nationalism, and the threat of climate catastrophe, problems exacerbated by capitalism, history is all but over.

emotionally acute depiction of a family on the run at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, while Edel's Academy Award-nominated film gives the RAF a Hollywood makeover, playing up some of the more romantically rebellious aspects of the group to portray them as wayward revolutionary rockstars. My interest here is what these stories are doing on a formal level and the subsequent impact these portrayals, and others, have on individuals who didn't live through the height of the RAF but instead are exposed to this history while living in a new supposedly more united Europe.

Petzold's *The State I am In* eschews making any grand political statements and instead focuses on what impact having outlaw parents has on the increasingly rebellious adolescent Jeanne, played by Julia Hummer (perhaps there is an echo of von Trotta's young Jan here). This is a film about generational trauma and the wide shadows cast by the past. The plot revolves around Jeanne's falling in love with Heinrich, a young mechanic, while the authorities seem to be zeroing in on her ex-militant parents, Hans and Clara, dashing any hopes they have to escape to Brazil. Time and time again, the contacts Hans and Clara attempt to utilize in the hopes of escaping the authorities prove unwilling to help or neutralized by the police. As previously stated, the focus here is not *why* Hans and Clara are on the run, there is little to no mention of the RAF, but *how* their pasts are inescapable. Never in the film do we get any indications as to what Hans and Clara's crimes were. Of course, this mystery functions differently for audience members of various generations. For German spectators over the age of 40, many of them remember reading about the actions of the RAF in the newspaper or hearing about them on the evening news. This, in effect, leads to a greater understanding of the characters of Hans and Clara, leading to either sympathy or utter disdain. On the other hand, audience members closer to the age of Jeanne know next to nothing about Germany's past experience with revolutionary violence, leaving the detached and distant parental figures as conundrums, much like how Jeanne views her parents.

An especially telling shot of the theme of inescapability underlining the film occurs around the 23-minute mark. Here, the family, running out of money and places to go, take a break from driving and stop on the side of the highway. The establishing shot features the family's car framed in-between two towering flag poles. To the right, is the German flag and, to the left, is the flag of the European Union. Jeanne gets out of the car first, walking in the direction of the flag of the European Union. The next shot is an extreme close-up of her face as she looks up at the German flag and then at her parents, who are visibly fatigued.<sup>70</sup> This brief scene is rife with symbolism. The car's positioning underneath the two flags encompasses the crossroads at which Jeanne and her parents find themselves. Her parents are political agents from a bygone period, now finding themselves hunted down across an increasingly united and surveilled 21<sup>st</sup> Century Europe. Meanwhile, Jeanne, now an adolescent, finds herself full of desire for the normal life of a teenager, one filled with friends, crushes, and an education. Her walking towards and remaining underneath the flag of the European Union tells us that she no longer wishes to live the life her parents have imposed upon her. Her destiny, like that of the nation's formerly within the Soviet sphere of influence, is integration into a wider cultural community. She is finally coming to the realization that she doesn't know her parents *or* Germany, as she has been denied the freedom that defined her parents lives in the late-60s and early 70s.

The film ends rather somberly. During a botched bank robbery, Hans is shot in the shoulder and Clara shoots a guard. Jeanne decides to go see Heinrich, with whom she has fallen in love. After an emotionally arduous conversation in which Jeanne admits, at least partially, the truth about her family, she promises Heinrich that she will be waiting for him when he returns from work. But Jeanne ultimately returns to her parents, signaling once more the inescapability of her

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<sup>70</sup> *The State I Am In*, directed by Christian Petzold (2000; Germany: Schramm Film, 2002), DVD.

situation. Then, during a last-ditch attempt to reach Le Havre, in northwestern France, to board a ship to Brazil, the family's car is driven off the road by shadowy individuals who are presumably German police. Interestingly, the cars that surround Jeanne and her parents are unmarked, and we don't see the faces of any of the assailants. Both Jeanne and her injured father are asleep during the crash, suddenly awakened as the car violently rolls onto the side of the road. In the final moments before the credits, Jeanne, having been knocked out, awakens at a distance from the car. As she looks around, the fate of her parents, whether they have died or been taken into custody, is left up in the air. Jeanne has found herself freed from the auspices of her parents, reborn as a freed individual in the middle of a vast stretch of nature.

It is also worth noting how the title of the film accents the narrative on various levels. "*The State I am In*" reads as a reference to the psychological "states" imposed upon Jeanne and her parents given their clandestine lifestyle, the newly reunified state of Germany refusing to offer amnesty to Jeanne's parents, and Jeanne's increasing rebelliousness in the face of her parents' authoritarianism. The latter dynamic becomes an amplified irony in the film: Jeanne's parents were freedom fighters in the late-60s and 70s but are now becoming the very people they so vehemently fought against, all while denying Jeanne the rebelliousness she has clearly inherited from them. This irony is only furthered when one considers that the family wants to escape to Brazil, a location fairly popular amongst Nazis seeking to escape Europe after World War II. The title also reminds the audience of the statelessness of Jeanne and her family. The film begins in Portugal, with the plot traversing through France and Germany as well, but they are not allowed to become familiar with or enjoy any of these locations, as it could spell arrest or death. In fact, many of the shots of

Jeanne and her parents feature them in the claustrophobic setting of their vehicle, as they continue to seek solace.<sup>71</sup>

Overall, the film functions brilliantly as an arena to examine intergenerational relationships, both on a micro and macro level (with the latter influencing the former), and as a rendition of individuals living a ghost-like existence. Petzold has alluded to the ghostliness of the film by saying, “I have a feeling I make films in the cemetery of genre cinema.” In this sense, as Gerhardt explains, he has taken the road film, whose mobility is traditionally associated with freedom, with a popular example being *Easy Rider* (1969), to instead show characters who are “[T]rapped in a constant mobility...on ‘a road to nowhere.’”<sup>72</sup> This ghostliness is also an allegory for the political beliefs of Hans and Clara. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the Cold War is over, and the consensus in a new neoliberal world order is that the specter of communism no longer haunts the world. Hans, Clara, and Jeanne have found themselves displaced in a neoliberal Europe, with the family representing an allegory for the ideological displacement of communism. The film is situated at the intersection of personal history and global History, an intersection rife with confusion as to what this new post-Cold War horizon holds. While *The State I am In* is a work haunted by what it is, the next film I will analyze, *The Baader-Meinhof Complex*, is haunted by what it is not.

Uli Edel released the sprawling yet middling *The Baader-Meinhof Complex* in 2008, eight years after Petzold’s *The State I am In*. The world underwent significant changes in the eight years separating these films. The terrorist attacks on 9/11, and those in London and Madrid in subsequent years, had presented a challenge to the neoliberal world order. History had returned in the form of

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<sup>71</sup> *The State I Am In*, directed by Christian Petzold (2000; Germany: Schramm Film, 2002), DVD.

<sup>72</sup> Christina Gerhardt, *Screening the Red Army Faction: Historical and Cultural Memory* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), p. 190.

international terrorism by way of Islamic jihadists. Edel's curious biopic was released within a media sphere which included militaristic shows such as *24*, in which Jack Bauer (Kiefer Sutherland) continuously saved the world from various belligerents, and as cable news networks centered around the ambiguous presentation of the Iraq War and the Terror Alert Color Code system.<sup>73</sup> Though the film was nominated for a Best Foreign Language Film Academy Award at the 2009 Academy Awards, and garnered a similar nomination at the Golden Globes, I couldn't help but feel empty upon completing it. Edel's film, unlike any of the films discussed hitherto, even those critical of the RAF, gives the group a Hollywood makeover which results in an aesthetically impoverished film featuring revolutionary silhouettes. While featuring several key events from the first decade of the RAF's existence, from the Frankfurt department store bombing perpetrated by Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ennslin to the group suicide at the tail end of the German Autumn, it fails to go further into the past to provide context for the group's birth. My main issues with the film revolve around its vapid portrayal of the RAF, especially considering the film's mass audience, many of whom will only engage with this incredibly complicated chapter in history through this popular biopic. Where the film could have leaned into complexities of the generational struggle amongst student activists in the 60s and 70s and their forebearers, those who lived under the Third Reich, like *The State I am In* or Fassbinder's segment in *Germany in Autumn*, we are treated to a highlight reel of attractive gun-toting militants who speak to each other in superficial one-liners. Below, I'll discuss two specific scenes I believe encompass the film's impact, or lack thereof, which have led me to draw the conclusions asserted above.

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<sup>73</sup> This system was an odd sight for anyone who watched the news in the United States from 2002-2011. Threat levels were represented using colors, with green representing a "low" level of the risk of a terrorist attack, yellow representing an "elevated" level of risk, and red representing a "severe," or imminent, threat.

At around the 26-minute mark of the film, a teenage runaway named Peter-Jürgen Boock (played by Vinzenz Kiefer), finds the communal home where Andreas Baader and Gudrun Ennslin are staying.<sup>74</sup> At this point in the film, Baader and Ennslin have been released pending an appeal on the court decision related to the Frankfurt Bombing. Boock finds Ennslin taking a bath, and while he apologizes for disrupting her, she invites him to bathe with her, to both save water and for the elder Ennslin to get to know him. After Boock gets in and explains to Ennslin how he was brutalized by guards at a juvenile detention center, the larger-than-life Baader makes an entrance. Boock is visibly nervous, as Baader puts on his leather jacket, and angrily asks, “What is this? You trying to fuck my woman?”<sup>75</sup> Boock looks at an expressionless Ennslin and then back at Baader, who can no longer hold back his laughter. Baader then kneels down to kiss the naked Ennslin, groping her breasts in front of the relieved Boock. After Ennslin introduces Baader to Boock, the latter exits the room. While doing so, the wide-eyed Boock remarks, “Cool leather jacket.” Without missing a beat, Baader takes off his leather jacket, tosses it to Boock and says, “Here. Keep it.”<sup>76</sup> This exchange serves as a metonymy for everything the film fails to do. Instead of leaning into a portrayal of the RAF grounded in the display of the material conditions which lead to the group’s birth, it instead leans into stereotypical portrayals of the so-called radical. The exchange between Baader and Boock, cringeworthy at best, is supposed to lead audiences to believe that Baader is as radical as they come: he doesn’t care if strangers take baths with his partner and will not hesitate to literally give this same stranger the clothes off of his back. There is a certain troubling chicness in this scene, because it plays more as if Edel were portraying a popular rock band from the era instead of individuals who viewed themselves as urban guerillas at war with the West German government, who left jobs and families in their commitment to revolution. Instead, Baader could

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<sup>74</sup> *The Baader-Meinhof Complex*, directed by Uli Edel (2008, Germany; Constantin Film, 2009), DVD.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

have easily been substituted for the likes of Jim Morrison or Mick Jagger in this scene. This concern only metastasizes in the film's next sequence.

After Baader so kindly gives Boock his leather jacket, he says, "Now let's hit Darmstadt and have fun!"<sup>77</sup> After assessing that the group may not have enough cars for an excursion to the city, he wears a wide grin and says, "Then we'll steal two. Or three."<sup>78</sup> We cut to a long stretch of highway with a caravan of speeding cars, while a *cover* of The Who's seminal "My Generation" is utilized diegetically. The gang is seen laughing, smoking, and drinking, while celebrating the freedom provided to them on an empty highway most likely built due to The Marshall Plan. It is crucial to consider the symbolism of this entire scene being scored by a cover of one of the most influential rock songs of the late-60s and early 70s. Moreso than the previous leather jacket scene, the "My Generation" scene is indicative of the film being guilty of what I have coined as "revolutionary karaoke." As anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist as these characters are presented as in subsequent scenes, they are not conscious of existing within a film with a \$20 million budget. The tragedy at the root of this revolutionary karaoke is that the version of the RAF on screen is merely playing out these lives without creating any political affect. These silhouettes are paraded around a frame until they dissipate under the pressures exerted on them by the state, which is itself shown more neutrally than Fassbinder, von Trotta, or even Petzold would allow. This curiously hollow directorial attitude finds a parallel expressed by social critic Mark Fisher when he wrote about *Control* (2007), another biopic set in the 70s. Directed by Anton Corbijn, that film traces the rise of Joy Division, an influential punk band whose career would be cut short after Ian Curtis, their lead singer, committed suicide at 23.<sup>79</sup> Fisher writes that, "We were taken through the story, but

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<sup>77</sup> *The Baader-Meinhof Complex*, directed by Uli Edel (2008, Germany; Constantin Film, 2009), DVD.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> For those that don't know, the remaining members of Joy Division would go on to form New Order, one of the most popular bands of the 80s.

never drawn into the maelstrom, never made to feel why any of it mattered.”<sup>80</sup> He goes on to explain how the actors were able to “[S]imulate the chords, could ape Curtis’ moves” but failed to capture the charismatic power which propelled the group to fame and inspired an endless number of copycat groups.<sup>81</sup> I evoke Fisher’s critique of *Control* because it in many ways colors my critique of *The Baader-Meinhof Complex*. Joy Division itself was a radical musical act, as four young Manchester musicians, led by Curtis, crafted a sepulchral disco, a sound that would vault them to the status of prophets of urban decay and modern ennui. There is an ineffable quality of radicality and urgency missing from both *Control* and *The Baader-Meinhof Complex*, a quality further clouded by the latter’s ultra-digital aesthetic. Even though the casting director did an excellent job casting actors who resemble members of the RAF, specifically Ennslin and Baader, I was continuously haunted by the notion that the film was a bad cover of the 60s and 70s in general, and the RAF, in particular. These actors are merely on a string as they are being pulled to their narrative deaths.

While I am not arguing for there to be a rigid formula for biopics, I am arguing that there is a danger in Edel’s Hollywood-esque makeover of the RAF, the same danger that I began this essay by mentioning through the overconsumption of radical images from the 1960s and 70s in our contemporary media landscape. His film turns the traumatic memories of a fragile political situation into a profitable spectacle, a consumer good. Edel’s film betrays the legacy of the New German Cinema, which, as argued above, attempted to create alternative political discourses to that which was being perpetuated by the government and the media. The troubling thought of history being turned into a trendy item for sale invokes a haunting passage from Theodor Adorno and Max

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<sup>80</sup> Mark Fisher. *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology, and Lost Futures* (United Kingdom: Zero Books, 2013), p. 51.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

Horkheimer's prescient 1947 essay "The Culture Industry," in which they write that the producers of culture, "[A]re on the alert to ensure that the simple reproduction of mind does not lead on to the expansion of the mind."<sup>82</sup> The flattening of history as seen in *Baader-Meinhof Complex* obviously makes for a more accessible product in relation to the films described above, but it seems to be more interested in profit and critical acclaim than providing audiences with an easily navigable onramp to the complexities of history.

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<sup>82</sup> Douglas M. Kellner and Meenakshi Gigi Durham, eds. *Media and Cultural Studies: KeyWorks*. (USA: Blackwell, 2010), p. 46.

## Epilogue

### The Task of the Historian: Final Thoughts

There is a resonance with the German Autumn, its afterlife, and how collective memories of the 2020 global George Floyd Uprising are currently being constructed. In doing research for and writing this paper, one specific memory haunts me out of the thousands of images from that fateful summer. I was at a vigil at Prospect Park, in Brooklyn, in mid-June 2020, to recall the lives lost during the opening weeks of the protests. Taking a much-needed break from the nightly battles against New York City Police Department (NYPD) across the city, those in solidarity with the dead had peacefully gathered to read off the names of the martyred followed by quotes from the likes of George Jackson and Assata Shakur, amongst others. We were there to collectively mourn and to remind ourselves of the stakes at hand. However, as part of its repressive counter-insurgency tactics, the NYPD decided to keep a watchful eye on the event, even having a helicopter fly overhead, which made the reading of names and quotes near impossible to hear if not shouted. While rewatching *Germany in Autumn* in the fall of 2021, I could not help but shudder in watching footage of a helicopter fly overhead at the funeral of Baader, Ennslin, and Raspe, as young West Germans mourned and reminded themselves, with fists in the air, *what was at stake*. History does not repeat itself, but it does, at times, form a fearful symmetry. However, its moments like this, in which images can create solidarity amongst seemingly disparate generations, that film pronounces its timeless importance.

This is why I have decided to undertake research the RAF and the legacy they have imprinted upon both the political and cultural spheres, because my own experiences and those of many others around me have, at times, been uncannily similar to what transpired in 1970s West

Germany. What was at stake then was not allowing for a media beholden to anything but profit ruining the lives, not merely of a small number of militants, but anyone critical of the state of things. It concerned halting a burgeoning surveillance apparatus from forever altering the nature of citizenry via the dissolution of civil rights, making fear and paranoia ubiquitous all in the name of justice and maintaining the status quo, faulty as it may be. In the four decades since the German Autumn, we now find ourselves witnessing, once again, the dissolution of the social order. The players this time around are both old and new: the ghosts of racism's past, the media, gargantuan social media companies, and apathetically nefarious governments are all playing a role in quelling dissent and spreading lies, making it ever more difficult to organize against oppressive forces. Governments' refusal to critically engage with their racist and violent pasts builds long-term resentment. It ultimately leads to violent eruptions—we have seen this transpire in West Germany and are currently experiencing it in the United States and the world at large. What is also at stake is the consideration that the more memorable images and sentiments from the global political eruptions of 2020, the burning of the Third Precinct in Minneapolis, the countless youths across the world expropriating material goods, and the multi-ethnic solidarity displayed in the face of police forces are quickly being flattened, relegated to the dustbin of hashtags, headlines, and memes. Our memories of events like the German Autumn and the Uprising, and the countless moments in-between, can't become easily digestible tidbits. These are immensely difficult flashpoints, and our reflections must be equally difficult, lest we delude ourselves with fantasies governed by right and wrong.

As historians of film, and the political and cultural mechanisms which guide cinema, it is imperative to realize the importance of artistic statements, like the manifestos put out by filmmakers of the New German Cinema, and their filmic statements, which are so much more profound, complicated, and ambivalent. These artifacts, past, present, and future, are crucial to

revolutionary discourse. Our task is not merely to continue this discourse with the past, but to *act* on it. Acting on this history will imbue filmmakers, historians, and activists with the knowledge that thought needn't come from above, for such a dynamic maintains the dominance of the ruling classes—for those in control of material production are in charge of intellectual production.<sup>83</sup> There is much to be learned from the RAF and the New German Cinema's legacy. If this legacy isn't acted upon, then, as Benjamin warns in his "Theses on the Philosophy of History, "*even the dead* will not be safe from the enemy if he is victorious. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious."<sup>84</sup> In taking this journey back in time with me, I hope you realize what toll political activism takes, not just on artists and activists, but on *everyone*. This realization is a step towards rejecting the future currently being imposed upon us. The gates of the future will be rattled by those who discuss and invent—its iron bars will turn to dust upon meeting the force of our ideas.

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<sup>83</sup> Douglas M. Kellner and Meenakshi Gigi Durham, eds. *Media and Cultural Studies: KeyWorks*. (USA: Blackwell, 2010), p. 9.

<sup>84</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. Edited by Hannah Arendt. Translated by Harry Zohn. (New York: Schocken, 2007), p. 255.

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